THE POWER OF IDEAS

Intellectual Input and Political
Change in East and Southeast Asia

Edited by
**Claudia Derichs and
Thomas Heberer**

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CONTRIBUTORS

Karin Adelsberger is Assistant to the Managing Director for Seikoh Giken Europe. In 1992–1997, she studied in East Asia Studies (focus: Japan and politics) in Duisburg (Germany) and Seto (Japan). In 1997, she was an assistant/secretary at Japan External Trade Organization in Düsseldorf (Germany). In 1998–2000, she was a research student at the Faculty of Law and Politics at the University of Tokyo (focus: Japanese reaction to international crises in East Asia). In 2000–2003, she was a research fellow at the Institute of East Asian Studies at the University of Duisburg (Germany). For participating in the research project "Discourses on reform and democratization in East and Southeast Asia", her planned PhD thesis has the working title "The diffusion of ideas into the policy-making process in Japan".

Olga N. Borokh is a leading research fellow at the Russian Academy of Sciences, Institute of Far Eastern Studies (IDV RAN, Moscow). Her major fields of research include intellectual trends in contemporary China with an emphasis on western influences upon Chinese debates on reforms and modernization. Her recent book is *Contemporary Chinese Economic Thought* (1998).

Claudia Derichs is an assistant professor for political science at the Institute of East Asian Studies, University of Duisburg, Germany. She has published widely on Japanese politics and social movements in Japan in addition to articles on nation-building and political Islam in Southeast Asia, particularly Malaysia. Prior to her academic career, Dr Derichs worked as a science journalist. Research: Nation-building in Malaysia, Islam and political reform in Southeast Asia and the Middle East (comparative politics) and female political leaders in East, Southeast and South Asia (comparative gender studies). Teaching: Domestic and foreign policy in Japan, political Islam in Southeast Asia and international relations in the Asia-Pacific.

Edward Friedman is a professor of political science at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, where he teaches courses on the Politics of Human Rights, Challenges of Democratization, Revolution, and Chinese Politics. His recent books include *Chinese Village, Socialist State* (Yale, 1991), *The Politics of Democratization: Generalizing East Asian Experiences* (1994), *National Identity and Democratic Prospects in Socialist China* (1995) and *What if China doesn't Democratize? Implications for War and Peace* (2000). *Revolution, Resistance and Reform in Village China* (Yale) is forthcoming.

Carol Lee Hamrin is a Chinese affairs consultant, as well as a research professor at George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia, where she is working with the Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution (ICAR) and the Center for Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (CAPEC). She also serves as a Senior Associate with several non-profit organizations supporting research and social services in China. Carol was the senior China research specialist at the Department of State for 25 years, and has taught at The Johns Hopkins University (School of Advanced International Studies). She has published several books, including *Decision-making in Deng's China* and *China and the Challenge of the Future,* and many book chapters and journal articles. Dr Hamrin's current research interests include the development of the non-profit, non-governmental sector; cultural change, human rights and religious policy and indigenous resources for conflict management.

Saliha Hassan is an associative professor at the Political Science Programme and an associate fellow at the Institute of Malaysian and International Relations Studies, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Malaysia. Her main area of research is political development in Malaysia with a focus on the dynamics of democratization as played out in the context of Malaysian civil society. Her latest publication is *Social Movements in Malaysia: From Moral Communities To NGOs* (RoutledgeCurzon 2003), which she co-edited with Meredith L. Weiss.

Baogang He (BA, Hangzhou University, 1981; MA, People's University of China, Beijing, 1986; PhD, ANU, Australia, 1993) is currently senior research fellow, East Asian Institute, National University of Singapore and reader at the School of Government, the University of Tasmania, Hobart, Australia. Dr He is the author of *The Democratization of China* (New York and London: Routledge, 1996, 1998, 2000), *The Democratic Implication of Civil Society in China* (London: Macmillan, New York: St. Martin, 1997), *Nationalism, National Identity and Democratization in China* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000, with Yingjie Guo), and *Between Democracy and Authority: An Empirical Study of Village Election in Zhejiang*, (Wuhan: Central China Normal University Press, 2002, with Lang Youxing). He has also published many book chapters and journal articles. Dr He was awarded the Mayer prize by the Australia Political Science Association in 1994 for the best article published in the *Australian Journal of Political Science*. He has been awarded Australian Research Council (ARC) large grants, and five ARC small grants. This current work stems from an ARC-funded project and a National University of Singapore-funded project.

Thomas Heberer is professor of Political Science/East Asian Politics at University of Duisburg, Germany. He has worked as a translator and reader at the Foreign Language Press in Peking from 1977 to 1981. Since the early

1980s, he periodically has conducted field research in China, e.g. on nationalities policy, on the individual economy, on rural urbanization and social change, and on private entrepreneurs and their social and political function. Major book publications since the 1990s include *Corruption in China. Analysis of a political, economic and social problem* (in German, Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1991); *Mao Zedong, the immortal revolutionary,* (Hamburg 1995: Institute of East Asian Affairs); ed. together with K.K. Vogel, in German, *Political Participation of Women in East Asia* (Hamburg 1997); in German, co-author W. Taubmann, *Transformation of China's Rural Society: Urbanization and socio-economic change in the countryside* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1998); in German, *Entrepreneurs as Strategic Groups. Social and Political Function of Private Entrepreneurs in China and Vietnam*, (Hamburg: Institute of East Asian Affairs, 2001); in German, *Falungong: Religion, Sect or Cult? A 'Salvation Community' as a Manifestation of Modernization Problems and Processes of Social Alienation* (Jena: IKS Garamond, 2001; and *Private Entrepreneurs in China and Vietnam – Social and Political Functioning of Strategic Groups* (Leiden: Brill, 2003).

Sunhyuk Kim is assistant professor in the Department of Political Science at the University of Southern California, Los Angeles. He was a research professor at the Asiatic Research Center at Korea University, Seoul, during the 2002–2003 academic year and served as the Research Director of the Pacific Council on International Policy's recent project on Korea, 'The Reshaping of Korea'. His research interests include democratization, civil society, political economy, state-society relations, and social movements in Korea. Dr Kim's recent publications include *The Politics of Democratization in Korea: The Role of Civil Society*; *The Politics of Economic Reform in Korea*; *The Political Origins of South Korea's Economic Crisis*; *Democratization and Environmentalism*; *The Politics of Dual Transition in South Korea*; and *Civic Mobilization for Democratic Reform*.

Lee Lai To is Head of the Department of Political Science as well as Academic Convenor of the Master of Social Sciences (International Studies) Programme at the National University of Singapore. Dr Lee – who has written and lectured internationally and regionally on Chinese politics, the South China Sea conflicts, cross-strait relations and Asia-Pacific security – has also been taking part in many of the academic and Track Two conferences on regional and international affairs. His publications include nine books (three solely authored and six edited or co-edited), numerous articles in international and regional journals, and a large number of conference papers and chapters in books.

Patrick Raszelenberg studied Philosophy, Political Science and Philology in Munich, Madrid and Boston. In 1991–1993, he was research fellow at

the Institute of Asian Affairs in Hamburg. In 1993–1996, he stayed in Vietnam. In 1996–1998, he studied East Asian Studies in Cambridge, MA. In 1999–2002, he was a research fellow at the Institute for East Asian Studies at Duisburg University.

Nora Sausmikat has degrees in Sinology, Anthropology, and Theatre Science. She was a research fellow with the University of Duisburg, Germany, and is currently working for the Federal German Culture Foundation in Beijing, China. Her PhD thesis was on the perception of the Chinese Cultural Revolution in women's narrated life stories. She has written extensively in German and English on women's studies, history of Chinese intellectuals, political reform movements and contemporary Chinese theatre.

Gunter Schubert is professor for Sinology with the University of Tuebingen, Germany. Research Fields: Chinese Politics, East Asian Security, Comparative Research on Democratization, Nationalism. Main publications: *Chinas Kampf um die Nation: Dimensionen nationalistischen Denkens in der VR China, Taiwan und Hongkong an der Jahrtausendwende* (China's Struggle for the Nation: Dimensions of Nationalist Thought in the People's Republic of China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong at the Turn of the 21st Century, Institute for Asian Studies Special Series No. 357, Hamburg 2002); *Taiwan – Die chinesische Alternative. Demokratisierung in einen ost-asiatischen Schwellenland, 1986–1993* (*Taiwan – The Chinese Alternative. Democratization in an East Asian Newly Industrializing Country,* Institute of Asian Studies Special Series No. 237, Hamburg 1994); *Blockierte Demokratien in der Dritten Welt* (Defunct Democracies in the Third World, Opladen: Leske + Budrich, 1998, co-edited with Rainer Tetzlaff); *Menschenrechte in Ostasien* (Human Rights in East Asia, Tübingen: Mohr–Siebeck 1999).

Carlyle A. Thayer is professor of Politics at the Australian Defence Force Academy. He is presently on secondment to Deakin University as their Academic Co-ordinator at the Centre for Defence and Strategic Studies, Australian Defence College. Professor Thayer has been working on Vietnamese politics for over three decades. He has published extensively on Vietnamese domestic and foreign policy. He is the author of *War By Other Means: National Liberation and Revolution in Vietnam* (1989); *The Vietnam People's Army Under Doi Moi* (1994); *Beyond Indochina*, Adelphi Paper 297 (1995); co-author of *Soviet Relations with India and Vietnam* (1992), and co-editor of *Vietnam and the Rule of Law* (1993) and *Vietnamese Foreign Policy in Transition* (1999).

Martina Timmermann is Academic Programme Officer and Director of Studies on Human Rights and Ethics with theUnited Nations University in Tokyo, Japan. She was also the head of a research project on "The Human

Rights Politics of Japan, Indonesia and the Philippines: Mirror of 'Asian Identity'?" at the Institute of Asian Affairs, Hamburg In the realm of ASEM IV (2002), she was one of two German delegates to the expert meeting on Gender at the Asia–Europe Dialogue in Finland. Among several articles on regional cooperation in Southeast Asia, human rights and gender politics, she has published *The Power of Collective Thought Patterns: Values, Change and Political Culture in Japan and the United States*, Opladen 2000.

Gabriele Vogt is a research fellow for Political Science with the German Institute for Japanese Studies. She was a visiting scholar at Cornell University in 2003–2004 and has a PhD in Japanese Science from the University of Hamburg in 2002, MA in Japanese Science, Political Science and Sociology from University of Munich in 1998. Field of expertise: community-based political action, Okinawa's role in Japan. Major publications: *Die Renaissance der Friedensbewegung in Okinawa* (forthcoming, München: Iudicium). "Alle Macht dem Volk? Das direktdemokratische Instrument als Chance für das politische System Japans", *Japanstudien* 2001 (13): 319–342

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Claudia Derichs and Thomas Heberer

The "Asian crisis" of the late 1990s is over. What has been left? Economically, the region has recovered. In foreign policy, attention has turned towards fighting international terrorism. Regional politics has been challenged by pandemics such as severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) or avian flu, which, interestingly enough, had a greater effect on regional cooperation than the financial crisis of 1997/98. In the meantime, significant domestic political changes have taken place in almost all countries of East and Southeast Asia, the effects of which are now beginning to develop clear contours. The future course of the Asian crisis notwithstanding, we believe that the discourse on the political future in East and Southeast Asia that was set in motion during the late 1990s is an expression of growing democratic self-consciousness and self-assertiveness among the political and intellectual elite.

"Reform" and "change" were the buzzwords of political debate during the crisis. Consequently, the movements for political change in Indonesia and Malaysia became known as the *Reformasi* movements. In other countries, the reform debate took place in a less turbulent manner, but nonetheless with a clear promotion of change-oriented interests. In this volume, seventeen authors have attempted to discern how the Asian crisis has promoted a new political discourse in the region and in which direction this discourse is heading. Propositions made by social actors (intellectuals and non-government organizations [NGOs]) and the push effects they can have on state actions are central issues of discussion. The political aspect here is the political propositions that are intended to change the rules and forms of politics without calling the existing system of government itself into question. Less concern is given to the radical "dissident level".

The editors of this volume are quite aware that in every society the "production of discourse" is not free and unplanned but controlled, selected, organized and channelled, and in consequence only certain ideas achieve prominence and can develop push effects. Such discourses, however, reflect a particular and quite significant segment of politically interested public opinion. In addition to such political propositions, discourses also have high conflict potential because they imply an element of change.

Discourses in the arena of politics do not surface by themselves. They are fed with ideas that are picked up for discussion, exchanged, altered and repeated, or discarded. Ideas get the discourse off the ground and make up its core nourishment. They are carried and brought into discussion by idea providers – mostly intellectuals. Discourses, ideas and intellectuals form three moving legs of a triangle. How fast they are allowed to move, how far they can move and whether they have a chance to enter the space of political decision-making, are questions that have not been attended to intensively with regard to the region of East and Southeast Asia.

In this volume, the movement of change-oriented ideas and the role of intellectuals within the arena of political discourse will be analysed in the case of two authoritarian states (China and Vietnam), a multi-ethnic, formally democratic state with strong authoritarian leanings (Malaysia) and two democratic states with significant parochial structures and patterns of behaviour (South Korea and Japan). The selection corresponds to the following categories of strong state formations: communist, neo-patrimonial and developmental. It also corresponds to the fact that the different political and economic situations of the countries involved have affected different forms of suffering from the crisis – a fact that should not be completely neglected when comparing them.

REGIONAL SIMILARITIES AND TRANSNATIONAL PROCESSES IN THE DISCOURSE ON DEMOCRATIZATION

The belief is strong that the future of regional political systems lies in the expansion of democracy. Yet there are several gradations of colour in the understanding of democracy, with some voices tilting towards an appropriation of Western institutions, and others espousing a synthesis of Western and indigenous patterns.[1] Primarily, traditional and participation-inducing institutions like village elections (China, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia and Thailand) or particular political ideas and features of a specific political culture (like particular forms of criticism of government, the state's obligation to serve the general good and specific egalitarian concepts of mankind and society) are regarded as "indigenous". Chih-Yu Shih refers to "collective forms" of democracy in East Asia, as opposed to western, individual forms of democracy. Such "collective forms" apparently correspond to the East Asian cognitive identity and aim to protect collective interests.[2]

CONCEPTS OF CHANGE AND DEMOCRACY

Within the political structures, ideas and traditions of Asia, there are factors that can be regarded as "democratic" or favourably inclined towards democratic elements. The use of the "western" term democracy would seem here to be questionable, because although there are certain ideal concepts of dialogue between leaders and followers and certain types of participation, these rights are not institutionalized and enforceable. The democratic

institutions which characterize modern democracy are missing. However, the way in which many East and Southeast Asians understand democracy would seem to point to quite a different concept of society, for example, when they contend that their traditional societies were democratic until the invasion of colonialism or until the demise of indigenous values, or when the reinstitution of the "dignity of individuals" is seen as the main aim of democracy.[3]

Among these proponents, we should again distinguish between those who employ these arguments to lash out against Western ideas of democracy and Westoxication in order to justify authoritarian structures, and those who, with reference to democratic traditions, argue against "traditional" structures of authority as championed by authoritarian elites, apparently not allowing democratic conditions. While, with the exception of Japan, the proponents of "Western" democracy appear to form a minority, as do the proponents of democracy entirely based on indigenous elements, the number of those thinking about a synthesis is on the rise. A "bottom-up" democratization via village elections or a liberalization of the media under the control of a powerful social institution (like the Communist Party in Vietnam or China) appears as part of this debate. The attempt to synthesize traditional elements (social order based on virtues) with modern ideas (well-protected autonomy) is seen as a "communitarian effort" by Amitai Etzioni.[4] Essentially, this is an attempt to find the ideal balance between universal individual rights and the good of all, or between self and society. For this reason, the search for a synthesis in East Asia should be regarded as an attempt to combine "good" (stable) social order with individual autonomy, whereby the good social order, many people believe, could be based on indigenous elements.

Despite the fact that the discussion is developing differently in each of the countries involved, there are similarities of transnational character which can be summarized as follows:

- A growing awareness in almost all countries in the region (though to different degrees) that as a result of the "Asian crisis", a change in political structures appears necessary;
- A debate which attempts to combine "Western" or (rather than that) universal democratic institutions with indigenous structures and values;
- A growing self-assurance with regard to indigenous democratic traditions, in the course of which the proponents of this argument do not regard "democracy" as a European invention but as a reorientation towards local democratic traditions; and
- An increasing hope for the opportunity of finding alliance partners within the political elite who support the struggle for reform and are able to open up new channels for political interest articulation.

We are thus dealing with parallel developments displaying transnational tendencies spawned by supranational discussion forums, the co-operation of

NGOs, scholarly conferences and internet newsgroups.[5] The Internet has long since come in for its full share of transnational regional discourses. Not only the networking between NGOs in ASEAN countries (in areas like human rights, alleviation of poverty, ethnic minority rights, women's and workers' rights) shows how important such networks are, but also the transnational role model function of Filipino and Thai NGOs for ASEAN countries and similarly Taiwanese, South Korean and Hong Kong NGOs for East Asia. This is mirrored by the parallel meetings of European and Asian NGOs during Asia Europe Meetings (ASEM). Contrary to Jürgen Habermas' prediction that the public spheres created by the Internet would form separate segments,[6] the development in Asia shows an integration of these spheres, with the internet attaining material power.

CRISIS OF REGIONALISM

From the viewpoint of international relations, bottom-up initiatives can play a vital role in strengthening the weakened regional elite organizations of APEC, ASEAN and even ASEAN +3/ASEAN 10. The reluctance of the respective governments to handle the financial and the accompanying social crisis in some countries of the region has cost these organizations a considerable amount of credibility in the international arena. The problems in the wake of the outbreak of the SARS formed another challenge to the region. Trying to cope with the economic and political repercussions of the disease, a hastily convened summit of Asian leaders in April 2003 showed some effects of state learning and agreement upon the importance of transparency in implementing the measures to control and contain the spread of SARS. The general mood, however, is that something has to be done, and since the "Asian Way" (ASEAN's "trade mark") has lost a lot of its appeal during the period of economic slowdown, new test cases such as SARS or avian flu may pave a way for concerted collective action in the region. The Asian crisis can be considered a symbol for a crisis of regionalism.

According to the German political scientist Jürgen Rüland who refers to this crisis of regionalism, the biggest impediment to effective crisis management is the current political behaviour of decision makers in foreign affairs.[7] The erosion of some of the central principles of the Asian Way demands a new support structure for the development of an integrative regionalism. The new support structure formed by civil society, social movements and NGOs with a transnational, regional orientation is becoming visible. As these actors are increasingly coming to the fore, a new form of regionalism from below might be able to prevent a fragmentation from above.

ASIANIZATION?

Having said that, the transnational developments in the region do not signify an Asianization per se. The Asian crisis partly contributed to a reassessment of common "democratic" values and institutions and has demonstrated the

need for political change in the entire region. While authoritarian structures were long regarded as a favourable condition if not prerequisite for economic development among the elites within the region, democratic conditions are now viewed as a guarantee for better crisis management and good governance even though they may require specific qualifications. Whether this discussion of the political future will lead to comprehensive democratization in the countries investigated (for Japan, it is a question of extending democratic space), or rather to a short-term democracy bubble with a subsequent authoritarian backlash, must for the present remain unanswered. Due to the divergent political, economic and socio-cultural conditions within the countries analysed in this volume, it does not make much sense to assume any linear democratic development. More appropriately, a kind of development as reflected in the political discourses mentioned above, i.e. with all its backlashes and contradictions, may be expected. In intellectual discourses on the necessity for democratic reform, the inevitable side effects of social turbulence and uncertainties are (again) coming to the fore.[8] In addition, there is growing criticism of the current form of democracy, for example, in the Philippines and in Thailand.

The discursive link between political perspectives from within the region and the Asian economic crisis was generated by the evidence of political corruption, nepotism, patronage, relationship networks and a lack of "checks and balances", i.e. democratic control. This discussion, which began before the crisis and was mostly confined to NGOs, intellectuals and opposition groups, centred upon issues of "Asian" patterns of power, democracy and participation[9] and was reduced to a debate on Asian values in the West, largely viewed as legitimizing authoritarian structures. The actual discussion within the region, however, took a decidedly different turn, with interpretations of traditional values in favour of a legitimization of authoritative structures confronting interpretations in favour of democratic traditions. In the international arena, this debate was highlighted by the contributions of Kim Dae-Jung and Lee Kuan-Yew in the journal "Foreign Affairs" in 1994.[10]

The Asian crisis has given the democracy debate in East and South East Asia added impetus, although this will not in the short term lead to automatic democratization in all countries. The debate is taking place mainly among intellectuals and members of the political elite. It is, therefore, not a one-sided state project but a social project in the sense of intellectual mobilization with significant effects on state actions. There is less emphasis on "Asian values" than on the question to what extent local experiences of political culture can usefully be brought to bear on democratization processes, and how destabilizing factors in democratization processes can be absorbed by introducing local instruments of political participation. Whilst there are clear parallels in this respect between all the countries in the region, forms of transnational exchange and discourse are growing. International

influence and pressure stemming from globalization have at the same time tangibly improved discourse opportunities in authoritarian states in the region. The role of the Internet should not be underestimated in this regard. Nearly every state in the region is striving to become an IT-hub and attract international investors; the goal of creating a knowledge economy and a knowledge society fills the pages of the national gazettes. Educating the people to develop an IT-savvy nation requires an infrastructure that allows free communication to harness the advantages of "knowledge". The logic of the story is thus that a knowledge society cannot develop if access to global knowledge is restricted or limited, and if creative minds are put under custody. Consequently, governments are forced to allow free access to knowledge and information if they want to improve their position in the regional race for technological progress. Therefore, the financial crisis has placed not only the local but also the regional and global discourse on democratization on a new footing. Again, we may assume that the handling of the SARS crisis taught a new lesson to those who still wanted to cover up information before a concerned public. It remains to be seen, however, how many crises are needed in order to make transparency and information disclosure a natural procedure.

CONTENTS OF THE CHAPTERS

The articles in this volume attempt to concretize the meaning of discourse for political change and how ideas in discourses affect political practice. Within the discursive settings they deal with, the authors' focus lies on discourses that promote ideas of political change and democratization. The assessment of the meaning of discourse for political change is based on structural analyses. Others prefer to have a closer look at discourse contents. Basically, these contents touch upon three themes. One is the relationship of different actor groups – like the state, NGOs, social movements, intellectuals, etc. Another one is the multi-layered structure of discourses. Discourses emerge from different opportunity structures of public discussion and may overlap with regard to certain topics. They display different qualities of breadth and depth, and they emanate from different social and political contexts. A systemic transition that is just about to start is accompanied by discourses that surely differ from those in an already transformed system. On the level of nation-states, this means that the political discourse in China, for instance, differs from that in Japan, where democracy is quite consolidated. These differences reflect, thirdly, the various directions and types of change a discourse hints at, be it incremental change, radical change, "customized" change, patterned change or else.

In the first cluster of articles, the theoretical setting is outlined. Thomas Heberer draws the connecting lines between ideas, intellectuals and discourses. He provides an overview of definitions for the terms we are so much used to work with – intellectuals and ideas. Regarding ideas as a major

segment of policy shaping, he identifies intellectuals as carriers and messengers of ideas in the process of modernization. But intellectuals do not passively carry an idea into society; they also discuss it and therefore actively shape the public discourse. Like Keohane and Goldstein (1993), Heberer understands ideas as road maps providing potential directions for political development. How to employ the road map in order to promote political reform and change is largely contingent upon the space granted for public discussion and its potential influence on political decision-making.

Since intellectuals form a crucial group of discourse actors, Lee Lai To discusses a set of different roles they can perform. While Heberer is concerned with the definition of their species, Lee addresses various roles of intellectuals, in particular Asian intellectuals. Regarding them as players in a globalized economy, Lee describes a role they are generally expected to play, like that of developer and disseminator of knowledge, a role they might want to play, like that of exerting political leadership and a role they have to play in a globalized world, like that of social critics and social advocates. In accord with Heberer, Lee shares the opinion that the capacity of intellectuals to exert influence on political and societal change depends to a great extent on their vehicles, channels and opportunities to promote their ideas. He concludes with a rather optimistic outlook, stating that it is absolutely necessary for today's states to embrace and amass their intellectual capital. It would thus be counter-productive for states to neglect the fact that intellectual capital is most important in the information age and in the process of creating a knowledge-based economy.

In the second cluster, five authors give an introduction to political discourses in Japan, Malaysia, China, Korea and Vietnam. The portrayals bear evidence of the discursive diversity among these nation-states. They underscore the importance of the contextualization of findings (something that is intensively taken care of in the subsequent clusters). Analysing Japan, Karin Adelsberger presents a concise assessment of the structural conditions of policy-making in this country. Her central question is how ideas of reform and change manage to "travel" from bottom to top, which is from the level of public discourse to the level of political decision-making. Her findings suggest that there are different channels and patterns of diffusion, and sometimes an idea might even reach the upper echelons of policy-making by chance, by spilling over. The different channels and patterns of diffusion can be grouped and ordered, which is what Adelsberger does in a very convincing manner. Her findings confirm the assumption of many a colleague in contemporary Japanese studies that it is not exclusively the "iron triangle" (composed of politicians of the ruling parties, bureaucrats in the national ministries and powerful interest groups) that determines the policy process, but that this process has become much more pluralistic.

The situation of "idea travel" in Malaysia takes its own peculiar shape, although some of the patterns of diffusion are similar to those discerned on

other countries of the region. Drawing her findings from several interview trips to the country, Claudia Derichs stresses the importance to look beyond the institutional level of information transfer. Like Adelsberger in the preceding article, she addresses, for instance, the role of think tanks in the national political process. As institutions for the development and dissemination of knowledge, think tanks are existent in almost every state of the globe. How they operate and how they function, however, depends on the political opportunity structures as well as their embeddedness in the cultural setting. In a rather authoritarian climate and with respect to the very delicate ethnic composition of Malaysian society, it does not suffice to have access to certain channels of policy-making. According to Derichs, the question of how, when and by whom an idea is sent out to "travel" – framing and timing – is as important a factor for its bottom-up travel as the proper functioning of the institutional infrastructure.

He Zengke's paper focuses on discourses on political reform in China since the late 1980s. He addresses the debate on neo-authoritarianism, on civil society and on the third sector. He extensively discusses the issue of a "Chinese way" to democracy in the context of bottom-up and top-down approaches, the contents of what is labelled "rule of law", the role of stability in political concepts, the problem of corruption and the attempt to counterbalance it by means of institutional innovations. Moreover, he approaches the phenomena of social stratification and social justice, the issue of nationalism and the meaning of Jiang Zemin's "Three Represents". He Zengke thus provides us with a comprehensive overview of Chinese political discourses in recent years from the perspective of a Chinese scholar working for a major think tank in Beijing. Though He is convinced that authoritarian structures are only a transitional aspect of China's development, the country needs, he argues, some time to develop its own path to democratization.

The reform politics in South Korea during two recent Kim governments – Kim Young Sam and Kim Dae Jung – are analysed by Sunhyuk Kim. He takes a twofold approach by examining different concepts of political issues, such as democracy, and their implementation on the one hand and different levels of discourses (elite, intellectual and social movement) on the other hand. As a yardstick for measuring success or failure Kim picks the correspondence between the discourse on democracy and the actual performance of the government. The Kim Dae Jung government clearly wins the comparison of the two administrations in terms of responsiveness to democratic demands uttered by various segments of society. The author's analysis shows, however, that the process of democratization did not run smoothly in South Korea and that the emanation of an open discourse on democratic reforms did not generate an immediate boost in the governments' democratic performance.

Discourses on political reform and change in fairly consolidated democracies like Japan and South Korea can yet emerge in a more participatory

surrounding than discourses in transition states like Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos or Myanmar. Carlyle A. Thayer impressively illustrates this in an assessment of the discourse on political reform in Vietnam. The seemingly obvious relation between the regional financial crisis in 1997 and the expansion of political discourses leading even to some leadership changes in Southeast Asia is challenged by Thayer's findings. Rather than being an outcome of regional developments, he argues, the discourse on political reform was shaped by domestic factors which are unique to Vietnam. Examining the role of political dissidents and raising the example of one of them, General Tran Do, the article does not only reveal how dissenting views can be uttered in an overtly repressive surrounding, but also gives a comprehensive idea of the discursive conditions in this country. The isolation of dissidents from the neighbouring states, the limited audience they can present their suggestions to and the lack of an articulated program of political reform are among the main factors framing the conditions for the articulation of dissent.

The subsequent cluster of articles focuses on themes and trends of discourses in the region. Economics and particular fields of political discussion (nationalism and elections) are addressed in the case of China, whereas some seemingly non-political expressions of discourse are analysed in the case of Vietnam. In addition to these nation-state-oriented chapters, Martina Timmermann refers to a major field of concern in the region, namely the transnational dimension of discourses, identity, community and institutions. Since transnationalism has become an ever more important topic in political science – communities across borders, transnational spaces, transnational democracy and all sorts of transnational activism are observed and examined – Timmermann refers to a key term of Asian regional studies. She strongly argues that, despite the rather frustrated comments on the viability and effectiveness of regional organizations like ASEAN and APEC, processes of collective identity- and regional institution-building are well at home in Asia Pacific. Using the case study of human rights identity, she points to the important roles performed by NGOs for regional community-building. By influencing the agendas of world conferences and "actively pursuing the set-up and intensification of transnational dialogues", NGOs have become a crucial actor in global and regional affairs. And there is a trend in international politics, she argues, to enhance the integration of security and welfare issues, thus interlinking "high" and "low" politics. The discourse and dialogue on "soft" issues such as human rights might therefore become a launch pad for transnational identity formation in "high" politics as well.

In her chapter referring to China, Olga Borokh detects new trends in economic thought. "Ethical norms matter", her argument goes, exemplified by the discourse of Chinese scholars on the negative social consequences of China's rapid economic growth. Taking publications of Chinese economists who have raised concern for the moral aspects of economic growth as her primary sources, Borokh paints an in-depth picture of the crisis of morality

felt by many contemporary Chinese. The problem of "moral hazard" and "spiritual void" is no doubt a familiar issue in modern Asian economics (Japan is a case in point), so its spread may not come too surprisingly. In the case of China though, Borokh traces back the historical experiences that have made the Chinese society comparatively more vulnerable and exposed to grievances than others, leading to an urgent demand for ethical norms. Her strongest point lies in proving that the current debates on economics and morality are neither imposed from the top nor do they form a part of an organized effort such as the campaign for the "strengthening of socialist ethics" in the past. The independent development of an intellectual discourse of this sort shows how much space exists for an open discussion of "sensitive" topics. The discursive space is widening and ever-expanding within the People's Republic – a fact not very often acknowledged in the Western mainstream media.

He Baogang immerses in a vivid debate in China with his detailed description of three discourses on democracy. His empirical accounts are informed by a five-year study of village elections in the province of Zhejiang. On the level of academic debate in China, a liberal, an official and a populist model of democracy are discussed, He states. While admitting to be a supporter of the liberal model of democracy himself, He warns to easily apply Western concepts and norms of liberal democracy to the Chinese context. "Drawing upon the standards of normal democracy in Western countries is inappropriate in assessing village democracy. Those who hold a (radical] liberal concept of democracy fail to understand China's situation, whereas a richer and synthesizing model of democracy helps us to understand China's practice of village elections". In reality, a hybrid that blends various local practices and liberal, official and populist ideas of democracy is at work. And in this hybrid model, the official model of democracy predominates. The village level forms an ideal laboratory, and many lessons from the local scene can be drawn for the national level.

Gunter Schubert's discussion of the specific discourse on nationalism examines a hypothesis that is definitely not the mainstream understanding of Chinese nationalism. He assumes that the nationalist discourse has stronger liberal foundations as it seems at first sight. This view takes issue with the dominant verdict on Chinese nationalism to be a variant of integral nationalism that is anti-liberal and anti-human in essence. Although the hypothesis does not deny the anti-liberal potential of Chinese nationalism, it stresses the historical contingency of this anti-liberalism. Liberal nationalism has always been a noticeable current in China, albeit it could never gain political supremacy. The author suggests to trace its influence within the current nationalist discourse by a two-pronged methodology: first, by unveiling the liberal counter-text behind the mainstream of neo-conservative etatism and ethno-cultural essentialism (the two dominating manifestations of contemporary Chinese nationalism); and second, by problematizing the

argument that nationalism is based on the quest for dignity which links it directly to the desire for individual recognition and autonomy (two crucial preconditions for any turn towards liberal democracy).

Departing from the discussion of specific discourse topics, Patrick Raszelenberg asks a crucial question that has not been addressed in any of the chapters so far: "What is so political about political discourse?" The question is all the more legitimate with respect to political systems in which the state authority exerts a strict control over the public discursive space, like in Vietnam. Trite truisms notwithstanding, Raszelenberg states, discourse politics in Vietnam is a matter of political control, implying "authority and command over who is allowed access to the status of a public voice, where he can be heard and will be discussed, and the means of expression he is supposed to employ". Mechanisms to overcome control and express an opinion on democracy, for instance, can then mean to negotiate in the public discourse within the frame of a cultural consensus, that is, to be able to touch upon political issues without necessarily making a political point at that time. "Political discourse is not the mere existence of certain statements, public or secret, intelligible or incomprehensible, but their absence and their effect and consequence as well". The case of Vietnam, Raszelenberg shows, is of particular interest since it illustrates the workings of cultural consent that transcends political discourse.

Each article in the cluster of "themes and trends" depicts facets of discourse, which are barely touched upon in comparative politics. Each country has its own, peculiar cultural and historical features that are neatly and almost invisibly woven into all forms of political expression. The grand topics of comparison such as "nationalism" and "democracy" are again on top of political science's agenda, but more often than not the reader (or observer) is left with a feeling that there must be more to it than meets the eye. Comparative politics may display yet another side of the story when results of in-depth studies like those presented here become an integral part of the theorizing process in this field of social science.

In the final cluster of articles, the authors deal with actors and actor groups coming from the non-governmental segments of society. Three chapters concentrate on social movements and grassroots activism in Japan, China and Malaysia, whereas one focuses on the new Chinese professionals and another one looks at how generational networks in the People's Republic function. Edward Friedman calls the controversially portrayed Falun Gong, a group of people practicing a mixture of Daoist exercises and Buddhist meditation, the "most popular social movement in China during the 1990s" and offers reasons for it. Exercises to control one's vital energies, *qigong*, attracted over a million people in that decade, raising the suspicion of President Jiang Zemin that such mass phenomenon could eventually become a political force. The suspicion ended up in a massive crackdown on Falun Gong. What Friedman interests is why *qigong* became so popular – in

order to go on asking what made the discourses popular which legitimated the campaign repressing *qigong* practitioners. Seeking to understand both developments, he discovers certain relationships between the spiritual, moral and socio-political (security, welfare and stability) demands of the Chinese people. Falun Gong "was tied into a patriotic, salvationist and apocalyptic mindset", Friedman argues. It offered a moral alternative to an immoral society, aspects of which have been discussed by Olga Borokh in the preceding part of this book. The shift in the public perception of the Falun Gong only came about when the movement's image changed from that of innocent victims of repression to one of aliens and superstitious peasants. Friedman explains this shift and the surrounding social, political and economic context.

Also, within this fairly new context of the 1990s, a shift of identities took place from "mandarins to managers", as Carol Lee Hamrin calls it. Taking on the role of and lifestyle of modern professionals, many intellectuals – or educated Chinese, for that matter – prepare themselves for the challenges of urban life in a globalized twenty-first century. They are aware of the career competition they are facing, so they choose to become professionals and build their own, personal career. Hamrin detects what she regards the most important change in the 1990s as a shift in mindset: "from an earlier idealistic preoccupation with debates over grand moral-ideological issues of national identity and alternative reform programs to a pragmatic focus on specific issues needing problem-solving". This mindset ascended to the ruling elite, the Communist Party. New social elites were co-opted and, conversely, private entrepreneurs enrolled in the party. The surfacing political–business alliance leads to "ideological revisionism" in a positive sense, a "third way" for China is debated and much publicity is given to creating a knowledge economy. For China, these issues and the alliance of politics and private business are a new experience with a fresh collection of actors, whereas in states, like Malaysia or Japan, such alliances have become severely criticized during the 1990s.

The term *crony capitalism* has been coined for the outcomes of a mostly non-transparent alliance of ruling politicians and business elite in Asia. The criticism directed towards nepotism, corruption and collusion reached a peak during the regional financial crisis of 1997–1998 and brought about reform movements like the *Reformasi* movement in Malaysia. The *Reformasi* discourse, led by opposition parties and politically engaged NGOs, critically discussed the pros and cons of a strong state and pushed the Malaysian civil society's desire for a more meaningful democracy. Saliha Hassan examines whether this discourse has had an impact on political reform and change and what role NGOs actually perform in support of the reform movement. Providing a typology of the Malaysian NGOs, of their emergence and the shifts in focus (from ethnicism to democracy discourse), she demonstrates the diversity of the scene. This is especially valuable because the Western

view tends to neglect the wide array of religiously based NGOs in this country, most of them Islamically inclined. Since 1998, politically engaged NGOs can claim an increasing public support, which came about not only as an effect of the regional discourse, but predominantly as a reaction to domestic political developments such as the growing opportunities for NGOs to participate in (opposition) partisan politics. Saliha explains the reasons for the increased support for NGOs and civil society, but also the reaction of the ruling coalition to this trend. Her future outlook is not too optimistic when she concedes that in terms of democratic awareness, mileage has been gained but that there may also emerge a negative impact of compromising NGOs' objectivity and their identity as a civil society agent that is above party politics.

In comparison to her fellow authors, Gabriele Vogt sounds much more convinced of the power of citizens' movements. Vogt analyses the situation in Japan, picking up the example of citizens' protest and referendum initiatives in the Southern Japanese prefecture of Okinawa. Like He Baogang's, her chapter underscores how fruitful it is to shed a light on the local level of discourse and activism. Okinawa's citizens have become a symbol of the struggle for local autonomy and a telling example for the repercussions of local politics into international relations, in this case, the bilateral relations of Japan and the USA. The tense local–central relations in Japan derive from the local levels' desire for decentralization. When Okinawan citizens protested the heavy presence of American military on their soil, the issue was not restricted to US–Japanese security politics. The discussion of local resistance to central politics generated a national discourse on this topic, Vogt claims, and the means to articulate protest – like using the Internet and holding referenda – have become popular throughout the country. Although it may be criticized that Okinawa was not the first prefecture to make use of a referendum, it has triggered the public awareness for such tools of political participation.

The "actors' cluster" concludes with a study of Nora Sausmikat, who seeks to provide a theoretical perspective on the relationship of actors of change in China. According to her observation, the generational networks that have been established because of a shared experience – such as the Cultural Revolution – provide an approved opportunity structure for China's "new elite". The networking of (former) mentors and scholars forms a basis for the flow of policy suggestions. Mentors in state-run institutions can act as protectors for their scholars who come up with fresh policy ideas. The alterations in the role of intellectuals during the last decade, their rising autonomy from state and party institutions and their access to other than state media create new opportunities of communication and exchange of ideas. Sausmikat categorizes five different types of idea dissemination and concludes that the reform discussions in official, semi-official and non-official think tanks or organizations integrate other protagonists along with

intellectuals and are based on epistemic communities and patron–client relationships.

In sum, the articles in this volume give evidence of the vivid discursive scenery in East and Southeast Asia. Ideas of political reform and change are floating through state and society, sometimes bridging the two spheres easily and across established formal channels, sometimes digging their way through muddy waters with only a few poles to offer orientation. Apart from the theoretical aspects of the roles of intellectuals, ideas and discourses for processes of democratization, reform and change, the chapters offer deep insights into the national and local, into the general and the specific situation of the selected countries. As with many edited books, one has to question the degree to which the chapters actually tie together. Although "discourses", "ideas" and "intellectuals" are themes that – to some degree or another – appear in all the chapters, the way in which this happens and the actual content of the chapters remain diverse. In this case, the diversity is seen as a great strength of the volume. It is precisely because the chapters are so diverse, but all contain such interesting and useful insights, that we believe we have edited something worth looking at.

NOTES

1. Kim Dae-Jung, "Asia and Democracy: Is Culture Destiny?" in *Democratization and Regional Cooperation in Asia*, ed. Kim Dae-jung Peace Foundation (Seoul: Asia–Pacific Peace Press, 1996), 53–65. In Germany, the sociologist Dieter Senghaas has worked on similar issues, compare Dieter Senghaas, *Zivilisierung wider Willen* (Reluctance to Civilize, Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, 1998).

2. See Chih-Yu Shih, *Collective Democracy. Political and Legal Reform in China* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1999).

3. E.g. Ramjeet Verna, Member of the Committees of Foreign Affairs, National League for Democracy of Burma at the International Symposium "Social Justice, Democracy and Alternative Politics. A Europe–Asia Dialogue," Ayutthaya, Thailand; May 6, 2000.

4. Cf. Amitai Etzioni, *The New Golden Rule. Community and Morality in a Democratic Society* (New York: Basic Books, 1996), 16.

5. On this developments cf. Shinichi. Shigetomi, *The State and NGOs. Perspectives from Asia* (Singapore 2002).

6. Jürgen Habermas, *Die Einbeziehung des Anderen. Studien zur politischen Theorie* [The inclusion of the Other. Studies on Political Theory, Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, 1996], 146.

7. Rüland claims the depth and intensity of the Asian crisis brought ASEAN to the edge of disaster (conference statement, Ibero-American Institute, Berlin, 25 May 2000).

8. Compare, e.g. Ricardo Saludo's assessment "As Asians push their individual agenda, things will not be as smooth and orderly as before. After all, people enjoying new latitude in their lives, livelihoods and politics will inevitably fall into excess and chaos, as they probe the limits of a new dispensation". He compares, therefore, democracy with the Internet: "Hence, it [the Internet, the authors] is messy but exciting, and so will be Asia's new democratic adventure"

("Reflections 1998: Out with the Old, in with the New", *Asiaweek*, 25 December 1998, online edition).

9. Cf. the cover story "A Year of Elections: Asia's voters show there are many roads to democracy," *Asiaweek*, 27 December 1996, online edition, that criticizes phenomena such as political corruption or vote buying; a Chinese view: Tao Dongmin and Chen Mingming, *Dangdai Zhongguo zhengzhi canyu* (Political participation in present China, Hangzhou: Zhejiang renmin chubanshe, 1998).

10. See Kim Dae Jung, "Is Culture Destiny? The Myth of Asia's Anti-democratic Values," *Foreign Affairs*, No. 2 (1994): 189–194.

CHAPTER 2

Discourses, Intellectuals, Collective Behaviour and Political Change Theoretical Aspects of Discourses

Thomas Heberer

INTRODUCTION

The role of ideas and discourses in shaping politics is often considered to be marginal. In fact, Rueschemeyer and Skocpol have discerned that historical change is strongly linked to the development of ideas as well as scientific, political and moral conceptions.[1] Peter A. Hall, a leading proponent of the *Power of Economic Ideas*, has stated that the neglect of the role of ideas in the political economy means

> to miss an important component of the economic and political worlds. It is ideas, in the form of economic theories and the policies developed from them, that enable national leaders to chart a course through turbulent economic times, and ideas about what is efficient, expedient, and just that motivate the movement from one line of policy to another.[2]

With few alterations, this view can be transferred into the political domain. A state acting in the political sphere has to be grounded on a specific reservoir of knowledge and discourse in order to regulate continuity and change in a rational manner. The same is true of processes of transformational change in which knowledge is politicized and takes over a transformational role. During development processes or – in the case of China and Vietnam – during the transformation into a market economy, the state can no longer despotically enforce its will upon society. In the interest of reinforcing its capacity, it has to engage in discourses with the intellectual community.

In fact, it is not sufficient, merely to list and depict ideas. Furthermore, as part of an analysis of a major segment of policy shaping, the interconnection of idea producers, bearers of ideas and state acting, the behaviour of concerned actors and the impacts of discourses of ideas will have to be analysed.

This contribution starts out with the role of discourses for processes of political change. Certainly, the participants and actors of discourses are primarily intellectuals. I am going to address, therefore, the role of intellectuals in social and political processes. In developing countries, the behaviour of intellectuals in political processes is strongly related to patterns of modernization and reactions towards those patterns. Furthermore, participants of discourses are not individual persons; they rather constitute a larger group finding itself in a particular interrelationship of interaction and communication. Beyond interaction, the issue of group formation and of collective behaviour is of major interest. I discern whether or not a group with mobilizing character, particular interests and influence already exists or is emerging. Yet, the relationship of intellectual discourses and state- or party-controlled discourses is another matter of principal concern that will be examined by the example of the discourse on corruption in China. Finally, the question will be addressed in which matter discourses influence political processes. I will discuss, therefore, some theoretical approaches in terms of spill-over effects of discourses into politics.

DISCOURSES: FUNCTIONS AND CONTENTS

Generally, by discourse I mean a form of critical intellectual dispute in which the participants communicate with each other on the basis of different arguments. The representatives of the various arguments endeavour to verify their hypotheses. Hence, discourses are not a form of individual acting but rather a process of interaction that brings the participants in a relationship of communication.[3] I intend to analyse concepts, interpretations and critical views in terms of solving problems and in terms of a future political shaping. According to Evers and Nowotny, social discourses are a form of coming to terms with political and social insecurity and that therefore, by means of discourses, new "securities" are to be institutionalized.[4] Solutions as well as knowledge of orientation and modelling are sought after, as well as direct and indirect political advice.

Discourses cannot be separated from historical experiences and cleavages, or from social practice. On the one hand, a discourse is coined by situational, institutional and social context; on the other hand, discourses are a reaction to social reality. This argument implies that discourses in the political sphere which I am focusing on have different functions: They may legitimize and/or cement existing power relations or contribute to impact or stimulate those relationships in terms of change. Accordingly, I speak of *constructive*, *preserving*, *legitimizing*, *transformational* and *dismantling* discourse strategies.[5] Discourses develop potentials generating or preventing social and political change. Conversely, they constitute a form of participative communication,[6] as they allow a larger number of people outside the decision-making elite to participate in the discursive shaping of societal and political concepts.

Political discourses are not merely power discourses but also designing discourses that are directed towards institutional changes. They emerge particularly in periods of political change, as in such periods intellectual and critical capacity are needed in order to secure stability or to achieve adaptation or change. Moreover, pluralizing opinions arise, traditional values and structures are put into question and the direction of social development is under consideration. Foucault argued that under the conditions of liberalization, resistance towards power does not take place in a direct conflict with the apparatus of state power, but rather via discourses and challenging behaviour. Though Foucault's conclusions are different from ours, e.g. in terms of progressing internalized social control and self-control, in our context it might be interesting that in periods of liberalization, the discourses, though unorganized at the beginning, tend to replace violence.[7]

Discourses generate a capacity for change, but only in interaction with other factors (institutional, economic, social or political ones) will this capacity become an element of political change. They are not dominating, but could spawn communicative power though this power cannot replace administrative power; instead, it influences the latter.[8] Therefore, discourses have to be comprehended as a concomitant component of a far wider reaching systemic change.

The Political Function of Intellectuals

Actors of discourses are intellectuals. Albeit there are various actors playing a role in processes of political modernization, transformation and transition, comparative research reveals that intellectuals take over a distinct role in such processes.[9] On the one hand, discourses are dependent on idea providers and eloquent intellectuals. On the other hand, during processes of transformation, intellectuals prove to be critics of ideologies providing alternative political concepts. Those concepts are not necessarily directed towards the political system. In addition, they couch their criticism in a specific symbolism and in metaphors that might not easily be classified as opposing the political system.

What do I mean by "intellectuals"? An intellectual, says Alatas, "is a person who is engaged in thinking about ideas and non-material problems using the faculty of reason".[10] He is not necessarily an "academic" in the sense of a university's graduate, but rather any person arguing in an intellectual and critical manner. Functionally, intellectuals are progressive thinkers and enlightening persons who, in their thinking, are critical in terms of culture, society and power, regardless of their own individual interests. And this is the difference vis-à-vis academically educated persons.

The most interesting definition in our context comes from Karl Mannheim: "In every society there are social groups whose special task it is to provide an interpretation of the world for that society. I call this the intelligentsia".[11] It is precisely this task which intellectuals accomplish (also in the political sphere), i.e. an interpretive concept *for* society. On the one

hand, they participate in the political discourse of a given society and on the other hand, they develop interests in shaping the system.

Edward W. Said has defined intellectual being in another way. Real intellectuals, he argues, denounce corruption, stand up for support of the weak and refuse to obey inadequate and repressive authority; the former are spurred by metaphysical passion and selfless principles of truth and justice.[12] One could ask, therefore, whether or not the term intellectual defines a clear-cut group or rather a specific social function. Such a definition of intellectuals, in principle, has a universalistic meaning and is a kind of an overall, transnational concept, though there are differences between intellectuals within a given country and between those in different countries.

In terms of developing countries, it was the sociologist Edward Shils who assigned the feature of regime opposition to the concept of intellectuals. Intellectuals, he argued, were in opposition to the respective regime in power,[13] a marker rather proving right for intellectuals engaged in revolutionary or liberation movements or those in authoritarian societies. Particularly, in the latter, intellectuals are facing a dilemma insofar as their concepts of ideas and the political reality they are living in do not match each other. Hence, they might easily change into regime opponents. In the case that they are personally affected by the gulf between cognition and reality, e.g. due to persecution, repression, censorship or simply recognizing that their society is in a critical condition, this might lead to a loss of identity vis-à-vis the state and the political system. On the one hand, they continue to be part of that society and system they are living in and might feel a kind of responsibility towards them; on the other hand, the loss of identity results in decreasing loyalty vis-à-vis the state and the system, though those intellectuals might not be released from political responsibility towards their social entity. Thus, they may choose between conformist subjugation and responsibility in terms of their intellect or their nation.

In his book *Attempt to live in truth*, Vaclav Havel suggested to face this dilemma and to resolve this contradiction. In post-totalitarian systems, Havel argues, conformity will reinforce the system and its power, as conformity creates the "panorama" of a regime's performance and validates its game rules.[14] The last resort out of the dilemma of the intellectuals would be to strive for a *life in truth*. If the intellectual breaks the game rule, so Havel, he abolishes the game as such. He reveals that it is only a game. He destroys the fictitious world that is the fundament of the system. By undermining those fictitious bonds, he hurts the rulers; he reveals that living in the lie is a living in the lie.[15] Here, Havel takes up an argument of Foucault that the intellectual represents specifying the politics of truth in society and that he works hard for the power of the truth,[16] hence proving to be a representative of an independent, social conscience.

Furthermore, there is another side of intellectuals, i.e. bearing the hegemonic system of the class in power and ideologically to convey the rule

of that class. Gramsci differentiates between *traditional* and *organic* intellectuals. The latter, he argues, is the new intellectual stratum raised by a new class in power, the former consists of intellectuals deriving from the old society that nevertheless could be assimilated by the new regime. In socialist countries, intellectuals believed that their social and political significance would increase. Finally, in those states, the participation of intellectuals in power resulted in the loss of independent thinking, not only of those in power but also of those not in power.

Gramsci's arguments point to the necessity to differentiate and deconstruct the term "intellectual", as intellectuals as such do not exist. He argues that they do not constitute an autonomous, independent social group, as various societies and social groups create their own specialized categories of intellectuals.[17] This differentiation implies that intellectuals are not necessarily innovators, critics of society or rebels, but might also be conservative preservers or caretakers, or represent backward values.[18]

Gramci's determination of a *hegemony* of the ruling class or state touches upon a further important phenomenon in our context. The state attempts to secure its hegemony in every sphere, including the ideological, cultural and scientific domain. Intellectuals becoming political enlighteners, who in the process of social change no longer behave as ideological agents of those in power, start out to question this hegemony in principle and strive to disseminate and enforce new ideas. Thus, by no means do they put the system completely into question. But by virtue of the existence of various currents of ideas they contribute to political pluralization. As, therefore, the dominance of the official "line" of the state or party is put into question, the state's hegemony is in fact decreasing. Hence, a transition from the hegemony of the state towards a *fragmented authoritarianism* emerges. In the latter case, the political system continues to exist, though various actors are tolerated.

Like Gramsci, Shils differs between "traditional" and "modern" intellectuals. The latter, he argues, had been educated in modern institutions and trained by modern educational concepts.[19] Unlike Gramsci, Shil's argumentation focuses on the function of intellectuals in terms of modernization. Modern intellectuals, he argues, were principally interested in creating modern conditions and structures thus proving to be agents of modernization. In addition, a modernizing intelligentsia would strive to solve acute political problems in a scientific way. It could provide state and society with policy-relevant knowledge. Particularly during modernization processes, the demand of knowledge relevant for society and state generates the production of discourses in which *knowledge professionals* turn into *policy intellectuals*.[20]

By intellectuals I mean people in a political sense, concurrently distinguishing between the following types: *marginal* intellectuals,[21] marginalized or persecuted due to their criticism ("dissidents")[22] and people who were put out of the running ("*Kaltgestellte*"); *constructive-critical* intellectuals, whose ideas and concepts reach far beyond the official party line, albeit they do not intend

to topple the system; the *conformist-critical* ones who within the borderlines of the official party argumentation express some doubts and suggest moderate changes; and finally the *assimilated intellectuals* who argue strictly in accordance with the official party line and do not voice a critical word. Moreover, intellectuals always have the choice of an exit or opting out, e.g. in turning to a self-employed engagement in business (in China called *xia hai*), withdrawing into inner exile, moving into esoteric domains or cultivating deviant positions in intellectual sub-societies like free-space opposition (meetings outside direct surveillance of the authorities), kitchen talk, tea-house politics or drinking discourses.[23]

Not unimportant is the question why intellectuals behave in a critical manner. Undoubtedly, in countries like China and Vietnam, the identity of people with their nation and its prosperity is an issue of principal concern. In the interests of modernization and of strengthening their nation, intellectuals strive to establish a modern intellectual system. This, they argue, requires a rationalization of the political system (far-reaching control of the bureaucracy, transparency and reliability of decision-making), in the interests of creating "modern" conditions, curbing corruption and misuse of power.

Examining discourses and discourse contents, we have to consider that they are coined by and dependent on the political system, political structures and political culture. Thus, discourses in the various countries differ principally. Yet, returning to the above-mentioned differentiation of discourse functions, we will find the five strategies of discourses (constructive, preserving, legitimizing, transformational and dismantling ones) in East and Southeast Asia as well. Critical intellectuals primarily represent the constructive and transformational ones though they are not necessarily critical of the political system. As far as authoritarian systems like China, Vietnam or Malaysia are concerned, those intellectuals feel obliged to intervene to improve their societies. But at the same time, they put forward positions and interpretations that transgress the *tolerance values* of the power elite though not yet the *tolerance limit*. The difference between both is that by transgressing the tolerance values the political leadership leaves the option open whether or not to intervene by means of censorship or criticism, whereas by transgressing the tolerance limit it poses (administrative or criminal law) sanctions on the respective actors.

In authoritarian states, critical intellectuals act in a discourse environment controlled by the state or a single party. This imposes restrictions on the fields of argumentation though several evading strategies are at the intellectuals' disposal like symbolic or metaphorical types of discourse. In the case of such countries in Eastern Asia that means that in one's writings critical issues either are not directly linked to one's country but rather are discussed in a general way or by the example of other countries (symbolic discourse); or the criticism is wrapped up in apparently systemically, conforming contents of

discourse. In the latter case, arguments of the ruling party or political leaders are cited in order to put forward or justify more far-reaching political suggestions or arguments. These evading or avoiding strategies vary according to a political system: in rigid authoritarian systems, they are more widespread than in latently operating ones.

In addition, intellectuals increasingly become principal actors of change. On the one hand, they have the most far-reaching access to modern science and to the knowledge of modern societies; on the other hand, development and modernization requires intellectual ideas and knowledge. The liberalization of knowledge production in a given country leads to the pluralization of knowledge and thus of knowledge discourses. During modernization, science comes in contradiction to ideologies, *interest discourses* (i.e. interests in political change) in contradiction to *power discourses* (in preserving political power). In countries like China and Vietnam, traditional ideological patterns do not work as instruments of control any longer. There, the recourse to patterns of nationalism seems to be the only one instrument of the actors in power towards advance of individualization and critical thinking. Nationalism is comprehended as a mobilizing leverage to attain modernity and stability, and has to keep the ideological erosion of the party and the state as well as the advance of the protagonists of political change within limits or to integrate them into the system.

Intellectuals as Group(s)
Effects of organization and mobilization of groups going beyond individual activities are a precondition for influence in society and politics. Lone wolves, as a rule, may achieve little or nothing. It is group and collective be-haviour that causes alterations. Therefore, we have to single out, whether or not and in which mode intellectuals develop forms of collective behaviour.

Intellectuals do not constitute a homogeneous group with a particular group strategy. They do not stand for shared interests and views of social and political changes. Even critics of the political system differ in terms of the notion of freedom. Possibly, this heterogeneity is related to the intellectuals' double role as *garde* and *avant-garde*: on the one hand to be conservators of the status quo, on the other hand as testifying intellectuals defending collective interests of society, often vis-à-vis public opinion and towards a monopoly on political knowledge by one single party. Then, they symbolize the good conscience of society, claim to be moral leaders, and an alternative voice in politics.[24]

This heterogeneity complicates the classification of intellectuals as a "group". It seems that they do not constitute an exactly definable group, but rather a function. Yet, we may discern particular segments indicating that they at least could be determined as a *quasi-group*.

Bourdieu's concept of social space is supportive in defining groups. According to this concept, social groups are entities related to each other by

a specific proximity in social space. This closeness arises out of common features. Such groupings in tendency share common values, attitudes, consumption behaviour and life-styles, separating one group from another. In this concept, social groups are put into a constructed space, comprising various types of capital. The latter constitute the total volume of capital. The concept of capital is dispersed in *economic*, *cultural* (education), *social* (resources of social connections and group affiliation) and *symbolic capital* (the forms in which the various types of capital are perceived). For our group, the intellectuals, we may add another attribute that of *intellectual* capital. Persons with similar positions in respect of the total volume of capital in a social space, argues Bourdieu, reveal similar dispositions and patterns of behaviour. Such groups by no means constitute uniform groups with shared interests, working towards a shared goal. According to Bourdieu, closeness in social space does not automatically cause unity. Therefore, we may speak of a tendency towards group formation.[25] This approach, initially designed for classes, was then extended to the scientific and intellectual field. Bourdieu argued that, in this domain, common interests, conflicts, power constellations and balances of power would exist, too.[26]

The closeness of intellectuals in social space consists of shared cultural (education, intellectual capital), symbolic (intellectual–critical behaviour) and social capital (intellectual and academic networks). As a rule, they inhabit similar class positions and share an equal habitus. Furthermore, they mutually refer each other to a common history of ideas (i.e. historically generated knowledge). This is symbolized by the adoption and utilization of the knowledge of past generations. Finally, they share the intention to establish a modern intellectual system. The latter is a precondition of political and social modernity and modern economics.

Karl Mannheim, in turn, by means of his specific generation approach, constructed common features of groups that resemble the approach of Bourdieu. Generations, he argued, mean less a periodical grading of age groups but rather groups that are characterized by shared experiences and values. Therefore, they can be assigned to a common location in a social and historical process. The linking factor in that location is the "common destiny in the ideas and concepts which are in some way bound up with its unfolding".[27] This approach does not only connect individuals separated from each other, but may also contribute to explain peculiar, time-related discourse approaches and discourse strategies. Due to shared experiences (e.g. the Cultural Revolution in China), a thematic closeness in the generational location is given, manifesting itself in the acceptance of specific themes of discourse and finally may lead to wider acceptance and implementation of discourse contents (e.g. in the sense of distinct political reforms). This is also true for a state's behaviour that is coined by the personal and collective experiences of its top leaders.[28]

Rooted in their "socialist" experiences, Konrad and Szelenyi have put forward a completely different group concept. Sooner or later, they argue, intellectuals may constitute a group due to political–ideological pressure and the pressure of "homogenizing actions of penalty".[29] Vaclav Havel has stated this in a more precise way: "Living in truth" was becoming the initial point and "hinterland" of all activities and therefore the common approach of evaluating a political system. Those activities develop into parallel structures and parallel movements (attempting to become autonomous from the state) exerting pressure on official structures. A tiny group of critics seems to offer no guarantee for influence and change. This seeming state of political hopelessness seems to be correct only so long as,

> […]we look at it with the traditional optics of an open political system, in which each political force quite naturally identifies itself by means of its position on the level of factual power.[30]

As our participants of discourses tend to establish distinct networks, we may furthermore speak of a particular *preparatory organization*. Sociology of organizations reveals that the tying together of resources in the interest of influencing politics has to be conceived as a proto-form of collective action and thus of organization and mobilization.[31] In this way, networks are established, political-academic ones (teacher–disciples networks) on the one hand, intellectual circles, research groups and connections to newspapers and journals on the other. Finally, social impact is exerted by means of publications, lectures and teaching activities.

By means of network analyses, the impact of discourses and bargaining processes between various actors are much easier to identify. Political actors like intellectuals and advisors can make use of networks in order to gain access to political arenas, to collect information, to coordinate, enforce and legitimize political decisions.[32]

Of particular interest in our context is the debate on social and political movements. By no means are movements fixed things in the sense of un-equivocal organized entities. People interactively engaged in "discourses" and practices moreover, constitute movements. Such practices include activities like writing or speaking. Therefore, discourses are per se part of those practices. In discourses, political symbols or code words as democracy participation or fighting of corruption are important. Such terms are oriented to patterns that are discussed within the people of a given country and are considered by them to be of particular value. Movements of this kind might be relatively small, but nonetheless struggle for political and social innovations and alterations. That is why the power elite classifies them as hostile forces. Those movements are not institutionalized, but use institutionalized means (parties, parliaments and organizations) to attain their goals.[33]

The emergence of such movements requires distinct political and social preconditions, e.g. *political opportunities*. Such opportunities of discourses

and movements arise particularly in periods of radical political and social change, of conflicts and crises or of political and social liberalization and pluralization. Then, such movements attempt to control that change or to push it in a certain direction.[34] In addition, a movement requires specific resources (alliances, networks, party membership, access to the media, external support, etc.).

Though it might be difficult to classify discourse participants as a "social movement", particularly as that term implies certain organizational patterns and targets, one could argue that participants of discourses on political change could be classified as a social *proto-movement*, as individuals are involved who by means of networks, intellectual circles and common features in the intellectual space are linked to each other and thus constitute a collective actor. The term does not assume unified action and argumentation, but rather a certain feeling of identity of discourse participants that manifests itself in the self-understanding as a "movement".[35] I explicitly speak of a proto-movement, i.e. of a collective actor which still has to constitute itself to a social movement, especially as a clear-cut, active relationship of action does not yet exist. "A collective intellectual", argues Flacks, "developing in and as public space, is the social formation within which historically relevant social theory might be made",[36] and this is the precondition for collective action in terms of influencing political thinking and acting.

State Discourses and Intellectual–Critical Discourses
In authoritarian states, we may, in principle, distinguish between two major discourse levels: (a) discourses representing the "official" line of the party or state in power, rooted in decisions of the political leadership, that is widely conformist (we call it *etatistic discourse*), and that keeps to the markers set by party and state (e.g. in China, the *Four Cardinal Principles*; in Malaysia, the principles of *Rukunegara*); and (b) *intellectual–critical discourses* that move beyond that markers but without putting the political system into question.

Yet, both discourse levels, the state-regulated or etatistic and the intellectual–critical one, do not constitute separate spheres, but rather a relationship of interaction. The state as such is not completely separated from society, but is strongly connected to it. Neither does he act independently, nor free of social forces and impacts. Through individuals or groups the etatistic discourses partly constitute a component of the intellectual–critical discourses and vice versa. Therefore, the state is not a monolithic block conducting a homogeneous discourse vis-à-vis the society, but is part and object of the debate.[37] The sociology of organizations has discerned the repercussions of inter-weaving between state's institutions and social groups (calling it *tangent relations*) and explored the interaction between them impacts and alters the entire structure.[38] Derived from this was the approach of *institutional amphibiousness*, which might be helpful for our analysis. Thus, we may identify in which manner discourse participants

are interwoven with structures of party and state and how they affect and alter them. Political input is influenced by means of party membership and the inclusion of discourse participants in discussion and bargaining processes within the party. Therefore, participants of intellectual–critical discourses are in a better position to influence policy output directly than marginalized dissidents. Ding Xueliang is right in arguing that the concept of *civil society* disregards the inter-weaving between state and society and thus features of mutual influence.[39]

Important is the question why at a given time particular themes attain such a great significance in the market place of political ideas. Certainly, this could be explained by specific historical, economic, political and social constellations. Luhmann's distinction between *attention rules* and *decision rules* might be promising here. Crucial themes of a society find public attention as people are interested in solving the respective problems (e.g. corruption and unemployment). Therefore, they have to be taken up by the political decision elite, too. In this way, such issues steer the construction of political themes. Decision rules, in turn, steer the formation of opinion within the decision elite and decision institutions. Concurrently, the elaboration of attention rules is necessary in order to understand the function of discourses properly. Otherwise, discourses and their effects could not adequately be classified. According to Luhmann, the following factors are crucial and constitutive for the construction of attention rules: (a) violation of or threat to crucial values, (b) crises or symptoms of crises (e.g. in our case the "Asian crisis"), (c) status of participants of discourses and communication, (d) symptoms of success, (e) approaches of innovation, and (f) turning points or endangering of a society.[40] Here, we find clues that illustrate the background of political effects of discourses.

Necessity, utility, time, motivation, choices, effects, given information, importance or influence as well as inner and external decision pressure are all factors that are crucial in political decision processes. At the same time we have to differ between *open* and *closed* decisions. The institutions of the state decide the latter ones without including external actors; the open ones are decided by means of inclusion of various external, social actors. Discourses impact both patterns of decision-making, the open ones having the advantage of including a larger number of actors in order to avoid isolated decision-making. This, however, does not mean that in the case of open decisions the direct effects of discourses could be discerned more easily. Even open ones are frequently negotiated or decided secretly, without giving any information to the public.[41]

Partial Discourses: The Case of Discourses on Corruption in China and Their Relationship to Discourses on Political Reform
Taking the case of discourses on corruption in China as an example, I attempt to identify in which manner partial discourses (on corruption) affect and

steer principal discourses (e.g. on political reforms). Various Chinese intellectuals and officials have understood the relationship between combating corruption and political reforms. The Beijing economist Cao Siyuan, e.g. one of the protagonists of stronger transparency and political reforms, complains that the number of arrested corrupt officials lagged far behind the number of new corruption cases committed day by day. Without freedom of the media, an independent law and an autonomous control of society, corruption can not be curbed.[42]

In a book published in 1998 that has received major attention, He Qinglian predicts the merging of political power and organized crime.[43] The transition from a planned economy to a market economy has engendered a hybrid "power economy" within which officials were shamelessly enriching themselves. In a volume on political reforms edited by Liu Fengzhi in 1999, a number of well-known authors discuss issues of combating corruption. Wang Guixiu, Professor of politics and law at the Central Party School, opts for the enhancement of direct elections and public control of officials; the renowned jurist Guo Dahui urges establishing an independent law as a precondition of efficiently fighting corruption. Sun Xupei advocates to include the public in fighting corruption and to grant the media a more independent role. In order to curb corruption in the sphere of law against external interference into the independent work of courts, argues jurist He Weifang, judges should defend themselves by means of law.[44]

Economist Yang Fan predicts a serious crisis should it be the case that corruption is not effectively tackled within five years. The prerequisites for that, he argues, were democratic structures and autonomous organs of control.[45] In a similar way, Liu Junning suggests that the introduction of democracy is the only way for fighting corruption successfully.[46] Tao and Chen demand a higher degree of citizens' participation and the establishing of public control as core instruments of corruption fighting.[47] The interconnection of political reforms and fighting corruption is the primary issue of the volume *Political China*, too. In that volume, various authors urge enhancing political participation of citizens and anchoring participatory rights, principles of democracy, general and democratic elections, public control of politics as well as free media in the constitution.[48]

Chinese discourses, which I have examined here by means of one single example, illustrate that discourses on causes and effects of corruption currently have three major strings: the *transformational string*, the representatives of which see the causes of corruption within the current processes of social change; the *systemic string* arguing that the political system itself is the principle cause of corruption and that corruption could only successfully be curbed by means of political reforms; and thirdly, the *actors' string* for which the cadre system (cadre corruption) is held responsible.[49]

Meanwhile, the argumentation in line with the official party line is eroding. In 1997, in a traditional argumentation, a major publication on

corruption in China by Yang Jiliang held the "feudalist" tradition, moral decay among officials and widespread bureaucracy responsible for current corruption; he wrote hopefully that the party leadership would put everything right.[50] Even in the mouthpieces of the party, more far-reaching measures of corruption fighting are demanded like public control, transparency of political decisions and restrictions of power authorities,[51] though in inner-party discussions, more traditional patterns are still on the agenda, like strengthening political-ideological education, self-education of senior officials, raising the consciousness of cadres, better and stricter selection of officials or stronger control of cadres within the party.[52] A volume on "democratic control" (*minzhu jiandu*), published by Rong and Zhong, urges for curbing of corruption by means of the Political Consultative Conferences, non-Communist parties, mass organizations as well as persons from all spheres of society. The interesting point of that suggestion is that control shall remain system immanent but nonetheless be exerted by organizations and persons outside the Communist Party.[53]

The question of what are the political conclusions drawn out of the discussion on causes and effects of corruption in recent years increasingly becomes the central point of public discourses on corruption. This demonstrates that discourse participants have recognized that democracy, particularly in the form of public control, of creating an *Öffentlichkeit*, a public space, as Habermas has put it, as well as the establishing of an independent law system is considered the last resort in fighting corruption efficiently. Thus, in the academic debate, corruption is comprehended as a political and at the same time a systemic phenomenon and, in contrast to the party, not merely as a moral and individual one. As far as the discourse on corruption strengthens the discourse on political change and democratization, we may agree with the view of Yufan Hao that the inner-Chinese debate on corruption finally will support the conversion into a rational power system and into a legal system. Yet, apparently the consequences of this debate go far beyond this argument. Albeit it might not always be expressed in an open matter, it is obviously not the lack of a law system that stands in the focus of critics, but rather the political structures (and definitely the fundaments of the political system) themselves.

The majority of discourse participants still keep to the upper limit of what is seen by the party leadership as acceptable and that does not go beyond the "contract" between party leadership and intellectuals. This contract provides that it is not permitted to put the power of the Communist Party and the political system directly into question, i.e. that *political correctness* in the Chinese sense has to be maintained. Yet, the argumentation slightly goes beyond that limit. Thus, the discourse on corruption becomes an important feature of the discourse on political change and democratization in China. Partially, this is expressed openly, e.g. when Ke Lin writes that corruption was strongly connected to the political structures and the political system of

China, and therefore corruption fighting was part of a struggle towards democratization. Without fundamental political reforms, he argues, the evil of corruption could not be eradicated.[54]

Finally, the development of such a process of discourse has to be comprehended as a sign of an increasing political maturity of society. Differences between public and private spheres are recognized, and the drawing of borderlines by means of law and administration is demanded. Behind this, argues Rose-Ackerman, there is certainly a demand that the state has to serve the general and public interests.[55]

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF DISCOURSES FOR POLITICAL CHANGE AND DEMOCRATIZATION

Yet, the question arises whether or not intellectual ideas and discourses could spawn a diffusion or spill-over effect into politics and policy shaping. As far as theory is concerned, research on the impact of ideas and discourses on politics is not satisfying. To offer evidence for a direct link between ideas and politics is extremely difficult, as the effects of ideas do not take place in a direct manner, but rather in a hidden form. Ideas are not anything that is tangible, and are by and large beyond empirical evidence. Consequently, they do not constitute independent variables influencing politics, but rather are partial elements having an effect in a distinct framing. Socio-economic changes and the emerging of a new political space generate new ideas and new discourses. Such ideas provide *road maps* that in times of conversion may serve political actors as "focal points".[56] Yet, they do not emerge and exist in an ideological vacuum, but develop on the basis of existing patterns of ideas, concurrently adapting to them. Discourse contents and ideas do not have an immediate effect; as the actors of the state as well as the initiators of discourses and the providers of ideas do not constitute neutral and value-free subjects, but instead are coined by values and interests, contents and ideas of discourses, therefore, do not have an immediate effect. Furthermore, ideas and discourses are not merely focal points, but by means of people impact on institutions or even lead to institution building. In the case that such an institutionalization proves to be successful, it contributes to the implementation and support of those ideas, e.g. in form of law mechanisms, procedures or regulations.[57]

As stated above, the impact of discourses and knowledge on political processes takes place more strongly via personal connections and networks, or via institutions of education, or research (universities, Party schools, etc.). The state's acting is influenced by people, interests, values and ideas outside the state. This develops by means of processes of negotiation and bargaining between actors with different resources, not by an equal exchange.[58] And, vice versa, intellectuals interested in influencing politics must seek connections to the political elite. A certain alliance with the state (party) and the power elite is necessary in order to be able to exert some degree of

political influence. In order to impact upon policy-makers, distinct resources are necessary, like *access* to policy-makers, *expertise* or knowledge necessary for their rational decision-making, and *legitimacy*, i.e. that the political leadership is convinced that a person or a group of persons are not offending the political system or its representatives.[59]

The grade of openness or closure of the state's institutions in terms of external knowledge determines the extent and opportunity of influence. As information and knowledge contribute to the recognition and solving of problems, rational state entities have a stronger demand for it than less rational ones.

Ideas and discourses have to be analysed in relationship to interests and institutions. On the one hand, they may generate change and thus stabilize or alter institutions. On the other hand, they affect the interest concepts of actors. Peter Hall enhanced the concept of change by the category of *state learning*. By the latter, Hall means that the state draws conclusions out of past mistakes and failures (*political heritages*[60]) that might result in different or improved policies. Yet, learning is not only an issue of learning from the past, but includes the elaboration of new concepts and policies in order to solve current and future problems. Hence, we may speak of an adjustment to situational changes. Ideas and discourses play a vital role in such processes of learning because political learning requires absorption and elaboration of information and new ideas. Then, political debates in form of ideas arise and policy shaping implies new ideas and discourses. In order to be successful policymakers turn to experts outside the state as for instance the intellectual community or think tanks. Learning means to find new solutions for problems, accepted by the state actors, albeit not the state in total, but rather particular segments of the state (organizations, institutions and regions) are such learning actors. This implies various stages of learning and various dimensions of learning processes.[61] The latter requires the existence of certain key actors, e.g. renowned politicians or policy advisors who might push forward those processes.

Hall differentiates between two types of state learning: simple (alterations of policy instruments and means) and complex ones (alterations of goals and goal determination). It is not only pressure on the state that generates political alterations, argues Hall. Ideas and discourses play a crucial role, too. They impact on actors engaged in politics that have to deal with those ideas. Furthermore, ideas and discourses link together state, politicians and society, last but not least via the exchange of ideas and via discourses. Discourses contribute to the creation of distinct patterns of legitimation and to the definition of limits of action of state and society. Even organized interests (e.g. associations) do not simply exert pressure, but rather attempt to enforce their interests by exerting influence on ideas and discourses. In the interest of policy formulation and policy shaping, the state at the same time is dependent on new ideas and discourses so that the latter may strongly impact

policy shaping. This takes place by means of *policy paradigms* developing through discourses which engender political and institutional alterations. The capacity of the state depends on such paradigms, as this allows it to be more flexible in policy shaping and to resist pressure exerted by society.

These explanations demonstrate that the relationship between ideas, discourses and politics may be described by means of new institutionalism approaches. In particular, two approaches are interesting here: a *historical* one and an *organizational* one. Though from different perspectives, both of them deal with effects of ideas and discourses on policy shaping. According to the historical approach, political actors do not only act in the interest of their own benefit, but furthermore make efforts to bring about social and political improvements and changes. Ideas and concepts of ideas, however, play a prominent role in the considerations of those actors. This role depends far and wide on the support of those ideas by distinct interest groups like parties, associations or influential political and intellectual elites as well as on the degree to which those ideas have found their way into institutions and policy-shaping arenas.

The organizational institution theory assumes that people have world images, according to which they attempt to shape structures. Ideas inherent of those world views may manifest themselves in a cognitive as well as in a normative way, as subliminal patterns of assumption or in the form of publicly formulated paradigms or programs. Accordingly, they shape the positions of the concerned participants of discourse and offer a framework for those discourses. The respective ideas generate a fixed framework, within which policy problems are dealt with and solved. The various actors have to keep in mind that this framework will not move away from public opinion too far. Otherwise cleavages and problems of legitimation might become paramount. The greater the impact of ideas and discourse on the framing, the larger the influence of ideas and discourses on politics.

Those rather short and simplifying explanations in terms of new institutionalism approaches demonstrate that ideas and discourses have effects on policy shaping, and can influence politics and institutions. In this contribution, spill-over effects of ideas and discourses on politics were discussed from a theoretical perspective without providing concrete evidence. The latter could only be investigated by means of concrete case studies which are provided in other contributions of this volume. Yet, institutionalism approaches sharpen our eyes with regard to the interrelationship between ideas/discourses on the one hand and policy shaping on the other. This might provide us with additional ideas, but does not mean that diffusion or spill-over and push-effects of ideas/discourses on politics could be easily explored.

NOTES

1. Dietrich Rueschemeyer and Theda Skocpol, eds., *States, Social Knowledge, and the Origins of Modern Social Policies* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 4.

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3. See Klaus Eder, "Dialog und Kooperation. Zur Zähmung der Bewegungsgesellschaft," in *Neue soziale Bewegungen. Impulse, Bilanzen und Perspektiven*, eds. Ansgar Klein et al. (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1999), 28.

4. Adalbert Evers and Helga Nowotny, *Über den Umgang mit Unsicherheit. Die Entdeckung der Gestaltbarkeit von Gesellschaft* (Frankfurt/M.:Suhrkamp, 1987), 20–21.

5. Ruth Wodak et al., *Zur diskursiven Konstruktion nationaler Identität* (Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, 1998), 43.

6. On participative communication, see Jan Servaes et al., eds., *Participatory Communication for Social Change* (New Delhi, Thousand Oaks, London: Sage, 1996).

7. As far as Foucaults concept of discourse is concerned comp. his writings *Surveiller et Punir: Naissance de la Prison* (Paris: Gallimard, 1987); *L' Archeologie du Savoir* (Paris: Gallimard 1986), 31; *Diskurs und Wahrheit* (Berlin 1996).

8. Jürgen Habermas, *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit: Untersuchungen zu einer Kategorie der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft* (Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp 1991), 44.

9. See Guillermo O'Donnell et al., eds., *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule* (Baltimore, London 1986).

10. Syed Hussein Alatas, *Intellectuals in Developing Societies* (London: Cass, 1977), 8.

11. Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia* (London: Routledge, 1991), 9.

12. Edward W. Said, *Götter, die keine sind. Der Ort des Intellektuellen* (Berlin, 1997), 12.

13. Edward Shils, "The Intellectuals in the Political Development of the New States," in *Political Change in Underdeveloped Countries, Nationalism and Communism*, ed. John Kautsky (New York, 1976), 217–219.

14. Vaclav Havel, *Versuch, in der Wahrheit zu leben* (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1990), 23.

15. Havel, 27.

16. Michel Foucault, *Botschaften der Macht*, 28.

17. Antonio Gramsci, *Gefängnis Hefte*, vol. 7, ed. Klaus Bochmann et al., vols. 12–15 (Hamburg, Berlin, 1996), 1497.

18. See for instance Seymour Martin Lipset, "The Roles of the Intellectual and Political Roles," in *The Intelligentsia and the Intellectuals. Theory, Method and Case Study*, ed. Aleksander Gella (London, Beverly Hills: Sage, 1976), 125–142.

19. Edward Shils, *The Intellectuals and the Powers and Other Essays* (Chicago, London: University of Chicago Press, 1972), 389.

20. Compare Ira Katznelson, "Knowledge about What? Policy Intellectuals and the New Liberalism," in Rueschemeyer and Skocpol, 28.

21. On marginal intellectuals: Györgi Konrad and Ivan Szelenyi, *Die Intelligenz auf dem Weg zur Klassenmacht* (Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, 1978), 362.

22. Dissident activities "tend to breach the public/private divide that separated unobtrusive practices from open challenge," see Hank Johnston and Carol Mueller, "Unobtrusive Practices of Contention in Leninist Regimes," *Sociological Perspectives*, 3 (2001): 366.

23. See for instance Johnston/Mueller.

24. See Ido Weijers, "Intellectuals, Knowledge and Democracy," in *Knowledge and Power. The Changing Role of European Intellectuals*, ed. Philip K. Lawrence and Mathias Döbler (Aldershot: Avebury, 1996), 26.

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26. Pierre Bourdieu, "Das intellektuelle Feld: Eine Welt für sich," in *Rede und Antwort*, ed. P. Bourdieu (Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, 1992), 155.

27. See Karl Mannheim, *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972), 306.

28. See for instance, Dingxin Zhao, "China's Prolonged Stability and Political Future: same political system, different policies and methods," *Journal of Contemporary China* 10 (2001): 428–430.

29. Konrad and Szelenyi 1978: 366.

30. Havel, 32.

31. Compare Charles Tilly, *From Mobilization to Revolution* (Reading/Mass.: Addison-Wesley), 52.

32. Dorothea Jansen and Klaus Schubert, "Netzwerkanalyse, Netzwerkforschung und Politproduktion: Ansätze zur 'cross-fertilization'," in *Netzwerke und Politproduktion. Konzepte, Methoden, Perspektiven*, ed. Jansen and Schubert (Marburg: Schüren, 1995), 12.

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34. See Robert H. Lauer, "Introduction: Social Movements and Social Change: The Interrelationships," in *Social Movements and Social Change*, ed. R.H. Lauer (Carbondale, Edwardsville 1976), xi–xxviii.

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41. See Dusan Sidjanski, "Introduction: Decision-Making Approaches," in *Political Decision-Making Processes. Studies in National, Comparative and International Politics*, ed. D. Sidjanski (Amsterdam, London, New York: Elsevier, 1973), 6.

42. Cao Siyuan, 2.

43. He Qinglian, *Xiandaihua de xianjing* (The pitfall of modernization, Beijing: Jinri Zhongguo Chubanshe, 1998).

44. Ma Wei, "Fangyan 7: Zouxiang qinglian zhilu. Fang Beijing Daxue sifa yanjiu zhongxin fuzhuren He Weifang" (Interview No 7: To go along the path of cleanness and non-corruption. Interview with the Vice-director of the Centre of Law Research at Peking University He Weifang), in *Shiji maibo. Zhonggong de*

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45. See Wang Guixiu, "Luoshi minzhu jiandu zhidu, yi quanli zhiyue quanli" (Implement a democratic control system, to curb power by power), in *1978–1999 Zhongguo zhengzhi tizhi gaige wenti baogao* (report on questions of China's political system reforms 1978–1999), ed. Liu Zhifeng (Beijing: Zhongguo dianying chubanshe, 1999), 69–77; Guo Daohui, "Shixing sifa duli yu ezhi sifa fubai" (Implement the Independence of Law and to Bring Corruption Within the Field of Law Under Control), in Zhifeng, 223–248; Sun Xuepei, "Kaifang yulun, jiandu fubai" (Open up public opinion, control corruption), in Zhifeng, 278–300; Yang Fan, "Zhongguo de weiji – quanli ziben exing pengzhang" (China's Crisis – the Evil Inflation of the Power Apparatus), in Zhifeng, 127–136.

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49. Chen Feng, "Shenhua dangqian fubai wenti yanjiu de sange shijiao" (Three perspectives that have to be strengthened in examining the current corruption), *Shehuixue Yanjiu* (Sociological Research), 6 (1999): 118–120.

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51. Li Tongshu, "Zhili fubai bixu cong yuantou zhuaqi" (The Eradication of Corruption has to Begin with its Origin), *Qiushi* (Truth), 7 (2000): 49–51; compare, e.g. Li Xueqin, *Minzhu yu Gaige* (Democracy and Reform, Beijing: Zhongguo Fangzheng Chubanshe, 2001); Li Liangdong, *Zhongguo minzhu wenti yanjiu* (Studies on China's Democratic Problems, Beijing: Dangdai shijie chubanshe, 2001).

52. See Wei Jianxing, "Jianding xinxin, jiada lidu shenru tuijin dangfeng lianzheng jianshe he fan fubai douzheng" (Strengthen Confidence, Push Forward the Development of a Clean Working Style of the Party, and Fight Corruption), *Qiushi*, 5 (2000): 6–14; Li Xueqin, "Jiaqiang sixiang zhengzhi gongzuo yu fan fubai" (Intensify Political–Ideological Work and Fight Corruption), Qiushi, 14 (2000): 41–43. See also the rigid catalogue which was enlisted in the "Guidelines for strengthening the reform of the cadres' system," promulgated by the Party in autumn 2000 and summarized by Jing Dali, "Xiezhi fubai de zhiben zhi ce" (Principle policies for curbing corruption), *Renmin Ribao* (People's Daily), 9 November 2000.

