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Diplomová práce

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Liberal Democracy and Chinese Political Culture: American Perspectives and Perceptions

Diplomová práce

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Autor práce: **Jan Hornát**

Vedoucí práce: **PhDr. Jan Bečka Ph.D.**

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Abstrakt

Čínská lidová republika si ve Východní Asii vytváří jistou sféru mocenského vlivu nejen z bezpečnostních důvodů, nýbrž i z důvodů „vyvažování" proti „tichomořské velmoci" – Spojeným státům. Obecný americký předpoklad, že demokratizace Číny bude mít pozitivní efekt na bezpečnost celého regionu a také na celkové vztahy mezi USA a ČLR, je (zjednodušeně) založen na dlouhodobé zahraničně-politické strategii Spojených států – šíření demokracie. Liberální demokracie západního typu v Číně by tedy pro Washington byla nejlepším výsledkem liberalizace komunistického režimu, která probíhá od konce 70. let 20. století. I z pohledu teorie demokratického míru by případná „demokratická Čína" představovala menší hrozbu pro USA, než „autoritářská Čína". V zásadě se však „interpretace" a vnímání obecných struktur demokracie v obou zemích v některých ohledech liší. Pokud se Čína rozhodne v budoucnu dále „demokratizovat" podle své vlastní definice demokracie, bude tento proces uspokojovat Spojené státy? Má čínská politická kultura předpoklady k přijetí liberální demokracie? Tato práce navrhuje, že pokud Čína přijme demokratický politický systém, bude tento systém vykazovat určité znaky meritokracie a komunitarismu, a to zejména v důsledku silného vlivu konfuciánské filosofie a etiky na čínskou politickou kulturu a společnost. V takovém případě však Spojené státy mohou vnímat Čínu jako „neliberální" či „nedemokratický režim" a obecný předpoklad, že demokratizace ČLR bude mít pozitivní vliv na vzájemné vztahy, tak nemusí být naplněn.

Abstract

In the case of China, a rising great power, the question of adopting a democratic political system is not just a domestic issue, but has much broader implications for China's relations with the outside world, especially the United States. Whether

Washington and Beijing continue to cohabitate without major conflict will depend in large part on the specific form of the regime that evolves in China and on the American *perception* of this regime. The research hypothesis of this paper proposes that in the event of a democratic transition, China will not adopt a *liberal* democracy, but a variation of democracy that will include meritocratic and communitarian aspects, due to the strong role of Confucian ethics and morals in influencing Chinese political culture. In an extreme case, China's "non-liberal" democracy may be *perceived* by the United States as a wholly undemocratic regime and hence, the presumed benign effects of democracy on state-to-state relations, such as "democratic peace", will become void. Yet, if China adopts a "non-liberal" democratic government that primarily strives to ensure "good governance" and if the United States is prepared to accept China as a "non-liberal" democracy, mutually beneficial and peaceful relations can be maintained.

The first part of the paper focuses on defining the theoretical tenets that undergird U.S. perspectives and discourse on democracy in China in the context of U.S. Grand Strategy. The second part aims to identify prevailing Confucian principles that have broad political implications for Chinese society and culture and that will likely play a strong role in shaping a potential "Chinese democracy". The final part of this paper proposes how a "democracy with Chinese characteristics" may look like and how the United States will possibly perceive this regime.

Klíčová slova

vztahy ČLR-USA, demokratizace, demokratický mír, liberální demokracie, politická kultura, konfucianismus, vzájemná reflexe, demokracie v Číně

Keywords

PRC-US relations, democratization, democratic peace, liberal democracy, political culture, Confucianism, mutual perception, democracy in China

Rozsah práce: 147 430 znaků

Prohlášení

1. Prohlašuji, že jsem předkládanou práci zpracoval samostatně a použil jen uvedené prameny a literaturu.
2. Prohlašuji, že práce nebyla využita k získání jiného titulu.
3. Souhlasím s tím, aby práce byla zpřístupněna pro studijní a výzkumné účely.

V Praze dne   Jan Hornát

Poděkování

Na tomto místě bych rád poděkoval PhDr. Janu Bečkovi Ph.D. za jeho konstruktivní návrhy a připomínky v celém průběhu vzniku práce.

Jméno: Jan Hornát	
E-mail: janhornat@seznam.cz	
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Vedoucí práce: PhDr. Jan Bečka Ph.D.	

V čem se oproti původnímu zadání změnil cíl práce?

The focus of this study is the conceptualization of American interests toward the democratization of the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the assessment of Chinese political culture in the prospective adoption of liberal democracy.

From the American perspective, authoritarian China may potentially pose a number of challenges to American national interests and international law – for example, to U.S. national security (modernization of Chinese military), U.S. trade (artificially undervalued yuan), U.S. naval predominance and the freedom of navigation in Asian waters (especially the South China Sea and possibly the Indian Ocean) and to other spheres of U.S. interest. Would the democratization of China provide a panacea for these bilateral problems? Would China be a more "responsible" actor in international affairs? And in the event that China undergoes a democratization process, will it embrace liberal democracy or will it adopt democracy "with Chinese characteristics?"

To answer such questions, the study will focus on the possible shape or form of a Chinese democracy and whether such democracy would meet the preconceived standards and perceptions of Western liberal democracy. The study will attempt to provide a coherent concept of a "democracy with Chinese characteristics" – this concept will be constructed on the basis of classical Chinese political thought (e.g. Mencius, Xunzi), modern conceptions of democracy in China (e.g. Sun Yat-sen's Three Principles of the People) and the democratic experience of other Asian (Confucian) societies. This model of Chinese democracy will then be confronted and compared with the American perspective on democracy in China.

The key research questions of the study are: Will the possible future democratization of China satisfy U.S. interests? Would a democratic China potentially pose fewer challenges to U.S. interests? and; would "democracy with Chinese characteristics" be perceived as a full-fledged "democracy" in the West?

Jaké změny nastaly v časovém, teritoriálním a věcném vymezení tématu?

In terms of territory, the study will mainly concentrate on the PRC and the Unites States, with a few references to China's regional neighbors (e.g. Japan or South Korea).

The first part of the study will work with contemporary (i.e. 21st century) U.S. interests and Grand Strategy vis-à-vis China. The second part of the study will concentrate on historical and modern conceptions of democracy and government in Chinese political thought, therefore the time period covered will be quite broad.

Jak se proměnila struktura práce (vyjádřete stručným obsahem)?

The first part of the study will focus on U.S. perspectives and discourse on democracy in China and American interests in China and the East Asian region. These interests will be divided into different spheres (such as national security, trade, regional alliances etc.) and each sphere will be analyzed and considered from various perspectives (i.e. democratic peace theory, U.S. Grand Strategy, Open Door policy etc.). This approach will enable the conceptualization of U.S. interests in China and the region. Subsequently, the study will determine the negative effects of authoritarian China and the presumably positive effects of a democratic China on U.S. interests as perceived by Washington.

The second part will focus on defining "democracy with Chinese characteristics" by analyzing Chinese classical and modern political thought and the democratic experience of China and other Asian societies. This section will not provide a description of how/in what manner the democratization of China would take place (whether it would be a top-down process or a bottom-up process etc.), but it will provide a description of the possible form of an established Chinese democracy.

The conclusion of the study will provide a comparison of the hypotheses devised in the first and second part and attempt to answer research questions.

Jakým vývojem prošla metodologická koncepce práce?

The study will utilize various methodological approaches. A discourse analysis will be applied in the first part of the study to assess the American position toward the democratization of China. Furthermore, the democratic peace theory will be applied to explain why the U.S. would prefer - in terms of national security - a democratic regime in China rather than authoritarian. Democracy promotion will be juxtaposed to the U.S. Open Door policy and similarly as prominent American historians Walter LaFeber and William Appleman Williams, the study will claim that the Open Door policy remains a vital part of U.S. Grand Strategy.