53. Rong Shixing and Zhong Min, eds., *Minzhu jiandu* (Democratic control, Beijing: Falü chubanshe, 1998), 2.

54. See Ke Lin, "On China's Corruption Problem," *China Strategic Review,* 5 (1997): 51.

55. Li Xueqin and Li Xuehui, eds*., Xin Zhongguo fan fubai dashi jiyao* (Recording major events of corruption fighting in new China, Tianjin: Nankai daxue chubanshe, 1999), 397.

56. Compare Albert S. Yee, "The causal effects of ideas on policies," *International Organization* 50, 1 (1996): 87; Kathryn Sikkink, *Ideas and Institutions: Developmentalism in Argentina and Brazil* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 23, 248; see

also Kathleen McNamara, *The Currency of Ideas: Monetary Politics in the European Union* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999).

57. See Ira Katznelson, "Knowledge about What? Policy Intellectuals and the New Liberalism," in Rueschemeyer and Skocpol, 21–22.

58. Compare: Howard L. Biddulph, "Protest Strategies of the Soviet Intellectual Opposition," in *Dissent in the USSR. Politics, Ideology, and People*, ed. Rudolf L. Tökes (Baltimore, London: John Hopkins University Press, 1975), 102.

59. Sikkink and Kathryn, 243.

60. This is called *Political legacies* by Margaret Weir and Theda Skocpol, "State Structures and the Possibilities for 'Keynesian' Responses to the Great Depression in Sweden, Britain and the United States," in Peter Evans et al., eds., *Bringing the State Back In* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 107–168.

61. See Haas, 25–26.

CHAPTER 3

The Role of Asian Intellectuals in a Globalized Economy: A Commentary

Lee Lai To

In this age of instant communications, rapid capital movements, and increasing significance of foreign trade and capital for development, many Asian countries are faced with, among other things, challenges of globalization, especially economic globalization. While there may be different views on globalization, it seems that it is not a question of whether to globalize, but how to globalize for many of the Asian states. Notably, following the footsteps of Japan and the newly industrializing economies (NIEs), China has also decided to open up and accept global challenges. The remarkable results of the economic reforms and opening to the outside world since 1978 have apparently emboldened China to plug into the regional and international economic circuits. Thus, it hosted the Ninth APEC meeting in Shanghai in October 2001. More importantly, it rejoined the World Trade Organization (WTO) in December 2001, marking a new chapter in China's determination to open up to the outside world.

With these irreversible trends towards globalization, the question this paper wants to address is: how would such a more globalized world affect the roles of intellectuals in Asia? The term "intellectuals" used in this paper basically refers to educated individuals who habitually engage themselves in the creation, communication, expression and criticism of ideas. They usually examine issues related to people, society, nature and the cosmos.[1] The educated persons referred to in this paper do not necessarily mean those with a university degree. However, chances are, they do possess advanced skills or knowledge as a result of self study or some kind of formal training. For the roles to be dealt with in this paper, it must be emphasized that they are more related to the Asian states which have decided to take the plunge in linking up with the regional and world economy. The time frame would be more in the 1990s and beyond. Thus, it is not so much on the roles of the intellectuals in fighting for the independence of the state and the establishment of statehood. It is more on the roles that intellectuals could play in meeting the challenges to the

nation-state posed by globalization. The focus will be on their major social-economic and political roles.

ROLE AS DEVELOPERS AND DISSEMINATORS OF KNOWLEDGE.

As the world moves to the so-called post-cold war era, the contest for ideology begins to be over-shadowed by that in economic performance. This concern for economic performance has led to bolder and faster economic reforms in many Asian countries. New ideas and policies would be necessary to promote productivity and generate growth and wealth. Intellectuals, as the part of the society possessing the expertise and knowledge, would be in a good position to join the drive towards economic modernization. This is especially true in the move towards the development of a knowledge-based economy. The importance of the "knowledge industry" as the basis for economic growth since the 1990s has certainly provided intellectuals many opportunities to demonstrate their talent. Some have indeed been rewarded handsomely in material or monetary terms. But there could be a problem of commercialization of knowledge in the sense that the passion to engage in research, contest of ideas, and critical thinking is not so much driven by the thirst for knowledge, truth and justice but for money and profit. Even at the highest level of learning, the university, the devotion to expanding the frontier of knowledge and educate bright minds may be affected when some of the academics begin to spend disproportionate time and effort in engaging in profitable activities.[2]

As far as the state is concerned, it is not uncommon that some intellectuals would be invited by the establishment to join the civil service and think tanks in harnessing their intellect and expertise. After all, the issues in the age of globalization are much more complex and specialized. Ideas, suggestions, proposals and support from the intellectuals would be valuable. In many ways, the government also needs the intellectuals to legitimize whatever new policies and reforms mapped out to face the challenges of globalization. In throwing their lot with the politicians or the establishment, the "assimilated" intellectuals may find it satisfying that their ideas have influenced policies or at least taken into account seriously. However, the lack of detachment from politics may result in the compromise of the intellectuals' autonomy and objectivity. Their contributions may also be subjected to the views and personality of their political masters. For places where factional differences exist at the top of the political system, the contributions by the intellectuals are very much dependent on the rise and fall of their political masters. It is not uncommon to see that whatever contributions that the intellectuals may have at the time of the rise of their political masters would be wiped out once their political masters lose power. Worst still, identifying with politicians may even get themselves into trouble as a result of the change of the political fortune of their sponsors.

It remains to be noted that for many Asian states, the real challenge in the promotion of a knowledge-based economy in the era of globalization is really the dearth of talent and poor human resources. As such, the intellectuals, as a small section of the population with knowledge, should be highly prized by the states as energizers of development and change. However, not every intellectual likes to join the government or the party in power in this effort as elaborated in the analysis of other roles. And not everyone has the opportunity and not everyone can be accepted by the establishment. Besides, as the state and economy opens up and a so-called borderless world begins to evolve, the more educated may find greener pastures elsewhere, leading to brain drains. The reluctance of a vast number of Asian bright minds trained in advanced countries to return home at the initial stage of the development in Asian states may worsen the situation. The hope is that when the economy at home takes off, not to say booming, some of these talents would return home as their knowledge and expertise could be used and that rewards at home have become more competitive.

Another problem for the states in Asia in moving towards a knowledge-based economy is the fact that foreign expertise may be necessary to jump-start the development process. Local talent may not be sufficient or competent enough to move the state up the economic ladder and leap-frog over other nations in the competitive world. Thus foreign talents are recruited to supplement or complement local talent. The experiences in Singapore or elsewhere in Asia seem to vindicate the wisdom of this approach. However, while the provision of knowledge and expertise by foreign talent and companies should be welcomed, there are always sceptics and nationalists questioning the need to rely on foreign talent, or for that matter, foreign capital and corporations. As such, it may take a lot of convincing on the part of the political leaders to emphasize the need for well-paid foreign talent, especially at a time when there is unemployment at home.

ROLE IN POLITICAL LEADERSHIP

For many Asian states, intellectuals invariably played an important role in the struggle for national independence and the birth of the state. The historical role of providing political leadership could carry forward for a long time even after independence. With the passage of time, the revolutionary elites seem to have faded away. In their place, there is the rise of the technocratic successors and relatively better educated politicians. The dawning of the IT age, electronic governance, economic inter-dependence and globalization, and the emergence of a more informed electorate, the middle class, public opinion, civil society and other social developments, would require a different type of political leadership. Since knowledge is power, intellectuals may be in a good position to plunge into politics. The presence of many PhD holders in the political circles in places like Taiwan,

Korea, Singapore and other Asian states reinforces this point. However, the translation of knowledge into power and the exercise of power require mobilization skill and organization muscles. One must also be able or willing to take the rough and tumble of politics. It is not difficult to see that even if intellectuals are willing to go through the baptism of fire by taking part in electoral or party politics, it may not be easy for them to reach the pinnacle of political power. Chances are, intellectuals may find it difficult to subsume themselves unquestionably under the leadership of the party, which is the major vehicle for the attainment of political power in the modern era. As genuine intellectuals, they usually value independence and critical thinking. They never really cease to cast a critical eye on every issue in the search for truth and justice, thus making it difficult for them to adjust and follow party order, discipline and programme. After all, party objectives and priorities are different from those of intellectuals. Obviously, all parties are interested in the pursuit and maintenance of political power. As such, they may not necessarily encourage the blooming and flourishing of ideas or intellectual pursuits which could be seen as divisive and impractical in the game of politics. In addition, the need to come down to the mass level to garner more popular support in many Asian states may be another difficulty faced by intellectuals when taking part in politics. Unless the intellectuals are good in organizational skills and willing to make a deliberate effort to bridge the communication and intellectual gaps with the masses, their ideas and observations, often high sounding ones, could not bring in much political capital. At best, they are appreciated or supported by a small segment of the population. Nevertheless, politicians do need intellectual inputs or ideas. This is especially true at times of globalization when issues have become much more challenging and complex. As a result, other than recruiting intellectuals to conduct research in think tanks and serve in the various bureaucracies, selected intellectuals may be invited or co-opted into the top political circle. These "assimilated" intellectuals are by no means true politicians in the sense that they have not made deliberate efforts to work from the grassroots level and garnered enough electorate or mass support in their rise to power. They are at the top political and party circle because of the appreciation of their expertise by the more established or influential political figures. These co-opted politicians from the intellectual circle will have to learn the skills of politicians. They will have to adapt to the needs and expectations of the party, electorate and the political system. Obviously, whether they can make it in politics depends on the versatility and adaptability of the individuals. In the light of the problems that the intellectuals may have in taking part in politics as discussed earlier, it is not surprising that some intellectuals may find the rough and tumble of politics too tough going and fail in politics.

It remains to be noted that there are always intellectuals who refuse to join the establishment, be it the party in power or the government. Because

of their critical disposition, the intellectuals always tend to question state policies, or for that matter, the political and social order of the time. For those who find it disagreeable or difficult to work with the establishment, they may join the opposition if they want to take part in politics. In fact, a look at the more prominent opposition parties in Asia could not fail to tell that they have a disproportionate number of this type of "critical" intellectuals. Some have managed to take over the government eventually. Notable examples are Kim Dae Jung of Korea and Chen Shui Bian in Taiwan. However, others like Aung San Suu Kyi of Myanmar and many others are still in the political wilderness. Obviously, whether in opposition or in power, intellectuals would face the same test or problems as analysed earlier in amassing political support, capital and experience to clinch political power.

ROLE AS SOCIAL CRITICS

One of the most important, if not the most important, roles of intellectuals is no doubt the role of social critics. From times immemorial, intellectuals have taken upon themselves the role of the so-called conscience of society. With a critical eye, they have spent endless effort and time, often fearlessly, on social and political inquiry trying to promote a better and more rational political and social order. While there may be intellectuals serving the establishment as noted earlier, there are always others, perhaps a lot more, who want to be detached and value their intellectual independence. As such, they are not receptive to the idea of joining the political circle, be it the establishment or the opposition. To them, their critical disposition in trying to push ideas out of the bounds of the political circle would be compromised once they join politics. Thus, it is not surprising that these "critical" intellectuals could be seen as nuisance, trouble makers or even subversives by the political establishment. They may also be accused of being too utopian and metaphysical.[3] Be that as it may, the established order may take measures to manage the perceived "destructiveness" of intellectual criticisms and tap the creativity of the intellectual "class" as elaborated later on. The most drastic state measure is of course to take action against the critics. It is not uncommon, at least in authoritarian societies, that critics would be arrested for "treason" or security reasons. Publications and other forms of communication could be censored. It must be added that with the globalization and the proliferation of new techniques of communication like the use of the internet and e-mail, fax machines, handphones and other forms of electronic communications, the established order will find it all the more difficult to clamp down on the critics. In addition, intellectuals by nature are usually more international or cosmopolitan in their outlook. Chances are, they will have links with like-minded intellectuals or organizations abroad. In fact, the globalization process has made it easier for intellectuals to link up and communicate across the continents. As a result, the states would have to be extremely careful in taking drastic measures against its own critics not only for domestic reasons

but also for possible international criticisms and repercussions. Certainly, they would have to ponder over possible impact on its foreign relations, trade and investment if they take action to curtail the activities of the critics at home.

The other common strategy adopted by the establishment in handling intellectuals and their criticisms is to improve their working conditions. For many intellectuals, the major concern revolves around their professional interests. Thus, research facilities, funding, pay and fringe benefits are probably factors that the state could help improve if economic conditions allow. Chances are, at least some intellectuals, especially those in the scientific and technical areas, are more interested in their own areas of specialization rather than venturing into social–political criticisms. It must be added quickly that this strategy to "buy over" the intellectuals may not work on all intellectual as there are always independent minded ones who feel that it is their responsibility to examine social and political issues with or without the improvement of their own economic conditions.

Finally, one more device that some states may use is to co-opt some of the critics into the political circle if they are regarded as malleable and useful technically or otherwise. In many of the Asian states where the role of criticism, or that matter, the role of the opposition is not taken kindly, to be a critic requires a lot of mental and physical courage and endurance. Many a critic could not nor expect to have much impact on the policy-making process of the state. Thus, they remain to be voices in the wilderness. As a result, given the opportunity to join the government and map out policies for the state would sound tempting for some of the critics. To be sure, there are social and political critics who subsequently become part of the establishment. Typically, critics in the early and younger days may become champions of the government and legitimizers of the regime at a later stage of their life if there are opportunities for them to do so. Of course, these intellectuals may be accused of being an opportunist. They may have to sacrifice their intellectual independence. Their credibility and intellectual integrity may also be called into question.

It remains to be noted that for those who take it upon themselves as basically social and political critics, the issues that they have to contend with in a globalized economy would be very different from those faced in the initial stages of statehood. In most cases, they are not issues related to the establishment of a new regime or ways to serve as vanguards of a revolution. By and large, the leading role of intellectuals in the birth or independence of new states has become history as noted earlier. While some old issues remain to be resolved, new issues that have to be dealt with in a borderless world have emerged. Notably, these include debates on political and socio-economic reforms, and more related to the focus of this paper, the pros and cons of globalization. While globalization seems to be unstoppable, the role of the intellectuals is to highlight not only the benefits but also the problems of

opening up and plugging into the regional and international economy. And as far as problems are concerned, the social and economic dislocations as a result of globalization certainly need to be examined, and if possible, rescued. Corruption, which by no means is new in many Asian states, may become more rampant and remain to be the perennial problem to be tackled. Perhaps one of the most challenging tasks for intellectuals in the globalization era is to come up with a proper response to the onslaught of western values and civilization as a result of more interactions with the outside world. A host of mind-boggling issues about the place of traditions and nationalism in the light of internationalism, cosmopolitanism and westernization are by no means easy to come to a conclusive resolution. The debates on Asian values and so-called clash of civilizations no doubt have made the search for values and identity all the more interesting but complex. Specifically, issues like the talks about the universalization of human rights, democracy and liberalism would need an enlightened response. While the above are by no means an exhaustive list of issues, it is clear that intellectual inputs are needed so much so that it is highly possible that the intellectuals may not only arouse public interest in these problems, but also offer alternative views or programmes, oftentimes to the chagrin of the government.

ROLE AS SOCIAL ADVOCATES

With globalization, it is inevitable that social-economic and political changes would ensue. Even in the case of one-party states where the control of the state was unchallenged previously, the pervasive control of the government could be diluted, if not checked or bypassed, by rising new forces. Notably, the flow of capital, especially short-term capital, could be beyond the control of the government as demonstrated by the Asian financial crisis in the late 1990s. As far as social and political changes are concerned, one of the most remarkable changes has been the strengthening of civic organizations as the state becomes relatively weaker. This is especially true in bigger states like India where there is a mushrooming of non-government organizations (NGOs). These organizations could be cultural associations, economic associations and even political associations.[4] While the existence of civic organizations is not new in many Asian states, there are many which are of relatively recent vintage. Notable examples could include human rights groups, environmental groups and consumers' associations. Unlike civic organizations of the past, the ones in the globalization era may be able to command more alternative resources. For example, members of the associations may be freer to communicate with their counterparts in other parts of the world as a result of the advance of technology and convenience of international travelling.

The growth of these civic organizations no doubt would create opportunities for intellectuals to play a role in advocating the interests of civil society. This is especially true for those who have reservations in joining the

political circle or the civil service for fear of sacrificing their independence. Moreover, as civil society implies the autonomy of the individual and the accountability of the state to the populace, independent intellectuals may find the civic organizations agreeable as such an environment will give them space and opportunities for creative thinking and room for the contest of ideas. However, the realization of a true civil society is based on the assumption that the state does not intervene. In other words, civil society is composed of autonomous associations aiming at the pursuit of individual liberties.[5] As such, there is a tendency to view the relationship between the state and civil society as adversarial. It is not surprising that a lot of Asian states may look at civil society with distrust. However, for the optimists and advocates of civil society, they would like to believe that it is possible and desirable to view state and civil society as having the potential for synergies.[6] They would argue that the contest of diverse views is not necessarily destabilizing and may strengthen and refine the fabric of society.[7] Alas, that may not be the thinking of many political leaders in Asia. The ability of civil society to act as democratic checks and balances, especially against the abuse of power by the state, may not be looked upon kindly by Asian power holders. With foreign support and international links in the globalized world, civil society may also be regarded as foreign agents to undermine the peace and stability of the country. However, states may accept, probably somewhat grudgingly, that the growth of civil society is inevitable. In fact, in places like Singapore, the state may recognize that it is wiser for the state to withdraw a little and provide more space for civic institutions to grow.[8] Nevertheless, the state would like to set the limits of the freedom enjoyed by civil society. It would like to manage its growth and co-opt its talent for political purposes if and when necessary. As remarked by one of Singapore's ministers, George Yeo, in his speech on civic society, "we (Singapore) need some pluralism but not too much because too much will destroy us".[9] Likewise, in places like China, it has been noted that the social organizations "are neither completely autonomous from the state nor completely dependent on the state".[10] As such, the social associations are by and large considered to be half official and half non-official (*banguan banmin*).[11] Obviously, quite a number of Asian states do not have the liberal-democratic idea of "civil society". Whether it is desirable or achievable remains to be seen. In the mean time, with the fierce defence of the interests of the nation-state in many Asian capitals, it is natural that civil society with international links may be seen as Trojan horses for the advance of western interests and influence. The emphasis on collective interests as against individual interests and the lack of a tradition of accepting intellectual criticisms in many an Asian state probably would make the power holders less tolerant or receptive to criticisms, dissent, and contest of ideas, the very functions that civil society could promote. It must be added that while members of civil society may want the state to be more accountable and more transparent in the conduct of public affairs, it is not

really the role of civil society to replace the state. Intermediate institutions like political parties are the organizations mediating between the state and civil society.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

The attempt in this essay has been to single out the roles played by Asian intellectuals in the age of globalization. While the roles analysed are not exhaustive, they probably include the major ones performed by such intellectuals. From the analysis, it could be seen that there are different types of intellectuals having different inclinations. Their impacts on or contributions to society vary, depending very much on their vehicles, channels and opportunities to promote their ideas, be it on globalization or other issues. It could also be surmised that the roles of intellectuals are not necessarily constructive or destructive. However, there is a tendency to view the roles of intellectuals more positively as the state begins to advance and open up. Evidently, in spite of the reservations about intellectuals in the past, countries like China, have acknowledged the usefulness of intellectuals as part and parcel of the productive force. After all, intellectual capital is most important in the information age and a knowledge-based economy. Even for countries with natural resources, they have to use intellectual capital to translate the resources into wealth. And for countries without much natural resources, intellectual capital is probably the most critical asset which could prop up the economy, or for that matter, the nation-state.

In the light of the necessity to amass intellectual capital in the globalization era, it would seem that states will try to invite intellectuals to join them and co-opt their talent. In the Asian setting, where the highest calling of the educated is to enter the civil service or join the government to serve the nation, it is likely that a significant number of intellectuals would work for the establishment. After all, the rewards, be it monetary or otherwise, are usually attractive. The exercise of power and the ability to make decisions and to influence social-economic and political developments are also very appealing. As such, the roles of intellectuals as disseminators and developers of knowledge, "mandarins" and political leaders as analysed in this chapter seems to be more agreeable to many intellectuals. The risks of serving as social critics and advocates may be too forbidding for many of them. However, the penchant of the intellectuals for independence and critical thinking will continue to urge some to speak the truth, and fearlessly. For these independent and "critical" intellectuals, their courage, sense of mission and conviction in exercising intellectual autonomy and integrity will continue to make them a respectable force to be reckoned with by friends and foes alike.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

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Development" hosted by the Research Center for Contemporary China, Peking University, 24–27 January 2002.

NOTES

1. Edward Shils, "Intellectuals," in *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, ed. David L Sills, vol. 7 (The Macmillan Company and The Free Press, 1968), 399.

2. For an analysis of similar roles in the development of a cosmopolitan culture, see Helena Z. Lopata, "Members of the Intelligentsia as Developers and Disseminators of Cosmopolitan Culture," in *The Intelligentsia and the Intellectuals, Theory, Method and Case Study*, ed. Aleksander Gella (London: Sage Publications, 1976), 59–78.

3. Rajendra Pandey, *The Role of Intellectuals in Contemporary Society* (New Delhi: Mittal Publications, 1990), 14.

4. Baogang He, *The Democratic Implications of Civil Society in China* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1997), 24–26.

5. Charles Taylor, "Models of Civil Society," *Public Culture* 3, no. 1 (1990): 95–118.

6. Gillian Koh and Ooi Giok Ling, eds., *State–Society Relations in Singapore* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 2000).

7. Ibid., 160.

8. Ibid., 159.

9. Ibid.

10. Baogang He, 7.

11. Ibid.

CHAPTER 4

Diffusion and Spill-Over Effects: Intellectuals' Discourse and Its Extension into Policy-Making in Japan

Karin Adelsberger

INTRODUCTION

Only some years separate the glorious picture of Japan as No. 1 expected to become the next superpower from the picture of Japan as Asia's ill man lost in an economic and political crisis. In the second half of the 1980s, Japan's strong economic growth and stable political system were admired. Since then Japan's economic and political situation was turned upside down. Japan has been facing diverse problems since the end of the 1980s. The end of the Cold War, the collapse of the economy, the uncovering of severe corruption scandals in politics and administration, and the bureaucracy's failure to cope with several crises, caused a vigorous discourse on the Japanese political system. The so-called "55 system" was considered as having failed. Different broad reforms were discussed under these conditions;[1] some reforms were realized, the broadest being the reform package of the electoral system in 1994 and the administrative reform package in 1998.

Who is participating in the policy formation process of such far-reaching, complicated political reforms? Is only the expert knowledge of *zoku* politicians (experts on a certain area) or the bureaucracy considered, or does the expert knowledge that is existing outside this political establishment also have an impact? The role of intellectuals outside the political establishment in the policy formation process in Japan has not been broadly discussed yet. Nonetheless, the formation of a policy must not be regarded as being separated from the discussions outside the political establishment, but is influenced by those debates. This study criticizes the old notions on Japanese politics that focus on politicians, bureaucrats and strong organized interest groups as the important actors in the policy process. The Japanese policy process is more pluralistic than these models assume. There is actually a

multiplicity of channels for external actors to seek influence by making their ideas and policy proposals "travel" into politics.

Although not focussing on Japan, Siegfried Jäger's (1993: 138–229) critical discourse analysis offers valuable insights into the influence on politics, exerted by groups outside the political establishment. Jäger distinguishes different discourse levels as the level of intellectuals, politicians, media, population, etc. These different discourse levels influence each other: Discourse fragments of the level of intellectuals can be picked up by the level of politicians, for example. This means that new ideas and policy proposals are not only generated inside the political establishment, but also diffuse into politics from the discourse among external groups, which have potential influence on the policy formation process.

This paper analyses the formal and informal "infrastructure" through which intellectuals exert influence on the policy process by making their ideas and proposals heard.[2] But what does "influence" mean? A narrow understanding of influence assumes that only the direct immediate impact of an actor, as seen in this actor's ideas directly affecting the course of a legislation or convincing politicians of a certain course of action, should be considered influential. But influence can also be interpreted in a broader way to include success in changing a prevailing consensus or keeping the present opinion by framing the discourse (Stone 1996: 109–10). This means that an actor's idea does not directly translate into legislation, but rather sets the agenda or shapes the discourse, so that the problem is not forgotten and the according legislation might be realized quite a long time later.

Since this paper seeks to analyse the channels for influence of intellectuals and their ideas, a working definition of influence has to be proposed. Influence is understood here as the ability to achieve a diffusion or spill-over of ones ideas and proposals into the debate among politicians. Influence therefore covers a broad continuum of variations, from relatively strong influence, when an actor's idea is directly translated into legislation, to relatively weaker influence, when an actor's idea manages to put a certain topic on the political agenda, but has no impact on the further stages of the policy process as for example the drafting of a bill. The difference between intended "diffusion" and accidental "spill-over" of ideas is not neglected here, but since both terms refer to the fact that an idea travels from the intellectual discourse to the policy-making debate among politicians, they are used interchangeably here.

This paper does not seek to quantify the influence of intellectuals, but rather seeks to show the formal and informal channels that exist for intellectuals to "feed" politicians with their ideas and proposals. Intellectuals are understood here as experts, working at universities, research institutes, think tanks, etc., and/or being engaged in citizen's movements, NGOs, NPOs, etc., whose research/activity focus is related to the discussed political reforms, and who show a constructively critical attitude towards government policy. This paper focuses on activities by

intellectuals, who are experts on certain topics, but are usually not considered to have close relations to the political establishment. High-ranking bureaucrats, business representatives and journalists, who are also experts on certain topics, but are considered to have close relations to politicians, are deliberately excluded from the category "intellectuals" used here. Neither the experts subsumed under the term "intellectuals" nor the Diet members from government and opposition subsumed under the term "politicians" are a homogeneous group. Due to the strong heterogeneity of both groups, politicians and intellectuals do not necessarily belong to complementary political camps.

Based on interviews of scholars, politicians, representatives of citizens' movements, an NPO, a think tank and a daily newspaper, which I conducted in Japan[3] this paper focuses on the diffusion of ideas suggested by intellectuals into the debate among politicians.

As shown in Figure 4.1, possible influence strategies are classified into two groups. The first group are influence strategies induced by the political establishment. These strategies have in common that politicians or bureaucrats explicitly ask certain intellectuals to participate in the discussion of a certain topic inside the political establishment, whereas other intellectuals are excluded. The second group are influence strategies emanating from intellectuals themselves. Through these strategies intellectuals try to participate in the discourse on a certain topic and influence the debate among politicians without being explicitly asked to do so.

INFLUENCE STRATEGIES

This paper assumes that information, ideas and proposals from the discourse among intellectuals diffuse into the debate among politicians and influence the policy formation and decision. How does this diffusion or spill-over
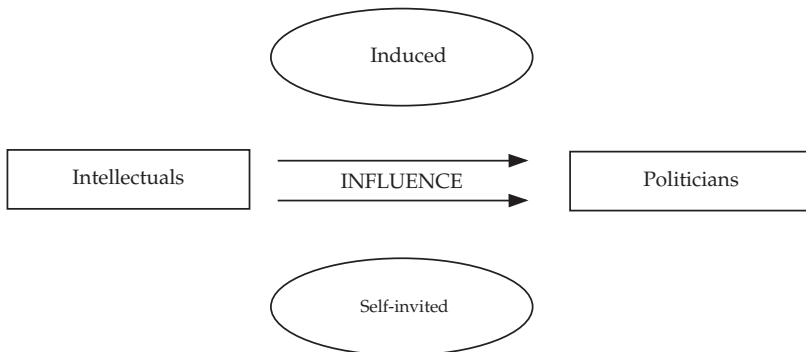
Figure 4.1. Classification of influence strategies.
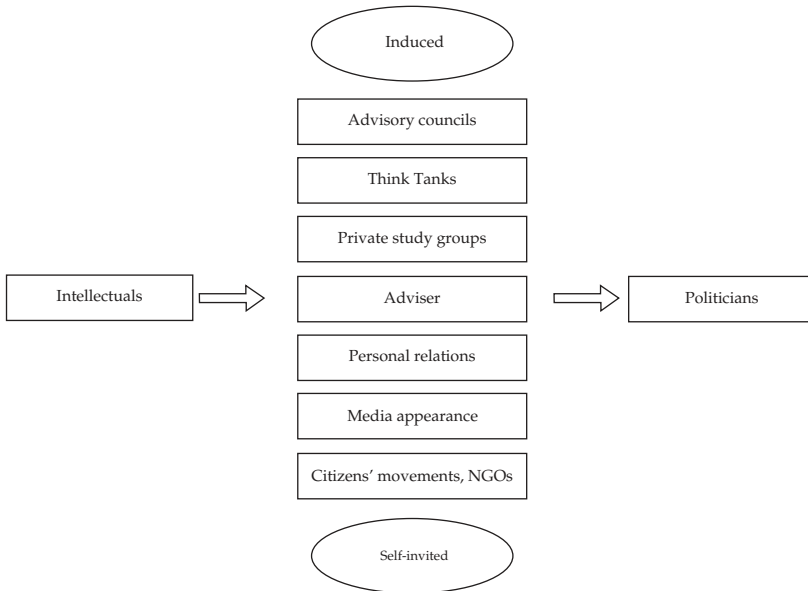
Figure 4.2. Different influence strategies.

happen? Which strategies do intellectuals apply to make their opinion and proposals be heard in politics?

Possible influence strategies are classified into two groups: Diffusion and spill-over induced by the political establishment, and diffusion and spill-over emanating from intellectuals themselves. Figure 4.2 shows the different influence strategies that will be discussed here.

DIFFUSION AND SPILL-OVER INDUCED BY THE POLITICAL ESTABLISHMENT

Influence strategies induced by politicians or bureaucrats, who explicitly ask certain intellectuals to participate in the discussion whereas other intellectuals are excluded, cover:

- Participation in advisory councils;
- Work of think tanks;
- Participation in private study groups;
- Work as adviser to politicians, parties, governments, committees, etc.; and
- Personal relations between intellectuals and politicians.

The interviews conducted in Japan showed that the strategies "participation in private study groups" and "personal relations"[4] were regarded as very

important for the diffusion and spill-over of the discourse among intellectuals onto the debate among politicians. "Participation in advisory councils" and "work of think tanks" were considered rather unimportant.

The strategies "participation in private study groups" and "personal relations", which were considered important, are discretionary, opaque strategies: It is difficult or almost impossible for groups outside the political establishment and the public to understand who is trying to influence politics, since the participants and the work of private study groups are often not made public; personal relations between politicians and intellectuals are usually unknown, too. The diffusion and spill-over that happen in these informal settings can hardly be observed and might be criticized as undemocratic "backroom politics".

The different influence strategies will be discussed here with regard to their ability to achieve a diffusion and spill-over of ideas and proposals.

Participation in Advisory Councils
Do intellectuals succeed in achieving a diffusion and spill-over of their ideas into the debate among politicians by participating in advisory councils?

Permanent or temporary advisory councils[5] are attached to a ministry or agency and have only consultative function. In most of the cases, the parent organization presents a policy proposal and the council is requested to approve, reject, or propose revisions to this proposal. In some cases, the parent organization presents several policy proposals and the council is asked to approve one of them, or the council is requested to examine a policy problem and work out recommendations (Harari 1990: 146).

The participants, appointed by the parent ministry or agency, are supposed to represent concerned groups and the public and bring expert knowledge into the council. Besides bureaucrats, politicians, representatives of interest groups and business, "persons of learning and experience" (*gakushiki keikensha*), which are often scholars, but may also be journalists, lawyers, staffers at research organizations, or former bureaucrats, are appointed (Schwartz 1998: 64–75). In the more than 200 councils that are attached to the central ministries, university professors are constituting the biggest group, followed by representatives of economic associations and business people (Zhao 1993: 102). Frank J. Schwartz (1998: 54) points out that members are often elected because of their name and reputation and not because of their expertise knowledge. This means that the number of intellectuals who are experts on the discussed topic – the focus group of this paper – is rather low in the councils.

The views on the function of advisory councils differ. Councils are meant to coordinate the interests of civil society and administration. But it is criticized that, by controlling the appointment of members, the agenda and the information sources, the administration makes sure that a council supports the administration's view. Advisory councils are therefore often portrayed as "invisible fairy cloaks" (*kakuremino*) (Schwartz 1998: 54). It is

criticized that since certain scholars are elected too often, the member selection does not mirror the many opinions in the academic world, and that many former bureaucrats, who are also regular members of advisory councils, attach more importance to the ministry they belonged to than to the national interest (JETRO 1999: 3).

In the interviews, several scholars emphasized that the participants are appointed in such a way that the majority supports the view of the government and administration. A political scientist described advisory councils as "generally a tool, through which the administration camouflages the policy it prefers and has it said by famous participants".

The minutes of the discussions within the councils are usually not made public. With the exception of councils that discuss a "hot" topic and are attracting broad media coverage, politicians and the public can learn of a council's work mainly through the council's reports. But since most of the reports are approved by consensus (Harari 1990: 147–8), they are not the summaries of the discussion inside a council, but only the common denominator of the participants. Minority opinions, that oppose the view of government and administration and might give new impetus for the discussion, are often neglected in the reports.

Intellectuals who are critical of the government's view and policy are usually only the minority in a council. Their views can hardly diffuse into the debate among politicians through participation in an advisory council, in which the majority sympathizes with the government's view, the direction of the debate is determined by the administration, and the reports are approved by consensus. In the interviews, "participation in advisory councils" was considered rather unimportant to achieve diffusion and spill-over into the debate among politicians.

Intellectuals' participation in advisory councils seems not to exert influence on politicians but rather on bureaucrats, who are the experts on the discussed topic within the political establishment. Since it is usually bureaucrats who draft the council's reports and do the groundwork in the council's secretariat, they are well informed about the discussion inside the council. If bureaucrats are taken with an idea that was generated inside a council but has not made it into the council's report, they might be able to pass the idea on into the debate among politicians through the bureaucracy's provision of information and bills to politicians. This idea would take the indirect way from the discourse among intellectuals onto the debate among politicians via the bureaucracy.

Work of Think Tanks

Is a diffusion and spill-over of the discourse among intellectuals into the debate among politicians achieved by the work of think tanks?

NIRA's "Annual Report on Japanese Think Tanks" (*shinku tanku nenpô*) lists 332 think tanks for the year 2000. Slightly less than half of them are

profit-making (*eiri hôjin*) think tanks, often established by the outsourcing of the information/research department of big banks or enterprises, the other half are non-profit (*kôeki hôjin*) think tanks, which are attached to ministries, agencies, etc. There are many small think tanks: 75.3% of the think tanks have less than nineteen employees (Fukukawa 2002: 2). In addition, there is NIRA (National Institute for Research Advancement), which was established by the government in 1974 and whose capital was endowed by both the public and the private sector (Hoshino 1997).

A total of 20.2% of all the research conducted by think tanks belong to the category "land development and utilization", 12.3% to "economy", 11.2% to "production" and 10.6% to "environment". The research area "politics/administration" covers only 7.6% of all the researches (NIRA 2002: 1).

One should not expect Japanese think tanks to be of the same strength as their namesakes in the US are. In an interview, the director of a Japanese think tank pointed to the difference: "American think tanks are policymakers by themselves. They are active in many areas. In contrast, Japanese think tanks are structures of the bureaucracy, research institutes. In Japan the role of think tanks is performed by the administration".

Japanese think tanks are not active actors in the policy formation process. The main activities of profit-making think tanks are forecasts and consulting for corporations. The research of non-profit think tanks is often restricted to contract projects for the administration, to which these think tanks are attached (Shimizu 1997). Although there are many research institutes, etc. which are called "think tank", there are only a small number of independent non-profit institutions that are able to do research on topics they consider important. The former NIRA president comments on Japanese think tanks: "Unfortunately the bulk of Japanese think tanks do not have much actual experience as an active actor in the policy-making process. It is only a slight exaggeration to say that they have performed as subcontractors of the ruling party think tank-like network" (Hoshino 1997).

The most important reason for the weakness of Japanese think tanks is the strength of the bureaucracy, which is considered the real think tank. Think tanks are commissioned by the bureaucracy to do research on a certain topic and gather material; the bill itself is drafted by the bureaucracy.

The meagre financial resources of many Japanese think tanks contribute to their weakness. Due to their financial situation, most of the think tanks can only do research on a certain topic when being commissioned and paid to do so. Roughly 80% of think tanks' work is commissioned research, accordingly independent research amounts only to one-fifth (Shimizu 1997). Therefore, Japanese think tanks hardly become active by themselves. In addition, think tanks often do not take up a neutral position. In the interview, the director of a think tank hinted that think tanks try to come close to the customer's point of view. Shimizu Tomochika (1997) also emphasizes "Truly independent think tanks–ones that conduct policy-oriented research, that make policy

proposals, and that are genuinely independent of other organizations – seem a distant possibility in Japan". NIRA can be considered an exception: Since NIRA finances itself by its capital returns, it is independent in the choice of research topics and the research itself (Hoshino 1997) – at least theoretically.

In contrast to the US with its political appointee system, the lack of personnel exchange between government, administration and think tanks in Japan also lowers the importance of Japanese think tanks. Japanese think tanks hardly play the role of "talent pool" (*jinzai no pûru*) and "saucer" (*ukezara*), that US think tanks play (Koike 2002: 2).

The possibilities of a diffusion and spill-over of the discourse among the intellectuals working at a think tank onto the debate among politicians should be considered rather low. It was confirmed in the interviews that the discussion inside a think tank hardly diffuses into the debate among politicians. Many think tanks hand over the reports to the customer, often the bureaucracy, without publishing them. This means that the work of think tanks is usually not known to the public and to politicians. Therefore, most think tanks cannot directly influence politicians, but can only achieve a diffusion of ideas and proposals, generated inside a think tank, into the debate among politicians through the information and bills provided by the bureaucracy. NIRA is the exception with this regard, too: The NIRA publications are distributed to Diet members, high-ranking bureaucrats, business representatives and editorial chiefs of major newspapers and TV stations. But the NIRA president admits that it is problematic to reach politicians, who are not used to read academic research results; it is rather bureaucrats and business representatives who respond to these publications (Hoshino 1997).

Participation in Private Study Groups
Do intellectuals who take part in private study groups exert influence on the debate among politicians?

High-ranking politicians and bureaucrats often establish private study groups[6] to discuss a certain topic with people from outside government and administration. It was former Prime Minister Nakasone who used private commissions and study groups to such a large degree, that commentators spoke of "brain politics". Intellectuals are often invited to these study groups. There are even cases of famous intellectuals who establish their own study groups and invite politicians to participate. In contrast to advisory councils, which also serve to include the views outside politics and administration, the establishment, composition and work of private study groups is not regulated by law. Existence, membership and discussion of those groups are often not known to the public, although there are some private study groups that publish their reports.[7] Similar to advisory councils, famous personalities of high reputation are often appointed as members of the informal private study groups. An Upper House member of the Democratic Party

(*Minshutô*) emphasized in an interview: "Young scholars are not joining, only those who have written books, reports, and critics".

In private study groups, an open discussion among politicians and intellectuals in an informal atmosphere should be possible. Especially politicians who preside over their own study group can be expected to have a real interest in the participants' opinions and be open for new ideas. In my interviews, private study groups were considered important for the diffusion and spill-over of ideas generated in the discourse among the participating intellectuals onto the debate among politicians.

Adviser to Politicians, Parties, Governments, Committees, Etc.
Is the work of intellectuals as advisers to politicians, parties, governments, committees, etc. a way for a diffusion and spill-over onto the debate among politicians?

Governments, parties, and high-ranking politicians often have academic advisers. As Herbert Passin (1975: 281) points out: "Most of the leading conservative politicians, at least those with prime-ministerial ambitions, have their own advisers and at times even something on the order of a brain trust". A political scientist mentioned in the interview that he is the academic brain of the Democratic Party (*Minshutô*) and would sit down together with these politicians in order to think of how the party can exert influence and which strategies should be adopted.

In his study on informal politics, Zhao Quansheng (1993: 100) states that almost every Japanese prime minister has a small, informal circle of private advisers, whose influences vary: "Scholars are 'selected' as advisers if they share similar political views with the prime minister; if they maintain a good personal relationship with the prime minister; and if they have a scholarly reputation. Once included in the inner groups, scholars retain their close contact with the prime minister. It is not unusual for a scholar-adviser to meet with the prime minister once or twice a month".

Besides being adviser to governments, parties or politicians, experts are consulted by the committees that exist within the parties and the Lower and Upper House. Politicians are usually members of several committees. These committees often invite intellectuals to insert expert knowledge and new opinions into the debate among the committee members. The Research Commissions on the Constitution in the Upper and Lower House, which were established in January 2000, can be mentioned as examples. All major parties have sent participants to these commissions which will do research on the constitution for five years (Yoshida 2000: 146–51). Many intellectuals have already been invited to present their views on the constitution and answer questions.[8]

The ideas and proposals of intellectuals, suggested when advising politicians, parties, governments or presenting their views in committees, etc. surely have an influence on the debate among politicians. Politicians,

parties, governments, who ask intellectuals to act as their advisers, can be expected to have a real interest in the ideas of their advisers.

Personal Relations between Intellectuals and Politicians
Do ideas and proposals of intellectuals "travel" into the debate among politicians through personal relations between intellectuals and politicians?

In the course of informal talks with politicians they personally know, intellectuals can pinpoint problems, provide new ideas and criticize policies to a degree that is at least difficult to reach when other spill-over strategies are employed. Personal relations with politicians were mentioned in the interviews as an important strategy to achieve a diffusion and extension of the discourse of intellectuals into policy-making circles.

DIFFUSION AND SPILL-OVER EMANATING FROM INTELLECTUALS THEMSELVES

Influence strategies emanating from intellectuals themselves, through which intellectuals try to participate in the discourse on a certain topic and influence the debate among politicians without being explicitly asked to do so, cover:

- Appearance in media; and
- Work of citizens' movements, NGOs, etc.

The interviews showed that the strategy "appearance in media" was considered very important for a diffusion and spill-over of the discourse among intellectuals onto the debate among politicians. "Work of citizens" movements, NGOs, etc. were considered to be rather unimportant.

The influence strategy "appearance in media", which was considered important, is a transparent strategy: The public knows who is trying to influence politics since intellectuals' appearances in the media, as articles, interviews, etc. are marked with their names.

The different influence strategies will be discussed here with regard to their ability to achieve a diffusion and spill-over of ideas.

Appearance in Media
Do intellectuals exert influence on the debate among politicians through their appearances in media?

The media's independent introduction of new ideas into the discourse[9] is excluded from this paper, since journalists have close, institutionalized relations to politicians. The focus is rather on the media as a stage for non-journalist intellectuals, who are often asked to write articles or to comment on TV. In addition to these contributions to the print media or TV, book publications are also included in the strategy "appearance in media". Herbert Passin (1975: 259–60) comments on Japanese intellectuals: "Their influence is transmitted through their teaching, their books and articles,

which form the basic parameters of public discussion, and the mass media. Through these means they have an influence, and often a decisive one, on public opinion and therefore on one of the key factors in the background of decision-making".

The media are an important means for diffusion and spill-over of new ideas into the debate among politicians. Since paying attention to the media is a duty for Japanese politicians, intellectuals reach politicians via the media. The Deputy Political Editor of a national newspaper emphasized that the leading Japanese politicians read all of the four national newspapers. It should therefore be expected that intellectuals' appearances in the media can achieve a diffusion and spill-over of new ideas onto the debate among politicians. This was confirmed in the interviews. A political scientist on how he tries to influence politics: "Through newspapers and magazines. The spill-over process happens when politicians read newspapers and magazines and learn from it".

But it should be taken into account that the Japanese media are facing a very tough competition. To increase the number of sales or viewers, the media concentrate on the topics the audience prefers. The audience's low interest in unappealing, complicated topics reduces the possibility that these topics will be covered by the media to a large extent. A constitutional scientist, who is engaged in a citizens' movement against a revision of the constitution, pointed out: "In the 1990s the competition between the newspapers became stronger. The companies had to make newspapers that sell well. Thinking does not sell well. Intellectuals' utterances through the media became less".

Work of Citizens' Movements, NGOs, Etc.
Can intellectuals influence the debate among politicians by participating in citizens' movements, NGOs, etc.?

Besides interested citizens, scholars and researchers whose research focus is close to the movement's focus, also engage in these groups. For example, some constitutional scientists are active in movements that are opposing a revision of the Japanese constitution.

In the interviews, the representatives from several groups listed the activities through which their movements try to exert influence on politicians: Demonstrations; meetings; bulletin boards in the internet where people can anonymously complain about politics or politicians; mailing lists that are also sent to political parties; and petitions submitted to the Diet.

To achieve a diffusion and spill-over of the discourse within a movement onto the debate among politicians, politicians have to be informed about existence and activities of this movement. This can happen by politicians being a member of this movement or taking part in its activities. For movements, which have no relations to politicians, the diffusion and spill-over of the discourse inside the movements onto the debate among politicians requires that the media cover the movements and thereby inform politicians about

them. But it is difficult for movements that are committed to rather unattractive topics, to become the object of broad media coverage.

Instead of directly appealing to politicians, citizens' movements, NGOs, etc. can get public opinion on their side and thereby make new ideas diffuse into the debate among politicians, who have to pay attention to public opinion. This detour via public opinion is a long-term process in which politicians consider the positive media coverage on a movement the result of public opinion and therefore feel forced to react to the movement's demands. John Creighton Campbell (1996: 190) offers a splendid analysis of the media's role as an ally to supporters of policy change in Japan: "That is, given the highly centralized nature of the newspapers and television networks, plus the high levels of literacy and media consumption in society – plus the propensity noted above for Japanese decision makers to take press attention as a surrogate for public opinion – it would seem that no supporter of policy change would be a more attractive ally in Japan".

Citizens' movements and NGOs can only achieve a diffusion and spill-over of their views onto the debate among politicians if they have contact to politicians and/or if the media positively cover the movements' activities. But not all movements succeed in achieving this attention. In my interviews, the work of citizens' movements, NGOs, etc. was considered rather unimportant for influencing the debate among politicians.

CONCLUSION AND FURTHER THOUGHTS

This paper has discussed several influence strategies through which ideas and proposals of the discourse among intellectuals can "travel" into the debate among politicians in Japan. The interviews conducted in Japan showed that in general, the transparent influence strategy emanating from intellectuals themselves "appearance in media" as well as the opaque strategies induced by the political establishment "participation in private study groups" and "personal relations" are considered important. This does not mean that the strategies, which were considered rather unimportant, are totally useless. These strategies might rather influence the debate among politicians indirectly via the bureaucracy or public opinion. Figure 4.3 shows the ways through which intellectuals' ideas and proposals can diffuse the debate among politicians.

This paper has shown that there are different ways for intellectuals to potentially exert influence on the policy formation process. Since the policy networks within which new legislation and necessary reforms are discussed are very complex, it is not possible to name one influence strategy the decisive one. It should rather be assumed that it is the combination of different influence strategies together with positive political circumstances that lead to the result that policy formulation is interspersed with ideas generated in the discourse among intellectuals.

Some thoughts should be added. The means of influence presented here show that ideas and policy proposals are not only generated by *zoku*
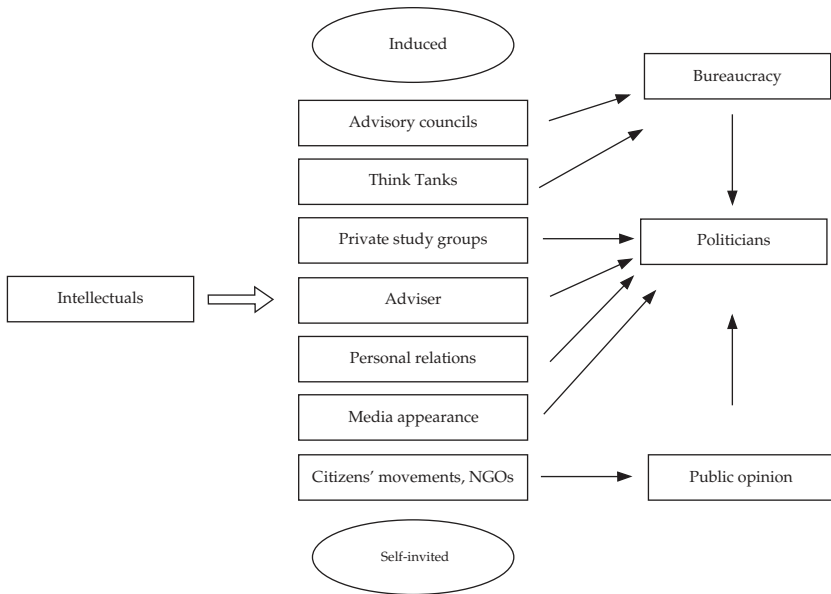
Figure 4.3. Channels for influence.

politicians (experts on a certain area) within the political establishment or by the bureaucracy. They also spread from the discourse among experts outside the political establishment into politics.

What aims do politicians and bureaucrats pursue when integrating ideas and proposals from intellectuals? The most obvious reason is the growing demand for expertise knowledge. Due to the increasing complexity of policies, expert knowledge from outside the political establishment might be needed even by the bureaucracy, which is considered a rather knowledgeable institution in Japan. Politicians from opposition parties are often dependent on external expertise knowledge, since they cannot rely on the cooperation of the bureaucracy to the same degree as the governing parties can. But politicians from governing parties also fall back upon external experts, when discussing topics that oppose the bureaucracy's interests or when trying to include as many views as possible.

More selfish aims should also be considered. Cooperating with experts from outside the political establishment improves the image of government and administration. This is especially true for advisory councils: Frank J. Schwartz (1998: 54) points out that the participation of known personalities of high esteem in these councils can be "good public relations" for the administration. Approval by an advisory council of well-known personalities justifies a policy proposal. To avoid a bad surprise when a bill is discussed by intellectuals, advisory councils are politicized. It was mentioned in my

interviews that the participants of advisory councils are appointed in such a way that the majority supports the view of government and administration. A young, unknown intellectual complained that always the same people are appointed to these councils.

How does the multiplicity of channels for intellectuals to potentially exert influence on the policy formation process relate to the often mentioned characterization that in Japan "there is a relative scarcity of public intellectuals to debate important public policy issues?" (Curtis 1999: 232)

One reason for this lack of intellectuals is seen in the fact that there are not many autonomous institutions that play the role that is performed by think tanks or parties' research institutes in other countries (Curtis 1999: 231). This means that there are not many institutions in Japan beside universities that train intellectuals and whose members participate actively in the discourse. The role that is played by think tanks or parties' research institutes in other countries is performed by the bureaucracy in Japan, which is not open to outsiders. Whereas in the US, there is a steady personnel exchange between think tanks and government and administrative institutions, this is not common in Japan (Koike 2002: 2).

The system of higher education – which is an important home to intellectuals – is criticized. A JETRO report (1999: 47) emphasizes that the utilization of university academism in Japan is different from the US. It is criticized that Japanese universities do not focus on contemporary problems of society but rather focus on exalted theses.

The scarcity of public intellectuals should also be related to the fact that only a certain number of intellectuals are known to the public or the political establishment since not all intellectuals try to participate in the discourse and influence the debate among politicians. In the interviews, a scholar focussing on public administration pointed to the low willingness of scholars to actively participate in the discussion on administrative reform: "Besides those (in the advisory council, K.A.), scholars hardly participated in the debate. Scholars are busy with their own research. If you are asked, you do it. But scholars are not that active". A political scientist added that trying to influence politics consumes a lot of time and energy.

Some scholars minimize their efforts to influence the debate among politicians not only because of the time and energy demand, but because of their wary attitude with regard to an integration into the policy formation process. Zhao Quansheng (1993: 102) emphasizes: "… intellectuals have conflicting opinions about their participation in politics. Many of them are still afraid of being used as "tools" by politicians and of losing academic credibility; therefore, they stay away from politics. Others believe that they must actively participate in "real political life" to fulfil their social responsibilities. A JETRO report (1999: 47) emphasizes that, in contrast to other developed countries, scholars who cooperate with the government are criticized as "scholars under the government's thumb" (*goyô gakusha*) in Japan.

The impression of a scarcity of public intellectuals is not only related to the low willingness of scholars to actively participate in the discourse, but also to the insufficient capability of some intellectuals to actively participate in the discourse and achieve a diffusion of their ideas and proposals. With regard to the scholars who were members of the advisory council on administrative reform, a university professor and former bureaucrat complained in the interview that these scholars were "not politics-oriented" and hardly participated. Scholars would have the academic attitude to lead a theoretical debate first. He considered the academic world "totally useless". A constitutional scholar, who is engaged in a movement opposing the revision of the constitution, pointed out that many intellectuals are not capable of suggesting proposals: "Those who have written brilliant dissertations cannot draft bills". There seems to be a gap between "scholar's politics and real politics", as the mayor of a Tokyo ward mentioned in the interview, leading to the situation that part of the intellectuals are rather silent.

But, being both willing and capable does not mean that an intellectual is automatically in the position to make ideas and proposals diffuse into the debate among politicians. Access to influence strategies as appearance in media, participation in advisory councils or study groups is not open to everybody. These strategies are relatively open to known intellectuals, whereas it is difficult for unknown intellectuals to get access to these influence channels. In the interviews, young and unknown intellectuals emphasized that they want to achieve a "travel" of their ideas, but cannot because of their rather low position. They, therefore, considered the establishment of a network with like-minded intellectuals important to exert influence. A young intellectual pointed out: "A network is better. If you are famous, you can do it alone. But if you do not have a name, you have to establish a network".

Other reasons for the "silence" of Japanese intellectuals, which are not rooted in the individual but rather in the system, should also be referred to. Edward Shils (1972: 12–3) emphasizes that in developed societies intellectuals are absorbed into executive positions. This means that the function of intellectuals – offering knowledge, showing problems and proposing solutions – is also performed by other groups in society. In Japan, nowadays groups such as parties, bureaucracy, the media, organized interest groups, the population itself, etc. (most of which are not subsumed under the category "intellectuals" here) play roles that were usually ascribed to independent intellectuals. Since there is a free press, organized interest groups, etc. that participate in the discourse and make their opinions be heard within the political establishment, intellectuals in Japan are probably not as indispensable as intellectuals might be in undemocratic societies to push for reforms.

When thinking about the role of Japanese intellectuals in the discourse and the policy formation process, the concrete content of the discussed reform topics should also be referred to. In contrast to other Asian countries where the discourses focus on sweeping, radical changes of the existing political and economic system, the discourses in Japan are focussing "only" on an improvement or fine-tuning of the existing political system. Whereas the question whether to change from an authoritarian to a democratic system probably results in a broad discussion, the question whether to change from an electoral system with medium districts to a system with small districts or proportional representation is restricted to the "experts" in this topic and therefore generates only a smaller discussion. In addition, it can be expected that the smaller the discussed reform, the smaller the interest in this reform. In Japan, the administrative reform, which was discussed and realized in the second half of the 1990s, was not generating as vigorous a discourse as the reform of the electoral system did some years ago. The expected sweeping political change that was related to the reform of the electoral system only some years ago was missing in the discussion of administrative reform. A political scientist emphasized in an interview: "My impression is that, besides the government offices, people thought that even if the central ministries are reorganized, there will be almost no change. I think the reform was highly discussed in a narrow circle among politicians, government offices, and economic organizations, but in general there was hardly any discussion".

NOTES

1. Bosse and Köllner (2001) cover a wide array of the discussed reforms in politics, administration, security, economy, finance, welfare, education in the 1980s and 1990s.

2. This paper gives a short overview of the author's planned PhD thesis with the working title "Spill-over of the discourse among intellectuals onto the reform debate among politicians in Japan in the 1990s". This PhD thesis is based on the author's participation in the DFG-funded research project "Political reform and democratization discourses in East and Southeast Asia in the light of regional community building" at the Institute for East Asian Studies at the Gerhard-Mercator University Duisburg, Germany. For project publications see http://www.uni-duisburg.de/Institute/OAWISS/Publikationen/orangereihe.html.

3. 17 interviews were conducted in September/October 2001. The questions focused on how non-politicians can in general influence the debate among politicians, how different spill-over possibilities are evaluated and how this influence did happen in the reform of the electoral system, the administrative reform, and the presently discussed revision of the constitution. In the case of scholars and representatives of citizens' movements, those persons were elected whose focus is related to the discussed political reforms and who show a constructively critical attitude and try to participate in the discourse.

4. The strategy "adviser" was not explicitly referred to in the interviews, but was interpreted as being included in the strategy "personal relations". Since this

inclusion is problematic with regard to intellectuals advising committees, the category "adviser" was added here.

5. These councils carry diverse names (*shingikai*, *shinsakai*, *chôsakai*, etc.); for the sake of simplicity, these groups will be referred to as "advisory councils". For an extensive analysis of advisory councils, see Frank J. Schwartz (1998: 48–93).

6. These private commissions carry diverse names (*kenkyûkai, benkyôkai, kondankai*, etc.); for the sake of simplicity, these groups will be referred to as "private study groups".

7. Extensively on private study groups, see Schwartz (1998: 105–14) and Harari (1990).

8. For the minutes of the commission's meetings see the Lower House's Homepage at http://www.shugiin.go.jp/itdb_main.nsf/html/index_kenpou.htm.

9. The newspaper Yomiuri Shinbun has published books and reform proposals on different topics, often in the initial stages of the discourses. These books are characterized as having strongly influenced the discourses. In the case of the discourse on a revision of the Japanese constitution, it was the revision proposal published by the Yomiuri Shinbun which is regarded as the starting point of the debate at the end of the 1990s. The media therefore exert a certain influence on politicians and achieve a spill-over of ideas.

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CHAPTER 5

Bottom-Up Travel of Ideas for Political Reform in Malaysia

Claudia Derichs

INTRODUCTION

In the wake of the financial crisis in 1997/98, the discussion of how to shape Malaysia's future was not confined to economic arguments. The question of governance was discussed as well and flourished across ethnic, religious, societal and generational boundaries, which have traditionally been of considerable importance for the country's political discourse. Malaysians had become more politically conscious and politically interested after 1998 than before, it was reported. The article looks at some of the suggestions for political reform in Malaysia which have been uttered by various groups and individuals. It addresses the question of how ideas of reform and change can spread from intellectual debate into the higher echelons of political decision-making – if they can at all. Drawing on empirical data collected during different field work periods in Malaysia between 1999 and 2001, the observation is that the diffusion of ideas from bottom to top may take familiar ways regarding the role of think tanks, intellectuals, mass media, NGOs and political parties. Beyond the institutional and formal level, however, the channelling of policy suggestions is based on informal procedures that do not depend on more or less democracy, but are linked to the specific social and political setting of the country – for example, the ethnic constellation and relicts and traditional sources of authority.

THE SETTING OF QUESTION AND THEORY

"Classical" discourse analysis was located primarily in the discipline of linguistics. Only gradually it began to occupy spaces in communication science and became accepted also as a method of empirical media science. Within the Western social sciences, political discourse is seen as an input factor. Discourse is understood as a political actor exerting influence on political change. Whether this understanding can be generalized and applied to contemporary non-Western societies as well, has yet to be proved. The article seeks to address this question and examines the social context in which

ideas of political change and reform are produced and developed with a case study of Malaysia. I look at the opportunity structures that may be given or may be lacking to make ideas find their way into policy formulation, policy-making and eventually political decision-making. Different mechanisms of power and authority determine the spread of ideas in that they allow or deny access to politically decisive circles. The question is whether ideas on reform and change evolving in a discourse really have the power to determine the official thinking within the ruling elite. An important role, one would assume, is assigned to think tanks serving as central sources of information and innovation for the policy-making elite.

Malaysia is a country in Southeast Asia where the discourse on political reform and change has become remarkably lively in the last four to five years, last but not least pushed by the regional financial crisis of 1997/98. Four groups of actors who are deemed to play a crucial role as providers of ideas and perhaps opinion leaders in the public discourse are of interest for the topic. They are think tank members, academics, NGO activists and politicians, some of them belonging to two groups at the same time. Ideas are seen as a central qualitative ingredient of discourse. Following the Western scheme of the diffusion of ideas, the suggestion would be that ideas are produced (or born) somewhere in the world, picked up by somebody in the same place or at another place, and elaborated upon in institutions like think tanks, from where they enter the stage of political elite discussion and eventually become an item in the policy-making process. Thinks tanks are regarded in the West as an interface between science and politics, as a transmission belt. In a simplified version, the process would work like shown in Figure 4.1. We can presume though, that this is not the way ideas spread in any country of the world. Each culture and each nation-state has its peculiar way of handling the dissemination of information that is the food for thought shaped in ideas. In the case of Malaysia, we can relate to a set of questions which bring us closer to an understanding of how and where ideas travel. This will finally lead us to some suggestions on the actual meaning of public discourse for political reform and change. The thesis here is that public discourse has an impact on policy formulation, policy-making and decision-making only when three conditions match: timing, acceptance of the dominant position of the ruling party/ruling coalition, and access to authorities.

The Empirical Setting
The set of questions addressed at Malaysian interviewees between 1999 and 2001 referred to domestic and regional political change, the perception of political developments in and outside Malaysia, reforms that are considered important for the country, and the probability of reform policies that have been generated by critical and creative minds within the "thinking community". The interviewees were think tank members, NGO
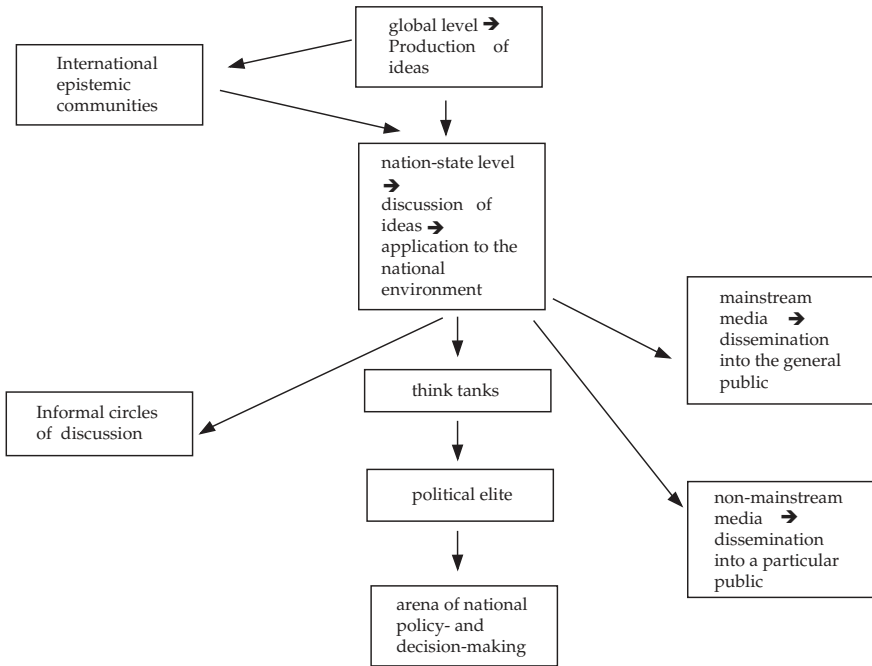
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                        ┌─────────────────┐
                        │ global level ➜  │
                        │ Production  of  │
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│communities   │             │ nation-state level│
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                             │ discussion  of    │     ┌──────────────┐
                             │ ideas ➜          │     │ mainstream   │
                             │ application to the│     │ media   ➜    │
                             │ national          │     │ dissemination│
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│Informal circles│     │  think tanks │
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                      ┌──────────────┐      │ non-mainstream│
                      │political elite│     │ media   ➜    │
                      └──────────────┘      │ dissemination│
                              │             │ into a particular│
                      ┌──────────────┐      │ public       │
                      │arena of national│   └──────────────┘
                      │policy- and      │
                      │decision-making  │
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Figure 5.1. Western scheme of idea diffusion.

and advocacy group activists, academics turned politicians and academics at universities. In one way or other, all of them can be subsumed under the category of "intellectuals".[1] For the purpose of this article, I concentrate on questions relating to the perception of change and the travel of certain ideas from point A (bottom) to a point B (up), that is questions like the following:

- What has according to your perception changed politically in Malaysia since 1997?
- Did events in other countries of the region have an impact on changes in your country?
- Do you think that reforms are necessary? If yes, in which sector (political, economic, social)?
- What kind of political change and/or reform would you recommend for Malaysia?
- Do you regard yourself and your institution/organization/party as an important participant in the political discourse of your country?
- How do ideas of political change and reform that are discussed publicly enter the realms of political policy-making?

The analysis of the answers to these questions shows the similarities and differences in the interpretation of the role of public and intellectual discourse for policy- and decision-making. The conclusion highlights some aspects which suggest that patterns of and conditions for idea travel in Malaysia are significantly personalized and preferences for a certain idea are not exclusively connected with any party or "camp" affiliation.

Perceptions of Past and Present

Asking what has changed in Malaysia since the regional financial crisis broke out in 1997, the counter question of whether it was the year 1997 or 1998 that has generated changes was instantly raised by some of the informants. For them, 1997 was connected to the realm of economics, whereas 1998 was a watershed for the political discourse. No doubt was uttered concerning the assumption that the sacking of former Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim in 1998 had a triggering effect on political developments in the country. The media reports on an increased political awareness since that time were confirmed.[2] A still open question is where this rising awareness has led and will lead. Are there chances for social movements and civil society to tap from those developments? Will the mood lead to a greater role to play for the opposition movement and civil society?

The events of the year 1998 have functioned as an eye-opener for the public on how the government handles problems. The government, in turn, had to come across and meet new challenges. Theoretically, such processes can strengthen democratization, because the spread of opposition views may be facilitated once an awareness for "things political" is given. People learn to consider their opinion part of politics, they participate in the political process by having an opinion and expressing it openly. The economic (1997) and the political crisis (1998) alike have been processes that disclosed systemic weaknesses. Frequently mentioned among these weaknesses is the lacking independence of the judiciary. In 1988, the Supreme Court's Lord President was suspended and five other judges of the same court were removed from their job. They were substituted by others who seemed to behave more loyal towards the ruling party. Civil liberties were curtailed by constraining laws like the Sedition Act or the Printing Presses and Publications Act. Anwar Ibrahim, who was once Prime Minister Mahathir's designated successor, was dismissed from government in 1998 after an abortive effort to mobilize the public for reforms and to unseat Mahathir at a party gathering. He was arrested under the country's Internal Security Act (ISA), which provides for indefinite detention without trial, and sentenced to fifteen years of imprisonment (six years for corruption charges and nine years for sodomy charges). The dismissal and dismal treatment of Anwar – he was beaten while blindfolded by the national police chief and chained to a bed in his cell – scratched on the Malaysian people's sense of moral and humanity. The verdicts on Anwar have been perceived as politically

motivated rather than neutrally inspired, independent judgements. The impression of a politically biased judiciary was nurtured by those events.

In political-systemic perspective, such developments signify an increasing concentration of power in the executive. Motivated by the struggle to stay in power and keep the current system going, more and more formally democratic procedures have been hollowed out. Since the late 1980s, an authoritarian tendency in politics has gained momentum. This has, informants say, become very clear to the people by now. At the same time, however, the observations sound quite positive on the engagement of the society at large. Interviewees state that the villages are talking politics that people want to have a stronger say in politics, and that the way people perceive politics has changed. There is a dimension of social change to it, too. On the one hand, the political space has become more hotly debated between parties and NGOs, which are no longer marginalized social groups but have managed to find coalition partners among the opposition parties. On the other hand, the status quo is challenged by the younger generation, who was strongest among the supporters of the *reformasi* movement in terms of age groups. Although many of the young Malays still enjoy the benefits of the New Economic Policy (NEP) and its successor, the National Development Policy, which both favour this ethnic group, the societal criticism of executive-centred politics has increased. Official political opinion is not automatically accepted in the public any more. Formerly accepted strategies of the ruling regime (the bailing out of ailing business enterprises to curb recession, for instance) became criticized, the legitimization of crony-friendly policies is questioned. According to one informant, "people have started to re-interpret the past, starting with 1997, and we can see a change of attitude towards leadership". This signifies a change in the political culture, because the expectation of what the state or the government should provide and what not, the attitude towards state performance, has changed.

In contrast to general optimism and expectations of a participatory movement on the rise, some interviewees reflected upon things with careful differentiation. A transfer of power from the ruling to the opposition coalition is not likely to happen in the near future because the opposition is not regarded a credible alternative to the ruling coalition yet. They lack the support of some crucial social groups in the society, for instance, important segments of the middle classes.[3] There are at least two groups that have to be separated analytically. One is composed of economic stakeholders, who have benefited from the NEP of the 1970s and 1980s, gained their assets and prefer to stick to the status quo. Another is composed of those who want to abolish the status quo; they seek structural change and a push for democratization, be it because they feel as economic losers of the NEP or because they have genuine political ambitions to change the system. In economic terms though, the government won back some credits that it had lost during the crisis by actually making attempts to counter cronyism and implement corporate reform policies.[4]

The measures taken to crush some connecting rods in paternalistic crony relationships came along with measures to discipline the society. Activists in the reform movement as well as other groups, cliques and initiatives seem to be touched intensively by a new wave of repression. In August 2001, the government prohibited to hold *ceramah* (public gatherings) outside, a measure clearly directed at opposition party PAS (Islamic Party of Malaysia), because this party attracted the masses in crowded public conventions. Civil servants and the teaching staff in schools and universities were asked to sign a "pledge of loyalty" in an effort to create model citizens who are committed and dedicated to the nation, are responsible and display a deep sense of patriotism. Critics argue that the pledge violates the academic freedom of pursuing knowledge in a free, non-partisan way.[5] The University and University Colleges Act of 1971, enacted to control the content of statements and the purpose of activities held on the campus by requiring prior approval, received yet another interpretation. The act prohibits political activity of teachers and students in institutions of higher learning. The implementation of the act depends on the political leaning of the students though. In November 2001, a member of the ruling coalition in parliament got worried about the continuing support of the reform movement by the students. He suggested that "UMNO politics should be allowed into university campuses, as the nation should be grateful to the party that had fought for the country's independence". The MP is quoted saying that it were alright for UMNO sections like the young women's wing (UMNO Puteri) to propagate their ideologies to students, because they belong to the government. "But if the opposition wants to do the same then we have to stop them because it is not appropriate and they have no business in campuses".[6] Disciplining the youth reached out to leisure activities when fans of black metal music were held for questioning because their cult-like practices (condemnation of the Bible, smoking *ganja*, taking Ecstasy pills) were identified as social ills. They were treated in programs to "keep them from becoming vulnerable to vice", "follow the right path" and "become better citizens in future".[7] The efforts to monitor social behaviour and ensure the loyalty of students, civil service and educational staff to the government have thus received a push since the formation of the *reformasi* movement.

Following an attack on military facilities and a bank robbery, the government began to hunt militant Islamic groups. The *Kumpulan Mujahedin Malaysia* (Malaysian Mujahedeen Group) was found to have links to international terrorist groups.[8] The crackdown on Islamic extremists became even stronger after September 11, 2001. The measures taken have aroused both approval and dislike. After 9/11, most people agreed that it had been the right policy to prevent Islamic extremist groups from taking ground in Malaysia. Before, the mood had been softer, probably also because one of the persons involved in the *Kumpulan Mujahedin Malaysia* happened to be the son of PAS leader and Chief Minister of the Kelantan State, Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat. The Chief

Minister is a respected Muslim leader for many Malays, so the involvement of his son seemed to indicate that the *Kumpulan* could not be that dangerous an Islamic group. This image was distorted in the wake of new findings and discoveries after 9/11. The legal instrument to get a hold of the extremists was once again the ISA, which is the most harshly condemned law among Malaysian human rights groups and political activists (of the opposition). Used against opposition figures and intellectuals, the ISA is severely criticized by NGOs and government-critical parties. Using it against Islamic extremists, however, has made some people think it over and regard it a useful legal instrument. The events of 9/11 and the subsequent global anti-terrorist policies have demonstrated the necessity of attentive national security agencies. Some states have (ab)used the post-September 11 mood to legitimize the suppression of political dissent. In the Western democracies, some long fought-for civil liberties have been constrained using the argument of terror prevention. In Malaysia, Prime Minister Mahathir definitely gained support by appearing as a strong leader preventing the nation from being harmed by terrorists. On his 76th birthday (in December 2001), he was riding a new wave of support generated by fallout from the terror attacks on the United States.[9] The opposition parties could hardly ignore this.

On the whole, the political developments after the crisis of 1997 reveal an undisputed belief in the triggering effect of the Anwar affair for both the dynamic of the public political discourse and an increased political awareness among the average people. This understanding was shared by informants who are close to the opposition movement and informants who tend to support government views alike. The reform movement had a fresh start after Anwar's arrest and his subsequent imprisonment. The dynamic of the movement became weakened in the years thereafter, partly because its leaders were arrested and detained on ISA charges, and partly because the movement was not strongly supported by the economic stakeholders in Malaysian society. Since the upper and middle class stakeholders usually enjoy access to the policy-making elite, their support of a reform idea would definitely facilitate its travel into the higher political echelons. NGOs and opposition parties have formed coalitions and partnerships, but since a central coalition partner within the ruling elite, former Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, is not available there any more, an important opportunity structure for the diffusion of ideas has been erased.

PERSPECTIVES ON REGIONAL POLITICAL EVENTS

Regional political events have been monitored in Malaysia but did not have an overwhelming effect on political change. Malaysians mostly looked at Indonesia and Thailand but not with the intention to copy events or initiate spill-over effects. Although it cannot be denied that there was some influence on domestic political affairs generated by the developments in neighbouring states – e.g. the fall of Suharto – no big wave of fundamental change was

transferred to Malaysia. Several reasons can be mentioned to explain this. On an average basis, the people in Malaysia are more concerned about their daily life than about reform politics. This applies in particular to the rural and village areas, where the local situation is quite different from that in metropolitan Kuala Lumpur or other big cities. The supply of basic goods and infrastructure is, to put it simple, a more urgent wish than the enhancement of democracy. In the cities, people did not really like street demonstrations, interviewees mentioned. Once the people take to the streets, the usual order is disturbed. It is again those who have too much at stake who prefer a quiet and incremental change without upheavals. The dislike of mass demonstrations and the preference of stability made a difference to Indonesia (and the Philippines), it was claimed. Government-friendly informants stressed that the remembrance of the racial clashes during mass demonstrations in May 1969 adds to the attitude of fear and dislike towards such forms of interest articulation. Conversely, opposition-friendly informants tended to prove the will of the majority by pointing out how many thousand demonstrators joined such gatherings. It was this group of interviewees who did not play the influence of the neighbouring countries down completely, but stressed that at least Indonesia, and probably also Thailand and the Philippines played a role in the perception of the situation in Malaysia.

The events in those countries have been used, however, by both the government coalition and opposition activists to appeal to certain sentiments. The opposition parties – and of course Anwar before he was arrested – clearly used the KKN[10] rhetoric for their purposes. Their intention was to detect the same systemic deficits in Malaysia as were made responsible in Indonesia for economic and political inefficiency. Later on, the Indonesian situation was used by the Malaysian opposition to show that people's action can be strong enough to bring about a free press, free media, and free speech. Indonesia was presented as a "positive" example by this group. Conversely, the government parties in Malaysia used Indonesia as a negative example, referring to the need of racial integration and social stability. They used Indonesia as a warning example of what could happen to ethnic minorities (particularly Chinese) if the political leadership were no longer able to control the scene. The formula was simple: If we allow street demonstrations and the killing of ethnic Chinese like in Indonesia, we will have another 1969 in Malaysia. The outcomes of the social unrest and the political restructuring in Indonesia that took place after the fall of Suharto then played into the hands of the Malaysian government parties, too. The results of the political restructuring in the countries of the region are, after all, not very promising for neither political nor economic stability. In short, the KKN rhetoric was appealing but the results were disappointing. Consequently, stability is still much more associated with the ruling coalition in Malaysia than with other political parties.

From an analytical point of view, the economic argument has gained weight in the interpretation of the situation in Malaysia. Too many people

have too much at stake in Malaysia, so they would prefer to see incremental, evolutionary change rather than abrupt and radical alterations. The middle classes in Malaysia have grown faster than in Indonesia, Thailand or the Philippines; the poverty rate is much lower (population below income poverty line: 36.6% in the Philippines, 27.1% in Indonesia and 15.5% in Malaysia).[11] There is less radical sentiment in Malaysia to mobilize the masses for street fighting. Another argument mentioned was that Malaysians (simply) do not like unrest but like stability. The government therefore would never allow street demonstrations. The different situation in Malaysia in comparison to other states of the region is deemed important in the national consciousness. This can be summarized in the observation that certain spill-over effects took place throughout the region, but that the need to copy events happening in a neighbouring country was not felt strongly. Thailand and the Philippines function as positive examples in terms of press freedom and political liberties. The social and political liberties achieved there (and also in Indonesia) are considered true and respectable merits of change. Conversely, the handling of the economic crisis is not very well received. For the reform movement in Malaysia, this is seen as a signal that Malaysia is part of a regional movement towards democratization, whereas pro-government groups stress the negative outcomes of the political and social turbulence in these countries.

SUGGESTIONS FOR CHANGE AND REFORM IN MALAYSIA

The list of recommendations for reform is headed by the need to strengthen democratic institutions (elections, parliament, judiciary and others). Regardless of political/party affiliations, this wish is articulated. The strengthening of democratic institutions has to go along with the provision of channels for dissenting views, so that the opposition can participate in the discussion of policies. In 2001, the question of the independence of the judiciary was frequently debated in the public and in the non-mainstream media. The judiciary, the police and policy-making bodies were described as eroded institutions which definitely need to be reformed.[12] The question is how an institutional reform could be achieved. There are various options according to different institutional, personal and political affiliations of the persons suggesting the reform. Some emphasize that democratic liberties must be given in the right doses, meaning not to allow too much at a given time. For those people, the concept of democracy has to be "customized" in order to fit the Malaysian situation. This view is very much determined by a top-down approach to politics and is found in other countries of the region, too. The masses have to be guided because they do not really know what is right for them, seems to be the underlying assumption to legitimize the logic of "customizing" democratic and liberal principles. In a weaker version, this

assumption comes up again when the need for an evolutionary instead of a revolutionary change is emphasized.

Strengthening democratic institutions can mean to modernize key institutions of the system like the judiciary. Since the impression has spread that judgments are politically biased, the exchange of persons in key positions would be a measure bringing fresh minds into the judicial system. But this is not enough. To make judicial institutions credible and accountable, a fair process must be ensured to any individual in society regardless of his or her political affiliation. Since this credibility has suffered in the last twenty years, the task takes more than an exchange of staff. Judges and attorneys need to prove their independence from the executive and be sure they can stay in office even when their judgement does not please the ruling elite. Any other reform relates to this requirement, because credibility and accountability are two pillars of the political process that cannot be created by formal institutions of checks and balances exclusively but have to grow and belong to the political ethic of a democratic system. Representatives of the government, however, tend to point out that the key institutions and formal procedures of a democratic system are all existing and functioning well in Malaysia. The prime minister believes that no *reformasi* is needed.

> This country has never been under autocratic or military rule. Since our independence, we have practiced a democratic system with continuing elections. … Since independence, we have had 10 general elections in 43 years during this tenure the opposition had won and ruled a few states. As such, why is there a need for reformasi in our country?[13]

The prime minister is perfectly right. What is disfavoured by his critics though, is the informal means of circumventing and influencing the proper functioning of the system. In the case of elections and election campaigning, for instance, there are some procedures that definitely work in favour of the ruling parties and cannot simply be imitated by the opposition parties because they do not have the resources to do so. Among these procedures is to let members of the ruling party's young women's wing move into Malay households to prevent the opposition from approaching voters there; to have the ruling party's youth as storm troopers; to have government staff camping out in the constituency to ensure the community they represent would be 'safe voters'; to have the government announce development projects for areas which its elected representatives have long ignored and which it usually has no intention of honouring; to have the police threaten with worsening security if, by implication, the voter decides to back the "wrong" candidate.[14]

None of these practices is illegal or violates the formal rules. This is why the ruling coalition can claim to stick to the rules, whereas opposition

campaigners complain it does not. The government might even suggest to the opposition to use the same means. The opposition, however, lacks the resources to do so. It does not surprise then that many a reform activist favours a change of the entire political structure (party structure, power distribution and power acquisition). A more moderate approach then is to create a two-party or two-coalition system, open more channels for dissenting views, allow the opposition room for expression, alter the electoral system (from majority to proportional representation system), elect office holders and executives instead of appointing them, lift up the functions of parliament, re-empower the constitution and end links between businessmen and politicians, and underpin this structure by strengthening opposition and civil society. There is also hope that a short period of government change – one year would even do – will have a positive effect on the empowerment of democratic institutions and "making democrats".

On the whole, a preference for institutional change is discernible. The need of both reform-minded persons in key institutions *and* reform on a structural/procedural level is evident. Malaysians, in general, however feel quite comfortable with the current stable situation, especially in the upper and middle classes. This is an important difference to Western middle classes and a bourgeoisie that demanded and pushed political rights through. Political reformers have a hard time convincing the masses and the stakeholders alike of their ideas for change.

POLITICAL DISCOURSE AND IDEA TRAVEL

Contributions to the public political discourse can take the shape of regular writing for newspapers or turning up on TV. Intellectuals may have a voice in the media when it comes to specific issues (women's issues, Islamic issues, human rights and other issues) and when they are consulted as experts. Others exert influence in debates within specific organizations (committees, parties and institutes), although belonging to an organization does not automatically mean to have avenues for political dissent available. Persons close to or even active in political parties were convinced that they can contribute in one way or other to the political discussion. Academics were less confident in this regard. Intellectuals have avenues to spread an idea within their scientific community. Publications, papers in conferences and research newsletters are the usual ways to go public with a thought product. Organizing seminars and workshops, maintaining a critical voice in the public discourse and raising voices through the mainstream media when deemed necessary then is a more broadly oriented form in which discursive engagement can take place. Where an idea goes from there, however, is not exactly predictable. In this regard, a line can be drawn between those who have access to formal and informal avenues of idea exchange and those who do not have a chance to attend formal or informal meetings with politicians. Between these two groups, the existence of access structures also relates to

the political affiliation, that is opposition or ruling coalition. Informants with access to authorities of the ruling parties feel more confident about the transfer of their opinions than informants in a relatively marginalized position.

In a prominent think tank like the Institute of Strategic and International Studies (ISIS), ideas are formulated which sometimes become a paradigm for the national agenda. The Vision 2020 (*Waswasan 2020*) is a case in point. It was developed at ISIS. This think tank, however, is in a very prominent position because of the access of its director and management to the ruling political elite. For think tanks lacking these access structures, it is nearly impossible to push an idea straight forward into the centre of policy-making. Independent organizations and think tanks affiliated to the opposition have difficulties in "selling" their proposals to the relevant circles.

The question of who contributes in which manner to political discourse and policy-making is strongly related to socio-structural criteria, including matters of class, ethnic origin, social status and patterns of patronage. Within the whole group of informants, those who claimed to be able to let an idea travel into the leadership circles were primarily those who had formal or informal access to political authorities. The others claimed a limited ability to participate in the public political discourse with their thoughts and opinions and an even more limited access to avenues reaching the ears of authorities within the ruling elite. On an individual level, think tank members and members of academia may be invited to formal and informal meetings with representatives of the political leadership. Providing expertise when requested by authorities – e.g. in "brain storming sessions" – is a formal way to contribute to the discussion, whereas attending weddings or other festivities of high-ranking politicians can be used as an informal way to let ideas travel. Writing regular articles or columns for a mainstream newspaper is a very effective way to bring thoughts and ideas into public discussion, but the access to such avenues is limited due to several socio-structural factors; belonging to the middle classes is usually one of them, and belonging to a certain ethnic group another. Because of the affirmative action policy towards Malays and indigenous people (a group forming the *bumiputera*, the "sons of the soil"), ethnic Malays enjoy privileges that may turn into benefits when political competition is at stake. In the political elite and in the bureaucracy Malays form the majority, whereas non-*bumiputera* have a strong position in the economy.[15] Although inter-ethnic cleavages tend to decrease the higher the social stratum, it is a matter of fact that politics in Malaysia are still highly ethnicized.

The general feeling expressed by interviewed intellectuals is that political change is not discussed openly in Malaysia. The diffusion of ideas seems constrained by the power structure of the national government, and to a certain extent this is due to the fact that party politicians are too much caught in the competition for posts instead of thinking about change.

Another important impediment to the bottom-up travel of reform ideas is the procedure of assigning key positions in the administration. Mayors, chief ministers, vice chancellors in universities and even the prime minister are not elected by the people but appointed by the government. This means that the office holders do not feel responsible to the people but to the government. The consequence of this lack of responsibility is a lack of responsiveness. There is a missing formal link between the articulation of ideas in the public realm and their diffusion into policy-making circles, it seems, because the office holders do not have to compete with each other to be elected by the very people they are supposed to represent. Formal mechanisms of "idea travel" via political parties as organizations to aggregate policy ideas do exist. But, again, the *procedure* of interaction within such institutions may be very different, because internal party structures and informal rules make it difficult to initiate bottom-up processes. Malaysian observers refer to a "feudal mindset" which is still at work in contemporary social and political interaction.[16] Party leaders hold office for decades, almost "for life", in some cases. But this principle seems accepted in the ruling as well as in the opposition parties, so the leaders also bring in their favourite candidates who then become re-elected without question. "Leadership by osmosis", as one informant calls it, functions as a source of authority. Authority structures, the role and function of think tanks and the ideal of a non-adverse relation between state and society suggest to not just look at what is discussed publicly, that is at the public political discourse, but to look for the mechanisms and conditions beyond the arena of discourse to find out how ideas travel.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In this article, the purpose was to present a report of the results deriving from approximately 50 interview sessions with intellectuals in Malaysia in different fieldwork periods between 1999 and 2001. Some preliminary conclusions for comparative research on political discourses and the diffusion of reform ideas can be drawn from the material. The observations made during the fieldwork lead me to the thesis mentioned in the beginning, namely that three conditions have to be met when an idea is meant to travel from bottom to top.

   The arena of public discourse in Malaysia is separated from the discourse within the ruling coalition and the policy-making bodies. On the one hand, this is caused by the common impression that politics and political decision-making in Malaysia is a closed-shop system. On the other hand, it is a result of structures and procedures within the institutions of the system (e.g. the procedure of appointing instead of electing office holders). The majority of the interviewees believed that there is hardly a chance to enter the closed shop of policy- and decision-making. Only few informants believed that there are (formal and informal) avenues into the closed shop, primarily because they

have access to them. These avenues have to be walked on carefully though, meaning that shop doors can be shut swiftly when certain limits of political action have been exceeded. The condition that has to be met is a certain level of acceptance of the ruling party's/coalition's dominant position as well as its monopoly in defining what is in the national interest and what is not. If this condition is not met, access to formal and informal circles and forums (brain storming sessions, consultative councils and private meetings with high-ranking officials/politicians) is almost impossible. The reasoning sounds simplistic, but it is not. In other countries with a formal democracy and a one-party dominance, the procedures can be quite different (e.g. in Japan, where vertical integrative procedures serve to include the opposition and various interest groups into policy-making processes).

Access to authorities is another condition that has to be met because of the very personalized and party-affiliated function of think tanks and policy research institutes. It is not enough to be a member of a well-known think tank conducting qualitatively sound research. The important question is whether this think tank is accepted by the decision-making elite as an input agent of political ideas. Thirdly, the element of timing is of importance. The concept of a Malaysian civil society was welcome within the ruling elite when Anwar was still a top member of the UMNO. After Anwar's sacking, it became an "issue non-grata". Intellectuals working on it might continue to discuss it with their colleagues or in NGOs. Within the ruling elite, however, it is currently not deemed important any more. Connected to the factor of access and timing is the ethnic factor. A Chinese Malaysian would probably have had no chance to push a civil society concept forward as far as Anwar has done. The privileges and special rights of the *bumiputera* ought not to be questioned by the non-*bumiputera*. In a nutshell: The travel of ideas is contingent upon many factors that cannot be discerned by merely looking at the institutional, formal and discursive level. Looking at the informal (and) procedural level lifts some curtains. Systematizing such procedures, however, appears to be difficult because every nation-state has its peculiar social and political setting (e.g. the ethnic factor or the "feudal mindset" in Malaysia).

APPENDIX: SELECTED LIST OF THINK TANKS, INSTITUTIONS AND NGOS VISITED FOR INTERVIEWS

- All Women's Action Society (AWAM)
- Asian Strategy and Leadership Institute (ASLI)
- Center for Policy Research, Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM)
- Centre for the Promotion of Knowledge and Language Learning, Universiti Malaysia Sabah
- Coordinating Bureau: Research and Education for Peace, Universiti Sains Malaysia

- Institute of Diplomacy and Foreign Relations (IDFR)
- Institute for Policy Research (IPR/IKD)
- Institute of Strategic and International Studies (ISIS)
- Institute Sultan Iskandar (ISI), Universiti Teknologi Malaysia
- International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC)
- International Movement for a Just World (JUST)
- Malaysian Human Rights Commission (SUHAKAM)
- Malaysian Strategic Research Centre (MSRC)
- Ministry of National Unity and Social Development
- Penang State Executive Council
- Regional Administration Division: Yayasan Sabah (Sabah Foundation)
- Regional Coordination Bureau: Southeast Asian Conflict Studies Network (USM)
- SIS Forum Malaysia Berhad: Sisters in Islam (SIS)
- Socio-Economic and Environmental Research Institute (SERI)
- Suara Rakyat Malaysia (SUARAM; Voice of the Malaysian People)
- Terengganu State Executive Council
- University of Malaya (UM) and National University of Malaysia (UKM), various institutes and centres

NOTES

1. For the purpose of analytical conformity, I stick to the definition of an "intellectual" provided in the article of Thomas Heberer in this volume.
2. For media reports, see e.g. Murray Hiebert, "No Turning Back. Opposition leader says protests are changing Malaysia," *Far Eastern Economic Review,* 5 November 1998; S. Jayasankaran, "Prime Mover," *Far Eastern Economic Review,* 12 November 1998; Simon Elegant and S. Jayasankaran, "Malaysia Uncensored," *Far Eastern Economic Review,* 6 July 2000.
3. Abdul Rahman Embong, *Social Transformation, the State and the Middle Classes in Post-Independence Malaysia,* in *Cultural Contestations. Mediating Identities in a Changing Malaysian Society,* ed. Ibrahim Zawawi (London: Asean Academic Press, 1998), 83–116.
4. See also S. Jayasankaran, "Mahathir's New Model," *Far Eastern Economic Review,* 14 February 2002: 44–45; S. Jayasankaran, "Malaysia Turns Around," *Far Eastern Economic Review,* 23 May 2002: 40–41.
5. See The Star, 13 August 2001: 4; Aziz, "Make teachers sign agreement," *The Sun*, 15 August 2001: 2; All civil sercants to also sign contracts on duties. For a critical discussion of this pledge of loyalty see Rosli Omar, "An Anti-Democratic Pledge," *Highlights from Aliran Monthly,* URL: http://www. Malaysia.net/ aliran/, retrieved 29 March 2002.
6. "Susan Loone, MP says 'aye' to Umno politics on campus, 'naye' to opposition," *Malaysiakini*, 19 November 2001, http://www.malaysiakini.com/News/, retrieved 20 November 2001.

7. See A. Sangeetha, and Omar Osman, "40 cult youths mend ways," *The Sun*, 15 August 2001: 11; Cynthia Blemin, "Plan to hold talks during assembly," *The Sun*, 15 August 2001: 6.

8. See Tony Emmanuel, "Gun-running racket," *New Straits Times*, 18 August 2001: 1; Sa'odah Elias, "Foreign link probe on KMM,"*The Star*, 10 August 2001: 4.

9. See also Karin Adelsberger et al., "Der 11. September und die Folgen in Asien" (September 11 and its consequences in Asia), *Duisburg Working Papers on East Asian Studies* 42 (2002).

10. KKN: *korupsi*, *kolusi*, *nepotisme*. The three key elements of a system relying cronies and intransparent mechanisms were first coined as a protest formula in Indonesian *reformasi* movement. From there the abbreviation KKN shifted to Malaysia.

11. Data according to Human Development Index 2001, URL: http://www.undp.org/hdr2001/indicator/indic_31_1_1.html, retrieved 24 September 2002.

12. See e.g. Steven Gan, "Return of the old judicial (dis)order," *Malaysiakini*, 11 November 2001, URL: http://www.malaysiakini.com/Editorial/, retrieved 12 November 2001.

13. "No reformasi needed: Umno president," *Malaysiakini*, 21 June 2001, URL: http://www.malaysiakini.com/News, retrieved June 22, 2001.

14. Compilation of points mentioned in a contribution tot the mailing list sangkancil@lists.malaysia.net, received Apr. 03, 2002.

15. This phenomenon is frequently found in countries with ethnic minorities, analyses Mohammad Haji Ysuf, "The Middleman Minority Perspectives: A Review," *Jurnal Antropologi dan* Sosiologi (Journal of Anthropology and Sociology) 19, 13 (1991): 13–24.

16. See e.g. Farish A. Noor and Megat Junid, "*Getek*-ness with politics. Part One," *Malaysiakini*, 3 March 2000, URL: http://www.malaysiakini.com/Column/, retrieved 4 March 2001; Farish A. Noor, "A tale of two neo-feudals. Part One," *Malaysiakini*, 9 June 2001, URL: http://www.malaysiakini.com/Column/, retrieved 10 June 2001; Norma Mahmood, *Malaysia*. in *Rethinking Political Development in Southeast Asia*, ed. Norma Mahmood (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1994), 63–80.

Discourses on Political Reform and Democratization in Transitional China

He Zengke

In 1978, China began to carry out its policy of reform and opening to the outside world, and since then discussions about political reform and democratization have continued without stop. But in the late 1980s, there was a turning-point, and discussion became both more rational and intense. Since then, the discussion has been both broadened and deepened focusing on the following ten subjects: neo-authoritarianism; civil society and the third sector, the path of democratization; the rule of law, fighting corruption and institutional innovations; political stability; social strata; social justice; nationalism; the "Three Represents"; and the modernization of the ruling party. By foregrounding these discourses on political reform and democratization since the end of 1980s, this paper summarizes previous research works and explores (some scenarios of) the future of political development in China.

DEBATE ON NEO-AUTHORITARIANISM

Pro neo-authoritarianism scholars argued that it would be a long process before democratization was arrived at. They contended that the evolution of a political system towards a democratic regime needed to go through three stages: from totalitarianism to authoritarianism, and only then to liberal democracy or plural democracy, i.e. it was impossible to leap from totalitarianism to liberal democratic politics directly; otherwise, it might lead to political earthquakes. The reason was that democratic political systems could only exist if they were securely based on social fundamentals, such as a market economy, a more liberal policy on ownership of firms, pluralism, economic growth, social modernization and political stability. Unlike the old authority and autocracy, the new authority would then create the social fundamentals for a democratic political system. They insisted that the transition from the planned to a market economy, the realization of social modernization in condition of late economic development, and the maintenance of political order in a changing society, all needed to be achieved by the new authoritarian regime.

The so-called, neo-authoritarianism refers to such a regime, in which the political leadership is aware of the necessity for modernization and develops the government-led modernization model in which politics is separated from the economy, and establishing a market economy and a more liberal policy on ownership of firms, and at the same time by restraining political participation, maintaining political stability and enhancing the authority of national government by coercive force. The difference between neo-authoritarianism and totalitarianism is that, for the former, government control on the whole society has been loosened and a limited pluralism and intellectual space has emerged in the economic and social fields while the government still keeps strong control in the political field. Neo-authoritarianism opposes mass democracy but concerning meritocracy and democracy based on elites they have not said much on how to implement them. Those who supported neo-authoritarianism had no intention to maintain it in the long term; rather they considered it a necessary transitional period toward a democratic regime, and thus they describe it as a transitional, authoritarian regime.

Opponents of neo-authoritarianism raised a great many questions about the viewpoints of proponents of neo-authoritarianism. For example, they pointed out that those who supported neo-authoritarianism could not ensure that the authority that they urged was the ideal, benevolent new authority (as envisaged above); moreover, empowering the authority of individual persons would provide legitimacy for preserving rule by an authoritarian regime and for irregular (i.e. non-democratic) changes of leadership. They argued furthermore that over-emphasis on personal authority might lead to the return of autocracy and intensify the abuse of power and corruption. As a result, they strongly advocated political reform combined with a democratization process and at the same time implementing economic system reform. However, they differed amongst themselves about the concrete goals of democratic politics. Some scholars advocated the separation of three kinds of powers (translator's note: executive, judicial and administrative) and the adoption of complete systems for national elections, parliament and multi-party set-ups.

Some scholars proposed to implement democratic elitism in the transitional period that is to democratize the source of elite authority through elections, and at the same time to emphasize the role of elite and strengthen the power of elite. Still some other scholars suggested developing the procedural democracy.

The heated debate about neo-authoritarianism has produced significant and lasting influence on both academic circles and government officials. This debate and the 1989 political events afterwards forced Chinese intellectuals to reconsider some rational factors included in neo-authoritarianism, and many radical intellectuals in China began to give up radical democratic thoughts and turned to more moderate positions. Meanwhile, scholars on

both sides of the debate concerning neo-authoritarianism, pursued the goal of liberal democracy or plural democracy; the difference between them being whether to pursue this as the current goal or as the long-term goal. Therefore, when Chinese scholars started to talk about "Asian democracy" later, they preferred to regard it as a kind of authoritarian regime, believing that it was only a kind of transitional regime toward democratic politics, and so they are against to justifying and regularizing it by the fine-sounding name of "Asian democracy".[1] After the political events of 1989, top Chinese leaders basically adopted the strategies of governing the country proposed by neo-authoritarianism. While maintaining political stability as the priority, they strongly advocate economic pluralism and market-oriented reform, and as a result have laid down a relatively solid, social and economic foundation for China's democratization.

STUDIES ON CIVIL SOCIETY AND THE THIRD SECTOR

In the 1990s, especially since the fourteenth Party Congress of the CCP in 1992 when the goal of building a socialist market economy was put forward, some scholars had realized that with the establishment of a socialist market economy, a civil society relatively independent from the state would emerge, while the development of civil society would provide a strong impetus for a democratization process and create structural fundamentals for a democratic regime. Since then, debates on civil society within domestic academic circles have become increasingly heated. This trend has continued unabated and recently a new tide that links civil society with good governance has emerged.

Since the end of the 1990s, Chinese academic circles having gone into more depth in studies of civil society, and so are marked with some new features. Firstly, scholars began to use the expression "*Gongmin Shehui*" to replace the old term "*Shimin Shehui*" and the civil society theory emphasized more civic and political rights such as the rights of information access, participation and association. Secondly, the studies on the third sector and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) which have close links with civil society have developed, research centres for NGOs have been established in Qinghua University and some other Universities, and a series of books about the third sector and NGOs have been published.[2] Thirdly, the new framework of "state market economy and civil society" has replaced the framework of "state-civil society" and become the mainstream of studies of civil society. As a result, scholars use new frameworks to analyse the structures and role of civil society. The cooperative and complementary relationships among civil society, state and market economy has received more and more attention and the participation of civil society in state's affairs is also regarded as positive. Finally, some scholars carried out studies on civil society, governance and good governance by linking them together and pointed out that the quiet emergence of civil society in China has promoted

the change of governance and advances democratic governance and good governance.[3] Governance and good governance have become more and more popular terms in China.

The continuous research and enlightenment by the domestic academic circles has produced important social effects. Comprising as they do the basic units of civil society, the rationality of various civil associations and organizations has won acknowledgement from the authorities. Correspondingly, the Ministry of Civil Affairs has established the Bureau of Civil Organizations for the daily management of various civil organizations. The central government has also promulgated the "Regulations Concerning the Management and Registration of Civil Organizations" and the "Regulations Concerning the Management and Registration of Civil Non-Enterprise Units", thereby that further governing and normalizing civil organizations. As a result, various non-political, civil organizations have developed remarkably, engaging with great enthusiasm in public welfare activities such as environmental protection, charitable causes, and even the application to play host to the Olympic Games, etc. The relevant government departments are also starting both to listen to the opinions of civil organizations and to pay attention to the roles these organizations play in society. More importantly, the development of various civil organizations especially the social intermediary organizations provides reliable guarantees for the transformation of government functions. In the process of administrative reform after 1990s, government began to deliberately withdraw itself from some economic and social fields. Various civil organizations especially those social intermediary organizations actively enter into these spheres and manage themselves through self-governance and self-regulation.

CHINESE PATH TOWARD DEMOCRACY: TOP-DOWN OR BOTTOM-UP?

It is indeed an interesting question whether it is a top-down approach of democratization advanced by national government, or a bottom-up path of democratization experiments that started first from the grassroots and local levels, and then spread into more regions and went upwards step by step.

Before the 1989 political event, Chinese intellectual elite had placed their hope of democratic reform on the highest echelon of leaders by submitting many plans of political reform to them. The intellectuals expected the top leaders to implement democratic reform in a top-down manner.

Both radical democrats and neo-authoritarianism proponents held the same position, though the plans of political reform put forward by neo-authoritarianism proponents were more conservative. Discussions during this period were largely limited to the theory level, without much consideration of feasibility.

Since the 1989 political event, Chinese intellectual elites have become more realistic about how to achieve the goal of democracy by paying more

attention to studying issues from the point of view of Chinese national conditions. In the process of studying Chinese politics, many scholars have foregrounded the significance of village self-governance or grassroots democracy in re-starting the democratization process. Rong Jingben et al., for instance, have made an optimistic prediction about the osmotic development of grassroots democratic elections into higher levels, and expect that China will move towards the path of democratization in a bottom-up way. Xu Yong and some other scholars hold a more pessimistic position on it (bottom-up democratization) because they pay much more attention to the role-model effects and democracy-training role of grassroots democracy and conclude that its use as a role-model is limited because grassroots democracy cannot be applied generally.

Since the end of the 1990s, some new democratic reforms have developed within the Party. One example is "two rounds of voting system" for the village Party branches and its secretary. In this, villagers vote for the first round of confidence or recommendation, and then the Party members vote in the second round of the election. Another one is the reform of the electoral system for township government and Party leaders, such as direct election of township leaders in Buyun township, Sichuan Province, and "three times and two rounds of voting system" for township leaders in Dapeng town, Guangdong Province and so on. These new trends in political development have attracted the attention of and research by many scholars and experts. Huang Weiping and his colleagues at Shenzhen University are pioneers in this respect. Most scholars believe that the new trends described above represent the future direction of grassroots democracy, though the concrete procedures and practice may still have some space for improvement.

In the process of studying village and township democratic elections, scholars found that it is impractical to move toward democracy in a bottom-up way. Democratic experiments at grassroots level will not be sustainable if they cannot have official support or at least tacit permission from national and local governments. A sustainable democratic practice such as village self-governance and "two-rounds of voting system" for the village Party branch should be based on strong, official support from governments at various levels. The difficulties of the task of reforming the electoral system for township leaders may be due to lack of strong official support from higher authorities. Resultingly, the democratization path in China in fact should be a mixture of both top-down and bottom-up processes. Making progress in democratization should rely on joint efforts by the central government, local governments and the citizens.

FROM THE LEGAL SYSTEM TO THE RULE OF LAW

There is a long tradition of rule by individual persons in China. Absolutist rule is a typical style of rule by individuals. In the absolutist approach law is

just one means for governing people, though rule by individuals using the legal system and individual rule without a legal system are quite different. The Cultural Revolution was a type of rule by individuals without a legal system. As the victims of the Cultural Revolution, the second-generation leaders hated from the bottom of their heart the tradition of rule by individuals and abuses of the legal system for personal motives. Consequently, they established the goal of improving the socialist legal system. In the process of improving the socialist legal system, the second-generation leadership with Deng Xiaoping at its core, continuously deepened their ideas. In view of various phenomena working against the socialist legal system, they put forward the important view that the CCP should carry out its mandate within the limits of the Constitution and the law before which everyone is equal.

After the policies of reform and opening to the outside world were implemented, Chinese academic circles especially legal circles have discussed the issues of rule by individuals, the function of a legal system, and rule of law. They have clarified the difference between on the one hand rule by individuals and on the other hand rule by legal system and rule of law; they have put forward the goal of building the state of rule of law. After the Central Committee of the CCP established the goal of building a socialist market economic system in 1992, those legal circles clearly stated that from their perspective, the theme that the market economy was a kind of economy where rule of law is practiced, property rights are safeguarded, and contracts enforced according to the law. With the intensifying efforts to win WTO membership, those legal circles proposed rigorous pre-conditions under which the country would be run according to the letter of the law and to establish a socialist state based on the rule of law would be established. Owing to the support these ideas gathered in legal circles and the needs of companies in a Chinese form of a market economy, the fifteenth Party Congress in 1997 finally put forward the goal of building a socialist state of rule of law. It was a historical leap from improving the socialist legal system to building a socialist state under the rule of law, and indicated that the CCP was leaving the tradition of rule by persons, and instead moving toward being a modern country under the rule of law.

Since 1997, the research into the rule of law by academic circles in China has gone into more depth. Scholars have advocated some important views. The first one is to distinguish the different goals between the socialist state subordinated to the rule of law and the society subordinated to the rule of law.

They pointed out that the most urgent task in the current period was to build the state based on the rule of law, implement checks and balance in a state governed by rule of law, and handle official business according to the law. It is a longer term task to establish a society based on the rule of law, in which both the management mechanism of the entire society, social life style and social order should be governed based on the Chinese Constitution and laws, and this is also the final goal, i.e. a social order subordinated

to the rule of law.[3] They argued the second task is to raise the principle of constitutionalism, and to hope to restrain by means of the Constitution the government's power, and to build a government with clear limits and boundaries.[4] The third task is to advance the concept of "administrating the Party by the law" (*Yi Fa Zhi Dang*), and to bring about an awareness that to govern the Party by the law is a necessary logical extension of administrating a country through law and is also the objective requirement of building a socialist state of rule of law.[5] The fourth task is to put forward some concrete propositions on how to build a socialist state of rule of law, such as establishing a constitutional court, engaging in judicial examination, approval even examination and ruling on acts that may be unconstitutional; building a vertical and independent judicial system from local government; strengthening the supervisory power of People's Congress at various levels, etc.

The transformation of the goal from improving the legal system to building a state of rule of law has produced important effects in the daily life. First, the awareness of rights and law has grown as seen in the case of citizens increasingly bringing lawsuits against organs of government and their officials. Second, in addition to the basic laws, more and more procedural laws are being promulgated and implemented gradually. One typical example is the Law-making Act passed in 2000 to normalize the law-making process itself. Third, the awareness of government officials running the country according to the law and administration by the law has been clearly enhanced, and it has reduced intervention into judicial cases. Fourth, the reform of the judicial system has been placed on the agenda; various reform plans aimed at ensuring justice under the law and judicial independence are under discussion.

DISCUSSIONS ON POLITICAL STABILITY

Political stability in a changing society is both an important theoretical and a practical issue, and so it is an important topic of discussion in China. Typical questions that are raised are: what are the causes that lead to political instability? and should democratic reforms be postponed when political stability becomes vulnerable? Both these questions are matters of urgency for many people. Some scholars, with Wang Huning, Yu Keping, Xiao Gongqin, and Wang Guixiu as major representatives, have had fruitful discussions on these questions.[6]

Many factors influence political stability in China as it is at present in a state of transition. Xiao Gongqin argues that China has entered what could be called a "middle period of reform" at the beginning of the 1990s. He believes the core political conflict in the early period of reform lies in ideology, while the basic contradiction in the middle period of reform is the uneven development between the differentiation of interests and social integration. Specifically, a series of structural problems has arisen in this

middle period of reform: weak government, a trend to polarization between the rich and the poor, formalization of the established interests, increasing social mobilization as the state frees up. The ideological debate on these questions may include the following: some individuals getting equally rich first vs. getting equally rich together, centralization vs. decentralization, democratic control vs. authoritarian control, promoting the voice of the people vs. stifling the voice of the people, etc.

Among various social conflicts in the middle period of reform, the most dangerous factor would be the combination of "New Left" forces within intellectual circles with the discontented masses (e.g. impoverished workers who are unemployed) at the grassroots levels full of resentment, which might lead to an anti-system movement under a populist banner. According to the view of a research team from the Department of Organization of the Central Committee of the CCP, the major contradictions within the masses of the people that could affect social stability are the following: the rising differentiation between the rich and the poor including the differentiation among social groups, between urban areas and rural areas, between different regions, and among different industries; the sharpening contradiction between staff cutbacks and staff re-employment in state-owned enterprises; the contradiction between cadres and masses; and the contradiction between official ideology and various non-official ideology. In sum, the issues of unemployment, corruption and polarization between the rich and the poor have become the major problems that influence political stability in transitional China.

Should democratic reform be postponed when political stability becomes fragile due to various structural issues in transitional process? The answers provided by scholars vary. Xiao Gongqin opposed the view of this so-called "democratic control", which is concretely manifested as the trend to making People's Congresses into a parliamentary system, and he argues that this will lead to political instability. He upholds the view of "authoritarian control", which is mainly manifested as the authority of the ruling party. He advocates reliance on a strong ruling party to overcome the trend of "soft government" and "shortage of norms" and to maintain political stability by using law and coercive force. In contrast, Wang Guixiu argued that, if political reform is postponed, if the institutional factors that lead to instability cannot be eradicated, if political reforms are marginalized and could not address the core issues, or if we are satisfied with the appearance of stability, then the accumulation of social contradictions will inevitably lead to serious societal upheavals. Wang Huning pointed out that a series of comprehensive strategies for political development is needed to maintain political stability in a changing society, and he thinks this series of strategies should include the following: promoting the growth of a new social order, advancing economic and social development and pushing forward the development of procedural democracy.

According to Yu Keping's argument, an outlook based on modern dynamic stability should be adopted. Stability should be understood as equilibrium in process, and a new equilibrium should replace the old equilibrium through continuous adjustment. Well-designed and mature political reform may, in a sense, mean rather the emergence of a new state of equilibrium that may be more beneficial to economic development in a larger context. Therefore, political reform should be continuously advanced.

After the 1989 political events, Deng Xiaoping stressed many times that "stability should prevail over any other things", "China cannot afford to be chaotic", as a result, maintaining political stability become a consensus within the entire party. However, in the following years, fighting against "peaceful evolution" had a negative impact on reform and development. Deng Xiaoping therefore gave the "southern tour talks of 1997", in which he pointed out that, "development is the real truth", and "it is a blind alley not to reform". Owing to his effort, the ship of reform and opening up of China has returned to the right course.[7] Since 1992, in the process of deepening economic reform and establishing a socialist market economy, political reform has restarted at the same time, though the emphasis of political reform in the 1990s is quite different from that of the 1980s. The separation of Party from government has no longer been at the centre of political reform in the 1990s.

The third generation of collective leadership with Jiang Zemin as the core had (until the sixteenth Party Congress in November 2002) adopted the modern outlook of stability, which was to "promote reform and development as the prerequisite for maintaining social and political stability", and to "realize social and political stability in the process of reform and development". Based on it, improving the People's Congress system, actively developing grassroots democracy, expanding steadily the political participation of citizens, all of these have become the significant content of political reform in the reports on the fifteenth Party Congress.[8] In 2001, Jiang Zemin delivered the important speech which was called "July 1 Speech", in which he stressed the development of inner party democracy and promotion of the development of people's democracy by developing democratic procedures within the CPC. This indicates that promoting inner party democracy has become an important strategy for top leaders to advance democratization and at the same time to maintain political stability.

Combating Corruption and Institutional Innovations
The situation of growing and rampant corruption in the process of reform and opening up to the outside world has attracted the attention of various circles. What are the causes that lead to the rampant corruption? How should corruption be effectively curbed? These are issues of common concern to academic circles, governmental officials and the masses.

The CCP has gradually formed a new attitude about fighting corruption, that is, to prevent and curb corruption from its institutional roots through institutional innovations. The second generation of collective leadership with Deng Xiaoping at its centre actively explored the most effective way to combat corruption, leading the entire party to achieve the consensus on two issues. One aspect of the consensus is to fight against corruption mainly through strengthening socialist democracy and the legal system *without launching any more political movements*. Another aspect of the consensus is to actively engage in political reform to curb corruption: although personal thoughts and style are important in causing corruption, institutional causes are more important and fundamental. As a result in the early 1990s, the third generation of collective leadership grouped around Jiang Zemin has gradually formed the new way of thinking about combating corruption, that is, to prevent and curb corruption from its institutional roots through institutional innovations. This new way of thinking is based on carrying forward and developing the thoughts of Deng Xiaoping as stated above.

The fifteenth Party Congress in 1997 for the first time clearly put forward this thought stating that fighting corruption "should seek both immediate and permanent solutions by regarding education as the basis, the legal system as the guarantee, and supervision as the key; and eradicating hotbeds that breed and spread corruption through deepening the reform".[10] In January 1998, the second session of the newly elected Central Committee of Discipline Inspection (CCDI) of the CCP concretized and clarified the new way of thinking of combating corruption. As a result, it has become the major task of the CCP to fight corruption, that is, to prevent and curb corruption at its institutional roots through institutional innovations. Henceforth, rooting out profiteering through institutional innovations has become the consensus of the entire party. Since 1997, the ruling party and government have taken a series of important measures to prevent and curb unscrupulousness in its institutional roots and these include the following: separation of the army, armed police, public security and judicial system from their satellite enterprises; a separation of income from revenue; the implementation of a new government procurement system; the establishment of a public construction market; the enforcement of making governmental affairs and transactions public to the grassroots level; and so on.

Some scholars in inland academic circles, such as Hu Angang and the author, adopted the method of neo-institutionalism to analyse the institutional causes of different forms of corruption, and then put forward some concrete policy suggestions on institutional innovations.[11] They point out that institutional defects are major causes of graft and may lead to rampant corruption. The Author has analysed the institutional roots of ten forms of corruption in the current period; on that basis, he has proposed eight general aspects of policy suggestions on how to advance government reform and innovations, as well as improve the institutional arrangements from the

point of view of governance and good governance. Hu Angang has put forward his own plan about a comprehensive, anti-corruption strategy and institutional design. It has influenced the general perception of both academic circles and the government as to how to combat corruption: he argues this should be done mainly through institutional reform and innovations.

Social Stratification Research

Since reform and opening up to the outside world commenced, China has given up that ultra-left line that regards class struggle as the key guideline to successful policies. The authorities now seldom use the method of class analysis to understand society. However, with the transition from the traditional planned economy to a socialist market economy, the old structure of interests has been dismantled. In its place a multiplicity and differentiation of interests has become the objective reality, and as a result, Chinese society has been divided into wide variations of social strata with widely varying incomes.

Studies of the issue of social stratification and social strata as a result have become inevitable. What criteria should be used to divide people into different social strata? Has a new capitalist stratum or class formed in China? The answers to these questions directly influence the nature and direction of reform and the opening-up process in China. Research on this issue can be divided into two areas.

One comprises the Old and New Left groups, and they continue to use the method of class analysis *to engage in their academic approach* and divide people into different classes or strata in accordance with ownership of means of production. Another group suggests dividing people into different social strata in terms of occupations and income status.

Those who adopt class analysis have inherited a "left" way of thinking and divide people into different classes according to the relationship between people and the means of production. Based on that, they argued that a new capitalist class or stratum has emerged in China. In his book *Analysis of various social strata in China*, Liang Xiaosheng divides people in contemporary China into the following strata: the contemporary capitalist class, the contemporary "comprador" class, the contemporary middle class, the contemporary intellectual class, urban common people and the poor and peasants and organized crime.[12] This book is not an academic work in the strict sense of meeting academic standards, but its influence cannot be ignored.

In addition, all four so-called "internal reports with ten thousand words" (*Wan Yan Shu*) – widely circulated in Beijing – adopt the method of class analysis to study social issues. In these reports, the authors argue that with the development of private ownership, a new capitalist class has emerged in current China. This class will advance their own political agenda when they grow stronger; in the meantime, it will look for its political representatives within the ruling party and government. Liang Xiaosheng argued that the

newly born capitalist class and its agents would pose a significant threat to the socialist direction of reform and China's national security. As a result there exists a trend to class struggle which is sharpening in intensity. The major issues that these authors concern themselves with are the nature and direction of reform, that is whether the reform is socialist or capitalist-oriented, public or private ownership oriented.[13]

Those who study social stratification suggest dividing people into different strata according to people's occupations and income with the purpose of exploring effective ways to carry out social and political integration given the existing differentiation of interests. Social strata analysis is more popular than class analysis in modern-day China. Some writers divide people into different groups on the basis of income level. For example, Yang Yiyong divides both urban and rural residents into four social groups: high-income group, upper-middle income group, lower-middle income group and lower income group. According to his study, among current urban residents, the ratio of the high-income group is about 18% of all households, the upper-middle income group is 37%, the lower-middle income group is 22% and lower income group is 23%; while among rural residents, the ratio of the high-income group is about 18% (of all households), upper-middle income group is 25%, the lower-middle income group is 14% and the lower income group is 43%.[14]

The research team "The Evolution of Social Structure in Contemporary China" led by Lu Xueyi at the Chinese Social Science Academy has recently published a book *Research Report on the Social Strata in Contemporary China*. In this book, they put forward a theoretical framework that is to divide people by occupations into social strata according to the standards of possessing levels of organizational resources, economic resources and cultural resources. Based on this framework, they divide people in current China into ten strata: state and social administrative personnel, managerial personnel, private entrepreneurs, professional and technical personnel, office workers and staff, individual industrialists and business people, commercial and service employees, industrial workers, agricultural labourers and lastly the urban and rural vagrants/unemployed/semi-unemployed. They point out that the core function of social system analysis and social policy at present is to establish a rational, modern model of social strata structure. Accordingly, the innovations of social system and policy need to follow the principles of stability, cooperation, equal distribution, coordination, protection of the socially weak and so on.[15] This book has had a great impact both in China and abroad.

Inquiring into Social Justice
In the past 20 years, China has transformed itself from an egalitarian country into one with extreme inequality within which the Gini coefficient has moved beyond 0.4. This is a serious challenge to China's socialist ideology that stresses the value of equality.

How to view the differentiation between the rich and the poor is a controversial issue in China's academic circles especially amongst economists. Some intellectuals hold that the traditional distribution patterns characterized by egalitarianism need to be altered, and a new income distribution policy should be adopted to enlarge income differentiation, and encourage some people to become rich irrespective of others' well-being. Otherwise, people will lose impetus to work hard and improve efficiency.

Regarding the latter and justice, they argue that both efficiency and justice are important, but when the former is in conflict with justice, priority should be given to efficiency. Some other scholars claim that the concept of social justice should be redefined. Social justice principally means that people have equal opportunities to become rich rather than the state pursuing equality of income distribution, and thus government should create equal starting points as well as opportunities, and should not discourage people's enthusiasm to become rich. But many other scholars expound and prove the necessity of maintaining social justice either from the point of view of the relationship between social justice and social stability, or from the point of view of social justice being the pre-requisite of socialism. They criticize the phenomena of injustice and large income distribution gaps.[16] Some scholars such as Hu Angang, Wang Shaoguang, and He Qinglian worry very much about the large gap in income distribution vis-à-vis maintaining social justice. They strongly advocate carrying out government intervention aiming at compensating those social groups whose interests were damaged in the reform process, protecting weak social groups, reducing the gap between the rich and poor, between urban and rural areas, among regions and industries and decreasing the social costs of transition and modernization.[17]

The official ideology is based on Deng Xiaoping's ideas which are flexible and able to promote policy change. In the early period of reform and opening up to the outside world, the official ideology encouraged some people and some regions to become rich first, while simultaneously encouraging people to become rich together by advocating that those becoming rich should first help the others to do likewise. Since the mid-1990s, with the growth of income gaps between different social groups, the official ideology has begun to stress the thought of getting rich together and this thought was included in the theories associated with Deng Xiaoping. Furthermore, the idea of social justice has gained more ground, and as a result, economic and social policies have also been adjusted. Such policies as establishing a social security system, developing the western regions of China, strengthening the efforts of poverty alleviation and protecting weak and disadvantaged social groups have been high on the agenda of the ruling party and government.

NATIONALISM: A DOUBLE-EDGED SWORD

Since the mid-1990s, nationalist sentiments among Chinese people especially within young students and intellectuals have been rising. The upsurge of

nationalism is not accidental. With the increase of non-governmental contacts with foreign countries and open access to information from the outside world through the Internet, Chinese people have come to know the Western world more and more. Meanwhile, the conflicts between China and the United States on the Taiwan issue, the "Xinjiang independence movement", the "Tibetan independence movement" and the human rights and religious issues have intensified in recent years. The United States has made bigger efforts than before to obstruct the rise of China. All these have provoked a strong anti-western mood especially anti-American among Chinese people particularly within young students and the intellectual elite.

With the growth of national strength and a rising international position, the sense of national pride and national self-confidence amongst Chinese people has been enhanced, and the determination to safeguard state interests and national dignity has also grown. The book *China can say no – Political and Sentimental Choice at the Post-Cold War Period* reflects nationalist sentiments among Chinese people, and produced widespread repercussions both in China and abroad.

After publishing this book, many books about similar subjects have also been published, such as *China says no nine times*, *Who Will Defeat the United States of America*, etc. The bombing of the Chinese embassy (Belgrade), the air collision between a US airplane and a Chinese army aircraft in the South China Sea, the US claiming to protect Taiwan by using nuclear weapons, all these events have provoked strong anti-America sentiments among Chinese people. The success of the application for the 2008 Olympics and China's WTO entry have increased the sentiments of national pride and self-confidence. In addition to this kind of emotional nationalism, discussion on nationalism among Chinese intellectual elite has also increased in recent years, and rational nationalism has developed too. This kind of nationalism is both a sort of resource for government and another check and balance on government behaviour. Chinese nationalism has become a reality that both Chinese government and Western countries should face.

On the issue of how to view Chinese nationalism, both Western media and academic circles mainly have negative attitudes and denounce it. They believe that, Chinese nationalism is a kind of expression of irrational sentiments, and in which there are tendencies of blind opposition to everything foreign and the creation of an anti-western world, and even propagating expansionism. At the same time, Chinese nationalism has the potential to become a hotbed of fascism. Since the mid-1990s, nationalism has become a controversial topic among Chinese academic circles. The influential journal Strategy and Management in China published special issues to discuss the subject "Nationalism at the crossroads of the centuries" respectively in 1994 and in 1997.

There are at least three different views on this issue. One view is that of liberal intellectuals, who basically agree with the above western views and

criticize Chinese nationalism severely. One view is from the moderate intellectuals who forcefully defend Chinese nationalism and think in-depth about how to develop rational nationalism. For example, Xiao Gongqin and some other intellectuals argue that Chinese nationalism is a kind of "stimulus-response" nationalism or defensive nationalism that mainly makes a stand against bullying outsiders and does not have the tendency to expansionism. On the basis of Confucian culture, Chinese nationalism does not have the zeal and fanaticism of religious salvation, and thus is a kind of moderate and rational nationalism. It also has the orientation of cosmopolitanism (*Tian Xia Zhu Yi*). They further suggest that this kind of nationalism could become a useful resource to increase cohesion among people as well as enhancing the legality of government, and so it is a beneficial complement for the official ideology.[18] The final view is more conservative; some scholars view Chinese nationalism as a "double-edged sword" that should be treated cautiously. Xiao Gongqin's attitude toward Chinese *nationalism went through such a change.* Some scholars pointed out that Chinese nationalism could be divided into two camps: extreme vs. moderate, rational vs. irrational. People should be alert to the radical, headstrong and bombastic nationalism, which may lead that political attitude into the direction of irrational conflict with Western countries and lead to a closed-door policy; it could create a hotbed for the re-emergence of an extreme-left, ideological trend. They believe that extreme nationalism may bind the hands and feet of pragmatic leaders and may even enable the hard-liners to take power, and at the same time it may stimulate hard-liners in the United States to become tougher and lead to pernicious antagonism between the two countries.[19]

Other writers pointed out that theory concerning nationalism in contemporary China has two dilemmas: one is that nationalism is irrational in essence and is provoked by emotional force of people being loyal to their own nations. So-called moderate and rational nationalism may not exist in reality. Another dilemma is that the rise of nationalist sentiments may lead to populism and the return of traditional culture, while the modern spirit needed by (economic) modernization is still absent.[20]

"THE THREE REPRESENTS" AND THE MODERNIZATION OF THE RULING PARTY

"The Three Represents" idea was first put forward by General secretary Jiang Zemin in early 2000. The "Three Represents" refers to, "Whether at the revolution period, construction period, or reform period, our party has always represented development requirements of the advanced productive forces, the forward direction of the advanced culture, and the fundamental interests of most people".[21] On 1 July 2001, Jiang Zemin elaborated in detail the basic content of "The Three Represents" in his speech delivered at the celebratory gathering to mark the eightieth anniversary of the CCP. The

important thought of "The Three Represents" has become the theoretical guideline for Party construction. "The Three Represents" thought is the result of deep thinking by Party leaders about the issue of "What type of party should be constructed and how should it be constructed". Its purpose is to reinforce the legitimacy of CCP as a ruling party, and at the same time to realize the modernization of the ruling party.[22] This requires the CCP to transform itself from a revolutionary party to a ruling party, and to make efforts to represent the basic interests of the people.

As a result, the social basis, composition, organizational forms, functions, activity patterns and external relationship of the CCP were also supposed to be changed correspondingly. Jiang's "July 1st Speech" has given a preliminary answer to these aspects that Party reform involves. For example, the "July 1st Speech" stresses expansion of the mass basis of the party and increase in social influence of the party, so it is necessary to attract excellent members from the new social strata into the party. Another example is that, the "July 1st Speech" pays more attention to developing inner party democracy and to actively promoting people's democracy through developing it within the party.

In addition, the "July 1st Speech" emphasizes improvement of the style of leadership and perfection of the leadership system and operational mechanism of the Party.[23] In total, "The Three Represents" idea has provided a theoretical basis for the further modernization of the ruling party and will advance forcefully the democratic reform within party.

CONCLUSION

All in all, since the end of 1980s, the discourses on political reform and democratization in transitional China have involved at least ten subjects: neo-authoritarianism, civil society and the third sector, the path of democratization, the rule of law, fighting corruption and institutional innovations, political stability, social strata, social justice, nationalism, as well as "The Three Represents" and the modernization of the ruling party. These theoretical discussions have produced real fruits in many regards such as the development of village self-governance and civil organizations and the construction of the legal system. "Asian values" and "Asian democracy" discourses have not attracted much attention from Chinese scholars. As I mentioned above, there are only a few papers on Asian values, and the authors of these papers tend to see it as a kind of authoritarian regime of a transitional nature; they do not think of it as another kind of democratic regime that is different from and parallel with liberal democracy, and thus should exist for a long period of time. Of course, this kind of authoritarian regime will not retreat from the historical stage before it finishes its historical mission. However, the path and pattern of the democratization process in China has its own character because of different national conditions. A case study on democratization in China will enrich further the theory of democratization and may even renew its research paradigm.

NOTES

1. The discussions within Chinese academic circles about Asia's democracy are fairly sparse; the major relevant papers are the following: Wu Hui, "'Asia Democracy': its functions and limitation," *Studies on Southeast Asia,* 2 (2001): 41–46; Li Luqu, "Culture and Democracy: re-exploration on 'Asia democracy'," *Journal of Guizhou Normal University,* 2 (2001): 25–29; Zheng Yiping, "On East Asia Democracy'," *Xue Hai,* 1 (2001): 136–139.

2. See also a series of books on the Third Sector by Xu Yongguang, ed. (Hangzhou: Zhe Jiang People's Publishing House, 1999).

3. Yu Keping, "The Emergence of Civil Society and Evolution of Governance in China," *Chinese Social Science Quarterly (Hongkong)*, 27 (1999): 105–108; He Zengke, "Governance, Good Governance and Political Development in China," *Journal of Fujian Party School*, 3 (2002): 16–20.

4. See also: Guo Daohui, *Times Spirit of Law* (Hunan People's Publishing House, 1997); Zhuo Zeyuan, *On the State of Rule of Law* (China Fang Zheng Press, 2001).

5. Liu Junning, "Market and Constitutional Government," in *Political China*, ed. Dong Yuyu and Shi Binhai (Today's China Press 1997), 190–195.

6. See also: Hou Shaowen, *Running the Country according to Law and Leadership of the Party* (Zhejiang People's Publishing House, 1998).

7. See also: Wang Huning, "Analysis on the Relevance between Political Democracy and Political Stability," in *Neo-Authoritarianism*, ed. Liu Jun, 230–245; Yu Keping, "Overcome the Dilemma of Political Reform-Political Stability," in *Political China*, ed. Dong Yuyu and Shi Binhai, 49–53; Xiao Gongqin, "Social Contradicts and Political Stability in the Middle Period of Reform," in *Farewell to Political Romanticism,* ed. Xiao Gongqin (Wuhan: Hubei Education Press, 2001), 143–162; Wang Guixiu, "Difficult and Long Reform: Rethinking of 20 Year's Political Reform," in *Report about the Issue of Political reform in China,* ed. Liu Zhifeng (China Film Press, 1999), 27–37. Research team of Organization Department of Central Committee of CCP, *China Investigation Report: Study on the Internal Contradictions of People in the New Situation* (Beijing: Central Compilation and Translation Press, 2001).

8. For an introduction to the controversy, see also: Ma Licheng and Ling Zhijun, *Confrontation of Ideas: Real Records about Three Liberation Movements of Ideas in Contemporary China* (Beijing: Today's China Press, 1998).

9. Jiang Zemin, "Hold High Great Flag of Deng Xiaoping's Theory, Advance in a Comprehensive Way the Cause of Building Socialism with a Chinese Character into the 21st Century," in *Selected Collection of Important Documents of Various Party Congress and Sessions Since the 3rd Session of the 11th Central Committee,* vol. 1, ed. Literature Research Department for Central Committee of CCP (Beijing: Literature of Central Committee of CCP Press, 1997).

10. Ibid., 455.

11. Hu Angang, "Comprehensive Strategies and Institutional Design to Prevent and Curb Corruption in the Transitional Period," *Management World,* 6 (2001): 44–55; Hu Angang, ed., *China: Challenge Corruption* (Hangzhou: Zhejiang People's Publishing House, 2001); He Zengke, "Corruption, Governance and Good Governance in Transitional China," *Chinese Social Science Quarterly (Hongkong),* 31 (2000): 107–116; He Zengke, "Advancing Government Reform and Innovation, Improving the Institutional Arrangements in Preventing and Curbing Corruption," *Marxism and Reality,* 5 (2001): 55–63.

12. Liang Xiaosheng, *Analysis on Various Social Strata in China* (Economic Daily Press, 1997).

13. Quoted from Ma Licheng and Ling Zhijun, *Confrontation of Ideas: Real Records about Three Liberation Movements of Ideas in Contemporary China* (Beijing: Today's China Press, 1998).

14. Yang Yiyong, *Efficiency and Justice: the Issue of Income Distribution in Contemporary China* (Beijing: Today's China Press, 1997).

15. Lu Xueyi, ed., *Research Report about Social Strata in Contemporary China* (Beijing: Social Science Literature Press, 2002).

16. Zheng Weiming, "Justice is the Key to Maintain Social Stability in Transitional Period," *Journal of Qinghai Nationalities College (Version of Social Science),* 3 (1999): 121–125; Chen Jian, "Socialism: Mixed Economy, Social Justice and Social Ownership," *Journal of College of Beijing Economic Management,* vol. 16, 4 (2001): 31.

17. See also, Hu Angang and Wang Shaoguang, eds., *Government and Market* (China Planning Press, 2000); He Qinglian, *Traps of Modernization: Social and Economic Issues in Contemporary China* (Today's China Press, 1998).

18. Xiao Gongqin, "Nationalism and Ideology in Transitional China," *Strategy and Management,* 4 (1994): 21–25; Shi Zhong, "Chinese Nationalism' in the Eyes of Westerners," *Strategy and Management,* 1 (1996): 20–26; Sheng Hong, "From Nationalism to Cosmopolitan," *Strategy and Management,* 1 (1996): 14–19; Xiao Gongqin, "History and Prospects of Chinese History," *Strategy and Management,* 3 (1996): 58–62.

19. Xiao Gongqin, "Why do I Oppose the Radical Nationalism?," in *Farewell to Political Romanticism,* ed. Xiao Gongqin (Shijia Zhuang: Hebei Education Press, 2001), 249–255.

20. Pi Mingyong, "Nationalism and Confucian Culture: Talks from Liang Qichao's Theory of Nationalism and its Dilemma," *Strategy and Management,* 2 (1996): 51–57.

21. Jiang Zemin, "In the New Historical Conditions, Our Party How to Realize 'The Three Represents'," in *On 'The Three Represents',* ed. Jiang Zemin (Beijing: People's Publishing House, 2001), 2.

22. Regarding the discussion about party modernization, see also: Wang Changjiang, "Some Thoughts on the Times Development and Modernization of the Party," *Contemporary World And Socialism,* 1 (2002): 4–9; Chen Guangyao, "The Three Represents'and Party Modernization," *Monthly Journal of Hei River,* 4 (2001): 14–16.

23. Jiang Zemin, 163–176.

CHAPTER 7

Discourses on Democracy and Political Reform in Contemporary South Korea

Sunhyuk Kim

INTRODUCTION

Under both the Kim Young Sam government (1993–1998) and the Kim Dae Jung government (1998–2003), "reform (*kaehŏk*)" was one of the most critical themes in South Korean politics. Since the democratic transition in 1987 and especially following the economic crisis in 1997, all significant social and political actors in South Korea have repeatedly called for economic and political reform. Both Kim Young Sam and Kim Dae Jung pledged that they would respond to the popular demand for reform as much as they could. In this respect, South Korean politics since 1987 has been continually and consistently characterized by what can be called the "reform syndrome".[1] All major elements of the "reform syndrome" – such as political leaders firmly committed to major change, widespread public acceptance of and demand for such change and new government with strong centralized authority – have been present, helping to constitute a political context favourable for determined reform efforts.

This paper is an analysis of reform politics (*kaehŏk chŏngch'i*) during the Kim Young Sam and the Kim Dae Jung governments in South Korea. Focusing on three different levels of discourse – elite, intellectual and social movement, I probe how different segments of South Korean society have conceptualized and understood major political issues such as "democracy" and "political reform", and how the actual politics of reform has played out. The paper proceeds as follows. In the next section, I analyse how different actors in South Korean polity and society have conceptualized and understood democracy and political reform. Then, I review the actual politics of reform under the Kim Young Sam and the Kim Dae Jung governments to examine the correspondence (or lack thereof) between the discourses on democracy and political reform on the one hand and the actual government performance and policy outcomes on the other. I conclude the paper with a set of prescriptions for sustaining reform politics in South Korea.

DISCOURSES ON DEMOCRACY AND POLITICAL REFORM, 1993–2003

Since its inauguration in August 1948, the South Korean government has officially espoused "liberal democracy" (*chayu minjuŭi*) as its political system and ideology. "Liberal democracy", according to the existing literature on democratic transition and consolidation, includes the "procedural minimum", which encompasses, *inter alia*, "secret balloting, universal adult suffrage, regular elections, partisan competition, associational recognition and access, and executive accountability".

"Liberal democracy", which was to a large extent imposed on South Koreans by the US. Army Military Government during the 1945–1948 occupation period, has served the subsequent South Korean governments in a dualistic way. On the one hand, authoritarian regimes under Syngman Rhee (1948–1960), Park Chung Hee (1961–1979) and Chun Doo Hwan (1980–1988) frequently characterized the resistance and opposition to their rule as a "threat" to liberal democracy and justified their suppression as a necessary measure to protect South Korea's "liberal democracy" in the face of communist North Korea's ambition to communize the entire peninsula. "Liberal democracy" in this context was rendered nearly synonymous with "anti-communism" or "anti-North Koreanism". "Liberal democracy" was used as a powerful ideological weapon to muzzle and muffle any anti-government – and therefore by default "pro-communist" or "pro-North Korean" – "conspiracies".

On the other hand, the authoritarian governments also admitted, either intentionally or inadvertently, that the South Korean political system was not really "liberal democratic". This was why they habitually put such adjectives as "national", "administrative" and "Korean" in front of "democracy".[2] With these restraining modifiers before "democracy", South Korean authoritarian leaders claimed that "Western-type", "full" liberal democracy had to be postponed until there was no national security threat from North Korea. By acknowledging that South Korean democracy was not a real liberal democracy, the authoritarian governments remained rather defensive, always vulnerable to various challenges to their legitimacy. In this sense, "liberal democracy" was the Achilles' heel of the authoritarian rule. The political opposition in South Korea persistently used "liberal democracy" to reprimand the authoritarian rule and to demand democratization. Pro-democracy activists highlighted the glaring discrepancy between the principles and ideals of democracy and the brutal realities of "Korean democracy" and intensely called for "restoration of liberal democracy".

As a result, "liberal democracy" has been deeply entrenched as the most dominant concept in South Koreans' political discourse. It has become the most important principle and the sole ideological basis of the South Korean polity. The authoritarian leaders argued that they were practicing "liberal democracy" in one way or another. Meanwhile, their critics counter-argued that the "liberal democracy" the authoritarian leaders were

allegedly practicing was not a real democracy at all. In this sense, the political and ideological terrain in South Korea has been rather restricted, strictly within the confines of "liberal democracy". Almost all South Korean politicians, whether in the governing party or in the opposition, had to accept liberal democracy and had to pledge their unstinting support for liberal democracy. Questioning liberal democracy has always been a very risky – and sometimes deadly – business in South Korean politics, invariably inviting the label of "*ppalgaengi*" (a communist; literally a "red") and various legal sanctions, including death, stipulated in the National Security Law (*Kukka poanbŏp*). Therefore, all political discourses had to be couched in "liberal democracy" or its derivatives. As will be seen below, it was only in around the late 1980s, when the "security threat" from the impoverished North Korea sounded more and more unrealistic and unconvincing, that fundamental challenges to liberal democracy were raised by intellectuals and social movement activists who explored different options to address and resolve problems of the South Korean version of "liberal democracy".

POLITICAL ELITES

To most South Koreans, democracy in their country began in earnest in 1992 when Kim Young Sam was elected to the presidency. The democratic transition took place in 1987 when the ruling regime yielded to the popular pressure for democratic reform and liberalized the political space. However, the result of the presidential election in December 1987 was quite disappointing. Primarily due to the split between the two opposition leaders, Kim Young Sam and Kim Dae Jung, the ruling party candidate, Roh Tae Woo, was elected. To many pro-democracy activists who had been engaged in intense anti-government campaigns, this result was extremely disheartening. In the midst of the intensive confrontation between the authoritarian regime and the pro-democracy movement, in early June 1987, Roh was designated to succeed authoritarian leader Chun Doo Hwan. In essence, therefore, Roh's election in December was an outcome that completely nullified the hard-fought victory for pro-democracy activists. Most South Koreans regarded the Roh regime as a mere extension of authoritarian rule. At best, Roh's regime seemed to be a *dictablanda* (liberalized authoritarianism), and the need to continue the pro-democracy struggle appeared vital.[3]

This was why when Kim Young Sam, a long-time opposition leader and pro-democracy fighter, was elected to the South Korean presidency in December 1992, South Koreans were greatly excited. In terms of his concept of democracy, Kim Young Sam reaffirmed "liberal democracy". In the speech delivered in commemoration of the 49th anniversary of Korea's liberation from Japanese colonial rule on 15 August 1994, Kim stated:

> World history already declared the victory of liberal democracy,
> we are currently living in the age of democracy. … Democracy

> without liberty cannot exist. Liberty and peace without democ-
> racy also cannot exist. Let's achieve peaceful unification on the
> solid basis of our democracy.

To Kim Young Sam, liberal democracy, which had finally won the global battle with communism, was not only the foundational principle of the South Korean political system but could also serve as the foundation for a future reunification with North Korea. Greatly encouraged by the "end of history" triumphalism,[4] Kim Young Sam expressed tremendous optimism for "reunification by absorption" (*hŭpsu t'ongil*). "Liberal democracy" was to serve as a strong instrument to demonstrate the superiority of the South Korean system over the North Korean system.

Affirmation of liberal democracy was nothing new. All the previous authoritarian regimes, despite their frequent violations of civil liberties, claimed that they were supporting and practicing "liberal democracy". What made Kim Young Sam's concept of democracy distinctive was his emphasis on "civilian democracy" (*munmin minjujuŭi*). For Kim Young Sam, "democracy" had to mean not only "liberal democracy" but also a civilian rule. Unlike his predecessors most of whom had been general-turned presidents, Kim was a civilian politician with no military background. He was in fact the first civilian president in South Korea since the early 1960s. His conception of democracy focused on removing the legacies of the preceding military and semi-military rule and restoring a "civilian" democracy. In his inaugural address delivered on 25 February 1993, Kim Young Sam emphasized that his government, a civilian democracy, would be qualitatively different from various forms of authoritarian regime during 1961–1988 and a semi-authoritarian regime under Roh Tae Woo (1988–1993).

Kim Young Sam government's main proposal was to achieve a "new Korea" (*sinhan'guk*) through "change and reform". Specifically, in his inaugural address, Kim outlined three elements of such "change and reform:" (1) uprooting corruption, (2) reviving the economy and (3) recovering the national spirit and morality ("moral restoration"). He reiterated and developed these themes further in his Liberation Day speech on August 15, 1993. In this speech, he proposed "The Second Liberation Movement" (*che 2 ŭi kwangbok undong*) to achieve a "new Korea". Unlike Korea's first liberation from Japan's colonial rule, the second liberation would be a liberation from chronic corruption, "reversed values" (*chŏndodoen kach'i*), idleness and inertia and disorderliness. This movement, he argued, would constitute a crucial foundation for a "new Korea" with a clean government, a strong economy and a healthy society.

Underlying Kim Young Sam's highly moralistic campaign for a new Korea was his firm conviction that his civilian liberal democracy must be fundamentally different from and noticeably superior to the fraudulent "liberal democracy" advocated and practiced by the past military leaders.

He wanted to put an end on the misrepresentation and misappropriation of "liberal democracy" by the politicized military. Kim Young Sam's political reform therefore was predicated on the moral and ethical superiority of civilian politicians and bureaucrats and was centred around anti-corruption, moral example of the leadership and removal of the remnants of past military dictatorship.

Kim Dae Jung was inaugurated in February 1998. Along with Kim Young Sam, Kim Dae Jung was one of the two most prominent opposition leaders during the 1970s and 1980s, who spearheaded the pro-democracy movement at the time. But unlike Kim Young Sam who joined the ruling party in January 1990 and thus ran as a ruling party candidate in the 1992 presidential election, Kim Dae Jung ran as a genuine opposition candidate and was the first opposition candidate to be elected to the South Korean presidency.

Kim Dae Jung's conception of democracy is, not surprisingly, also liberal democracy. As Kim clearly asserted in his Liberation Day speech on 15 August 1998, the centrepiece of South Korean democracy is "liberty". In his Liberation Day speech on 15 August 2000, he once again made clear that the future of South Korean democracy would hinge on expansion of human rights and civil liberties such as the freedoms of the press, demonstration, assembly and association. In this context, he put a special emphasis on legalization of all labour unions including dissident unions, labour's participation in politics, gender equality and empowerment of civic groups. In addition, liberal democracy, according to Kim Dae Jung, can be developed simultaneously with a market economy. Kim proclaimed, underscored and elaborated on the theory of a "parallel development of democracy and a market economy" (*minjujuŭi sijang kyŏngje pyŏnghaeng palchŏnron*).

At the same time, Kim Dae Jung also emphasized that his government, as a true people's government (*kungminŭi chŏngbu*) resulted from the first peaceful horizontal transfer of power in South Korean history, would strive to achieve a "participatory democracy" (*ch'amyŏ minjujui*). In his inaugural address delivered on 25 February 1998, Kim emphasized that such a participatory democracy would promote transparency in policy-making, anti-corruption, decentralization and greater local autonomy. He reaffirmed in his Liberation Day speech on 15 August 1998 that his government would pursue various political, economic, social, educational and media reforms to accomplish a participatory democracy.

Kim Dae Jung also highlighted the importance of expanding South Korea's unduly narrow and truncated political and ideological terrain, by increasing ideological diversity and tolerance. For example, in his Liberation Day Speech on 15 August 1999, Kim raised the issue of revising the National Security Law, which had been a taboo in South Korean politics up to that point. The National Security Law, which was first enacted during the Syngman Rhee administration in the 1950s, was widely used, misused and

abused by the preceding authoritarian regimes to threaten, tame, suppress and persecute political opposition and dissidence. Kim Dae Jung himself was frequently subject to the abuse of the National Security Law, prosecuted and imprisoned on various "violations" of the law. In addition to a possible revision of the National Security Law, Kim also listed legislation of a human rights law as one of the most important goals of his government in the Liberation Day speech on 15 August 2000.

Kim Dae Jung's concept of "participatory democracy" entailed numerous elements of "substantive democracy" or "socioeconomic democracy" that will be discussed in detail later. Kim Dae Jung stressed ensuring equality in opportunities and guaranteeing a level playing field for everyone. Also, he emphasized improving quality of life for the working and middle classes. In his Liberation Day address on 15 August 2000, Kim pledged to enact the People's Basic Livelihood Guarantee Law (*Kungmin kich'o saenghwal pojang-bŏp*) to ensure basic life expenses for low-income families.

INTELLECTUALS

One of the most prominent intellectual debates on the concept of democracy in South Korea since the democratic transition in 1987 is between "procedural democracy" (*chŏlch'ajŏk minjujuŭi*) and "substantive democracy" (*silchilchŏk minjujuŭi*). Procedural democracy includes all the procedural minimum of liberal democracy mentioned above. In contrast, substantive democracy encompasses more equal distribution of income and opportunities among different social classes, geographical regions, social groups and genders.

Im Hyug-Baeg at Korea University, one of the most prominent political scientists in South Korea and a supporter of procedural democracy, affirms that with Kim Dae Jung's election in 1997, South Korean democracy entered the stage of consolidation. According to him, three most important tasks to be accomplished to consolidate South Korean democracy include: (1) establishment of the rule of law and constitutionalism, (2) greater representativeness and (3) citizens' internalization of democratic procedures and norms. In addition, similar to Kim Dae Jung's comment on the need to revise the National Security Law to achieve a participatory democracy, Im also accentuates that elimination of anti-communism and revision of the National Security Law are important tasks to accomplish further consolidation of South Korean democracy.[5]

In contrast, supporters of "substantive democracy" emphasize that furthering the procedural minimum and expanding the political arena by revising the National Security Law are simply not sufficient to make South Korea a real democracy. Rather, they argue that for South Korean democracy to be meaningful, what O'Donnell and Schmitter (1986) calls "socialization" must take place.[6]

For example, Choi Jang Jip at Korea University, who is one of the most well-known experts on democracy and labour politics in South Korea,

questions whether there has ever existed a broad consensus on the definition of democracy in South Korea. Conservatives prefer procedural democracy, whereas progressives prefer substantive democracy. According to Choi, in contrast and in opposition to the procedural democracy that is indefensibly narrowly predicated on the "procedural minimum", substantive democracy focuses on two crucial socioeconomic changes: (1) enlarged participation of the previously excluded social groups or classes in political process and (2) expansion of the welfare system to achieve "socioeconomic citizenship".[7]

In a similar vein, Sonn Hochul at Sogang University, who is another prominent scholar specialized in democracy and social movement, presents two different conceptualizations of democracy: political democracy (*chŏngch'ijŏk minjujuŭi*) vs. socioeconomic democracy (*sahoe kyŏngjejŏk minjujuŭi*). Sonn's "political democracy" is synonymous with what other scholars call procedural democracy and his "socioeconomic democracy" is equal to substantive democracy. He is extremely critical of the current status of South Korean democracy. He argues that neo-liberal economic restructuring policies designed and implemented in the wake of the economic crisis in 1997 have significantly eroded the goal of socioeconomic democracy in South Korea. Sonn lists several examples of the negative impact of neo-liberal economic restructuring pursued by the Kim Dae Jung government on socioeconomic democracy (1) Kim Dae Jung's neo-liberal policies have been pursued without parallel development in welfare and social safety net system, (2) pains of the economic crisis have concentrated on the socially disadvantaged such as women and the handicapped and (3) labour has been hit much harder than the *chaebol* (huge family-owned and family-managed business conglomerates in South Korea).[8] Therefore, Sonn concludes that the Kim Dae Jung regime is a "dependent, neo-liberal, limited political democracy".[9] He is even reluctant to grant the status of "limited democracy" to the Kim Dae Jung regime because, according to his typology, "limited democracy", which is in essence equal to procedural or political democracy, incorrectly assumes that South Korea only needs to achieve socioeconomic democracy.[10] According to Sonn, even political democracy is not yet fully attained in South Korea.

Most of the supporters of "substantive democracy", however, stress that their support for "substantive democracy" does not necessarily mean that substantive democracy must be pursued instead or in place of procedural democracy. Rather, Choi emphasizes that the two versions of democracy must be pursued simultaneously. Both Choi and Sonn caution against the misleading assessment that South Korea is already done with procedural democratization and only needs to concern itself with substantive democratization. Choi emphasizes that there still exist a number of procedural elements to be fully achieved, such as too much power in the presidency, an ideologically conservative political party system and discrepancy between civil society and

political society (i.e. over-representation of vested interests and under-representation of the traditionally alienated). In a similar vein, Sonn warns that an instrumental view of procedural democracy for the eventual attainment of substantive democracy is misleading. According to him, procedural democracy is equally important and, therefore, must be pursued in addition to, or simultaneously with, substantive democracy. Before addressing substantive democracy, according to the supporters of substantive democracy, outstanding tasks in procedural democracy must be handled first.

In terms of specific reform tasks to be pursued, South Korean intellectuals have reached a general consensus on four areas of political reform: National Assembly reform, political party reform, electoral reform and political finance reform.

The National Assembly reform includes: (1) overall reduction in the number of legislators (in the same spirit of ongoing streamlining and restructuring in the economic arena); (2) increased autonomy and empowerment of the National Assembly (vis-à-vis the executive branch), which entails, *inter alia*, National Assembly hearings on high-ranking public office appointees in the executive and the judiciary; (3) development of policy expertise by strengthening committee activities and (4) increasing accountability and transparency via, for example, keeping minutes for subcommittees and implementing an open voting system.[11]

The political party reform includes: (1) intra-party democratization, especially with greater input from party members and ordinary citizens in the nomination process of election candidates; (2) promoting the emergence of a multi-party system by lowering the entry barrier (electoral threshold) for progressive and minority parties; and (3) lowering the level of governmental subsidy to existing (big) parties and monitoring the distribution of governmental subsidy.[12]

The electoral reform includes: (1) expansion of proportional representation to the level of about 1/3–1/2 of the total number of legislators; (2) adoption of a large electoral district system; and (3) lifting of the prohibition of social groups' election activities.[13]

The political finance reform includes: (1) close monitoring and audit of governmental subsidy to political parties, (2) strengthening punishment on illegal political funding by businesspeople to politicians and (3) raising the ceiling of legal campaign finance to make it realistic.[14]

SOCIAL MOVEMENT

One of the most notable trends in South Korean social movement since the democratic transition in 1987 has been its bifurcation into two different wings: "citizens' movement groups" (*simin undong tanch'e*) and "people's movement groups" (*minjung undong tanch'e*). Most of the citizens' movement groups emerged in the wake of the democratic transition and have vigorously expanded over the past decade. The people's movement

groups refer to those groups that, as an integral element of the grand pro-democracy coalition, played a crucial role in bringing about the democratic transition in 1987. Prominent examples of the citizen's movement groups are the Citizens' Coalition for Economic Justice (CCEJ, *Kyŏngsillyŏn*), the People's Solidarity for Participatory Democracy (PSPD, *Ch'amyŏ yŏndae*) and the Korea Federation for Environmental Movement (KFEM, *Hwan'gyŏngnyŏn*). Examples of the people's movement groups include the National Alliance for Democracy and Unification of Korea (NADUK, *Chŏn'guk yŏnhap*), the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU, *Minju noch'ong*), the Korean Teachers' and Educational Workers' Union (KTEWU, *Chŏn'gyojo*), the Korean Peasant Movement Coalition (KPMC, *Chŏnnong*) and the National Coalition of University Student Councils (NCUSC, *Hanch'ongnyŏn*).

These two social movement wings in South Korea differ in a number of respects.[15] First, in terms of movement participants, the citizens' movement groups principally include middle class citizens, such as white-collar workers, professionals, religious leaders and intellectuals. By contrast, the people's movement groups have been and still are primarily composed of blue-collar labourers, peasants, the urban poor, students and other local residents. Second, in terms of movement goals, the citizens' movement groups emphasize gradual institutional reforms. They do not oppose the capitalist system *per se*; instead, they primarily underscore and try to correct the "distorted" and unjust aspects of its socioeconomic results. Meanwhile, the people's movement groups pursue fundamental and structural reforms that are intended to address and eventually overcome economic inequality and political suppression. Third, in terms of movement style, the citizens' movement groups mostly rely on legal and non-violent methods, such as publicity campaigns, lectures and distribution of pamphlets. The people's movement groups, however, do not strictly comply with legal and peaceful methods. They often resort to illegal and violent measures like strikes, demonstrations and sit-ins. Fourth, in terms of issues, the citizens' movement groups focus on a range of social issues, including fair elections, consumers' rights, anti-corruption, the environment and gender inequality. By contrast, the people's movement groups put their priority on overcoming various forms of political and economic inequalities – particularly the inequality between the elite and the mass on the one hand and the inequality between capital and labour on the other. According to the people's movement groups, rectifying such inequalities is crucial in consolidating and deepening Korean democracy.

In essence, therefore, the new citizens' movement groups focus more on procedural democracy, whereas the old people's movement groups put greater emphasis on substantive democracy. The citizens' movement groups basically accept "liberal democracy" as given and try to improve on it by enhancing citizen participation in policy-making and by increasing

ideological tolerance. In this respect, their definition of democracy is quite similar to Kim Dae Jung's "participatory democracy". In contrast, the people's movement groups take issue with the fundamental problems of the capitalist system at both domestic and global levels. The Korean Confederation of Trade Unions, one of the two official national labour confederations in South Korea today, expresses profound doubts about all versions of "democracy" and instead proposes pursuing an alternative vision of society:

> Irrespective of their levels of democratization, all states in the contemporary world display a strong pro-capitalist bias. There-fore, we should focus on liberating labour from capitalist suppression and establishing an equal society. 'Abundant and equal society (*p'ungyoroun p'yŏngdŭng sahoe*)' must be our goal. Its political system combines both representative democracy and participatory democracy. In such a society, various commit-tees must be activated to determine, through discussion, differ-ent social and economic policies.[16]

As is clear from this statement, the democracy envisioned by the people's movement groups including the KCTU is very similar to "substantive" and "socioeconomic" democracy.

In terms of political reform, social movement activists in South Korea have focused on several key issues. For example, the CCEJ called for holding of National Assembly hearings on high-ranking public office appointees such as the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, the Prime Minister, the Chief Justice of the Constitutional Court, the Director of the Board of Audit and Inspection, Supreme Court justices, the Director of the National Intelligence Service, the Director of the Supreme Public Prosecutors' Office, the Director of the National Police Agency and the Director of the Office of National Tax Administration; abolition of Article 87 of the Electoral Law that prohibits social groups from engaging in election-related activities; reduction in the number of legislators from 299 to 270; democratization of political parties' nomination process of election candidates and increasing transparency of political funds.[17]

Meanwhile, the PSPD has called for punishment of corrupt bureaucrats, politicians and businesspersons responsible for the economic crisis; increas-ing transparency in political finance; enactment of the People's Basic Liveli-hood Guarantee Law; expansion of citizen participation in policy-making; National Assembly hearings on high-ranking public office appointees; enact-ment of a Human Rights Law and an Anti-Corruption Law; repeal of the National Security Law and National Assembly reform aimed at increasing transparency (*t'umyŏngsŏng*), accessibility (*chŏpkŭnsŏng*), professionalism (*chŏnmunsŏng*), richness (*ch'ungsilsŏng*), cleanness (*ch'ŏngnyŏmsŏng*), and ethicality (*yullisŏng*).[18]

THE ACTUAL POLITICS OF REFORM, 1993–2003

Reform During the Kim Young Sam Government (1993–1998)

Kim Young Sam began his tenure as an unprecedentedly popular president. South Koreans, in general, were tired of the slow progress of democratization in both the political and economic spheres during the previous government under Roh Tae Woo. They had great expectations about Kim's new government. After all, Kim Young Sam was the first truly civilian president since the early 1960s, who was elected through free and fair popular elections. In a survey taken immediately after Kim's inauguration in 1993, 95% of the respondents were supportive of his performance. According to another survey, 96% of the pollees endorsed his policies.[19]

Encouraged by its unprecedented popularity and responding to great public expectations, the Kim Young Sam regime launched an ambitious plan of building a "New Korea". Particularly during the first two years after his inauguration (1993–1994), the Kim Young Sam government designed and implemented a series of sweeping political and economic reforms.[20] The political reforms revolved around consolidating the fledgling democracy in Korea by augmenting civilian control of the military (and the intelligence agency) and expanding civil liberties.

Economic reforms centred around terminating the collusive relationship between politicians and businesspeople, specifically between the government and the *chaebol*. In particular, two policies were crucial. First, Kim Young Sam publicly declared that he would not accept any political contributions from any business, and on 27 February 1993, he formally launched a campaign against political corruption by disclosing his family assets to the public and encouraging other high-ranking government officials to follow suit. In May 1993, the National Assembly revised the Public Officials' Ethics Act to require that cabinet members, legislators and other high-ranking government officials register and disclose their assets on an annual basis. Second, on 12 August 1993, Kim issued an emergency decree banning anonymous bank accounts and requiring the mandatory use of real names in all financial transactions. This real-name financial transaction system was intended to dismantle the structure of political corruption by severing the collusive links between government and business.

Together with these two institutional reforms to end state-business collusion, *chaebol* reform also constituted an essential component of Kim Young Sam's economic program. However, an expert on the *chaebol* concludes that these two initiatives at reform that sought to democratize – both internally and externally – the *chaebol* system failed rather dismally during the five years of the Kim Young Sam presidency.[21] When the economy plunged into an unprecedented crisis in November 1997, all his economic reforms rapidly unravelled. On the other hand, his attempts at "moral restoration" was similarly eroded when, toward the end of his presidential

term, a series of corruption scandals were revealed, several of which involved his own son and other close aides.

On 26 December 1996, the ruling New Korea Party passed several labour-related bills and a reform bill regarding the Agency for National Security Planning (ANSP; renamed National Intelligence Service in January 1999). These bills had been intensely debated and contested among South Koreans. Labour unions had opposed the proposed labour reform bills, because the bills, if legislated, would weaken labour unions and facilitate massive layoffs. Civil society groups had also disputed the proposed ANSP reform bill, because the bill would expand the investigative power of the already powerful state agency. Despite these concerns and criticisms from labour unions, civil society groups, and the opposition parties, the ruling party rammed the bills through the National Assembly, at six in the morning of December 26, clandestinely without opposition legislators. This railroading of the controversial bills profoundly outraged civil society groups and led to a series of anti-government protests. Well into mid-March 1997, massive demonstrations and signature collection campaigns by civil society groups and labour strikes destabilized the whole country. The government remained uncompromising, yielding nothing to the pressure engendered by such mass mobilization. Nonetheless, it was the Kim Young Sam regime that ultimately lost the battle. These anti-government protests irrevocably tarnished the regime's previous democratic image, which, combined with the onset of a grave economic crisis in late 1997, made Kim Young Sam the most unpopular president in South Korean history.

Explaining why Kim Young Sam's reform drive was successful in the beginning but petered out at the end, the main reason was the absence of a viable reform coalition. Because Kim Young Sam had long stayed outside of the power bloc throughout the authoritarian period, and joined the ruling bloc only recently, he did not have any reliable allies within the government ministries, the military, the judiciary, the intelligence agency, and in all the major state apparatuses. This was why Kim Young Sam's initial political reform, particularly the anti-corruption campaign, which was officially intended to terminate the collusive links between the government and the business, largely targeted old, conservative politicians and corrupted, politicized military generals. By means of these political "purges", Kim attempted to establish his own power base within the system. Yet, despite these purges and other personnel changes, Kim Young Sam and his colleagues were largely outnumbered by the conservative, if not reactionary, survivors of democratization, who had benefited from the *status quo ante* under the preceding authoritarian regimes. As a result, most of the reforms were excessively dependent on the president alone, without any institutional or coalitional basis. When Kim Young Sam's popularity and influence plummeted after the economic crisis, most of his earlier reforms also unravelled.

Reform under Kim Dae Jung (1998–2003)

Most of the reforms during the initial two years of the Kim Dae Jung government focused on overcoming the economic crisis. In part owing to various economic reforms, key macroeconomic indicators began to show signs of recovery in late 1999. Meanwhile, there has been little progress in political reform. In general, South Korean politics during the 1998–1999 period suffered from serious paralysis and immobilism, primarily due to the profound distrust and intense confrontation between the ruling party and the opposition party. The Kim government and the ruling party (the New Congress for New Politics, NCNP), often in conjunction with its coalitional partner (the United Liberal Democrats, ULD), criticized the opposition party, the Grand National Party (GNP) and its leader Lee Hoi Chang for obstructing and sabotaging numerous reform initiatives. The opposition party, in return, countered that the ruling party consistently attempted to repress, weaken, subvert and ultimately destroy the opposition. Continued antagonism between the ruling party and the opposition made it difficult to legislate political reform bills in the National Assembly.

What the Kim Dae Jung government paid greater attention to than "political reform" during the first two years of its term was political stability through a "reconstitution" or "reconfiguration" of the political system. Although the slogan itself – "reconstitution" or "reconfiguration" – appears to involve some fundamental structural changes in South Korean political system, the real meaning of the "reconstitution" has been to manufacture a parliamentary majority in the National Assembly. Kim Dae Jung won the 1997 presidential election with the critical help from Kim Jong Pil – a pivotal engineer of the military coup in 1961, founder of the Korea Central Intelligence Agency, and a leading political figure under Park Chung Hee's authoritarian rule during 1961–1979. As a minority government in a coalition with the conservative ULD, the Kim Dae Jung government was greatly frustrated and irritated by GNP's open and continued hostilities in the National Assembly. "Reconstitution" of the political system was tantamount to creation of a parliamentary majority. The specific method the ruling NCNP used in manufacturing a parliamentary majority was to allure and incorporate as many opposition legislators from the GNP as possible. As a result, by September 1998, the ruling party obtained the majority in the National Assembly, increasing its membership to 101, giving the ruling coalition (which included ULD's 52 seats) a majority in the 299-seat National Assembly. This strategy of "political reconstitution", ultimately gave the Kim government the upper hand in managing the passage of economic reform bills in the National Assembly.

Another political project that consumed much of the Kim government's energy in its first two years was the "Second Nation-Building Movement" (*Che 2 kŏn'guk undong*). This movement was first proposed by Kim Dae Jung himself in his speech in commemoration of the Liberation Day on 15 August

1998. According to the president, this movement is "a holistic and comprehensive national campaign to reform the consciousness and mentality of the whole nation … to realize a participatory democracy and to establish a market economy". Kim Dae Jung particularly stressed that this movement should not be led by the government in a top-down manner but should rather be initiated and pursued by the entire nation and ordinary citizens. In essence, the "Second Nation-Building Movement" is Kim government's campaign to directly appeal to and mobilize civil society in order to support and reinforce its reform drive. Many analysts in South Korea pointed out that the "Second Nation-Building Movement" by the Kim Dae Jung government, despite the initial claim on its bottom-up nature, was another state-led social campaign. Moreover, several leading newspapers disclosed that numerous government officials and pro-government local leaders had joined and in fact led the movement. This was why some observers pointed out that the movement was the government's elaborate divide-and-rule strategy toward civil society and social movement, which would ultimately undermine the autonomy and independence of civil society in general.

Meanwhile, in the first two years of his term, Kim Dae Jung contributed to the promotion of human rights and democracy in South Korea by, for example, releasing a number of long-term political prisoners, legalizing formerly unlawful labour and social organizations and launching discussions on the Human Rights Law and on the revision of the National Security Law. But it was when the Kim Dae Jung government finally dropped the Second Nation-Building campaign and the obsession about obtaining a majority in the National Assembly that it seriously began to address some of the outstanding issues in political reform and made some accomplishments. The Kim Dae Jung government, in comparison with the previous Kim Young Sam government, has been quite responsive to many of the demands for political reform made by intellectuals and social movement activists. For example, the Law on National Assembly Public Hearings on Public Office Appointees was enacted in June 2000. The People's Basic Livelihood Guarantee Law was enacted in October 2000. The Law on National Human Rights Commission was enacted in April 2001, and the National Human Rights Commission was launched in November 2001. The Anti-Corruption Law was enacted in January 2002, and the Anti-Corruption Commission was also launched in the same month. Also, the ruling New Millennium Democratic Party (formerly NCNP) introduced a primary election system in its nomination process of the presidential candidate in early 2002, which significantly contributed to intra-party democratization demanded by intellectuals and social movement activists for many years.

CONCLUSION

What should be done to continue and sustain political reform and to complete the remaining reform tasks in South Korea? Most of the political

reform so far has been too much dependent on the presidents: Kim Young Sam and Kim Dae Jung were the main designers and implementers of political reform. Meanwhile, an institutional or coalition basis for reform has been largely lacking. This must not be a problem as long as the president remains powerful, influential and popular. However, when the legitimacy, popularity, and charisma of the president decrease and dissipate, reform is also likely to collapse. Therefore, it is essential to form and nurture a solid reform coalition within the government and political society. Reform without a group of deeply-committed reformers will never succeed.

Second, there should be more collaboration and coordination between such a reform coalition in the state and political society on the one hand and social movement activists and intellectuals on the other. Most of the "collaboration" between the government and civil society so far has taken the form of recruitment of movement activists by the government (as ministers or ruling party politicians). However, this has been to a large extent ineffective. State recruitment of movement activists has brought about depletion or depopulation of the civil society arena. Rather, efforts must be made to establish multi-level formal and informal channels of interaction between the state and social movement groups. For a grand reform coalition between civil society and state/political society to emerge and develop, there must be more regularized and institutionalized linkages between government officials, politicians, and movement activists. More public fora on diverse issues of political and policy reform must be fostered and encouraged.

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Political Dissent and Political Reform in Vietnam 1997–2002

Carlyle A. Thayer

INTRODUCTION

In 1997–1998, major leadership changes took place in eight of Southeast Asia's ten countries.[1] In July, Cambodia experienced a violent domestic upheaval that led to collapse of its democratically elected coalition government. In November, Thai Prime Minister Chavalit Yongchaiyudh resigned from office; and in neighbouring Myanmar the State Law and Order Restoration Council gave way to the State Peace and Development Council. In December, Vietnam jettisoned its party leader in mid-term, while Laos undertook a leadership reshuffle early in the new year. The Philippines underwent an orderly transfer of power through democratic elections held in May 1998. No change was more dramatic than that in Indonesia where President Suharto resigned from office amid the collapse of his New Order regime. In Malaysia, the financial crisis intensified the power struggle between Prime Minister Mahathir and his deputy, Anwar Ibrahim, and led to the latter's sacking in September 1998. Only Singapore and Brunei were unaffected.

All of these leadership changes took place within the context of a major regional financial crisis precipitated by the devaluation of Thailand's currency in mid-1997. Most of Southeast Asia's regimes based their legitimacy to govern on economic performance rather than a democratic mandate. The Asian financial crisis of 1997–1998 severely undermined economic performance as the basis of regime legitimization. In Indonesia, for example, what had begun as a domestic discourse on political reform quickly expanded into a more general discourse on democratization.

It is not clear, however, whether leadership changes elsewhere in Southeast Asia were so casually linked to the regional financial crisis. This chapter examines the discourse on political reform in Vietnam during the period of the Asian financial crisis of 1997–1998 through the actions and statements by domestic dissidents. It argues that the discourse on political reform was largely shaped by domestic factors unique to Vietnam. External factors, in

particular the Asian financial crisis and pro-democracy movements in neighbouring states, barely featured at all.

Two reasons account for this. First, discourse on political reform in Vietnam historically has been very limited and subject to repression when it has gone outside approved official channels. Political dissidents usually comment on draft policy documents in circulation in the lead up to a national party congress. Or they have made their views known to party and state officials in the form of open letters, petitions, and submissions to the state-run media. These are approved activities and are a relatively safe way of entering the discourse on political reform. The Vietnam Communist Party (VCP) held its Eighth National Congress in June–July 1996, a year before the Asian financial crisis. Second, Vietnam's economy was not fully integrated into the global economy at the time of the financial crisis. Consequently Vietnam suffered much less than Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, or the Philippines. The issue of performance legitimacy was not as salient in Vietnam as elsewhere in the region.

This chapter is divided into four sections in addition to the introduction. The first assesses the Vietnamese economy and the impact of the Asian financial crisis. The second section provides a typology of political dissent in Vietnam. The subsequent section focuses on Vietnam's most prominent political dissident, Tran Do, and his proposals for political reform. Finally, the chapter concludes with an overall assessment of the discourse on political reform, the role of intellectuals, and their impact on Vietnam's political system.

VIETNAM AND THE ASIAN FINANCIAL CRISIS

The Asian financial crisis struck Vietnam when it was facing three major problems of its own. The first was a decline in economic performance for the first time since the adoption of *doi moi* a decade earlier. Signs of impending trouble began to emerge in the last quarter of 1996, prior to the onset of the Asian financial crisis.[2] Vietnam's problems were due to such fundamental deficiencies as a weak financial and banking system, lack of budgetary transparency, an inefficient state sector, excessive bureaucracy, red tape, endemic corruption, and growing trade and current account deficits.