The second part will consist of an analysis of Chinese political thought, which will help construct a model of "democracy with Chinese characteristics". This part will build on Gabriel Almond's and Sidney Verba's concept of political culture in attempting to distinguish whether contemporary China, influenced by Confucianism, has the cultural requisites to adopt liberal democracy.

Které nové prameny a sekundární literatura byly zpracovány a jak tato skutečnost ovlivnila celek práce?

Gilley, Bruce. *China's Democratic Future: How It Will Happen and Where It Will Lead* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).
Bell, Daniel. *Beyond liberal democracy: political thinking for an East Asian context* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).
Bell, Daniel. *East meets West: human rights and democracy in East Asia* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000).
Reilly, Ben. *Democracy and diversity: political engineering in the Asia-Pacific* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).
Rasler, Karen A, and William R Thompson. *Puzzles of the democratic peace: theory, geopolitics, and the transformation of world politics* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).
Chester C. Tan, *Chinese Political Thought in the Twentieth Century* (New York City: Doubleday Anchor, 1971).
Zhao Suisheng ed., *China and Democracy: Reconsidering the Prospects for a Democratic China* (New York: Routledge, 2000).
Michael E. Brown, Sean M. Lynn-Jones, Steven E. Miller, eds., *Debating the Democratic Peace*, (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1999).
Gilbert Rozman, ed., *The East Asian Region: Confucian Heritage and its Modern Adaptation* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991).
Xiao Gongquan, *A History of Chinese Political Thought* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979).
Pankaj Mishra, *From the Ruins of Empire: The Intellectuals Who Remade Asia* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 2012).

Charakterizujte základní proměny práce v době od zadání projektu do odevzdání tezí a pokuste se vyhodnotit, jaký pokrok na práci jste během semestru zaznamenali (v bodech):

The study gained a more coherent and clearer structure.
Problematic parts (in terms of methodology and research) were omitted.
Research questions were elaborated and defined.
New literature was incorporated into research.

Podpis studenta a datum:

Schváleno:	Datum	Podpis
Vedoucí práce		
Vedoucí diplomového semináře		

Obsah

Introduction

"The contact of cultures is not like pouring milk into coffee when white mixed with black will turn gray."[1] This statement by Chinese philosopher Li Huang (1895–1991) is emblematic of the discourse about the prospective democracy in China. Is the concept of liberal democracy universally applicable or do some cultures and societies intrinsically hinder its adoption? Some observers oppose the universality of liberal democracy and claim that the form democracy takes in China will be so specifically rooted in Asian (especially Confucian) traditions and culture as to be "unrecognizable to the West".[2] Chinese pro-democracy scholar Yu Keping argues that the "unconditional promotion of democracy [in China] will bring disastrous consequences" and that to ensure stability the "construction of democracy must be closely integrated with history, culture, tradition and existing social conditions".[3] Samuel Huntington went even further when he bluntly stated that a "Confucianism democracy is a contradiction in terms".[4]

In the case of China, a rising great power, the question of democracy is not just a domestic issue, but has much broader implications for China's relations with the outside world, especially the United States. The manner in which the two countries interact with each other in the years to come will have a significant impact on the formation of the entire international system. Whether Washington and Beijing continue to cohabitate without major conflict will depend in large part on the specific form of the regime that evolves in China and on the American perception of this regime.

The end of the Cold War saw the emergence of liberal democracy as a "global ideological panacea"[5] for ensuring good governance and its promotion was – according to a number of scholars and politicians – seen as a key to reaching a peaceful world.[6] The communist bloc fell apart and communist regimes were quickly toppled and replaced with liberal democratic regimes. In contrast, the Chinese communist regime survived the Tiananmen Square uprising and seemed to consolidate its grip on power throughout the 1990s. Consequently, U.S. politicians, non-governmental organizations

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[1] Cited in Chester C. Tan, *Chinese Political Thought in the Twentieth Century* (New York City: Doubleday Anchor, 1971), 297.
[2] Francis Fukuyama, "Confucianism and Democracy," *Journal of Democracy* 6, No. 2 (April 1995): 24.
[3] Yu Keping, *Democracy is Good Thing* (Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institution), 4–5.
[4] Samuel P. Huntington, "Democracy's Third Wave", *Journal of Democracy* 2, No. 2 (Spring 1991): 24.
[5] Fred Dallmayr, "Exiting Liberal Democracy: Bell and Confucian Thought", *Philosophy East and West* 59, No. 4 (October 2009): 524.
[6] Of course, this was one of the main theses of Francis Fukuyama's book *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Avon Books, 1992), but mainly the proponents of the "democratic peace theory" such as Bruce Russet or Michael W. Doyle (see below).

and segments of the academia continued to push for the adoption of a liberal democratic regime China.

The first subject matter discussed in this paper is the "motivation" of the United States to pursue a policy of democracy promotion in general and specifically vis-à-vis China. American author William Pfaff linked democracy promotion to America's Christian creed and argued that as the Bible "introduced the notion of history as a progressive process leading towards a redemptive conclusion", U.S. foreign policy can be viewed in a similar vein. Democracy is perceived as the ultimate (redemptive) end of all societies, which is reflected in the prevailing "belief that America is destined to confer democracy upon the world".[7] However, apart from this ideological or moral aspect of democracy promotion, the policy provides pragmatic benefits for the U.S. national interests. The promotion of democracy can be seen as a *quid pro quo* strategy – once democratic, the United States "expects" of the given regime to meet certain criteria of governance and thus act in a predictable manner. Chinese democracy, however, may not meet these "expectations".

Entering the 21st century with double-digit growth of the national economy and a rapidly increasing GDP per capita, the Chinese political and economic model is increasingly viewed as a counterweight to American liberal democracy.[8] In third-world countries, the so-called Washington consensus may be replaced by the "Beijing consensus". Nevertheless, the millions of Chinese being pulled out of poverty and joining the ever-expanding middle class may represent a trend that – according to some theories[9] – is inevitably leading to a democratic breakthrough sometime in the future. But what will Chinese democracy look like? Chinese scholars and politicians have always talked about adapting Western political systems to "Chinese characteristics" – this inevitably leads to the question what are these characteristics and how will they manifest themselves in a Chinese democratic system.

In order to understand the nature of a prospective democracy in China and answer such questions, it is instrumental to trace the historical development of Chinese political thought and evaluate how Confucian ethics shaped the perception of the role of

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[7] William Pfaff, "Manufacturing Insecurity: How Militarism Endangers America," *Foreign Affairs* 89, No. 6 (November/December 2010): 138.
[8] See Niall Fergusson, "We're All State Capitalist Now," *Foreign Policy*, February 9, 2012, http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2012/02/09/we_re_all_state_capitalists_now (accessed April 16, 2013).
[9] Most notably the "modernization theory" discussed below.

the government and the society in China. The assessment of Chinese political culture and its implications for adopting democracy is the second issue addressed in this paper.

The research hypothesis proposes that in the event of a democratic transition, China will not adopt a *liberal* democracy, but a variation of democracy that will include meritocratic and communitarian aspects, due to the strong role of Confucian ethics and morals in influencing Chinese political culture. In an extreme case, China's *non-liberal* democracy[10] may be *perceived* by the United States as a wholly undemocratic regime and hence, the presumed benign effects of democracy on state-to-state relations, such as "democratic peace" (elaborated below), will become void.

Yet, if China adopts a "non-liberal" democratic government that primarily strives to ensure "good governance" (term further discussed below) and if the United States is prepared to accept China as a "non-liberal" democracy, mutually beneficial and peaceful relations can be maintained – a scenario that, due to China's importance for the American economy, may seem more plausible.