The second major problem faced by Vietnam was rural unrest in several provinces. The most severe "hot spots" occurred in the northern province of Thai Binh. Throughout 1997, confrontations between peasants and local officials grew in frequency and intensity. During the final quarter of the year, police and military forces had to be mobilized to restore order. At the end of the year, Vietnam encountered its third major problem when the worst typhoon in 50 years struck the central provinces flooding rice fields and causing destruction to homes and infrastructure.

It was in this context – a decline in economic performance, peasant unrest, and a severe natural disaster – that Vietnam experienced the impact

of the Asian financial crisis. Foreign investment and trade, especially from the former growth economies of East Asia – South Korea, Hong Kong, Japan, and Thailand – dropped sharply. Vietnam's growth rate also declined. Taken together, these "four typhoons" and their after-effects posed a serious challenge to performance legitimacy as the basis of one-party rule in Vietnam. In December 1997, Do Muoi stepped down as VCP Secretary General. Do Muoi had been first elected to office at the 1991 Seventh National Party Congress. At the Eighth Congress, delegates had become deadlocked over the selection of party leader. A compromise was reached. Do Muoi was elected to another term of office on the understanding he would step down in mid-term. The "four typhoons" of 1997 hastened his departure and the deadline was brought forward. Do Muoi was replaced by Le Kha Phieu, a retired general and political officer who at that time had responsibility for internal party security.

Under the leadership of Le Kha Phieu, the VCP adopted a policy of battening down the hatches in order to ride out the regional economic storm. Political instability in Indonesia and Malaysia served as a negative example to Vietnam's leaders. Phieu and other party leaders put a premium on maintaining political stability. They also rejected calls to kick-start a new round of reforms, referred to as "*doi moi* 2". As a consequence, Vietnam weathered the "four typhoons" reasonably well. Political order was restored in Thai Binh province. Although Vietnam's growth rate was cut into half, it remained among the highest in the region. However, under Le Kha Phieu's cautious and indecisive leadership, Vietnam entered a period of political immobilism that undermined economic performance as the basis of regime legitimacy.[3]

THE TYPOLOGY OF POLITICAL DISSENT

This section presents an overview of political dissent in Vietnam from 1997 to 2002 in the form of a political typology (see Table 8.1). Reform-orientated political dissidents are classified into four main categories: establishment dissenters, networked dissidents, intellectual dissenters (the Dalat Group), and cyber dissidents.

There are a number of difficulties with this approach. Firstly, this typology does not adequately acknowledge the historical range of political dissidents who were active prior to 1997 and who were repressed by the state.[4] Political dissent in Vietnam may be traced back to the 1950s when intellectuals, writers, and poets fought for freedom of speech and freedom from party control.[5] Another group of political dissenters arose in the 1960s. They opposed Vietnam's pro-China tilt in the Sino–Soviet dispute. They were condemned as anti-party revisionists, tried, and jailed. Another generation of political dissenters emerged in the 1970s following Vietnam's unification. The typology of groups that emerged in this period includes religious dissidents, pro-democracy activists with ties to the old regime, and

disgruntled members of the VCP's southern branch. Still another wave of political dissidents emerged in the 1980s in response to the comparative freedom of expression of the early years of *doi moi*. Three main groups may be identified: literary dissidents, pro-democracy activists, and "loyal oppositionists" – disaffected members of the party, army, and state bureaucracy. The loyal oppositionists were active in submitting comments to the party on the eve of its Sixth (1986) and Seventh (1991) National Party Congresses.

Secondly, the attempt to classify and generalize the views of diverse individuals may create the impression of a more unified and cohesive group than is the case. Some individuals are difficult to classify because their style of discourse has changed over time. Bui Tin, for example, went from being a loyal oppositionist in 1986 to an exiled dissident in 1990.[6]

Thirdly, this analysis only includes individuals whose views and writings have become known outside Vietnam. The danger here is that this analysis may give more prominence to the views of an individual or group than is accorded by the political elite in Vietnam. Finally, the main focus of this analysis is on the discourse of political reform in the post-1997 period. This emphasis may depreciate the importance of individuals and groups who were active earlier, and then were subject to such heavy repression that they ceased to play a major role in public discourse in the late 1990s. Here the examples of pro-democracy activist Nguyen Dan Que and religious dissident Thich Quang Do come to mind.

Establishment Critics
Establishment critics consist of very senior party, army, and non-party state officials who have communicated their demands for political reform through approved channels. They have not attempted to circulate their views overseas. The establishment critics seek the reform of Vietnam's socialist system, not its overthrow. They are critical in varying degrees of the VCP's adherence to Marxist–Leninist ideology, abuse of power, old-boy patronage and family networks, and corruption.

The establishment critics have advanced a wide variety of proposals for political change. Individuals in this group would like to reform the Vietnam Communist Party in order to bring it back into accord with an imagined past when there was national unity in the struggle against foreign aggression and when the party and society were perceived as being one. Individual establishment critics generally argue that a conservative ageing leadership, fixated by outmoded ideology, is largely to blame for what they perceive as Vietnam's current predicament. How was it possible, they ask rhetorically, to defeat the United States, yet decades later still remain mired in poverty and inequality?

The most prominent establishment critic to emerge in 1997–1998 was Tran Do. His case is discussed separately in the following section. It should

be noted that Tran Do was one of a number of party members who are also military veterans, and who have been motivated to step forward and criticize existing policies and advocate political reform. The most prominent non-party establishment critic is Dr. Phan Dinh Dieu, a professor of mathematics. Dr. Dieu became prominent in 1991 in the lead up to the Seventh Congress for his criticisms of socialist ideology.[7] He subsequently became a sought-after speaker at forums convened to discuss the reasons for the collapse of the socialist system. Dieu ran afoul of security authorities and was dismissed from his post as Deputy Chairman of the National Center for Scientific Research in 1993.

In December 1997, Phan Dinh Dieu was invited to address a Hanoi meeting of the Vietnam Fatherland Front. This meeting took place on the eve of the Central Committee's fourth plenum where the "four typhoons" and party leadership were scheduled for discussion. In his address, Dieu reiterated his widely known view that it was impossible for the party to maintain a monopoly of power and develop a market economy at the same time. In March 1998, it was reported that Dieu had addressed meetings of official institutions at which he advocated more democracy.

Other examples of establishment critics include Mai Chi Tho, a former member of the VCP Politburo and Minister of Interior. In October 1998, he wrote to the Politburo complaining of corruption, the degeneration of the party, and deterioration of society. Another example is General Nguyen Van Dao, who has lashed out at continuing corruption at senior levels of the party, military, and state, and the party's repression of whistle blowers. Dao advocates the independent monitoring of the business interests of the families of Vietnam's top leadership and preventing the party, military, and security apparatus from owning and running business enterprises.[8]

Networked Dissidents
The second major group of political dissenters comprises party and army veterans who have moved beyond loyal opposition to Vietnam's socialist regime to a state of more or less permanent dissidence. Political dissenters in this category generally operate in loose groups or networks, and not as individuals. They are active in publishing and distributing their anti-socialist tracts among a wider circle of intellectuals at home and overseas. Despite much commonality in the criticism of the socialist regime, each individual has a different agenda. Some are issue specific, while others are concerned with more general issues such as promoting democracy.

The most prominent networked dissident is Hoang Minh Chinh. Chinh was educated in the Soviet Union and is the former Director of the Institute of Philosophy. He was imprisoned in the 1960s for opposing the party's pro-China line. In 1991, in the lead-up to the Seventh Party Congress, Chinh was one of a number of prominent intellectuals who commented critically on draft VCP policy documents that were in circulation.[9] His comments were

mainly aimed at challenging the party's infallibility on ideological doctrine in order to seek redress for the victims of the anti-party purges of the 1960s.

Chinh's advocacy of the 1960s purge victims found support among party officials. Le Hong Ha, a former prosecutor in the Ministry of Interior, teamed up with Nguyen Trung Thanh, a cadre assigned to the Central Committee's Organization Commission, to conduct archival research into the 1967 purge trials. In December 1993, they submitted a report to the Politburo and the Secretariat arguing that the verdict had been based on questionable evidence and that the findings should be reviewed. Ha actively campaigned for the rehabilitation of the purge victims, including Hoang Minh Chinh.

News of these developments quickly spread overseas. An unsigned letter purportedly written by persons close to the individuals and families of those "arrested and persecuted in the 'anti-party revisionist trial'", was published by an anti-Hanoi activist group in Paris in 1995. The letter provided details of 47 alleged purge victims. As a result, Nguyen Trung Thanh was dismissed from the party. Le Hong Ha and Hoang Minh Chinh were arrested and imprisoned.

After his release, Hoang Minh Chinh resumed his political activities. In late 1997, he authored and privately circulated a critical essay. He was visited by Le Kha Phieu who at that time was busy lobbying intellectuals in support of his nomination as party leader. In January 1998, Chinh wrote an open letter where he argued that "there is a gap between leaders and intellectuals", which could be bridged by holding a sincere dialogue between them. When Phieu, now the new party chief, failed to act, Chinh began networking with other dissidents to protest repression against political dissenters.

In May 2000, Chinh teamed up with Pham Que Duong, Nguyen Thanh Giang, Hoang Tien, and Tran Dung Tien to submit a signed open letter to the National Assembly calling for democratic reforms and protesting the arrest of political dissident Nguyen Xuan Tu (Ha Si Phu). A year later, Chinh joined more than a dozen political dissidents in signing an appeal to party officials calling for the repeal of Decree 31/CP authorizing administrative detention. Chinh has repeatedly defied police summons to attend working sessions at their Hanoi headquarters. On one occasion in April 2001, Chinh barricaded himself in his house during a police visit.

There are also a number of individuals who started out as establishment dissenters but due to their treatment by the state began to network with other political dissidents. Three examples may be given: Hoang Tien, Pham Que Duong, and Vu Cao Quan. Hoang Tien is an army veteran who took to writing stories, novels, and essays after his retirement. In November 1996, Hoang Tien sent a letter to the VCP calling for the abolishment of the Ideology and Culture Commission, characterizing it as "simply an informant's organization to spy on and control the thinking of intellectuals, artists, newspaper staffs, and editors". Tien also wrote to the Chairman of the

National Assembly's Standing Committee, Nong Duc Manh, demanding freedom of speech and freedom for the press. In May 2000, Tien wrote a number of articles condemning the arrest of Nguyen Xuan Tu. He also joined a network of four other dissidents in signing an open letter protesting Tu's arrest. Since then, Tien has been subject to police harassment and forbidden to publish.

Pham Que Duong is a retired army colonel, former editor-in-chief of the military journal *Tap Chi Lich Su Quan Su*, and a party member since 1948. In 1999, he resigned from the VCP in protest at the expulsion of Tran Do. In May of the following year, Duong joined Hoang Minh Chinh, Nguyen Thanh Giang, Hoang Tien, and Tran Dung Tien, in sending an open letter to the National Assembly protesting the arrest of Nguyen Xuan Tu. The following year, Duong joined an expanded network of more than a dozen other political dissidents to demand the repeal of Decree 31/CP. In 2002, Duong filed a request to form an independent anti-corruption organization. He was arrested by the police in a round up involving a number of other political dissidents and was subject to repeated videotaped interrogation sessions over a two-week period.[10]

Vu Cao Quan has been politically active since 1990 in demanding democratic reforms. In 2001, Quan attempted to form a network of like-minded intellectuals in his home city of Haiphong. As a result, he was repeatedly summoned to police headquarters for questioning. In April, Quan journeyed to Hanoi and held separate meetings with Tran Do, Hoang Minh Chinh, Nguyen Thanh Giang, and Pham Que Duong. On his return to Haiphong, the police searched his home and confiscated a number of books and documents. He was arrested and detained for ten days for writing and possessing anti-socialist documents. In January 2002, the Deputy Minister of Culture and Information ordered that Quan's essay, "A Few Words Before Dying" be confiscated and destroyed.

On 6 July 2002, 21 political dissidents sent a petition to the National Assembly and the VCP leaders calling for political reforms, a multi-party democracy, and the release of political prisoners.[11] The petition called on the National Assembly (elected in May) to create a constitutional court to review anti-democratic legislation and bring Vietnamese domestic law into compliance with the UN Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Further the petition called for legal safeguards to prevent state repression, the establishment of an independent anti-corruption body, and the publication of the full text of border agreements signed with China in 1999 and 2000. The significance of this event lay in the large number of individuals who signed the petition (possibly the largest collective group to do so) and the fact that they included representatives of at least three different dissident groups (networked, intellectual, and cyber). The signers collectively referred to themselves as a "group of democratic voters", and Pham Que Duong and Tran Van Khue served as their spokespersons.

Intellectual Dissidents (the Dalat Group)

A third group of politics dissidents comprises intellectuals who have been dubbed the Dalat Group because of their residence in that city in Vietnam's central highlands. The Dalat Group is composed of five persons: Nguyen Xuan Tu, a professor of biology; Nguyen Thanh Giang, a geologist; Mai Thai Linh, a former Deputy Chairman of the Dalat City People's Council; and Bui Minh Quoc and Tieu Dao Bao Cu, two provincial party journalists.

Professor Tu became active in the early years of *doi moi* when there was a relative relaxation of restrictions on intellectuals. In the late 1980s, Tu wrote a number of lengthy essays under the pen name Ha Si Phu (Hero Professor of Hanoi). These writings were highly critical of communism. In 1993, Tu wrote an extended essay under the title "Some Thoughts of a Citizen". Professor Tu ran into trouble with authorities when his essays were published abroad by the émigré Vietnamese community.

In 1995, Tu added fuel to the fire by advocating that the United States withhold granting Vietnam "Most Favored Nation" status until Vietnam developed real democracy. Tu made these statements in a series of interviews given to overseas radio stations, including Voice of America. Tu was arrested in late 1995 after the police searched his home and reportedly discovered confidential documents outlining preparations for the Eighth Party Congress. Tu was tried in August 1996 and found guilty of revealing state secrets. He was released four months later and kept under police surveillance. As noted earlier, Tu's arrest and imprisonment provoked written protests by a group of networked dissidents.

Professor Nguyen Thanh Giang has been a public advocate of human rights and multi-party democracy since 1989. In late 1993, he submitted a critical letter to the party's Central Committee. In 1997, he circulated an open letter supporting political dissent. The following year, Giang circulated an eight-page essay in which he denounced "red capitalists" within the VCP. These were individuals, Giang argued, who were "promoted, subsidized and protected by the proletarian dictatorship". In March 1999, Giang was arrested on the charge of abusing democratic right and was released two months later. Undaunted, in October Giang fired off another letter of protest to the government. In January 2002, the Deputy Minister of Culture and Information issued a decree authorizing the police to confiscate and destroy an essay written by Giang.

A month after Giang's arrest, the police raided Nguyen Xuan Tu's house and confiscated his computer and printer. He was fined for violating the publishing law for writing a letter to General Tran Do ironically congratulating him on his expulsion from the VCP. A year later, the police once again raided Professor Tu's home when they learned that he was drafting a pro-democracy declaration in collaboration with other political dissidents. The police seized Tu's computer and diskettes. Tu, and a colleague, Mai Thai Linh, were placed under investigation by local

authorities for making contact with overseas groups. This provoked five political dissidents to send an open letter of protest to the National Assembly. In February 2001, Tu and Linh were placed under house arrest for two years for "making contact with reactionaries living abroad to sabotage Vietnam and demand the overthrow of the socialist regime and the leadership of the Communist Party".[12]

In 1988, Bui Minh Quoc and Tieu Dao Bao Cu, two Dalat-based party intellectuals, began their protests against the state's suppression of literary freedom. As a consequence, both Quoc and Bao Cau were hauled before their party branches on charges of violating party discipline and democratic centralism. Both were expelled from the VCP and fired from their jobs with a provincial newspaper.

Quoc and Bao Cu then joined the increasing network of political dissenters who protested acts of state repression against intellectuals at every opportunity. They jointly wrote an open letter to the National Assembly protesting that their constitutional right of freedom of speech and expression had been denied. They also protested the censorship of articles and letters sent abroad for publication. Bao Cu initiated a letter writing campaign on behalf of Nguyen Xuan Tu in 1995–1996. Bao Cu also condemned those writers who participated in the campaign vilifying Nguyen Xuan Tu in the press. Bau Cu also took issue with Phan Dinh Dieu's 1997 suggestion that the Vietnam Fatherland Front could serve as a suitable neutral venue where intellectuals could meet to discuss democracy.[13]

In March 1997, both Tieu Dao Bao Cu and Bui Minh Quoc were detained for violating Directive 893 prohibiting publication overseas. Bao Cu has been repeatedly called in for police questioning.

Cyber Dissidents

The fourth major group of political dissenters represent a new generation of political activists who have taken to the Internet to air their views on political reform. They represent Vietnam's first group of cyber dissidents. For example, in 1999, two scholars based in Ho Chi Minh City, Tran Van Khue and Nguyen Thi Thanh Xuan, established an Internet forum called *Dialogue* that encouraged political discussions on democracy.

The cyber dissidents became prominent in 2002 when the Vietnamese police detained five key figures: Nguyen Khac Toan, Le Chi Quang, Tran Van Khue, Pham Hong Son, and Nguyen Vu Binh. The police arrested Toan and Quang while they were working in Internet cafes.[14] The police raided the homes of the three others, seizing computers, diskettes, printers, cell phones, cameras, and documents. Toan and Quang were subsequently tried and sentenced to jail, while Khue has been placed under house arrest. Son and Binh were finally brought to trial in 2003 and sentenced to lengthy jail terms.

These five individuals represent diverse backgrounds. Nguyen Vu Binh was a reporter who worked for the party's theoretical journal, *Tap Chi Cong*

San. Pham Hong Son andNguyen Khac Toan are both retired army officers. Tran Van Khue is a scholar while Le Chi Quang is a lawyer. Several of the cyber dissidents became politically active in the late 1990s using more orthodox channels of protest. Lt. Gen. Son, for example, was galvanized into action by Tran Do's expulsion from the VCP. Le Chi Quang wrote in support of pluralism and a multi-party political system. Nguyen Vu Binh quit his job in 2000 and unsuccessfully applied for permission to form an independent political organization, the Liberal Democratic Party. The following year he joined Pham Que Duong in applying to set up an independent anti-corruption commission.

Three major themes preoccupied the electronic postings of the cyber dissidents: political reform and democracy, human rights, and Sino–Vietnamese relations. For example, Pham Hong Son translated an article, "What is Democracy", from the US State Department's website and sent it to colleagues and senior government officials, including party Secretary General Nong Duc Manh. Nguyen Vu Binh provided a written statement on human rights to the US Congressional Human Rights Caucus.[15] Nguyen Khac Toan collaborated with a Vietnamese activist group in France by gathering materials written by political dissidents and copies of citizens' complaints to government officials.

The third theme – Sino–Vietnamese relations – represents a new development. In 1999, China and Vietnam signed a treaty demarcating their land border. Because the treaty was not immediately published, this gave rise to suspicion, particularly among anti-communist overseas Vietnamese communities, that the Hanoi government had made territorial concessions to China. This was an explosive political issue because, if true, it could undermine the nationalist credentials of the VCP.

Three cyber dissidents took up this cause. Bui Minh Quoc actually went to the border region and gathered first hand material. He posted some of his research findings on the Internet. In January 2002, Quoc was arrested and the police seized more than 300 documents as well as notebooks and film. He was later placed under house arrest in Dalat and charged with possessing anti-government literature. Le Chi Quang, who accessed electronic information on the border treaty, posted on the Internet an essay he had written entitled "Beware of Imperialist China". Tran Van Khue took matters a step further – he wrote directly to China's President, Jiang Zemin, on the eve of Jiang's February 2002 visit to Hanoi, criticizing the 1999 Sino–Vietnamese land border agreement. Khue also posted his letter on the Internet.

GENERAL TRAN DO

Tran Do is arguably the most prominent political dissident to emerge in Vietnam since *doi moi* was initiated in 1986. Tran Do has impeccable revolutionary credentials. He was born in Thai Binh province, one of the cradles of the Vietnamese Revolution. He was a life-long member of the Vietnam

Table 8.1. A Typology of Political Dissidents in Vietnam, 1997–2002

Classification	Characteristics and Personalities
Establishment Critics	Mainly current or former mid- to high-level party cadres, state officials and army veterans. Proposals for political reform submitted within approved channels or circulated privately. Tran Do, Phan Dinh Dieu, Mai Chi Tho, Nguyen Van Dao, Hoang Huu Nhan, Nguyen Khac Vien (deceased), Bui Tin.
Networked Dissidents	Former party, army and state officials who have moved from being establishment critics to permanent dissident status and networking with like-minded intellectuals. Hoang Minh Chinh, Le Hong Ha, Nguyen Trung Thanh, Tran Dung Tien, Hoang Tien, Pham Que Duong, Vu Cao Quan, Nguyen Kien Giang.
Intellectual Dissidents	Former party, army and state officials who have moved from being establishment critics to permanent dissident status and networking with like-minded intellectuals known as the Dalat Group. Nguyen Xuan Tu (Ha Si Phu), Nguyen Thanh Giang, Mai Thai Linh, Bui Minh Quoc, Tieu Dao Bao Cu.
Cyber Dissidents	Disaffected party and state cadres who advocate political reform and liberalization generally outside approved channels. Focus is on democratic reforms, human rights and national sovereignty. Circulate views domestically and overseas via the mass media, and increasingly over the Internet. Tran Van Khue, Nguyen Thi Thanh Xuan, Le Chi Quang, Nguyen Khac Toan, Nguyen Vu Binh, Pham Hong Son.

Communist Party, who rose to membership on the Central Committee and headed its Ideology and Culture Commission. In addition, Tran Do fought in the anti-French Resistance War and served in South Vietnam during the Vietnam War as the second highest-ranking communist military official. He retired from the Vietnam People's Army with the rank of lieutenant general and served for a term as Deputy Chairman of the National Assembly.

Although Tran Do had been active in Vietnamese political affairs for a number of years,[16] he did not emerge publicly as a political dissident until late 1997 when he submitted a thirteen-page open letter to "the party, National Assembly, Government and concerned friends". The letter became public in early 1998.[17] Do's open letter was written for domestic Vietnamese audience and it provides important insights into the discourse on political reform in Vietnam. It is notable for its scant mention of the Asian financial crisis, political instability, and leadership change that was sweeping Southeast Asia at that time.

In submitting his open letter to senior party and state officials, Tran Do was operating through approved channels. Indeed, he offered his open letter ostensibly as a contribution to the "upcoming Ninth Party Congress" (which was not scheduled until mid-2001). Tran Do entitled his submission "The State of the Nation and the Role of the Communist Party".[18] It was divided into four parts (current state of the nation, the causes, what to do, and summary and conclusions). It also included an appendix that contained practical proposals for spurring the process of democratization (a set of laws guaranteeing basic political freedoms and free elections).

It is customary in high-level party documents to start off with an evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses and successes and shortcomings of the party's policy in the current situation. Tran Do modified this protocol by asking rhetorically why recent rosy assessments had suddenly become so pessimistic. He pointed out, with reference to reportage of peasant unrest in his native Thai Binh province, that it was difficult to know whether "the country is advancing or stopping".

Tran Do noted that when renovation was first adopted in 1986 it was under the slogan, "Facing the Truth". He drew attention to the fact that the new Prime Minister, Phan Van Khai, had recently used this expression in his address to the second session (tenth legislature) of the National Assembly. But Do questioned if the party was interested in knowing the truth in light of its suppression of newspaper reports detailing the causes of peasant unrest in Thai Binh. Do cited the case of *Tien Phong* newspaper that had to apologize for publishing a series of reports on Thai Binh that party censors felt "did not conform to reality".

Tran Do, therefore, entitled his first section, "Facing the Truth Once Again" as a rhetorical devise for altering traditional protocol. He did so explicitly so that he could immediately pay attention to "the negative side, the observed and potential contradictions, and the major problems for our stability and development". Do presented his analysis in the form of seven rhetorical questions:

- Why does "the state-owned economic sector taking the leading role" continue to be emphasized while this is the least effective sector and the worst den of corruption?

- Why could we not mobilize domestic capital … to raise the GDP per capita to $400 in the year 2000?
- What caused foreign investors to become more hesitant in investing in our country; (and why) some foreign firms are even withdrawing their capital?
- Why are citizens, with better living conditions, not interested in contributing their effort and wealth to the building of the country as the Party calls for?
- Why do the reform and open door policies lead to such a deep social division, and to such a bold and illegal get-rich schemes of a small group composed mainly of office holding cadres and party members?
- Why are we unable to push back corruption effectively?
- With so much giant machinery to run the country, why are the campaigns against corruption, smuggling and social vices almost totally ineffective?

In Part Two, Tran Do characterized the current state of affairs as one in which "the whole society has generally lost its initial enthusiasm" and has become cynical. Vietnamese society, argued Do, "is in danger of not being able to develop (its) internal potential" and is dependent on foreign capital investment. At the same time, social vices such as drug trafficking and corruption are growing alongside a rising incidence of poverty. Do concluded that "most of the negative aspects of society today have been caused by 'us'", and not hostile forces from abroad.

Do ended Part Two by offering four opinions on the current state of the nation. Firstly, the market economy could not coexist with a "socialist direction"; "eventually one must eliminate the other", he concluded. Secondly, Do argued that Vietnam had failed to adopt an appropriate economic development strategy that commanded the support of the Vietnamese people. Vietnam had shifted from the Soviet command economy to the economic development model pursued by the Asian tigers and dragons but, as he noted wryly, "(these) models are not much more fruitful". Thirdly, Do railed against the party's monopoly of power that invariably led it to reject alternate views. "The record of the last several decades shows that the party was not always right", he observed. In Do's view, the party would continue to abuse power until independent institutions or groups could modify its behaviour.

Tran Do extended his analysis by addressing the question of political reform. He noted that in the recent past, several party policy documents had mentioned the need to separate the party from the state. Other policy documents discussed the need to conduct political reform in parallel with economic reform, but these had been altered to give priority to conducting economic reforms first to be followed later by political reform. The latter was diluted to administrative reform. According to Tran Do, "in my opinion, *the*

current economic reform demands a vigorous political reform … many party members with power have really become 'new capitalists' hoarding authority, turning power into private wealth, and causing ever more severe social tensions" (emphasis in original).

Fourthly, Do offered the opinion that the party and its ideology were the most important causes of Vietnam's current predicament. Party members had become so mired in self-interest, he argued, that they have become "the obstacle against national advancement". Tran Do was scathing in his assessment of Marxist ideology. "Holding on exclusively to Marxism–Leninism", he wrote, "only leads to mental retardation". There were many other schools of thought that could benefit Vietnam, he concluded.

In Part Three, Tran Do set out his personal programme of reform measures that needed to be adopted to overcome Vietnam's backward slide. Do called for the mobilization of the "intellectual power of the people" through real efforts at democratization including political freedoms, human rights, and rule of law. Do argued that the VCP should end its monopoly of power and confine itself to a leadership role so as to permit the National Assembly, the government, and the Vietnam Fatherland Front to exercise their responsibilities independently.

In Part Four, Tran Do provided a summary of his arguments and offered the conclusion that Vietnam faced "two cruel dangers": the collapse of the party-state due to its inability to overcome socio-economic malaise and the disintegration of the VCP due to prolonged confusion and instability. If Vietnam did not carry out democratization, he concluded, the country would experience instability; and if the party sought to repress unrest this would bring about its disintegration.

In the appendix, Do argued for the adoption of laws guaranteeing freedom of thought, expression, and press and publication; and a people's monitoring body to prevent corruption. Do also included a detailed proposal to democratize the nomination process for persons wishing to stand as deputies to the National Assembly.

Tran Do's open letter was broadcast by Radio Free Asia in February 1998 and soon appeared on the Internet. Tran Do was then subject to a campaign of indirect vilification in the party press and direct attack by party cadres at private meetings. Members of Tran Do's family were subject to harassment by the security police. In response, Tran Do wrote two letters of protest: one to the Politburo Standing Board (March 29) and the other to the National Assembly (April 20).

Sometime during this period, Tran Do was visited in his home by newly elected party Secretary General Le Kha Phieu. According to one account, Phieu discussed Tran Do's proposals and then urged him to undergo self-criticism. In late May, Tran Do met privately with three members of the Politburo. At this meeting, Do pressed his demand for a national consultative meeting to discuss his ideas. This was rejected. The Politburo

members told Do to stop his letter writing efforts. Do did not heed this advice and on June 20 wrote a fourth open letter addressed to various newspapers that had participated in the press campaign against him. Tran Do called for a debate on the future leadership role of the VCP and proposed that socialism should be jettisoned if it failed to bring development to Vietnam. Later in the year, Radio Free Asia broadcast excerpts from two other documents written by Tran Do, including extracts from his memoir *Looking Back*.

In July 1998, the VCP Central Committee passed a confidential resolution condemning Tran Do, and on 4 January 1999, Do was expelled from the Vietnam Communist Party. This action triggered an unprecedented outpouring of outrage. Both Pham Que Duong and Vu Cao Quan resigned from the party. Written protests were filed separately by Pham Hong Son, a retired lieutenant general; Hoang Huu Nhan, the former Haiphong party secretary; and Nguyen Van Dao, a former senior cadre attached to the Central Committee's Economics Commission. Notably, eleven retired party cadres jointly signed a letter of protest.[19]

In April 1999, in a further challenge to party authorities, Tran Do submitted an application to publish a private newspaper. This was rejected. In June 2001, security police confiscated copies of Tran Do's 83-page diary-memoirs. Do responded in predictable fashion by firing off a letter of protest to the Vietnam Association of Writers. In January 2002, the Deputy Minister of Culture and Information issued a decree ordering the confiscation and destruction of Tran Do's three-volume memoirs that were in private circulation.

Tran Do, who had been fighting a terminal illness, died on 9 August 2002 at the age of 78.

THE DISCOURSE ON POLITICAL REFORM: AN ASSESSMENT

This historical overview of political dissent in Vietnam demonstrates that neither the Asian financial crisis nor the political reform movements in Indonesia and elsewhere in Southeast Asia in 1997–1998 had any discernable impact on the discourse of political reform in Vietnam. None of these momentous events featured in the statements of Vietnam's political dissidents during this period. Even the writings of the most prominent dissident, Tran Do, only mentions the economic disarray of the Asian tigers in passing. What does this tell us about the discourse on political reform in contemporary Vietnam?

Vietnam's political dissidents are doubly isolated. They are largely isolated from each other and also from regional political developments. Vietnam's political dissidents are more like a virtual network than a discernable group or movement. They are small in number; only about three-dozen are identified in this chapter. They are also geographically confined to three major cities and one provincial town – Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City,

Haiphong, and Dalat, respectively. What about Vietnam's other 57 provincial towns and Danang, its third largest city? Political dissidents may well be active in these locations but so far they have not figured in media or diplomatic reports.

Generally, Vietnam's political dissenters have acted alone or in small groups in publishing and circulating their reform proposals. But who is their audience? The establishment critics clearly aim to influence internal party debates and decision-making. That is why they resort to approved channels of communication. But much of the writing by intellectual and cyber dissidents seems aimed at themselves, the overseas Vietnamese community, or sympathetic foreign NGOs and their governments.

Vietnam's political dissidents are also isolated from the Southeast Asia region. Notwithstanding Vietnam's membership in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations in 1995, it has been kept isolated by the legacy of its membership in the socialist community and close ties with the Soviet Union. Much of the discourse on political reform in Vietnam has yet to shake off the imprint of ideology. Few of Vietnam's political dissenters have had any prolonged experience living and working in a state with a liberal democratic political system. Vietnam's system of censorship also contributes to the isolation of its intellectuals.

When political dissenters have come together, their activities have been intermittent, such as signing protest petitions or open letters. It is notable, however, that in recent years there has been a trend towards enlarged networks. However, only a handful of political dissidents were involved in efforts to found the Liberal Democratic Party and an independent anti-corruption commission. These activities seem half-hearted in retrospect. To sum, Vietnam's political dissidents have been reluctant to cross boundaries and make common cause with other dissidents, such as religious dissenters, and they have refrained from forming political organizations.

Perhaps the most trenchant criticism that can be levelled at Vietnam's political dissidents is that they have not articulated a programme of political reform. They have articulated various reform proposals instead. One explanation is the severity of state repression. But it is not the only explanation. Generally, Vietnam's political dissidents favour reform of the existing system, not its transformation or overthrow. They are mainly concerned with ending the arbitrary exercise of power by party officials, untangling party–state relations through constitutional and legal reform, reviving the Vietnam Fatherland Front as an effective mass organization, and transforming the National Assembly into a more independent and effective legislative body.

Vietnam's dissidents invariably and naively concede a major role to the Vietnam Communist Party. Even Tran Do refrained from advocating a pluralist multi-party system. Vietnam's political dissidents prefer rule by

educated men – elitist democracy – to the cut and thrust of political party competition or mass democracy. As noted by Tieu Dao Bao Cu:

> Up to now, intellectuals have been individuals, without organized forces, followers, and support. In today's struggle for democracy, intellectuals are supposed to be the leading flag. But is that really so, or the opposite true? Could it be, that deep down, intellectuals themselves are afraid of democracy; that with democracy they might lose certain privileges, immunity and interests considered exclusively theirs through the ages?[20]

NOTES

1. Carlyle A. Thayer, "Southeast Asia: Challenges to Unity and Regime Legitimacy," in *Southeast Asian Affairs,* eds. John Funston and Daljit Singh (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asia Studies, 1999), 1–17.
2. The discussion in this section is based on: Carlyle A. Thayer, "Vietnam's Integration into the Region and the Asian Financial Crisis," in *Vietnam, Regional Integration and the Asian Financial Crisis: Vietnamese and European Perspectives*, eds. Martin Großheim and J. H. Vincent Houben (Passau Contributions to Southeast Asian Studies 9, Passau: Department of Southeast Asian Studies, University of Passau, 2001), 17–53.
3. Carlyle A. Thayer, "Vietnam: The Politics of Immobilism Revisited," in *Southeast Asian Affairs 2000*, ed. Daljit Singh (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2000), 311–326.
4. For a comprehensive overview consult: Zachary Abuza, *Renovating Politics in Contemporary Vietnam* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2001).
5. Carlyle A. Thayer, *War By Other Means: National Liberation and Revolution in Vietnam, 1954–1960* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin Publishers, 1989), 95–96 and 177.
6. Bui Tin, *Following Ho Chi Minh: Memoirs of a North Vietnamese Colonel* (London: C. Hurst Publishers, 1995).
7. Phan Dinh Dieu, "Kien Nghi Ve Mot Chuong Trinh Cap Bach," *Dat Nuoc* (Canberra) 21, 4 (1991), 4–8.
8. Ken Stier, *South China Morning Post*, 20 February 1999.
9. Hoang Minh Chinh, "op Y Kien ve Du Thao Cuong Linh," *Dat Nuoc* (Canberra) 21, 6 (1991), 13–16.
10. "Vietnam: New Threats to Free Expression," Human Rights Watch Asia, Press Release, 9 October 2002.
11. "Petition to the Eleventh Session of the National Assembly," released by the Vietnam Committee on Human Rights, Paris, 16 August 2002.
12. *Cong An Nhan Dan*, 9 February 2001.
13. Tieu Dao Bao Cu, "Open Letter to Phan Dinh Dieu," *Vietnam Insight*, April 1995.
14. Reuters, 24 October 2002. There are two dissidents with the name Pham Hong Son. Son, the cyber dissident, is a businessman who holds graduate degrees in business administration and medicine. The other is a retired army general.
15. BBC News World Edition Asia Pacific, 23 July 2002 and Deutsche Presse-Agentur, 27 September 2002.
16. In the 1950s, Tran Do tried to moderate between party hardliners, like To Huu, and dissident intellectuals during the *Nhan Van-Giai Pham* affair. In 1995, Tran Do

once again tried to serve as a buffer between ideological conservatives and party dissidents.

17. Do provided a copy of his letter to a friend in Moscow who in turn passed it to foreign correspondents. It was broadcast by Radio Free Asia in February 1998.
18. Published on the Internet by *Vietnam Democracy*, 23 February 1998.
19. "Huyet Tam Thu Xay Dung Dang," 1 May 1998.
20. Tieu Dao Bao Cu, "Open Letter to Phan Dinh Dieu," *Vietnam Insight*, April 1995.

CHAPTER 9

New Trends in Chinese Thought: Economics and Morality

Olga N. Borokh

INTRODUCTION

In the recent decade, issues of morality attracted an increased attention both of government officials and intellectual elite of China. The Sixth Plenary Session of the Fourteenth Central Committee (October 1996) recognized the necessity to "strengthen the building of socialist spiritual civilization", which reflected growing worries about decline of moral standards within the society.[1] Party leadership warned that failure to promote ethical progress would lead to damage to material progress and even "change the nature of society". Although the concept of "socialist spiritual civilization" was introduced by the CCP already in the 1980s, only in the mid-1990s, it was directly linked with an urgent task to counterbalance the negative impacts of market reforms.

Since the mid-1990s Chinese scholars launched a discussion on the role of ethical norms in China's transitional economy by raising a question: "Should economics speak about morality"? Literary writers, philosophers and sociologists could be commended for initiating these debates. Increasing criticism of negative social consequences of economic reforms at the background of tremendous success of China's growth prompted professional economists to join this discussion.

Economic pundits responded with numerous articles, books and conferences. In 1997 Beijing Unirule Institute of Economics sponsored a conference "Institutional structure in transition to market economy: market, government and morality". Same year Prof. Mao Yushi (Unirule Institute of Economics) published a book *Moral perspectives of the Chinese*; in 2001, he developed his ideas in a new book *Morality, Economy, Institutions* that appeared in special publication series titled "Morality, Effectiveness and Justice".[2] Problems of relations between morality and market economy were highlighted by Prof. Zhang Shuguang in collection of articles *How Economics (Economists) speak about Morality*.[3] Well-known researchers in transitional economy of younger generation such as Sheng Hong (Unirule Institute of

Economics) and Fan Gang (director of National Economic Research Institute) also joined the debate. This fact is especially remarkable because Prof. Fan Gang is famous for his adherence to the strict Western standards of scholarship and for his opposition to mixing ethics with economics. The most influential scholarly participants of this discussion belong to different independent economic research think tanks (such as Unirule and NERI) that emerged in the first half of the 1990s due to availability of financial resources from non-governmental sources.

The most impressive social criticism of reforms was presented by He Qinglian (in the late 1990s, she was a correspondent of *Shenzhen fazhi bao* [Shenzhen Legal Daily]) in her best-seller *The Pitfalls of Modernization*[4] and subsequent publications. Ethical dimension of the issues of justice and effectiveness in the context of Chinese market reforms were raised by an influential scholar Qin Hui (School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Qinghua University). Vivid debates about the relations between economics and morality appeared on the pages of the prominent intellectual elite magazine *Du Shu* (Reading). Some noteworthy publications were printed in the influential journal *Zhanlüe yu guanli* (Strategy and management), thus indirectly indicating an existing attention to the problem from the part of the Chinese policy-makers.[5]

This paper aims at analysing different positions of Chinese scholars on the question of relations between economics and morality. Printed publications of the Chinese economists served as basic primary source for this research. Their polemics in the Internet was also incorporated into this analysis. Sharp and open nature (for example, in the dispute between Zhang Shuguang and He Qinglian in 1999) of the "online" expressions of scholars contrasts with more reserved and careful tone of their "paper" publications. Some important insights about the nature of discussion were received by the author in personal interviews with the Chinese economists.

MOTIVATING FACTORS: WHY CHINESE ACADEMICS JOINED THE DEBATES ON MORALITY AND ECONOMICS

Crisis of Morality in the Chinese Society of the 1990s
Complaints about the "spiritual void" caused by dynamic advancement of market relations became a commonplace among the Chinese intellectuals. Transitional economy with its imperfect legal and institutional environment created favourable conditions for spread of controversial forms of moneymaking activities. And rent-seeking behaviour produced resentment from the side of common people, prompting some social groups to feel disillusioned in the outcomes of reforms. It could be observed that weakening of moral norms during the period of market reforms is not a purely Chinese phenomenon, but a common feature of all transitional economies.[6] Although the problems are similar, in China, concerns about morality are voiced much stronger.

Every day Chinese consumers encounter the consequences of infringement of moral norms by economic agents engaged in manufacturing of fake products. Therefore, it is not occasional that the Chinese economists pay special attention to the works of 2001 Nobel Economics Prize winners G. Akerlof, M. Spence and J. Stiglitz, who had explored the problems of asymmetric information. It is remarkable that the most recent book by Prof. Wang Zeke (Zhongshan University, Guangzhou) on economics of information is titled *A Discipline To Deal With Lying And Cheating*.[7]

Another moving force of the debate is rooted in serious problems with business trust and reputation. Spread of deceit in commercial relations and non-return of financial debts prompts scholars to warn that the decline of professional ethics (*zhiye daode*) becomes the most significant ethical problem in China.[8] Chinese authors frequently describe the behaviour of economic agents in contemporary China as a state of "complete lawlessness".[9] Scholars emphasize that this mode of conduct is essentially different from economic behaviour in normally functioning developed market system, which rely upon established rules, legal and moral norms. Keeping the promise and fair play constitute an important part of well-functioning Western capitalist mechanism, while in China trust has not become an integral part of business ethics.[10] Although the concept of "trust" (*xin*) was integrated into the basic framework of Confucian teaching on ritual propriety (*li*) since the ancient time, the system of trust based on laws never existed in China. The traditional concept of "trust" was a value category, which relied upon the notions of kinship and vertical subordination. Due to an impact of Chinese traditional mentality business trust had never been elevated to the positions of social importance, human relations (*guanxi*) are still more influential than legal norms. The significance of informal ties is so high that in some southern coastal cities job advertisements openly state employer's preference to applicants "with connections in governmental agencies".[11]

An increased social awareness about the interrelation between advancement of market reforms and retreat of morality prompts some scholars to question whether economic science is capable to cope with this challenge. Other academics prefer to place the economics outside the sphere of ethical predicaments of the market system and to transfer the problem of market-induced moral degradation for studying by other scholarly disciplines.

Influence of Chinese Intellectual Tradition

Chinese economic thought of the past centuries had a strong ethical dimension due to the influence of Confucian ideology. Dominant ethical and political discourse embraced economic issues. The roots of current discussion could be traced to ancient cultural and philosophical traditions of China. Scholars were discussing the relations between economics and morality since the end of the nineteenth century when Western economic thought had become known in China. An old Confucian tendency to merge economics and

ethics into one synthetic whole was perceived by Chinese intellectuals as a definite proof of superiority of Chinese economic thought over its Western counterparts.

Due to this cultural preference, Chinese reviewers expressed skepticism about the ideas elaborated by well-known German thinker and economist P. Koslowski in his *Ethik des Kapitalismus* (published in Chinese translation in 1996). A critic noted:

> *Ethik des Kapitalismus* is based upon the premise of "separation" between "profiting oneself" and "profiting others"; all his [Koslowski's] arguments are based upon the assumption of "separation" between economics and ethics… From his point of view, words about "moral nature" of economic system contain an intrinsic contradiction. [He wrote:] "Economy as a commodity supply system must correspond to economic criteria, not to moral norms. It follows the principle of efficiency, not the principles of good intentions."… Koslowski upholds the view that morality and economy, collective rationality and individual rationality are separated from each other, their difference is similar to opposition between good and evil: it can not bridged and there is no possibility to achieve unity between them.[12]

These critical assessments reveal cultural worries about the chances to reach an adequate synthesis between economics and morality, between "profiting oneself" and "profiting others".

To prove that market economy and moral behaviour do not contradict one another, Chinese intellectuals struggle now to re-discover Adam Smith as "moralist" in order to link his famous concept of the "invisible hand" with the ideas from *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*. They want to demonstrate that economics must "speak about morality" because the founder of this branch of knowledge was also concerned about ethical problems. By linking together *The Wealth of Nations* and *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* Chinese authors argue that within the context of current market reforms pursuit of money and devotion to moral norms equally correspond to the original views of A. Smith.[13]

This interpretation of A. Smith opens an opportunity to criticize modern Western economics for neglecting ethical problems. Contemporary foreign economists who wrote extensively about morality (D. North, F. Hayek, J. Buchanan, A. Sen) are especially prominent in China. Chinese scholars abundantly cite these Western academics as weighty validation that economics must speak about morality. Zhang Shuguang said that "contemporary economists who won Nobel Prize, such as F. Hayek, K. Arrow, M. Friedman, J. Buchanan, D. North and H. Simon, all expressed their opinion of the issues of morality".[14] The "Nobel argument" has an exceptional appeal of authority for many Chinese economists who are dreaming about receiving this ultimate international recognition of their contribution into success of China's reform.

Scholars enjoy to remind that D. North considers the theory of ideology (which includes morality) as one of three cornerstones of institutional changes. They also like to cite J. Buchanan's definition that placed economics "between predictive science and moral philosophy".[15] It is also noteworthy that many Chinese publications about 1998 Nobel Prize winner A. Sen concentrate on his contributions into ethical economy.

One could find some striking similarities between accents placed by the mainland's intellectuals and the Taiwanese experts in Western economics. On both sides of the Strait, identical figures and topics attract the attention of academics who attempt to find equivalents of Chinese traditional ethical and anthropocentric mentality in the West. In 1996, when Sen lectured in Taiwan, he was praised for successes in providing economists with a new philosophical foundation. Analogous high assessments are given to the works by North who is popular in Taiwan no less than in mainland China, not to mention Hayek, who has always attracted interest in Taiwan (in mainland China his rise to popularity was blocked in previous periods due to his negative view of socialism).

Critical Reaction Against "De-Humanization" of Western Economics
This aspect of discussion is also closely linked with the influences of tradition. For more than 2000 years, Chinese classical thought is characterized by humanistic orientation. Contemporary desire to discover similar anthropocentric features in Western economics is supported by an aspiration to protect the Chinese thought from borrowing "wrong" things from the West. Frequent complains about the "loss of human dimension" are caused by objective internal developments within economics. Debates about "human economics" are gaining popularity in many countries, but in China this movement is strongly reinforced by the influence of traditional mentality. Current trends in modern economic theory urge Chinese scholars to defend economics from dangerous "de-humanization". An enormous increase in the use of mathematics in mainstream economics is perceived by some in China as a disturbing tendency that sooner or later will completely eliminate much-cherished "humanitarian component" from economics.

A significant number of Chinese researchers concluded that abandonment of morality represents an "Achilles heel" of modern economists. He Qinglian found a bright historical allusion by metaphorically comparing contemporary professional economic research with an "art of slaying dragons" (*tu long shu*), mentioned in the ancient Taoist book of *Zhuang-zi*.[16] Later this expression was used to describe a difficult but inapplicable craftsmanship. In projection on contemporary realities, it means that an increasing presence of mathematics in the realm of economics represents an elaborate, but useless skill. Sheng Hong compared scholars busy with fashionable work of construction of economic models with a shoemaker, who produces footwear not for consumption by ordinary people, but for an exhibition at shoemaker association.[17]

Wang Dingding (China Center for Economic Research, Beijing University) also criticized the West for the loss of "humanistic dimension". He wrote that Chinese scholars would surpass Western economics only if they would be able to link it with the strong points of Chinese culture: "Chinese philosophy has a strong humanistic basis and traditions. If the meaning of human life will be introduced again into economic science, then it would be possible to create a Chinese economic science with Chinese characteristics".[18]

Intellectual Vogue for Philosophical Styling of Academic Discourse
In the recent years, many economic publications in China were overflowing with numerous philosophical concepts of Western origin. Philosophical lexicon penetrates into specialized economic articles. The most common are the notions of "ultimate concern" (*zhongji guanhuai*), which spread among the intellectuals to enormous extent after the works by P. Tillich were translated into Chinese, and of "humanistic spirit" (*renwen jingshen*). Regrets about the loss of "humanistic spirit" constitute a truly indigenous theme of discussions among the Chinese intellectuals of the late 1990s.

This new phenomenon was labelled in China as "pan-philosophization tendency". Wang Zeke observed that such economic debates are "flooded with Habermas, Heidegger and Wittgenstein; names of philosophers appear more often than ever". He added that separation between economics and moral philosophy represented a "very precious evolution" in human knowledge. "Introduction of philosophical speculations like 'white horse is not horse' into economics will produce no great meaning for people's livelihood and fate of the country".[19]

This tendency is driven more by an intellectual vogue than by an essential scholarly necessity. "Post-modernist vogue" adds articles of Chinese academics with an "elite touch", making them hardly comprehensible for ordinary readers. In the most cases, substantial philosophical problems were not introduced into economic discussions and "philosophization" was limited to an external sophistication of texts filled with unfamiliar words.

DIFFERENT VOICES: REPRESENTATIVE SCHOLARLY VIEWS

Both in Chinese and Western publications on this discussion, all its participants are usually referred as "the economists". However, in reality, their theoretical and methodological approaches essentially differ. The following section of the paper aims at analysing some most representative positions in order to show a significant distinction between the so-called "popular economists" and professional economists in a strict sense.

Fan Gang: Economic Rationality as an Alternative to Moralization
This well-known scholar strongly disagreed with the attempts to make economics "moral" and to broaden the scope of its researches beyond the

limits of studies in profit maximization. Fan Gang insists that although economics is closely connected to morality and system of values, it should not study the questions of morality.[20]

He admits that "no up-to-the-standards economist could say that morality plays no role in the economy", because both "moral concepts" and "cultural traditions" act as "unofficial institutions".[21] For him, morality is one of the preconditions of economic analysis, but definitely is not an object of economic studies. He proclaimed that "in principle, from the standpoint of the profession *per se*, [economists] could serve Hitler or Churchill… mafia or the government. In this sense economics as science and profession is 'morally neutral' and the economists 'do not speak about morality".[22]

Economics also has nothing to say in the sphere of history of formation of moral values and, especially, in the problems of moral edification. For Fan Gang economics is "extremely modest" because it is satisfied with accepting an existing "human nature" as a fundamental starting point in analysis. Fan Gang underlines that if there is a chance that even single immoral person with "spoiled nature" could start to seek profit for himself to the detriment of interests of the others, than all social economic institutions must be necessarily constructed upon the precondition of protection from the "badness" of human nature. Economic proposals on improving institutions and politics (contracts, controls, arrangements, laws and democracy) are finally directed on taking measures against the evil actions of "inferior man" (*xiao ren*).

Fan Gang concludes that the economists advocate the market economy not because it is "lofty" or "noble". On the contrary, it is a "low-grade" system, which permits humans to have ethical qualities inferior to the ideal type of Confucian "noble man" *jun-zi*. It is not similar to the traditional socialist system, which demanded every person "to be holy" in order to ensure its normal functioning.[23] Market mechanisms allow to negotiate deals and to cooperate to all kinds of humans irrespectively to their moral properties, thus promoting an overall development of economic system.

Scholar agrees that in a society with solid "moral foundation" the economy will develop better. "Therefore we support with both hands persistent work of the ethics scholars, politicians, ideology workers and even of some priests, but should we also join the ranks of those who deliver moral lectures"? – asks Fan Gang.[24] He compared colleagues involved in non-economic researches with "mouse-chasing dogs". Due to division of labour, economic science does not investigate the issues studied by other disciplines. Talks on morality are permitted for an economist only as kind of spare time relaxation – in the same way someone who is not a gardener can plant flowers, or somebody who is not a writer can read novels and evaluate them.[25] He adds that instead of delivering "moral instructions" economists "must produce more analysis on how the institutions bring about the 'decline of morality'".[26] Instead of asking crooks and thieves to be honest,

Fan Gang proposes to elaborate a set of mechanisms which will help to punish those who breach promises or produce fake goods, making their losses inevitably higher than profits from corrupt behaviour.[27] At the same time, as an "amateur moralist" Fan Gang agrees that its necessary to criticize all kinds of "ugly Chinese" of our days.[28]

Fan Gang stresses that corruption is rooted neither in bad qualities of human virtues, not in low level of individuals, but in systems that determine their type of behaviour. He suggests that the simplest definition of corruption is "use of public rights for achievement of personal profit". Fan Gang explains that cases of corruption in Chinese economy are so numerous because there are too may situations where the "public rights" are involved. In order to decrease the amount of corruption cases, "it is necessary to 'decrease the number of public rights', to downsize the government and public expenditures, to diminish opportunities to 'use' public property and to pass more matters for individuals and market to decide".[29]

Similar ideas were expressed by another well-known economist Zhang Wuchang (School of Economics and Finance, University of Hong Kong). He suggested that the only effective way of getting rid of corruption is to get rid of controls and regulations that give rise to corruption opportunities. Prof. Zhang Weiying supposedly proclaimed that "corruption is the second best choice", and that under conditions of heavy bureaucratic interference into the economy corruption helps to make adjustments in resource allocation. Fan Gang, Zhang Wuchang, Zhang Shuguang and Zhang Weiying were criticized in China for "supporting corruption".[30] These economists were blamed for treating corruption as tolerable "reforms lubricant" or inevitable "road tax" on the path towards market economy. Their attempt to explain objective institutional reasons of corruption was interpreted as "theory of justification of corruption" and even as "theory of benefits of corruption". Scholarly intention to eliminate moral judgments from economics created an impression of their neutral stance towards corruption and other manifestations of "immoral" behaviour.

Sheng Hong: Economic Moralism

Sheng Hong represents another group of Chinese economists who are trying to justify the necessity to bridge economy with morality. He argues in favour of this synthesis by stating that human calculations of benefits directly shape their morality. For him moralization of economy signifies a process of convincing people that cooperation is more preferable than unchecked pursuit of one's own interests. While not abandoning the scholarly standpoint of modern economic theory, he attempts to prove that ethics is needed under the market economy because moral behaviour is more preferable for the society than rationalist and individualist acts. By referring to game-type "prisoner's dilemma" model Sheng Hong wanted to make evident how the individual's pursuit for own interests can result in selection of wrong type behaviour which will inevitably worsen his current situation.

For him human reciprocation of kindness with kindness and of evil with evil is the only type of behaviour, which "corresponds to normal human nature and forms the culture for the significant piece of human society". Sheng Hong indicated that in Chinese tradition the idea of retribution after death was based not upon the faith in individual immortality of soul, but upon an extension of individual life into future generations of one's descendants. He concludes that this primitive concept of "cause-and-consequence retribution" upon the offspring had extended the temporal interval for human accounts beyond the limits of individual life, hereby "performing the moralizing and enlightening role in utilitarian sense".[32]

According to Sheng Hong, calculations of profit play a very important role in formation of morality. Economics must demonstrate that cooperation can bring profits to both parties, by "relying on the principle of utilitarianism people can reach a conclusion about the necessity of observance of morality".[33] At the same time, he considers as narrow and limited notions of morality, which are based solely upon profit-seeking. In order to become a human being, one must step beyond pure utilitarian reasons and become moral. He warns that a society consisting of profit-driven "economic man" could achieve the level of efficiency no higher than animal herd. "Humans are higher than animals only in morality. It is morality that moves human society to become more effective" – concluded Sheng Hong.[34]

Mao Yushi: Accommodation Between Economics and Morality
Mao Yushi argues that economics must speak about morality, but an inclusion of morality does not imply an exclusion of problems related to material profits. On the contrary, moral requirements and morality could emerge only upon the basis of calculations of interests. Mao Yushi underlines the importance of observance of moral norms and stresses that low level of morality results in serious squander of resources.[35] He views morality as a stabilizing force in the society and repeatedly emphasizes that it is profitable to be moral because social costs of observing moral norms are much lower that costs of observing the norms of law.[36]

Communist propaganda of self-sacrifice and traditional Confucian ethics are both unsuitable for the market economy. Mao Yushi critically assesses former socialist ethics and considers erroneous propagating the idea of "sacrificing own interests and profiting others". It is right to help people in need, but it is wrong to turn principles of selflessness into a general norm and to call the poor and weak to help the wealthy and strong. "On the streets one could see a person 'sacrificing own interests and profiting others' by, for example, making free haircuts. A long queue of no less than ten people builds up near him. These ten came here not to study how to 'sacrifice own interests and profit others", but to profit themselves at expense of others".[37] This kind of selflessness fosters immoral behaviour because some people want to lean upon others and reap a profit at their expense. From the standpoint of

economics well-known moral model of Lei Feng is not positive because it produces numerous free-riders, concluded Mao Yushi.

Many negative phenomena in contemporary Chinese market economy (like phony products and non-return of loans) are rooted not in pursuit of selfish interests, but in infringement of interests of other people. For Mao Yushi hunt for one's own benefits is moral, but an infringement of the interests of others represents the most serious moral predicament of contemporary China. According to his views, private property constitutes the "deity of morality".[38]

He Qinglian: Moral Criticism of Economics and Market Realities
He Qinglian gained a tremendous success by unfolding numerous contradictions in China's social and political life, but her best-selling book *The Pitfalls of Modernization* is not an economic work in a strict sense. It is not occasional that professional economists refuse to accept her as an expert in transitional economy (position of Sheng Hong) or to treat her on equal footing as a member of their professional community. For the economists, *The Pitfalls of Modernization* is an example of mass literature, which it is based mostly upon the facts and data from newspaper publications instead of modern scholarly studies into the problem.[39]

The resentment is mutual. He Qinglian condemns the Chinese economists for an absence of "care about mankind". She maintains that during the years of reform scholars forgot the issues of justice, their articles consists mostly of mathematical formulas where "human had disappeared".[40] In 1998 after devastating summer floods in China, He Qinglian angrily criticized "inhuman absurd theories" of some economists. At that time, some scholars indicated that the calamity has had a positive side, because the destruction is capable to spur the domestic demand thus stimulating an emergence of new points of economic growth. In He's eyes, these arguments constituted an indisputable proof of the "loss of moral conscience" among the economists.[41] She declares that the essence of the economic science is "humanitarian" – economics constitutes a part of the humanities, not of strict "natural" sciences.[42] She asserts that the leading Western economists F. Hayek and G. Myrdal have accurately expressed an idea of "social justice".[43]

He Qinglian warned that Chinese market reforms lack an ethical framework. In two decades, collectivist ethics and former disdain for wealth were replaced by neglect to ethical norms and worshipping money above all. In regard to the crisis of professional ethics and business confidence, she emphasized that the representatives of each profession are bound by special ethical demands – official should have the virtue (*de*) of official, doctor – the virtue of doctor, businessman – the virtue of businessman. However, in contemporary China, the virtue of many trades is absent. In this context, she compared Chinese traditional saying "a person can not be established

without trust" with M. Weber's thesis "trust is money" and concluded that market economy of the West is fundamentally an economy of trust.

He Qinglian traced the roots of China's problems in the ethical values of the past. In traditional China, respect for private property rights was not considered moral; in the socialist period of the 1950–1970s, private property was completely rejected. Notion that the "private property is a source of all troubles" and ideological criticism of much-hated "sacred inviolability of private property" in a hidden form helped to rationalize contemporary economic "ethics" of "thrusting own hand into other's pocket". It is important to note that He Qinglian is not upset by the prospects of transformation of "public" socialist economy into a "private" capitalist one: her greatest concern is that the forming system is "immoral" and "unfair". Qin Hui (pen-name Bian Wu) in his review praised *The Pitfalls of Modernization* for scrutinizing "true problems" of justice and injustice instead of "false problems" (like relations between private and public).

> It is possible that public property is ideal, but what will happen if someone decides to follow an example of the Red Khmers and deprives common people of everything, puts them in jail and kills the innocent in order to promote the growth of "public property"? I am afraid that if Marx were alive he would be very indignant about it. It is possible that private property is very effective, but no Hayek, Mises or any other "apologist of capitalism" could agree with "transformation of public into private" by the means of embezzlement of public funds and misappropriations on the side of officials. An advocate of "shock therapy" Sachs is condemning "privatization by influential officials," isn't he?[44]

He Qinglian suggested solving the problem by uplifting human characteristics of the Chinese through education. This idea is congruent with the Confucian moral doctrine, which proclaims that anyone can become like legendary emperors Yao and Shun through moral cultivation. He Qinglian declares that "moral education is not based solely upon the discipline" and that it is necessary "to wake up everybody's conscience".[45] She called to return to discussions about an eternal problem of "justice and efficiency", which creates the "main theme with an ultimate meaning for human civilization". He Qinglian believes that it is necessary to restore human trust to economic science, economics should "return to the path of morals" and become filled with the spirit of "care about mankind". She admits that an actual possibility of everyone's conversion of into Yaos and Shuns is not in the agenda, it is more important to "raise the banner of justice" and to show the goal for human efforts.[46]

During the investigation into the negative consequences of Chinese reforms, He Qinglian shifted attention from economic analysis to criticism of economics from the moral perspective. Her arguments abandoned the framework of economic science and moved into the neighbouring spheres of culture studies and ethics. He Qinglian began her book from researches in problems of China by using classical Western model of "economic man". This approach substantiated her criticism of the negative outcomes of shareholding system, land speculations, corruption and criminality. In her vision of Chinese reforms, a rational "economic man", who was born in Western scholarship, performs the role of "bad guy", its alternative is the ideal of "moral person" from traditional Confucianism.

Chinese critics of He Qinglian properly noted her works could certainly help to understand contemporary Chinese society and its illnesses due to her truthful and precise description. "However author's method of thinking is traditionally Chinese… When difficult social economic problems are encountered, they must be solved with a help of 'method of reliance upon ideas and culture.'"[47] It is possible to agree with an observation that traditional sources of He Qinglian's thought have got their concentrated expression in her prescription for treatment of China's illnesses – it is "morality", "spirit" and "ethical qualities".[48]

CONCLUSIONS

Specifics of Debates

Contemporary Chinese discussions about the relations between morality and economics are different both from earlier campaigns for "strengthening of socialist ethics" and from debates on the role of morality under conditions of so-called "Confucian capitalism". Continuing scholarly disputes about morality are not imposed upon the academics by the authorities in any from which could resemble "assignments" and "orders" of Maoist ideological system. It is clear that in this case scholarly discourse develops independently from the government and sometimes it approaches "red lines" that set allowed limits for criticism.

There are some similarities with debates on "Confucian capitalism" of the 1970–1980s. Then the emergence of Japan and other newly industrialized East Asian countries caused an intensive investigation into connection between economic success and influence from the side of Confucian values, which shaped paternalistic attitudes of governments, emphasis on loyalty, cooperation and consensus. Both debates on "Confucian capitalism" and contemporary Chinese discussions interpret economic processes through values, morality and human relations. But circumstances of their initiation are very different. For East Asian "tigers" an idea of "Confucian capitalism" emerged as an intellectual response to success of private entrepreneurship, it was an attempt to create a nationally coloured model to describe existing

achievements. In case of contemporary China, the main driving force of the discussion is a reaction to social polarization and injustice in process of re-distribution of public assets. Neither Taiwanese nor South Korean model of "Confucian capitalism" never embraced the problem of moral behaviour of officials in relation to corrupt practices of division of the "public property". It is a specific problem of contemporary China, which shaped the contents of the current debates on morality.

Cultural Implications

Discussion on economics and morality constitutes a part of the broader theme of cross-cultural interactions between China and the West. Chinese advancement in assimilation of modern Western economic ideas is accompanied by conflicts, which are partly embedded in national traditions and mentality. An abstract model of "economic man" that was borrowed from the West is perceived critically in China because it does not include an ethical ideal. While many branches of Chinese culture are undergoing commercialization, professional economists are being pushed into the path of "culturalization" of their studies. They are being blamed for abandoning the issues of "ultimate concerns" and addressing "false problems".

As a result, economic problems are getting improperly overloaded with philosophical discourse. This conflict reveals a deep-seated discord between Chinese pro-humanist mentality and Western rationality, when "moralists" attempt to re-define disciplinary boundaries of economics by embracing ethical ideals and value judgments. Present disputes stepped far beyond the limits of economic science and for this reason they are losing scholarly value in the eyes of professional economists. Nevertheless, they deserve to be studied by the Sinologists as an evident demonstration of the still existing influence of the traditional culture upon the Chinese perceptions of foreign theories.

Scholarly Implications

Basic theoretical assumptions of modern economics compelled the Chinese economists to keep some distance from widespread complaints about the decline of moral ideals in the society. Therefore, they are often criticized for overlooking the moral costs of reforms and for advocating theoretical premise of "badness" of human nature. Professional theorizing led economists to conclusions unacceptable for Chinese ethical common wisdom: Lei Feng's model was discarded for nourishing "free-rider" mentality; devastating floods were praised as accelerators of internal demand; some scholars interpreted corruption as rational self-maximizing behaviour in transitional economy. Economists suggest curbing the tide of corruption by installing proper institutions and clearly defining property rights, not by appealing to the moral consciousness of thieves. While some economists respond to criticism by stressing an "immoral" nature of their

profession, others produce rational arguments in favour of ethical behaviour by proving that high level of morality reduces transaction costs. Professional economists respond to "moral challenges" with proposals of reforms of institutions, legal reform, they want to make costs of corruption for its agents higher than costs of anti-corruption measures. Suggestions to intensify moral edification are important, but they cannot solve existing problems.

Social Implications

Economists suggest to deepen economic reforms, but they refrain from proposing to support institutional reforms by political transformations. The most prominent moral critic of Chinese reforms He Qinglian openly suggested to start political reforms, but her disapproval of corruption is not linked with solid economic ideas. He Qinglian focuses her attention primarily on uplifting moral qualities of the Chinese intelligentsia.

Although the "non-moral" group exercises prudent restraint in spheres of social criticism and political suggestions, it is very open to the Western influence due to its ever-increasing absorption of Western mainstream economics. The "pro-moral" group dares to speak about political reform and to expose official corruption, but this trend is more oriented towards the roots of Chinese tradition and Confucian morality, sometimes its populist overtones overpower scholarly objectivity. This generalization corresponds to an interesting observation made by Zhang Shuguang, who noted that in contemporary China economists act mostly as defenders of the existing socio-political system and they propose to continue gradualist reforms. "At the same time a huge part of politologists and sociologists had adopted a comparatively radical approach".[49] It appears that none of these two groups could be easily labeled as "reformist" or "conservative" within the Chinese context. Both "non-moral" and "pro-moral" groups contribute to growth of social awareness about the necessity of future reforms by voicing their criticism and advocating different policy suggestions. Their target groups are also different: "pro-moral" group led by He Qinglian addresses the "broader masses", "non-moral" group appeals primarily to the limited circles of experts and decision-makers.

Political Implications

Ethical problems were reflected in the recent key statements of Chinese leaders who aspire to create moral ideological system corresponding to socialist market economy. This tendency became evident after the Fifteenth Congress of the CCP (1997). In 2000, Jiang Zemin proclaimed the slogan of "governing the state with morality" (*yi de zhi guo*). A year later, he called to "strengthen socialist ideological and moral construction" and condemned the "rotten ideas" of "money-worshiping, hedonism and extreme individualism". This programmatic declaration was formalized in September 2001, when CC CCP issued "An Outline for Implementation of Construction of Public Ethics".[50]

At least two sections of this document were vaguely linked with the contents of scholarly debates on morality and economic reforms. Part 5 called to "support mutual correspondence" between "ethical construction" and market economy by developing an active role of market mechanism via strengthening of people's "consciousness of self-reliance" (*zili yishi*) along with "consciousness of competition" of "effectiveness" and of "democratic legal system". The document instructed "to apply correctly the principle of material interests and to stay against the erroneous tendency to speak on money without speaking on morality".[51] Part 16 touched the problems of professional ethics.

Although official and scholarly discourses on morality address similar problems, it seems that the intellectual debates exercise no direct influence on governmental decisions. Official policy is implemented with the help of traditional communist tools of politicized "education campaign" which includes distribution of printed propaganda, organized studies of the Party documents, instructive commentaries to these documents and even open competitions for best knowledge of the official policy of "ethics construction".

Scholarly debates about morality are confined by the circles of Chinese intellectuals. Proposed views are often vulnerable to strict academic criticism; offensive style of polemics among the intellectuals sometimes transgresses accepted norms of academic debates. At the same time, these debates play a very positive role by further clarifying the boundaries among scholarly disciplines and formulating some preliminary responses to social challenges of transitional economy.

NOTES

1. *Beijing Review*, 39 (1996): 20–31.
2. Mao Yushi, *Zhongguoren de daode qianjing* (Moral Perspectives of the Chinese, Guangzhou: Jinan daxue chubanshe, 1997); Mao Yushi. *Daode, jingji, zhidu* (Morality, Economy, Institutions, Zhengzhou: Henan renmin chubanshe, 2002).
3. Zhang Shuguang, *Jingjixue (jia) ruhe jiang daode* (How Economics [Economists] Speak about Morality, Beijing: Shenghuo, dushu, xinzhi sanlian shudian, 2001). See also Zhang Shuguang, *Zhongguo jingjixue he jingjixuejia. Zhang Shuguang jingji shuping ji* (China's Economics and Economists. Collection of Book Reviews on Economics by Zhang Shuguang, Chengdu: Sichuan renmin chubanshe, 1999).
4. He Qinglian. *Xiandaihua de xianjing–dangdai Zhongguo jingji shehui wenti* (The Pitfalls of Modernization – Contemporary China's Economic and Social Problems, Beijing: Jinri Zhongguo chubanshe, 1998).
5. Influential Western sinologists describe *Strategy and Management* as "a publication edited by younger conservatives with rumored People's Liberation Army backing and diverse business interests" (Geremie Barmé, *In the Red: on Contemporary Chinese Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 259–60). J. Fewsmith observes that the physical appearance of *Strategy and Management* indicates "its substantial financial backing – reputedly contributed

by a wealthy overseas Chinese from Thailand but also suggesting its support from the military" (Joseph Fewsmith, *China Since Tiananmen. The Politics of Transition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 151).

6. Russian scholars also note that ethical level of economic actors in Russian transitional economy is lower than in stable market economies. See V. Avtonomov, "'Rynochnoe povedenie': ratsional'nyi i eticheskii aspekty," *Mirovaya ekonomika i mezhdunarodnye otnosheniya*, 12 (1997): 6–13.

7. Wang Zeke, *Duifu qizha de xuewen–xinxi jingjixue pinghua* (A Discipline to Deal with Lying and Cheating – On the Economics of Information, Beijing: CITIC Publishing House, 2001).

8. Mao Yushi 1997: 156.

9. Wang Dingding, "Daode jichu yu jingjixue xiandaihua" (Moral Basis and Modernization of Economics). *Zhanlüe yu guanli* (Strategy and Management), 6 (1996): 42.

10. Mao Yushi 1997: 210.

11. He Qinglian, 125.

12. Zhang Jing, "Jingji: Daode? Bu Daode?" (Economy: Moral? Unmoral?), *Du shu* (Reading), 11 (1998), 130.

13. Liang Xiaomin, "Yadang Simi wenti zhi jie" (The Explanation of Adam Smith's question), *Du shu* (Reading), 10 (1998), 83.

14. Zhang Shuguang 2001: 37.

15. Ibid.

16. He Qinglian, 357.

17. Sheng Hong, *Jingjixue jingshen* (The Spirit of Economics, Guangzhou: Guangdong jingji chubanshe, 1999), 1.

18. Wang Dingding, 43.

19. Wang Zeke, "Guan qi zhe yu" (Words of Chess-watcher), *Du shu* (Reading), 8 (2000): 68.

20. Fan Gang, "'Bu daode de' jingjixue" ('Unmoral' Economic Science). *Du shu* (Reading), 6 (1998), 50.

21. Fan Gang, *Zoujin fengxian de shijie* (The Way to the World of Risk, Guangzhou: Guangdong jingji chubanshe, 1999), 48.

22. Ibid., 45.

23. Ibid., 51.

24. Fan Gang, *Miandui zhuanxin zhi nan* (Facing the Difficulties of Transition, Beijing: Zhongguo fazhan chubanshe, 2000), 97.

25. Fan Gang 1998: 54–55.

26. Fan Gang 1999: 49–51.

27. Fan Gang 2000: 97.

28. It was Fan Gang's response to criticism voiced by literary writer Liang Xiaosheng, who blamed Fan Gang for his non-moral approach to social problems. See Fan Gang 2000: 43–47.

29. Fan Gang, "Fubai de jingjixue yuanli" (Economic Principles of Corruption), *Lilun jingjixue* (Theoretical Economics, China Renda Social Sciences Information Center, F11), 7 (2001), 110.

30. Wan He, "Fubai zhong de zhuanxing jiang chansheng shemmo yang de zhidu?" (What Kind of System Will be Produced by Transition in Corruption?), *Dangdai Zhongguo yanjiu* (Modern China Studies), 3 (2000), 54–67.

31. Sheng Hong, "Daode, gongli ji qita" (Morality, Utility, etc.), *Du shu* (Reading), 7 (1998), 120.

32. Ibid., 121–22.

33. Ibid., 123.

34. Ibid., 125.

35. Mao Yushi 2002: 2.

36. Mao Yushi 1997: 265.

37. Mao Yushi 2002: 11.

38. Mao Yushi 1997: 72.

39. Zhang Shuguang 1999: 303–306.

40. He Qinglian, 360.

41. See Zheng Hongliang et al., eds., *Zhongguo jingji da lunzhan. Di wu ji* (Great Discussions on Chinese Economy, issue 5, Beijing: Jingji guanli chubanche, 2000), 332–333.

42. He Qinglian, 358.

43. Zhang Shuguang criticized He Qinglian for inaccurate interpretations of sources and emphasized the she managed to turn Hayek from "mortal enemy" of "social justice" into its champion. See Zhang Shuguang 1999: 306–307.

44. Bian Wu, "Youle zhen wenti cai you zhen xuewen" (If there are true problems, there could be true knowledge), *Du shu* (Reading), 6 (1998), 44.

45. He Qinglian, 281.

46. Ibid., 360–361.

47. Tao Yun, "He Qinglian de 'xianjing' he siwei wuqu" ('The Pitfalls' of He Qinglian and the Blind Areas of Thinking), *Zhanlüe yu guanli* (Strategy and Management), 2 (1999), 114.

48. Ibid.

49. Zhang Shuguang 1999: 310.

50. "*Gongmin daode jianshe shishi gangyao" xuexi wenda* (Questions and Answers for Studying "An Outline for Implementation of Construction of Public Ethics", Beijing: Zhongguo yanshi chubanshe, 2001), 3–16.

51. Ibid, 5.

CHAPTER 10

Village Elections and Three Discourses on Democracy

Baogang He

INTRODUCTION

This paper attempts to examine the conceptual and normative assumptions of the three discourses on democracy by drawing on my empirical study of village elections[1] in Zhejiang in the last five years.[2] It will critically question the presuppositions of three models of democracy, their normative validity and practical relevance through an empirical approach. It will address the following questions: Is the distinction of three models still valid? Which model has taken root in village elections? Has China developed a unique model of democracy in its village elections? In what ways have the three models of democracy manifested in the practice of village elections?

The method used in this paper is not so much a literature review of Chinese views of democracy but an empirical testing of them. An empirical approach, adopted in this paper, will discuss normative democratic ideas from an empirical point of view. This approach stresses that the discourse itself originally comes from the empirical world and that the conceptual and normative ideas and presuppositions of discourse must be subject to empirical testing to find out whether ideas are workable in reality. The discourse analysis must be based upon the solid empirical foundation so that it can prevent the problems of emptiness, irrelevance and over-theorizing.

Such an empirical approach is badly needed in the Chinese context in which a number of Chinese intellectuals are interested in discussing democratic discourse and writings about village elections, but not in the practical issues of village elections and democracy. They tend to view village democracy with little reference to the context of political development and the reality of politics in China, but through the prism of an ideal liberal democracy.

It should be noted that the paper also attempts to combine empirical, conceptual and normative considerations that are essential components of discourse analysis. My approach is concerned with what is both desirable and feasible. Such an approach is willing to revise both conceptual and normative presuppositions if empirical facts challenge them. The paper

rejects one extreme normative approach that is merely concerned with the desirable rather than the feasible. Such a position is not concerned about empirical claims for no empirical fact challenges its pre-conceived normative idea. Such a position, for example, holds the view that if liberal democracy is not realized, the problem does not lie with the idea of liberal democracy, but with actors who fail to carry it out.

It should be noted that there is a gap between macro-theory (the references of three models of democracy are national–state politics) and village politics. One, therefore, may argue that macro-theory of democracy does not apply to village politics and that village politics cannot be used to test macro-theory. While this concern with the methodological gap is legitimate, such a gap does not prevent us from examining village elections from the perspective of three models of democracy, and village politics encounters the similar issue encountered at the macro-level.

THREE DISCOURSES ON DEMOCRACY AND VILLAGE ELECTIONS

There are three discourses or models of democracy, systematic thoughts about democracy in, and relevant to, China. First, a liberal model stresses liberty, procedure, representative government and a multi-party system. Liberal democracy refers to *representative* democracy, which means that decisions affecting a community are not taken by its members as a whole but by a group of people whom "the people" have elected for this purpose.[3] Second, an official model, which centers on authority and collective interest, aims to rebuild order through democratic means, or at least sees democracy as an instrument to reinforce authority and order. Third, a populist model emphasizes participation and equality, takes social justice seriously and trusts people's ability to run their own affairs.[4]

We can easily identify the variants of three models of democracy in the current political discourse on democracy in China. The pattern of discourse on democracy is that while the official model of democracy still predominates, the liberal discourse on democracy enjoys ideological hegemony largely because the official model of democracy cannot deliver a convincing alternative value system. The Chinese New Left has also called for a direct and extended democracy by establishing a coalition between the center and grass-root to contain corrupt officials in the middle. Nevertheless, support for populist democracy in China is strikingly rare amongst academic circle. This is a further indicator of the decline of the populist thought of democracy.

Is the category of three models of democracy valid? The answer is a qualified yes. The qualifications are: some distinctions between different models are not clearly made, and the three models of democracy have complex, conflicting, convergent and compatible relationships. The Chinese official democracy is, for example, in conflict with liberal democracy in the area of restricting certain political liberties, but is convergent with liberal

democracy in the area of adopting a set of electoral procedures. They even influence and interact each other, as will be discussed later.

The category can be defended on the grounds that they have analytical, normative and instrumental values. Analytically it is useful to grasp the differences of basic positions and assumptions among competing ideas of democracy. For example, a populist model of democracy favours direct democracy, therefore, direct all-villagers assembly for village democracy, while a liberal model of democracy stresses representative democracy, therefore advocates representative village assembly.[5]

Normatively, the three models of democracy offer different criteria of evaluating village elections. When people evaluate village elections they consciously or unconsciously use different ideas of democracy, or different components of one model. Those who cherish the ideal of liberal democracy tend to regard village elections as either undemocratic or semi-democratic. But if one thinks of democracy in non-liberal terms, or accepts the variant of illiberal democracy, one will regard village elections as democratic.

The three models of democracy also recommend future programs for village elections and offer different ideas of how local democracy should be established and operated. With regards to the question of furthering local democracy, those who believe in liberal democracy clearly demand a more open contest that allows for opposition and a multi-party system.

The category of three models of democracy has the instrumental value in stressing the existence of plural understandings and demands of democracy in China. We should keep an open mind about rather than stick to one idea of democracy. A procedural view of democracy is one-sided in the sense that it stresses procedure but ignores other such questions as local justice and voter participation. Cross-dialogue and mutual criticism between competing ideas of democracy are healthy for the theoretical and practical development of democracy (I will discuss a populist critique of liberal democracy later on). Of course, the three models should not prevent us from exploring other models of democracy, or should the fixed models prevent us from looking at change and flexibility or from creative thinking.

Liberal Democracy Revisited

I have defended liberal democracy strongly in *The Democratization of China* and continue to defend it today. For me, out of the three models, liberal democracy provides a series of checklists for the Chinese practice of democracy. It is an ideal model towards which Chinese democratization should move. As a value system, liberal democracy is more attractive than that of the official model of democracy in providing us a systematic thinking about the desirability of democracy. It offers useful insights into the essence of the process of democratization, that is, to increase liberties and equality. Having made the above acknowledgment, I attempt to provide a critique of liberal democracy as a practical guidance for the democratization program.

The purpose of the critique is to develop liberal democracy in a Chinese context, not to reject it.

We should be aware of the problems associated with the existing democratization literature. One problem is that the framework of "liberal democracy" has been taken for granted. This is a deeply rooted in the arrogance of the liberal theorizing of democratization and in the neglect of the internal tension between democracy and authority in the process of democratization, which dogs the practice of village elections. Moreover, most theories of democratization focus on empirical questions without considering the normative questions that apply to peoples who live in different circumstances. Thus, to be relevant to these differing backgrounds, theories of democratization must address the normative question of what is an appropriate model of democracy. They must take account of the stage and process of democratization, for example, regarding one-party democracy as a transitional model.

Liberal democracy is a product of a long and very specific historical process. Thus, it is ahistorical to apply a liberal model of democracy everywhere, ignoring specific circumstances and preconditions. Democratization is a natural process. There is no clearly defined direction and no timetable. China needs sufficient time to develop democracy gradually and it follows its own path toward democracy: a kind of developmental democracy, starting with procedure, followed by competition and participation.

According to liberal democracy, any realization of the democratic principle must secure the conditions for a freely formed, undistorted public opinion. Democratic elections are futile unless the people are in a position to make an informed choice. This requires, at the very least, a system of liberties of conscience, speech and associations as well as rights to due legal process and the rule of law. While this liberal position, as I acknowledge, is fundamentally important, the primary focus on liberties as the key feature of democracy is biased. In the US, the gun policy reflects the individualistic bias towards, and excessive indulgence in, individual liberties. We need to differentiate the relative weightings of different basic liberties at different stages of development. For instance, the right to vote and the freedom of speech are essential and protected in village elections. Nevertheless, the right not to vote is not fully protected (compulsory voting is illiberal, but necessary), neither is the right to political association. Freedom of the press is not an issue simply because the villages are small. More importantly, liberty is not primary while economic development is centrally salient in village politics.

The lack of liberal elements in village elections is often regarded as "deficient". Seen in this light, village elections appear undemocratic. But are they really defective? Consider, for example, the limit on kinship associations in village elections. This might be justified on the grounds that it prevents the domination of one family clan and the intensification of kinship fighting.

If one takes the existence of multi-parties and opposition parties as central to liberal democracy, one would point out the serious limits of village elections, including the existence of one-party domination, the absence of an opposition party, and the absence of genuine villagers' association. Village elections are thus seen as merely a political symbol for Chinese democratization, which does not change the structures of power. China only introduces a formal and procedural democracy in order to rebuild authority in rural China and to gain acceptance in the international community. Where democratic institutions rest primarily on such bases, rather than on demands from civil society, they will be more vulnerable to authoritarian reversals and are likely to be merely formal trappings.

Alternatively, one may ask is a multi-party system a necessary condition for village democracy? Or, is this merely a western bias?[6] It can be argued that a multi-party system is inappropriate to village politics.[7] Not only is the size of the village too small to render two parties necessary, but a two-party system may intensify kinship conflicts if clans are to be mobilized by two or more parties. In China, kinship conflicts have been kept under control by the party/state in contrast to India, where the political forces of multi-parties have penetrated into local elections and their political campaign makes use of the forces of caste, class, religion and ethnicity. As a consequence, Indian local elections are now increasingly undermined by violent conflicts.[8] Moreover, the assumption that one party prohibits political competition is not always true. Indeed, there are high levels of political competition in village elections. To force the implementation of a multi-party system could be dangerous and inappropriate for some developing countries in certain periods.

Collective Democracy Revisited
My 1996 book has criticized the official model of collective democracy and its two principles of collectivism and concluded that Chinese collectivism is unsympathetic to the liberal democratic ideal. Such a position is seriously criticized by Chih-yu Shih in his 1999 book. Shih argues that Western scholars seem to agree that collectivism is the key obstacle to Chinese democracy and tend to look to individual private property rights as the most critical foundation for democracy.[9] Therefore, according to Shih, Western scholarship is based upon an individual-centred approach and is inappropriate to understand Chinese practice of democracy. As an alternative, Shih suggests that we need to avoid presuming that democracy has only one meaning and we should "open-mindedly appreciate and empathize with indigenous Chinese practitioners of democratic reform". He strongly argues that "it is almost certain that democracy in China will not be promoted and practiced exclusively as a protective mechanism for private property rights". He also advocates "the inclusion of collective units in the concept of individual actors".[10]

I should acknowledge that Shih's point of view does have some value. Political administration, natural village and cultural kinship all constitute a communal basis for village elections and village democracy. At an ideological level, voting for the village's interest rather than for an individual is promoted. Indeed, the development of village enterprises is in the common interest of the villagers. There are common interests in providing services such as roads, schools and welfare, and the question of how rights and duties are distributed is a collective matter and concern.