Methodology, Outline and Literature

A sudden revolution in a country the size and importance of China would have grave consequences for the region and for the stability of the international system as a whole. Therefore, analysis based on a thorough research is needed to help foresee the possibility of adapting democracy to Chinese particularism, ensure the sustainability of the new regime and avoid non-conceptual institution building. At the same time, the United States' approach toward China should be nuanced and sensitive to cultural particularities that will shape Chinese democracy. The first part of this paper looks at the underlying paradigms of U.S. democracy promotion – this is important in order to realize what the United States actually "expects" of a democratic regime in China (and elsewhere) and why it supports democratic initiatives. The paper argues that democracy promotion is an integral part of U.S. Grand Strategy and of the Open Door policy.

U.S. Grand Strategy is a fairly ambiguous term and has held various meanings and implications throughout different presidential administrations. Although each U.S. president has defined his "own" Grand Strategy, an all-encompassing definition can still

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[10] Fareed Zakaria, in his 1997 Foreign Affairs article "The Rise of Illiberal Democracy", coined the term *illiberal* democracy. The semantics of his notion are different from the term "non-liberal" used in this paper. "Illiberal democracy" has rather negative connotations and refers to regimes, which deny certain civil liberties to its people. In the context of this paper, "non-liberal" democracy refers to a political regime that rejected liberalism as its guiding principle.

be made, with some limitations. A Grand Strategy is grounded in the "national interest", has a moral/normative dimension and constitutes something of a "starting point" to formulating concrete policy.[11] The exact nature of Grand Strategy may change with every president, but the creed behind it remains the same.

Associating democracy promotion with the Open Door policy is in line with the theses of American historians such as Walter LaFeber, William Appleman Williams and Thomas McCormick.[12] These scholars formulated the "open door interpretation" of U.S. foreign policy. They argue that the Open Door policy not only survived its eclipse in the 1930s Far East, but it emerged as one of the most enduring concepts in U.S. foreign relations even during the Cold War.

The paper then discusses how, due to the policy of democracy promotion, Washington is inclined to universalize the values of liberal democracy. The universalization of liberal values often leads to shortsightedness and the overlooking of national, cultural and social particularities of given states. On the other hand, the idea that the adoption of universal values will lead to a more peaceful world plays an important role in promoting democracy. The "democratic peace theory", stating that democratic regimes do not engage in military conflict with other democratic regimes, supports this premise.

Democratic peace has been widely discussed by scholars of both the (neo) realist and (neo) liberal schools of international relations (IR) – the most comprehensive debate can be found in a reader edited by Michael E. Brown, Sean Lynn-Jones and Steven Miller, "Debating the Democratic Peace".[13] One of the conclusions of the debate, on which advocates of both IR schools of thought agree, is that mutual perception of the two "democratic" regimes is pivotal to fostering "democratic peace". In the case that one of the regimes does not perceive the other as a democracy, the "democratic peace" theory is not applicable. This point is crucial for the relations between a hypothetical democratic China and the United States.

A qualitative approach, rather than quantitative, has been chosen to evaluate the (hypothetical) mutual perception of the two countries. Although this paper builds on

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[11] Christopher Layne, *Peace of Illusions: American Grand Strategy from 1940 to the Present* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 203.

[12] See William Appleman Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1952). Walter LaFeber, *The New Empire: An Interpretation of American Expansion, 1860–1898* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1963). Thomas J. McCormick, *America's Half-Century: United States Foreign Policy in the Cold War and After* (Baltimore MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989).

[13] Michael E. Brown, Sean M. Lynn-Jones, Steven E. Miller, eds., *Debating the Democratic Peace* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1999).

certain aspects of Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba's 1963 book "Civic Culture"[14], the lack of measurable and up-to-date data about Chinese people's values made a thorough quantification impossible. In their work, Almond and Verba discussed the historical origins of "civic culture" and its functions in the process of social change. Through cross-sectional surveys, they compared and contrasted the patterns of political attitudes in five countries (USA, UK, Mexico, Germany and Italy) and concluded that certain forms of civic attitude (political participation, tolerance, interpersonal trust etc.) are necessary for the adoption of an "efficient" democracy. Further research and elaboration of political culture, by Ronald Inglehart, Christian Welzel or Robert Putnam for example, aimed to identify specific cultural traits, which were conducive to accepting democracy.[15] This constructivist approach is applied in the second part of this paper.

Aspects of Chinese political thought, Confucian ethics and social morals are analyzed to provide a plastic picture of Chinese political culture and its contemporary political implications. The paper assesses the traditional position and obligation of the ruler in a Confucian society; the perception of the individual and authority; the instance of Confucian social harmony and chaos; the historical conception of rights and duties; and the interactions of Chinese thought with Western concepts. These phenomena provide a basis for understanding Chinese political culture and its potential approach to democracy. The traditional texts of Confucian (and neo-Confucian) scholars were instrumental in conducting the necessary research for this part of the paper − especially the works of Mencius, Xunzi or Huang Zongxi.[16] One of the most elaborate books on the interpretation of traditional Chinese political thought is Xiao Gongquan's "A History of Chinese Political Thought";[17] a comprehensive view of the twentieth century political thought in China is provided by Chester C. Tan's book "Chinese Political Thought in the Twentieth Century"[18] − both were helpful in conceiving the influence of Confucianism on Chinese culture. Also, Gilbert Rozman's book "The East Asian

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[14] Gabriel Verba and Sidney Almond, *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1963).

[15] For example in Robert D. Putnam, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993) or Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel, *Modernization, Cultural Change and Democracy: The Human Development Sequence* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

[16] For the citations of Mencius, the translations of W.A.C.H. Dobson, *Mencius* (London: University of Toronto Press, 1963) are used. Other translations are noted.

[17] Xiao Gongquan, *A History of Chinese Political Thought* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979).

[18] Chester C. Tan, *Chinese Political Thought in the Twentieth Century* (New York City: Doubleday Anchor, 1971).

Region" offers a broad view of the persistence and diffusion of Confucian thought in China and the entire East Asia.[19]

The final section of this paper is a synthesis of the two previous parts and serves as a broader conclusion. Firstly, the dynamism of political culture is considered in the context of globalization and China's increasing modernization. Opinion polls and value surveys are cited to empirically illustrate and uphold some conclusions from part two. Possible future shifts of political culture are considered, mainly with the regard to Taiwan – a "Chinese" Confucian society that has adopted a democratic system. Possible scenarios of China's democratic political engineering are envisioned with the aid of the political thought of the likes of Yu Keping, Bai Tongdong or Daniel Bell, who have extensively written on the prospects of democracy in China.[20] Finally, the paper ponders the perception of China's prospective democracy by the United States and whether such democracy will meet American "expectations".

Since this paper discusses democracy at various points, it is necessary to provide a definition of democracy at the outset. For the use of this paper, it is important to distinguish between a "minimalist" definition of democracy and the more extensive definitions of the term. The "minimalist" conception of democracy holds that elections are the linchpin of the democratic process. According to this conception, a state holding free, fair, periodic and competitive elections can theoretically be considered as a democracy. Joseph Schumpeter's definition of the classical democratic method defines democracy as an "institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions which realizes the common good by making the people itself decide issues through the election of individuals who are to assemble in order to carry out its will."[21] However, to many political theorists, this definition of democracy is insufficient.