Collective economy and collective ownership structure are one of the bases for village democracy. My empirical study finds that the group with a collective economy has the highest mean of political participation score (11.7), but the mean gap between collective and private is less than 1.0. The mean of the agricultural group is further down (9.9). This means that an elector from a village where collective economic activity prevails tends to have a high participation index, compared with an elector from the other two groups (private economy-dominated village and agricultural-dominated economy). One explanation of the above statistical difference is that peasants have much more material interest in collective-dominated villages than agriculture-dominated villages. This is simply because the collective-dominated villages are relatively rich and have accumulated a certain level of wealth, and village wealth constitutes a more important source of family income. The villagers there tend to demand village democracy vigorously and actively, and take it as the mechanism to protect their rights and interests and to distribute fairly collective wealth. Nevertheless, collective economy and its accumulated wealth can also be a basis of authoritarian control in many villages. As Tianjian Shi finds, incumbent leaders can use newly acquired economic resources to bribe their superiors to ignore decisions of the central government to introduce competitive election into the villages. They can also use those resources to co-opt peasants and to make peasants more dependent on the village authority.[11]

In addition, some villages have a strong cultural identity, such as clan, cultural network and village memory. Such a cultural basis has influenced villagers' voting behaviour. In electoral campaigns, some candidates even strongly argue that voters should vote for their clan members, not outsiders.

The critical question is, can these things be conceptualized as "collective democracy"? To answer this question, we should address the question of whether we can conceptualize Western democracy as "individualistic democracy"? While Western democracy emphasizes individual rights, it does contain collective or communal elements. Democracy is largely a nation-state institution that assumes national community. It protects and encourages a plural culture in which various cultural associations exist. The working of democracy relies upon civil society and various associational activities. All these indicate Western democracy also has a "collective" or

communal basis. William Kymlicka's theory of minority rights challenges an individualistic view of democracy and argues that the interests of cultural community are central to liberal theory and democracy. Democracy involves both individual and collective actions and is based upon private, collective, corporative and state economy.

In China, the administrative or natural village, collective village economy, and the cultural identity of the village all influence village elections and democracy. But they do not represent a different kind of "democracy" at the institutional level. One should ask, where and what is an institutional form and mechanism of "collective" democracy? In village elections and democracy, *individuals* exercise the right to vote and the right to dismiss corrupt village leaders. Although the village assembly can be regarded as a "collective mechanism", it is a place where villagers can express their views, and fundamentally, it is the *individual right* to vote that decides disputing matters.

Normatively speaking, a collective model of democracy and a collective notion of people do not favour the right to vote exercised by individuals. In the past, Chinese intellectuals held a variety of collectivist concepts of the people being regarded as everybody, a great many, the lower class and an organic whole.[12] Intellectually and methodologically, it is this collectivist notion of the people that favours the idea of intellectual representation that only enlightened intellectuals are able to represent the interests and opinion of the people, regardless of what different social groups think about their self-imposed role of representation. More importantly, it is this collectivist notion of the people that disfavours the development of an electoral mechanism of representation. By contrast, an individualistic view of people intrinsically questions the moral basis of the intellectuals. Why should one's interest be represented by an intellectual rather than expressed through an institutional channel? How can one trust intellectual representation as genuine and truthful? An individualistic view of people demands an electoral mechanism whereby each individual can select their representatives through a democratic process.

Empirically speaking, the idea that Chinese democracy is "collective without individuals" finds no support. Private ownership and economy have also come to play a role in village elections and democracy. Private interests contribute to the formation and development of plural interests, and private entrepreneurs challenge the party's monopoly of elections by running for elections.

Behind slogans about collective interests during electoral campaigns, it is individual interest that is driving village democracy. Collective interests of the village can be reduced to individual interest and individuals are basic units in the politics of distribution of collective wealth. While some candidates advocate voting for the candidate from the same clan, equally it should be noted that other villagers are likely to vote for those who can look after their interests and make them rich. All the different voting behaviours can be reduced to individual interests. Most villagers can and should

therefore be regarded as "economic animals", or rational actors in their activities of competition and participation.[13]

Commercialization strengthens individualistic thinking and behaviour so that the individual becomes the basic unit and individual interests are primary. Indeed, economic development and the expansion of markets prioritize rational calculation and atomize villagers. Villagers enjoy their right to move out of their villages, indeed some no longer identify with their village at all once they begin to lead a new life in the cities. All these weaken the collective ethos. For example, one care less about water if it is a collective matter than if it is related to his or her land. Under such a condition, so-called "collective democracy" is empirically weak although neo-collectivism is called for to deal with individualistic behaviours.

A significant challenge to "collective democracy" is that the existence of villages themselves becomes an issue. Urbanization has reduced the number of villages and destroyed the basis of villages. For example, the number of villages in Zhejiang has decreased from 42,865 in 1999 to 42,226 in 2000.[14] Some village teams demand the division or divorce of politically administrative village so as to reduce the number of villagers who want to share collective fruits.[15] Such a separation challenges the basis of village communities, subsequently village elections and democracy.

The process and the forms of privatization of collective enterprises have also posed significant challenges to the so-called "collective democracy". For example, the privatization of village enterprises, or the sale of village enterprises to individuals, in some areas of Wuhan, Jiangsu and Zhejiang, has undermined the collective economic structure, and reduced villagers' incentive for political participation in village elections and democracy. Without collective economy and collective fruit to be distributed, villagers lose interests in participating in election and village assembly. If the village economy collapses, villagers are likely to become atomized and care more for their own interests. However, if the privatization adopts the form of distributing the capital of village enterprises as share-stock to villagers, say, in some area of Shenzhen, collective interest remains, and villagers will still maintain interest in village elections and democracy.[16]

In short, "collective democracy" is a rhetorical ideology invented by officials to express their desire for a different democracy, or justify their practice. We should not take such a rhetorical thing seriously. Village elections and democracy show the existence and continuing growth of individual rights and individual behaviour.

Populist Model of Participatory Democracy
In assessing the populist democracy, my 1996 book concludes that it is much less attractive than the liberal model of democracy that it is not workable in reality and that it has undergone a decline. My critical conclusion about populist democracy is criticized by a few book reviewers.[17] Ann Kent, for

example, argues that "populist democracy would appear more attractive to the Chinese people than liberal democracy".[18] Manicas hopes that "If there is anything powerfully unique and important about China with regard to the possibility for democracy, it is just this [populist democracy]. If this 'seed' were to grow, China might well give the world a much-needed *new* model of democracy".[19] Drawing on Mao's style of "Great Democracy", Cui Zhiyuan, for example, criticizes liberal democracy in USA where there are so many restrictions upon participatory democracy. He holds the view that public ownership is the guarantee for full democracy, for it can overcome the problem of private capital's control over equal participation. He argues further that if there is no democracy, there is no real public ownership. With reference to the electoral system, he interprets village elections as being non-party-based competition, an institutional innovation by Chinese.[20]

Village elections provide an ideal laboratory for us to examine popular democracy, because the village is the most appropriate size and the suitable condition under which populist idea of direct democracy can be implemented. Nevertheless, no intellectuals and cadres carry such an experiment to materialize populist democracy (by contrast, numerous experiments of both liberal and official models of democracy have been carried). Why is this so? Apart from the official control of village election experiments, the theoretical assumptions of populist democracy have serious and inherent weaknesses.

First, populist democracy favours direct democracy, where people exercise rights and participate in the political decision-making process directly. But such direct democracy cannot work at the village level. An institutional form of direct democracy is an all-villagers' general meeting in which major decisions are made through public debate and a general vote. Nevertheless, the idea of an all-villagers' meeting is difficult to put into practice for the following reasons. The first has to do with the size of the village. The village in China today is similar in size to the production brigade in the past. Its population in general is 1,000–3,000. Some villages can have as many as 8,000–10,000 people. Another reason has to do with range and location. In some mountainous areas, a village committee may cover several natural villages, and villagers are scattered in a large area. The third is due to certain features of agricultural production. With the production mode of household responsibility, land is leased to each individual household. There cannot be any consensus on the time of labour and rest. Hence, it is difficult to find a time that suits everybody. Finally, there has been increasing social mobility. In some underdeveloped villages the majority of the labour force may have left and is working or doing business away from home. All these add to the difficulty of holding more than a few villagers' meetings.[21] They render the ideal of direct democracy at village level impractical. Many local authorities therefore take the representatives' meeting as an alternative to the all-villagers' meeting.

Second, populist democracy adopts the anti-elite stand, takes ordinary people seriously, and appeals to the equality of political participation. However, the model fails in reality because villagers, whom populist theorists regard as the agents of populism, tend to have elite attitudes towards their fellows. Villagers have a sensitive awareness of social status and fight for elite status in the village. This political culture of villagers renders the key feature of populist democracy and anti-elitism unrealistic. If implemented in politics, it inevitably gives rise to a new form of elitism.

A third problem is its egalitarian view of participation, and its democratization strategy that stresses the precedence of popular participation over competition. Village election experience demonstrates that the political competition among village elites preceded the development of fully and equal political participation. Political competition followed by political participation is the sequential development of village elections. Similarly, the historical sequence of political development in England was that liberalism came first followed by participatory democracy.

A HYBRID MODEL AND THE PREDOMINATION OF OFFICIAL DEMOCRACY

While we make analytical distinctions of three models of democracy, in reality they interface with each other. For example, the official model of democracy incorporates some elements of liberal democracy, such as citizenship, procedure and electoral law. The incorporation is due to the interaction between international and national forces and the interaction between officials and liberal-minded intellectuals. NGOs from the USA, for example, have been contributing to the improvement of electoral laws such as one vote one value and secrete vote.[22] At the same time, the liberal model of democracy has been modified to incorporate a gradual approach towards the democratization of China. And some officials have started to regard "democracy for the people" (*Weiming zhuzu*) as undemocratic, and take increasing interest in liberal elements of democracy.

As a result, a hybrid model of democracy has emerged. Currently, rural democracy in China is characterized by a combination of collective basis and individual rights, one-party domination, free and competitive elections, and increasing power and roles of elected village heads. It combines leaders' selection and villagers' election, the desire of the authorities and the will of the people, and the party's domination and limited free choice.

Analytically the hybrid model needs to distinguish two conceptions of difference in terms of Chinese democratic practice. By different kinds of democracy I mean different combinations and configurations at different times and localities. Such a conception of difference does not stress uniqueness, but similar components and mutual influence. Another difference lies in the so-called "uniqueness" in the context of the opposition between Western and

Chinese democracy. Such a conceptualization of difference is problematic. Chinese village elections and local democracy contain numerous individualistic features and they can hardly be conceptualized as "collective democracy" different from individualistic Western democracy.[23]

Also, the conceptualization of a Chinese model is problematic, because village elections and democracy take place under different local conditions, thus different localized models and patterns have taken place. There is no such thing as a Chinese model, nor as an Asian model. Local actors have been searching for appropriate models of democracy that suit their particular conditions. Indeed, a close examination of electoral laws at national, provincial and local levels reveals the diversity of legal regulations concerning the qualifications of candidates, the methods of candidate selection, and the methods of deciding final winners of candidates. There are emerging different local models of village elections in Lishu, famous for the open selection of candidates, Qianxi, known for its women's participation in the elections, Shanxi, which as the first established elections of party secretaries, and Anhui, a pioneer in electing village heads who form a village "cabinet". In short, local patterns cannot be theorized as a Chinese model. We can talk about a Chinese model only in the sense of the sum of all local variations and features.

In this hybrid model, totalitarian, authoritarian and democratic tendencies coexist and have their adherents at local level institutions. The aggregation of the different tendencies resembles the authoritarian model most, and the official model of democracy pre-dominates. It can also be called illiberal democracy or authoritarian electoral democracy.[24] Key features of the official model of democracy and a few elements of liberal democracy in the hybrid model are described below.

Paternalism
The villagers' right to vote is granted by the centre to farmers who need to be trained so as to exercise that vote properly. This "grant" is regarded as a paternalist action. Nevertheless, it can also be seen as an outcome of compromise in the sense that if the state wants to secure stability and unity in rural areas it must grant and protect certain rights of the farmers.

Balance Between Authority and Liberty
Village democracy must strike a balance between authority and freedom, and between central and local interests. The Party seeks to ensure that the village elections do not challenge the centre, but strengthen it instead. For the central leaders, village elections are permitted in order to change and redistribute village power without disrupting the central authority. As a result, the authorities initiate elections, decide on the final candidates, and ensure procedural fairness, while the farmers are given a choice through a vote and the freedom to nominate their candidates. Without competition, elections will lose their legitimate function, while competition might lead to

disorder and chaos. The fear of losing control has thus resulted in an emphasis on authority. A real choice would be a balance between authority and liberty, between authoritative control and democratic competition in practice.

One-Party Domination[25]

That village elections should be conducted under the authority of the party clearly contradicts common understandings of democracy. It is, however, a reality. Village elections take place without the participation of an opposition party although they provide an opportunity for a rotation of village power inside and outside the Party. Thus village democracy can be characterized by the acceptance of and respect for authority and hierarchy, the dominant party, a centralized bureaucracy and a strong state. The role of the CCP is obvious in the whole election process.

A New Art of Ruling

Village elections can be seen as a new form of social control and a sort of political mobilization. They are part of an effort to rebuild order, stability and authority in the wake of economic reforms that have weakened the state. In other words, they are part of a political process through which individuals are reorganized or mobilized into political order. This is how "democratic Machiavelli" can be motivated to propel village democracy in rural China.

Elite-Led Democratization

The village elections were conducted from the top and by officials.[26] The best example is Professor Zhang Huoan and his team from Huazhong Normal University. They gained direct support from the party secretary of Hubei province and spent two years organizing an election in one selected village. The village was determined to be a successful case, and leaders at all levels supported this experiment. Nevertheless, in the election after Zhang's team left the village, one third of the villagers did not attend the village meeting, the two candidates did not win sufficient votes, and township and village leaders manipulated the election process.[27]

Competitive Elections[28]

While many village elections witnessed the absence of freedom, vote-buying, and irregular voting behaviours such as paying someone to cast a vote or even using other names to cast a vote, one should not turn a blind eye to the development of village democracy, as some scholars have, when they underrate the significance of village democracy and overrate its limitations. In the practice, more and more semi-competitive and competitive elections take place even though some elections are not competitive or free and hardly relevant or consequential to the voters. There have been changes in the form and content of elections, and competition has gradually increased in the

elections. Running for positions on the village committees has become increasingly more competitive since elections were introduced over ten years ago. Particularly competitive was the election held in November 1998, when the "Organic Law of Village Committee" came into effect. The practice of direct and open selection and election of candidates, which is called *"haixuan"* (direct election) in many localities, dramatically increased the competitiveness of the village elections.

Participation

The farmers' political participation in Zhejiang has changed a lot as compared with the commune period or the early stages of village autonomy. The first change is an increase in the opportunities of participation. The second is the mode of participation. The passive participation through mobilization has been slowly replaced by self-motivated participation among an increasing number of voters. My survey[37] finds that participation index is in proportion to the number of elections in which a farmer is involved. In other words, those farmers who have participated in more elections also show a higher index than those who have experienced fewer elections. More election experience means a higher index.

CONCLUSION

We have discussed the diverse roles of three discourses on democracy. The liberal discourse on democracy provides an ideal model towards which China's democratization should move. The populist discourse on democracy could play a critical role in its criticism of the limits of liberal democracy and contribute to the development of plural thoughts. The official discourse on democracy, despite its flaws, has guided the practical policies on procedure, sequence and implementation of village elections.

This paper has examined the conceptual and normative assumptions of three discourses on democracy, taking village election practice as an ideal laboratory. Through a critical reflection of three discourses on democracy with reference to village elections, this paper reaches four conclusions. First, the *radical* model of liberal democracy cannot provide a satisfactory democratization program for Chinese village elections and democracy. Second, the process of village elections and democracy is so compounded by marketization, urbanization and the growing individualistic behaviour of villagers that it can hardly be conceptualized as "collective democracy". Third, it has proved the populist model of democracy to be unrealistic and impractical. Fourth, the three models of democracy interface with each other in reality, giving rise to a hybrid that blends various local practices and liberal, official and populist ideas of democracy. And in this hybrid model, the official model of democracy predominates.

APPENDIX:
PARTICIPATION INDEX

I employ one special technique to measure the level of participation. Participation index is a coding representative of a number of attributes associated with an electors' attitude towards election and his (or her) behaviour in an election. These attributes include the level of understanding of electoral laws, the campaign events an elector attends, the attitude towards the necessity of knowing candidates prior to elections, and the reasons for going to vote. For questions 10, 14, 20, and 21, a measurer of degree is assigned to the corresponding attributes. For example, we assign a score of 3 to the record with "know well" in the case of knowing electoral law, 2 to "know in general", and so on. Question 12 is a multiple response question and I simply take the count of ticked choices as the score. In the case of question 21 which also is a multiple response one I assign a score to each of the choices available and sum the scores up when more than one choice is made.

The participation index is formulated by adding up all the scores I have assigned to the responses of the above 5 questions. For example, an elector believes that he/she understands in general electoral law and chooses number 2 as response to Question 10. I read off his score of 2 for this particular question. Meanwhile, he/she only took part in the election and didn't attend any other campaign events; so his/her score is just 1. In answering Question 14, he/she chooses number 3, i.e. "it is sort of necessary to know the candidate before an election", and his/her score turns out to be 1 according to Table 9.1. The elector considers his/her own vote to be important and he/she gets a score of 2 for Question 20. If the elector only chooses "to vote for the candidate he or she believes in" (the choice of Number 3) without indicating any other reasons; the score for Question 21 will be 1. I then add up all the scores of individual questions to obtain a point of 7, namely 2 + 1 + 1 + 2 + 1 = 7, for the participation index of the elector.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

NOTES

1. See K. O'Brien, "Village Committees: Implementing Political Reform in China's Villages," *Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs*, 32 (1994); Shi Tianjian, "Village Committee Elections in China: Institutional Tactics for Democracy," *World Politics*, 51 (1999): 385–412; K. O'Brien and Lianjiang Li, "Accommodating 'Democracy' in a One-Party State: Introducing Village Elections in China," *The China Quarterly*, 162 (2000): 465–489; Robert A. Pastor and Qiangshan Li, "The Meaning of China's Village Elections," *The China Quarterly*, 162 (2000): 490–512;

Jean C. Oi, and Scott Rozelle, "Elections and Power: The Locus of Decision-Making in Chinese Villages," *The China Quarterly* 162 (2000): 513–39.

2. See Baogang He, *Between Democracy and Authority: An Empirical Study of Village Election in Zhejiang*, (with Lang Youxing, Wuhan: Central China Normal University Press, 2002); "China's First Direct Election of the Township Head: A Case Study of Buyun," (with Youxing Lang), *Japanese Journal of Political Science* 2, 1 (2001): 1–22; "Village Elections, Village Power Structure and Rural Governance in Zhejiang," *American Asian Review*, 10, 3 (2002): 55–89.

3. For a detailed discussion of the three models, see Baogang He, *The Democratization of China* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996).

4. The all-villagers' meeting and village representative meeting are two decision-making institutions at the village level. They are important steps towards genuine democracy. In practice, village representative meeting, rather than, the all-villagers' meeting, has become important institutional arrangements in rural democracy.

5. For the idea that constitutional opposition is a necessary condition for democracy, see Stephanie Lawson, "Conceptual Issues in the Comparative Study of Regime Change and Democratization," *Comparative Politics* 25, 2 (1994): 183–205.

6. Nevertheless, it should be noted that when direct elections move up from villages to townships, they need political associations or functional multi-parties to compete political power.

7. Amrita Basu and Atul Kohli, eds., *Community Conflicts and the State in India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), 3.

8. Chih-yu Shih, *Collective Democracy: Political and Legal Reform in China* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1999), 326–27.

9. Ibid., 329.

10. Tianjian Shi, "Economic Development and Village Elections in Rural China," *Journal of Contemporary China* 8, 22 (1999): 425.

11. Edward X. Gu, "Who was Mr. Democracy? The May Fourth Discourse of Populist Democracy and the Radicalization of Chinese Intellectuals (1915–22)," *Modern Asian Studies* 35, 3 (2001): 598–9.

12. To what degree villagers conform to the characteristics of "economic man" or a member of kinship depends upon the prevailing level of economic development, political consciousness and other factors.

13. See *Rural China Statistics Yearbook* (Beijing, 2001), 28.

14. The author observed that five village teams attempted in May 2001 to "throw out" another team located in a mountain area in Jianshe village of Wuyun Township.

15. The author has witnessed these developments in his numerous research trips between 1999 and 2001.

16. See Bruce McFarlane's review, in *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 28, 1 (1988): 138–9.

17. Ann Kent, "Review of the *Democratization of China*," *Pacific Affairs* 70, 4 (1997–98): 587–8.

18. Peter T Manicas, "Review of Baogang He's *The Democratization of China*," *China Review International* 5, 2 (1998): 428.

19. Cui Zhiyuan, *The Second Enlightenment Movement and Institutional Innovation* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1997), 295–300.

20. Working Committee of Legality of the NPC Standing Committee, et al., eds., *Cunminweiyuanhui zuzhifa duben* (Organizational Law of the Village Committee:

a Reader), *Zhongguo minzhu fazhi chubanshe* (China Democracy and Legality Press), 1998: 53–54. Also see Xu Yong, *Zhongguo Nongcun cunmin zizhi* (Village Autonomy in Rural China, Central China Normal Univ. Press, 1997), 83–84.

21. Becky Shelley, "Political Globalization and the Politics of International Non-governmental Organization: The Case of Village Democracy in China," *Australian Journal of Political Science* 35, 2: 225–238.

22. Shih claims, "in China democracy is not purely an individualistic endeavor", and "Chinese democracy is a collective democracy". Shih, *Collective Democracy*, p. viii.

23. Larry Diamond and Ramon H. Myers, "Introduction: elections and Democracy in Greater China," *The China Quarterly*, 162 (2000): 365–386.

24. See Baogang He, "Village Elections, Village Power Structure".

25. A detailed study on this subject, see Lang Youxing's PhD thesis on Elite's Grafting of Village Election, the National University of Singapore, to be completed.

26. The author's interview with Professor Zhang Houan in December 2000 in Hubei.

27. See Baogang He, "Are Village Elections Competitive?," in *China's Challenge in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. J. Chen (City University of Hong Kong Press, 2003).

28. I conducted three surveys (peasant survey, village head survey and township leaders survey) between October and November 1998 in Zhejiang Province with the help of a research team of two staff members and seven students from Zhejiang University. Four geographic areas are covered in the survey: Wenzhou (2 villages in Tangxiang), Shanmen (7 villages in Liuao township), Lishui (3 villages in Shuiger, 5 villages in Wuyun) and Shaoxin (4 villages in Chengdongxiang). An enormous amount of data was generated by the responses received from 1245 respondents for the peasant survey, 111 respondents for the village chief survey, and 115 respondents for the township leader survey.

CHAPTER 11

Why Do We Look at Political Discourse in Vietnam?

Patrick Raszelenberg

Political discourse offers three lines of approach: As seen through the eyes of those in charge of and participating in it, as perceived by those aspiring to participate, and as noted by an uninvolved observer. While we cannot presuppose the latter's impartiality, we need not assume his arbitrariness, either. In the case of most scholarly observers, matters of propensity, proclivity or even bias are normally laid out openly and deliberately in order to lend more weight to an argument's natural cause which is persuasion. The same does not, of course, hold true for the holders of discursive powers or the aspirants to that position. Here, we are faced with a variety of non-rational principles guiding action and behaviour. We shall, for the moment, refrain from ascribing such motivating forces to the third group, since the display of said tendencies, while perceptible and traceable, is less forceful here; mentioned guiding principles are more directly noticeable in the first two groups, where they also play a more significant role. Therefore, it appears appropriate to view the dynamics of political discourse as an individual's or a group's means of access to, regulation and containment by, and ability to manipulate public discussions, the latter currently being dominated and partly directed by the Vietnamese Communist Party.[1]

What is so political about political discourse? Given that most discourse patterns observable in political discourse are practically the same as in any other form of discourse (e.g. philosophical or literary discourse), we need to ask ourselves where that realm of discourse we are constantly referring to actually begins and ends. Does it comprise the entirety of rhetorical actions undertaken in public with an aim to contributing to a given entity to whom everybody responds, which regards each and every person, perhaps the entire public realm? Or is our sense of public affairs limited to those performances encompassing administrative actions that can be subsumed under the general heading of political administration as part of politics as a whole? For the purposes of discourse analysis, scholars will sometimes arbitrarily restrict their notion of what is political to suggesting that it

revolves around the particular problem they are interested in analysing. Thus, in Chilton/Schäffner's analysis of Tony Blair's speech patterns during his intervention at the XI. Conservative Party Congress in 1994, the problem that what is "political" "depends on the standpoint of the commentator"[2] is resolved by proposing to limit as "political" "those actions (linguistic or other) which involve power, or its inverse, resistance (sic)".[3] This might work for rhetorical actions pinpointing the intricacies of these two identifiable opposites, dominance and resistance – as in utterances such as "no Vietcong ever called me no Nigger".[4] However, statements identifiable as political ones yet not directly related to matters of dominance or resistance would fail to be included. Intellectuals in particular will frequently couch the thrust of their argument in allusive, sometimes nebulous speech devices refusing to jeopardize their position – in case they actually have any – as when relegating their personal concerns to the realm of public interest or when addressing nobody in particular yet seeing to it that the addressee will understand he is spoken to.

The language employed by intellectuals and artists in political discourse is never taken per se, neither by the speaker nor an interlocutor or the listener; it is never existent by means of itself but transformed by means of another language, that of political discourse – which in this case is not meant to be the sum total of (public, semi-public or secret) political discussions but the reigning codification governing these discussions, e.g. specific taboos, so-called sensitive topics etc.[5] Hence, the imaginary text of the speaker becomes part and parcel of an altogether different texture into which it is woven by means of political discourse, the kind currently holding sway over all or most of its minor sub-discourses. Here, what is originally intended to mean one thing may be transformed into another by means of reading: The techniques employed to decipher orthodox political lingo, which are not restricted to known official parlance but to any text; therefore, non-orthodox texts are scrutinized by the same eyes and minds accustomed to applying their techniques to an entirely different corpus of words, which is why not only the actual "texts" (verbal interventions, discussion papers, political directives, laws, intellectual products – literary works, scholarly articles etc. – and artistic products – paintings, sculptures, performances, the staging of plays and directing of films etc.) produced in the web of political discourse, but their interpretation and ascription of meaning as well are all subject to a specific form of reading influenced and fed by dominant alignments pertaining to the mode discourse is organized and structured. While this may sound somewhat vague and ambiguous, it is actually common sense: Political discourse is not the mere existence of certain statements, public or secret, intelligible or incomprehensible, but their absence, their effect and consequence as well, i.e. that which depends on their reading and interpretation, a field in which what is omitted plays as important a role as what is mentioned. To refrain from stating that the sending of Vietnamese

laborers abroad, while obviously a means to export unemployment, is a political strategy that is both correct and useful, is tantamount to breaching one of those unwritten laws of political statement production. It will be read for its lack, non-existence or inexplicable evanescence rather than the actual content of its ensuing argument. Likewise, the Vietnamese polity's insistence on non-political conflicts with regard to recent turmoil in the Central Highlands[6] testifies to a significant disappearance from official reactions of political targeting for the purpose of appeasement and assuagement despite the fact that political targeting – in this case, the minorities around Buon Me Thuot – would have entailed possibilities for powerful strategies aimed at defamation, isolation and discrimination. Precisely this, however, was regarded unwise in light of the VCP's overall objective to portray the country as a quiet, peaceful patch of land desiring to develop its resources and become an affluent member of the Southeast Asian community of states. That part of political discourse which is directed and regulated is thus able to devise as forceful a strategy for omission as it is for inclusion, as long as specific overall purposes are met. The case in point is of particular interest, since it illustrates the workings of cultural consent which transcends political discourse. Rarely do we find a case where discourse politics are able to attack this consensus head on, since it would entail questioning the fundamentals of self-understanding if not cultural identity. The real issue behind those turmoils is, of course, a long-standing unresolved social dispute encompassing elements of a wider cultural dispute between the majority Kinh and the highland minorities, i.e. a cultural conflict between Vietnamese and non-Vietnamese. On a purely social level, intellectuals and other critics may disagree with the policies of forced or voluntary Kinh settlement in those areas. Moreover, they may target the local administration's procedures, especially ethnic favouritism. Culturally however, even the most fervent opponents and most outspoken critics will agree with the government's management and operation as well as its attempt to portray this as an economic or purely social conflict, albeit this being a cultural problem, one which every Vietnamese would deny outright. It is this denial which transcends political discourse at a crucial point and turns the whole issue into a non-political affair touching upon cultural identity. The juncture at which both ways, those of the critics and of the overseers and regulators of (public) political statements, come together is the definition of ethnicity and nationality. While all minorities are regarded part of the (politically and administratively defined) "people" – "*nhân dân*"–they are not included in the (ethnically defined) "people"–"dân tộc", meaning they are "not really" Vietnamese but "guests" supposed to behave accordingly.

Needless to say, we do not regard what we have called cultural consensus (here: the orthodox canon of ethnic majority beliefs) as a static, unchanging or unmoldable pattern but as a result of political perception and interpretation of, on one hand, the self, the individual, and the nation

(i.e. both the state and the dominant ethnic group, in this case the Vietnamese) on the other. Consensus may be a process per se, yet cultural consensus determined by transepochal determinants tends to lose this function as it acquires the ossified structure of quasi petrified reiteration. In the predominant underlying assumptions of Vietnameseness and hence cultural consensus about the nation, this reiteration is evident in a set of bound variables which, unquestioned, continue to produce the same equation. Among them, the sense of external threat, masterfully exploited over generations by Confucian scholars deeply steeped in the Chinese classics, combined with the archetypal Vietnamese tendency to idealize one's own weaknesses, figures prominently enough to pervade seemingly unrelated spheres such as the relation between the Vietnamese (Kinh) and the minorities.

While the concept of political discourse in Western societies rests largely on the image of an expanded public sphere since the Enlightenment,[7] Vietnamese society has traditionally been more familiar with recurrent contractions rather than a steady, consistent expansion of the public. Naturally, more people are involved in political decision making today than during the *Trần* dynasty,[8] and access to means of diffusing one's personal opinions in public are broader now than they were several decades ago. While many would argue that the politics of economic renovation since the early 1990s[9] have laid the foundations for a more modern concept of an open society able to negotiate its concerns in public, what is generally termed political discourse continues to be a quasi sealed off area where illicit trespassing can result in serious consequences. What appears to be a paradox is actually no more than a state of relative normalcy, since the expansion of a particular field or sphere does not per se constitute a broadening of discourse itself; even beyond those mechanisms governing discourse and regulating access to it there still persists a universal feeling of established, albeit forced political consensus closely tied to political culture, i.e. the various traditions of political dispute that reign in a given territory. To provide an example: No freedom of speech, constitutional amendment or general sense of pride in civil liberties would pardon the dissenting voices uttered within the United States after the September 11th attacks. Relativist approaches such as Susan Sontag's were received with a sense of betrayal, not because they contained passages of balanced judgment, but because balanced judgment was considered bad style at a moment when culturally assertive statements carried the day over scrupulous, serious scrutiny.

"Peaceful evolution", "social evils" etc. may be employed arbitrarily in order to create new resources for targeting, one of the prime movers of directed political discourse allowing to, first of all, identify the object against which specific resources are supposed to become affective against, then to defame and smear, discriminate against the identified, and further to define its place in public discussions by either tabooing it or otherwise ascribing to

it specific characteristics making it altogether undesirable for the community as a whole – at which stage those desiring to elaborate on these issues in a more balanced manner are required to subject themselves to a set of predetermined concepts which will affect any reader of their remarks, at least in the sense that he knows that the issue at stake is considered to be *"tế nh"*, i.e. sensitive, tricky, delicate. At this point, discourse politics will have effectuated a change in the speaker's original outlook and his phraseology. He may still say what he intends to yet must conform to the intricacies of what directed political discourse has left, i.e. certain assumptions and suppositions. To ignore them may not matter all that much when the consequences of breaching the rules of discourse alone are at stake (for in this case, the speaker alone will have to bear them). They become more serious when evoking ideas detrimental to generally held presumptions. These in turn are almost always related to issues beyond political discourse as such. What happens in these cases is that everything political discourse stands for is transcended, albeit that its resources – the conglomerate of regulating mechanisms, discriminatory policies, discourse governing principles etc. – are brought to bear upon the alleged perpetrator in an entirely indiscriminate manner.

    This is astonishing in so far as one would expect directed political discourse to react somewhat similarly as it does in cases where purely political topics, say the formation of new political groups, are discussed – which means that falsification and delegitimation would have to play a preeminent role. Yet the opposite is the case. As if stripped of any necessity to proceed logically or rationally, directed discourse will at this point depart from and discard all basis for argument and persuasion and deal with the speaker in an almost neutral, indifferent manner. It may be the end of the speaker's access to a public voice for some time to come, but this will be a far shot from the kind of public contempt he would have to deal with in light of his remarks. Reaction to these instances is universally hostile, independent of the political system yet closely related to the specific values upheld by the community such an act occurs in. Normally, the person will be extended a kind of political sympathy befitting of a lunatic, and actual reprisals may be less harsh for reasons of misunderstandings and misreadings. This was the case of Trn Anh Quân and a few of his friends and fellow painters in the late nineties: In both cases, the concrete political statement was wrapped in intransparent canvas discourse, as it were, so that only part of the message got through and was treated more lightly than it would have, had the deeper layers of these works been assessed appropriately. It thus seems fruitful to distinguish between external and internal layers of discourse signifiers, since topics not directly related to the immediate nucleus of affairs are generally addressed in a more undeviating manner while issues obviously associated with the political plat du jour – corruption, a multi-party system etc. – are dealt with far more subtly. Vietnamese reactions to the September 11 attacks serve to illustrate this point.[10]

When the Vietnamese embassy in Washington, the foreign ministry in Hanoi and the cupola of the VCP's political leadership responded with messages of understanding, condolence and sympathy, they found themselves in agreement with the vast majority of the population to which the events came as sudden and surprising as they did to most of us. Traditionally unfamiliar with the intricacies of political turmoil in the Middle East, few Vietnamese felt they had something if anything to say about their relation to this new, apparently global phenomenon. However, there were voices of intense curiosity asking delicate questions and even uttering dissent, whom I shall discuss presently. First of all, it seems worth remembering that for reasons of reconciliation and normalization, official Hanoi displayed little interest in stepping out of line with regard to those voicing their sympathy and regret. If nothing else, the recent agreement on bilateral trade – the largest of its kind Vietnam has ever signed with the United States – would have served to subdue any sentiment of malicious glee in light of the attacks. Nothing could have harmed the policy of (internal) economic renovation and (international) reintegration more than risking to become a pariah once again. The last time this has happened was on Christmas Day, 1978, when Cambodia was invaded and remained occupied for ten years by an expansionist army that had little in common with the one fighting for reunification years before.

Besides sentiments of gratification felt by certain adherents to political utopia, most Vietnamese intellectuals offered a more differentiated and balanced judgment on the political consequences of these events than the political élite. Probably most significant was the fact that many of them attempted to explain militant Muslim fundamentalism to themselves first and only then tried to put forth cautious judgments. In any form of public discourse, considerations regarded as predominant for the political élite or those in charge of deciding what is talked about and when, are picked up in intellectual circles first, where they are discussed and examined. Accordingly, a number of intellectuals wondered how the PRC would behave and how she was going to improve her image in the eyes of the West, given that Beijing had condemned the attacks and was moving towards joining the global alliance against "terrorism". The link allowing her to do so, ethnic and religious unrest in Xinjiang, was considered a more worthwhile and curious issue by Vietnamese intellectuals than the actual events themselves. In Vietnam's directed political discourse, even VCP members interested in engaging, active discussions find it hard to circumvent the boundaries of ignorance established by cultural prejudice. Thus, talking about the "global" aspects of named events does not necessarily mean Vietnam is included, a sentence hardly regarded as a paradox in Hanoi or Saigon. That discourse is not merely what it deals with but also its own formation had been one of the points incessantly driven home by Foucault,[11]Vietnamese intellectuals' sense of direction, warily watching the

PRC's every move and discussing possible consequences for a reassessment of the political struggle in Xinjiang, proved to be the political leaderships' overriding concern as well, since it entailed a strengthening of Hanoi's foremost adversary with whom it is still engaged in continuous skirmishes over the Spratly islands. While at first glance anyone would profess that Vietnamese intellectuals' debate on the September events is a form of classical derived discourse entirely missing the point and almost unrelated to the fundamental problems topified and examined by the non-Islamic makers of Islamic fundamentalist discourse, it is nonetheless significant to observe that mentioned events allow Vietnamese intellectuals to talk about themselves and the political environment they live in. Practically any given lengthy Vietnamese assessment of the situation in the Middle East, Afghanistan, Irak and elsewhere will portray the Islamic world as backward, misogynist and irrational. Needless to say that Vietnam's own state of development is frequently judged as backward itself, that the country's dominant social values are derived from misogynist Confucian ethics, and that parts of the East Asian intellectual heritage (Yijing, Huainanzi, Liezi etc.) is predominantly anti-rational. Hence, what is rejected, treated with suspicion, shunned and spurned is more or less what is scorned about oneself, that which stands for one's own weaknesses. One of the formative laws of discourse, the interrelationship between those participating in it and thus contributing to its direction, and the identity of these individuals within a given discursive field, their discursive self generated by discourse,[12] is corroborated by this form of derived discourse, since the lack of need to restrict and restrain on part of the political centre allows for a somewhat more pure appearance (or public image) of said "law". The participants' specific discursive identity notwithstanding, parts of this discourse are directed by cultural consensus functionalized by the discourse elite dominating the personal expression of political views. Beyond the semantic derivatives of Vietnamese intellectuals' assessments of Islam and the Middle East, it is this consensus which narrows a person's options for engagement.

Unlike the Western world, which would bring the full force of the law to bear against those breaching established cultural consensus of good taste and propriety – as in the case of a German cook fined the equivalent of $ 4.500 by a local court in Bad Hersfeld for welcoming the September 11 attacks (approval of a criminal act in public)[13] – similar declarations might not necessarily be regarded "political" within the Vietnamese context where no common value system with the United States exists and no political alliance ties the country to Washington.

Within the context of political unrest in the Central Highlands however, the underlying cultural pattern of Kinh Vietnamese and minority interests will defuse charged statements on political conflict even before they are uttered. The common goal uniting those opposing the political powerhouses of directed discourse with the centres wherefrom discourse politics emanates

alerts us to a major feature of Vietnamese political discourse, its domestic or interior character understood not as political (for the minorities are domestic as well) but as ethnic and cultural: Resistance, never far away whenever the workings of dominance are present, is not confined to purely political means but will channel its concerns through cultural expressions as well. Albeit that no cultural consensus will detain the degree of political contest fought out over the land issues in the highlands, the major elements of discourse formation as directed by the VCP (for the sake of argument we will assume that they actually are) cannot but deal with this form of resistance as a political statement of disagreement. One of the main characteristics of discourse re-formation is that it works culturally inclusive: Among the more outstanding results of political unrest in northern Vietnam several years ago (Thái Bình) was that corruption[14] became an issue that was identified as such by the political leadership, openly discussed in the media, and moved to second place (after internal political stability) on the political agenda. Here, an attempt not at mere initiative-seizing, but an endeavor to simply turn around the course the argument would take, was undertaken with an aim to have it rebound upon the populace by proclaiming that it is indeed a serious problem but it's an inherently Vietnamese one, none that could be blamed on any systemic shortcomings. Thereafter, one part of the argument was directed towards party organization – eradicating elements of non-virtuous behaviour by purging those cadres responsible for it and raising the standards of conduct for all party members, especially new ones – while the main issue remained untouched: The fact that the VCP had once assumed power laying claim upon a new form of political conduct allegedly far removed from the standards of former administrative cadres' behaviour under the ancien régime. Obviously, the message was almost Argentinean (in the sense of Arlt's thesis that Argentineans are beyond remedy due to being Argentineans), for the VCP suggested that the Vietnamese were prone to being corrupt due to being Vietnamese and belonging to the greater East Asian cultural sphere where corruption can be part of established political (and social) conduct – a somewhat topsy-turvy representation of a political phenomenon not yet successfully suppressed by the VCP.

Just as paradigms are not, according to Kuhn, abandoned when falsified,[15] the theoretical and ideological foundations of the VCP's political legitimacy are not challenged head-on when (and while) no longer relevant. Kuhn's accumulation of anomalies, the ensuing sense of crisis, and the eventual abandonment of one paradigm for another holds true for the intricacies of change within political discourse as well. Simplistic as it may be, his model demonstrates the workings of discourse politics rather poignantly. Typical for the sense of crisis is an authoritative view on one hand conceding the existence of some serious problem, and on the other failing to draw what would appear as the most logical consequences. Endless reiterations of the well-known origins of corruption, its diverse appearance

in a number of different social, political and cultural contexts etc. will prevail over any concrete reference to where the problem should be tackled, one's own environment.[16] Solutions offered generally run into the dozen, while none is related specifically to any legal (not to speak of social) measure intended to assuage or mitigate the grave consequences of this "social cancer" as it is labeled in Vietnam.

Those actively participating in political discussions are often given a voice ex officio which is why not all of their contributions appear sound. Instead, they end up making "minor comments" or offering "additional insights" into overstudied fields. Usually entitled *"một ý kiến nhỏ về…"* (a minor opinion on…), *"vài ý nghĩ về…"* (several thoughts on…) or *"mấy đặc điểm của…"* (some outstanding features of…),[17] these mainstream contributions to the daily emanations of political discourse tend to clot up space which might have been reserved to those desiring to offer interesting thoughts or valuable insights. Rummaging out the mass of redundant, verbose twaddle leaves a few scattered voices belonging to discourse participants on the verge of stepping out of line yet forced to accept certain unwritten laws that regulate their sporadic dashes into sensitive territory. What they actually transgress is no less than a boundary where forced, routine discourse fed by the views of those "supposed to" say something gives way to an open terrain marked by the conscious, deliberate contributions of those intent on providing worthwhile ideas and beliefs.

The point made earlier that discussing the September 11 events allows the Vietnamese to talk about themselves is one that provides an interesting link between politically orthodox Vietnamese intellectuals (e.g. Lê Minh Khuê) and those interested in shifting the political debates to include more unorthodox views and unconventional, non-conformist attitudes. To elucidate this point, we may look at the peculiar turn the argument of a known intellectual inside Vietnam takes at the end of an article on the irrational elements contained in the attacks.[18] Putting forth the somewhat daring argument that the September events were the first in a new war against the Rational ushering in a new era of Irrationality, it first contradicts one of its major subpoints by suggesting that while no policy of revenge can solve the underlying political conflict, nonetheless all pockets of terrorist resistance and areas where terrorism is fostered in one way or another need to be "cleaned up" (*dọn sạch*) – only to end up recommending an additional alliance (next to the existing one against "terrorism") against poverty and backwardness. Such argumentative strategy moves beyond matters of sheer discourse politics – where the foremost consideration would be to establish a consensus on what can and should be talked about and how – to a sphere of common interest that is every Vietnamese individual's most pressing urge, how to turn Vietnam into a prosperous place. An almost identical turn as the one mentioned can be observed in an article which appeared in the theoretical organ of the VCP where a general discussion of the September attacks accompanied by

warnings of the re-emergence of a longtime foe of Vietnamese communism, US imperialism, ends in the popular call for a struggle against poverty.[19]

If anything, what deserves mentioning is the broader concern not of why, but how Vietnam is supposed to come to terms with the conceptually vague yet emotionally no less real situation it exists in. Most discussions will not tackle this issue head on but repeatedly return to it in a circular manner after having initially set off to talk about something completely different. Hence, the actual issues are not examined but rearranged to suit a particular context which is defined less politically than culturally. There are various primary motivations for this behaviour.

The attempt to place external concepts into internal contexts allows for better argumentative movement within the boundaries of any given linguistic and political home turf. When readdressed from a "native" perspective, these issues make sufficient sense to be related to one's own cultural traditions. Hence, the effect of this kind of Vietnamization is twofold, one being a feeling of equalizing, as it were, i.e. of striking even in an utterly uneven contest instead of conceptually lagging behind in a quest to grasp the quiddity of alien notions. Moreover, distortion by means of relativist strategy paradoxically works to produce clearer images everyone can relate to. Reiterating the global character of corruption will not only cast aside its conrete local connotations, given that it is a worldwide phenomenon and thus a ubiquitous affair, but produce an intriguing replica image of the original, obliterated one in the mind of an uninformed, unlearned reader, since given its planetary reach, the issue becomes dispersed and vanishes as a national phenomenon that need be taken more seriously than others – an almost numinous process in which the social significance of said problem ends up dissolved in an allegedly global affair only seemingly related to Vietnam, and if, not presenting a uniquely Vietnamese problem at all.

The most vociferous resistance to the hermetic exclusiveness of political discourse and the most fervent pleas for redrawing its boundaries can be observed among intellectuals both within and outside of the VCP. As LaCapra has observed, unlike a scholar, an intellectual will tend to transcend a specific field of expertise and treat general social topics to a broad audience: "The scholar is able to rely on expertise and established criteria of research in the production and evaluation of knowledge. The intellectual goes beyond an area of professional expertise to address problems that are of broader social and cultural interest, and in that sense he or she does not simply mind his or her own business. The activity of the intellectual is more tentative and controversial than that of the scholar. It is especially open to contestation when it includes not only critique but the suggestion or recommendation of alternatives to existing practices and frames of reference".[20]

At this point, political discourse in Vietnam does not include systemic discussions; neither does it comprise critically affirmative attitudes. On the contrary, the reiteration of orthodox beliefs usually stops short of any critical

examination of unquestioned sets of beliefs. What the last ten years of relative openness have brought to light, however, is an acute awareness among the populace that particularly those structural problems unrelated to the political system per se – corruption, poverty etc. – cannot be tackled sufficiently by those who spent most of their political careers negating the sheer existence of these problems or their significance in light of insufficient methods of eradication. In these circumstances, is a demand for acceptable personal standards among VCP cadres and good behaviour among politicians a political demand, when the VCP invests considerable time into the training of its cadres and keeps drawing political legitimacy from the moral superiority of its members? This seemingly insignificant question, superfluous when posed in the context of Western society,[21] acquires different political weight when posed in a society that has yet come to terms with the standards of political conduct, rules of general political procedure, and overriding political aims to be pursued independent of any personal tilting towards this or that political direction.

What exactly is it that needs to be negotiated first? Let us look at two examples approaching the same topic – democratization – from two opposing angles, one orthodox and one critical. While seemingly a debate on how to interpret this foreign concept as well as how to put it into acceptable practice, it is actually the result of a broader urge to talk about oneself, i.e. Vietnam and the Vietnamese. As mentioned above, directed and regulated political discourse only scrutinizes that which speaks its language; if that language involves an argument about democracy, one may have entered a sensitive zone of contested intellectual sovereignty. More important still is the public negotiation of certain basic rules, not of discourse but of the political environment, which will permit discourse participants to speak up their mind without fear of deliberate misunderstanding. Foremost among these rules is the standard of political conduct and the possibility to name it directly, to point towards transgressions and misconduct in this essential area of contestation. Hence, the virtue of those setting the standards of political virtue and good government without critically examining their premises is as much disputed as the actual topics themselves. We will see that even an unequivocal issue like democratization entails speaking about Vietnameseness and the political application, utilization and sometimes redefinition of cultural values – and not, in the first place, thinking through political models or systemic questions. No matter a universalistic approach is pursued or not (holding that certain general standards are compulsory for any political system), the demand for intellectual dispute aimed at coming to terms with oneself (in a communitarian, not an individualist sense) is unbroken. Therefore, political discourse is really a separate area of distorted issues and discussions evolving in contexts mostly unrelated to the issues themselves. What is debated in this discourse, however, is the same variety of seemingly strictly political issues such as democratization yet without the

same constitutionally guaranteed framework for public negotiation that provides the playground for intellectual debates in our societies. In fact, these are no mere intellectual debates but acts of putting oneself, one's name, prestige etc. on the line. The function of this kind of discourse is that of a linguistic antechamber for ensuing assertions on what fits how into the specific cultural context we are dealing with.

The example is drawn from a recent article by an author from the state political publishing house (*NXB Chính trị Quốc gia*), Hồ Bá Thân, and last year's open letter by Trần Khuê and Nguyễn Th Thanh Xuân that got its authors into jail.[22] Both contributions deal with the same issue, democratization. While Thân proceeds to relativate democratization in order to communicate an idea long popular with the Vietnamese political élite, that the "people" need to be taught democracy first, Khuê and Thanh Xuân question it existence in Vietnam and challenge the way it is expounded to professedly exist by the VCP. Thân refers to the long tradition of village democracy, the somewhat shorter one of bourgeois democracy, and the even shorter of socialist democracy to portray this last notion as a relatively new one that needs to be popularized first. While the general level of democracy as well as its conceptualization on part of both the people and "certain leading cadres" is still low, socialist democracy in particular has its deficits, unavoidable due to the fact that it is still in its initial stage. However, the socialist character of the so-called "democratic base" already existing in Vietnam is "undeniable". What is more important, the level of democracy is intrinsically related to and cannot be detached from the general level of economic and social development of the country. Albeit that former development of democratic elements under the ancien régime actually managed to attain a respectable level, it is historically outdated and (given the course of historical development according to historical materialism) dead wrong. At the same time, the kind of democracy now practiced in the West, with less than 50% of the electorate showing up at the ballots in the United States, has no future. Socialist democracy is a kind of democracy that's made up of true historical stuff, i.e. needs to be placed within the general development of democracy under different political systems – at the apex of which stands socialism. Thence its slow development over extended periods of time. Here, we are held to calculate in centuries: two, three at the least *("vài ba thế kỷ")*, and, even if introduced at a breakneck pace, this concept will need "decades" to establish itself…. As Thanh Xuân and Khuê point out, the VCP currently attempts to introduce a kind of concept logically bringing with it certain criticism of its still faulty application while at the same time endeavoring to protect the party's prestige – a rather contradictory undertaking. While the thrust of their argument is that Vietnam is in danger of ending up like the Eastern European people's democracies and had better reform and renovate its political institutions in order to save the political system, they call for a referendum on a number of

points including the axing of article four of the constitution, the burning of
Ho Chi Minh's remains and "true freedom of speech" (*tự do ngôn luận thật
sự*). Citing a variety of structural elements all sufficient to bring down the
régime by themselves (corruption, insufficient political education of leading
cadres, graft, behind-the-doors style of political bargaining reducing the
national assembly to a mere acclamatory organ), they claim that socialist
democracy is an illusory concept that exists only in the minds of certain VCP
members but does not correspond to any existing reality.

Beyond all obvious attempts to portray democracy as something that
needs to be "learned" first, and certainly something that can only be grasped
by practicing its socialist variant, Hồ Bá Thân employs a phenomenally
popular strategy almost any Vietnamese intellectual will subscribe to at one
point or another: the idealization of one's weaknesses. He may do so in order
to drive home a nonsensical point, that some nearly 80 million people "aren't
ready" for something, yet he couches his argument in culturally sound terms
which transcend the nature of political discourse that his argument could be
expected to move within. Saying what he says in the particular way he does
say it seems both logical and convincing, at least when one is imbued with a
sense of cultural preservation always on the defense against mystified
external encroachments. The only sensible way out is adaptation and
metamorphosis (of any given concept that requires this adaptation and
metamorphosis in order to become culturally acceptable). Moreover, like
most participants in the debate on whether certain political phenomena are
related to systemic questions, he avails himself of the opportunity to provide
a vision of the cultural sphere a VCP cadre needs to think in, and tries to
convey a heightened sense of responsibility based on deeper insight into the
nature of the governed. The same holds true for Thanh Xuân's and Khuê's
argument, where distress turns to apprehension and anxiety when the
authors contend that ideas such as socialist democracy are likely to
jeopardize the achievements of decades of revolutionary struggle. Here, too,
it is argued that failing to catch up with the social reality of the country and
refusing to acknowledge the existence of unbearable signs of systemic
debilitation will lead to a situation where the phantoms that brought down
the former régime might ultimately beset and obliterate this one, which is to
say nothing less than the VCP doesn't really understand the nature of the
governed, which in turn means it has lost its cultural legitimacy.

This is not a political point, since bad government can be reformed, and
faulty practices improved. However, it is viewed as one, for all discussions
employing political vocabulary are part of political discourse though they
may not touch upon political issues directly. In our example they did. More
often they don't. There is a tendency to channel everything through the
sphere of public political discourse and thwart perils here, not to let them get
through to where significant political thoughts are elaborated upon and

where decisions are made. How exactly these are made is still beyond public control and likely to remain so for a while. In the meantime, political discourse remains a sphere where politics is rarely discussed at all. Not surprisingly, this includes political organs supposedly discussing politics ex officio like the national assembly.[23] What is negotiated in this discourse is less a given set of ideas but a means to express them unequivocally, to be able to touch upon political issues without necessarily making a political point at the same time, e.g. mentioning failures in the struggle against poverty without implying that a specific organization could or even should be blamed for them. Political discussion can only be fruitful when the rigid distinction between politics and non-politics as well as its arbitrary application by the VCP is overcome and discourse politics stops short of blocking sensible arguments that are labeled "political" while they intend to make a point that may relate to the current political situation yet deals with something else. This is the case in Tran Khue's letter where the objective was a rational strategy to attain renewed legitimacy, to reform by sacrificing a lesser evil for the benefit of saving the party's neck.

At this point, only the VCP is in a position to label as "political" anything that needs to be funneled into the rhetorical basin of political discourse. State media tend to distinguish between a general situation (e.g. slow development) considered structural, and the rather modest means at the disposal of those in charge of combating it. This procedure serves to gain additional legitimacy, since it is only a syllable away from admitting that one cannot but attempt to steer and direct yet won't be able to swerve around and turn this mess from a structural quagmire into a bright prospect. By so doing, the VCP ultimately acknowledges that government, i.e. the entire state apparatus, is part of the same grand picture where lack of qualified cadres doesn't apply exclusively to the lower echelons but to the higher circles as well. This being the case, it is more than conceivable that an alternative government (again, not the administration but the state, "bộ máy nhà nước") may not fare any better, since the odds are the same, structural impediments and organic deficiencies utterly beyond the confines of the VCP, hence also beyond the realm of political discourse itself but part of a broader image where any chosen vantage point will identify this problem as culture-related. Vague as this may sound, the purely argumentative logic of this mode of thinking does not stop here but comes full circle when professing that solving issues of structural or organic substance (the whole array of social problems) requires not political but social and cultural measures. Over the years, the VCP has produced an impressive streak of optimistic answers, e.g. land reform, cultural reform, economic reform etc. all aimed at coming to terms with seemingly unchangeable sets of social, economic and cultural patterns. In all cases, the answer was political in nature. If not directly, as in the case of economic renovation (*đổi mới*), it was

still aimed at solving an ultimately political problem, that of retaining the initiative, providing new forms of legitimacy, and of remaining in power. What was lacking, however, was a politically sound vision for guiding the populace towards the specific kind of required social and cultural change that comes with the successful application of new political ideas. Embracing the façade of political change without substantial social and cultural pull in the same direction is only one particular form of political suicide. A political revolution may be carried out and supported by a traditional society, yet that same society will be fast in stifling social and cultural changes without which political upheaval tends to lose significance.

Trite truisms notwithstanding, discourse politics in Vietnam remains a matter of political control. This implies authority and command over who is allowed access to the status of a public voice and the means of expression he is supposed to employ. Simplistically speaking, everything boils down to who governs how and which individuals or groups beside the VCP are permitted to what. Reality, as usual, is more complex, since the VCP is by no means a homogenous political body, as repeated revisionist approaches by (not trends within) the party itself have demonstrated.[24] Moreover, political discourse comprises a wide field not easily definable, and the inherent contradiction of economic openness and political control will continue to give birth to hybrid forms of discourse expansion not synonymous with more liberal attitudes. The reintroduction of *the Tự Lực Văn Đoàn* provides as good an example as any: Long forbidden and denounced as a bunch of anti-communist scribblers, the Self-Strengthening Literary Group (TLVĐ) was a milestone in Vietnamese literary development in the twentieth century. One of the group's protagonists, Khái Hng, was apprehended by the Vietminh in 1946 and died several days later. When the TLV works were republished several years ago, a brief biographical sketch of Khái Hng's life mentioned neither the arrest nor the day, month or year of his death.[25] One of Vietnam's most conservative institutions, the Institute of Literature (which edited the republication series in three volumes) attempted to circumvent the issue by ignoring it, which aroused most readers' curiosity even more. What happened next is typical for the soft underbelly of political discourse: Closed-circuit discussions, as it were, among friends and acquaintances about the historical place of the TLVĐ. Whereas papers such as "Văn Nghệ" (Literature & Arts) would cautiously endeavor to depoliticize these authors, most intellectuals agreed that while the republication was long overdue, it would only serve to corroborate popular prejudices against the Institute. The feeling prevailed that this was one in a long row of small steps by which the VCP continued to delegitimize itself while at the same time attempting to retain the initiative.[26]

The VCP's main agenda over the past years has been political control, an issue that has overshadowed virtually everything else, the campaigns

against corruption and trials against embezzlement, social problems such as the widening gap between the rich and the poor, prostitution, foreign investment, regional integration etc. While the régime's legitimacy is based less on performance than on faits accomplis, less on ideological truths than on the power to decide, political discourse attains a screening function where not the substance of a person's argument but the political language employed is used by the state's regulating machinery to berate, ostracize and castigate.

NOTES

1. For approaches defining discourse politics in linguistic terms and analyses treating political speech acts as forms of communication analysis and political symbolism, see: J. Searle, *Speech Acts* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1969); J. Austin, *How To Do Things With Words* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962); M. Edelman, *The Symbolic Uses of Politics* (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1964).

2. Paul Chilton and Christina Schäffner, "Discourse and Politics," in *Discourse as Social Interaction. Discourse Studies: A Multidisciplinary Introduction, vol. 2*, ed. Teun van Dijk (London and New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1997), 212.

3. Ibid.

4. Muhammad Ali in response to his reclassification as 1-A in February 1966. The remark was made in conjunction with the better known "I ain't got no quarrel with them Vietcong". See: Mike Marqusee, *Redemption Song. Muhammad Ali and the Spirit of the Sixties* (London: Verso, 2000), 170; Thomas Hauser, *Muhammad Ali. His Life and Times* (New York: Touchstone, 1991), 144.

5. In Vietnam in particular, practically any issue considered a hot potato is referred to as "*tê nhi*" (sensitive, tricky, intricate) which allows the speaker to intervene less concretely or simply switch the topic.

6. One of the many statements downplaying the politically charged atmosphere of conflict in the Central Highlands can be found in the Foreign Ministry's communication reported in Vietnam News on 04/02/02: "Resettlement or repatriation …. should not be politicized or used as a tool to undermine the interests and security of Vietnam and Cambodia".
   For additional info on turmoil in the Central Highlands, see: Nhân Dân, 02/09/00; FEER, 03/01/00.

7. E.g. Jürgen Habermas, *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp 1990).

8. 13th to 15th century

9. "*Doi moi*" was decided upon in December 1986 (4th VCP congress) but not implemented on a broader scale until 1991/92.

10. The following paragraphs are based on my "Vietnam in der Rolle des 'peripheren' Beobachters," in *Der 11. September und die Folgen in Asien,* ed. Adelsberger/ Derichs/Heberer/Raszelenberg, *Duisburger Arbeitspapiere Ostasienwissenschaft* 42 (2002): 18–20.

11. See Michel Foucault, *L'ordre du discours (Paris: Gallimard, 1972)*

12. Michel Foucault, *Surveiller et punir. La naissance de la prison* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975).

13. Süddeutsche Zeitung (Munich), 21 December 2001.

14. To illustrate the significance and quasi omnipresence of corruption as a debated topic, suffice it to go through any Vietnamese paper on a given day, e.g. fund embezzlement in Chau, Lai. *Vietnam News*, April 4 2002.

15. Thomas Kuhn, *Die Struktur wissenschaftlicher Revolutionen* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1976).

16. A typical example is Vu Hien's "The gioi chong tham nhung" on the Xth Anti-Corruption Conference in Prague in October 2001. See: *Tap chi Cong san,* 21 (2001).

17. Comp. any random magazine selection, e.g. *Nghiên cú'u Li.ch su?,* 5 (2000), Sept/Oct 1981. This tradition is continued, albeit in different form, in the endless superfluous and unspeakably boring contributions on politics in Vietnamese magazines, reviews and papers today. For a more recent example, comp. Tranh Phuc Thang. "Tuyen ngon cua DCS ban ve giai cap tu san" (Declaration of the VCP on the capitalist class), *Tap chi Cong san* (Communist Review), 6 (2002).

18. Nguyen Kein Giang, "Mot cuoc chien chong lai phi ly tinh?" *talawas*, 21 February 2002 (www.talawas.de/aa/a03.html). This and other references to internet sites is deliberate, for it allows us to understand the seriousness of lack of access to the print media. Authors are frequently forced to use the net to distribute their views. The forum this opinion was distributed by had been founded precisely for this purpose

19. Nguyen Hong Linh, "Thê´ gió'i hâ.u Aáp-ga-ni-xtan" *Tap chi Cong san*, 4, 5 (2002).

20. Dominick LaCapra, *Representing the Holocaust* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 218.

21. Given that civil society has been debating this question time and again; for a definition of why it is Western civil society whose grade of civility needs to be measured according to the existence of such debates, see: Michael Walzer, *Zivile Gesellschaft und amerikanische Demokratie* (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1996), 93.

22. Ba Than, Ho, "Suy nghi them ve nen dan chu o nuoc ta hien nay" (Additional thoughts on the democratic basis in our country today), *Tap chi Cong san,* 21 (2001); Tran Khue and Nguyen Thi Thanh Xuan, "Thu ngo gui d/c tong bi thu Nong Duc Manh," One of the many internet reprints is available at: www.lmvntd.org/dossier/0106trankhue.html.

23. See Tran Khue's and Ng. Thi Th. Xuan's letter for remarks by former NA members severely dissatisfied with the de facto (not de iure) status of the NA as a raise-hands-and-applaud style acclamatory body.

24. The fourth party congress (1986) introducing the concept of economic renovation is only one example, others being the successive rewritings of history course books for the universities where more recent events are portrayed far more balanced than they used to, and the recurrent calls for true political renovation from within the VCP (the concept of '*doi moi*' has so far been interpreted primarily economically, whereas the notion itself does not exclude political renovation – in fact, even individual connotations for a person's own reorientation and flexible change are endorsed by this concept, as the Vietnamese translation of a well-known passage from the Great Learning shows (Tang's bathtub inscription): Comp. Tu Tho, Dai Hoc and Trung Dung, *Tri Duc Tong Tho, vol. 5* (trilingual Chinese–Sino-Vietnamese–Vietnamese edition, transl. By Ðoàn Trung Còn, Saigon 1950), 9; for a more readily available bilingual edition, see the respective passage in "The Great Learning" (Daxue), in: *The Chinese Classics, vol.1*, ed. James Legge (Taipei: SMC Publishing, 1994), 361.

25. Vien Van Hoc, ed., *Van chuong TLVD, tap II*, Khai Hung / Hoang Dao, NXB Giao duc, Hanoi 1999: 6.

26. Personal communication of various Vietnamese writers, Summer 2000.

27. Carlyle Thayer, "Vietnam's Integration Into the Region and the Asian Financial Crisis," in *Vietnam, Regional Integration and the Asian Financial Crisis,* ed. Vincent Houben and Martin Grossheim, 177–179.

CHAPTER 12

The Discourse on Contemporary Chinese Nationalism – An Alternative Reading

Gunter Schubert

INTRODUCTION

Chinese nationalism and nationalist thought continues to be under "academic supervision" worldwide. The literature treating this topic has become abundant over the last decade both in and outside China.[1] The main focus of the domestic and international discourse on Chinese nationalism is its impact on political system reform in the PRC and on the Communist regimes' foreign policies. Han relations to the ethnic minorities are also an issue, pointing at the significance of nationalist thought for domestic stability and the legitimacy of the Chinese (multinational) state. The debate will certainly go one for some time to come, although it does not promise to produce astonishing new results for those questions that have been discussed over and over again in recent years: What are the conceptual foundations of Chinese nationalism? How much sense make the different labels that have been assigned to it in the past: anti-Western, anti-modern, parochial, confident, aggressive, expansive, racist, chauvinist, defensive, authoritarian, liberal, multilayered or multifaceted, just to mention a few? Does nationalism figure as an ideological substitute for socialism hollowed out by more than twenty years of market reforms in China? Or does it tell us more than that about the unresolved issue of national identity that allegedly is the reason for all the ups and downs of Chinese history throughout the last hundred years? What answers does contemporary Chinese nationalism hold for resolving this identity crisis, which is said to result from unsuccessful state-driven definitions of a nation that has never been allowed to constitute itself democratically?[2] How is liberal democracy in today's China impeded by Chinese nationalism? And how well does Chinese nationalist thinking go with post-nationalism, multilateralism, global citizenship and multiculturalism – keywords of the international discussion on globalization, in which nationalism is often (and erroneously) treated as a historical anachronism. As indicated above, the given answers to these questions are not conclusive. Chinese nationalism is indeed a multifaceted phenomenon – as nationalism always is – which makes its analysis and

evaluation often enough the result of a scholar's anthropological or theoretical premises, forcing him/her to be highly selective of those segments of the discourse that are sorted out for investigation. In that sense, it is impossible to get the "objective" truth out of any nationalism that is under observation.

Against this background, I do not pretend in this article to present anything new to the discourse on Chinese nationalism – neither to its interpretation. However, I want to accentuate a hypothesis which is definitely not common opinion: Chinese nationalism has strong liberal foundations, at least stronger as it seems at first sight. This view takes issue with the dominant verdict on Chinese nationalism to be a variant of "integral" nationalism–to apply a classical category introduced by Carleton Hayes[3] – which is judged anti-liberal and antihuman in essence. Although my hypothesis does not deny the anti-liberal potential of contemporary nationalist thought in China, it stresses the historical contingency of its anti-liberalism. As history has shown, nationalism and liberalism are not per se antagonistic and have neither been so in China since the demise of the Qing empire in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Liberal nationalism has always been a noticeable current in China,[4] although it was and is much challenged by anti-liberal nationalist thinking. What side of Chinese nationalism will win out in the future is no easy guess. However, as I will argue in this article, there is no more reason for pessimism than for the optimistic belief that its liberal potential is going to have the final say.

NATIONALISM AND LIBERALISM IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

In a fine piece on "the reconciliation of nationalism and liberalism", Murray Forsyth has shown how these two concepts are entangled.[5] Forsyth insisted "on the early *identity* of liberalism and nationalism, and the continuing historical significance of this identity".[6] In the French revolution the new French nation was built on the principle of equal citizenship and on the ideal of the people to be the constituent power of state authority. The nation was conceptualized as a political unity of individuals, who were as much autonomous human beings as equal citizens. The foundational document of the new nation, the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen of August 1789, was as much national(ist) as liberal. French nationalism at the time could not be thought without a liberal framework. It was liberal nationalism at its best.

However, this was not the only stream of nationalism breaking its way in the late eighteenth and nineteenth century. Another one was "ethnic or cultural nationalism, in which the linguistic factor is usually of vast significance".[7] This kind of nationalism is usually identified as anti-liberal, because it promotes a homogeneous unity of a group of people which is often at odds with the concept of equal individual rights guaranteed by the

state. Ethnic-cultural nationalism, as Forsyth argues, is considered to be backward in Hegelian historical thinking (or mainstream modernization theory) which has so much shaped the study of nationalism. With humanity progressing towards rationalism and enlightenment and the concurrent evolution of modern capitalism, ethnic-cultural nationalism has long been believed to be a concept of the "tribal" that must gradually vanish from scene.

However, this prediction – supported by such influential thinkers as Karl R. Popper and Friedrich A. Hayek – has not come true. On the contrary, ethnic-cultural nationalism has unfolded since the American and French revolutions throughout the world and has seen an outright revival after the End of the Cold War. It has become as much attached to modernity as it has proved to be a "Siamese twin" of capitalism.[8] What does this mean for the influence of liberalism in the modern era? Has liberalism actually been on the retreat as ethnic-cultural nationalism became stronger? Or should the question been raised, as Forsyth suggests, if and in what sense ethnic-cultural nationalism must be understood as a liberal phenomenon itself?[9]

Comparing liberal nationalism to ethnic-cultural nationalism, as Forsyth defines them, both seem to be irreconcilably opposed to one another: "Both argue that the true basis of legitimacy of the state is the 'nation'. But the national-liberal doctrine is rationalist in tone; it conceives of the nation as a compacted unity of free and equal individuals, and the essential task of the nation to be the constitution of a state that represents this equal union, and will secure and enhance the rights of those who combine to form it. It stresses man's inherent freedom. The other theory is romantic in tone; it conceives of the nation as a pre-existing, qualitatively distinct, ethnic-cultural unity, with which the individual should identify himself. It considers the essential task of this unity to be the establishment of a state that will represent, defend and advance the welfare of this particular grouping. It stresses man's inherent determinism".[10]

However, a closer look to this juxtaposition of liberal and ethnic-cultural nationalism makes clear some striking similarities between the two concepts with respect to their core values. Forsyth is right to point out that the French revolution, for instance, was based as much on the idea of constitutionalism and equal citizenship as on the idea of a monolingual people with a common history that could exactly claim those rights. On the other hand, it is as just to say that those ethnic-cultural communities striving for their own nation-state often enough have demanded (and still do so) constitutional systems, equal rights (especially for minorities) and parliamentary institutions. "The nation", writes Forsyth, "theoretically conceived by social compact theory and the empirical nation based on a shared culture thus have tended often to mean in practice the same thing".[11]

However, they do not always coincide. Certainly enough, ethnic-cultural nationalism can be taken to extremes, its liberal ingredients paralysed and the individual forced into a non-liberal community, in which it is deprived of the constitutional right of equality. But this would be the result of politicizing ethnic-cultural nationalism and not its true essence. It is historical contingency that makes this kind of nationalism anti-liberal in much the same way that it makes liberal nationalism suffer from anarchical setbacks[12] when it is taken to extremes. Therefore, the distinction between liberal nationalism and ethnic-cultural nationalism would be faulted if it was not understood in terms of Weberian ideal types (*Idealtypen*), but in a more fundamental sense.[13] Also, liberal nationalism engendering a nation out of a group individuals with equal and constitutionally protected rights is hardly imaginable if these individuals do not concurrently share some perceptions of community which are ethnic-cultural to a considerable extent.[14] According to this logic, liberal nationalism – especially in times of crisis – relies on a kind of loyalty that the constitutional state alone cannot generate and that only ethnic-cultural embeddedness can provide.

Because nationalism has as much liberal as "romantic" (i.e. ethnic-cultural or 'integral') underpinnings, conflict is probable and often enough inevitable. It is therefore an important exercise – not only intellectually, but also politically – to trace the liberal side of nationalism even in those discursive spheres of integral (non-liberal) nationalism where it hardly seems to be able to prevail. This reduces the danger of misreading the nationalist discourse as "romantic" because too much attention is paid on its ethnic-cultural phenomena. Searching for nationalism's liberal dimension helps to open up "discursive space" that rescues the nationalist idea from being too easily imprisoned by anti-liberalism. In terms of methodology, an alternative reading of nationalism has therefore two tasks: first, it looks out for the liberal counter-text within the nationalist discourse, no matter how anti-liberal this discourse appears to be; and second, it investigates 'integral' nationalism for the liberal behind the seemingly anti-liberal. Of course, such a two-pronged approach does also apply to an alternative reading of the discourse on contemporary *Chinese* nationalism.

Attempts of that sort are seldomly undertaken, as Chinese nationalism has been too often and authoritatively declared void of liberalism or, for that part, of any genuine democratic potential. It has even been declared the enemy to modernity in much Western research.[15] However, recent studies have shown that the understanding of an anti-modern, anti-liberal and anti-democratic mainstream nationalism in China generated by a history that never rescued the nation from the state is far too unidimensional.[16] Chinese nationalism was and might still be closely tied to the state, but it has never been nor is without potential – however limited in scope – to challenge this state in the name of liberalism and a democratically constituted nation.

UNCOVERING LIBERAL NATIONALISM IN CONTEMPORARY CHINA

*The Liberal Counter-Text to Neoconservative Etatism and
Ethno-Cultural Essentialism*

As indicated above, the discourse on Chinese nationalism has been under much academic scrutiny in Western research in recent years. Nevertheless, when looking closely at it, we are facing a much more complex picture than most Western studies of Chinese nationalism draw. These accounts have been remarkably lopsided, as they focus almost exclusively on the anti-Western (anti-American), authoritarian-etatist (neoconservative) and ethno-cultural (ethno-centrist, racist, *han*-chauvinist) manifestations of contemporary Chinese nationalism, albeit the judgements on the latter's motivational drive can vary a lot. This observation corresponds to three explanations for the so-called resurgence of Chinese nationalism since the early 1990s which stand at the centre of much Western and Chinese research on the subject.[17]

Reactive and Affirmative Chinese Nationalism

It has often been argued that China's 'new nationalism' is a reaction to the Chinese perception of Western containment strategies and of a general Western objective to keep China from becoming a world power–which it allegedly wants to be. The "empirical evidence" for this perception has been enumerated again and again, e.g. the failure of Beijing's 1993 bid to host the 2000 Olympic Games because of intransigent resistance by a hostile US Congress; US approval of former Taiwan president Li Denghui's visit to his *alma mater*, Cornell University, in mid-1995 and steady support for the regime in Taiwan; persistent Western criticism of China's human rights record, especially with respect to Tibet; and, last not least, the 'China threat' theory so vigorously discussed in the Western academe and media throughout the 1990s, which is seen in China as the ultimate proof of foreign attempts to degrade and isolate the PRC.[18] At the same time, however, Chinese nationalism has been interpreted as an unavoidable consequence of China's rise in terms of economic prosperity and international political influence. Even if China claims an equal seat among the respected great nations only, so the argument, it is clear that at the same time it strives for a leading role in the Asia–Pacific. A defensive posture is therefore as typical for Chinese nationalism as a more affirmative stand which reflects self-assertion and self-confidence as much as anti-Western defiance – an ambivalent psychological pattern that will keep Chinese politics volatile for a still considerable time to come.[19]

Chinese Nationalism and Regime Legitimacy

Another common interpretation of China's 'new nationalism' since the end of the Cold War figures prominently with those authors who see it closely connected to the Communist regime's declining legitimacy. For them,

nationalism is an answer to the consequences of the reform process and today provides the most important ideological foundation of Deng Xiaoping's "socialism with Chinese characteristics". Nationalism takes, for instance, the form of a rather offensive language towards the US, Japan, Taiwan and, more generally, those "foreign forces" which interfere in "internal Chinese affairs". This is typical of regimes which try to reduce domestic pressure by uniting the people against the "external foe". It often comes along with anti-Westernism and anti-Americanism,[20] but apart from than that, 'new nationalism' as an ideology takes the form of officially sponsored patriotism. Patriotism, generally spoken, aims at the production of new regime legitimacy by promoting the internalization of selected Confucian values and traditions, mostly through new education policies; praising the "glorious" history of the Communist Party and the material achievements of the reform process by concentrated propaganda efforts; and, by the same means, convincing the people that the socialist one-party state alone can navigate the Chinese nation through the rough waters of global capitalism and protect it against Western 'peaceful evolution'. Patriotism should make every Chinese a culturally sensitive and proud supporter of "socialism with Chinese characteristics" who knows that her/his personal well-being is directly attached to the party's further being in charge.[21]

In answering to the Communist Party's aspiration to perpetuate its power monopoly, patriotism is domestically driven. It strives to restore the nation behind the state which is embodied by the party. To some authors, this state-centred patriotism which lacks any perspective of more democratic participation for the Chinese people, has aligned with *han*-based ethnocentrism to transform into what has been called racist nationalism – a dangerous amplifier of anti-Westernism which could make China's foreign policies even more assertive in the long run.[22]

CHINESE NATIONALISM AND THE QUESTION OF NATIONAL IDENTITY

There is a third interpretation of contemporary Chinese nationalism that refers more generally to the question of national identity, i.e. the tricky relationship between the state and the nation (the people). As has been discussed in many Western and Chinese studies on the history of Chinese nationalism and national identity construction since the late nineteenth century, the definition of the Chinese has been primarily state-driven. It was the state, meaning those in power, which moulded the nation – an observation that encouraged John Fitzgerald to make the plain statement that China actually was a nationless state.[23]

However, the Chinese state never really succeeded in creating a coherent and stable nation and whenever state authority was in danger, so was China's national identity. This has produced and ongoing identity crisis,

because the nation has never been able to constitute itself independently from a state that has been under siege during most of China's post-imperial history. With the Communist regime's legitimacy becoming precarious because of the demise of the Soviet empire and the rapid capitalist transformation of Chinese socialism, contemporary Chinese nationalism is a natural reaction of the political and intellectual elites in China to restore state-society relations and to bring about a new feeling of national belonging.

Such motivation had already been shown by the passionate debates of the 1980s between neo-authoritarians, liberals, neo-Confucians and anti-traditionalists on China's future which reached up and into the Communist leadership. When this struggle was brought to an unvoluntary halt in the spring of 1989, nationalism suddenly became the only game in town. Neoconservative etatism and cultural essentialism – often enough with ethno-centrist undertones – have since turned into the dominant currents of political thinking in the PRC, while liberalism has been exiled, silenced, or converted to nationalism itself. This was due to different reasons: The general disenchantment of China's intellectuals with Western "hegemonism"; the liberals' specific disappointment to have been left alone by the West when the democratic movement was crushed in 1989; and, more generally, the intellectual and political marginalization of liberal thought for contextual reasons, as China's liberals place too much emphasis on abstract globalization and universalism of values while they neglect the people's quest for identity and practical social justice – demands that the new nationalists have discussed much more sympathetically.[24]

Thus, China's "new nationalism" must be explained threefold: first, as the only platform of political debate that has been acceptable to the regime in the aftermath of the Tianmen suppression and beyond; second, as the consequence of Chinese liberalism's alienation from the West and its subsequent turn to nationalism; and third, as a new intellectual undertaking to strengthen Chinese national identity by subscribing to an alliance of etatism, political realism (focussing on China's national interests and economic independence), post-Maoist egalitarianism[25] and cultural uniqueness.[26] This illustrates the closeness of so-called "new Nationalism" to neo-conservatism and new leftism, which have actually been integral parts of the nationalist discourse and cannot be separated from it.[27]

Looking at the three interpretations mentioned, contemporary Chinese nationalism seems to advocate anti-Westernism and national self-assertion, political centralization and authoritarian (neoconservative) etatism, cultural essentialism and ethnocentrism, a striking focus on regime legitimation via economic development and China's international recognition as a Great Power. The nationalist discourse therefore conveys the picture of a nation based on a strong, prosperous and autonomous state, *han*-centred ethno-cultural homogeneity, and cultural essentialism including the old intellectual dream of a distinct Chinese modernity[28] and a

Pax Sinica in terms of regional power proliferation. At no point, as it seems, has this discourse unveiled or discussed the liberal aspects of Chinese nationalism or national identity.

Such a verdict, however, would be flawed. As a matter of fact, there have been many intellectuals and scholars who challenged mainstream Chinese nationalism's anti-Western, neoconservative and ethno-cultural foundations. Advocating "open" (*kaifang*), "substantial" (*wushi*) or "rational" (*lixing*) nationalism,[29] they defied what was perceived as short-sighted and damaging nationalist thinking in post-Tiananmen China and

- insisted on the application of instrumental reason (*gongju lixing*) and administrative efficiency as the main tasks of the state; to them, it was successful development alone that legitimized the state, whereas the promotion of China's cultural traditions and Confucian values would not serve the country's modernization, but impede it;[30]
- argued against political centralization as promoted by neo-conservative etatism and for more accountability of the government in order to reconsolidate the state's legitimacy; sometimes, they advocated a "democratic" mechanism to connect the state to the people, and quite often proposed the implementation of genuine rule-by-law and more institutionalized political participation;[31]
- rejected ethnocentrism, i.e. a *han*-based concept of the Chinese nation, mainly by institutionalizing true cultural and political autonomy for China's minorities and by introducing new educational policies to bring about more cultural tolerance, because only then official state multi-nationalism could be given a sound basis;[32] and
- criticized "Sinocentrism" and supported the idea of Chinese cosmo-politanism and internationalism; this stance was connected to the pleading for a China that should finally overcome the historic trauma of Western imperialism and the antinomic view on the West (and so-called Western modernity) that has been prompted by it.[33]

Moreover, there have been some contributions to the nationalist discourse that openly contested the value of nationalism for China's modernization and internal coherence. These more radical intellectuals rejected the attempts of 'rational' nationalism to combine China's legitimate search for wealth and power – i.e. an agenda of pursuing essential national interests – with liberalism, because they deeply mistrusted Chinese nationalism's etatist and anti-liberal tendencies.[34] Although these voices have mostly been articulated outside China, they were often quoted in the domestic discourse and should therefore have influenced the nationalist debate over the years. It remains an open question, however, to what extent their uncompromising position has been received positively by Chinese scholars. The same must be asked for the proponents of "rational" nationalism. The overall impression is that the

liberal challenge of mainstream Chinese nationalism has been rather cautious and its influence limited, especially in the early 1990s.[35]

It remains difficult to judge if this observation is more due to the general political climate in the PRC or stemming from the fact – as has often been suggested by both Western and Chinese scholars – that China's liberals have turned more "nationalist" since the end of the Cold War. It may also be true that whenever perceived Western intrusions – economic, political or cultural – upon China are under debate, neo-conservatist etatists, *han*-oriented ethno-culturalists and liberals stand firm in the same camp. This reflects a strong intellectual commitment to secure Chinese autonomy vis-à-vis the West and an overarching consensus that such a stand is a precondition of China's survival as a nation – even if there is an equally stable consensus on the necessity of opening up to the world so much shaped by Western ideas and values. Doubtlessly, Chinese nationalism is still driven by an anti-Western impulse, even if this impulse has become weaker over the last two decades. It strengthens Chinese nationalism's authoritarian etatist and ethno-cultural layers and also affects those who opt for liberalism when nationalism's inclusivist side is at issue, i.e. a positive definition of what the nation is – and not a negative one of what it stands against.

It should not be forgotten, however, that the liberal counter-text to integral (anti-liberal) Chinese nationalism has never been absent from scene. Ideas of representative democracy, federalism, multilateralism and globalism – no matter how prudently spelled out – are continuously channelled into the nationalist discourse, where they resist or subvert the demands for political centralization, (ethno)cultural authenticity and undivisible territorial sovereignty. It is not unrealistic to assume that once the political conditions change and a more open debate on China's future is permitted, the liberal counter-text will quickly transform into the nationalist mainstream and become empirically effective. It would then very likely be the liberal constitutional and multinational state which gradually takes the lead in determining China's national identity, albeit this state would still have to be strong and autonomous. In this case, Chinese nationalism would not differ too much in context and substance from contemporary US pretensions to be both democratic *and* powerful.

THE QUEST FOR DIGNITY AND CHINESE NATIONALISM

Challenging the mainstream Western understanding of Chinese nationalism as anti-liberal and authoritarian-etatist by unveiling the liberal counter-text is essential for a more realistic understanding of the nationalist discourse in China. However, this exercise cannot not put into question that the effects of liberal nationalism are quite limited in present-day China. As has been noted, neoconservative etatism and ethno-cultural essentialism – both strongly anti-liberal – restrain liberalism to the role of a caretaker at best.

Questioning this view from a historical and philosophical perspective, John Fitzgerald has stressed the significance of dignity within the concept of nationalism. According to him, dignity figures as a bridge between nationalism and liberalism. Consequently, the widespread belief that the Chinese obsession with national dignity entails non-liberal nationalism must be rejected.[36] As a matter of fact, Fitzgerald's contribution is an interesting reminder of Murray Forsyth's "nationalist dialectic", i.e. the mutual relationship between nationalism and liberalism/democracy. It adds an important aspect to the argument that Chinese nationalism might be more liberal than it seems. Fitzgerald contends that "we make too little allowance for the possibility that China pursues wealth and power for the sake of asserting national dignity, and that citizens demand rights, not in pursuit of liberty or happiness, but out of concern to preserve personal dignity".[37]

Hence, there is a direct connection between the state's emphasis on the nation's dignity – China's famous "search for wealth and power"[38] – and the individual's desire for recognition. This thought, well grounded in much theoretical work on the concept of nationalism,[39] points at the same historical impulse that brings about nationalism and liberal democracy, as both are manifestations of the "irrational" human struggle for dignity and recognition. It is this struggle which as much determines the relationship between all human beings within a nation as between nations – i.e. collectives of individuals–on the international stage. As the politics of protecting individual dignity is directly attached to the institutionalization of human or civic rights, Fitzgerald holds that this politics "appears to be parasitical on the idea of national dignity".[40] In fact, it is Chinese nationalism which "has inadvertently incubated an ideal of individual rights and individual self-determination within its discourse on national rights".[41] At the same time, however, nationalism fails to provide for individual dignity, as its agent, the Chinese state, exerts strict political control over the people. The result is an alienation of the people from their state, which is growing with the same vigour the state shows in promoting Chinese nationalism. It follows that "paradoxically, then, resurgent nationalism does offer ground for hope that China's wheel is turning, slowly but surely, to recognizing the inherent dignity of the individual".[42] To put Fitzgerald's hypothesis in different words: National dignity requires individual dignity; any attempt to create a stable national identity depends on its solid liberal foundation in terms of institutionalized individual rights against the state.

The author has supported his argument by debatable interpretations of different texts, some of them central to the nationalist discourse under review here. He states, for instance, that the authors of the 1996 bestseller "China can say No"[43] – and all the "No"-literature that followed[44] – actually expose a nationalist consciousness that is compatible with of liberalism. Once again, the concept of dignity is the clue for understanding this surprising statement: "Neither the party nor the regime is presented with

any appreciable sympathy in this literature of complaint. While its 'no' is directed explicitly against foreigners, the present government is held implicitly to account for yielding too readily to foreign political and commercial demands, and for surrendering China's national dignity in the process. Even more pertinently, the texts shed light on a parallel struggle for personal dignity within China itself. They demonstrate a significant loss of self-regard among people within China, and reluctantly acknowledge that this loss lies exposed for all the world to see".[45]

As Fitzgerald suggests here, the authors' hatred against the West actually is a sublimed form of deep-going resentment against the Communist State and themselves. It is the reality of political authoritarianism and individual degradation since 1989 that makes China's nationalists feel *shame*, "the shame of a people who tried to stand up before their own state and discovered that it could not be done".[46] As national dignity is not nurtured by individual dignity and the latter, for its part, can't be attained for political reasons, all what remains are ferocious attacks on those foreigners who "fail to appreciate and make little allowance for the particular conditions that apply in China"[47] – and who, consequently, make the Chinese people feel morally inferior. However, as Fitzgerald concludes, at the end of the day anti-Westernism cannot provide a substitute for national and individual dignity. Dignity can only be restored by challenging the conditions that hamper it, i.e. the "head-on existing constraints on thought, speech and assembly".[48] Put differently, "the more indignant they become, the more China's 'say no' nationalists are likely to inflame the desire to restore some balance, or symmetry, between individual and national dignity".[49] Bashing "them Westerners" is therefore a dead end in the search for dignity – a fact that, as Fitzgerald suggests, the "No"-sayers subconsciously feel and slowly become aware of.

In much the same interpretive way, Fitzgerald has approached Wei Jingsheng. By asking provocatively, "whether there can be *nationalism* without democrats in China today",[50] he depicts Wei's writings and political thinking as a reaction to his humiliated nationalist feelings. Wei himself reported that his first motivation to post the "Fifth Modernization" came from overhearing bystanders speaking of the Chinese people as "spineless weaklings" who immediately pack up and go home once Deng Xiaoping would urge the Democracy Wall activists to do so – which actually happened in late November 1978. Wei Jingsheng wrote the "Fifth Modernization" in order to prove "that the Chinese were brave and fearless people after all".[51] The Chinese nation should "never again be a nation despised by others. We have stood up".[52] Wei acted on behalf of a nation that had lost its dignity, because the people lacked democratic rights. Logically, it is the introduction of democracy and the ensuing feeling of individual dignity that would restore the nation's dignity, the core of what the whole struggle for personal freedom is about. As Fitzgerald concludes, "Wei's behaviour demonstrates that the fight for individual dignity is a powerful antidote to the shame and

self-loathing that converts national pride into parochial chauvinism in China today".[53] Once again, the latter – no matter how strong – is unable to provide for national dignity, because democracy is its prerequisite.

Fitzgerald's reading of the nationalist discourse in China, which draws as much on Kantian rational humanism as on the Hegelian slave-master narrative, is certainly stimulating. But to name nationalism a condition of democracy is a courageous stance, as George T. Crane has argued in a response to Fitzgerald's contribution.[54] He correctly points at the homogenizing tendencies of many present ethnic nationalisms that render the individualistic connotations of Fitzgerald's civic nationalism problematic at best. Although Crane admits that Chinese nationalism is not ethnic, but "political and civic", it has obviously not kept the liberal promise that it putatively contains. As "collectivist-national authoritarian narratives" predominate the discourse, Chinese nationalism is clearly no friend of democracy.

In spite of much evidence that supports this argument, it does not quite get Fitzgerald's point. It is the "nationalist dialectic" that confronts each collectivist-authoritarian narrative unrefusingly with the liberal quest for individual dignity – even if the latter is not "completely articulated", as Crane demands. The continuing search for a strong state in China can't be denied, but this does not derail the assumption that the individual desire for recognition will finally turn against the state if the latter fails to provide the liberal foundations of national dignity. Crane's argument may therefore be as short-sighted as Fitzgerald's might be too idealistic and hypothetical. However, there is much reason to believe that the weak legitimacy of the Chinese state has much to do with the unkept liberal promise of Chinese nationalism that Crane himself has identified as it main defect. Even if the collectivist-authoritarian (etatist) narrative dominates the nationalist discourse in contemporary China, it is obviously unable to generate a nation reconciled with the state. It is therefore correct to assume that this "emotional" discrepancy subverts the state and induces a gradual process of national restoration under democratic conditions – mentally first, physically later.

The Communist leadership knows about the intrinsic connection between national dignity and democracy too well, as it seems. It has repeatedly in the past contained the outbreak of anti-Westernism among the people, as it was quickly turning against the Chinese state.[55] Nationalism is a double-edged sword for the Communist regime: It may serve the party's objective of stabilizing its rule by closing ranks against the West. But at the same time, such instrumentalist dealing with nationalism bears the danger of making the people become aware of what they lack most: democratic rights as the basis of individual and national dignity.

CONCLUSION

As I have emphasised earlier, an alternative reading of the nationalist discourse in China does not intend to prove that those proponents are completely

wrong who think that contemporary Chinese nationalism is anti-liberal. As a matter of fact, they have at least as many good points to support their view as their critics have to challenge them. However, it is important to stress the liberal *potential* of Chinese nationalism in order to sharpen the view for its motivational structure and future directions, and – not at least – for suitable international policies to deal with it. The contemporary discourse on Chinese nationalism seems to favour anti-liberal etatism and cultural essentialism, making liberalism (liberal nationalism) a counter-text at best, which – for its part – has rarely been able to free itself from the overarching desire of China's intellectuals for a strong state. It is still difficult in China, as it seems, to mediate this desire with the constitutional requisites of liberalism, especially the proper implementation of individual rights against the state.

Nevertheless, as John Fitzgerald's interpretation of China's quest for dignity has shown, authoritarian (neo-conservative) etatism and ethno-cultural essentialism could have much more liberal underpinnings as is widely believed. Such an assumption should be tested by continuous efforts of the international community to engage China in multinational agreements and the further underwriting of international law. As much as individual dignity nurtures national dignity from a domestic perspective, the recognition of a nation's dignity by other nations is conducive to its probing into liberalism and democratic reform. To give China face at the international level therefore is one of the best ways to foster democracy within China.[56] However, such recognition and respect must be conditional and remain critical towards the empirical relationship between the Chinese nation and the Chinese state. The more the West both respects the Chinese nation and makes clear the limits of respect for Communist one-party rule, the more Chinese nationalism might open up for debate and self-reflection. This would certainly strengthen its liberal and democratic aspects – aspects which have at least produced a democratic narrative within the nationalist discourse in China since it started some 100 years ago.

NOTES

1. This does not mean that nationalism has ever been a "non-topic" among scholars in China and the West. I am just referring to the debate on so-called "new nationalism" that has been repeatedly singled out by the academe as the most important current of political thinking in post-1989 China. Some of the best more recent Western books on the topic are Lowell Dittmer and Samuel S. Kim, eds., *China's Quest for National Identity*, (Ithaca-London 1993); Prasenjit Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation* (Chicago 1995); Jonathan Unger,, ed.,*Chinese Nationalism* (Armonk/N.Y. 1996); Shu-min Huang and Cheng-kuang Hsu, eds., *Imagining China. Regional Division and National Unity* (Institute of Ethnology, Academia Sinica, Taibei 1999); Yongnian Zheng, *Discovering Chinese Nationalism in China. Modernization, Identity, and International Relations* (Cambridge 1999); for a good overview over the discussion among Chinese intellectuals see also Qingfeng Liu, ed., *Minzuzhuyi yu Zhongguo xiandaihua* (Nationalism and the Modernization of China, Hongkong 1994).

2. I follow Lowell Dittmer and Samuel S. Kim's synthetic definition of a national identity crisis, which they name a "crisis of self-definition" that "is likely to erupt at three junctures: when the chosen developmental "road" conspicuously fails, when it succeeds beyond expectations, and when it is challenged by a convincing alternative". Analytically, national identity can also be jeopardized by a "crisis of inclusion" caused by "border disputes over irredentas, secessionary conflicts and civil wars, and divided nations". As "national identity is the relationship between the nation and the state that obtains when the people of that nation identify with the state", a crisis of national identity logically means that the people realize a lack of legitimate congruence between their nation and the state. See Lowell Dittmer and Samuel S. Kim, "In Search of a Theory of National Identity," in *China's Quest for National Identity*, ed. Kim Lowell (Ithaca-London 1993), 1–31; 13; 27–29.

3. Carleton J.H Hayes, *The Historical Evolution of Modern Nationalism* (New York 1931).

4. One of the most prominent advocates of liberal nationalism in late Qing-China certainly was Liang Qichao, even if his conceptualizations of the Chinese nation oscillated between ethnocentrist/racist and civic frameworks. The liberal side of Liang Qichao is emphasized in: Xiaobing Tang, *Global Space and the Nationalist Discourse of Modernity. The Historical Thinking of Liang Qichao* (Stanford 1996).

5. Murray Forsyth, "Towards the Reconciliation of Nationalism and Liberalism," *Integration and Fragmentation: The Paradox of the Late 20th Century*, ed. in Guy Laforest and Douglas Brown (Queens University, Kingston [Ontario] 1994), 7–23.

6. Forsyth, *Towards the Reconciliation of Nationalism and Liberalism*, 9.

7. Ibid., 13.

8. Ibid., 14.

9. Ibid., 13.

10. Ibid., 17–18.

11. Ibid., 18. In one of his recent publications, David Brown has also convincingly shown, how much civic (liberal) nationalism relies on ethnocultural concepts and can turn out to be as illiberal as ethnoculturalism can be a promoter of liberalism and the idea of individual rights. See David Brown, *Contemporary Nationalism. Civic, Ethnocultural and Multicultural Politics* (London 2000), see especially chap. 3: "Are there two nationalisms?".

12. Authoritarianism can be another consequence of liberal nationalism, if the idea of individual rights and liberties at one point is declared a threat for the "general will" of the mainly civic nation to sustain its survival and development, as in the case of Singapore.

13. It would therefore be much better to distinguish between *civic* or *constitutional* nationalism and ethnic-cultural nationalism, leaving the term "liberalism" deliberately aside.

14. Consequently, some scholars of multiculturalism reject the concept of liberal or civic nationalism, if it is treated as the only kind of nationalism that lives up to the idea of individual rights. See e.g. Will Kymlicka, *Liberalism, Community and Culture,* (Oxford 1989) and *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights* (Oxford 1995).

15. See Lucian W. Pye, "How China's Nationalism was Shanghaied," in *Chinese Nationalism*, ed. Jonathan Unger (Armonk 1996), 86–112 (109, 111). See also Pye's sharp comments on Chinese nationalism in his contribution to the *Festschrift* in honour of Jürgen Domes, "After the Collapse of Communism: The Challenge of Chinese Nationalism and Pragmatism," in *The Study of Modern China*, ed. Eberhard Sandschneider, (London 1999), 31–51.

16. For example, as Prasenjit Duara and Rebecca Karl have shown, there was a substantial current of transnationalist thinking within the Chinese nationalist discourse of the early twentieth century. Whereas Duara, however, makes a point for pan-Asianism, Han-racialism and Confucian culturalism as concepts which domesticated Chinese transnationality, Karl emphasizes the emancipatory underpinnings of the globalist counter-narrative to Chinese state nationalism, which separated the nation from the state and insisted on the former's anti-colonial and democratic foundations. See Prasenjit Duara, "Transnationalism and the Predicament of Sovereignty: China, 1900–1945," *American Historical Review* 102, 4 (1997): 1030–1051; Rebecca A. Karl, *Staging the World: Chinese Nationalism at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (Durham 2002).

17. See also Gunter Schubert, "Nationalism and National Identity in Contemporary China: Assessing the Debate," *Issues and Studies* 37, 5 (2001): 128–156 (130–131).

18. Anti-western (anti-American) Chinese nationalism is explicitly discussed in Hongshan Li, "China Talks Back: Anti-Americanism or Nationalism?," *Journal of Contemporary China* 6, 14 (1997): 153–161 (a review of five Chinese books critical of Sino–US relations, all published in 1996); Guangqiu Xu, "The Rise of Anti-Americanism in China," *Asian Thought and Society* 22, 6 (1997): 208–226; Guangqiu Xu, "The Chinese Anti-American Nationalism in the 1990s," *Asian Perspective* 22, 2 (1998): 193–218; see also the special edition on "The China Threat Debate" of *Issues and Studies* 36, 1 (2000); more recent Western comments on the issue are e.g. Kevin Platt, "A Protest China's Leaders Can Use," *Christian Science Monitor*, 10 May 1999: 6.; John Derbyshire, "Communist, Nationalist, and Dangerous," *National Review,* 30 (2001): 31–33.

19. Chinese nationalism's inherent contradiction of being both defensive and affirmative has been analysed most lucidly by Gungwu Wang, *The Revival of Chinese Nationalism* (Leiden 1996), reprinted in: Gungwu Wang, *Bind Us in Time: Nation and Civilisation in Asia* (Singapore 2002), 111–133. Wang speaks of two faces of Chinese "restoration nationalism", that "stresses the recovery of sovereignty, the unification of divided territory, and national self-respect", but also "emphasises moral order and the preservation, or a rediscovery, of traditional values". (114)

20. Stephen Hallet, "A New Nationalism?," *China Review,* Autumn/Winter 1999: 10–13.

21. For Chinese patriotism and its different components see e.g. Suisheng Zhao, "A State-Led Nationalism: The Patriotic Education Campaign in Post-Tiananmen China," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 31, 3 (1998): 282–302; Maria Hsia Chang, *Return of the Dragon. China's Wounded Nationalism* (Boulder 2001), chap. 8 ("Patriotic Nationalism of the People's Republic"). Chang does not differentiate between patriotism and other manifestations of Chinese nationalism, but uses the former as a key notion overarching authoritarian etatism, anti-Westernism, ethnocentrism and racism, "cultural-moral relativism" and an "illiberal worldview".

22. Barry Sautman, "Racial Nationalism and China's External Behaviour," *World Affairs* 160, 2 (1997): 78–95. Edward Friedman has even pointed at a "dangerously expansionist nasty racism that increasingly informs much of China's natural national pride". See Edward Friedman, "Globalization, Legitimacy, and Post-Communism in China: A Nationalist Potential for Democracy, Prosperity and Peace," in *China under Jiang Zemin*, ed. Hung-mao Tien and Yun-han Chu (Boulder 2000), 233–246; More cautious on the political consequences of racial nationalism, which he nevertheless calls "a very powerful and cohesive form of national identity in China", is Frank Dikötter, "Culture, 'Race' and Nation: The Formation of National Identity in Twentieth Century China," *Journal of*

International Affairs 49, 2 (1996): 590–605. For a more recent analysis of the racist narrative in Chinese national identity construction see also Kai-wing Chow, "Narrating Nation, Race, and National Culture: Imagining the Hanzu Identity in Modern China," in *Constructing Nationhood in Modern East Asia*, ed. Kai-wing Chow et al. (Ann Arbor 2001), 47–83.

23. John Fitzgerald, "The Nationless State: The Search for a Nation in Modern Chinese Nationalism," in *Chinese Nationalism*, ed. Jonathan Unger (Armonk/N.Y. 1996), 56–85.

24. As a matter of fact, in their self-perception China's "new nationalists" are as much critical of the West as they make substantial contributions to the conceptual debate on social and political reform and on ideological development in China. See the brief analysis of Lu Zhoulai, "Ye shuo minzuzhuyi" (Also Nationalism), *Shehui kexue luntan, 6* (2000): 51–52.

25. This concept mainly refers to "new leftism" or "new collectivism", a strong intellectual current in the 1990s that sponsored a kind of "communitarianism with Chinese characteristics", i.e. the adaptation of Maoism's collectivist traditions to the rising market economy and the idea of an authentic Chinese model of modernization. See Hui Wang, "Contemporary Chinese Thought and the Question of Modernity," *Social Text,* 55 (1998): 9–44.

26. Zhao Suisheng has published extensively on this complex structure of contemporary Chinese nationalism. See e.g. "Chinese Intellectual's Greatness and Nationalistic Writing in the 1990s," *The China Quarterly,* 152 (1997): 725–745; "'We are Patriots First and Democrats Second': The Rise of Chinese Nationalism in the 1990s," in *What If China Doesn't Democratize? Implications For War And Peace*, ed. Edward Friedman and Barret L. McCormick (New York 2000), 21–48; "Chinese Nationalism and its International Orientations," *Political Science Quarterly* 115, 1 (2000): 1–33.

27. I make this point in Gunter Schubert, *Der Kampf um die Nation. Dimensionen nationalistischen Denkens in der VR China, Taiwan und Hongkong and der Jahr-tausendwende* (The Struggle for the Nation: Dimensions of Nationalist Thinking in the PRC, Taiwan and Hongkong at the Turn of the Millenium, Institute of Asian Affairs, Hamburg 2002), chap. 4. It is interesting to note that "new leftism" has recently been connected to "new liberalism" and "social democratism" by those Chinese liberals who insist that the principles of "classical liberalism" and "negative liberty" have to be properly installed, before any discussion on the common weal (*Gemeinwohl*) makes sense. This, however, is not part of the nation-alist discourse anymore but informs of more recent developments in Chinese in-tellectual debates on the capitalist transformation of the Chinese economy and its political consequences. See e.g. Xu, Jilin. "Dangdai Zhongguo de liangzhong ziyou" (Contemporary China's Two Liberties), *Ershiyi shiji,* 68 (2001): 15–19; Ren Jiantao, "Shenmo shi dangdai Zhongguo ziyouzhuyi gongtong dixian?" (What Is the Common Base-line of Contemporary Chinese Liberalism?), *Ershiyi shiji*, 68 (2001): 20–25.

28. Xiaoming Chen, "'Wenhua minzu zhuyi' de xingqi" (The Rise of "Cultural Nationalism"), *Ershiyi shiji,* 39 (1997): 35–43; Yang Gan, "A Critique of Chinese Conservatism in the 1990s," *Social Text,* 55 (1998): 45–66.

29. For a brief account of the debate on "open", "modern", "substantial" and "rational" nationalism in present-day China see Gunter Schubert, *Der Kampf um die Nation* (The Struggle for the Nation), 241–255.

30. See e.g. Baoyun Yin, "Minzu zhuyi yu xiandai jingji fazhan" (Nationalism and Economic Development), *Zhanlüe yu guanli,* 3 (1994): 13–15; Jilin Xu, "Fan xifang

zhuyi bu dengyu xiandai minzu zhuyi" (Anti-occidentalism Is Not Modern Nationalism), *Mingbao yuekan,* 3 (1997): 22–26. Contributions of this sort very often opted for an interventionist or developmental state modelled along the South Korean and Taiwan experiences in the 1970s and 1980s. Their authors were economic pragmatists who focussed their understanding of Chinese nationalism on the national interest and China's international competitivity. They need not be political liberals, but they certainly are economic liberals who support a rule-based system and stand firmly against the ideologization of CP rule by state-centred patriotism.

31. However, they never became more precise than that. See e.g. Guoguang Wu, "Yi lixing minzu zhuyi kangheng 'weidu zhongguo'" (Using Rational Nationalism to Compete with "Containing China"), in *Quanqiu guanxi zhongde zhongguo chujing* (China's Dilemma In Global Relations), ed. Zhun Wang and Yu Guoliang (Hongkong 1998), 115–128; See also the concept of Chinese nationalism presented by Yonggnian Zheng, *Zhongguo minzu zhuyide fuxing* (The Re-awakening of Chinese Nationalism, Hongkong 1998).

32. See e.g. Jian Xie, "Wenhua rentong, zuqun rentong yu min(guo)zu zhuyi: yi zhongguode duoyuanxing weili," (Cultural Identity, Ethnic Identity and 'State'-Nationalism: China's Plurality as an Example), in *Minzu zhuyi yu zhongguo xiandaihua* (Nationalism and the Modernization of China), ed. Qingfeng Liu (Hongkong 1994), 159–176; Qing He, "Minzu zhuyi yu shijie zhuyi" (Nationalism and Cosmopolitanism), *Dushu*, 8 (1996): 72–75; Bilige Nari, "Zhongzu yu minzu guannian de hushen yu yanjin–lianji minzu zhuyide taolun" (Mutual Penetration and Evolution of the Concepts of Race and Nation – Discussing the Two Sides of Nationalism), *Zhongguo shehui kexue jikan*, 16 (1996): 109–125; Gengwu Wang, "Minzu zhuyi, zhongzuxing yu yatai qucheng" (Nationalism, Ethnicity, and the Asia-Pacific Region), *Zhongguo shehui kexue jikan,* 25 (1999): 17–30; Lian Wang, "Guanyu minzu yu minzu zhuyide lilun" (Referring to the Theory of Nationalism), *Shijie minzu*, 1 (1999): 1–11.

33. Guantao Jin, "Zhuangzao yu pohuai de dongli: zhongguo minzu zhuyide jiegou ji yanbian" (Creative and Destructive Force: Change and Structure of Chinese Nationalism), in *Minzu zhuyi yu zhongguo xiandaihua* (Nationalism and the Modernization of China), ed*.* Qingfeng Liu (Hongkong 1994), 127–141; Yufa Zhang, "Diguo zhuyi, minzu zhuyi yu guoji zhuyi zai jindai zhongguo lishi shang de juese (1900–1949)" (The Role of Imperialism, Nationalism and Internationalism in Modern Chinese History), in *Minzu zhuyi yu zhongguo xiandaihua*, ed. Qingfeng Liu, 99–125. The significance of cosmopolitanism and internationalism in the Chinese nationalist discourse has recently been discussed by Hung-yok Ip, "Cosmopolitanism and the Ideal Image of Nation in Communist Revolutionary Culture", in *Constructing Nationhood in Modern East Asia*, ed. Kai-wing Chow et al. (Ann Arbor 2001), 215–243.

34. See e.g. the debate between Wu Guoguang and foreign-based scholar Chen Jan in the above-quoted volume of Zhun Wang and Yu Guoliang, eds., *Quanqiu guanxi zhong de zhongguo chujing* (China's Dilemma In Global Relations, Hongkong 1998).

35. This does not contradict to the fact that there have been periods in the late 1990s, when the demand for more democracy became astonishingly strong in China. As a matter of fact, political system reform has been an important issue in China's influential academic journals throughout the post-Tiananmen era. However, this debate has the CP's general support, since it is considered instrumental for enhancing the Communist regime's legitimacy and is not directly related to the discourse on nationalism. Concerning the latter, liberals have to tackle the

question of democracy in a different way, as they automatically bump into the problem of ongoing one-party rule, national identity and China's relations to the West.

36. See John Fitzgerald, "China and the Quest of Dignity," *The National Interest*, Spring 1999: 47–59.

37. Ibid., 48.

38. See Benjamin Schwartz, *In Search of Wealth and Power: Yen Fu and the West*, (Cambridge 1964).

39. See e.g. Liah Greenfield, *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity* (Cambridge 1992).

40. Fitzgerald, 50.

41. Ibid., 49.

42. Ibid., 50.

43. Qiang Song et al., *Zhongguo keyi shuo bu* (China Can Say No, Beijing 1996).

44. See e.g. Qian Peng et al., *Zhongguo zenmo shuo bu?* (How Can China Say No?, Beijing 1996); Xueli Zhang, *Zhongguo heyi shuo bu?* (Why Should China Say No?, Beijing 1996); Jian Li, *Zhongguo jiuci shuo bu* (China Says No Nine Times, Beijing 1999); Xiguang Li, *Yamohua zhongguo de beihou* (The Background of China's Demonization, Beijing 1996).

45. Fitzgerald, 54–55.

46. Ibid.

47. Ibid., 56.

48. Ibid.

49. Ibid., 59.

50. Ibid, 56.

51. Interview with Wei Jingsheng, *China News Digest*, 15 February 1998, quoted in Fitzgerald, 57.

52. Fitzgerald, 57.

53. Ibid., 58.

54. George T. Crane, "China's Democratic Prospects," *The National Interest*, Fall 1999: 94–100.

55. An often quoted recent example is the government's handling of the strong mass protests against the US after the NATO bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrad in May 1999. Initially organized by the Communist leaders themselves, they soon faced the danger that those demonstrations out of beyond control, as the demonstrants' anger of the West for having humiliated China was about to turn against the Chinese government as the main source for all the frustration.

56. See also Peter Hays Gries, "A China Threat?," *Word Affairs* vol. 62, no. 2: 63–75.

CHAPTER 13

Regional Community-Building in Asia? Transnational Discourses, Identity- and Institution-Building in the Fields of Human and Women's Rights

Martina Timmermann

INTRODUCTION

Globalization, regionalization, and identity in international politics have become key terms within the political and scientific debate. Whereas Asian values were debated from the late 1980s until the middle of the 1990s, the dominating question now is how to cope with the negative effects of globalization. Within this context, problems of human rights, gender, poverty and environment are only the most prominent examples of the urgent issues which affect people all over the world and which require different solutions from those of the cold war period.

Two of the approaches trying to offer plausible answers to the challenges of globalization refer to the functions of collective identity and regionalization. The reference to identity,[1] values and culture in times of unrest and instability has repeatedly proven to be an effective instrument of politicians and political groups for "unifying" the people. It has been effective policy to use existing antagonisms or create new simplifying ones to fill the vacuum of orientation. In the context of our increasingly diversified world of globalization this method thus still seems to be promising.

Another important and complementary method of dealing with the effects of globalization is the deliberate enforcement of regionalization. In Asia's case, the ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) has attracted most of the attention in research. The majority of the studies on ASEAN, however, has focused on economic and security cooperation. Moreover, the concentration upon these topics is strongly linked with quite an exclusive analysis of the governmental level. This bears consequences for the judgements of the authors who are dominantly pessimistic about the perspectives of future ASEAN-integration. Such pessimism seemed to

be confirmed, when Indonesia, the long time motor of ASEAN-institutionalization, reduced its regional initiatives, while being occupied with its national problems, most prominently the conflicts in East Timor and Aceh. In addition, the pictures of the violent Indonesian reactions to US-American policy in the aftermath of the attacks of September 11, made people anxiously wonder, if Samuel Huntington's clash-of-civilization-prognosis (Huntington 1993) had suddenly turned into reality. They became keenly aware of the cultural complexity and also the fragility of the multicultural institution ASEAN and started questioning the possibilities of further regional institution-building. Within such contexts, values and identity have turned into very up-to-date topics again.

Thus the question arises, is there an ongoing process of regionalization in Asia-Pacific and specifically ASEAN. In contrast to the pessimists' views, I argue that there has been collective identity- and regional institution-building going on in ASEAN and Asia-Pacific. Based upon the theoretical premises of identity-research, this development can increase the chances for progress and stability within the region, but also enhance the potential for conflict between the regions.

Three examples will be used for the illustration of this argument: the general turn from an *inter*regional elitist human rights debate towards an *intra*regional discussion on human rights and values led by NGOs and grassroots-organizations, and the institutionalization process of the Working Group for an ASEAN Human Rights Mechanism and the Asia Pacific Women´s Watch (APWW).

COLLECTIVE IDENTITY AND REGIONAL-COMMUNITY-BUILDING

The function of collective identity as a "bond" in the processes of institutionalization at the national, regional or global level has been, especially in the field of International Relations, increasingly attracting interest (Weller 2000; Risse et al. 1999; Lapid 1996; Kratochwil 1996; Katzenstein 1996; Jepperson et al. 1996). But in spite of the high importance of identity in International Relations, there is as yet no unanimous definition. In addition to factors such as the strife for power, security and welfare, identity is often used as a complementary variable for explaining political action. The ambiguity of the word and its understanding is not only characteristic for the field of International Relations but runs through all the social sciences, where the debate on identity is characterized by the conflicting opinions on its existence, its power of explanation and provability (Weller 2000).

The working definition here is that identity involves the rational and/or emotional (self-) attachment/reference of a person to a group, that is being demarcated from others (by the person, a third person or the group itself), because of its ideas, or/and its goals, or/and its values, or/and its activities,

or/and its physical looks, or/and its language or/and its historical experiences. The same applies to a collective that attaches itself or others to a larger group, such as a nation to a region. This working definition of identity is based upon the following aspects important for the analysis of regional-community-building.

The Function of "Identity" in Times of Social and Political Change
The debate on the value of the concept 'identity' is not only the result of the lack of a unified definition, but also of its inflationary use. During the Asia boom and with the beginning of the Asian crisis in July 1997, the inflationary use became obvious (again).

In addition, however, it demonstrated important functions of identity, because Hermann Bausinger concluded already in 1978 that identity had only become a hot topic, since identity itself had become a problem (Bausinger 1978: 204 cited by Weller 1998: 3). His observations of the 1970s were based on the period of the Helsinki-process, when for the first time human rights were acknowledged to be of major importance for security policy. The discussion on the meaning of human rights according to Western democratic, and Eastern communist interpretation respectively, and the maintained specific identity thereby gained a special significance. The respective interpretations of identity became an instrument of the political elites for the demarcation between East and West.

The Asian values debate of the 1980s and the Asian crisis of the 1990s show obvious similarities, because the legitimization of different political and economic systems resulted from the rhetorical differentiation into Asian and Western identity by political and academic elites.

The Function of Identity in Processes of Institutionalization
Looking at the importance of the function of identity in times of change, it becomes obvious that there are two dimensions of identity: 1. The rhetorical attachment of identity to a person or a group by others, for example by political elites; 2. The self-attachment of a person or a group to another group they can identify with.

Reflexive Identity within the Framework of UN World Conferences
Mead (1970) proposed the concept of reflexive identity where subject and object of identification are the same person (Weller 2000, 1998). A person (subject) identifies with a group (object) because of her or his feeling of sharing ideas, goals, values, physical looks, language, activities or/and history. An example could be somebody who perceives him- or herself as a human rights activist. It is important to note that such reflexive identity does not develop by itself but *in discourse with the social environment* (Mead 1970; Weller 1998: 7; emphasis by the author).

Thus the institutional frames of reference for such discourses gain in importance. After the Cold War, UN world conferences on issues which for a long time were being understood as "low politics" have increased. The world meetings have to be prepared on the regional and national levels. Therefore they create the social environment for discourses and the framework within which identity-building can take place.

In terms of the actors who are involved in this process it is important to remember that it has been a specific goal of the UN to strengthen the role of NGOs in agenda setting, counselling and monitoring of the results of the world and regional conferences. This leads to an even stronger intensification of transnational discourses at the regional and global level and thus provides wider opportunities for the development of reflexive identity.

Social Identity, Issue-Relation and Rational Choice
An important question is, at what moment do such identities influence actions? One explanation is offered by the theories of social identity and self-categorization (Weller 2000):

The theory of social identity proposes that individuals in specific social contexts attach themselves to groups, with whose members they can identify. This attachment to a group, however, can change depending on the situation. Examples for this temporary attachment are identities which become obvious in certain issue-related situations, e.g. when activists take sides pro or contra human rights questions, religion, terror, gender questions, climate protection, etc. Thus, several identities can become relevant in different situations and settings and may also compete or clash with each other.

An explanation as to why, in some cases, the self-categorization of a group is so strong, whereas in others it is denied, offers the theory of self-categorization. According to the theory of self-categorization, actors compare the differences between the in-group and out-group and draw the conclusion that the differences within the in-group are not as strong and costly as compared to the out-group(s).

Collective Identity and the Legitimization of the Use of Force
The conclusions from the micro-level can be transposed onto the macro-level,[2] where the research on "national identity" has attracted most interest. A proposal for explaining collective identity offers Weller (1998: 15):

> The larger the perceived social room is, the stronger one depends on using categories which make the differences between the groups more obvious, whereas inside the group similarities are emphasised. (…) Collective identity develops, when the members of a collective perceive themselves primarily as members of the collective and thus a depersonalisation of the perceptions as well as the behaviour takes place.

Research on national identity is especially popular because of its obvious link of emotional attachment between the individual and the state, based on the institutionalization of legitimized force within a state, but the denial of force among the individuals themselves. Whereas the use of force among the individuals inside the group is forbidden, however, the use of force against outsiders can be looked at as legitimate again (Weller 1998: 9).

The differentiation between the in- and out-group also involves the upgrade of the in-group and the degradation of the out-group. Such a behaviour is effective on the micro- as well as on the macro-level as being obvious in the first debate on Asian values (see Example 1). With regard to the questions, if there is identity-building in (Southeast) Asia and which consequences that would involve for security politics, this aspect has to be looked at in greater detail.

TRANSNATIONAL DISCOURSES ON HUMAN RIGHTS, IDENTITY-BUILDING AND INSTITUTIONALIZATION

Three examples shall be used for illustrating the intensification of transnational discourses, accompanied by identity-building and institutionalization.

The first one shows the general qualitative shift including contents and actors of the Asian Human Rights and Values Debate, which includes the development of a transnational human rights discourse, the development of a human rights identity, obvious in references on regional human rights problems and the process of institution-building.

Within this general development, the second example particularly illustrates the institutionalizing process and issue-related identity-building of the Working Group for an ASEAN Human Rights Mechanism.

Another concrete example of issue-related identity-building and institutionalization can be seen in the development of the Asia Pacific Women's Watch (APWW) which has its roots in the activities evolving around the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing and the follow-up process resulting in the stock-taking conference "Women 2000" in New York.

Example 1: From Interregional to Intraregional Discourses on Human Rights and Asian Values

The First Generation of Interregional Discourses led by Government Elites and Academics

The discussion of the first generation of Asian values and human rights mainly focused on the quality and efficiency of different development models (Heinz 1995). The argument was started by the government elites from Singapore and Malaysia who, e.g. in *Foreign Affairs*, opposed the western understanding of democracy and human rights that was to be imposed upon their states. To the minds of Lee Kwan Yew, Mahatir Mohammed and former Ambassador to the US Tommy Koh it was an

attempt by Western powers to hinder the development potentials of their societies. To underline the impossibility of simply transferring western values to Asian countries, they pointed at the increasing moral decay of Western countries. Examples they named were high crime rates, a growing apathy of the people resulting from an exaggerated welfare system and consumerism. To their understanding such factors were responsible for the decay of the West. In Asia they thought limited individualism, work- and saving efforts as well as responsibility for one's personal life by strengthening the family lead to the development successes of the 1980s and beginning 1990s.

The problem with that argument, however, was not only the woolly meaning of those values. More problematic was the attempt at justifying authoritarian states with their restrictive political and civic rights such as freedom of opinion, the ban of political parties and political activities. According to the governing elites socio-economic rights had priority, the political and civil ones had to wait until their societies would be ready for them. Western, mainly US-American reproaches, were regarded either as interference in their national affairs, or as envy of the development successes and as attempts to substitute the former colonial imperialism by new value imperialism.

This debate between Western and Asian elites lasted until the middle of the 1990s and was an interregional discussion. With the beginning of the Asian crisis in July 1997 it was virtually swept off the table, because the economic development had removed the foundation for what had been suggested by the Southeast Asian elites and been believed by many Western discussants.

Still, it is important to notice that the deliberate use of the variables "identity" and "values" in such interregional discussions was as both important for interregional demarcation as for the process of regional unification. The rhetorical upgrading of the Asian in-group and the degrading of the Western out-group was an additional important indicator of identity-building within that process.

The parallel beginning and ongoing development of a second Asian human rights debate, the development of stronger regional cooperation among NGOs within the framework of the overall increase of world conferences as illustrated by the cases of Asia Pacific Women's Watch and the ASEAN regional human rights mechanism demonstrate that this process has made further progress and taken more concrete institutional shape.

The Second Generation of Intraregional Discourse led by
Non-Governmental Actors
Whereas the first debate on Asian values and human rights was kicked off and fuelled by elites from governments and academia from different regions,

another discussion has been taking place on the intraregional transnational level. One might speak of the development of a "second generation" of a debate on Asian human rights and values. This second debate started already during the regional preparations for the Second World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna (1993) and was something like an outflow of the conflict between NGOs' and government views during the first debate. It got its direction and momentum by the final declaration of Vienna, wherein not only the universality and the equality of all rights were underlined, but the demand for the establishment of a regional human rights mechanism was explicitly formulated. The debate was additionally catalyzed by the growing fear of the effects of globalization, among which are the increasing problems in connection with poverty, especially for women, the increase of international crime, human trafficking, international terrorism, sex tourism and the galloping environmental damage. All these problems concern each country in the Asian region and require comprehensive regional solutions to be handled effectively.

The intensification of discourse and cooperation has been further supported by the general increase in UN world conferences which have been dealing with topics of sometimes greater sometimes lesser relevance to the countries of the Asian region. Independent of the relevance of the topic, however, such world conferences have to be prepared on the regional level, mainly by UN-ESCAP (UN-Economic and Social Commission of Asia Pacific). Even more important for the development of this process are the follow-up conferences which are actually processes of continuous national and regional institution- and identity-building, because of the requirements to continuously monitor and evaluate the policy implementations following the world conferences. The final UN stock-taking is thus the result of a five-year monitoring and institution-building process which is based on continuous discussions among governments and NGOs on the national and regional levels as well as between governments and NGOs on the transnational level.[3]

The increased involvement of civil society in human rights questions had its consequences for the quality of the human rights discussion: whereas, during the first debate, socio-economic rights and the right of collective development had been used mainly for the cultivation of the antagonism between Western and Asian countries and for the legitimization of authoritarian rule, this time protagonists have been underlining the meaning of economic, social and cultural rights. But, they link them without reservation with civil and political rights, explicitly referring to the existing international human rights instruments and try to concretize such rights with respect to the specific needs of the people of their countries.[4]

Consequently, this second discussion about socio-economic and cultural human rights as well as the postulation of the right for collective development is by no means to be equated with the first debate. This time the

equal importance of all human rights is pointed out, but in explicit correspondence with the declaration of Vienna 1993 and – at the same time – with explicit consideration of the cultural diversity in the region and the countries concerned. Still, as in the former debate, the consideration of the cultural diversity goes hand in hand with the pinpointing of Asian commonalities and the demarcation from the West. In interviews with Philippine human rights activists, for instance, norms like "tolerance" as well as "careful and patient listening" were called "typical Asian" and contrasted with Western behaviour.[5]

It does not matter, if such norms are "typical Asian" or not. What matters is that the interviewed people differentiated into an Asian in- and a Western out-group by referring to perceived different behavioural patterns at interregional or global conferences.

Example 2: The Working Group for an ASEAN Human Rights Mechanism

Not only the development of the second intraregional Asian human rights debate and the perceptions of its protagonists reflect the ongoing process of regional identity building but also the increase of discourses, cooperation and institution-building resulting from the increase of the UN world conferences. A vivid example is the founding and institutional development of the Working Group for an ASEAN Human Rights Mechanism which was initiated after the Second World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna.

The Start of the Institution-Building

During the preparations for Vienna 1993 the dialogue among NGOs, the church, academia and government representatives intensified within the region. In addition to the postulation of Vienna to build a regional human rights mechanism there was a growing realization that problems like poverty, drug- and human trafficking, and transnational crime could be fought more successfully together. The LAW ASIA-human rights committee organized several meetings joined by national human rights institutions, parliamentary committees and human rights-NGOs to develop proposals for a human rights mechanism in Asia. Those meetings were formalized with the official founding of the *Working Group for an ASEAN Human Rights Mechanism* in 1996.

Goals Structuring the Institution-Building Process

The major goal of the *Working Group for an ASEAN Human Rights Mechanism* is to create an intergovernmental human rights mechanism for ASEAN – whatever form it may have. Background of the sub-regional limitation is the group's view that a comprehensive regional mechanism for the entire Asia–Pacific realistically cannot be achieved because of the enormous cultural and

socio-political diversity. The establishment of a mechanism limited to ASEAN seems to be necessary and realistic:

> [Yet] there is a need for some form of regional human rights mechanism. Such a system can lead to a deeper understanding and more sensitive treatment of human rights issues among governments and peoples in the region. It can provide greater access to remedies for human rights violations. It can certainly complement the UN human rights system and bring it closer to the state level.[6]

The regional working group consists of representatives from quasi-government (CHR), NGOs and academia who at the same time represent national working groups. In 2001, there were five national working groups: in Thailand, Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines.

It is their goal to finally establish such national groups in each ASEAN-member state. In Singapore, the fifth and only founding member state of ASEAN that does not have a working group yet, the situation is at the stage of "careful fathoming" or examination. In the first Asian values debate the elites from Singapore were especially outspoken with regard to Asian values and the justification of their authoritarian model of society. Since Singapore has kept its position as a success model within the region, the restriction of civil and political rights in favour of economic rights is still not seriously questioned.

Strategies Within the Transnational Discourses
Due to the somewhat delicate situation in some member states of ASEAN the working group is following a careful step-by-step strategy including protagonists from government institutions, NGOs, church and academia. Illustrative for this strategy was the contact meeting between 22 and 25 March 1999, in Laos and Vietnam. The meeting aimed at introducing people to the goals and achievements of the group. It was set up to examine the possibilities of setting up national working groups in those countries. Another comparable meeting took place in Cambodia from 6 to 7 April 1999. The higher sensitivity for the Singaporean situation became obvious in a clearly lower target at the contact meeting in Singapore on 8 April 1999. There the group was only examining the possibility of setting up a temporary secretariat for a Singapore working group.

The Working Group has two arguments in favour of the necessity of establishing a regional human rights mechanism: The first argument is, that several countries in the region are exposed to UN-human rights fact-finding missions, but do not have any frame of reference to counter the results and reproaches in discussions on the international level.

The second argument is as convincing as pragmatic. The creation of a regional human rights mechanism would help in implementing existing obligations from international human rights treaties and thereby also help in

gaining a more positive international profile – an important requirement for obtaining economic development support by Western donor countries.

One social fact is supporting the difficult task of persuasion: it is the fact that not just "anybody" from NGOs or individual personalities belong to the group and negotiate with the ASEAN senior officers and ministers. Former and future political leaders[7] form this group – a factor that is extremely important in the hierarchically structured cultures of Southeast Asia. Another important factor for the success of the meetings is the person who presides ASEAN at the time of the negotiations.

First Successes in Institution-Building

The first successes seem to prove the working group's concept strategy to be right. In 1996, Working Group representatives met with ASEAN foreign ministers in Jakarta, with senior officials in 1997 in Kuala Lumpur, in 1998 in Manila to discuss the possibilities of creating a human rights regional mechanism. The answer of the ministers was initially encouraging. The Joint Communiqué of the 31st ASEAN conference in Manila (25th July in 1998) stated:

> The Foreign Ministers recalled the decision of the 26th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting held on 23–24 July 1993 in Singapore to consider the establishment of an appropriate mechanism on human rights and noted the establishment of the informal non-governmental Working Group for an ASEAN Human Rights Mechanism. The Foreign Ministers noted further the dialogues held between the Working Group and ASEAN officials in Jakarta during the 29th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting and in Kuala Lumpur during the 30th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting. They recognized the importance of continuing these dialogues and took note of the proposals made by the Working Group during its dialogue with ASEAN held in Manila on 22 July 1998.[8]

Within the framework of the 32nd ASEAN conference on 22 July 1999, a meeting with senior officials took place wherein the group made a more substantial proposal in terms of the steps to be taken. It seems, however, that the proposal was too demanding. The reaction was reportedly frosty, and it took roughly one year until the activities became more dynamic again.

In July 2000 within the framework of the ASEAN conference in Bangkok, the dialogue was taken up again. The group was advised to concentrate on the grassroots-level and to first found national working groups. This was a step forward, as previously it had been expected that national commissions on human rights would be set up as in the Philippines – a process which would have been much more complicated.

Another step forward was made on 5–6 June 2001, when for the first time a national government, the Indonesian, invited the members of all the national working groups, i.e. from Thailand, Cambodia, Malaysia and the Philippines as well as advisors from other regions to lecture on other regional human rights mechanisms. On this occasion the Indonesian took up their traditional role as motor of ASEAN-regional community-building again.

The latest meeting took place during the 34th ASEAN conference in Hanoi, 23–24 July 2001. The expectations were high, but the group was advised to cooperate more closely with ISIS for evaluating the implications from the security perspective. The Working group's first reaction was disappointment. On the other hand, however, this advice leaves a good chance for progress, because the "high politics"-field of security requires a stronger focus on the concrete details of further institution-building and will thus enhance intensified transnational discourses which may go beyond the former frame of discussion.

Example 3: The Development of the Asia Pacific Women's Watch (APWW)

Another example for the process of regional identity-and institution-building is the Asia Pacific Women's Watch (APWW). The development of the Asia Pacific Women's Watch (APWW) has also to be seen in the context of a UN world conference: the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing (1995) and its follow-up process "Women 2000", also called "Beijing+5".

The Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing 1995

The Beijing conference was announced as a confboerence on equality, peace and development;[9] however, the central topic in Beijing was the discussion on the elimination of force, discrimination and violence in women's public and private lives. Governments and NGOs pointed out, that in economic and employment policies the unpaid work of women which nevertheless still contributes to the economy should find adequate recognition. There should be no more difference in wages for equal work, equal access of women to public office, education, health care and access to all other areas of public and private life. In addition, they called for the elimination of violence against women in public and private life, where rape is not only a crime against individuals but also an instrument of war. At the end of the conference the governments confirmed the results they had already formulated at the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna 1993: international human rights laws and standards shall not be watered down by religious practices or traditions if they refer to women (Dunlop/Kyte/MacDonald 1996: 154). They passed the "Beijing Platform for Action", supposed to be an instrument for the societies to push the women agenda and thereby to better meet the

political, economic, scientific and technological developments and challenges of the twenty-first century. In the framework of this discussion there were also critical voices who claimed some alterations in certain parts of the platforms. Finally, however, 189 governments signed the document that was supposed to push equality, development and peace in the world by the support and equalization of women. By passing the platform for action the governments committed themselves to consider in their policies the so-called "12 Critical Areas of Concern". Thus the platform of Beijing became the frame of reference for the implementation and served as the basis of all regional and national action plans which followed. National barriers and impediments should be pursued with priority and a monitoring-system with strong integration of the NGOs should be established. Moreover, the General Assembly (GA) of the UN decided that after five years there should be a follow-up conference, where the results of the monitoring and stock-taking[10] should be discussed. Still, the GA decided that the platform would not be negotiable again. No severe alterations would be possible, only recommendations based on the experiences.

Regional Discourses and Institution-Building on the Way to Beijing
The Beijing Platform for Action was a result of intensive negotiations in Beijing, but also of five regional preparatory conferences at governmental and NGO-levels. The regional NGO-planning groups were called together by the CSW (Commission for the Status of Women) which was in charge of the stock-taking since 1990. Thanpuying Sumalee Chartikavanij, President of the Pan Pacific and South East Asia Women's Association (PPSEAWA), was invited to take the key role in the preparation process in Asia–Pacific. She gathered a group of NGOs and started a series of consultative meetings with representatives from the region. That group became well-known as the Asia and Pacific Non-Government Organisation Working Group (APNGOWG). It was the main goal of this working group to consolidate the diverse NGO-positions on women and to make sure that those opinions would be reflected in the final document to be signed in Beijing. APNGOWG took part in numerous regional planning-meetings and CSW conferences. Its recommendations were summarized in the so-called "Yellow Book" and became an essential lobbying-instrument for the NGO-representatives in Beijing.[11]

Regional Discourses and Institution-Building During the Follow-Up Process "Women 2000"
The follow-up conference was a special session of the General Assembly, entitled, "Women 2000: Gender equality, Development and Peace for the 21st Century". It took place in New York from 5 to 9 June 2000. Apart from 184 governments an estimated 10,000 NGO-representatives convened in parallel meetings. Not only the implementation results of the Beijing Platform for

Action but also the "Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies for Women" (NFLS)[12] passed in 1985 was put up for discussion.

The actual stocktaking started already directly after the conference of Beijing, because with the signing of the platform of action, the states had committed themselves to taking care of its immediate implementation including the establishment of national machineries which were, in close coordination with NGOs, supposed to initiate social, political and administrative initiatives for the improvement of the women's situation, monitor the results and publish them in annual reports.

In addition to such reports which were to be delivered in preparation for the special session "Women 2000", the NGOs wrote up their own reports, initiated laws and monitored their implementation. Thus, the stocktaking was indeed a process taking place over a period of time of almost five years, extending to all levels and strongly integrating the NGOs. Consequently such activities also exercised influence on the network structures among the NGOs.

After the conference of Beijing, APNGOWG concentrated its efforts on the monitoring of the platform of action. It founded a body of NGOs from Asia Pacific, called "Asia Pacific Watch (APW)".

During the session of the CSW in New York 1997 the Asia Caucus was built. It was the explicit goal to enhance the input from the Asian region to the CSW. Initiator was the regional NGO ISIS International (name from the moon goddess Isis) located in Manila. At the meeting of the CSW in 1998 Luz Martinez, representative from ISIS, organized daily meetings of the Asia Caucus. During such meetings both partners APW and Asia Caucus decided to jointly represent the interests of the women of the Asian-Pacific region. ISIS International functioned as the secretariat for Asia Caucus.

At the CSW-meeting in 1999, APW (Asia Pacific Watch), APWLD (Asia Pacific Women Law and Development), SEAwatch (Southeast Asia Watch) und Isis International finally formed the Asia Caucus Coordinating Body and was chosen to lead the process of the regional NGO-stocktaking in preparation of the GA special session "Women 2000/Beijing+5". Besides it was decided to enlarge the membership of the Asia Caucus by the members of the Pacific Rim countries. The conference also supported the wish to conduct a regional NGO-symposium in Thailand.[13]

All in all the two major events had to be prepared by the members: first, NGO-representatives were to take part in the regional meeting of ESCAP (Economic and Social Commission of Asia Pacific), which was to prepare the stocktaking of 31 governments of the Asian Pacific region. Second, the New York conference itself had to be prepared in terms of contents and logistics. A regional planning committee was founded consisting of ISIS International, APW, SEAWatch und APWLD and members from each sub-region, such as central Asia, East Asia, Southeast Asia, South Asia and Pacific Rim Countries.

The Asia–Pacific-NGO-Symposium, entitled, "Women 2000", took place in Bangkok from 31 August until 4 September 1999. A total of 385 women from 28 countries of the region gathered in Bangkok.

The conference was perceived as highly motivated and energetic, forgetting about national borders and cultural differences.[14]

> The atmosphere was positive, the energy levels and enthusiasm was high, and women worked together across national boundaries and across ethnic and cultural differences to focus on issues of mutual concern and solutions to problems which affect us all.

At the end of the conference it was decided to unite the Committee and the coalition of NGOs and to form the "Asia Pacific Women's Watch" (APWW). APWW should be formed out of three members of each of the sub-regions and representatives with key organizing functions.

The formation of the Asia Pacific Women's Watch seems to indicate the evolution of a regional (if not global) identity on women. National, cultural and ethnic differences are cut out in favour of the common issue and, important with respect to the impact on the governmental level, the NGOs were able to present their findings and views at the intergovernmental Asia Pacific Regional Meeting.[15]

CONCLUSION

The Asia Pacific Women's Watch and the Working Group for an ASEAN Human Rights Mechanism are only two particular examples for the ongoing process of regional identity- and community-building in Asia–Pacific and ASEAN. They both reflect the strong influences of global politics, the role of UN conferences in initiating regional identity- and community-building, and the increasingly important role of non-governmental actors within this process.

The beginning and development of both groups were founded in the changed political situation after the cold war, when the social effects caused by increasing globalization required new, comprehensive and cooperative international solutions. The demand for such new political solutions has led to an increase in UN world conferences on topics such as human rights, gender, poverty reduction, and environment. Since the world meetings have to be prepared on the regional and national levels, they require regular discourses and meetings which consequently imply the advance of regional institution-building both among NGOs and among governments. Since the NGOs have been increasingly influencing the agendas of the world conferences by participating in the processes of agenda-setting, implementation and monitoring, transnational discourses strongly interlinked with issue-related identity-building have also increased. At the regional preparatory

conferences the discourses on human rights or gender are deliberately broken down and focused on regional specifics. By concentrating on specific regional problems in comparison to other regions in-group/out-group-building and thus regional identity-building takes place.

The Working Group for an ASEAN Human Rights Mechanism and the ASIA Pacific Women's Watch are vivid examples for such developments. Both have come into existence within the realm of two important UN world conferences, the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna 1993, the World Conference on Women in Beijing 1995 and their follow ups. Both NGOs have been actively pursuing the set-up and intensification of transnational dialogues and regional institution-building.

One might argue that these examples only apply to the fields of "low politics" including topics which are not at the heart of international politics, security and sovereignty. However, they do illustrate the important gradual trend within international politics to more strongly interlink security issues with welfare issues. The activities of the ASEAN Working Group are illustrative for this trend. The group has been changing from a forum exclusively dealing with human rights, but (even if involuntarily) expanding to a forum where human rights and the effects on security are being discussed. Considering that former and future leaders constitute this group, this example therefore also seems to indicate the possibility of a spill-over effect of discourses from the NGO-level to the government level (see also Saparinah Sadli, 2001).

This process could be further reinforced by the organizational principles of personnel change inside the ministries and the periodical elections of politicians which may contribute to the spread of ideas, discourses and thereby to further identity-building. Educational human rights programs such as for the military in the Philippines and conducted by the national Commission of Human Rights are additional means for strengthening this development.

In addition, very rational considerations, for instance on the rising strength of China and the wish of ASEAN-member states to counterbalance such a development may contribute to this process of regional-identity-building.

What are the possible consequences of this process of regional identity- and community-building? According to the theory of identity, force within the in-group is outlawed and illegitimate, which would speak for a stabilization of ASEAN, maybe even Asia-Pacific. At the same time, however, identity-building also implies exclusion and the legitimization of force against the perceived out-groups. Thus, the danger of conflicts between different regions would arise.

Theory also spoke of the rhetorical upgrading of the in-groups and the downgrading of the out-groups in discourses. Such behaviour indeed occurred during the first Asian values debate. However, with regard to the

second debate, things seem to point in a more positive direction. There is a different quality to the discourses on human rights including strong and repeated references to global human and women's rights frameworks. Here we can detect the reflexive identity of the human and women's rights protagonists who attach themselves to the global in-group of human and women's rights activists. Even, if the differentiation between "Asian" and "Western" has prevailed, this time demarcation seems to indicate and reinforce the creation and cultivation of a regional human rights identity which might be expressed and manifested by the final institutionalization of the ASEAN human rights mechanism.

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NOTES

1. For my definition of "identity" see the following chapter.
2. Regionalization is here understood as the process of institutionalization within a geographically defined area. Institutions are "persistent and (…) connected sets of rules and practices that prescribe roles, constrain activity, and shape the expectations of actors. Institutions may include organizations, bureaucratic agencies, treaties and agreements, and informal practices that states [and non-state-actors; the author] accept as binding" (Lamy 2001: 189, Box 9.2).
3. This way the explanation from the theory of self-categorization can be transposed onto the debate on Asian values and identity. There not only had *national* identity been spoken of but also *Asian* identity. The group was intra-regionally opened up by leaving out the otherwise popular mentioning of national differences and emphasizing Asian values for the, at that time, more convenient purpose of demarcating the Asian region from "the West".
4. A recent example was the Second World Conference against the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children taking place in Yokohama in December 2001. For East Asia–Pacific the preparatory meeting took place in Bangkok, October 16–18; the Arab–African Forum met in Rabat, Morocco from October 24–26; South Asia Consultation convened in Dhaka, Bangladesh in November 4–6; the Latin American–Caribbean Region met in Montevideo, Uruguay in November 7–9; Europe and Central Asia debated in Budapest, Hungary in November 20–21; Canada, Mexico and the USA, got together in Philadelphia in December 2–3. At all of such conferences there was a stock-taking of the Implementation of the *Agenda for Action* which had been passed in Stockholm five years before, the drafting of regional positions or more concrete programs and strategies.
5. See for example the Draft Declaration of Human and Peoples' Rights of the Philippines, publicly announced on December 7th, 2000 (Timmermann 2000: 388–395 and 428–431).
6. The author conducted the interviews with governmental and nongovernmental actors in the Philippines in December 2000 and May 2001.
7. Medina, i–iv.

8. E.g. Praphan Hutasingh from Thailand; Dato Param Cumaraswamy from Malaysia; Marzuki Darusman from Indonesia; Kem Sokha from Cambodia and Wigberto Tanada from the Philippines

9. Medina, iv.

10. United Nations Guidelines to Governments and NGOs in relation to preparation for the Fourth World Conference on Women, 1995, issues September 12, 1993.

11. The General Assembly ordered the UN-Commission for the Status of Women to lead the international and therefore highly complex stocktaking. The CSW was supported by the UN-Commission for the Advancement of Women (CAW) and a vast number of NGOs.

12. From the NGOs' point of view the lobbying was very successful, because many of their proposals were accepted in the final document, the Beijing Platform for Action.

13. The NFLS was agreed upon at the Third World Conference on Women in Nairobi, Kenya in 1985. Five years later, the UN-Commission for the Status of Women (CSW) took the lead in the process of stocktaking and criticized the slow implementation of the NFLS. As a result, the CSW and ECOSOC recommended a second stocktaking five years later. It was that recommendation that started the organization and institution-building process for the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing 1995.

14. The decision for Thailand was taken, because Thai Women's Watch had already started with preparations.

15. Voices 2000 and Beyond. URL: http://www.jca.apc.org/aworc/bpfa/ngo/lbb/lbb/html (June 16, 2000). For more updated details see URL: http://www.aworc.org/bpfa/pub/front.html (July 4, 2002).

16. 31 Governments of the region took part in the conference in Bangkok, October 26–29, 1999.

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CHAPTER 14

The Most Popular Social Movement in China During the 1990s

Edward Friedman

INTRODUCTION

The discourses that intellectuals analyse on post-June 4 China almost invariably ignore the most popular one of the 1990s. Focusing on debates among liberalism, nationalism and conservatism hides most of the recent victims of political repression at the turn into the twenty-first century, people associated with *qigong* movements.

In China's mainstream discourse, elite intellectuals claim that their work advanced from a 1980s distractingly focused on the liberal Enlightenment to a 1990s realistically focused on China's true problems. Repressed *qigong* practitioners are dismissed as sources of disorder and distraction at a time when the government was trying to grapple with serious national issues. In contrast, a German scholar found that "in the 1990s there was a reversion to … neo-Confucianism … this reversion focuses on the re-establishment of an out-of-date autocratic political regime … which … has … outlived itself objectively".[1] China's hegemonic public transcript about a sober, materialistic, realistic 1990s obscures more than it reveals.

Qigong attracted well over 100 million in the 1990s. It was called a fever. How should one interpret this extraordinary popularity of exercises (*gong*) to control one's vital energies (*qi*)? How understand President Jiang Zemin's campaign to crush *qigong*? How come no one in China takes up the cause of those suffering from a Mao-like political movement?

This chapter seeks to understand, first, what made *qigong* so popular and, second, what made the discourses popular which legitimated the campaign repressing *qigong* practitioners. Exploring these questions clarifies prospects for democratization.

DATA

Falun Gong (FLG), the wheel of the law exercises, or *falundafa*, the Dharma wheel, came to outside attention on 25 April 1999 when 10,000 or so practitioners, mostly from nearby Tianjin, gathered in Beijing, ringing Zhongnanhai, home to

China's rulers.[2] A Tianjin journal had characterized FLG as a superstitious fraud led by a charlatan. Members, however, believed that FLG, a synthesis of Daoist exercises and Buddhist meditation, was scientific. Exercise, breathing, and giving up smoking and drinking worked. They improved health and prolonged life. Members avoided hospitalization costs beyond the means of the prematurely retired, mostly women, especially in urban centres with money-losing state-owned enterprises, dinosaurs of the Stalinist age of heavy steel, as in Changchum, home to FLG leader Li Hongzhi, a demobilized soldier.

Before approaching leaders in Beijing, FLG members marched and asked Tianjin authorities to retract the slander. Chinese have learned that to win redress they should call their plight to the attention of national leaders. Often, self-serving local officials acted corruptly.

But, the Tianjin authorities were heeding central directives. By 1994, the PRC senior leadership had grown anxious over the popularity of sectarian groups promising salvation. Membership had exploded especially in central China, a new mental geographic designation, an "S" shaped region running from the rust belt in the northeast to the marginalized southwest. These people fell behind in the reform era. As their nightmare continued, they sought spiritual help. As characterized by China's famous composer Wang Xilin, victims experienced "disasters, crime, destruction, massacres, deceit, persecutions, betrayal, malice, distortion of the truth, torture…" This "has been a grim and ruthless era… long and chaotic. We feel lonely, often lost, helpless, sad, confused and distressed. We worry and turn towards seeking, thinking and praying".[3]

Participants in *qigong* groups, ranging form prematurely retired women in their fifties to computer whizzes at China's MIT, Qinghua University, to young men seeking stronger bodies and serving as soldiers in the PLA following the lead of senior officers, often retired, ran well over 100 million. It was the People's Republic most popular autonomous social movement, offering an ethos similar to conservative CCP Confucianism.

Reformist leaders, trying to avoid the disintegration suffered by the Soviet Union, trying to lead China into an age of advanced science and a knowledge-based economy experienced the *qigong* movements as a threat that could stop the rise of China to glory. *Qigong* fever seemed a retrogression, an obstacle to modernization. Communist Party (CCP) leaders wanted the frauds exposed, the charlatans arrested, the people making scientific progress.

Ubiquitous snake-oil salesmen did frequently cheat gullible hopefuls. Anxious Chinese, with no faith in the ruling party, its Leninist ideology or the false promise of salvation from socialism, looked for solutions and meaning. Given the emotional void at the heart of the CCP polity, the powerless were suckers for pyramid schemes, stock frauds, useless medicine and religious cults. Others became nostalgic about the Mao era.

In the reform era, Chinese suffered a crisis of faith.[4] Many found that no good thing could result without ultimate ethical commitment. Religious participation spread. Chinese hungered for spiritual fulfilment.

FLG leader Li Hongzhi spoke and organized. Post-Mao openness provided space for civil society mobilizations. China's Qigong Scientific Research Association estimated that by the start of the 1990s, 5% of Chinese, some 60 million souls, were regular practitioners. Subsequently, *qigong* groups burgeoned.

The atheistic CCP responded in a scientistic manner. It saw spiritualism blocking modernization. For the CCP, religion was the ideology of the pre-modern era before the rise of science. That is, in contrast to the hegemonic discourse in which Chinese in the 1990s rejected the Enlightenment project of the 1980s, actually, CCP leaders only rejected the critical, tolerant and liberatory elements of the Enlightenment. They embraced a simple-minded intolerant Enlightenment discourse on negating superstition. The Enlightenment was not a seamless cloth.

Reformers also shared a discourse on why the Soviet Union had imploded. Reformers rejected the conservative view that the USSR had come apart because of reform, condemned as bourgeois liberalization and capitalist roading. Reformers believed instead that only sustained reform could save China. Russia had failed, reformers contended, because Brezhnev had reversed Khrushchev's reforms, condemning the USSR to economic stagnation and social disarray.[5]

CCP leaders longed for regional parity with America. They saw Russia losing its superpower status because it disintegrated. That splintering, CCP reformers believed, was spearheaded by religious and ethnic groups, a case of primordialism defeating modernization. Only a single-minded focus on economic growth could save China. *Qigong*, therefore was apprehended as a deadly obstacle to modernized greatness.

To the CCP leadership, believers became problems when coddled. China could not afford softness. Destabilizing spiritual forces had to be stopped so that a scientific China could rise to restored glory.

Leaders of the Communist dynasty also thought through their fate by analogies with previous dynasties. The superstitions and religions of Yellow Turbans of the Han dynasty had organized a major rebellion. Buddhism, by the Song dynasty, had spawned the White Lotus sect which proffered mantras, talismans, meditation and breathing regimes as cures for life's ills. That sect was the core of the first major rebellion which began the decline of the Qing dynasty. The Qing was further weakened by a Christian religion-infused Taiping rebellion and fell in a 1911 rebellion energized by secret societies, including the Triads who, after the 4 June 1989 Beijing Massacre, helped democracy activists escape a police dragnet.

Beijing, in the 1990s tried to coopt the Triads. The CCP would not allow popular autonomous groups. By 1994, when the CCP turned against spiritualists, FLG leader Li Hongzhi tried to survive by attaching FLG to a legitimate state body. FLG tried to register with the United Front Department, the Chinese Buddhist Association, the National Minority

Affairs Commission and an adjunct of the State Sports Administration. Since the CCP meant to outlaw FLG-like groups, Li's attempts at legality were frustrated.

The FLG founder fled in 1995 for safety to America. The CCP tried to close down FLG web sites. But FLG grew. So did other forms of *qigong* and spiritualism. New members of FLG knew they were entering a group the CCP opposed. Some appreciated the FLG because, in addition to its promise of health, strength and faith, it also was the adversary of a corrupt and useless ruling group.

Chinese authorities by 1998 acknowledged that FLG had some 40 million adherents. Other *qigong* related groups such as Zhong Gong, which had more of a rural base, especially in central China, perhaps with a core group in poverty-ridden Henan, also spread. The leaders of FLG and of Zhong Gong were both master organizers. FLG's top-down hierarchical structure was, early on, based on 39 main stations, 1900 guidance stations and 28,000 exercise sites. The CCP and FLG were similarly hierarchical and authoritarian. Both magnified the leaders' prestige, fostering charismatic attraction. By 1998, after the fall of Indonesia's corrupt dictator Suharto, a panicked CCP stepped up the crack down on FLG, Zhong Gong and similar spiritual movements whose membership had swelled to over 100 million.

The Chineseness of *qigong* groups made them attractive. Patriotism surged in the reform era. The 1990s discourse was not sober materialism. As ever more people were laid off by money-losing SOEs, *qigong* groups attracted vulnerable and patriotic Chinese.

Qigong promised an alternative to merely "western" medicine. China had unique ancient cures. Chinese doctors and herbs were in great demand. Chinese diets, herbs and exercises cured cancer, it was said, when "western" methods failed. In the 1996 soap opera, *Foreign Babes in Beijing* (Yangnu zai Beijing), said to have attracted 600 million viewers, the bad American, Robert, suffers from a cancer that cannot be cured by "western" medicine. The "only hope for a cure is traditional Chinese medicine and exercise. One final shot of the serial shows Robert practicing physical exercise amid a group of Chinese people".[6] *Qigong* was quintessentially Chinese.

If one gave up alcohol, foreswore tobacco, and embraced vegetarianism, one could be purified because one cultivated the third eye, the heavenly eye in the pinal gland between the eyebrows. Practitioners believed themselves both Chinese and scientific. The CCP crackdown on *qigong* groups therefore was incomprehensible. In the new globalization, tofu, tea, ginseng and *taiji* exercises have spread to "the west", experienced as part of a healthier life style. Even non-Chinese saw wisdom in Chinese medicine.

Millennia ago, practices to control the *qi* meshed with occult forms of Chinese Daoism, part of a return to obeying nature. Exercises, meditation, correct and doctrinal purity could save one from mortal decay. The *dao* would infuse the body.

These practices mixed with a-rational aspects of Buddhism. Meditation with a master could offer enlightenment. In the nineteenth century, a slow exercise form of martial arts grew, known as *taiji.* This martial arts revival came when China confronted foreign powers strengthened by combining modern industry and science in a new political form, the nation state. *Taiji* could help make Chinese strong enough to stand up to a foreign threat.

The term *qigong* became popular soon after 1949. Right after the founding of the People's Republic, Chinese joined in small groups with masters to do exercises promising to harness bodily energies. These health-enhancing practices were at one with an ages-old Chinese cosmogony of medicine. The CCP approved clinical trials to learn what was scientifically true. Much in the pharmacopoeia of the great civilizations is based on a core of working cures.

But, starting in 1957–1958, the CCP treated *qigong* groups as anti-socialist promoters of superstitions blocking the popular energies needed so China could achieve the perfection of communism. Only Mao's utopian fundamentalism (*yuanzhaozhizhuyi*) could save China.

Soon after Mao died in 1976 and Deng Xiaoping became China's leader, economic reform began and society (including *qigong*) revived. Once again it was a popular Chinese form of healing. At first, it was especially appealing to women victims of a combination of rationalizing layoffs and misogyny. Again laboratory trials were promoted, authorized by the Qigong Scientific Research Association. It was part of China's resurgent nationalism, proof that China had superior contributions to make to humanity.

According to FLG, the families of seven members of the CCP Politburo were serious practitioners. Gossip had it that Jiang Zemin, the successor to Deng, had consulted a senior Zhong Gong master to cure arthritis and back problems. Gossip also had it that Mao himself had been a *qigong* adept. Chineseness was superior.[7]

With *qigong* again understood as part of national self-strengthening, male membership grew, including the military, security forces, the CCP and elite university students. Renouned rocket expert Qian Xuesen was a practitioner. Young men, seeking strength, loved Rambo movies and martial arts. They bemoaned the sad fate of the men's soccer team, taken as proof that Chinese males were not yet strong enough for world competition. Victories by the great women's team were almost embarrassments, a reminder of the failure of males. Popular soap operas conveyed "an unabashed self-assertion of the male ego". The rise of *qigong* was imagined as part of the rise of a China replete with indigenous, patriotic and salvationist values.

All Chinese had the potential to live their Buddha nature. Adepts were to spread the message. Practitioners would study the texts of Li Hongzhi's FLG doctrines. These were chauvinistic. To FLG, Egyptian civilization, earlier than and superior to ancient Shang, was not a human creation, but

merely a residue of outer space aliens. Race mixing was immoral. Only Chinese reading the texts in Chinese could absorb saving powers.

FLG was a moral alternative to an immoral society. It propounded conservative, fundamentalist, patriarchal beliefs. The modern (America) was misleading the young and weakening men. Alien feminism was leading women to crop their hair short and act on male ambitions. FLG promised a return to Chinese morality.

Analysts speculate as to why President Jiang made destroying FLG a priority national campaign rather than prosecuting its leaders for fraud and welcoming conservative and patriotic health practices as an alternative to protest against the regime's inability to provide pensions and medical care. Luo Gan, a member of the very conservative Li Peng faction with security responsibilities,[8] met the 25 April 1999 demonstrators outside of Zhongnanhai. He then spoke with reform Premier Zhu Rongji who telephoned President Jiang who passed on the word that there was no CCP effort to ban *qigong* groups. The protestors then left peacefully.[9]

Popular gossip differs on why President Jiang decided to destroy FLG. In one view, he is traumatized to hear that there were already several hundred thousand CCP members in FLG and that the navy was disseminating FLG material. Jiang then sees FLG as a destabilizing threat to the unity of Party and nation. In another account, Jiang is misled by Luo Gan, who tricked FLG innocents coming from Tianjin on 25 April 1999 to protest slanders. The evil adviser Luo Gan got security forces to misdirect innocent FLG members to encircle Zhongnanhai, thereby shocking Jiang into the suppression of FLG.

Yet the public discourse does not blame President Jiang for the repression. It manifests "jacquerie" consciousness. As with Mao during the Great Leap famine, the leader is excused; the victims are good and loyal; yet the policy is evil.

Brutality was unleashed against FLG, including the imprisonment, torture and murder of thousands. Courageous large scale demonstrations of practitioners ensued. President Jiang then ordered regional leaders punished for any locals getting to Tiananmen Square to protest. Public practitioners were then detained, isolated, tortured and forced to recant. Beatings, electric shocks, psychotropic drugs and threats of murder spread.

A Marxist–Leninist disdain for the false consciousness of the masses, (workers suffer from economism, trade union consciousness and feudal remnants) under-girds the discourse on *qigong* practitioners as backwards and therefore not serving the CCP's advanced interests.[10] That campaign discourse did not initially move practitioners or observers. FLG attracted a large number of people who worked in the health field. They had local prestige. Chinese social scientists derided "government overreaction", complaining "that they could no longer do objective research on such a

religious organization".[11] Guangzhou (Canton) television had to fire top people when a subtitle was added under an image of reformist Premier Zhu reading, "Former Follower of Falungong".[12] *Qigong* groups were popularly seen as innocent, healthy and patriotic.

In January 2001, however, an attempted immolation (the Buddhist Lotus sutra approves of self-immolation, as occurred in Vietnam during the American military intervention)[13] in Tiananmen Square led to a more effective portrayal of FLG as an alien cult similar to the murderous Aum Shinrikyo in Japan which launched a sarin gas attack in the Tokyo subways, and the Branch Dravidians in the USA, whose self-immolation burned scores of innocent children to death.[14] Chinese re-imagined practitioners as alien, backward, superstitious peasants, the remnant of the pre-modern losers who did not have what it took to make it in the modern age. The encirclement of the leadership compound at Zhongnanhai proved them crazy.

With FLG leader Li Hongzhi organizing from America and demonstrators in Tiananmen increasingly foreigners, FLG began to be experienced as a foreign plot to embarrass China. That FLG practitioners could meditate peacefully in Taipei, Hong Kong, Singapore and Bangkok was also seen as a foreign plot. Educated Beijing people commented that to allow superstitious, pre-modern Chinese peasants to act as modern and sophisticated urbanites could elsewhere would destabilize China. Patriots misremembered FLG's social composition and forgot its high degree of order.

This chauvinistic discourse imagined China as vulnerable and encircled, a target of foreigners who opposed China's return to glory.[15] Allowing FLG to rise and then failing to crush it in one blow, for leaders in Beijing, this "mishandling of Falun Gong signalled to Washington that China was ripe for unrest, thus inviting the [USA's May 9, 1999] bombing of the [Chinese] embassy in Belgrade…to test Beijing's resolve against American aggression".[16] As a leading foreign policy specialist in China explained, "For political elites in China, the stark fact is that America provides sanctuary to representatives from virtually all anti-government groups…from separatists in Tibet to Falun Gong that are threatening the political order at home".[17] Since the 1989 democracy movement, "China's leaders believed that foreign forces…were behind Tiananmen, particularly the western strategy of implementing a 'peaceful evolution [to democracy] strategy'."[18] FLG was discredited as an alien plot, forgetting that the *qigong* fever spread precisely because FLG and the others were part of China's nationalistic self-strengthening. Highlighting what the hegemonic discourse about a sober materialistic 1990s obscures reveals that CCP nativism does not exhaust Chinese patriotism. Chinese could again embrace alternative political projects in a search of succour and experience themselves as patriotic in doing so. Given the Chineseness of *qigong*, the native/alien polar binary requires further exploration.

INTERPRETATIONS

One could claim that Buddhism is alien, too. It originated in India. But most Chinese are practicing Buddhists. In fact, borrowing is normal; no people is the product of pure biological continuity from time immemorial. Yet Chinese in the 1990s imagined themselves as racially unique. To them it would be untoward for lineal descendants of the Yellow Emperor, blood heirs of the same seed and soil, to embrace an alien religion. Chinese chauvinists see Buddhism in China as signified, not like Indian Buddhism. The hard conquered and transformed the soft. The Chinese essence triumphs over the polluting alien.

This discourse treats native and foreign as polar opposites. Actually, borrowers never merely mime. They see from their own perspective. They serve their own purposes. Borrowing, therefore, creatively enriches.

This is as true for borrowers of democracy as it is for emulators of Buddhism or Leninism, a Russian creation embodying reactionary forms of the backward type of feudalism that was Czarism, institutions such as the nomenclature (appointment and promotion premised on political loyalty), a pervasive secret police and an over-centralized command economy infused with gigantomania. Was Czarist Leninism attractive because it harmonized with China's imperial past or is that analogy a slander on millennia of glorious achievement by a non-feudal, culturally vibrant, trading, militarily expansionist, agrarian empire, from the non-Han founders of the Sui to the non-Han founders of the Qing?

Since Buddhism, Leninism, the Sui and the Qing can travel and be rooted in a sinic world, is it persuasive when the CCP dismisses liberal constitutionalism as alien, "Western"?[19] Is democratic, albeit Hindu (secular, multicultural) India "Western"? Is the democratic dissident turned president, Korea's Kim Dae Jong, not the product of a most Confucian society? Is not the Burmese democratic leader Aung San Suu Kyi Buddhist to her bones? Democracy is invariably indigenized and particularized to reflect unique aspects of culture and history, as were Buddhism and Leninism, which still remained Buddhism and Leninism.

Given the power of patriotic passion, the discourse on Chineseness that overcomes reason branding *qigong*, actually a quintessentially Chinese product, as alien, foreshadows possible futures. The CCP insists that its borrowed political system, Czarist Leninism, is Chinese and is authentically democratic.[20] Not so western democracy. Rule in ancient Athens was "rule by the slave-owners". Modern democracy is "rule by the bourgeoisie".[21] Election campaigns are "empty freedom of speech" because "wealthy people" control "newspapers, radio, television and the Internet".[22] Democracy was the "class dictatorship" of capitalists, an exploiting minority. In contrast, CCP rule, as first constituted by the regimes of Lenin and Stalin was people's democracy, "socialist democracy", led by "the political party of the working class".[23]

As FLG, bourgeois democracy is presented as an alien cultural project. It is "Western", replete with individualism, supposedly disastrous for Chinese. When China copied "the Western model", the "result was…civil conflicts".[24] China always "suffered by…imitating Western forms of government".[25]

The emotional edge of the screed against constitutional liberty, as in discrediting FLG, was damning the project as anti-China. Democracy was imagined as a tool of "a certain superpower" trying to make "developing countries" such as China "its dependencies". The American goal in promoting democracy was "to put the country [China] …under their control".[26] The political priority for patriotic Chinese had to be "to frustrate the hegemonic attempts to encircle and contain China".[27] Democracy was alien, treasonous.[28]

Yet when Mao took power, he presented himself as democratic in contrast to Chiang Kai-shek's reactionary one party dictatorship. Mao promised coalition government, a united front multi-party government. While astute analysts of Leninism understood the misleading quality of united front tactics and transitional slogans, well-intentioned Chinese were attracted to the CCP precisely because it presented itself as China's most democratic force.

To many outside observers during the era of New Democracy, Chinese seemed heirs of a great humane civilization that was so divided against itself as to seem a sheet of loose sand, as Sun Yat-sen, known as the father of the 1911 republican revolution, characterized China as it descended into warlordism, chaos and civil war. Such individualistic people, it seemed, could never become subjects of Leninist-Stalinist collectivism as had occurred in Russia, heir to an over-centralized, Czarist, police state despotism. Chinese were too humanistic, familistic and individualistic.

US Secretary of State Dean Acheson voiced this broadly shared sentiment in explaining his Department's White Paper on its China policy. Eventually, the great humanism and individualism of the gloriously creative people of China would prevail, he asserted. Mao, in letters answering Acheson, agreed that educated Chinese were indeed committed to democracy. But, Mao argued, this was because they had been fooled into thinking that America was free.

To make America abhorrent, the US military, in China after defeating Hirohito's Japan was portrayed as arrogant imperialists acting regardless of Chinese life. American soldiers drove wildly, killing or threatening innocent Chinese. One GI brutally raped a Chinese student. A campaign was launched to drive the raping, murdering Americans out of China and out of Chinese hearts in order to discredit "American democracy".

At the same time, the CCP covered up how the Red Army despatched by Stalin into Manchuria in August 1945 had raped Chinese. The Chinese victims were legion. Stalin's minions were also a massively raping army as they marched into East and Central Europe and into northern Korea. The drunk

and undisciplined "Soviet soldiers often attacked women", raping hundreds of thousands. At times, the "women were raped by dozens of soldiers lining up to take their turns".[29] A commander would respond to complaints about the raping "by laughing".[30]

The CCP's purpose in discrediting "American democracy" was to protect the CCP from democrats. Massive Russian raping was hidden; one alleged American crime was a campaign focus. To discredit democracy, Chinese were taught to hate Americans and the culture which supposedly shapes Americans, the democratic "West".

Campaigns portraying US democracy as immoral continue. In 2002, the Chinese press reported that an American bus rider lifted a woman's blouse to expose her breasts. The "shameless", "brazen-faced" American who engaged in the "low-down acts" had "salacious eyes". He beat and yelled "fuck you" at heroic Chinese who came to the victim's defense.[31] A "wave of criticism" followed in articles with titles like "Know Whom to Love, Whom to Hate".

Another report told about a foreign "hooligan", an "evil-doer" who "acted wildly", hitting a woman bus driver and passenger, leaving them "wounded, with blood dripping down their faces". Chinese, with "bitter memories of being bullied and humiliated by foreign imperialist powers" responded with "righteous indignation" to protect the "national honor".[32] The CCP dictatorship has long presented the Chinese people with a polar binary of ethically protective Party patriots versus immoral aliens, democrats or FLG.

The Korean War, with Chinese mourning family killed by US GIs, made anti-Americanism palpable. The big lie convinced Chinese that America practiced germ warfare on them. American democracy was "a Grim Reaper riding the back of a housefly, or…releasing diseased rats upon the Chinese population".[33] Enemies were portrayed as vermin and traitors, threats to the nation.

Ever since the late 1940s, Chinese have been taught to frame opposition to democracy as disdain for bourgeois, immoral America.[34] Consequently, when participating in the 2001 United Nations Dialogue Among Civilizations, the Chinese bottom line was, "In the final analysis, rights politics means fighting against hegemony". This was because American hegemonists "throw their weight about….ruthlessly [to] oppress weak ones [China] …".[35]

Such anti-American democracy ideas have sunk into the subconscious of many Chinese. They are even embodied in FLG's teachings, which not only are anti-Christian and anti race mixing (America is taken in much of Asia, as well as by Le Pen in France, not just in China, as a mongrelized society), but also stigmatize modern culture, with America its extreme embodiment. Your innocent daughter would never be safe there. Feminism, for FLG, threatened the strong masculinity that China needed to save itself from foreign threats. Chinese should have women stay at home, support their men and raise their children. While FLG's popularity reflects many forces and discourses,

among them is a reactionary populist discourse similar to the conservative wing of the CCP.

But the CCP is experienced as corrupt and self-serving. People, therefore, look elsewhere for spiritual sustenance. FLG in particular and *qigong* in general were imbibed for such nourishment. Chinese search for founts of ethical being and the CCP represses as alien any organization likely to offer sustenance for the morally famished. The rapid spread of *qigong* groups and the extraordinary rewards to Li Hongzhi's organizational talents reflect the passions, including racist chauvinism, fear of modern culture and anti-Americanism, which infuse Chinese society. The 1990s was not merely an era of pragmatic materialism.

An example of the lack of popular resonance to a narrow materialism was the virtual non-response to Deng Xiaoping's final gift to the Chinese people. When Deng breathed his last, his final orders, as Vivienne Shue points out in a forthcoming study, included having his corpse dissected and made available to medical research because, Deng wrote, he was a thorough-going materialist. He wanted Chinese to donate their corneas and to give up the Confucian superstition of preserving in tact the ancestor's body. Confucianism is not merely sober rationality, as China's 1990s hegemonic discourse wrongly claims.

Despite a campaign for cornea donations, the results were minuscule. In this final act, Deng revealed himself, in some respects, as very much a child of the Enlightenment and the May Fourth spirit. For Deng, the 1990s was not a total renunciation of the critical spirit of the Enlightenment 1980s. But conservatives have rejected Deng's value thrust and built on the reactionary and nativist tendencies in Mao's and the Party's ceaseless campaign of hatred for democracy in the guise of contempt for the progressive, liberatory and egalitarian dynamics built into the promise of Enlightenment modernization. Reactionaries promote a romantic nationalism similar to what rose in Europe in the late nineteenth century and then devastated the continent in the first half of the twentieth.

The change in discourses from the 1980s to the 1990s was, in part, a defeat of the best in the Deng reform project, analogous to a defeat of Sakharov by Solzhenitsyn in an age where China's economic reforms edge ahead in an era of Brezhnevian politics, a corrupt morass entrenching the self-serving ruling apparatus. A narrow chauvinism spread which included a spiritualism, as with FLG, in which economic growth, as materialism and Marxism would be understood and stigmatized as Western and alien and, in their stead, a racial Han project of future national glory wins out as authentic Chineseness, harmonizing with the nativistic and nostalgic discourse shared by FLG with CCP-oriented nativists, neo-Confucians, the new left and conservatives. FLG's rise was emblematic of the popularity of such cultural tendencies.

Qigong fever for things truly Chinese rose with a host of revivals of ancient China, including writing the names of new businesses in ancient

characters, studying the Book of Changes (Yi Jing), touting the power of geomancy, and finding virtue in the original Confucianism (neo-Confucianism was too democratic). The rise of FLG was part of the resurgent Chineseness that pervaded the 1990s.