Robert A. Dahl, for example, held that democracy requires social structures beyond the functioning of the electoral process that enable citizens to independently form their political preferences, and to collectively express and mobilize these preferences.[22] Similarly, Samuel Huntington emphasized the existence of opposition

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[19] Gilbert Rozman, ed., *The East Asian Region: Confucian Heritage and its Modern Adaptation* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991).
[20] Namely in Daniel Bell, *East Meets West* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000); Daniel Bell, *Beyond Liberal Democracy: Political Thinking for an East Asian Context* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006); Yu Keping, *Democracy is a Good Thing* (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution, 2009).
[21] Joseph Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy* (London: Taylor & Francis, 2003), 250.
[22] In Robert A. Dahl, *On Democracy* (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 1998).

groups and independent social interests. In this sense, the freedom of expression and free press are also a prerequisite for democracy.[23]

In the West, modern democracy is connected with republicanism[24] and represents a set of political institutions, which are the benchmark for measuring the maturity and viability of the democratic regime. The core features of democracy are (1.) the freedom to form and join organizations; (2.) freedom of expression; (3.) the right to vote; (4.) eligibility to hold a public office; (5.) the right of political leaders to compete for support and votes; (6.) alternative sources of information; (7.) free and fair elections and; (8.) institutions for making governmental policies dependent on votes and other expressions of preferences.[25] In addition, the Freedom House's definition of "liberal democracy" requires a wide array of civil liberties, political and individual rights and the rule of law – not just electoral democracy.[26]

What happens if one of these requisites for democracy is breached? Does the given system still qualify as a democracy? Are the benign effects of democratic government derived from a combination of all the requisites or simply the sole virtue of electoral politics? The definition of democracy is pivotal for the mutual perception of political regimes – most "minimalist" democracies are not perceived as democratic by the standards of the United States and other Western democracies. This question will very likely materialize if China adopts "its own form" of a "democratic" political system.

1. Democracy Promotion in the Context of U.S. Grand Strategy

Democracy in China is often perceived as an inevitable development in the not-too-distant future. Former U.S. President Bill Clinton deemed it "just as inevitable as the fall of the Berlin Wall" and British Prime Minister Tony Blair called the development of democracy in China an "unstoppable momentum".[27] What are the underlying

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[23] Russell J. Dalton and Doh Chull Shin, *Citizens, Democracy, and Markets around the Pacific Rim* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 76.

[24] A wide definition of republicanism holds that the political regime must encompass the separation of powers, the rule of law, public election of leaders and a system of checks and balances.

[25] Zhao Suisheng, "A Tragedy of History," in *China and Democracy: Reconsidering the Prospects for a Democratic China*, ed. Zhao Suisheng et al. (New York: Routledge, 2000), 34.

[26] *Freedom in the World 2013* (Freedom House, 2013), 33–34, http://www.freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/FIW%202013%20Booklet.pdf (accessed May 5, 2013).

[27] James Mann, *The China Fantasy: How our Leaders Explain Away Chinese Repression* (New York: Viking Penguin), 3.

assumptions of such statements? It is fair to say that it is not only the prospect of a democratic China that inspires such proclamations – it is the promotion of democracy *per se*.

"The best hope for peace in our world is the expansion of freedom in all the world […] So it is the policy of the United States to seek and support the growth of democratic movements and institutions in every nation and culture […]" stated George W. Bush in his Second Inaugural Address, supported by many policymakers and analysts who argued and continue to argue that the promotion of democracy should become the *basic* mission of U.S. Grand Strategy.[28] Through a Western lens, democracy is seen as a political and social culmination of all societies and the supreme political regime within the international community.

Why is the promotion of democracy so significant from the viewpoint of U.S. Grand Strategy? From a moral and humanitarian standpoint, the promotion of democracy is well-grounded due to the infamous experience with individual liberty breaches and human rights abuses in authoritarian states. Nevertheless, a moral perspective does not provide a full explanation to the fact that, historically, the United States has dedicated a significant amount of resources (most notably after the end of the Cold War) to help the development of democratic institutions around the world. There are other incentives, which make democracy promotion a logical and pragmatic national interest of the United States.

The story of Western civilization has been significantly marked by the "slow, inexorable ascent of liberal democracy" and recent history has demonstrated that democratic regimes constitute stable partnerships and alliances.[29] A leading U.S. State Department official noted that it "is no accident that our closest relationships – our true partnerships – are with fellow democracies. Societies that are like-minded are more likely to see the world similarly."[30] This statement implies that the promotion of democracy will increase the "like-mindedness" of governments and societies, which will in turn lead to more stable relationships between states. In the same vein, the U.S.

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[28] George W. Bush, "Second Inaugural Address" (Presented in Washington D.C., January 20, 2005) and Sean M. Lynn-Jones, Preface to *Debating the Democratic Peace*, by Michael E. Brown, Sean M. Lynn-Jones, Steven E. Miller, eds. (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1999), xiv.

[29] Robert W. Merry, "Waking from the Democratic Dream," *The National Interest*, June 25, 2012, http://nationalinterest.org/commentary/time-give-mideast-democracy-7105?page=show (accessed May 5, 2013).

[30] Richard N. Haass, "China and the Future of U.S.-China Relations" (Remarks to the National Committee on U.S.-China Relations, New York, December 5, 2002), http://2001-2009.state.gov/s/p/rem/15687.htm (accessed May 5, 2013).

National Security Strategy from 2006 stated that "[…] democracies are the most responsible members of the international system, promoting democracy is the most effective long-term measure for strengthening international stability [...]."[31]

The strategy of enlarging the community of democracies is thus theoretically seen as an effective tool for bolstering the stability of the international order – this strategy is further strengthened by the democratic peace paradigm (i.e. "democracies rarely wage war against each other").[32] The assumption that the "single overarching aim of U.S. policy toward China should be to bring about as rapid and smooth a transition to democracy as possible" is a logical deduction from the experience of the benign impacts democratic regimes have had on the international community.[33]

Former National Security Advisor Anthony Lake also stressed the importance of enlarging the "world's community of market democracies" – the emphasis on *market* democracy introduces another important trait of democracy promotion. For the United States, the enlargement of the democratic community is not only beneficial from the political perspective, but also from the economic perspective. In a broader sense, such reasoning can be juxtaposed to the Open Door policy – a concept originally designed to provide access to the markets of Imperial China – which also aimed to expand economic ties and foster trade opportunities.

1.1 Open Door Policy and its Implications for Democracy Promotion

Since its inception in 1899, the interpretation of the Open Door policy has changed in many aspects. Originally intended as a blueprint for U.S. policy toward Imperial China, American historians such as Walter LaFeber or William Appleman Williams have understood the term as a continuous U.S. policy *vis-à-vis* the international community. This policy formed a crucial part of the American Grand Strategy not only during its "imperialist" phase in the end of the 19th century, but also during the First and Second World Wars and throughout the Cold War.[34]

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[31] The White House, *National Security Strategy 2006* (Washington D.C.: The White House), 3, http://merln.ndu.edu/whitepapers/USnss2006.pdf (accessed May 5, 2013).

[32] Joanne Gowa, "Democratic States and International Disputes," *International Organization* 49, No. 3 (Summer 1995), 511.

[33] Bruce Gilley, *China's Democratic Future: How It Will Happen and Where It Will Lead* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 79.

[34] Francis G. Couvares et al., eds., *Interpretations of American History: Patterns and Perspectives Vol. II* (New York: The Free Press, 2000), 105–106, 270.

The underlying tenet of the Open Door policy was to provide access to ever-expanding foreign markets for American goods and products. The policy pursued a pragmatic national interest of the United States and – in theory – it had the potential to be mutually beneficial for all countries concerned. In practice, however, economic penetration gave way to political and ideological penetration. A modern interpretation of the Open Door policy claims that the goal of U.S. Grand Strategy was to create an "Open Door world", which rested on two pillars – the economic Open Door (i.e. maintaining an open international market) and a political Open Door (i.e. spreading democracy and liberal values). The perceived "closure" of the system would potentially threaten the core U.S. interests and values.[35]

The two pillars of Open Door policy are assumed to be reciprocal and mutually reinforcing. Open markets contribute to the increase in bilateral trade, which purportedly brings about more peaceful relations. Already Charles Montesquieu acknowledged that international trade leads to peace among nation-states – this scheme was later expanded for example by Erich Weede or Richard Rosecrance.[36] The "capitalist peace" described by Weede increases interdependence amongst nations and has a significant effect on the diffusion of liberal values and democratic thought throughout the world. In turn, democratic political systems are statistically more likely to trade with each other and enter into multilateral organizations and pacts, which further strengthen peaceful relations.[37]

In an ideal scenario, the Open Door policy works to uphold U.S. core values and interests and to maintain stability in the international community. Stability of the international system is assured not only by economic interdependence, but also by the assumption that democratic regimes are more compliant with international norms and have little incentives to disrupt the system. The logic of "democratic compliance" claims that elections in democratic states enable constituents to punish leaders who deviate from declarations made in public – the fear of such a punishment may serve as a deterrent for politicians from violating international agreements and commitments.[38]

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[35] Layne, *Peace of Illusions*, 30–32.
[36] See Erich Weede, *Economic Development, Social Order, and World Politics*: *With Special Emphasis on War, Freedom, the Rise and Decline of the West, and the Future of East Asia* (Boulder CO: Lynne Rienner, 1996) or Richard Rosecrance, *The Rise of the Trading State: Commerce and Conquest in the Modern World* (New York: Basic Books, 1986).
[37] Karen A. Rasler and William R. Thompson, *Puzzles of Democratic Peace: Theory, Geopolitics and the Transformation of World Politics* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), 228.
[38] Dai Xinyuan, "The Conditional Nature of Democratic Compliance", *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 50, No. 5 (October 2006): 1–2.

Despite the contrasting findings about the compliance of democratic institutions and the fact that the United States itself often does not comply with international agreements, democratic compliance is deemed to be one of the factors contributing to the stability of the international system.

U.S. policy toward China can still be observed through the prism of the Open Door concept. The economic pillar of the policy has been (at least partially) attained after Deng Xiaoping's economic reforms, while the political pillar (democratization) is yet to be reached. In this sense, the United States attempted to oblige China's compliance through the so-called "responsible stakeholder" concept.[39] In spite of China's non-democratic regime, the United States pushed Beijing to act like a democratic country within the international system (i.e. comply with international norms and uphold the current international order). In this manner, the "democratization" of China could be achieved at least on the level of China's relations with the international community, if the internal "democratization" remains unattainable for the moment being.

Historically, the Open Door policy has often led to the exploitation of foreign markets by the United States, especially if the bilateral relationship was asymmetrical.[40] Consequently, the attempt to create an "Open Door world" often had very different effects than envisaged in theory. In addition, a subtle and perhaps inevitable by-product of the Open Door policy was the inclination to universalize American values.

1.2 Universalization of Liberal Democracy

During the Cold War, democracy promotion clearly served as a weapon against the Soviet regime, whose ideology was perceived as substantively antagonistic to American values and interests.[41] The obligation to promote democracy was seen as a part of the ideological struggle between individualism and collectivism. U.S. democracy thus became the norm or benchmark against which all other regimes were judged – in other words, only the "like-minded" or "America-like" states were perceived as benign

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[39] This concept was first introduced by the then Deputy Secretary of the State Robert Zoellick in 2005. Robert Zoellick, "Whither China: From Membership to Responsibility?" (Remarks to National Committee on U.S.-China Relations, New York, September 21, 2005), http://2001-2009.state.gov/s/d/former/zoellick/rem/53682.htm (accessed May 5, 2013).

[40] This applies not only to China at the turn of the 19th and 20th century, but also to Latin American and Caribbean countries in the 20th century.

[41] David Rieff, "Evangelists of Democracy," *The National Interest*, October 24, 2012, http://nationalinterest.org/article/evangelists-democracy-7625?page=show (accessed May 5, 2013).

actors.[42] Democracy slowly came to be equated with *liberal* democracy. However, liberalism, as certain pundits point out, emerged from a variety of religious and social tenets of the West and is thus culturally and historically specific. The unique traits of the Americans, which gave rise to a stable liberal democracy, are best described by Alexis de Tocqueville. His account of American democracy shows that certain characteristic features of the Americans were conducive to shaping democracy. Tocqueville mainly emphasized the individualism of Americans in their private pursuits, but also their very active participation in civic associations.[43] Such characteristics may be lacking or play a weak role in other societies and cultures.

The root of liberal democracy is liberalism, defined as a "set of social and political beliefs, attitudes and values which assumes the universal and equal application of the law and the existence of basic human rights superior to those of state or community." [44] At the heart of liberal democracy thus lie the rights of individuals, which are defined in "asocial" or "non-communal" terms. Some societies may perceive the strong emphasis on the individual as too egocentric or even hedonistic. By decoupling liberalism and democracy, political theorist Bhikhu Parekh notes that:

> *"[…] the democratic part of liberal democracy, consisting of such things as free elections, free speech and the right to equality have proved far more attractive outside the West and is more universalizable than the liberal components […] As [non-Western societies] understand it, liberalism breaks up the community, undermines the shared body of ideas and values, places the isolated individual above the community [and] encourages the ethos and ethic of aggressive self-assertions […]"*[45]

In addition to this observation, certain non-Western policymakers (most notably East Asian) argue that their societies do not even desire the "democratic part" of liberal democracy and rather wish to live under "benign authoritarianism" (as further discussed below).

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[42] It is true that – for purely pragmatic reasons, especially during the Cold War – the United States considered states, where liberal democracy was applied only formally, also as "like-minded". Ida Oren, The Subjectivity of the 'Democratic' Peace: Changing U.S. Perceptions of Imperial Germany," in *Debating the Democratic Peace*, ed. Michael E. Brown et. al., 147.

[43] See Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America Vol. II.*

[44] Cited in Ambroce C.Y. King, "Confucianism, Modernity, and Asian Democracy," in *Justice and Democracy: Cross-Cultural Perspectives*, Ron Bontekoe and Marietta Stepaniants, eds. (Honolulu HI: University of Hawaii Press, 1997), 167.

[45] Bhikhu Parekh, "The Cultural Particularity of Liberal Democracy," *Political Studies* 40, Issue Supplement s1 (August 1992): 172–173.

Nevertheless, two decades after the end of the Cold War, democracy promotion is still referred to as the "most powerful weapon" of the U.S. and a tool for the pursuit of U.S. interests.[46] President George W. Bush was among the strong proponents of enlarging the community of democracies.[47] His administration's advocacy for democracy promotion culminated in 2007 with the so-called ADVANCE Democracy Act. The act sought to develop a comprehensive strategy that would translate the objectives of democracy promotion into concrete institutional steps.

Most interestingly, in section 8221, the act mentioned "the need for specificity in democracy promotion efforts across different continents, cultures, and circumstances" and also stated that "the State Department [should] build on its efforts to develop country specific strategies for promoting democracy". This could mark a turn in the perception of the universality of democracy, since the act quite clearly dismissed the notion that only one form of democracy can be directly imposed in any country. However, the Congressional findings regarding the act overtly mentioned the importance of American documents such as the United States Declaration of Independence and the United States Constitution as being the leading ideals which undergird democracy.[48] The call for the institutionalization of democracy promotion rang hollow as the ADVANCE Democracy Act eventually died in committee.

While some commentators note that "the time has come to recognize that the principles of liberal democracy are not universal"[49] and ask the question "whether [after the Cold War] the U.S. government's commitment to democracy promotion still makes sense in terms of national interest"[50], supporting democratic movements and proposing liberal values as universal human principles remains a core feature of any U.S. administration's foreign policy.

It is thus possible to assess the American tendency to universalize liberal democracy using two competing perspectives:

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[46] This statement was made by Vice-President Joe Biden in 2006. Patrick J. Glen, "The ADVANCE Democracy Act and the Future of United States Democracy Promotion Efforts," *Santa Clara Journal of International Law* 9, (2011), 276.

[47] Larry Diamond claimed that "it could be argued that President Bush is the most pro-democracy and pro-democracy-promotion president in American history." Patrick J. Glen, "The ADVANCE Democracy Act," 277.

[48] 22 USC Sec. 8201, http://uscode.house.gov/download/pls/22C89.txt (accessed May 5, 2013).

[49] Leon Hadar, "The Arrogance of Universal Democracy", *The National Interest*, February 19, 2013, http://nationalinterest.org/commentary/liberal-democracy-one-country-8096 (accessed May 5, 2013).