These nativistic tendencies rose, Liu Qingfeng finds, because since June Fourth 1989, the Chinese government has not loosened its iron grip on "ideological control". Given "1990s social control", Chinese channelled their energies into permissible forms, especially those which supported and promoted "traditional Chinese culture".[36] National studies (*guo xue*) and new left post-modernist fundamentalism both rejected the notion of a liberating rupture to a rational, modern, liberal Enlightenment.[37] The Chinese state consequently promoted a "return to tradition" which strengthened conservatism and nativism and negated the May Fourth critical apprehension of tradition.[38] The CCP supported "traditional Confucianism", Tang Yijie finds, to legitimate a patriotic claim to Taiwan, to legitimate authoritarian politics combined with state-guided market economics ("the Asian model") and to counter the appeal of "Western" democracy.[39]

This conservative authoritarian chauvinism, Liu Qingfeng notes, held the hope that "in the twenty-first century, it will be the turn of Eastern or Oriental culture to assume dominance once more". That is, "just as the October Revolution of 1917 'delivered Marxism to China with one cannon blast,' the end of the 1980s brought neo-conservatism to China with the sound of one gunshot (…June Fourth) ".[40] FLG, as other cultural fevers of the 1990s bought into the regime's nationalistic legitimation that the twenty-first century would witness the rise again of the East (meaning China, definitely not Japan) and that, therefore, it is necessary that a Chinese essence structure the moral being of the gloriously rising Chinese nation.

Although the CCP crushed FLG, it was, in some ways, a sectarian fratricide. While reformers sit at the helm of the ship of state, an economic crash tied to international turmoil could strengthen the forces reflected in shared FLG and CCP discourses. The story of FLG, especially the discourses it shared with reactionary elements in the CCP and within anxious, angry and nostalgic forces in Chinese society, auger certain futures and de-legitimate others.

CONCLUSION

Given the continuing crackdown by the CCP on diverse forms of spirituality, including *qigong* groups, the value of democracy for a dignified life is apparent. How else protect religious practice? How else offer people a meaningful civil society? How else guarantee toleration of the diverse ways humans seek ultimate and incommensurable life goals? How else check an arbitrary police, a politicized judiciary and a regime that imposes degrading fawning and lying on countless innocent beings? By the end of the 1990s

ever more Chinese recognized the virtues of democracy for reducing fear in daily life and for making more likely a stable society allowing people to live their values in normal and peaceable ways. Democracy augured dignity and self-respect.

But given the suppression of FLG, people wonder, where are China's democratic heroes, its Mandela, Aquino, Aung San Suu Kyi and Kim Dae Jong? Have they been cowed into silence? Or coopted? Or does Han patriotism trump all else? Or do people share the regime's discourse which discredits as alien whatever is not supportive of the ruling order?

The costs of opposing the Party dictatorship are too high for these to be fair questions. After Brezhnev ordered the 1968 crushing of the Prague Spring attempt to build socialism with a human face, only a few courageous souls in Moscow protested, all swiftly despatched to the Gulag.

Yet the stunning silence is evidence against a theory that market reforms automatically further independent, critical action. A shared feeling that nothing should be allowed to block China's rise weighs against privileging democracy and human rights. Chinese tend to believe that their nation's rise is still fragile and that anything which might cause China to fail and fall and fracture, as did the Soviet Union, cannot be tolerated. The power of the discourse de-legitimating FLG flows from that hegemonic legitimation.

The nationalism the regime stokes to hold the nation together also haunts the ruling party. The CCP has created unattainable patriotic expectations vis-a-vis Taiwan, America and Japan. Embracing impossible hopes, people mock those in power for selling out the nation, for caring only about enriching their own families and support networks. People therefore could yet look outside the CCP for real patriots.

Should a financial bubble burst, a democracy promising to expose the corrupt and to make transparent how the people's taxes are spent could seem attractive, a way of proving that rulers are not selling out the nation. Suddenly democracy would seem very Chinese, very patriotic. Citizens would welcome normality, a world where one is not silenced, denounced, imprisoned or tortured for living in accord with one's ultimate notions of right and wrong. FLG, however reactionary and undemocratic, would then be transformed into a harbinger of China's democratization.

Politics, however, is a contingent arena. The discourses that helped win FLG its base of support – national chauvinism, physical strength, racism, sexism, homophobia and appeals to fundamentalist longings for earlier times imagined as simple and healthier – suggest that a fascist-like project could also win great popular support.

Discourses do not automatically translate into political forces, even as they frame debates and structure the cognitive terrain. Institutions, leaders and contingent factors such as the state of the economy or the death of a leader or a natural catastrophe or war are also weighty. That is, they create Machiavellian movements which can be seized for better or for worse.

Although FLG was crushed and discredited, the crisis of faith that facilitated its extraordinary spread deepens. Therefore, so has the quest for spiritual salvation. The material world seemed to offer no egress for those writhing from inhumanity and insecurity. Religions, spiritual movements, sects (such as Red Lightening) and cults grew even in richer parts of the nation. Even Christianity was popular. Chinese visiting America often converted. House churches seemed ubiquitous. The local CCP even protected a few. Some families changed their name to Jiao (religion), a talisman that would augur succour for the suffering.

Ruling groups worked to get those seeking salvation to see the Party leader as their saviour much as did Mao Zedong. But scepticism toward state propaganda about internal Chinese realities renders official sources incredible, powerless to persuade. Yet, as Mao and Li Hongzhi, President Jiang also proved a shrewd mobilizer of popular passions by utilizing mass culture.

At the end of the twentieth century and the start of the twenty-first century, viewers were shown a series of evening soap operas touting the patriotic and other virtues of strong emperors such as the Manchu ruler Kang Xi who added Taiwan to the empire. The shows mesmerized. Living under arbitrary local despots who ripped off the powerless, the allure of a strong man, a saviour, grew in popularity. An emperor type ruler could restore order and dignity, ever more people came to believe. Democracy, experienced as immoral, alien and American, seemed no solution to China's pains.

In sum, the 1990s notion that realism had replaced injurious Enlightenment discourses of the 1980s misled. Many of the discourses which made FLG popular are also the discourses of the CCP's nationalism. Whether the regime thrives, survives or is replaced, whether by democracy or militaristic fascism or something else, analysts should not assess the PRC's future without heeding the power of the discourses which made for "The most popular social movement in China during the 1990s".

NOTES

1. Dieter Senghaas, *The Clash Within Civilization* (New York City: Routledge, 2002), 25.

2. The data synthesizes materials in human rights compilations, conversations with Chinese social scientists and four major articles: Julia Ching, "The Falun Gong," *American Asian Review* 19, 4 (2001): 1–18; David Qwnby, "Transnational China Project Commentary: Falungong as a Cultural Revitalization Movement: An Historian Looks at Contemporary China," October 20, 2000, audio transcript; Palmer, David, "The Doctrine of Li Hongzhi," *China Perspectives,* 35 (2002): 14–23; Xu Jian, "Body, Discourse and Cultural Politics of Contemporary Chinese Qigong," *Journal of Asian Studies* 58, 4 (1999): 961–991.

3. David Kelly, "Behind the Red Curtain," *The Weekend Australian*, 7–8 July 2001: R4–R5.

4. As an unemployed northeast rust-belt worker put it, "In my generation, we all talked about realizing…communism, but now it doesn't exists…So what are we realizing? Nothing. Nothing at all." (NPR online, August 13, 2002).

5. Stephen Kotkin, *Armageddon Averted* (New York City: Oxford University Press, 2002).

6. Sheldon Lu, *China, Transnational Visuality, Global Postmodernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 233.

7. The paranormal (e.g. ESP) attracted a huge following. Numerous UFO sightings were reported. Resurgent nationalism required surpassing America. Why should aliens prefer to land in Carswell, New Mexico in America? Chinese sightings swiftly permitted China to catch-up with and surpass America in UFO sightings.

8. Jasper Becker, "China's new leadership is already picked," *South China Morning Post,* 10 January 2002.

9. Hairen/Zhong (pseud.), *Zhu Rongji zai 1999* (Zhu Rongji in 1999, New York City: Mirror Books, 2001, translated in *Chinese Law and Government*, January–February 2002); Zhong, "Jiang Zemin said Falungong is a Meticulously Planned Event," *Hsin Pao* (Hong Kong), 18 September 2001, translated by FBIS.

10. President Jiang, strongly backed by Li Peng is said to have turned against FLG the day after the conciliatory phone conversation with Premier Zhu despite the dissents of Zhu and two other Politburo Standing Committee members.

11. Berthold Brecht made the ills of such a discourse palpable after the Communist rulers of East Germany's "workers democracy" crushed a 1953 workers movement and announced that the Party had lost faith in the people. Brecht satirically suggested that, since it was impossible for the people to democratically change the government, the Party instead proposed to "change the people."

12. Richard Madsen, "Academic Freedom in China," *Asia Program Special Report,* No. 102, Washington, DC, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, April 2002: 9.

13. Matthew Forney, "Killing the Messenger," *Time Asia,* 18 April 2002.

14. In 2002 retired Chinese workers cheated of their pensions attempted a mass suicide.

15. Immolators can be seen as patriotic sacrificers. In Prague, there is a national shrine where 21 year old Jan Palach burned himself to death to protest the Soviet Union's 1968 re-invasion of Czechoslovakia.

16. Those close to power in Beijing see the world framed in conspiratorial super-realist dynamics. The Gulf War was a US effort to control world oil so it could dominate Germany and Japan. German unification was a Chinese opportunity to ally with a strengthened Germany to check the evil USA. Chen You-wei, "Viewing a Changing China from the PRC Embassy Window in Washington, DC," *Journal of Contemporary China* 11, 30 (2002).

17. Craig Smith, "Tell-All Book Portrays Split in Leadership of China," *New York Times,* 17 January 2002.

18. Ray Cheung, "Peers Unite in Praise of Likely Top Policy Adviser," *South China Morning Post,* 3 May 2002.

19. Chen You-wei, 168.

20. Given the West Asian and African influences on ancient Greece, there surely is no sense to the idea that Greece was uniquely "Western." Even today, given the impact of the Ottomans, Greece is not simply "Western," whatever that term is meant to signify.

21. Actually, the CCP imprisons democratic activists.

22. Li Tieying, "Questions in the Theory of Democracy," *Social Sciences in China*, Summer 2001: 6–7.

23. Zhu Muzhi, "Deliberations on Democracy," *Beijing Review,* 2 May 2002: 20.

24. Li, 10.

25. Zhu, 19.

26. Li, 12. Treating democracy as bad because it is bourgeois (rather than alien) is more difficult for the CCP entering the twenty-first century, because the socialist command economy has been discredited and the CCP embraces the market and invites businessmen to join the CCP.

27. Li, 22.

28. This discourse is not uniquely Chinese. Surveying former Soviet bloc nations, a Georgian academic finds that "a country where the West is seen as alien will be a country that is less likely for that reason to choose democracy." Ghia Nodia, "The Impact of Nationalism," *Journal of Democracy* 12, 4 (2001): 31.

29. A.C. Grayling, "Fulfillment of a terrible promise," *Financial Times*, 18–19 May 2002.

30. Gordon Craig, "The Russians are Coming," *The New York Review,* 23 April 2002: 45–46.

31. "Ins and Outs of a Young American's Roguery on Bus in China," *Renmin Ribao*, 15 March 2002.

32. "Know Who (sic) to Love, Who (sic) to Hate," *Renmin Ribao*, 25 April 2002.

33. Ruth Rogoski, "Nature, Annihilation and Modernity," *Journal of Asian Studies* 61, 2 (2002): 385.

34. Educated Chinese, however, deny that they hate Americans, pointing to how Chinese admire Michael Jordan or patronize Starbucks or watch Hollywood movies. But all people have some admirable achievements. What was decisive was that democracy was a fraud and American culture was threatening.

35. Shen Qurong, "Dialogue Among Civilizations," *Xiandai Guoji Guanxi*, September 2001.

36. Liu Qingfeng, "The Topography of Intellectual Culture in 1990s Mainland China," in *Voicing Concerns*, ed. Gloria Davis (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2001), 48–50.

37. Mitchell Cohen, "An Empire of Cant: Hardt, Negri and Postmodern Political Theory." *Dissent* (Summer 2002): 17–28.

38. Liu, 55.

39. Tang Yijie, "Some Reflections on New Confucianism in Mainland Chinese Culture of the 1990's," in Gloria Davis, ed., 132, 133.

40. Liu, 60–61.

Chinese Professionals: New Identities and New Style Politics

Carol Lee Hamrin

The impact of the global market economy and commercial culture has brought rapid transformation to China's social structure and to the role of the highly-educated in society and in politics. The Mandarin tradition, in which the educated elite takes on moral responsibility for the interests of the collective while the populace has little involvement in public decision making, is changing rapidly. There has been considerable legitimation of pluralism in society and the pursuit of self-interest, including for new communities of specialized professionals. China is developing its own cohort within the global managerial elite, which uses the same social science administrative techniques whether in government, business or the non-profit sector.

To maintain its monopoly on China's modernity project, the CCP is reforming itself into a managerial party, using a mix of repression and cooptation against potential competitors with a focus on incorporating new business and professional elites. But whether this alliance will hold in the face of major systemic challenges is in question. Discoures on how China should manage globalization are calling for more fundamental political reform.

NEW IDENTITIES: MANDARINS TO MANAGERS

In the 1980s, senior politicians opened up a window into decision making for a tiny group of public intellectuals in Beijing and Shanghai, who offered generalist advice and moral rationalization for policy departures from the Mao era. The older generation of revolutionary leaders was not at home in the world of ideas, and they needed advice in coping with the sudden rush of influence from the outside world. Intellectuals seized the opportunity to resurrect their early modern role as social critics and key agents in China's modernization. But their self-perception still reflected something of the literati tradition of a moral-intellectual priesthood, which educated the masses while speaking on behalf of the people to power-holders. Generalists trained in Marxist-Leninist "political economics" were recruited into political

"brain trusts" and encouraged to comment on the grand ideological issues of national identity and direction. These establishment intellectuals were state employees who relied on personal ties to senior officials to provide service. In an alliance of interests with reform politicians, intellectuals joined in a crusade against Soviet era excesses, when they were forced to serve as state propagandists at best, and at worst were labelled the "stinking ninth" category of "bourgeois petty intellectuals".

Based mainly in Beijing, with some in Shanghai, this small community fragmented in the 1990s, in part due to state repression after the tragedy of Tiananmen and in part due to the new pluralistic identities and career mobility of younger intellectuals. The post-June Fourth fate of the staff of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences reflects both dynamics. Social scientists bore the brunt of the blame for supporting Tiananmen demonstrators due to the prominent role of CASS employees. Tighter political controls and even tighter budgets were their reward. The best and brightest have either gone overseas, left the Academy to "leap into the sea" (*xia hai*) of business, or positioned themselves with a token involvement in CASS activities while moonlighting in business, teaching or consulting.

In all, the educated are beginning to take on the role and lifestyle of modern professionals. There are several dynamics behind this momentous change. First, they are less special than they were, as the percentage of the population made up of highly educated citizens rises (although still quite low in international comparison). University education, which was accessible only to 2% of the relevant age group in 1980, was available to 8% in 1998, 11% in 2000, with 15% expected in 2005. The whole urban populace has expanded from 25% to over 30% of the population in a decade and is still rising rapidly. These urbanites now have a greater variety of adult and distance learning opportunities. Meanwhile, literacy has risen to 75%, with adult literary even higher.

The educated also face growing competition for career opportunities. Graduates no longer are assigned work by the state and must compete for the best jobs in non-state technical employment. They are thinking in terms of building personal careers, not just finding a job for life. Graduates in 2002 had high-expectations for high-paying jobs in the big cities that may not be met. Nevertheless, overall demand was good for the following majors, in descending order: information technology (IT), finance and economics, politics and law, life sciences, environmental science and engineering, management and foreign languages, art, engineering, math, physics and chemistry, agriculture and forestry. Only in medicine and teaching would there be a decrease in demand.

Under the impact of commercial culture, status has begun to disperse from the power elite and the well-educated to include those with money. Business professionals and technical staff, especially in foreign-owned enterprises, can earn more than officials and academics. In a mid-1990s poll,

graduate students listed the most desirable jobs as those in private enterprise (50%), universities or research institutes (17%), government organizations (9%), and state-owned enterprises (5%).

Commercialism has also transformed the media and the arts. Mass media are highly-competitive big business. Many artists have left the world of state subsidies to cater to popular consumer tastes. Even state-employed "knowledge workers" have felt the effects of commercialism. Their lives are no longer totally controlled by the state work unit (*danwei*), as alternative employment and housing options have opened up, giving them greater autonomy. Even at work, due to government downsizing and budget cuts, they have been thrust into unfamiliar roles of fund-raising for projects and competition for journal readership.

There has been a strong impact from transnational professional communities. In the 1980s, there were several training and exchange programs funded by American foundations aimed at building up key professions such as law, economics, sociology and international relations. By the 1990s, China's professional circles were being shaped by professional values and international standards, not just political and personal interests, as they sought respect from their peers. Global community ties have grown exponentially through English language publishing and conferencing, overseas post-graduate study or training, joint research projects, academic sabbaticals in both directions, and the use of Internet communication in both English and Chinese.

It is important to note that the US is the central node of professional communities, both global and regional. The region is "East Asia and Pacific", not "Asian". Although both the business and consumer cultures are mediated by the Chinese diaspora and other Asians to a great extent, this is not true for the academic culture of the humanities and social sciences, which is dominated by American Anglo discourse.

NEW-STYLE POLITICS

The intellectual elite has begun to relate in different ways to the political elite. First, the function of government itself is beginning to change. Older bureaucratic administrators are being replaced by pro-active forecasters, managers and coordinators who use more indirect tools of governance. Under Premier Zhu Rongji's leadership, the State Council is hiring young, foreign-educated professionals under new criteria that stress education more than political correctness. State education and employment needs are increasingly specialized and technical in nature; generalists no longer have their past influence. Civil service reform has included competition for government jobs. A new code of conduct for civil servants reflects professionalization.

Political leaders themselves, along with their policy advisors, are better educated than in the 1980s. There is less distance and mutual suspicion

between the two elites. Researchers relate to the state along a wider spectrum from the government's now more professional internal research bodies to quasi-independent educators who do consulting for both business and government to think tanks with independent, often foreign, sources of funding.

FROM SPECIAL ELITE TO ORDINARY CITIZEN

Many other educated Chinese today can choose not to be political, a refreshing change from the past. In part this is by state design and in part, reflects personal preference in an era of cynicism about ideology. Through the 1990s, the content of political education shifted from socialist doctrine to patriotic pride in Chinese history and culture. Beginning in 1994, students taking college entrance exams in the sciences were not required to take an examination in politics.

Intellectuals can no longer presume to be the "voice of the people". There are new channels for reflecting as well as influencing public opinion due to the rapid spread of communication technology and independent opinion polling and social surveys. The government pays close attention to the opinions expressed in Internet chat rooms and T.V. and radio talk shows. Through these means, urban public opinion and even rural opinion now has some relatively unmediated impact on policy-makers. Professionals now tend to speak for their own diverse interests, something which is increasingly legitimate.

THINK GLOBALLY, ACT LOCALLY

Probably the most important change in the 1990s was a shift in mindset – from an earlier idealistic preoccupation with debates over grand moral-ideological issues of national identity and alternative reform programs to a pragmatic focus on specific issues needing problem-solving. The focus shifted from "isms" (*zhuyi*) to "problems" (*wenti).* This in part reflected tacit consensus in both political and intellectual elites that the collapse of Soviet communism left China no choice but to learn to swim in the sea of globalization or perish. Deng Xiaoping's insistence in 1992 on rapidly building a market economy was accompanied by a taboo against debating the merits of "capitalism" vs "socialism", to protect the state from having to explain how it squares the ideological circle in China's "market Leninism". Premier Zhu captured the new mindset with his slogan, "Talk less, do more".

To some extent, the shift toward pragmatic social engineering reflected the ascendancy of well-educated and well-travelled technocrats in the government, who basically share the elitist, technical ethos of many intellectuals. The Soviet-trained engineers in the leadership have been promoting a younger generation of technical experts, many trained as engineers and scientists but also as economists and financial experts. Faith prevailed in the application of science and technology to resolve China's

problems and achieve modernization. Technical rationality migrated to the centre of the CCP's operational ideology, with economic development at the core of all policy decisions. Vaguely-defined "scientific socialism" suited to Chinese national conditions trumps all competing value systems.

The shift toward pragmatism also reflected a disillusionment with totalistic thinking and revolutionary top down transformation after 1989. With greater exposure to the US, a more tempered understanding of the US replaced the 1980s mythology about the American system, when it appeared to be a panacea that would help China leap-frog into its destiny. The failure of "shock therapy" to cure post-communist ills elsewhere, and the sudden implosions of Indonesia, Russia, and then Argentina have been continual reminders that the Chinese people could again pay a high price for overnight remedies. The mainstream came to favour steady, gradual progress as the best China could hope for. Two well-known 1980s reformers, after sabbaticals in the US, brought this lesson home when they wrote, *Farewell to Revolution*.

Some of the grand thinkers from the 1980s have been critical of the lack of macro discourse on the mainland. Historian Jin Guantao, writing from Hong Kong in 1999 on the evolution of China's political structure, lamented the lack of "great thinkers", since "intellectuals have become slaves of the market and of a division of labour as well as professionalism". He attributed this "demise of critical consciousness" to "people's loss of faith in the mastery of thought and knowledge from a totalistic perspective". This loss of faith was promoted by the failure of the 1980s Democracy Movement, which prompted both self-reflection and mutual blaming. It has been buttressed by post-modern theorizing imported from Western academia, which also debunks "meta-narratives" and calls for a critical stance.

PROFITS AND PATRIOTISM

Nevertheless, the lack of grand theorizing for much of the 1990s may not at all reflect a lack of political consciousness. Many professionals are working within their narrow sector or locality with a steady eye on future systemic change, and when questioned about their current lack of critical activism, will stoutly defend their choice to pursue a different approach. Well-known Tiananmen dissidents turned entrepreneurs, for example, point out that their new business activities are not necessarily in conflict with their former idealism. One dot.com founder in the plastics industry "works only with private enterprises, to help nudge China toward freedom and prosperity". He is organizing a buyers' cooperative to make them competitive with larger state-owned rivals. One self-made entrepreneur who started life as a farmer's son, gained experience and connections in the army, and now is the largest employer and tax-payer in Xinjiang Province, is also a self-made intellectual. He has a "bookcase chockablock with tome on political and government systems".

In one study of the intense impact on people's lives of privatization and commercialization, the author concluded that what we are witnessing in China, compared with the dramatic breakdown of old regimes in Europe, is a "slow, soft, and messy meltdown of the old structure… A lot of the educated urban Chinese involved in economics, history and law like to talk about Taiwan as a model". For example, when the author asked "So, are big lawyers like you…are too busy making money to represent political prisoners?", one lawyer replied.

> We take another approach; we are helping China's 'peaceful evolution…' We've been helping China set up new economic laws, to help our clients do business by market rules…Capitalism boils down to two basic things: private ownership and fair competition…Gradually there will be more laws and rules; the market will be more mature, more compatible with international standards, the competition more fair and open. Then China will have been structurally transformed! Political change will come after that. Look at Taiwan.

China's fastest growing profession is law, despite the notorious corruption among police and in the courts, which makes for more danger than profit. One reason may well be similar motives to bring about systemic change from the inside in a very concrete fashion. The central policy injunction to build up the rule of law has created a new channel for political reformers. The 2001 passage of a new marriage law, for example, was an unprecedented exercise in obtaining expert advice and public opinion, not just elite input. The designer of China's bankruptcy law, now a consultant in great demand by local government and state enterprise managers engaged in bankruptcy procedures, spent time in prison after 1989, when he sought to mobilize congressional leaders to rescind martial law. His next project is to promote a law allowing overt lobbying. Other reformers are quietly preparing the way for eventual laws to protect freedom of the press and of religion.

DYNAMICS OF POLITICAL DEBATE: DISCOURSE ON GLOBALIZATION

The periodic emergence of high-profile intellectual discourse on national issues is strongly shaped by five year political cycles. These are the Communist Party Congress and National People's Congress, which appoint new senior leaders and adopt packages of policy guidelines, and the five year socioeconomic planning cycle, which sets concrete state policy and budget priorities for all sectors. These formal processes require comprehensive five year reviews, as well as research and advice and drafting for new policy platforms, all of which requires the talents of the educated

elite. During the several year internal process of creating new programs, disputes often spill-over into public discourse as proponents of competing policies seek evidence of public support, as they lobby against competitors for the ear of top decision-makers.

International events that reflect on China's reputation, such as hosting APEC in Shanghai in 2001, or special anniversary dates with political import also provide opportunity for contestation between intellectuals and the party-state. In 1999, for example, occurred the eightieth anniversary of the May Fourth Movement, tenth anniversary of June Fourth, and fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the PRC. Increasingly, unexpected events or developments in China's external environment will also have an impact on debates and plans, especially when they challenge the "party line" on an important issue, requiring either a new line of policy defence or a policy adjustment. A case study of such dynamics can be found in the late 1990s debate over globalization between liberals and the New Left.

SECTORAL CONCERNS

China's ongoing negotiations with the US and others regarding membership in the World Trade Organization (WTO) first prompted discussions among specialists in trade and international law, who were encouraged by the State Council to analyse what changes China needed to make in its economic and legal systems. Economists and sociologists began to look at the risks from WTO posed to different socio-economic sectors. There was significant input from outside experts, including US trade negotiators who introduced a "win-win road map", which later was used by Chinese officials to "sell" the US–China agreement to internal audiences.

Foreign affairs specialists were re-thinking China's policy of promoting an alleged trend toward multi-polarity in the face of evidence that the US "hyper-power" was growing, not waning, as it rode the tide of globalization. Bilateral confrontations such as Congressional lobbying against Beijing's candidacy to host the 2000 Olympics, and the cross-strait crisis of 1995–1996, had prompted a series of books on the theme, "the China that can say no". These had the special cache of being written by young returned scholars. Such sentiments reflected post-June Fourth Chinese education in anti-imperialist patriotism and internal government admonitions to maintain vigilance against US intentions to divide and weaken China. The highly-nationalistic sentiments of resentment against American "bullying" especially captivated younger audiences and were echoed in Internet exchanges, putting pressure on the leadership, and especially the Foreign Ministry, to prove they were not being soft on the US.

Meanwhile, elite writers and artists exchanged gloomy views on how to deal with the commercial competition resulting from cultural pluralism. Along with the flood of popular foreign cultural products, there was also a "fever" of interest in nativistic products, a search for "roots", and academic

"national studies", all of which spawned a resurgence of interest in Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism. Beijing City experimented with classes in Confucian ethics, martial arts, calligraphy and traditional musical instruments in the public schools. This trend was often funded by entrepreneurs and encouraged by top political leaders through appearances at international conferences or references to "Asian values".

THE 1998 "BEIJING SPRING": NATIONAL DEBATE

All of these disparate strands came together starting in the Fall of 1997, when Jiang Zemin conducted a state visit to Washington and the Fifteenth Party Congress convened and for the first time since 1989 endorsed the resumption of political reform, defined vaguely as the building of a rule of law. Intellectuals seized the window of opportunity to engage in discourse on the import for China of global expansion of the US model of market economics and democratic politics. In the interval between Jiang's visit and President Clinton's return visit in June 1998, participants felt safe in pressing the envelope. Debate broke out between advocates of Western liberalism and anti-Western New Left views, continuing into 1999.

Picking up on themes first voiced during the upsurge of political reform in the late 1980s, prominent liberals like the elderly Li Shenzhi, former Vice President of CASS, argued again that globalization is the highest, latest stage in the inevitable process of human development, and promises great benefit to China. Cultural globalization, which was spreading universal [not American] values of freedom, democracy and human rights, should be welcomed in China. Later, on the occasion of the October 1999 fiftieth anniversary of the PRC's founding, Li warned that a continued refusal on the part of power holders to consider democratization would lead to chaos in China once more. New Left critics countered that global capitalism would do more harm than good to China; the Western political model of "representative democracy" actually was elitist and would only increase social inequalities and accelerate social, cultural and environmental degradation. They advocated "direct democracy", and their writings had a distinctly populist, even Neo-Maoist, flavour.

A New Twist

Although the Liberal–New Left discourse at first glance appeared to echo competing totalistic models, in fact the liberals were arguing on behalf of democratic institutions and process, not an ideology or social movement (which did characterize the New Left). This startling revival of classical liberalism reflected the decade-long shift toward professional identity and work. There was a remarkable echo of trends in the 1930s–1940s, when Western-trained modern professionals criticized ideologues who sought to achieve a totalistic modernity project for actually continuing the traditional approach to moral governance. Liberals tended instead to

survey China's predicament more narrowly from the perspectives of particular disciplines, concentrating less on problems of power and more on technical problems of modern administration by a state whose role was as an instrument for the realization of the aims of the people as a whole.

The contribution of economists to this discourse on globalization can be used to illustrate this change in discourse over the course of a decade:

In the 1980s, political economists still were wedded to the "techno-mandarin" tradition, as reflected in a "world-ordering compulsion" and a faith that central planners could bring about better futures. They echoed the scientism of earlier Chinese intellectuals, which fuelled a totalistic search for fundamental societal models. Progressive economists like Li Yining called on theorists to create new value concepts to under-gird development plans; Liu Guoguang exalted China's reforms as a "gigantic social engineering project". China's traditional utopianism was fuelled by futurist thinking such as Alvin Toffler's suggestion that a new technological revolution would enable late-comer states to bypass stages of industrialization.

During the 1990s, such hubris was deflated by Japan's prolonged recession and punctured by the economic collapse of Russia and Indonesia. The growing gap between the technologically advanced and laggards brought a stronger sense of realism. Economists viewed their mission as both more urgent and more mundane, as they sought pragmatic short-term solutions to specific problems without promising a well-integrated comprehensive outcome. Planners were turned into researchers and experimental project managers in Premier Zhu Rongji's Cabinet and "think and do" tanks.

By the end of the decade, when professionals again found a critical voice, they spoke about politics not from an ideological position but as experts. Economist He Qinglian in 1999 critiqued the "anti-market" character of China's highly-regulated hybrid economy as a hindrance to sustainable development. Her analysis of the flaws of deficit spending and manipulation of stocks and bonds for fuelling growth highlighted the conditions of false reporting, massive corruption, and public service monopolies that skewed results. She called for stronger legislative and judicial agencies, competitive hiring in government, and political participation, all aspects of good governance viewed as an economic imperative.

State Response
Even as the Beijing Spring of 1998–1999 saw a brief revival of liberalism, including direct calls for restructuring the political system, several developments began to fuel a neo-conservative backlash. The flagging growth rate due to the impact of the broader Asian financial crisis was reflected in an upsurge of farmer and labour protests. These coincided with the surfacing of several social movements that were emboldened by

President Clinton's visit in June. The China Democratic Party announced its intent to hold a national congress in the Fall of 1998, and leaders of several large networks of Protestant house churches convened their first national "Unity Movement" meeting, which was publicized in the foreign press. These leaders had the potential to articulate growing grievances and provide linkages among different groups. An already nervous regime, facing the tenth anniversary of June Fourth, tried to reassert controls over intellectuals and society to prevent political instability. The intellectual thaw came to an abrupt end in one of those fateful conjunctions of events: the failure of Premier Zhu Rongji to clinch a WTO agreement while in the US in April, followed closely by the mass silent sit-in demonstration at Zhongnanhai by the Falungong spiritual movement, and then NATO's bombing of PRC Embassy Belgrade in early May. The regime helped orchestrate brief rock-throwing demonstrations outside the US Embassy and consulates, to make sure the venting of emotions was not directed against itself.

REASSERTION OF POLITICAL CONTROLS

Throughout the 1990s, professionals still faced major constraints on all their activities posed by the mechanisms of CCP control over non-communist economic and social elites, which had remained in place despite attenuation of effectiveness and some changes of function in the mixed economy. Tightened up after 1999, these included:

- Bureaucratic administration of finances, hiring and promotions, and research priorities through state-run institutions and professional associations, and rigid registration requirements for non-profit organizations.
- Preferences and privileges for the scientific and technical elite over social sciences and the arts.
- Revival of ideological campaigns, media and Internet controls and propaganda guidelines requiring self-censorship and "official optimism", inhibiting truth-telling, and placing taboos on sensitive issues.
- Limitation of political activity within the constraints of "democratic centralism" (for CCP members), or relatively ineffective "consultation" mechanisms (the eight "democratic" parties and the Federation of Industry and Commerce).

During the 1980s, Deng Xiaoping had revived these united front organs as a means to coopt rising social elites by offering them special material privileges and an advisory role in policy-making. Each of the parties had a special target group for membership, partly on historical grounds. But due to the pro-democracy activism of these groups in 1989, including demands that the People's Consultative Conferences become a lower chamber of the legislature rather than a mere agency of the CCP's United Front Department, plans to allow them expanded recruitment and greater autonomy were aborted.

After 1993, there was a decision to resume funding and growth for these united front groups but under tight controls, including explicit rejection of any oppositional role. There was a deliberate shift toward recruitment of the economic elite into all these groups. They were also allowed to go into business, to become more self-supporting. By the late 1990s, the approach seemed relatively ineffectual, except perhaps in business circles.

These groups had tiny memberships compared with the CCP: a bit over 400,000 in 1996 for all eight parties and 700,000 for the ACFIC, the most influential in terms of influence and finances. This was well below the target growth rate set by the United Front Department.

Non-political chambers of commerce and industry associations had not been developed as planned.

There was considerable dual membership in the CCP, certainly at the leadership level. The political parties, especially, had little credibility in society.

Other examples of the CCP's dilemma in dealing with new professional elites can be found in the development of the disciplines of sociology, law and international relations. On one hand, these professions are considered essential to help China deal with social dislocations, a heavy load of legislative and judicial work, and diplomatic challenges after joining WTO. But on the other hand, there is also a high level of suspicion among Chinese authorities of independent speech and publication in these sensitive arenas. The post-Mao revival of these fields, moreover, has involved extensive foreign funding, guidance and influence. As a result, scholarship continues to be initiated and shaped by non-professionals appointed by the government.

Sociologist Richard Madsen details the results of the dominance of political over academic criteria for decision-making in the field of sociology:

- Political appointees who head departments and professional associations strictly control travel and participation in national and international exchanges, cross-disciplinary work and joint research, and meeting agendas and venues. All inhibit the emergence of creative new research topics or methods.
- Mandatory policy-oriented "research" fosters description rather than analysis and squeezes resources for teaching and theoretical research.
- Wide leeway for discussion but inconsistent access to publication inhibits the development of scholarly debate between coherent "schools of thought" through which any discipline makes progress.
- The prevalence of petty power politics and use of politicized accusations creates misery and anxiety in university departments and research institutes, fuelling the continual brain drain of the best and brightest.

This picture is similar in the other professions: relatively more freedom of speech, but little freedom of association. The result is to keep scholarly

communities fragmented and weak. They are not politically threatening, as a result, but neither can they offer sophisticated, realistic solutions to China's problems.

REASSESSING THE SOCIAL STRUCTURE

The leadership's immediate kneejerk reaction in 1999 to signs of social instability was followed by its first serious review of the unplanned but fundamental transformation underway in Chinese society. Its attempt to understand and adapt to changes society in order to harness them for state purposes resulted in a three year study published in December 2001. Titled "Research Report on Social Strata in Contemporary China", by researchers from the CASS Institute of Sociology, the study discards as out-dated the Maoist description of two classes (workers and peasants) and one strata (intellectuals). It describes Chinese society as having developed a "modern" structure that will prevail for some time to come. Ten occupational strata are listed in rank order according to "ownership" of organizational, economic and cultural resources:

- State and social managers (leaders, supervisors)
- People who hold positions above division chief level in central ministries, CCP organs and national social organizations, or people who hold positions above section chief level in provincial, city or county government organs or CCP committees
- Business managers (leaders, directors)
- People who hold high or middle level leadership positions at large or medium size enterprises.
- Owners of private enterprises
- Professionals and technicians
- People who carry out different kinds of professional or scientific and technological work at various levels of government and CCP organs, social organizations, state-owned enterprises, and private enterprises
- Clerks (office workers)
- Lower level officials/office workers in various levels of government and CCP organs, lower level office workers at enterprises and commercial and service trades, whose work does not require professional knowledge or skills
- Self-employed individuals in industrial and commercial fields
- Employees (labourers) in commercial and service trades
- Industrial workers
- Agricultural labourers
- Jobless, unemployed and half-unemployed, urban and rural

There are a number of technical questions that can be raised about this study, including the opaqueness of terminology in discussing "ownership"

vs "control" over resources. There is a need for further differentiations within at least some of these categories. For example, different ranks of state cadre would have very different lifestyles and access to state assets. Similarly, enterprise owners may include groups with very different values and interests. For example, Li Cheng identifies three distinct types of entrepreneurs – self-made, bureaucratic (officials and their children), and technical.

However, the major political breakthrough reflected in this study is the implicit recognition of the legitimacy of different social strata having their own special interests, which opens up the possibility of interest group politics. Dropping the central Marxist concepts of exploitation and class struggle and simply using "modern" categories to rank strata by wealth, occupation and status, is a major break from Marxist and Maoist conceptions of Chinese society. Listing state cadre as the top strata indirectly admits to its role in society as a dominating class. Internal controversy over the study, especially its listing of workers and farmers at the bottom of society, persisted through the Spring of 2002, when the study was banned from public distribution.

CO-OPTING NEW SOCIAL ELITES: THE HONG KONG MODEL

Jiang Zemin's controversial 1 July 2001 speech calling for CCP recruitment of entrepreneurs and managers is just one reflection of a major rethinking of the CCP's relationship with new social strata. This new thinking very likely is rooted in both the East Asian development model of state capitalism (Japan, South Korea, Singapore), and in China's experience in co-opting various elites in Hong Kong. Following the British colonial model, Beijing sought cooperation from the leading business families, senior executives of major public companies and leading professionals, in part by using official public appointments as public "status markers". Of a total of 1590 PRC appointments and titles conferred on Hong Kong citizens after 1992, including posts in the National People's Congress and Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference and in five new political bodies in Hong Kong, 49% went to business figures (mostly commercial, some industrial and financial) and 13% to professionals (almost half in law or accounting, one fourth in architecture, engineering, or medicine, plus some in publishing and culture, IT or business consulting.

The "state-business" symbiosis is well under way on the mainland as well. Through the 1990s, state employees (many of them party members) have gone into business, while thousands of others have enrolled in the Party as "red capitalists". As a result, around 20% of 1.8 million private entrepreneurs already are CCP members. Recruiting business leaders seems to be compensation for the CCP's failure to penetrate more deeply in the private sector, especially among workers. One study concluded "Whether this emphasis on cooptation at the expense of traditional [mass] party-

building will allow the party to adapt or simply contribute to its decay remains to be seen".

Kang Xiaoguang, a leading policy researcher, and other academics have explicitly recommended this Hong Kong model of "administration absorbing politics" for the mainland. Kang believes there is a strong complementarity of interests among the state, business and the professions, which produces an alliance incorporating economic and knowledge elites into the political elite. This type of state corporatism seeks to improve government accountability through a balance of institutional functions and factional or interest groups, to avoid sharing power. Kang posits an eventual evolution to more democratic societal corporatism, but without any evidence or precedents cited.

Ideological Revisionism

A rationale for this political-business alliance has gradually surfaced during the course of a party-building campaign since early 2000, which promotes Jiang Zemin's theory of the "Three Represents" as the core of China's future ideology. According to this theory, the CCP is to be reinvented, dropping its former self-identity as revolutionary vanguard of the dispossessed classes and taking on a new identity as a modern ruling party representing the "advanced productive forces, advanced culture and the interests of the majority". This involves a sleight of hand redefinition of "worker" to include both intellectuals and entrepreneurs. Jiang Zemin put it, "Our party can forever be the vanguard of the proletariat and at the same time be the vanguard of the Chinese people and the Chinese race".

One study points out that the cynical use of a mix of nationalist, socialist and capitalist ideological elements as a political tool has very weak grounding in actual social norms. The resulting corporate or managerial party, dispensing its rewards for exemplary loyalty, provides a very thin veneer of order.

Venting Mechanisms

The greatest hurdle to the success of gradual and elitist reform is the growing public opposition to the plague of official corruption, viewed widely as the cause of social inequality and incivility in society. Increasingly, these are viewed as a systemic problem that requires a systemic solution.

To aid in creating a public impression that the regime is concerned about the same issues and is making headway on problems, the media elite was given some slack to publicize select abuses. But fierce competition in print and electronic media has produced a new breed of professional journalists, who are always pressing the envelope of state intent. As a result, to some extent the media has taken on an indirect "agenda-setting role" by providing public feedback on areas of the state's political agenda that need adjusting.

Talk shows and T.V. news programs like "Focus", along with international media and the Internet, began to serve a "watchdog" function as well, even

beginning to shape a common social morality. As public debate over social problems increased, people gained a "rights consciousness", and the government felt growing pressure to acknowledge and resolve problems. There was a growing sense of indirect civic dialogue replacing the traditional top-down monologue from state to society.

PRAGMATISM AND POLITICAL REFORM: THE "THIRD WAY" DISCOURSE

By re-imposing social and media controls in 1999, the leadership hoped to stifle public debate on political reform. But they authorized internal exploration of ways to improve the functioning of the existing system to ensure the Party retained its monopoly role as broker of any conflicting group interests. They avoided the term "political system restructuring", which guided formation of the comprehensive reform plan of 1987–1988 and led to discussion of civil rights legislation, and referred instead to regularizing the administration of society by building "rule by law". Researchers in different sectors recommended narrowly-targeted approaches to "administrative reform", "civil service reform", "change of government functions", or building "social capital" and "developing the non-profit sector". They were more concerned about fixing urgent problems than institutionalizing political participation.

The political leadership authorized major internal studies of social and political issues in order to identify further means of policy adaptation. These strategic analyses would then provide the basis for the Sixteenth Party Congress report on the 1997–2002 period and its program for the next five years. This is standard operating procedure, and involvement in such research and drafting is the most direct route to political influence for intellectuals.

Compared with the 1980s, when intellectuals were forced to comment indirectly on Chinese problems by studying other country experiences, there was a proliferation of study groups and think tanks focused on research into China's particular national conditions. Although the studies were intended to remain in secret channels, several became public due to the intense political competition and relatively low risks in the post-Mao period of bending disciplinary rules by going public. These included:

- Research from the National Long-Term Strategic Studies Group at the Chinese Academy of Science, which also serves as the China Studies Center at Qinghua University. The director, Hu Angang, has been forthright in his intent to write not only for policy-makers but to try to persuade the public as well. A participant in cooperative research with the World Bank, Hu is a prominent advisor to Premier Zhu Rongji, as reflected in his prominent role during such major events as a central work conference on job creation in September 2002. Associates include Kang Xiaoguang, a leading authority on China's Third Sector, and Wang

Shaoguang of the University of Hong Kong, whose writings on state capacity have been well received in the field of China studies. The team worked on a comprehensive Party reform plan, which they first submitted in August 2000. Edited versions appeared in public in January and again in June 2002 – just before the annual leadership conclave at the beach – in *Strategy and Management*, a journal affiliated with "princelings" (the younger generation of prominent revolutionary families) in the military. Although deleting highly sensitive issues like the prevention of cults of personality, these articles still were unusually frank in warning of a major social crisis or even a social revolution if the economic takes a downturn. They urged the regime to quit assuming rapid growth rates would be a panacea for all problems and to remedy systemic social injustice before it is too late. Not coincidentally, similar messages were published by PRC political scientists outside China also hoping to influence the Congress agenda.

- Research efforts at the Central Party School, whose deputy director Zheng Bijian has served the whole succession of post-Mao party leaders with policy packages and ideological justifications. The School was involved in development of Jiang's thesis of the "Three Represents" as well as research on European political systems, including democratic socialist parties, perhaps in order to brief School President Hu Jintao before his first travels to Europe. Hu has mandated faculty in the School's new international studies centre to find a practical, workable international approach that will better serve the national interest. National security interests are being re-conceptualized. Rather than simplistic class struggle, international affairs are complex and inter-related, requiring coordinated management of domestic systemic issues as well as international threats and opportunities.

- Several reports on highly sensitive issues of party-mass tensions due to economic, ethnic and religious conflicts were leaked, perhaps as "trial balloons" for new ideas that were having trouble getting a hearing on the inside. A Central Organization Department investigation report on problems facing the Party, as well as secret dossiers on rising leaders, somehow made their way to the outside. Recommendations for political reform, including in religious policy, came from the State Economic Reform Office's Deputy Director Pan Yue, a well-known opinion leader among the "princelings", and an advocate of exploring a "third way". Insiders say that his suggestion to include religious elites in the new Party recruiting program led to disfavour.

Such evidence of considerable ferment behind the scenes points to important lines of generational tension and policy disagreement in the political elite. Jiang Zemin and others want to appoint successors who will safely carry on their legacies and protect their reputations and families.

But some significant younger leaders apparently worry that current conservative policies will not suffice to keep the regime in power.

The policy researchers above have promoted their ideas within a "neo-authoritarian" discourse that seeks to improve and sustain the Party-dominant system and avoid the "extremism" of either democratic liberalism or New Left populism, both of which threaten rule by the managerial Party. At the height of the increasingly vitriolic debate between liberals and the New Left, in October 1998 Anthony Giddens visited Beijing and advocated the neo-liberal "Third Way" program of Britain's New Labour Party. As liberals and New Leftists were shut down, researchers closer to the establishment explored European Labor and Socialist party history and practice as a potential alternative path to modernity for China. Their main concern appeared to be why and how British and German socialism managed to adapt to change, while East European socialism did not. In October 2001, for example, the co-architect of Britain's New Labour Party, Peter Mandelson, lectured at the Party school on how to woo big business supporters. Politically, of course, this was safer than advocating the American model. But this trend also reflected how far-reaching the pragmatism in the younger generation may carry political reform over time.

CONCLUSION: THE SPREAD OF PLURALISM WITH GLOBALIZATION

In the next decade, Chinese coastal urban society and politics will experience an even faster and more encompassing flood of change with the next wave of economic reform. The managerial elite that includes political, economic and social leaders will all experience the impact of global information, travel and exchanges. No doubt fracture lines will grow as the Party takes in more entrepreneurs, managers and professionals from China's growing middle strata. Those educated abroad, linked with the Chinese diaspora, will have growing influence on professional matters, and also on policy analysis and planning. Pressures will building for more direct public participation not just in economic matters but also in social policy and political decisions.

Party-state legitimacy will rest on its ability to sustain a globally competitive economy. In part due to the steady contribution of the World Bank in PRC economic planning, captured in its 2001 report *China and the Knowledge Economy: Seizing the 21st Century*, Chinese leaders realize they are coming from behind in the fierce global competition for capable managers and specialists of all kinds, both foreign and Chinese. There have been increases in state salaries to attract better quality staff, amidst a spate of publicity given to the "knowledge economy" of the future and the important role of "knowledge workers" or even "knowledge entrepreneurs". The state plan to address the challenge includes:

Developing world-class institutions for education and research. Both the Chinese Academy of Sciences and Qinghua University have been selected as

such, given more funding and autonomy, and are recruiting world-wide for staff and rapidly expanding chosen key departments. Examples include the CAS Institute for Polymer Sciences and Qinghua's Departments of Sociology, International Relations Department and School of Public Management. There is also backing for select high-tech industries and industrial parks as well as private universities to compete by cutting red tape and offering international salaries and working conditions.

Wooing educated Chinese to stay in China or return to China, and work for or in cooperation with state organizations. There likely will be growing demands by returnees not just for high salaries and ease of travel, but for protection of civil liberties including religion and belief, speech and association.

Even as the next generation of leaders depends even more heavily on the support of the educated business and social elites, they also face rising discontent in the lower classes, and the spectre of populist revolt. With globalization, not only are the business and academic strata and cultures expanding, but so is grass-roots society becoming more rights-conscious. There are popular movements of all types – on behalf of new religions, environmental or feminist concerns, and consumer rights. These pose a major challenge to the newly expanded technocratic elite and their gradualist approach. Sudden national crises are more likely to arise than not, and these have the potential to split the elite. Some of the educated will take on new roles as representatives of these demanders, while others defend the status quo. The larger moral and ideological issues of national identity and political system will return to the agenda, reshaping once again the evolving relationship between intellectuals and politics.

NGOs in the Discourse on Political Change and Democratization in Malaysia

Saliha Hassan

INTRODUCTION

In the calm waters of ASEAN (the Association of South East Asian Nations) – which it helped found in 1967 together with Indonesia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand to keep the region out of the cold war conflict –and supported by its strong state structure, Malaysia has pursued great economic development. Malaysia has embraced developmentalism, industrialization, urbanization and as a result has had to address also their attending elements of modernization, consumerism, materialism and individualism. Further, Malaysia has survived the 1980s international economic down turn as well as the late 1990s monetary and economic crises. However, it was also realized that its economy could be so vulnerable to international fundamentals. The latter international crisis had also played a role in a chain of domestic reactions, particularly the political crisis known as the 1998 *Reformasi* episode. The catalyst was the sacking of Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim (DSAI) from his posts as the Deputy Prime Minister, the finance Minister and the Deputy President of United Malays National Organization (UMNO), the dominant member of the Malaysian ruling coalition party, the *Barisan Nasional* (BN) in September 1998. An important reason for it was said to be differences between DSAI and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad over economic and financial policies in handling the crises.[1]

The *Reformasi* discourse, sparked off by what was seen as unfair and unjust treatment of DSAI both in the press and in the court, and led by opposition parties mainly *Parti Islam Se Malaysia* (PAS) and the Democratic Action Party (DAP) together with dominant politically engaged non-governmental organizations (NGOs), demanded review and reforms on what they alleged as authoritarian aspects of Malaysian state such as huge powers of the executive. They reiterated calls for the abolition of various "draconian" acts such as the Internal Security Act (ISA) that allows detention without trial, the University and University college Act (UUCA) that curtails

political participation of students and academics un higher institutions of learning, the Official Secret Act (OSA) that hinders bureaucratic transparency, the Publication and Printing Press Act (PPA) that constraints freedom of expression, the Societies Act that regulate the formation and activities of organizations, the Police Act that gives police a large measure of authority and various other limitations to what they consider as genuine democratic freedom in the country. The subsequent 1999 general election saw not only an opposition parties alignment between PAS, DAP, *Parti Rakyat Malaysia* (PRM) and the newly formed *Parti KeADILan Nasional* (Keadilan) but also the open involvement of political NGOs and NGO activists on the side of the alternative front, *the Barisan Alternatif* (BA). The front gained almost half of the total popular votes, thus sending shock waves against the unchallenged dominance of the ruling coalition party since the latter's formation in 1974. With this background of ground political swing, within the constrained space that it has, the Malaysian civil society continued to push its discourse on the evils of strong state and the desirability of meaningful democracy.

DEMOCRACY ACCORDING TO OUR OWN MOULD

Malaysia is a multi-ethnic nation, that has actually been variously labelled by scholars, analysts, democracy activists, and international media as a "formally democratic state with strong authoritarian features", "quasi democracy", "authoritarian", "semi democracy", "statist democracy" and "pseudo-democracy". Crouch (1996) attributed this on one hand to the Malaysian state's adherence to regular elections which compel the state to be responsive to electoral socio-economic expectations while on the other, its maintaining firm control over critical elites, politically inclined civil society associations, trade unions and labour organizations. Cooptation of certain influential individuals and organizations aligned with other oppositional movements also helps clear a path. The Malaysian leadership itself has called the system a "democracy according to our own mould" (*demokrasi menurut acuan kita sendiri*). This is to say that with all the limitations to democratic participation resulting from its various constraining Acts, Malaysia still clearly adheres to parliamentary democracy by its constitution, its electoral process and its functioning legislative bodies. Having to face the electorate once in every five years, the ruling coalition has strategized consistently to keep on the right side of Malaysian voters by pragmatically addressing voters' priority concerns which for quite sometime has been more bread and butter as well as local issues rather than the broader issues of democracy and democratization as espoused by political NGOs. Thus when we talk about NGO discourses on political change and democratization in Malaysia, we are referring to what Weiss (2001: 32) terms as "shifts along the continuum of liberalism within a state that is already at least minimally democratic", or what the state's critics term as the struggle for more meaningful democracy.

Much of the discourse is directed at what Barraclough (1985) has discussed as "role of coercion in governance" that is evident in Malaysia despite its holding of regular elections, multi-party system and pretty subdued civil society.[2] A generally pro establishment Malay middle class created through the New Economic Policy (1970–1990) which is further extended *via* the National Development Policy further augments Malaysian strong state political structure. Although in fairness it must be recognized that it has served multi-ethnic Malaysia relatively well in providing it a stable environment for tremendous overall economic development that has placed Malaysia in the rank of the world's newly developed nations.

Nonetheless, the 1998 *Reformasi* discourse calling for general political, legal, social and economic reforms had happened and the fiercely contested tenth Malaysian General Election that took place on 29 November 1999, saw an increase in opposition parliamentarians and state assemblymen, especially from PAS which had won the Terengganu and Kelantan states.[3] The result of the election was generally seen as a clear message to the ruling national front to seriously address the contents of the *Reformasi* phenomenon. The *Reformasi*'s immediate focus was allegations of power abuses by various government agencies and personnel, executive interference in the judiciary, and the evils of corruption, cronyism and nepotism. Its broader discourse centred issues of civil and democratic rights, fundamental liberties, form and substance of democracy, fundamentals of good governance and social justice.

The significant question is how have their discourse impacted upon Malaysian discourse on political change and democratization? While the street activism and public demonstrations have been subdued by various legal and state apparatus, the critical issues thrown up during the short *Reformasi* period remain in the minds and consciousness of the Malaysian public. The challenge to the conscientized public is how best to handle those issues and realize their underlying ideals of democracy and social justice. However, it would seem that other more pressing international developments such as global terrorism, challenges to the Muslim world and national resilience have become overriding priorities that force back the Malaysian public to look towards the tried and tested leadership of the national front. These issues have recentred development and national security as dominant national issues which all along have sustained the electoral support for the national front coalition party. Nevertheless, the party and therefore the government cannot afford to ignore the ground undercurrent. They have to respond to their critics and react positively to the urge for more meaningful democracy especially in terms of bureaucratic transparency, greater accountability and wider public participation at all decision-making levels. Theoretically, this should open up more space for political NGOs' discourses and provide more opportunities to touch base with grassroots public.

FIRST NGOS ON THE SCENE

In Malaysia, the earliest civil society organizations were usually formed and oriented around ethnic or religious communities. They were often linked with mosques, churches, clan networks and the like. They were concerned primarily with the socio-economic development and moral welfare of their communities (Weiss and Saliha 2002). This is particularly true during the first phase of British colonial administration prior to the period of Japanese Occupation (1942–1945) in Peninsular Malaysia, then known as British Malaya. During the second phase of British colonial rule in Peninsular Malaysia, which as of 1948 was designated the Federation of Malaya, many civil society associations tended to be motivated by more political considerations. This is particularly so for the Malay based ones that purported to be literary, self-help, educational, social, religious or welfare associations. These associations encouraged the growth of Malay nationalism, evaluation of traditional Malay leadership, notions of people's right to political participation and the concept of self government. However, it must also be noted that this trend towards democratization was due to the international trend towards democratic self-government among colonized Asian nations such as Indonesia, India, the Philippines and Burma, as well as the influence of Islamic progressive reform movements that took place in the Middle East, particularly Egypt where many Malays had gone to study.

In short, immediately during the post Second World War period, political change towards democratization have begun to take their place in what had been a Malay feudal system whose authority had actually crumbled under the British indirect colonial rule beginning with the infamous 1874 Pangkor Treaty.[4] During this period, ideological strands also began to appear. Waking up to a multi-ethnic post Japanese Occupation, the people of Malaya savoured various choices of political platforms that had introduced themselves as anti-Japanese movements in the years between 1942 and 1945: ethnicism, nationalism, democracy, socialism and communism[5] and left-leaning socialistic ideologies (Cheah 1987). These were espoused by Islamic educated Malays, Chinese educated activists and English educated urban elites. The Muslim and Chinese activists were more in touch with grassroots from among their own specific communities, while the latter tended to be more exclusive to themselves. In the earlier phase of civil society associations, their activities revolved around the welfare of their members and they were inspired by their various societal norms and traditions or by the teachings of their religions. These characteristics continued pretty much until the 1970s.

FROM ETHNIC TO DEMOCRACY DISCOURSE

By the time of *Merdeka*, or independence, in 1957, while the non-Malays, mainly Chinese and Indians, who were newly made citizens were still familiarizing themselves with their new status, political or politically motivated Malay civil society associations were already actively advocating and acting

upon special Malay provisions in the *Merdeka* Constitution. In the 1960s, their discourse and activism focused on the implementation of these provisions in areas of education and economic developments (see Table 16.1). This ethnic-based discourse only began to be dominated by more democracy inclined issues in 1970s and 1980s with the activism of more broad-based NGOs such as the *Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia* (ABIM) led by Anwar Ibrahim, the national consciousness movement, the *Aliran Kesedaran Negara* (ALIRAN), led by Chandra Muzaffar who is now the President of the International Movement for A Just World (JUST), and other smaller like-minded NGOs. In fact in the 1980s, especially at the beginning of the dynamic leadership of PM Dr. Mahathir and his Deputy, Musa Hitam who later became the first Chairman of the Malaysian Commission on Human Rights, *Suruhanjaya Hak Asasi Malaysia* (SUHAKAM) formed by the government in 1999, there was a proliferation of political non-governmental organizations advocating greater participatory democracy, fundamental democratic freedoms, and social justice. Unfortunately, this period that was thought to be the blossoming of civil society in Malaysia ended abruptly with the 1987 *Operasi Lalang* which saw the detention of more than a hundred social and political activists under the Internal Security Act (CARPA 1988, Das and SUARAM 1989). Among the allegations thrown at them were threats to national security and causing racial tension thus upholding justifications for the limitations of various democratic freedoms through existing Acts and their further amendments. Malaysian civil society was subdued for a few years after that until the issue of human rights that refocused attention to civil, cultural and political rights in Malaysia began to seep down from its global platform to domestic plains as globalization became buzz word of the 1990s.

By the 1970s, Malaysia had already gone through the traumatic experience of the 1969, May 13, racial riot, followed by the suspension of Parliament and emergency rule by the National Operation Council, *Majlis Gerakan Negara* (MAGERAN). MAGERAN was responsible for many of the Acts, and tighter amendments to some others, that put tighter restrictions on fundamental democratic liberties. These became the focal issues of NGOs advocating and agitating for greater participatory democracy. However, shaken by the May 13 incident, the Malaysian government withdrew from what it termed as "aping western democracy" and generally regarded it a mistake "to transplant Westminster democracy" to the Malaysian soil. In its place was planted the beginning of the current much discussed *Malaysian* democracy.[6] Its main features being its executive dominant structure, single dominant party system, privileging of the indigenous group, or *bumiputera* that are mainly Malays, limitations on various civil liberties, sharing of power between ruling coalition of ethnic-based parties led by UMNO, and predominantly top-down administrative decision-making process. Its justification as consistently reiterated by the ruling political elites is the fundamental need for maintaining a stable political and racial environment

Table 16.1. A Typology of Earlier Malaysian NGOs

Historical Context	NGOs	Nature	Issues	Ideology Source	State Response
Pre 1940s : British pre 1940s Japanese British 1946–57	*Kesatuan Melayu Singapura*; Islamic Reform Movt; *Sahabat Pena Malaya*	Religious, Literary, Guilds, Socio-economic	Welfare Recreational Literary Education	Islam, other religions, Left, Nationalist	British colonial rule: allowed non political; detained political activists;
1950s–60s : period before & after Independence 1957; Federation of Malaysia 1963; May 13, 1969	Dong Jiao Zhong; Kesatuan Guru-guru Melayu Semenanjung; Women's Institute	Nationalist, ethnic, socio-economic	Malay (identity, political rights, cultural heritage), other ethnics (rights as citizens)	Pro-democracy, Left, Islam, Nationalism	Outlawed leftist ideologies; watched and suppressed political NGOs
1970s–80s : Islamic Resuergence; Urbanization; industrialization Mahathir–Musa liberal era; 1987 Operasi Lalang	ABIM, ALIRAN, AWAM, Dong Jiao Zhong, SUARAM, HAKAM PUM	Islamist, ethnic, universalist, liberal	Human rights, cultural rights, Civil liberties, democracy, social justice, Islamisation, 'draconian' laws, women's rights, consumer interests	Islam, Ethnicism, Universalist Liberal values Democracy	1987 Operasi Lalang; Acts limiting civil liberties; ROS (political & non-political); focus on socio-economic developments; cooptation, suppressed extremism; forms parallel movements or organizations

Table 16.1. A Typology of Earlier Malaysian NGOs (*continued*)

1990s–current Economic prosperity	JIM, TERAS, SUQIU (MCA' Election Demands),	Malay empowerment	Malay position	Malay nationalism	SUHAKAM
Reformasi (AI)	PEMANTAU (Pemantau Pilihanraya Rakyat Malaysia), GERAK, GAGASAN	Malaysian Malaysia	More genuine democracy	Democracy	ISA
					Legal limitations
Civil society awareness	(Gagasan Demokrasi Rakyat, 1998), DEMA	NGO collaboration	Inter ethnic cooperation	'Globalization' 'Universalism'	Developmentalism
	(Gerakan Demokratik Belia dan Pelajar Malaysia), WCI & WAC	Youths for democracy	Gender : women & children		Liberalization
			Beyond Malaysia: East Timor; Myan Mar, APWLD		

Table: Saliha Hassan

in order for development to take place. Thus it was concluded that firstly, Malaysia had to develop its own "democracy" more suited to the local political norms and necessities,[7] secondly, Malaysia must first concentrate on its socio-economic development, and thirdly, in order to address both of these issues the government would take the lead by first putting into place the framework for democratic processes suitable for Malaysia. The first led to the current Malaysian-type democracy, the second, the New Economic Policy (1970–1990) and other development focused policies, while the third resulted in various Acts dubbed "draconian" by political and politicized NGOs advocating democratization and political change. These NGOs have in the main kept up their discourses through the 1970s and 1980s in spite of legal and political constraints. By the 1998 *Reformasi* episode, their efforts at political conscientization and their advocacy for more meaningful democracy and less pre-occupation with ethnic differences seemed to have reached beyond their traditional urban and English speaking constituencies to the Malay majority rural areas and non-English speaking communities in general. The current era of post Anwar episode and *Reformasi* is a new watershed for civil society activism and impact with regard to advances in democratization and political change. The civil society agents have in fact forced the state to rethink its interpretation and operationalization of democracy and its Asian values approach.

NEW POLITICS AND WIDENING SUPPORT FOR CIVIL SOCIETY

By the 1990s, the notions of political change, liberal human rights, social justice, good governance, independent judiciary, less executive prerogatives and more meaningful participatory democracy became quite entrenched in the discourses of Malaysian NGOs advocating greater democratic participation and more liberal attitude on the part of state towards civil society. These NGOs could be categorized into those that are informed by secular liberal western tradition and Islamic political perspectives (see Table 16.2). They converged on such commonalities as social justice, independent judiciary, accountable leadership, people's interests and general notion of good governance. The government responded by going back to the challenges of multi-ethnicism and other domestic cultural as well as social specifics that support Asian values paradigm which seemed to justify constraints on democracy. The NGOs retorted that it was just a strategy by the incumbent political elites to remain in power and to retain power. The government also implemented liberal policies in the education and economic sectors to maintain and secure the support of the moderate mainstream and pro *status quo* multi-ethnic electorate, especially from among the non-Malays. It in fact continues to maintain this liberalization trend into the beginning of the new millennium. However, the 1999 general election showed that these liberalization policies and incidents of uneven

Table 16.2. Typology of Malaysian NGOs in 1990s

Period & Happenings	NGOs	Nature	Issues	Ideology Source	State Response
1990s–current :					
1987 Operasi Lalang	JUST, SUARAM, FIRE (SFX), AWAM,	Coalitions, networks, alternative media,	minority rights,	Secular Liberal	Promotion of Asian values
Buoyant economy	CENPEACE, TENAGANITA GAMIS, BUDI, HAKAM, BBMN, GMMI, etc		Islamisation,	Islam	SUHAKAM (1997);
1997 financial, monetary & Economic crisis			Women & gender consumer,	Socialistic	Use of ISA on *Reformasi* activists,
1998 'reformasi'			inter-religious understanding, democratic commonalities,		liberalization (education, language, cultural).
1999 BA & Gen. Elections New politics	GERAK, GAGASAN, PEMANTAU DEMA		KKN, more egalitarian multiculturalism, good governance, direct participation in political		Vision 2020
2001 Islamic state			process, Civil liberties, democracy, human rights, social justice		Ministry of Women and Family Devt

Table 16.2. Typology of Malaysian NGOs in 1990s (*continued*)

Period & Happenings	NGOs	Nature	Issues	Ideology Source	State Response
Future? Wawasan (vision) 2020 Post Mahathir	- do -		Global influences and networks Greater domestic coalition building More rational less cultural perspectives Dependent on political orientations of younger generation		Global/international pressures and domestic demands on state to reform

Table: Saliha Hassan

developments had alienated a large segment of its Malay support vital to UMNO, the ruling BN coalition's main component party. This alienation was further aggravated by the government's handling of the DSAI case which grieved a large section of the Malay community.

Meanwhile due to the government's liberal policies on the use of the internet that coincided with the Multi-Media Super Corridor (MSC) mega project, NGO discourses get disseminated among the grassroots more freely than ever before. This contributed to another chain of developments: firstly, there was evidence of increasing public support and interest towards the political NGOs that were traditionally regarded as 'radical' and even 'subversive'; secondly, these NGOs decided to align themselves with political parties, in particular with the alternative front, during the 1999 general election; thirdly, the centring of public interest issues by concerned NGOs detached from ethnic biases; and fourthly, the formation of a number of new wave NGOs and NGO coalitions which included the Women's Candidacy Initiative (WCI) that fielded its own candidate in the 1999 election, the NGO coalition for Women's Agenda For Change (WAC) that actively sought political parties' endorsement, the NGO coalition for Citizen's Health Initiative (CHI) in response to the government's proposal to privatize the health services, the *Suqiu* movement comprising of more than 2000 Chinese organizations that submitted a document of "17 demands" revolving around issues of citizens' rights in Malaysian parliamentary democracy, responsible constitutional governance, justice and transparency and others relating to Chinese interests, and *Pemantau*, the coalition of 40 NGOs committed to observing that a fair and clean general election was carried out (Loh 2002). They were also united on various issues such as in the denouncement of cronysm, corruption and nepotism and "political tyranny". They stood together on human rights, good governance and social justice (see Table 16.2; Weiss 2001). Together with the NGOs' prolific use of ICT and their direct involvement in partisan party politics, a new set of democratizing dynamics emerge in the Malaysian political scene thus prompting the concept of *politik baru* or new politics as opposed to old politics that revolved on ethnic and development issues.[8] Thus over the years, especially since the early 1990s, it can be said that civil society agents have begun to make a significant difference in the quality of Malaysian democracy, both in terms of issues and activism.

INTELLECTUAL AND ATTITUDINAL DEMOCRATIZATION

Many of the Malaysian political NGOs began as vehicles for one or more outspoken activists such as ABIM for Anwar Ibrahim, ALIRAN and later JUST for Chandra Muzaffar, Center For Peace Studies (CENPEACE) for Fan Yew Teng, Environmental Protection Society, Malaysia (EPSM) for Gurmit Singh, TENAGANITA for Irene Fernandez, AlArqam for Ashaari Muhammad and

Sisters In Islam (SIS) for the group of progressive and influential Muslim ladies. In the 1970s, Anwar Ibrahim was already a civil society activist in his undergraduate days. Espousing ideal society values and framework inspired by Islam, his discourse was about the Islamization of the Malaysian system. He popularized the ideals of *masyarakat madani*, a democratic society that is built upon Islamic and ethical values.[9] Chandra Muzaffar is an international personality who speaks at international fora and writes from an academic as well activist perspective extolling human dignity, equality of humankind, accountable leadership, fundamental liberties, good governance, democracy and social justice in a just world. Fan Yew Teng, who is also a prolific writer, is a veteran political critique of the state, the incumbent government, misdeeds of all political parties and leaders, denouncing corruption, nepotism and socio-political hypocrisies – always championing transparency, accountability, human rights, fundamental liberties and social justice beyond the Malaysian borders.

Similarly, Gurmit Singh and Irene Fernandez share the same broad aims as the others except that Gurmit is immersed in environmental issues while Fernandez is more focused on human rights and women issues. Ashaari Muhammad was the leader of a Muslim community that strived to establish a lived Islamic system as he interpreted it to be. Consequently his movement, the AlArqam, was instrumental in highlighting un-Islamic practices and policies of the government. Al Arqam was banned by the government as deviationist in 1994. The Sisters In Islam is made up of influential Malay women professionals who articulate their progressive interpretations of Islamic perspectives on contemporary concerns at national and international levels. Their main issue focus are the public and private roles and rights of a Muslim woman, the nature of Islamic state, and various Islamic legal provisions for the running of society and state. Beyond that they also discourse on democracy, individual freedoms, human rights, secular versus Islamic state and good governance.

Meanwhile, the state has consistently maintained a tight rein over civil society and variously by legal repression or strategic cooptation has strived to determine the shape and contents of civil society just as it has quite unilaterally determined the parameters of Malaysian democracy (Saliha 1998, Nair 1999, Ramasamy 2001). This double-pronged strategy has given it the characteristics which Crouch (1996) termed as "neither democratic nor authoritarian" and what some quarters in Malaysia claim to be the ideal democracy model for Malaysia. This characteristic of the state's behaviour of double strategy both towards the people (keep voters in line by addressing their immediate priorities) and civil society (allows enough space for them to exist but within constraining legal parameters) has tended to give the Malaysian civil society a Gramscian sphere of contestation not only among the civil society agents themselves (the secularist liberals, the Islamists, the socialistic orientations) but also between the state's Asian value position and

them. Nonetheless, the role and shape of the Malaysian state continues to shift in response to trends and pressures from the global level and from such domestic civil society discourse and activism.

Consciously or other wise, the Malaysian state, over time, has and is engaged in the process of defining and re-defining their roles as response to these influences. For Malaysia the most significant factors in the last ten years in this context are firstly, globalization and its attending multi-dimensional liberalization, deregulation and ICT innovations, secondly, the global economic and monetary crises and thirdly, the Anwar *Reformasi* episode that launched *politik baru* (new politics) in earnest. In parallel development, both factors, the global and the domestic, have enhanced the role of the NGOs, not only at the discourse level of affecting political change and democratization in Malaysia but also at the activism level. This in turn has forced the state or the government to evaluate its policies and positions on various matters that are currently prioritized by civil society and are clearly within the political change and democratization projects.

In general these individual civil society agents and the NGOs they lead adopt the pluralist attitude suited to the basic multi-ethnic and multi-religious make up of Malaysia. However, there is an underlying competition between the Islamists and the secularists to influence the state, the grassroots and civil society itself to their preferred perspectives. In terms of impacts and ability to make a difference in the nation's discourse on political change and democratization, those that had claimed some measure of success are those with some forms of ties to the government and the grassroots. The Islamists tend to have networks extending into the government machinery and natural access to the Muslim majority public. The latter gives them greater efficacy and leverage in dealing with the state. On the other hand, their secular counterparts, who are often urban based English speaking professionals, tend not to have much link with the grassroots and regarded generally by the government as "oppositionists". However, their discourse converges on the same platform that calls for more genuine democracy for Malaysia, similarly explores possible alternative models and strategies for political change, and their discourses, while informing each other, are aimed at influencing the state's position and conscientizing the public.

An example that would probably be helpful in further clarifying this point is the issue of human rights. This issue and the effectiveness of SUHAKAM, the Malaysian national commission on human rights, had captured public attention since the detention of DSAI and the exposure of his black eye, a result of a blow received while in police custody. The incidents captured the imagination of the Malaysian public famous for its apathetic attitude if not actual animosity towards political NGOs' discourses and activism. The voters practically ignored a 1990 Election Manifesto for Human Rights in Malaysia put together by over 30 Malaysian NGOs, including women's, labour, youths', social movement, and Islamic organizations, and endorsed by opposition

parties (PAS, Democratic Action Party, Parti Rakyat Malaysia, Semangat 46 and Indian Progressive Front). The Manifesto put forward a list of people's grouses including the lack of democratic freedoms, corruption, destruction of natural environment indiscriminate logging and development, poverty and huge income gaps, and various forms of discrimination. Other civil society issues such as democratic rights, fundamental liberties, good governance, accountable government, democracy and social justice have hooked on to this dramatic highlight. Other incidents of clashes between the public and the uniformed apparatus of the government that followed in the wake of DSAI's fate gave SUHAKAM a variety of test cases to handle and riveted the Malaysian public attention to the performance of the judiciary.

The government responded by attempting to down play the significance of DSAI's arrest and trials, distance itself from the DSAI black eye incident that involved the then Inspector General of Police himself, put into question SUHAKAM's credibility and scope of authority, detain a number of activists alleged to be "ringleaders" of the *Reformasi* movement under the Internal Security Act, go out to the people and explain its actions to be in the public's interest and to remind them of its people oriented policies that has allowed economic development. A significant aspect of the human rights issue is that it highlighted the different perspective among the political NGOs as to what constitute human rights in Malaysia. A sample of these NGOs are the Malaysian Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (MPPNW), International Movement for a Just World (JUST), Civil Rights Committee of the Selangor Chinese Assembly Hall (CRC–SCAH), All Women's Action Forum, Malaysia (AWAM), Center For *Orang Asli* (indigenous people) Concern (COAC), the National Human Rights Society or the *Persatuan Kebangsaan Hak Asasi Malaysia* (HAKAM), the Malaysian People's Voices or *Suara Rakyat Malaysia* (SUARAM), *Tholilaliyin Tholar* (Friends of Workers), Women's Force (TENAGANITA), ABIM, the National Islamic Students' Association or *Persatuan Kebangsaan Pelajar Islam Malaysia* (PKPIM), Sisters in Islam (SIS) and the Christian Reflection Society (CRS). Debates and discussion that emerge on the issue include the question of priority between "civil and political rights" and "social and economic rights", non-divisibility and universality of human rights, individual versus collective rights, universalist versus relativist perspective of human rights. These debates and discussion not only have seeped down to the grassroots and continued to engage the public but they have also promoted and provoked necessary dialogues among the NGOs in order to identify common grounds for Malaysian human rights.

SOURCES FOR DISCOURSE TERMS OF REFERENCE

One aspect that the dialogues have had to address is a common set of terms of reference. Many of the human rights advocacy NGOs, such as SUARAM, HAKAM, TENAGANITA and COAC, find their terms of reference in the universal UN Declaration of Human Rights (UNDHR) and other related UN

documents.[10] Other NGOs with similar intentions such as ABIM and PKPIM formulate their positions from the teachings of Islam,[11] CRS based theirs on the Christian teachings, and MPPNW refer to universalist ideals of human rights to life to human dignity. NGOs like SIS, on the other hand, may be an example of a bridging NGO whereby it embraces the overarching Islamic principles but it captures certain aspects of the dominant western and secular human rights assertions, such as women's rights in the private and public spheres. Similarly, JUST aims at bridging between civilizational interpretations of human rights. It calls for a reconceptualization of the construct of human rights and invite thinkers and activists to raise fundamental questions about the dominant concept of human rights itself[12] in line with the multiplicity of human rights positions in the international world.[13] The government also joins the discourse with its own position that human rights interpretation in Malaysia must be aligned to the provisions of the Constitution. This forms the frame of reference for SUHAKAM. For the moment the debates and the dialogues continue, side stepping more complex and divisive issues, such as right to change religion among Muslims and capital punishment.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS AND POTENTIALS

Once Chandra Muzaffar (1986: 296) raised a number of fundamental questions about "Democracy a la Malaysia" that are still relevant. "How does this concept stand in relation to some of the cardinal principles of democratic rule? Does it recognise dissent as a legitimate fundamental of democratic society? Does it accord supremacy to Parliament as the formulator of legislation? Does Malaysian democracy uphold the independence of the judiciary? Does our version of democracy appreciate the full meaning of the rule of law or do we confuse it with rule by law?"

One fundamental question addressed by political development theories is a system which thrives on a capitalistic economy, such as Malaysia, would inevitably undergo industrialization, urbanization, modernization and political liberalization. Yet to the concerned NGOs and democracy activists in Malaysia, the majority of Malaysian grassroots are generally ignorant or apathetic about civil rights issues like the plights of those detained without trials and their families, those displaced by urban developments or neglected by agricultural innovations, cases of corruption and financial mismanagement of public funds, and misuse of official powers. This is said to be related to the general lack of indigenous democratic political culture as well as the persistent ethnic divide, thus resulting in a lack of skills necessary to be effective participant in democratic political processes. At the most, their hitherto indifferent and passive attitude, if not outright suspicion, towards political NGOs, can only be said to be somewhat changing since the 1999 general election and the DSAI and *Reformasi* episodes.

Apart from people's attitude towards political NGOs, the *Reformasi* fervour that enveloped almost all the nation in the late 1990s has affected also

people's perception and understanding of the significance of individual's role in a democratic system. It has also brought home the significance of "fundamental liberties" that are guaranteed in Chapter II of the Malaysian Constitution and how abstract terms such as "social justice", "independent judiciary" or "executive dominance" relate to their every day life. The *Reformasi* also ushered in "new politics" that saw the formation of a strategic negotiation of power and resource sharing arrangements between political NGOs and opposition political parties, namely the Malaysian movement for justice, the *Majlis Gerakan Keadilan Rakyat Malaysia* (GERAK) and the convergence of independent political NGOs in one movement, such as the coalition for people's Democracy, the *Gagasan Demokrasi Rakyat* (GAGASAN), which were major boosts to the state of civil society in Malaysia. The question is whether this actually reflects long term ideational shifts, whether they would really encourage genuine multi-racial, issue based cooperation that would foster the realization of *Bangsa Malaysia* (Malaysian Nation) pursuing non-exclusive goals, whether they would provoked solemn re-evaluation of the Malaysian politics of race or whether they would lead to significantly lager role for citizens in ensuring democratic governance.[14]

In Malaysia, the experience of NGO participation in partisan politics have had two immediate results: one is bringing NGO political discourses directly to the electorate thus gaining mileage in democratization campaign awareness and two is a relatively negative impact of compromising NGOs' objectivity and their identity as civil society agent that is above partisan politics. In relation to the latter, the relevant NGOs are now identified with opposition politics out of their own volition while before they were labelled as such by the government due to their critiques and advocacy that are often aligned, although not necessarily by design, with opposition positions. This development may not in the long run benefits the Malaysian civil society nor strengthen NGOs' credibility to make positive impacts towards greater democratization. However, in the context of current political fluidity, this is a positive signal as well as injection of a refreshing dynamic into the entrenched Malaysian post colonial status quo politics.

ALLIES TOWARDS POLITICAL CHANGE

Among NGOs' allies among position politics is the Islamic party, PAS. PAS has been on record for maintaining a good rapport with NGOs over issues pertaining to human rights, civil rights, democracy, good governance, accountable leadership and social justice. The party's newsletter, *Harakah*, always have space for critiques and debates on human and civil rights issues.[15] PAS and Islamic NGOs are normally anti-secularist and desirous of an Islamic democratic political system. Their position is that given the Islamic framework that supports cultural pluralism, a pluralist democratic political culture may still be accommodated within a progressive Islamic regime.

The role of the media in the dissemination of discourses on democracy is obviously vital. Global mass media has exhibited tremendous power and influence in shaping contemporary cultural, societal, national and world views on almost all issues. They have been important vehicle in promoting mainstream notions on democracy, oftentimes with such single-mindedness that they tend to overlook crucial local specifics. In the Malaysian case, conventional print and electronic mainstream media is pretty much the mouthpiece of the government. Media channels for alternative views and visions for society are limited both by opportunities and language for much of the discourse that we are discoursing about is still in English while the rest of the Malaysian society has Malay, the national language, as its lingua franca. This automatically limits the ripple effect that NGOs hope for. Currently, much of the discourse also has taken place in the cyber media. While it facilitates fast communication, much of Malaysia is still without access to the internet. Thus limited media exposure plus legal constraints and other legal as well as practical limiting conditions imposed on civil society agents further limits their grass-root impacts.

While we are exploring the future direction and potentials of NGOs' discourses on political change and democratization in Malaysia, it may also be useful to ask about what roles can networking and link up between national or domestic NGOs with international and trans-national NGOs play in the furtherance of a global democracy project. Transnational NGOs may serve as catalysts for shift away from traditional values and world view towards a more homogenizing perspective based on messages implicit in the global culture. The particularities of relative values and world views often come into sharper focus when faced with *other* paradigms. In other words, they may define themselves or reach clear self-articulation when in a sort of juxtaposition with what is both similar and different within other values and cultural systems with which they are faced. This is where the role of local NGOs that espouse global mainstream values such as those on political change, might sometimes causes uneasiness on the part of national governments or sub national groupings wishing to resist the incursion of ideas, values and worldviews implicit in the global system. Probably much for this reason that the Malaysian state has always followed a wary attitude towards foreign NGOs and donors, thus making local-international/transnational NGOs link up that could result in more vibrant civil society tend to be very low key (Saliha and Lopez 2001).

Local NGOs, that may or may not be directly affiliated to any of the international NGOs, supported by western oriented intellectuals and professionals, may also subscribe in a juggernaut manner towards global mainstream definition and contents of democracy. However, in recent years political and cultural awkwardness that arise from this at the national level provokes a counter critique and calls for re-examination of local specifics. In Malaysia these would be one, constitutional monarchy political structure with seven Malay sultans rotating to be the king of Malaysia or the Yang

Dipertuan Agong (YDPA) once every five years; second, the demographic multi-ethnic configuration enhanced by identification with particular religions, culture and in some measure still by economic sectors; third, constitutional provision for the special position of the Malays by virtue of historic political indigenous legitimacy; fourth, the historical and demographic facts that since independence from the British colonial rulers, political power is in the hands of the Malay Muslim majority and has not been seriously threatened by the other ethnic groups. Thus status quo structure looks set to remain in place for sometime still.

CONCLUSION

In Malaysia, anyone who is in touch with the younger generation would recognize that new politics with its characteristic tendencies towards pluralist and liberalist attitude, less ethnic hang-ups, issue based activism, and gender sensitive outlook are taking roots. Such an environment is fertile for NGO discourses on political change and greater democratization. This environment does not grow solely from internal dynamics but is also a product of globalization that brings with it the ideologies of Liberalism and Democracy due to the nature of globalism and its major players. Thus, political change in Malaysia is being shaped by 'globalization' as much as by NGOs' discourse and activism. Paradoxically, of course, peaceful passage of political change towards greater democratization and the success of NGO discourse to provoke it to happen, is dependent on firstly, the masses' internalization of democratic political culture, values and attitudes, and secondly, on a confident administrative and political structure that allows civil society to flourish.

NOTES

1. This seemed to have been brought forth not only by the exposure of DSAI's alleged sexual misconduct since it was supposed to be known already by the authorities years earlier than 1998, but perhaps more immediately by the conflict in his IMF-style of handling of the crises with what has proved to be a fairly successful innovative Malaysia oriented solution of Prime Minister Mahathir.

2. Weiss's (2001: 9) definition is that "Malaysian civil society is comprised of those agents who debate, evaluate, and challenge or support official discourses, interpretations, structures, or policies, regardless of their perspective or organizational base". However, Weiss uses the term civil society agents (CSAs) for actors in Malaysian civil society since "visible, coherent associations are only part of it. Other key components of civil society include networks of public intellectuals or floating activists, trade unions, student groups, and even perennially out of power opposition political parties, which tend to function more like NGOs than parties between elections".

3. In the 1999 general election, PAS, won 98 state assembly seats from a total of 394 seats compared to 33 in 1995 and 27 parliamentary seats from a total of 1995 seats compared to 8 from a total of 193 seats in 1995

4. The Pangkor Treaty signed by the British and the Sultan of the Perak state stripped the sultan of his absolute power and the British ruled indirectly in the

name of the sultan through their Residents whose advice the sultan must act upon. It was known as the resident system and was gradually replicated in other states on the Peninsular except for Penang, Melaka and Singapore that were already administered by the British as the British Straits Settlements. This administrative arrangement continued until the Japanese invasion in 1942.

5. Upon their return in 1946, the British swiftly banned the Malayan Communist Party (MCP) and detained practically all leftist activists leaving the field clear for British friendly UMNO and its allies.

6. Tan Sri Ghazali Shafie, one of the most influential Malaysian leaders during the period, analysed that "One of our major miscalculations at the time of *Merdeka* [independence] was to welcome uncritically the concepts and precepts of a Westminster type democracy… We did not realise how irrelevant it was to our society as it was then as it exists today… We did not have, in 1957, the necessary social and economic infrastructure for a successful political surgery and transplant. The surgery performed in 1957 was not successful, the transplant did not 'take' and unless we take immediate measures the reaction will be complete… We therefore need an industrialisation and urbanisation programme in order that we can build an authentic Malaysian middle class to sustain the kind of democracy we want. … Let us therefore admit that at this stage of our constitutional development to mimic the democracy of Westminster in 1957 without the comparative economic and social foundation is to court self-destruction" (quoted in Muzaffar, 279).