[50] Rieff, "Evangelists of Democracy".

A. The universalization of liberal democracy is not sensitive to cultural factors and its implementation may turn out to be problematic in the non-Western world.[51]

B. The universalization of liberal democracy may potentially lead to the creation of an international community of identical (*universal*) political regimes based on the same values and principles and, in turn, lead to an enduring peace.

1.3 Democratic Peace Theory

The thought of a permanently peaceful world, free of wars, has employed human minds for centuries. In times when for the barbarian "war was the rule; peace the exception", Christianity sought to establish a world empire of religion united under the Christian God to bring universal peace.[52] In 1495, the Decree of Eternal Pacification abolished private war, but war among states still remained a curse and a heavy burden. In early 17th century Hugo Grotius laid the foundation of a code of universal law in *De Jure Belli at Pacis*. This work was written during the Thirty Year's war and tried to suggest various methods by which the severity of warfare could be mitigated and peace achieved. Henry IV of France envisaged the so-called *Grand Dessein*, which proposed to divide Europe between fifteen powers in such a manner that the balance of power would be established and preserved, thus ensuring peace.[53] A more mature plan for peace among states through unification was conceived by Abbé St. Pierre in his 1713 *Projet de Paix Perpetuelle*.[54] However, it was not until Immanuel Kant's essay on Perpetual Peace and its concrete suggestions for achieving the plan that the idea of universal peace attracted wider attention.

Although the likes of Georg W. F. Hegel may consider war an educative instrument that consolidates states, Kant aimed to establish an order, which could eliminate war due to normative restraints. Kant argued that "perpetual peace" would be guaranteed by the acceptance of three "definitive articles" of peace. The First Definitive Article holds that the constitutions of states shall be republican; the Second Article states that "the law of nations shall be founded on a federation of free states" creating a

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[51] King, "Confucianism, Modernity, and Asian Democracy," 167.

[52] Campbell M. Smith, Translator's Introduction to *Perpetual Peace*, by Immanuel Kant (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1903), 13.

[53] Ibid., 34.

[54] Original text available at http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k105087z/f2.image (accessed May 5, 2013).

"Pacific union"; and the Third Definitive Article establishes a "cosmopolitan law" founded on "universal hospitality".[55] Only when *all* states accept these three articles will a metaphorical "treaty" ensuring perpetual peace be signed.

Not surprisingly, given his fascination and knowledge of political philosophy, Woodrow Wilson's vision of a peaceful world order after the First World War contained many features similar to Kant's essay. His Fourteen Points included the thought of a "pacific union" and "cosmopolitan law" to ensure stability and peace. Wilson also alluded to the importance of democracy, claiming that "a steadfast concert of peace can never be maintained except by a partnership of democratic nations".[56]

A notable observation regarding the above-mentioned historical efforts to ensure "eternal peace" among states is the common tendency to *universalize* certain values or principles. Whether peace was thought to be guaranteed under the auspices of religion, law or a political regime, it has always been conceived that only homogeneity of values can lead to peaceful relations (i.e. one God, universal law, republican regime etc.). It seems as if heterogeneity made the attainment of the goal of eternal peace impossible.

The modern democratic peace theory, often applauded for being "as close as anything to an empirical law in international relations", emerged in the 1970s and gained popularity in the late 1980s.[57] The theory quickly achieved practical impact as Presidents Clinton and George W. Bush often argued for democracy promotion on the grounds of democratic peace.[58] The virtual absence of wars or armed conflict between democracies coincides with Kant's "perpetual peace" and to a certain degree proves his point that political regimes sharing the same values constitute peaceful relations. Still, a deep divide exists between adherents of the liberal and the realist schools of international relations on whether the democratic peace thesis is in fact a causation or a mere correlation. The problem is that to demonstrate the empirical causation between democratic regimes and peace, the academic definitions of *democracy* and *war/peace* can in many ways be "manipulated".

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[55] Immanuel Kant, *Perpetual Peace* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1903).
[56] Bruce Russet, "The Fact of Democratic Peace," in *Debating Democratic Peace*, ed. Michael E. Brown et. al., 59−60.
[57] Jack S. Levy, "Domestic Politics and War," *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 18, No. 4, (Spring, 1988), 662.
[58] See for example Omar G. Encarnacion, "Bush and the Theory of the Democratic Peace", *Global Dialogue* 8, No. 3–4 (Summer/Autumn 2006), http://www.worlddialogue.org/content.php?id=384 (accessed May 5, 2013) or Bruce Russet, "Bushwhacking the Democratic Peace", *International Studies Perspectives* 6, No. 4 (November 2005): 395–408.

For instance, the quantitative testing of democratic peace has often involved data from the Correlates of War Project (CoW), which defines inter-state war as a military conflict with "at least 1000 battle related fatalities among all of the system members involved."[59] Any conflict falling under the threshold of 1000 battle deaths does not classify as inter-state war, but as a "militarized interstate dispute" (MID). According to political analysts, this classification of war helps rule out "accidental conflicts" or "deliberate military actions" – but would this mean that a conflict between democracies falling below this threshold would not classify as inter-state war, thus leaving the "existence of democratic peace" untouched? A similar challenge to the empirical justification of democratic peace rests in the definition of democracy. The number of states and dyads (i.e. groups of two states), which qualify as being democratic, depends largely on the wording of the definition of a democratic political regime – a minimalist definition of democracy[60] will encompass a larger scope of states than Rudolph J. Rummel's definition claiming that "[b]y democracy is meant *liberal* democracy".[61]

Semantic disputes aside, historical experience has demonstrated that democratic dyads tend to be more conflict-free and peaceful than any other dyads – this is a conclusion accepted by both the liberals and realists.[62] However, both sides see the phenomenon of relative peace among democracies from a different perspective. The critics of democratic peace argue that realism or pure pragmatism are key to explaining why conflict is so rare between democracies, while the advocates of the theory argue that democratic regimes face two sets of restraints, which hinder their ability (or willingness) to wage war. These restraints can be summed up by two theoretical models: the normative/cultural model and the structural/institutional model.[63]

The normative/cultural model holds that:

1. Decision-makers in democracies follow norms of peaceful conflict resolution that reflect domestic experience, values and principles and expect the same attitude from fellow democracies;

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[59] Correlates of War, *Inter-State War Data*, 1816-1997 (v3.0), http://www.correlatesofwar.org/cow2%20data/WarData/InterState/Inter-State%20War%20Format%20(V%203-0).htm (accessed May 11, 2013).

[60] A minimalist definition of democracy may focuses on just a few attributes of democracy – such as holding periodic competitive elections.

[61] R. J. Rummel, *Power Kills: Democracy As a Method of Nonviolence* (New Brunswick NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1997), 11.

[62] For a discussion see Michael E. Brown et al., eds., *Debating the Democratic Peace*.

[63] Based on Russet, "Why Democratic Peace?" 90-102.

2. Democracies are inherently inclined to resolve conflicts nonviolently and by compromise;

3. Democracies tend to view countries with identical political regimes as less hostile.

The structural/institutional model is formed by the above-mentioned norms and reciprocally supports and enhances them. Its main tenets are:

1. Domestic political restraints of checks and balances, separation of power and public debate/opinion will slow or constrain the decision to go to war;

2. Politicians need to gain popular support for their decisions, therefore costs and benefits of going to war will be thoroughly and rationally weighed;

3. Political leaders are forced to accept blame for war losses to their constituents and thus are more inclined to establish diplomatic institutions for resolving inter-state tensions.

Both theoretical models present a rather "dovish" picture of democratic regimes. However, these restraints can arguably be employed only when referring to democratic dyads. A democracy dealing with a distinct political regime may apply different policies and instruments in resolving tensions or conflicts. In fact, certain studies have shown that democracies are no less war-prone than any other political regimes.[64] Although democracies have shown to be more selective in the wars they choose to wage because of the greater threat of electoral costs, the democratic regimes are very often also war-initiators.[65] Moreover, evidence shows that democracies are also more likely to win the wars they initiate.[66] This indicates that democracies are not *intrinsically* peaceful, but act peacefully only amongst fellow democracies.

The opponents of democratic peace contend that the singular virtue of political regime does not explain peace among democracies. There may exist supplemental reasons and motives placing restraints on the regimes' maneuverability, which account for the peaceful relations between states. These restraints may exist both in democratic dyads and in non-democratic dyads. One of the alternative motives is the already-

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[64] Henry S. Farber and Joanne Gowa, "Polities and Peace," in *Debating the Democratic Peace*, ed. Michael E. Brown et al., 256.

[65] Rasler, *Puzzles of Democratic Peace*, 137, 140.

[66] John Ferejohn and Frances McCall Rosenbluth, "Warlike Democracies," *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 52, No. 1 (February 2008): 24.

mentioned trade and economic interdependence. Another incentive to maintain peaceful relations could be alliances and multilateral organizations, formed for particular causes or against a common threat (these groupings may include democracies and non-democracies alongside). Political stability and wealth or autarky can make great contributions to regional peace, since states with stable political systems and durable economies will lack incentives to externalize domestic discontent into conflict with its neighbors.[67] International institutions (e.g. the United Nations and its sub-organizations) capable of enforcing international law also have the potential to be an important factor in maintaining peace among states.

A point worth mentioning is the finding of Farber and Gowa, which states that the positive relationship between democracy and peace applies *only* to the years after 1945.[68] They found that democratic dyads became relatively pacific and tended to form alliances only after 1945, but not prior to 1914. Although the evidence for this conclusion may be disputable, the interpretation carries interesting implications. The vision of a common enemy (and thus a common interest or goal) in the Cold War years possibly contributed and strengthened the democratic peace between states. In the European context, this peace was extended to countries that were not democratic at the time (Spain, Portugal), but also perceived the mutual threat.

Turning to the People's Republic of China, democratic peace theory and its adherents may allude to the fact that a democratic China would be less inclined to go into conflict with the United States and Western democracies and that the prospect of a potential war with China could be virtually abandoned. Such logic, however, would be myopic. As seen above, many factors can potentially influence the peacefulness of relations − not just the regime type. In addition, the process of democratization has shown to be a volatile period in most democratic states' history, raising the probability of military conflict.

1.4 The Democratization Process

Contemporary democratic regimes are mostly viewed as benign international actors, who respect the basic rights of their citizens and the international community. Historically, though, coupling democracy with peace is a rarity. Ancient (direct) democracies such as Athens were believed to be more turbulent, war-prone and swayed

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[67] Russet, "Why Democratic Peace?" 89.
[68] Farber and Gowa, "Polities and Peace," 258.

by emotion than, for example, republican Sparta. The same was assumed of France in its revolutionary phase – democracy was deemed to be a wild, expansive and radical force.[69] It was often associated with "mob rule" – not only by the likes of Plato – but also by U.S. presidents until the early 20th century, who were reluctant to label the United States a "democracy" and rather preferred the word "republic" to describe the American political regime. Even Woodrow Wilson understood democracy differently from today's terms – he thought of it rather as a meritocratic system than a rule by the "unenlightened *demos*".[70] The "republican" regime was favored for having enough checks and balances to scrutinize both the policymakers and the public.

The 20th century has shaped a more positive picture of democracy, but when considering the prospects of democratization in a non-democratic state, it is essential to take into account that the process of democratic political transformation has often been very volatile and that democratizing states often find themselves in very unstable circumstances.

Typically, democratizing states undergo a rocky transitional period "where democratic control of foreign policy is partial, where mass politics mixes in a volatile way with authoritarian elite politics, and where democratization suffers reversals".[71] Considerable statistical evidence shows that emerging or young democracies are more likely to wage wars than mature and stable democracies. In addition, the probability of waging a war is two-thirds higher for democratizing states than for states undergoing no regime change at all (even authoritarian states and dictatorships).[72] In a sense, democratic peace may be disrupted by young and immature democracies, which externalize their domestic power struggles.[73]

During the process of political transformation from an autocratic to a democratic regime, it is certain that everyone will *not* be made better off by effective democratic institutions. Some groups (e.g. bureaucrats of the old regime) will be the "losers", while others (e.g. former dissidents) will be "winners" – such a transformation of power will naturally cause friction and possibly culminate in some form of a conflict. Even the end

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[69] Christopher Hobson, "Towards a Critical Theory of Democratic Peace," *Review of International Studies* 37, No. 4 (October 2011): 1916–1917.
[70] Oren, "The Subjectivity of 'Democratic' Peace," 290.
[71] Edward D. Mansfield and Jack Snyder, "Democratization and the Danger of War," in *Debating the Democratic Peace*, ed. Michael E. Brown et al., 301.
[72] Ibid., 308.
[73] The direct connection between externalizing internal struggles is, in a number of cases, difficult to authoritatively establish (e.g. during the democratization process in Great Britain or the Netherlands, where the process was very gradual).

of the 20th century has demonstrated that democratization may lead to a rise of belligerent nationalism and war (e.g. the democratization process in former Yugoslavia or the former Soviet Republics – Armenia, Azerbaijan etc.).

The initial design of democratic institutions may also play a large part in igniting conflict – freedom of speech may contribute to ethnic or racial hatred and the rise of malign nationalism, an ill-chosen method for allocating seats in representative bodies discriminating minorities may further worsen social conflicts, etc. [74]

Samuel Huntington claimed that: "Democracies become consolidated when people learn that democracy is a solution to the problem of tyranny, but not necessarily anything else."[75] This is probably the most prosaic way to achieve democratic maturity, but for democratizing states, Huntington's claim is probably crucial. When a democracy becomes consolidated, another important factor comes into play – how this "new" democracy is *perceived* by other democracies in the international community.

1.5 Mutual Perception of Political Regimes

The democratization process upgrades the status of the state in the international system and the new democracy joins the community of already established world democracies. However, the democracies have to "accept" the newcomer amongst their ranks by *perceiving* it as a democracy – that is, they have to acknowledge that the new democracy has an identical political regime, which will generate similar policies and uphold the same values and principles as they do. This aspect is essential, since, as mentioned-above, there is the argument that democracies act peacefully only among fellow democracies. What happens if a new "democracy" emerges in the international community, but the community of democracies does not perceive it as democratic, because, for example, it does not respect the same set of values, but only fulfills the minimalistic definition of democracy? Could democratic peace theory be applied in such a case?

Some political scientists claim that it is *liberalism* that creates democratic peace, not democracy *per se*.[76] In his research, John M. Owen found that states which today's researchers consider democratic did not consider each other democratic at given time

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[74] Russet, "Why Democratic Peace?" 109.
[75] Samuel Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993), 263.
[76] See John M. Owen, "How Liberalism Produces Democratic Peace," in *Debating the Democratic Peace*, ed. Michael E. Brown et al.

periods in the past. He argues that the normative perspective of democratic peace should also take into account mutual perceptions of political regimes.[77] For example, the French after World War I did not perceive their neighbor Germany as a fellow liberal democracy, despite the liberal Weimar constitution.[78] The notion of mutual perception may thus be essential in considering the prospects for democratic peace – a *non-liberal* democracy may not be accepted among a community of *liberal* democracies and vice-versa.

An important feature determining the mutual perception of political regimes is *trust*. Democracies *a priori* mistrust non-democratic regimes. This lack of trust hinders dialogue and any accommodation efforts by autocratic regimes. "When the Soviets refuse to negotiate, they are plotting a world takeover. When they seek to negotiate, they are plotting even more insidiously."[79] This statement demonstrates the initial position of democracies toward non-democracies.

The undergirding logic says that because autocratic regimes do not rely on the consent of the governed, they often act "irrationally" and oppress their own people, thus they will also act "irrationally" in their foreign policy. Such assessments partly suffer from so-called fundamental attribution error – "the tendency to overemphasize motivational factors and underemphasize situational or environmental factors when explaining an actor's actions".[80] Although irrational in their domestic endeavors, some autocratic regimes may be fully rational when maneuvering on the international scene.