7. In 1946 there was a spontaneous nation-wide protest by civilians, mainly Malays, against the Malayan Union proposal by the returning British colonial power at the end of the Second World War. However, that was to retain the Malay sultanate and feudal system although the resulting substitute of the Federation of Malaya (1948) cut a path to democratization by its constitutional monarchy model and adopting the parliamentary democracy political system.

8. See also analysis by Mohd Yusof Kasim and Azlan Ahmad in their Introduction chapter for their book on new politics in the 1999 Malaysian general election, *Poltik Baru Dalam Pilihan Raya Umum* (2002: 15–22) and Loh Kok

   Wah, Francis. *Politik Baru Di Malaysia. Syarahan Perlantikan Profesor*. Universiti Sains Malaysia, P. Pinang, Malaysia, 2002.

9. Weiss (2001: 42) gives a fair summary of the masyarakat madani concept: "a caring society built upon Islamic principles of communal interdependence. Citizens in a mm are encouraged to be self-sufficient, civic conscious, and engaged in socio-political discourse and practices, debating issues such as democracy, pluralism, social justice, accountability, and good governance in a free, ethical environment. The concept is thus clearly akin to civil society, albeit constructive rather than adversarial in approach. It might be termed a 'civic society' but one inspired by Islamic history. More than simply a political concept, though, masyarakat madani refers to an all encompassing system of social organization, much as Islamists promote Islam as *addeen*, or a complete way of life. In such a society, both rulers and ruled are to be held to the same moral, value based (as opposed to performance based) standard. Moreover, a masyarakat madani occupies a moral space, and thus unlike civil society, is not dependent upon the goodwill of the state for its perpetuation. The principles at the root of the order are morality, justice, fairness, civility, and consultation rather than majoritarianism".

10. Western liberal interpretation of human rights generally refer to various UN documents, namely the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), International

Covenant On Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), International Covenant On Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the Optional Protocol (1976) as its legal instruments that together are known as the International Bill Of Human Rights. Others include Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and the International Convention On Rights Of The Child.

11. The Charter of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (1972) endorses the UN Charter, including its provisions for fundamental human rights

12. According to Chandra Muzaffar (1996: 3), the President of JUST, some of the human rights questions that need rethinking are "what sort of rights emphasizes civil and political rights when sidelining economic, social and cultural rights? Can a rights concept that centres around the individual fulfill the aspirations of whole communities and collectives? How can a view of human rights which confines itself to transgressions within the nation state address the increasingly crucial challenge of human rights violations at the global level? Is it possible to conceive of rights that are not linked to responsibilities?" (Chandra 1996: 3)

13. The 1993 Vienna Declaration at the end of the Second World Conference on Human Rights asserts that all Human Rights are universal but also states that natural and regional peculiarities and various historical, cultural and religious backgrounds should be taken into account (Milne and Mauzy 1993).

14. Weiss (2001: 260–70) deals with these questions in greater depth and of the opinion that the signs are fairly positive, that a beginning is made.

15. Khalil Zulkifflee, "Review of an Information-Based Website: UMNO Vs PAS", (Unpublished essay, 2001) evaluated the websites based on screen design, interface, navigation, content and personal comments and found that PAS has a more effective and people friendly website than UMNO's.

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CHAPTER 17

The Impact of Discourses, Institutional Affiliation and Networks among New and Old Elites for Political Reform in China

Nora Sausmikat

A common view among political scientists is that a pluralistic, pro-democratic Civil Society is necessary for a sustainable democratization in China. Two significant groupings of this Civil Society are the intellectuals and various grassroots associations. As is argued for Eastern European states, the decline of the position of intellectuals goes with the increase of democratization of society. Similar, at the end of the millennium Chinese intellectuals face new challenges.

Since 1989 public political opposition has been abandoned inside China, but discourses on political reform continue to take place. In this essay, I shall demonstrate that elite intellectuals and grassroots associations managed to establish strategies to participate in political reform processes by using the new media, new participation opportunities and networks which partly had been built already in the 1980s, partly were newly established during the 1990s. These provided channels for travel and exchange of ideas. Based on extensive interviews (2000–2003), I conclude that the impact of political discourse on policy-making depends firstly on the type (and generation) of intellectuals, secondly on institutional and network resources, and thirdly on the discourse strategy.

Turning to the level of the actors in the Chinese context, the concept of *generation* is one (among other) connecting elements concerning the flow of information and the channels of influence. Generation can mean that vertical ties are determined through (inter-)generational networks; or that the discourse on political reform and the selection of certain global topics on political change is very much influenced by formative experiences of generations.

My hypothesis is two-fold: The shift from the 1980s, during which the fundamental question was "pro/contra economic reform", to the 1990s formula "How to realize reform", catalyzed the dissemination of what were

formerly politically taboo topics into governmental bodies and official think tanks. In organizational terms, we are witnessing an increasing cooperation between "external" and "internal" think tanks, "external" describing newly emerged, mostly foreign-funded organizations, the "internal" ones by contrast Party or state think tanks.

INTRODUCTION

Judging China's democratic future we witness very contradictory optimistic and pessimistic assumptions, ranging from the collapse of the power of the CCP to the still existing omnipotent power of the Party.

> The Party is modernizing, training its officials in market economics and encouraging them to cultivate a more cosmopolitan sensibility. But at base what has not changed is that it is still the most powerful force in China today, and its tentacles reach everywhere. (S. Lawrence. "Appearance can deceive." *FEER* 13.12.01)

> Meanwhile, the CCP is so riven by internal disagreement that it has spent 12 years since the Tiananmen massacre unable to come up with a coherent and workable plan for political reform. So forget any hopes for a peaceful transition to a more open political system in China, (…). One way or another the People's Republic will not survive. The only question is how it will die. (China's entry into the WTO "will provide the spark to light the prairie fire"). (Gordon Chang. "The Coming Collapse of China." 2001)

We can find similar contradictory insights into the role of the intellectuals in China:

> It looks as if Chinese intellectuals have collectively reached a dead end, and all they can do now is to intone mournful elegies for dead masters. [This is a] transformation from the previous mental state of self-pride to the current mental state of self-pity (…). (Gan Yang. "A critique of Chinese Conservatism in the 1990s". *Social Text* No. 55, p. 47)

> Ineluctably, the emergence of the market has brought with it diverse economic interests and a loosening of central state control. This has nurtured increasing pluralism in intellectual life, challenging socialist dogma with increasing boldness, and a growing diversity of associations autonomous from the state. (Larry Diamond. Foreword in Zhao Suisheng 2000, p. xi)

The discussion on the changing role of the intellectuals and their function inside the modernization process is not only an analytical one, but

simultaneously a political evaluation of newly emerging social groups and resultingly a re-evaluation of the term "intellectual" and the "old" relationship between intellectuals and the state.

On the one hand a mainstream conviction among Chinese and Western scholars is that Chinese intellectuals still identify themselves with the traditional role of the Confucian literati who fought for justice in the name of the people and who trust in an enlightened enigmatic leader. The democratic experiment, so the analysis goes, failed in China because democracy and intellectuals became instruments for the national cause; democracy only functioned as a means to strengthen China, not as an aim to change the political system.[1] Fang Lizhi, a strong protagonist of the 1989 movement for political reform, perceived himself as a "loyal dissident" in the Confucian tradition.[2] The responsibility of intellectuals should be to intervene especially in times of political crises.[3] The tension between "enlightenment" and "national salvation" seems to be one of the long-lasting, identity questions for modern intellectuals.[4]

On the other hand we have the optimistic notion of the coming of a "new elite", a "new generation" of intellectuals (or better "professionals"). Some predict, this new elite inside the Party will change the Party automatically.[5] The increasing professionalism among intellectuals led, as some observers think, to the development of a new "technocratic elite",[6] which gained influence and political power during the 1990s.

Li Cheng's thesis is that the so-called "Fourth Generation of leaders", or inside China better known as the "third echelon" (*disan tidui*) of political leaders, the generation of Hu Jintao, Zeng Qinghong (the two currently competing heirs of Jiang Zemin) and others (whom he calls the "Cultural Revolution Generation" because of formative experiences during that time) is characterized by a dramatic rise of higher education, especially in the disciplines of engineering and natural sciences.[7]

In fact, the regime's emphasis on expertise has altered the status of intellectuals radically and has fostered an environment in which a more professional approach to history and politics could be cultivated. But concerning political reform, intellectuals were not allowed to challenge the system. After various campaigns against "unorthodox thought" in the 1980s (1983, 1986 and 1989), intellectuals were forced to stay inside the framework they had followed already during the early 1960s, in which era they had been engaged as professional advisors to shape economic policy.[8]

But if we analyse the discourses on democracy and the strategies developed to influence reform in the 1990s, we can observe fundamental changes. A novel pluralism of discourses and the emergence of new networks among new and old agents of reform caused a shift from "closed discourses on reform" to "open social discourses". To demonstrate this multi-layered process the analysis combines three factors: the individual factor (discourse participant), the discourse factor and the institutional factor.

Discourse participants: With the marketization of society during the 1990s, intellectuals became entrepreneurs, who, most often with the financial support of foreign foundations, influenced the reform process through other channels and forms of action than producing ideas, ideologies or political concepts. The privileged position of elite intellectuals is constantly declining, and they cannot claim anymore to be the only "spokespersons of the people". As a reaction, many older intellectuals reflect on the identity question, and make various appeals for the independence of intellectuals. They protest against not being seen as a relevant social group or a force for modernization. Those same older intellectuals warn against being co-opted by the ruling elite.[9] In the analysis of the discourse participants I will look more closely at new relationships between semi-co-opted, non-co-opted and co-opted actors.

Discourse: The analysis of the discourses focuses on the types of action and the design for political reform. Ideas are developed through experiences and models, and so the sources for a discourse may be personal history, national history, or foreign models. Since we are concerned here with the influence of ideas on political reform, we will only include discourses that are intended to push reforms without calling for the radical abolition of the existing system. Concerning the influence of discourses on policy making, we have to differ between intended and spontaneous influence (see also Adelsberger in this volume). Whether the actors try to participate in reform via the media and publication of articles, or whether she/he writes proposals for reform which are channelled directly to the decision-making level, determines the scope and type of influence. As a result, the type of discourse is linked to the type of actor and the institutional setting they are affiliated to.

Institutions: If we analyse the different ideas, concepts and theories for political reform isolated from their historical genesis and their enforcement on an institutional level, we will not be able to judge the importance of the different debates. As Robert Marks has shown, "….the power of ideas cannot be separated from the power of institutions to enforce their acceptance".[10] The institutional setting determines not only access to "persons in power", but also the access to resources like media, internal policy information, or conferences and meetings. The quality of the interplay between discourses and policy is dependent on the support of interest groups/ discourse participants by the state (or the Party) institutions or the political elite.[11] Hence "institutions" include not only the organizational affiliation of the discourse participant, but also his/ her affiliation with "epistemic communities" (including overseas communities), that can provide the network necessary for the travel of ideas.

That means we can identify three different parameters which determine the discussion and diffusion of ideas for political reform:

After examining different definitions for intellectuals,[12] and keeping in mind, that we analyse the situation within an authoritarian regime,
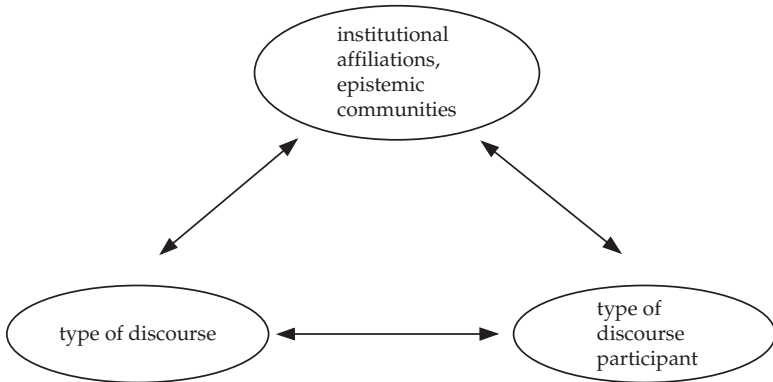
Figure 17.1. Parameter for diffusion of ideas.

we further can differentiate the types of intellectuals according to their position to the mainstream (Party) discourse:

- exiled or marginal intellectuals, who are oppressed because of their open critique;
- constructive-critical intellectuals, who do not follow 100% the reform propositions of the government, but at the same time are unwilling to call the system of government into question;
- assimilated-critical intellectuals, whose purpose is to stay inside the governmental and Party discourse, but propose changes and improvements; and
- assimilated intellectuals, who propagate and support the official guidelines.

Some of the discourse participants can belong to two or more types and in fact this is due to their discourse strategies. We know, that touching on certain taboo topics, like the positive evaluation of the Taiwan elections or openly support the parliamentary and multi-party system, could marginalize intellectuals. But the travel of ideas is not necessarily be determined by the obedience of taboos. Because of the innovative impulses coming from critical intellectuals their propositions are more likely printed in well-known critical newspapers. The different discourse strategies can be grouped as follows: the retaining (or legitimizing), the constructive, the transformative and the dismantling discourse. Having examined a large body of Chinese texts dealing with political reforms, and based on three interview series conducted in 2000–2003, I have ascertained the following basic structural features of the propositions for political reform: (1) reform within the system/change of the system, (2) pro/anti-"Western" models of

democracy, (3) state- (or party-) centred/society- (and institution-) centred discourse, (4) bottom-up/top-down approach.[13] The first two points describe the major parameters for marginalization of intellectuals, the last two points describe the fundamentally different approaches to reform inside the permitted framework of discourse.

The argumentation proceeds in three steps. In part one, I will summarize the mainstream discourses throughout the 1990s. This is meant as the background against which the discourses can be evaluated in a broader perspective. Part two identifies five groups of different institutional affiliations and nature of discourse and examines different reform propositions within these groups. Finally, a conclusion with the main emphasis on the decisive factors for the "travelling of ideas" is given. All the discourses analysed are urban-based and discourses carried out among members of the intellectual elite.

OVERVIEW OF THE MAIN DISCOURSES ON POLITICAL REFORM DURING THE 1990S

In 1993, China had to struggle with local peasant uprisings, which culminated in violent clashes between the provincial or township governments and peasants. Especially hinterland provinces such as Sichuan, Jiangxi, Anhui, Hunan and Guangxi experienced strikes, protests and open criticism of the Party.[14] The sociologist Zhou Duo (1947–), who participated actively in the attempt to convince students to leave the Tiananmen-Square in 1989, predicted in 1992 that the CCP would only be able to stay in power if it were to change into a social-democratic party (which meant for him a coalition with the intellectuals and much more liberal political reforms);[15] this topic was discussed in a very lively way during the second half of the 1990s. During the period between the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Party Congress (1993–1997) campaigns against "wholesale Westernization" (*quanpan xihua*) with the accompanying adaptation of Western models of democracy joined forces with rising nationalism led to a short-term rise of conservative intellectuals with the backing of older, inner-Party cadres.

The so-called, neo-conservatism discourse was not only a substitute for the neo-authoritarian trend of the 1980s, but also encompassed the cultural reorientation after the "cultural fever" of the 1980s towards the "national cultural fever" (*guoxuere*). As it did throughout the entire East and Southeast Asian region, cultural re-orientation played a crucial role for economic and national emancipation and modernization. It was argued that the Western concept of democracy is too abstract, not applicable to the Chinese situation, and linked to a Western understanding of human rights. But simultaneously, the rising professionalism among the political and intellectual elite, expanding communications with Western scholars and the integration into international institutions and alliances made it necessary to study and apply international political concepts like "democracy", "NGO", civil society, or rule of law.

At the Fifteenth Party Congress of the CCP in 1997, it was officially decided to establish a *rule of law system*. Since then we have witnessed an enormous rise in research activities on this topic. Specialists for foreign political and economic theory were needed and education was shifted into this direction – studies of ideology declined whereas economical, theoretical and political specialization gained the upper hand.

The period between 1997 and 2000 was characterized by a nascent liberalization of discourse. Certain events made it possible to voice ideas for political reform, like the centenary of the Beijing University in 1998. During this "Beijing spring" liberalism, Western models of democracy, (democratic) nationalism and other political concepts were openly discussed. But questioning of the single-party-state (and the "Four Cardinal Principles") remained sensitive topic. With the rising tensions among Party leaders over the entry into the WTO, this open discourse atmosphere ended with reinforced restrictions. That created a polarization between the so-called Neo-leftists, conservatives and liberals at the end of the 1990s.

We can divide the discourse on liberalism into two main sub-discourses: reform through economic liberalism (which implies the change of the whole political system, "rightist liberals"), and Anglo–American liberalism (paradoxically also called "leftist liberalism"). The latter one includes discussions on constitutional democracy (institutionalization of the People's Congress as the highest institution of the government, institutionalization of the constitutional rights like freedom of press, speech, opinion, Civil Society). Liberals like Liu Junning critically add a third, sub-discourse category – "the discourse of the conservative liberals", represented by the Shanghai historian Xiao Gongqin, who argue inside the framework of Edmund Burke and only pretend to advocate the tradition of British liberalism.[16]

Xiao Gongqin, a famous neo-conservative, defines liberals to the effect that they are intellectuals with Western orientation, college students, democrats within the Chinese Communist Party, and moderate "progressives" at the political centre.[17] The discourse on nationalism harbours various facets of sub-discourses, from "democratic nationalism", "Confucian" fundamentalism, pragmatic nationalism, to aggressive chauvinism. Conservatism combines very complex and different concepts.[18] The "Chinese" path towards modernization was at the centre of argumentation of the neo-conservatives; hence post-modern, post-colonial theories, which were applied to reject Western models or standards, became very much in vogue among these protagonists.

Such political reform discourses represented the dominant Party discourse on slow and step-by-step reform, the rejection of any kind of radicalism (economic or political "shock-therapy"), as well as the support of the *"Four Cardinal Principles"* (leadership of the CCP, the socialist path, dictatorship of the proletariat, and Marxism–Leninism–Maoism). These Four

Principles were necessary for stability, Xiao stated; when given up too early during the "early phases of modernization", this would create an "explosion of political participation" which is not controllable anymore and would end in a crisis.[19] But the recent proclamation of the so-called *"three represents theory"* on the eightieth anniversary of the CCP in July 2001, which allowed private entrepreneurs to become Party members, reinforce the impression that the major future target of reform will be the reform of the Party. If this trend continues, the Four Cardinal Principles will also have to be replaced as the ideological mode of rule.

In a recent presentation in Washington, Xiao Gongqin described the antagonism between liberals and conservatives as surpassed by the new power of centrists, technocrats, intellectuals, and the media, the new middle class of China.[20] After 4 June 1989, liberals were purged or marginalized and replaced by the new centrist forces. Conservatives obtained temporary power on a platform of anti-liberalism combined with political alliances with elders. This is interpreted by Xiao as "the arrival of Neo-authoritarianism" in China.

NON-GOVERNMENTAL THINK TANKS – CONSTRUCTIVE AND TRANSFORMATIVE DISCOURSE

This group of intellectuals can be called "dissident dissenters", who choose *direct* agitation to influence the political reform process by establishing non-governmental think tanks. These think tanks can be seen as a tolerated niche for experimental political reforms which remain sensitive inside official think tanks.

These actors do not want any more to discuss ideologies or theories, they want to become "political entrepreneurs". Li Fan (World and China Institute):

> We can offer services for the government, like some American political organizations that receive governmental funds, but the government is not paying your salary! Therefore, we are an NGO, we are not doing governmental projects, we work together with local government to promote reform.[21]

They left state institutions to establish their "independent" organizations with the help of the Ford Foundation or other foundations. Many of these actors belong to the same age-group ("Cultural Revolution generation"). During the 1980s, they worked in advisory teams of the government, for example, in the Beijing Association of Young Economists, a think-tank which recruited 200 young economists and which was established by Bao Tong and Chen Yizi.[22] The careers of the interviewees discussed in this group resemble each other very much: mostly they went to prestigious schools before the Cultural Revolution (high schools No. 4/ No. 101/ high schools attached to

Qinghua / Beijing University or similar schools in other provinces), managed to enter university right after the Cultural Revolution and entered the newly established governmental advisory groups for economic reform. During the last years of the 1980s and especially after the Fourteenth Party Congress 1992, many managed to establish their own think tanks.

A typical feature of this group of intellectuals are their interpersonal ties to well known mentors within the political elite (Li Fan was a pupil of Du Runsheng, the former leader of the Central Research Bureau/ Cao Siyuan, the designer of China's bankruptcy law, now a consultant in great demand, a pupil of Yu Guangyuan, former leader of the Marxism–Leninism Bureau). Other are mentors themselves, like Mao Yushi. Mao Yushi (the director of the think-tank *Unirule*), who is one of the older intellectuals now in his eighties, is no Party member and works together with some of the members of the so-called "Four Gentlemen Group" (influential economic reform group during the 1980s). All these mentors belonged either to the Hu Yaobang (party general secretary from 1980 to 1987) or the Zhao Ziyang (party general secretary from 1987 to 1989) think-tank of the 1980s.

The old networks of reformers also function as door-openers for younger reformers. Many of these intellectuals or the people who collaborate with them have indirect or direct contacts to some members of the reform-wing inside the Party or with governmental think tanks. For example, the famous economist Wu Jinglian (very active already during the 1980s) works with Mao Yushi and simultaneously in the Center for Development Research of the State Council (*guowuyuan fazhan yanjiu zhongxin*). Through this double function they can build a bridge between actors inside and outside governmental institutions. This bridge can bring about the exchange of information and communication as well as the transfer of political reform ideas and concepts. The cooperation between Party members and non-Party members is essential for the development of the discourse. Mao Yushi highlighted the importance of not being a Party member:

> If you are not a Party member, you are able to articulate your ideas more independently, and it is more difficult to control your actions. There are some very important Party members, like for example Du Runsheng, who was the most important agrarian economist during the time of Hu Yaobang. He still is very active and we meet at conferences. These people are all Party members and have to support the Party guidelines. They are free in their thinking, but cannot articulate their ideas.[23]

Wu Mingyu and Du Runsheng (the former leader of the first reform think-tank), both highly placed leading cadres, are supporters inside the party. Because of the special feature of inter-generational bonds, there are also contradictions between different reform concepts. Whereas members of the old reform faction inside the Party (Li Rui, Du Runsheng, Yu

Guangyuan) and non-Party members of that generation (Mao Yushi) hope for a democratic reform within the Party and pursue a top-down approach, younger ones like Li Fan (World and China Institute) advocate a bottom-up approach. Although their reform discourses and strategies are different, there is an agreement across the generations: the condemnation of the massacre of 1989.[24] This is due to a deeply-rooted basis, their experiences of the Cultural Revolution (and for the elder ones of the anti-rightist movement of 1957). Mao Yushi is concerned with the question of the reform of the economic system, but openly criticizes the 1989 verdict, and consequently argues for a democratization inside the political elite. In his view the political concepts developed during the 1980s inside the Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang think tanks should be applied today for political reform.

The reform strategies differ along the generational borderlines. The older mentors who struggle for reform within the Party, have some support inside the Party because inner Party reform was on the agenda of the Sixteenth Party Congress in November 2002. In contrast, the younger generation of intellectuals tend to argue outside of the ideological discourses. They try to strengthen reform forces within the society and advocate a modified adaptation of Western models (like the enforcement of open discussion inside the NPC, competitive elections on the lower levels).

Li Fan promotes the expansion of rural elections to the township level. He has gone on record that his strategies for political reform are based on his experiences in the post-Cultural Revolution research group. After working for a short time at the Academy of Social Sciences, he went to the USA for five years. When he returned in 1989, Li immediately entered the State Council but later set up his own think-tank in 1993. Tracing back his ability to convince provincial leaders to the rhetorical abilities he picked up during the Cultural Revolution, he concluded that it is important not to work inside state institutions to preserve an independent spirit.[25] Li avoids direct confrontation because this would only lead to exclusion.[26] Therefore he wants to keep a low profile. In his view, three steps of political reform have taken place so far: the first was the rotation system of politicians initiated by party leader Deng Xiaoping during the 1980s; the second was the separation of government and Party by Zhao Ziyang at the end of the 1980s which failed; and the third one initiated by the current state president Jiang Zemin was only an administrative reform. For Li Fan only the usage of elections will lead to a breakthrough in the field of political reform.

He works in a team with loosely associated scholars and together they publish policy papers and books to spread their proposals for reform. This team does not aim to convince the Party leaders but the local reform forces. Similar to many other interviewees, he differentiates between "scholarly work" on political reform and concrete policy-orientated research.

> No, I only cite from central political leaders what is necessary
> for our approach, you will not find any quotation of the present

political slogans. It is not my style to beat around the bush, we do not need to cite Jiang Zemin's words.[27]

Another discourse strategy is pursued by Cao Siyuan, son of a former leading cadre from Jiangxi, and former student of Yu Guangyuan and Su Shaozhi. He was very active already during the 1980s movements and established his own "independent research institute" (the Stone Group) after withdrawing from the State Council. Already an outstanding critic during the 1980s (when he was convinced, that it was impossible to abolish one-party rule), he changed his attitude towards a multi-party system. Nowadays, he argues, a reform within the Party must be accompanied by the establishment of a multi-party parliamentary system and direct elections of representatives.[28] This open support for Western styled democracy is softened by his additional remarks that the Party should take the leading role in the reform process.

These proposals are also supported by independent scholars,[29] and some elder intellectuals from the former Hu Yaobang think tanks, like the former deputy-director of the Organization Department of the CCP, Li Rui. He urges the continuation of the "May Fourth (1919) project", freedom of the media, protection of the constitutional rights and the establishment of a Western-style democratic system.[30] Although these cadres are retired, this network helps to promote the dissemination of ideas.

STATE AND PARTY THINK TANKS – RETAINING AND LEGITIMIZING DISCOURSE (PARTY INTELLECTUALS)

The mainstream discourse is the reform discourse, the so-called "reform and opening" (*gaige kaifang*) discourse (or "Deng Xiaoping discourse") – which means, that every proposal for reform must conform to the "Four Cardinal Principles", the general direction of economic reform and a step-by-step administrative reform. Triggering reforms of the political system in state or party think tanks is very limited, especially after the increasing controls on the liberal reform discourse after 1998. But the interviews demonstrated that some state and Party institutions became important disseminators of reform ideas and maintain intimate connections between insiders and outsiders.

In the 1980s, these "intellectuals", mostly ex-Red Guards, served as professionals in different political departments as well as institutions like the well-known Party think-tank "Research Center for the Reform of the Political Structure" (*zhengzhi tizhi gaige yanjiusuo*), or the governmental think-tank "Research Institute for Economic Reform" (*jingji tizhi gaige yanjiusuo–tigaisuo*). These institutions were the first, post-Cultural Revolution think tanks. They were restructured during the 1980s (especially after 1985) and again after the Tiananmen crackdown 1989. Today the "State Council Development Research Center" (*guowu yuan fazhan yanjiu zhongxin*) is one of the "surviving" organizations of the 1980s, which unites four of the formerly

six sub-departments of the "Research institute for economic reform". Nowadays, most of the intellectuals who work for reform are concentrated in this centre.[31]

Members of the State Council Development Research Center argue that one major target of the current, internal reform discussion is the structural reform, the separation of government, Party and enterprises, especially the separation of local enterprises and their protection by local governments. Without this separation, it is argued, the fight of corruption will show no results. In fact, these discourses have continued and surpassed pre-1989 discourses.

Inside these think tanks informal politics procedures remain the same as in the 1980s. Wu Guoguang, a former member of the advisory team of Zhao Ziyang, remembered that personal contact was not necessary to be named an "advisor" of the government. The inventor of the so-called "Big Circle theory (*daqinghuan*) ", Wang Jian, never met Zhao Ziyang before he wrote his proposal. Wu:

> It was common practice to publish your proposals in the different "internal newsletters" (*neican*), every governmental section has its own political research department with their own *neican*. These departments try to circulate their *neican* as widely as possible. The secretaries of the ministers, they select beforehand, which articles shall be circulated.[32]

According to the interviews this structure still prevail in governmental and Party think tanks.[33] Additionally, the present atmosphere in the different think tanks seems to be much more focussed on the one and the only leader than was the case during the 1980s. Liberal thoughts or concepts of a multi-party system cannot be discussed in *neican* papers.[34]

The Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) as one of the states most important governmental think tanks remains a place for intellectual exchange between reform discourse participants of different institutions. For example, the academy's publication of the *"Collapse of a superpower: Deep analysis of reasons of the Soviet disintegration"* (2001) was thought to serve as teaching material for Chinese officials. In this analysis, the over-centralized, decision-making system, the ethnic chauvinism and the political dictatorship was held to be responsible for the failed liberalization of Gorbachev. Influential people like Huang Weiting from the Party school commented that the book shows clearly that the superpower collapsed because the Russian political elite possessed too many privileges, did not feel responsible anymore for their power, and became corrupt.[35]

The most surprising, ideological change occurred in the Party school, which has become an attractive place for many young students who strive for a good education and value non-conformist thinking. This change can be seen as a success for a reform inside Party institutions. People with very good personal connections to all factions inside the Party managed to promote such

a reform. Zheng Bijian is a representative of this kind. He was promoted from the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS), where he served as vice-director, to the post of the vice-director of the Party school (under the Central Committee) and currently is the director of the China Reform Forum (CRF). The latter think-tank is very active in organizing exchanges between European and Chinese experts on the party systems, party and on economic reforms.[36] The vice director of this think-tank argues, that without a competition the CCP will not be able to survive. Therefore, village elections have to be pursued further, although there are still fundamental problems waiting to be solved. According to the same informant the theory of the "Three Represents" was designed as a tool for the survival of the party. The party must mirror the economic development and fight for their legitimacy – otherwise they will not be accepted by the people. These statements show how urgent political reforms are perceived even inside party think tanks. Zheng Bijian concludes that many Chinese officials realize that fundamental political change is necessary to democratize the country. Especially the question of recruiting new, professional personal for this task seems to influence his concept of reforming the Party school.[37] The Party School has to compete with other think factories in the new market environment. Therefore it has tried to increase the attraction for young scholars to enter the Party school for getting a good professional training.[38] Today this institution cooperates with Western party foundations and supports research projects on democratization. One aim is the establishment of independent government institutions which are not solely under the jurisdiction of the Party: these include the establishment of an administration for state property and a control institution for public assets, the establishment of an independent "legislative and court system"; the separation of governmental institutions and undertakings to fight protectionism.

The dissemination of ideas coming from these think-tanks can be viewed as most effective because of their close relationship with the institutions in power. Currently, the most popular research in think tanks like the China Reform Forum or the China Centre for Comparative Politics and Economics is the comparative party research. Although the old director of the latter think-tank supports the mainstream discourse of "*gaige kaifang*" (reform and opening), dismiss a multi-party system as "utopian", and want to concentrate on the central element of current reform, the "local governance",[39] small research groups on comparative party research were founded inside this think-tank.

OVERSEAS/MAINLAND ACADEMIC CO-OPERATIONS – RETAINING AND LEGITIMIZING DISCOURSE

During the 1990s, the influence of overseas communities contiguously gained influence on the political discourse. This is a new feature, which I

discuss in detail elsewhere.[40] Most of the discourses among these academics accept the overall framework of the mainstream discourse in mainland China. This community can be divided into three different categories: some of them try to keep their old networks with their former mentors and some leading figures from the pre-Tiananmen think tanks, some are engaged in influencing the new intellectual trends like the New Leftist by building international networks, and yet others try to get involved in research projects for the Chinese government.

The first group consists of people who were exiled after the dissolving of the Zhao Ziyang and Hu Yaobang think tanks in the aftermath of Tiananmen. This is the only group which is really challenging the mainstream discourse. Their connection with the mainland discourse is channelled through old networks of the former theorist group around Hu Yaobang (f.e. the former deputy editor of the *Science and Technology Daily* Sun Changjiang)[41].

The second group of overseas intellectuals tries to gain influence on the new intellectual trends like the New Leftist or the so-called liberals by building international networks. This group formed among overseas intellectuals during the 1990s, when some intellectuals who studied in the United States and managed to establish their own networks with scholars inside China. In 1996, they established the USA-focused "Western Returned Scholars Association", which organizes regular symposia and workshops for sustainable development in China. According to Wang Hui (former editor of *Dushu*), many were influenced by Neo-Marxist ideas, which spread in economic, sociological, and legal theory in American Universities. Afterwards, they developed their own mixture of liberal and conservative thinking.[42] In the aftermath of the Tiananmen tragedy, some intellectuals turned away from ideas of the "enlightenment" movement of the 1980s, and blamed now the West and not the "traditional feudal culture" for the lack of democracy in China and the infiltration with radicalism. Some of them looked for new solutions by turning back to traditional resources of the Chinese spiritual civilization (like Confucianism),[43] and even founded their own associations, such as associations for the study of the "National conditions of China" (*guoxue* studies), or the "International Alliance of Confucians" with widespread participation of overseas and mainland Chinese.

During the 1990s, some of the overseas intellectuals became protagonists of the so-called New-Left, and propagate preserving Mao's heritage. Cui Zhiyuan, who worked in the United States, and mainland scholars like Gan Yang as well as Wang Shaoguang (both living now in Hong Kong), dominated the discussions on the "Chinese way of democratization" among the New Leftists in mainland China.[44] They argued for a positive evaluation of some Maoist (economic) policies and declared that the populism of the Cultural Revolution could be a genuine form of direct democracy. Especially

Cui Zhiyuan argued that totalitarianism is not inherited in the CCP and hopes for "a transfer of power back to the people".

These intellectuals are strongly criticized by former associates of Zhao Ziyang. For example, Wu Guoguang (living now in Hong Kong) describes their reform ideas as Janus-faced:

> In the 1980s you couldn't imagine anything like the New Left. Even the Old Left, who were politically very powerful at that time, were totally unattractive for intellectuals. But today the political ideas of the New Left sometimes even appeal to me. But the problem is, that the New Left is not really leftist – because they support the current regime, they want to keep stability, want to keep the big power in the state's hand, are against Western capitalism, but who oppressed the intellectuals, the workers and peasants? Why are they poor? Who did that? The regime. So if they would be real Leftists, they would have to advocate a revolution now in China![45]

Different from the first two groups, the third group does not solely engage in ideological or academic discussions and in some respect can be called political advisors. They consist in overseas and mainland China co-operations. One example is the newly established "School of Public Policy and Management" at Qinghua University; the Dean simultaneously is the deputy president of the State Council Development Research Center. This school intends "to build a strong and modern China" through applying pragmatically "Western theories and practices to Chinese conditions". Consequently it is dedicated to doing research on "national characteristics", while at the same time catching up with the globalization of theories. Hu Angang, a young economist aged around 40, is the director of the sub-division "Center for China Studies". Hu also cooperates with the above mentioned party think-tank China Reform Forum and is internationally well-known for his report on corruption, and other publications co-authored by Wang Shaoguang on regional disparities.[46] Wang claims that he himself and Hu have had a decisive influence on the *"xibu kaifa"* (developing the Western areas)-policy (inaugurated after the Fifteenth National Congress of the CCP 1997), on the tax reform program of the 1990s, and on the tenth Five-Year-Plan.

Hu and Wang both belong to the Cultural Revolution-generation and to a group of academics who left China after 1989 to be educated in the West, and returned equipped with their Western PhD. Today, especially Hu became a public intellectual who can voice far-reaching reforms without any restrictions. This could be due to the reputation of his father, but more likely it is due to his cautious strategy not to challenge the one-party-rule. Hu Angang's contacts to the state planning commission helped him to translate their 1994 and 1998 reports into policies.

Wang strategically supports the state discourse and rejects Western forms of democracy which are mainly identified by the establishment of different parties. In his current political reform research project, he claims to combine streamlined ideology with issue-focussed Western practices like the Scandinavian (Swedish) social security system, or Civil Society concepts. Wang aims to link overseas with mainland scholars in a project on "State Building and Democratization".[47] The aim of this project is the development of a "Chinese way" for political reform and the establishment of a "participatory regime".

To look for a Chinese way of political reform or modernization path is very welcomed by the political elite and receives much support from that side. Other, less ideological approaches to reform are easily rejected. Recently, Hu Angang has written detailed proposals on political structural reforms. He favours regulations and clear rules stipulating how long party general secretaries may serve and how vacancies should be filled.[48] He and his colleagues' original proposal was a comprehensive reform plan for the Party, that they submitted to governmental and Party offices in August 2000. They also handed in proposals on freedom of speech in Central Committee meetings, secret ballots on Party decisions, and freeing mass media from governmental control. But since they did not receive any reaction from the officials, they published their proposals under the title *"China's strategic vision"*, where the sensitive section on term limits were deleted due to the publishers request.

SOCIAL ORGANIZATIONS – TRANSFORMATIVE DISCOURSE

This discourse correlates democratization with the emergence of a Civil Society and the empowerment and enlightenment of the people. It is advocated by people working in the "third sector", meaning people working in social services, quasi NGO's or in honorary positions. But this group also includes other social groups like professional associations, clubs, foundations or individual journalists and writers. The supply of every citizen with information on their civil rights, on different, critical views of governmental decisions or on historical facts, they argue would lead to the empowerment of the people to speak on their own. So this type of discourse only indirectly aims to promote reform, it rather aims at creating democracy by the strengthening of autonomy and self-regulation. Contrary to a common understanding of democracy among the (conservative) political elite, who perceive democracy as an instrument to consolidate and not to limit the state-power,[49] they are convinced of the necessity to strengthen the rights of ordinary citizens, and to enlighten governmental officials as well. In the discussion on the establishment of a rule of law system, some scholars focus on the institutional aspect of such a reform and propose that non-governmental bodies should be allowed to draft bills and introduce them into legislature.[50]

One example of this kinds of organization is the "Center for Women Law Studies and Legal Services" (*funü falü yanjiu yu fuwu zhongxin*). This centre promotes and generates new laws, as well as aiming to create a bridge between governmental institutions and the Chinese citizens. Guo Jianmei, the director of the Legal Service Center, is working at the grassroots level. She managed to establish a network between lawyers, university professors and the political administration which helped to influence the drafting of the new marriage law released in April 2001. Guo does not believe that the people are "not mature" enough for democracy, but measures have to be implemented to enable citizens to enforce their constitutional rights.[51] The women working in this centre understand their role as "representing the interests of women", and as one step towards a society with institutions of representative character. The term "institution-building entrepreneurs", intellectuals who contribute to "construct various institutional and organizational forms to bridge society and the state",[52] would be appropriate for these intellectuals. Although the establishment of an organization still has to rely on the official accreditation process, individuals managed to get organized first internationally (with the support of the Ford-Foundation), and register later on.

This gradualist strategy avoiding both direct political discussion and confrontation as a way to push forward political reform is supported by political scientists, philosophers, writers and artists. Some argue out of their biographical experience for the need to raise independent consciousness among Chinese citizens. One example is the writer Dai Qing who writes historical novels to "clear up some twisted facts inside the Party and national history":

> There have not been big changes in the political system, but there have been very big changes in the possibilities to discern misgovernment for the people. People start to fight for their own voice. In fact we have political reform every day, every hour, every minute in China. (…) The people feel doubt inside themselves, this is very different from my own experiences during the 1960s.[53]

Institutionally these intellectuals rely on their interpersonal relationships with officials and with the administration. Their main instruments of agitation are the media (TV, newspapers, journals, books, internet etc.), as well as their own established organizations or centres. Support by the media guarantees broad support in the society. Investigative journalism even on state controlled television is possible to a certain extent, like the series *Jiaodian Fangtan* (Focus Report) which features the abuse of power by officials and on corruption. But this situation conceals significant insecurities, as the leftist critic Wang Hui describes. He criticizes the formation of a shadow market, where unofficial productions have to be produced in official

publishing houses and are administered by the Bureau of Journalism and Publication. In this situation, journalists have no legal protection, no rights,[54] and therefore no real power to resist state intervention. Unlike in the West, in "mainland China, the public sphere emerged before a mature Civil Society, and it exists very much within the state apparatus. Its existence is facilitated (…) by the needs of the state and the internal splits within the ruling elite".[55]

INTELLECTUALS AS FUTURE MENTORS AND PROPHETS: CONSTRUCTIVE, TRANSFORMATIVE AND RETAINING DISCOURSE

The last group tries to gain influence on political reform by analysing the changes within the intellectual community in China, and therefore providing the ideological software to be applied for a vision of a new political system. I will concentrate on two outstanding figures of the intellectual elite: Wang Hui, born in 1959 and working in the literature department of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, and the Shanghai historian Zhu Xueqin.

Wang Hui critically assesses the rise of liberalism in China and points out the conservative roots of Chinese liberalism. According to Wang Hui, the intellectuals of the 1980s were not at all a homogenous group, but they had in common the development of anti-orthodox, anti-establishment and pro-Western tendencies. In his view, many of them were amongst those who profited from the reforms in the 1990s, and so they do not only constitute a dissident group. Some even obtained leading positions in state institutions because their mental orientation was not very different from that of the political elite. They paved the way for the radical capitalism in China and gave support to people like Li Yining (former professor of Beijing university, who introduced Western economic theories),[56] who only strive for their own profit.[57] For this reason they created cracks in the internal structure of the state and deepened factionalism among the ruling elite.

Their "unconscious or conscious" support for Western capitalism is strongly rejected by Wang Hui. These intellectuals do not stay in the framework of socialism so as to reform socialism, but rather turn instead to the pre-socialist era to formulate an Anglo-American liberalism for China. The split of the intellectuals after 1989 into "conservative" and "radical" intellectuals caused the creation of many small, scholarly circles, which weakened the whole movement for reform. While Wang identifies people "on the radical side" like the Shanghai philosopher Liu Xiaofeng or the historian Zhu Xueqin as being infiltrated by "Eurocentric universalism", he characterizes the conservative side as technocrats and theorists (like Qin Hui, Gan Yang, Sun Binglin) who develop realist concepts for social reform, who doubt universalism, and who do research in indigenous studies. Wang Hui urges people to be aware of one-sided nationalism that focuses only on a strong (interventionist) state, and calls for transcendence of binary paradigms, such as West/China and tradition/modernity. The theoretical

problems of identifying a place in between socialist historical practice and the dangers of global capitalism could offer the opportunity to define a new transnational model of modernization.[58]

Zhu Xueqin on the other side asks for the return of Chinese intellectuals to their "traditional thinking" of the May Fourth Era (1919), when they started to learn from Anglo-American liberalism, which he identifies as the Chinese project of modernity. He analyses the development of Chinese intellectuals after 1989 from the standpoint of the liberals and detects "nationalism and populism" as the two chronic illnesses of intellectuals since the May Fourth movement, which brought radicalism and fanaticism to China. For him it is absolutely necessary to resolve misunderstanding concerning the Cultural Revolution especially for intellectuals from the New Left who did not experience the Cultural Revolution, otherwise the rise of the leftists will bring another catastrophe to China.[59]

In Zhu's view the analytical conclusions of people like Wang Hui are wrong, because the introduction of capitalism did not cause the social crisis in China, but the political system and the lacking of democratic institutions. He defends He Qinglian's work "The pitfalls of China's modernization" (*Zhongguo de Xianjing* Hongkong. Mingjing chubanshe 1998), and condemns the critique of the conservatives on He's work. His prophecy for China is that in a society,

> …which is pushed forward by unchecked corruption (*fubai youli*), the new creation of laws will only create the Italian model of corrupt financial power, where society is controlled by the Mafia and not a Civil Society where intellectuals help to create laws.[60]

He traces the emergence of the New Left back to the question of generations – ironically, the ones who went to the West and came back to China developed the "New Left" and the conservative trend (like Cui Zhiyuan, Wang Shaoguang), whereas the ones who got educated in China support liberalism (like Xu Youyu, Zhu himself, and Liu Junning). The substitution of liberal and conservative forces by technocrats and "centrist forces", who are not occupied with ideology and ignore ideological battles, as described by Xiao Gongqin, cannot be followed by Zhu Xueqin. His bitter assessment of the current position of liberal forces indicates a strengthening of leftist forces, who have been gaining influence just because of their anti-Western standpoint.[61]

Ironically, both Wang Hui and Zhu Xueqing do argue for a transcendence of ideological battles. But as a matter of fact, they are forced to struggle with inner contradictions within their generation and pressure from conservative forces within the Party. The process of the economic integration of China into the WTO is accompanied now and again by new attacks from authorities on any kind of "Western" theory.

CONCLUSION

We have seen, that the collective experience of generations are decisive factors determining the specific approach to reform and the scope of influence. However, the institutional infrastructure is characterized by a simultaneity of patriarchal leadership structure, patron-client relationships and an internationalization of political reform discourses and networks. This situation produced hybrid types of interaction between formerly closed systems and open systems, which resulted in pluralism in most of the political official and semi-official, reform think tanks. Despite the fact, that discourses on Western models of democracy are currently firmly controlled in official Party or Central Committee think tanks, we can find even in these institutions ideological and strategic pluralism. The linkages between insider and outsiders with liberalism, conservatism and "leftism" are deeply rooted in autobiographical backgrounds, and perhaps can evolve into the basis for a future state with competing parties.

Nevertheless, the three types of intellectuals – namely the above mentioned constructive-critical, assimilated-critical (or pragmatic), and assimilated intellectuals – do choose their discourse strategy and ideology against the background of the anticipated future for their own status, positions and possibilities to gain influence. This anticipated future sharply contrasts the situation in the 1980s – nowadays internationalization and wide-ranging means of access to information fundamentally changed the opportunity structures. The interviews have shown, that these conditions enabled the majority of the constructive-critical intellectuals, who can be discerned in all examined institutions, to "link-up globally and act locally".

The diversity of problems spurred the opening up of reform discourses outside and inside official think tanks which touch on taboo-topics like the basic pre-conditions for a democracy like free elections, the freedom of speech, the fight of corruption inside the political elite. It led to far-reaching proposals for the inclusion of other groups in political decision-making, to the establishment of lobby groups for the protection and extension of the citizens rights (especially underprivileged citizens and losers in the market reform process), and to pragmatic co-operations between the political and local elites with internationalized actors. But it also led to a marginalization of ideological questions, some even trace the success of Japan back to the rejection of ideology and pure materialistic, anti-egalitarian and pragmatic politics.

To come back to the initial question of the role of the intellectuals, we have to conclude, that the social, intellectual and cultural anchor for their identity still is rooted in the old dilemma between moral, legitimacy and pragmatism. The status and position of intellectuals as critics, political philosophers and independent forces which maintain their critical spirit, and do not become tools of the political elite, mostly is advocated by intellectuals who lost their privileged position during the incorporation of pragmatic-orientated intellectuals. The continued oppression of the Western orientated,

liberal thinkers led to widespread frustration, to a polarization of the debate and the conviction that a reform inside the system will be impossible. The problem of "pragmatic reforms" and applying Western concepts for political reform has to be dealt with strategically. Consequently, in order not to get marginalized, the constructive-critical approach to synthesize Party and Western approaches can be found in all the groups of intellectuals under scrutiny.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The results presented here base mainly on interviews that I conducted between 2000 and 2002 in the People's Republi of China and Hong Kong with different members of the intellectual elite. The respondents were members of the Center for Comparative Politics and Economy (CCPE), scholars from some Elite-Universities like the Qinghua -and Beijing University, party school cadres, journalists, members of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, independent think tanks, grass-root organizations, and other associations. Beyond that there were informal talks with academics, students, and policy advisors. The author would like to thank all interviewees for their frankness, openness and their willingness to share their views with me.

NOTES

1. Interview with Zhao Baoxu in June 2000. See also Edmund S.K. Fung, *In search of Chinese democracy. Civil opposition in nationalist China 1929–1949* (Cambridge 2001), 5–10; He Baogang, "Why Establishing Democracy is so Difficult in China? – The Challenge of China's National Identity Question," Paper given in Hong Kong an the CEFC 15 December 2000; Baogang He, *The democratization of China* (New York, London 1996), 89; Shuisheng Zhao, ed. *China and democracy* (London, New York: Routledge 2000), 5–6.

2. Fang in Adrienne Woltersdorf. *Vom Quantenphysiker zum Dissidenten. Eine politische Biographie Fang Li-zhi's* (Bochum 1995), 197.

3. Fang Lizhi, *Weiji xia de zeren* (Responsibility in the crisis), vol. 1–2 (Singapore 1988).

4. Li Zehou, "The conflicting forces of enlightenment"; Li Zehou, *Going my own way* (Zou wo ziji de lu, Taipei 1990), 568.

5. Michael Schoenhals, "Political movements, change and stability: The Chinese Communist Party in power," *The China Quarterly*, 159 (1999): 599; Ding Yijiang, "The conceptual evolution of democracy in intellectual circles' rethinking of state and society," in *China and democracy*, ed. Shuisheng Zhao, 20–23.

6. Li Cheng, "Jiang Zemin`s successors: the rise of the Fourth Generation of leaders in the PRC," *The China Quarterly*, March 2000: 1–40.

7. Li Cheng, 19; CNA No. 1613, 14 July 1998: 6.

8. Nina Halpern, "Economists and economic policy-making in the early 1960s," In *China's intellectuals and the state*, ed. Goldman, Cheek, Hamrin (Cambridge 1987), 57; Hong Yung Lee, "From revolutionary cadres to bureaucratic technocrats," in *Contemporary Chinese politics in historical perspective*, ed. Brantly Womack (Cambridge 1991), 191.

9. The conference "The role of intellectuals in social development in China," (Beijing University, January 2002) was opened with remarks on the declining status of intellectuals as independent group.

10. Robert Marks, "The state of the China field. Or, the China field of the state," *Modern China* vol. 11, no. 4: 462.

11. This is described by Peter M. Haas, "Introduction: Epistemic communities and internal policy coordination," *International Organization* 46, 1 (1992): 3–17 (see also Heberer in this volume).

12. Thomas Heberer and Nora Sausmikat, "Politische Diskurse, Intellektuelle und Politischer Wandel. Diskurswandel in China seit 1998 und seine Implikationen," *ASIEN* 82 (2002): 35–60 and Heberer in this volume.

13. A more detailed analysis of the reform discourses can be find in Nora Sausmikat, "Demokratisierungsdiskurse unter Intellektuellen in der VR China 2000 – Der schwere Weg der Emanzipation vom 'Hu Yaobang-Phänomen'," *Projektdiskussionspapiere* (Project Discussion Papers) No. 11, Universität Duisburg, 2001.

14. Werner Meißner, "Die erbosten Bauern von Sichuan," *taz* 15 June 1993; *Der Spiegel* 14 (1992): 176–178;

    Der Spiegel 8 (1992): 166–170; *Der Spiegel* 10 (1992): 162–166.

15. *Der Spiegel* 24 (1992): 173–174.

16. Liu Junning, interview 21 June 2000; Liu Junning, "Between conservatism and liberalism" (baoshou zhuyi yu ziyou zhuyi zhijian), in *Current trends among Chinese intellectuals* (*zhishi fenzi de lichang*), vol. 3, ed. Li Shitao (Beijing 2000), 497–505.

17. Gongqin Xiao, "Marginalization of liberal and conservatives and its impact on Chinese politics," *Carnegie Endowment,* 14 May 2002, internet version.

18. Michael Sullivan, "The impact of Western political thought in Chinese political discourse on transitions from Leninism, 1986–1992," *World Affairs* 157, 2 (1994): 83–84. For further information see Gongqin Xiao, "The 'Yan-Fu paradox' and the modern neo-conservative stand on reforms," *Chinese Law and government* 30, 6 (1998): 64–76; Gu Xin and David Kelly, "New conservatism: intermediate ideology of a 'new elite'," in *China's quiet revolution: New interactions between state and society,* ed. David G.S. Goodman and Beverly Hooper (New York: St. Martin's Press 1994), :219–233.

19. Gongqin Xiao, Shanghai scholar on PRC Political Reform, FBIS-CHI-2001-0327, 27 March 2001, translation from HK Ta kung Pao.

20. Gongqin Xiao, "Marginalization of liberals and conservatives and its impact on Chinese politics," *Carnegie Endowment*, 14 May 2002.

21. Interview with Li Fan, 9 July 2001.

22. See Joseph Fewsmith, *Dilemmas of reform in China* (New York: M.E. Sharpe 1994), 137.

23. Interview with Mao Yushi, 26 June 2001.

24. Interviews with Yu Guangyuan, Li Shenzhi, Mao Yushi, Cao Siyuan, Li Fan in July 2001.

25. Interview with Li Fan in Beijing, 9 July 2001.

26. When he came back from the USA shortly before the Tiananmen massacre, he did not take part in the demonstrations, because, as he said, he got the information, that there will be no peaceful solution. Interview with Li Fan in Beijing, 9 July 2001.

27. Ibid.

28. Interview with Cao Siyuan June 2001.

29. Shang Dewen (Beijing university) made more or less literally the same announcements in his essay "Regarding the reform of China's political structure, and basic countermeasures", *SCMP,* 10 August 1997; *taz* 1 October 1999. He advocated the direct election of the state President and the President for four years, the establishment of a parliamentary system and of a constitutional court.

30. Liu Rui's speech on the conference "The role of intellectuals in social reform in China", January 2002, Beijing University.

31. Interview with Yu Keping 29 June 2001.

32. Interview with Wu Guoguang, 15 June 2001.

33. Interview with the editor of one of the major *neican* publication of the Central Party school.

34. Ibid.

35. *Nanfang Zhoumo*, 17 August 2001; FAZ 28 August 2001.

36. Interview with the Vice director of the CRF on 26.10.02.

37. Ezra Vogel, "Asia update," *Harvard University Asia Center,* 25 September 1998, internet version.

38. Interviews with members of the Party school, June 2001.

39. Interview with Yu Keping 29 June 01. Yu pointed out, that a multi-party system cannot always protect the system against wide spread corruption, as we could see in Italy. Therefore, he support the standpoint of Robert Putnam's "Make democracy work" (Princeton 1994).

40. See Adelsberger, Derichs, Heberer, Sausmikat (2003, forthcoming), *Ideen, Diskurse, politischer Wandel – Intellektuelle Ideengeber in der Politikgestaltung*, Hamburg: IfA.

41. Patrick Tyler, "Concerning liberties, China is free to prosper, but that's all," *New York Times*, 30 May 1997.

42. Interview with Wang Hui, 19 May 2001 and Wang Hui, "Contemporary Chinese thought and the question of modernity," *Social Text* 55 (1998): 30.

43. Jin Guantao and Chen Fong-Ching, *From Youthful manuscripts to River elegy* (Hong Kong 1997), 275–76.

44. Wang Hui, 9–44.

45. Interview with Wu Guoguang, 1 June 01.

46. Hu Angang and Wang Shaoguang, *Changes in China's Regional Disparities* (Washington: Center for China Studies 1996) and *The political Economy of Uneven Development: The Case of China* (New York: M.E. Sharpe 1999).

47. Interview with Wang Shaoguang June 2001.

48. Susan Lawrence, "Daring to raise a taboo topic," *FEER,* 12. September 2002: 37.

49. Brantly Womack, "In search of democracy: Public authority and popular power in China," in *Contemporary Chinese politics in historical perspective*, ed. Brantley Womack (Cambridge 1991), 85.

50. Albert H.Y. Chen, *Toward a legal enlightenment: discussion in contemporary China on the rule of law* (Mansfield Center for Pacific Affairs 2000, internet version), 44.

51. Interview with Guo Jianmei, 27 June 2000.

52. See Edward Gu, "Plural institutionalism and the emergence of intellectual public spaces in China," in *China and democracy. Reconsidering the prospects for a democratic China*, ed. Zhao Suisheng (New York, London: Routledge 2000), 144.

53. Interview with Dai Qing June 2000.

54. Wang Hui 1998: 33.
55. Ibid., 33.
56. Currently, Li is the deputy director of the legal department of the consultative conference.
57. Interview with Wang Hui December 2000.
58. Wang Hui 1998: 37.
59. Zhu Xueqin, "Two spiritual ‚foci of infection' since May Fourth Movement,"*China Spring* 1, 1 (2000): 99–108.
60. Xueqin Zhu, "The argument between the new left and the liberals" (xin zuopai yu ziyou zhuyi zhizheng), *Sixiang de jingjie* (Ideal internet-forum), 2000.
61. Xueqin Zhu, "The argument between the new left and the liberals".

New Ways for Citizens' Movements to Participate in Political Discourse: The Case of Okinawa

Gabriele Vogt

INTRODUCTION

Japan's southernmost prefecture, Okinawa, covered the national newspapers' front pages in September 1995, after a twelve-year-old schoolgirl had been raped by three US servicemen. The islands of Okinawa host 75 of all US military facilities and 65 of all US military personnel based in Japan, although the prefecture itself measures less than 1% of Japan's total area. This disparity in numbers has long been a source of discomfort and protest among the islands' inhabitants. In 1995, this sentiment erupted in a prefecture wide protest movement that understood itself as standing in the tradition of the islands' peace movements of the 1950s and 1960s.[1] Governor Ôta Masahide quickly transported the protest from the streets into the prefectural government's policy. He decided to boycott land lease procedures that would have extended the right of the US military to maintain bases in Okinawa, guaranteed in the US–Japan Security Treaty and the bilateral Status of Forces Agreement. Ôta's policy of clear opposition to the central government in terms of the land question has for three years been strongly supported by a vast majority of the Okinawan people. However, the result of the gubernatorial elections of November 1998 symbolized a shift in priorities among the prefecture's people: Ôta was defeated and Inamine Kei'ichi, a Liberal–Democratic Party (LDP) politician, who as a central point of his political program stressed Okinawa's economic recovery that could only be achieved through cooperation with the central government, won the elections. In 1998, the people of Okinawa had chosen economic stability over political protest against the US military and the central government of Japan. The protest movement continued to exist, but never again so far has reached its mass based popularity of the mid-1990s. Only once again, in the run-up to the G8-summit in Okinawa in July 2000, did the protest movement experience a powerful renaissance.

The Okinawan protest of the years 1995–2000 can serve as an excellent example when it comes to analysing factors of discourses on political reforms in modern-day Japan. Besides the obvious goal of a withdrawal of a significant amount of US military facilities the central goals, which the recent Okinawan protest movement tried to achieve, are based on the fields of local autonomy, human rights and environmental protection. Those issues are part of the general topics that have been becoming central elements of modern-day Japan's political discourses. How different those issues may seem to be, they have one very important structural aspect in common: they make it necessary for each government to cooperate with other governments as well as with civil society organizations in order to successfully deal with them (Beck 1986, Yamamoto and Ashizawa 2001: 16–8). Civil society can act as a force for reform on national and transnational levels. Nowadays civil society's groups are mostly seen *"as political watchdogs, as advocates of policy change, and as alternate sources of policy formulation"*. (Yamamoto and Ashizawa 2001: 27). Most naturally the role civil society can play for a nation differs from state to state depending on a variety of factors, such as e.g. structural conditions and individual resources. By attempting to analyse new ways for citizens' movements to participate in political discourse for the case of Japan in the late 1990s a foundation for a comparative study on civil society's scope and role in democracies will be laid. Within the context of the research project about discourses on political reform and democratization in East Asia, currently conducted at Duisburg University, this paper, too, will focus on means and methods of Japan's civil society's members to participate in the political discourse. It will be shown how Okinawa's civil society participates in the nation's political discourse as a vital actor and how it influenced the Japanese nation-state through its actions in those three functions that were mentioned above by Yamamoto and Ashizawa. This study will give central attention to *"the influence exerted on the political reform process by political discourse"* (Derichs and Heberer 2000: 24). The actors of civil society, especially in Okinawa, but later on also generally in Japan, e.g. intensively made use of referendums and of the Internet as new means of participating in the political discourse and thus influencing the political reform process. Civil society's actors succeeded in strongly influencing Japan's political discourse in the late 1990s: By their actions they shaped the public opinion, introduced new topics into the political discourse itself and also initiated new self-definitions of political actors.

PARTICIPATING IN POLITICAL DISCOURSE VIA THE INTERNET

The attitude of leaders of private political organizations, and especially of leaders of political protest movements, towards the mass media is very ambivalent. The media are considered as a resource, by which a movement's statements and demands can be introduced to a broad public. On the other

hand, media reporting can also clearly show the negative sides of a movement, may they be true or made-up, and thus develop into a movement's enemy. Taking those roles of the media in consideration, there are two main criteria non-state actors must watch out for when dealing with mass media: one is the area of distribution of information and the other is the possibility of controlling the information broadcasted. If both, quantity and quality, seem satisfactory, the protest movements can use the media as a valuable political resource. Usually citizens' movements have to deal with six major types of media: national daily newspapers, local newspapers, national public service broadcasting network, private commercial broadcasting networks, media network of political parties, and finally the so-called mini-media (Groth 1996: 218–9). Mini-media are media that are autonomously developed by non-state actors. The information they publicize can thus be totally controlled by the movements. However, such mini-media in their traditional form, i.e. as pamphlets, hand-outs, or as mobile street broadcasting from speaker trucks, cannot really reach a large group of persons. Mini-media, the only media that provides exactly the information a specific movement wishes to be published, usually only reach a limited amount of listeners or readers. In fact, as the audience size increases, the movement's ability to control the information published diminishes. In order to optimize the quantity and quality of the information broadcasted on the character of civil society's groups, any basic media strategy of a social movement, *"must include the development of mini-media"* (Groth 1996: 235).

From the late 1990s on, social movements in industrialized countries "discovered" the new media, especially the Internet, as a way to significantly strengthen their media strategy. The new media boosted the role of the mini-media. The new mini-media, i.e. the Internet-based mini-media, now were anything but mini. The new mini-media developed more than quickly into true "maxi-media", which combined two significant advantages: They still were, in contrast to local or national papers and broadcasting networks, under the complete control of the movements themselves. Furthermore they enabled the movements to reach a very large audience. The new mini-media in detail consist of e-mail, mailing lists, online discussion forums and the Internet, especially movements' homepages, as a means of presentation and interaction. From 1997 to 1998 the percentage of non-state actors' groups in Japan that possessed and used an own Internet homepage rose from 17% to 25% (Yamauchi 2001: 23). The Internet, as well as telephone, facsimile and letter post, is being used as a means of communication with people inside the group, with people outside the group and also with individuals and whole groups overseas. The telephone as a means of communication is still preferred by the activists. Ranked second in terms of preferred usage is the facsimile and third is traditional letter post. The percentage of non-state actors' communication via the Internet, however, in the late 1990s ranged in all three categories, i.e. concerning the communication within the own

group, with members of different groups and with overseas activists, on the fourth rank. It never exceeded a usage rate of 15% (Yamauchi 2001: 23). The numbers can be expected to have been rising recently, but nevertheless seem surprisingly low for a well industrialized country as Japan is. Three reasons may be responsible for the still limited spread of the Internet as a means of communication among the activists of Japanese citizens' movements: First, the use of the Internet in Japan is fairly expensive. It secondly is unusually complicated in terms of techniques, and it thirdly is strictly regulated by Japan's electoral law.[2] Early results of a research project on the connection between the Internet and politics in Japan, currently conducted at the German Institute for Japanese Studies in Tôkyô, were presented by Blechinger in late 2001: She argued that the Internet is regarded by most Japanese politicians as an instrument for self-representation, rather than of interaction and communication with the voters (Blechinger 2001). Citizens' movements, on the contrary, make extensive and successful use of the Internet as a means of interaction and communication and thus serve as an example for the political elite in how to handle the new media purposefully, for their own good and for democracy's vital growth. The Internet as a discussion forum and as an instrument, e.g. of fund raising, gathering new supporters, organizing activities and distributing flyers, provides the chance for non-state actors to by-pass formal ways of transmitting information, i.e. the traditional mass media, and the restrictive interferences of political organizations or government authorities (Yamauchi 2001: 22). This common means of communication nowadays binds together actors of those different societal groups.

In Japan, too, the Internet nowadays strongly influences the relationship between the government, political parties, non-state political activists and the citizens. Computer-mediated communication has created *"a potential parallel public sphere"* (Freeman app. 2003: 409), in which the new media can act as an unmediated information link between the political elite and non-state actors. Through that it also may have an impact on elections. The central role of communication via the new media, however, seems to be its empowering of non-state actors by giving them the opportunity of unmediated and widespread interaction. After an early phase of political activism via traditional mass media, the Okinawan protest movement soon extensively used the Internet as new mini-media. Some of the single groups that the whole protest movement consisted of, coordinated their agitation completely via the Internet. The *Save the Dugong Foundation of Nago City, Okinawa*, e.g. informed online about ongoing projects of protest and also provided an online petition against the construction of a heliport in the Henoko bay, off-shore Nago-city, which would bear a major risk for the well-being of the dugongs (Save the Dugong Foundation of Nago City, Okinawa 2000). Shimabukuro Hiroe, a freelance researcher at the Ôta Peace Research Institute, almost single-handedly organized the so-called *Red Card Movement*

via the movement's Internet homepage. She called for wearing red items or placing red items at one's house or car in order to show the "red card" to the US military. Red was taken as a symbol from soccer games, where being shown a "red card" means being expelled from the playground. Shimabukuro provided flyers for download on the *Red Card Movement's* web-site and build up a mailing list by which she informed about ongoing events, such as the human chain around Kadena air base in the run-up to the G-8 summit meeting in July 2000 (Shimabukuro 2000).

The Okinawan protest movement's activists were among the first non-state actors in Japan to extensively use the new media for political campaigning. Unlike most of the other Japanese NGOs or grassroots movements, which mainly act on a local level, the Okinawan group from the very beginning clearly aimed to make its protest internationally known. With the withdrawal of the US military as one of its central goals, it was necessary for the movement to at least make public the protest's demands in the US and to reach out for transnational alliances with US peace activists. Some groups, such as *Okinawa Women Act Against Military Violence*, organized so-called Peace Caravans and even travelled to the US in order to give presentations, do workshops on the Okinawa topic and thus bind coalitions with US activists (Bowen-Francis 1999: 192–6). Most of the Okinawan activists, however, used the new media in order to build up transnational alliances with activist groups and concerned individuals from all over the world. In order to contact an international audience, the Internet homepages of, e.g. the *Save the Dugong Foundation of Nago City, Okinawa* and the *Red Card Movement* were translated from Japanese into several languages, such as, of course, English, but also into Asian languages, such as Philippine. In the run-up to the G8-summit meeting, Shimabukuro succeeded in having the *Red Card Movement*'s homepage translated into all languages of the G8 nations, i.e. besides English, into French, German, Italian and Russian. The broad international recognition the Okinawan protest movement found, did not remain unnoticed among other Japanese citizens movements. The pioneer-like intensive use the Okinawan grassroots movement made of the new media soon found its followers among other non-state actors in Japan. Japan NGO Center for International Cooperation (JANIC), e.g., aims to use the Internet as an instrument not only for international cooperation, but also as a data base on information regarding the Japanese and the international non-governmental sector (JANIC 2002, Internet). The Japan Center for International Exchange (JCIE) on its homepage also stresses the meaningfulness of international and transnational alliances in a global era. The JCIE mainly works in the fields of international political exchange programs, of transnational partnerships among grassroots movements and also through publications of studies on civil society in Japan as well as in other nations (JCIE 2002, Internet).

Besides initiating an intensive use of Internet representation as a means of making public the demands of various groups of the grassroots sector, the

Okinawan protest movement also influenced the very topics discussed among citizens and non-state actors, in political parties and among the representatives of the political elite. Local autonomy,[3] human rights and environmental protection – central issues of the Okinawan protest – made their way into Japan's political discourse through a never before experienced massive use of one mini-media by a citizens movement. The main demand of the protest movement – or at least what seems to be so, by superficially looking at it –, the withdrawal of US military from Okinawa, was closely connected with the demand for a reform of Japan's given security architecture. The Okinawan protest movement asked if the bilateral security treaty between Japan and the US was still necessary after the End of the Cold War. This question led to an intensive debate in Japan's political elite over whether the US-centred bilateralism or a new Asian multilateralism could be considered the future pillar of an Asia–Pacific security structure. A gradual approach towards a multilateral security environment in Asia nowadays seems much more thinkable among Japanese politicians than it did a decade ago.[4] This shift in mindset was to a great deal initialized by the Okinawan protest movement, which demanded to find alternatives to the existing US–Japan security pact that loads heavy burden on the Okinawan people. The protest movement thus helped to free from taboos the topic of Japan's future security architecture. It succeeded in doing so by its intensive use of the Internet that initiated a political discourse on this up to then taboo topic. The Internet might develop into a hugely valuable instrument for the non-state actors' political participation process, as it *"suggests an alternative mechanism through which civil society and the public sphere might independently be able to influence the political process […]"*. (Freeman app. 2003: 383). However, one warning aspect needs to be mentioned in this context of praising the new media's impacts on the development of civil society and on nationwide changes in the political discourse. As Keohane and Nye argue in "Power and Interdependence in the Information Age", the growing amount of information and its fast spread via the Internet lead the citizens into a more critical way of selecting and reading news. Therefore new organizations that hold a website and distribute information on it will always have to fight the consumers' doubts of reliability towards it. Keohane and Nye thus argue that the Internet not only provides a free mechanism of information exchange, but due to the huge mass of information provided, also makes it much more difficult for new and unknown groups to establish themselves as trustworthy (Keohane and Nye 1998, Internet). Nevertheless, the Okinawan protest movement very well succeeded in communicating via the Internet and also being considered as a reliable source of information in terms of data on Okinawa. The movement, however, also used another method of participating in the political discourse: it made popular the – in Japan so far relatively unknown – political instrument of referendums and thus positioned the citizens in the very centre of the political action itself.

PARTICIPATING IN POLITICAL DISCOURSE VIA REFERENDUMS

When citizens *"feel that the courts are untrustworthy, elected representatives pay them no heed, and the administrative process is rife with corruption and clientalism"* (Norris 1999: 25), they will seek new forms of participation in the policy-making process. One of those new means that enable citizens to participate in the policy-making process more directly, i.e. without being dependent, on a grand scale, on the established institutions, are referendums. The use of referendums is generally increasing worldwide. This process must be understood as a result of citizens' increasing disaffection with the realities of the given political system and a simultaneously rising affection for non-state actors' methods of policy-making and for civil society in general. However, the position of referendums as an instrument of policy-making in the Japanese state is still very weak. This weakness has its reasons not only in a lack of resources on the side of the activists, and the general character of the Japanese nation-state, but also in the legal position of referendums in Japan: Chapter five of the Local Autonomy Law clearly subordinates referendums to the system of representative democracy by declaring the result of a referendum as generally non-binding. The result of a referendum thus only has to be taken note of by the mayor, respectively by the governor, i.e. the government leader of the region the referendum had taken place in. The mayor or governor does not need to implement the referendum's result as government policy. Furthermore does the Local Autonomy Law guarantee the city assembly, respectively the prefectural parliament the right to vote down the project of a referendum in the very early phase of its development: After 2% of the eligible voters have signed a petition on a certain topic that they want to be publicly voted about, the local or prefectural representatives have to discuss whether a referendum on this issue shall be held or not. As mainly critical projects that may find their political supporters only among the opposition parties, are suggested for referendums, it rather often happens that the demand for a referendum is already stopped at this early stage and the controversial question will never be even put on a ballot for voting (Vogt 2001a, 319–42).

Despite those various structural barriers that make it difficult for non-state actors to use referendums as a powerful means of political participation, referendums are being considered as a valuable method of expressing the people's political opinion. Lackner developed a model of four levels showing how the use of referendums may tremendously influence the political elites, even if the actually voted for result is not being realized: Referendums have pre-effects and after-effects as well as direct effects and indirect effects (Lackner 1999: 81). Research on these effects for the case of Japan has previously been conducted widely (Vogt 2001a, 319–42, Vogt 2003: 91–111) and shall be only briefly addressed here. The referendum of 8 September 1996 in Okinawa was the first referendum ever to be held

throughout a whole Japanese prefecture. There were two demands to be voted on by "I support" or "I oppose": "Redefinition of the Status of Forces Agreement" and "Reduction of the US military bases". The turnout at the referendum with 59.53% was slightly poorer than expected by the Okinawa Prefectural Government that strongly supported the referendum. The vast majority of Okinawans voted for "support": The result was a 91.26% consent with governor Ôta's policy of working for a redefinition of the Status of Forces Agreement and a reduction of the US military bases (Mainichi Shinbun, September 9, 1996: 1). The governor thus found what he was searching for, namely a broad public agreement for his political concept. He was confirmed in his actions by a huge majority of his people and decided to keep fighting back the step by step stiffer opposition in Tokyo. This referendum seems to have had a pioneering impact on Okinawan policies. Since, open plebiscites or mayoral elections etc. as "hidden plebiscites" have regularly taken place, not only in Okinawa, but also in other Japanese prefectures.[5] In December 1997, a public referendum on the building of the so-called heliport, either a floating or anchored, sea-borne airfield located slightly off-shore, was held in Nago-city, a potential location of the heliport. The heliport shall, according to the Special Action Committee (SACO) on Okinawa's Final Reports (SACO 1996a and SACO 1996b), be build in exchange for closing Futenma Marine Corps Air Station. The referendum gave the following four options to the people: "I agree with the construction plan". (8.14%); "I oppose construction". (51.64%); "I agree because promised anti-pollution and economic measures can benefit the region". (37.19%); "I oppose construction because such benefits are unlikely". (1.22%); (Asahi Shinbun, December 22, 1997: 1). The final result of the Nago plebiscite, with more than 80% of eligible voters casting their votes, turned to be a neck to neck result with 53.8% opposing and 46.2% agreeing with the plan. It became clear that those who were opposed were simply opposed, no matter what economic inducements were offered, whereas those who decided to vote for the heliport took advantage of the softer wording; only a few were willing to support the heliport outright. Since the plebiscite was non-binding, Tokyo simply ignored its result. Nago's mayor resigned from office and his successor left the topic to the Okinawa Prefectural Government (Asahi Shimbun, December 25, 1997: 1). With the number of local plebiscites all over Japan rising constantly it will become more and more difficult for Tokyo to ignoring them.

Among the more recent effects of an increased use of referendums as a means of citizens' direct political participation, which was to great deals initiated by the Okinawan protest movement, are two factors which have both influenced the political discourse on the issue of the public good. On the one hand Japan's central government supported the enactment of new laws that were to regulate the new dynamics in the nation's search for efficiently coordinating strives towards a stronger decentralization and those towards

a protection of the centralized system. On the other hand, initiated by grassroots movements and generally by actors of the civil society sector, the relationship between the people and the political elite, respectively the bureaucratic elite, began to form new shapes, as clearly shown in the studies of Steinhoff and Yoshida. According to Steinhoff there are mainly four different patterns of relationship between public and officials in Japan, especially among Japan's local governments. In her study on those relations (Steinhoff 2000: 115–29) Steinhoff uses the expressions of *"kan"* and *"min"*, both abbreviations for *"kanryô"* (bureaucracy), respectively for *"minshû"* (people). The system of kan-min relationship equals that of *kô-shi* relationship, analysed by Yoshida.[6] Steinhoff argues that three patterns of *kan-min* relationship have already been given before in the late 1990s a new, a fourth, pattern was added by the political actions of the Okinawan protest movement. The existing patterns were *"kan* over *min"*, *"kan* parallels *min"* and *"min* checks *kan* as equals". The *"kan* over *min"* pattern is the traditional relation between the two actors: *kan* stands vertically above the *min*, guiding and supervising affairs on their behalf. In the case of *"kan* parallels *min"* both actors operate on parallel but separate tracks with some degree of common purpose. *"Min* checks *kan* as equals" is a fairly new pattern that is mainly based on the effects of the Information Disclosure Law of 1999: A greater transparency of political facts and, resulting from that, a wider actual possibility for non-state actors to participate in the policy-making process were guaranteed by this law (Maclachlan 2000: 9–30). The fourth pattern, *"kan* represents *min"* was initiated by Okinawan governor Ôta in the wake of the local protest movement. This pattern generated a politics of confrontation with the central government and bureaucracies (Steinhoff 2000: 116–23). Following the referendums, through which the "public interest" of the Okinawan people had been made explicit, Ôta conducted a series of negotiations with Tokyo. At the Supreme Court the governor declared:

> I believe that my decision [resistance against the extension of land lease contracts, G.V.] was the only choice available to me as a governor responsible for a prefectural administration that should protect the lives and livelihoods of the people of the prefecture (Ôta 1999: 211–2).

The public interest of the Okinawan people has been formulated in the results of the referendums as a demand for reduction and scaling down of the US military presence on the islands. However, Prime Minister Hashimoto defined the Japan–US mutual security arrangements as "public goods" and as in the "public interest" (Yoshida 1999: 33–4). The conflict in the definitions of "public interest" and "public good" that arose between the min of Okinawa, their representing *kan*, Ôta, on the one side and the national government on the other side led to an open confrontation of the parties in

the 1998 gubernatorial elections. By actively interfering in the prefecture's politics with economic, political (Gabe 2000: 1–24) and psychological (Takara, Oshiro and Maeshiro 2000) means the national government achieved the voting out of office of governor Ôta, the people's advocate, the break-off of the pattern *kan* represents *min*, and finally the significant weakening of Okinawa's protest movement.

In contrast to the grassroots-based formation of a new *kan-min* relationship in Japan, the second direct effect the Okinawan protest movement had on Japan's current political discourse and political development, the enactment of various new laws, was initiated and regulated by the central government itself. This measure, too, was conducted in the name of the public good. The central government tried to define Japan's public good as a balancing act between decentralization and a protection of the centralized system. It, however, did not seem to find an integrated guideline in fulfilling this attempt: On the one hand laws that strengthened decentralization, such as the above mentioned Information Disclosure Law or the Law to Promote were enacted. The Information Disclosure Law, enacted in 2000, makes it possible for private citizens and non-state political actors to obtain information about ongoing decision-making processes in the nation's political and partially also in the economical sector (Maclachlan 2000: 25–7). The 1995 Law to Promote Decentralization brought with it a *"greater latitude to localities in formulating and implementing local initiatives"* (Steinhoff 2000: 112) and thus, as well as the Information Disclosure Law did, represented a step towards regulated decentralization of the nation state by enabling the citizens to more directly take part in the nation's political discourse and decision-making processes. On the other hand the Japanese government in spring 1997 mightily, i.e. even under the condition of breaking up the up to then four years old de facto coalition between the Social-Democratic and the Liberal-Democratic Party, pushed through both houses of the parliament a revision of the Special Measures Law for Land Used by US Forces. The central point of the revised Special Measures Law is its extensive empowerment of the central government. By this law the central government, e.g. is guaranteed the right to overrule any boycott, supported by local politicians, in questions of land lease. The central government seemed to have learned about its vulnerability in its national and international interdependencies in terms of land lease from the case of the Okinawan protest. It thus, in this very point, significantly strengthened its centralized system. A most recent law that directly concerns non-state actors' means of participation in the political discourse, is the Law to Promote Specified Nonprofit Activities of March 1998. This so-called NPO Law reflects the above briefly outlined ambivalent attitude of the central government towards the nation's process of decentralization which is being accompanied by a growing demand for a more direct citizens' participation in the political discourse, by actors of Japan's civil society since the late 1990s.

It also represents a central part of Japan's recent discourse on the search for the public good: The central idea that led to a broad demand for an NPO Law was *"to create public-interest organizations not subject to official control, paving the way for citizen-led activities in a freer context"* (Yoshida 1999: 47). After having overcome a variety of concerns on the official side, some strong opposition from the ruling Liberal-Democratic Party and even a renaming procedure of the law, it was at last, though not in that a clear tone as the citizens' activists had wished for passed.[7] Despite any semi-positive development in state-regulated defining the role of citizens' political participation, which might also follow pressure from international organizations, such as the OECD, which in its reports in the 1980s and 1990s sharply criticized the weakness of Japan's NGO sector (Reimann app. 203, 479–508), the sector of civil society in Japan still is considered to be relatively little developed. One central reason for this phenomenon may be found in the ongoing discourse on public good: Who should be in charge for defining and protecting the public good? Can private organizations, i.e. basically anybody outside a political frame, be trusted with this task? Japan's political discourse on this topic will without any doubt intensify during the following years, as actors of civil society will, e.g. by usage of instruments such as referendums, keep demanding a more central role for themselves in the nation's political decision-making process.

CONCLUSION

Since the late 1990s citizens movements in Japan make use of two very powerful new means of political participation. They use new media, especially the Internet and mailing lists as a forum of uncontrolled and unmediated articulation. Through this new medium they can reach a wide public auditorium and thus gain supporters for their demands, raise money from sympathizers, etc. Another very powerful new means of Japan's citizens movements are referendums. They are nowadays being used as an oppositional political instrument. Citizens movements in Japan, as shown through the case study on Okinawa, recently started fulfilling their role as *"as political watchdogs, as advocates of policy change, and as alternate sources of policy formulation"* (Yamamoto and Ashizawa 2001: 27). The Okinawan protest movement on an abstract level focused on three topics: local autonomy, human rights and environmental protection. By indeed fulfilling their roles as Yamamoto and Ashizawa characterized them, the Okinawan citizens movements and in their wake also members of the Japanese civil society in general achieved to directly and lastingly shape the public opinion, to introduce new topics, respectively new aspects of known topics, into the political discourse, and finally also to initiate a shift in local politicians' self-perceptions towards building a stronger alliance with citizens in terms of defining the public interest and the public good. These alliances in most cases were directed against the central government and thus must be

understood as a significant step towards a decentralization of the Japanese nation state. During the late 1990s Japan's civil society was, due to the use of new powerful means of political participation by non-state actors, immensely strengthened. Japan's civil society has developed much further than the international perception would have believed it to have done. When in August 2002 the Japanese government put in operation a nationwide computerized registry of its citizens, many Japanese protested against this governmental project. The New York Times called this reaction an *"un-Japanese response[s]: civil disobedience"* (New York Times, August 6th, 2002, Internet). It maybe is only a question of (short) time until the early stage of activism in this case will, through an intense use of the new means of participation in the political discourse, switch into a mass-based protest movement with maybe even transnational alliances against the digitalization of the individual. Japan's civil society is on its way towards becoming a powerful actor in Japan's political discourse. What it needs now to succeed are powerful national and transnational alliances as well as a fairly liberal political and administrative environment that supports its growth. Despite all enthusiasm concerning the development of Japan's civil society, it has to be realized that it nowadays only can exist in some niches provided or tolerated by the central government. Japan's civil society is still in the midst of its *"maturing process"* (Menju and Aoki 1995: 143).

NOTES

1. The social movement of the 1950s, the so-called *shimagurumi tôsô*, mainly focused on a protest against the US military's land lease system, which was perceived to be highly discriminatory towards the Okinawan land owners. The movement of the 1960s, the *fukkikyô*, demanded the reversion of Okinawa and many surrounding minor islands under Japanese authorities. Both movements – as the recent one of the late 1990s also did – drew masses of people of all ages and from all levels of society to participate in them (Vogt 2001b, 305–30).

2. Freeman has conducted extensive research on the reasons of the relatively moderate use of the Internet in Japan's public sector (Freeman app. 2003: 381–411).

3. In the 1990s, the issue of local autonomy developed into one of the central topics of Japan's political discourse. Special attention to this issue in general and to Okinawa's role for the growing importance of the issue in Japan will be given in the chapter on participating in political discourse via referendums.

4. Political scientists, such as Blechinger and Dosch, expect Japan not to completely cut its ties with the US, but to keep those up and simultaneously strengthen its coalitions with the Asian countries (Blechinger 1998: 71–106 and Dosch 2000: 87–110).

5. The first ever referendum in Japan was held in the city of Maki in Niigata prefecture in August 1996. The citizens voted down construction of a nuclear power plant (Kubiak 1999). Initiated by the enormous medial success of the Okinawan referendums a not to be underestimated number of referendums since have been held nationwide. Adelsberger (Adelsberger 2001: 26–31), respectively Neumann (Neumann 2002: 138–58), provide more information on this topic.

6. Yoshida argues that there are three conditions that are necessary to keep up an intact society. With pointed emphasis on the public sector, those are the recognition of the public interest, a set of rules to maintain the public interest, and actors who protect and advance the public interest. The characteristic of modern-day Japan as a "'*public-equals-official' society*" (Yoshida 1999: 13) is that the government itself has assumed the initiative in fulfilling all three conditions almost single-handedly. The central government bureaucracy maintained a virtual monopoly on decision-making authority. It was the advert of a new public consciousness that led Japan into experiencing the emergence of civil society. The Japanese society has come up with a new concept of public interest and attempts to define what is "public". The Chinese character "kô" that is used in the Japanese language to express "public", historically has got two dimensions. Besides the meaning of "public" it also expresses the meaning of "government/ruling authority". Nowadays "kô" also is used in these very different two meanings. There is e.g. "kôbunsho", meaning "government document" and there also is e.g. "kôeki", meaning the "public interest". Both expressions are written with the same character for "kô". As opposite of "kô" Yoshida understands "shi", in the meaning of "private / self" (Yoshida 1999: 24–9).

7. The text of the NPO Law in an English translation can e.g. be found at the Japan Center for International Exchange's Internet homepage: http://www.jcie.or.jp/civilnet/monitor/npo_law.html.

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