Liberal democracies do not suffer from a lack of mutual trust in their relationships, because they expect each other to act in a similar (thus predictable) manner, due to the same domestic normative and institutional constraints they function with. Also, they believe that fellow liberal democracies share their ends, while "non-liberal" or "illiberal" states do not.[81]

Along with trust, the phenomenon of *rivalry* significantly conditions mutual perceptions and relations between political regimes. States involved in rivalry

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[77] Owen, "How Liberalism Produces Democratic Peace," 120.

[78] Historical animosities between France and Germany also played a large part in France's perception of Germany. Christopher Layne, "Kant or Cant: The Myth of Democratic Peace," in *Debating the Democratic Peace*, ed. Michael E. Brown et al. 189.

[79] Michael W. Doyle, "Kant, Liberal Legacies, and Foreign Affairs," in *Debating the Democratic Peace*, ed. Michael E. Brown et al., 32.

[80] Daniel Drezner, "Fundamental Attribution Error and Al Qaeda's Strategy," *Foreign Policy*, November 26, 2003, http://drezner.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2003/11/26/fundamental_attribution_error_and_al_qaedas_strateg y (accessed May 6, 2013).

[81] Owen, "How Liberalism Produces Democratic Peace," 132.

relationships – in which they perceive some state or states as threatening competitors or enemies— are more likely to go to war with their designated adversaries than with other states. Nearly 80 percent of all wars in the past two centuries involved a confrontation between rivals.[82] Interstate rivalries may have ideological origin, but also ethnical, racial, cultural or economic and they do seem to have life-cycles.

An obvious question arises – whether war/peace is due more to the presence or absence of rivalry as opposed to the presence or absence of democracy. Can rivalry trump regime type?[83] Rivalry can potentially distort the positive mutual perception in democratic dyads. If two democratic regimes hold a rival relationship, will the normative and institutional restraints of democracy prevent military conflict, or will rivalry overcome such restraints?

The rivalry variable is hard to measure empirically, but to assess the situation between China and the United States, it should be taken into account at least in its abstract form. Currently, the United States and the People's Republic of China (PRC) are rivals – both in the ideological and economic realm. If China becomes a democracy, the ideological rivalry will dissolve. The economic rivalry, however, may remain. In addition, China is an aspiring hegemon (at least regionally) and arguably it will not give up its aspirations as it becomes a democracy.[84] The relationship with the standing hegemon, the United States, may therefore be also affected by a "great power rivalry". The United States desires to remain the systemic leader of the international community and thus perceives a rising China as a threat to its unipolar hegemony. From the American perspective, China's potential great power aspirations may, in certain spheres of interest, clash with U.S. interests and create additional tension and rivalry.

Linking this scenario to A. F. K. Organski's theory of power transition, an interesting dilemma arises. The theory of power transition, as formulated in 1958, comes to the conclusion that in time of power transition between the dominant state and a challenging power, the probability of war increases.[85] Organski's theory does not differentiate between regime types. So, could it apply to a democratic dyad – in this case a democratized China and the United States? Would such a situation undermine

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[82] Rasler, *Puzzles of Democratic Peace*, 26.

[83] Ibid., 113.

[84] Harry Harding, "Beijing Through Rose-Colored Glasses: Why Democracy Cannot Tame China," *The National Interest*, July 13, 2011, http://nationalinterest.org/commentary/beijing-through-rose-colored-glasses-why-democracy-cannot-ta-5603 (accessed May 6, 2013).

[85] The theory of power transition was first presented by Abramo Fimo Kenneth Organski in his book *World Politics* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1958).

democratic peace theory? In modern history, power transition between two democracies took place only once – between the Great Britain and the United States – and it was peaceful (it can be argued, however, that the two countries had their share of war in the past). At the time of this power transition, their mutual rivalry had long ended its life-cycle and moreover, the two countries shared many cultural, religious and ethnical aspects, which facilitated a peaceful power transition.[86] Concerning China, the situation may be substantially different.

1.6 The Concept of Political Culture

The preceding analyses demonstrate that when Western policymakers talk about the prospects of democracy in China, they ideally envision a country that maintains an open door economy, accepts and abides by "universal" values and norms, sustains conflict-free relations with other democracies and, in fact, is a *liberal* democracy. Such a scenario is a logical and pragmatic interest of any Western democracy and most notably the United States. China's unique cultural and political heritage, however, may cause it to deviate from the liberal model of democracy and forge a democracy undergirded by idiosyncratic norms and values, which reflect Chinese political culture. In that case, how would the United States *perceive* Chinese democracy? Would the mutual relationship follow the patterns of behavior in liberal democratic dyads?

A marker of how democracy possibly may look like in non-democratic countries is the concept of political culture. The concept was first systematically outlined by Gabriel Verba and Sidney Almond in their 1963 book "The Civic Culture" and has been since used to study attitudes towards democracy in non-democratic and democratic countries.[87] Political culture can be defined as a

> *"[…] set of attitudes, beliefs and sentiments which give order and meaning to a political process and which provide the underlying assumptions and rules that govern behavior in the political system. It encompasses both the political ideals and operating norms of a polity. Political culture is thus the manifestation in aggregate form of the psychological and subjective dimensions of politics. A political culture is the product of both the collective history of a political system*

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[86] It may be argued, however, that a certain level of economic rivalry still persists in the relationship.
[87] Gabriel Verba and Sidney Almond, *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1963).

and the life histories of the members of the system and thus it is rooted equally in public events and private experience."[88]

Almond and Verba made the point that political culture could be predicted by analyzing structural and historical factors and many political scientists have adhered to this concept. They divided political cultures into three main categories: (1.) *parochial*; (2.) *subject* and (3.) *participant*. A participant political culture is the most compatible with democracy, while the parochial is the least.[89] The categorization of societies depends on historical and cultural pathologies, which tend to be quite durable and stable. For Ronald Inglehart, the "study of political culture is based on the implicit assumption that autonomous and cross-cultural differences exist and they can have important political consequences".[90] He also acknowledged that "people live in the past much more than they realize", or, in other words, that the impact of direct experience on political behavior is "severely constrained by norms passed across generations".[91]

Evidence indicates that a political culture that emphasizes *self-expression*, *tolerance*, *(interpersonal) trust*, *life satisfaction* and *participatory orientations*, plays a crucial part in effective and stable democracy.[92] The existence of these pro-democratic values at the individual level is thus conducive to installing democracy.[93]

The process of democratization inherently creates new institutions and authority patterns – this political engineering does not happen in a social vacuum, but depends on the specific traits of a given society. Therefore certain pundits argue that newly formed institutions should be congruent with the political culture of the given society or "designed at least in a way that does not dramatically violate the congruence condition – in other words, that adapts in some degree to the pre-established order."[94]

Chinese political culture is deeply influenced by Confucian ethics, values and principles and evolved in a very different historical context than the political cultures of

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[88] Jo Freeman, "The Political Culture of the Democratic and Republican Parties," *Political Science Quarterly* 101, No. 3 (Fall 1986): 327.

[89] Robert W. Jackman and Ross A. Miller, "A Renaissance of Political Culture?" *American Journal of Political Science* 40, No. 3 (August 1996): 634.

[90] Ronald Inglehart, "The Renaissance of Political Culture," *The American Political Science Review* 82, No. 4 (December 1988): 1205.

[91] Cited in Jackman and Miller, "A Renaissance of Political Culture?" 635.

[92] Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel, "Political Culture and Democracy: Analyzing Cross-Level Linkages," *Comparative Politics* 36, No. 1 (October 2003): 76.

[93] Lu Chunlong, "Democratic Values among Chinese People," *China Perspectives* 55 (September/October 2004): 40.

[94] Harry Eckstein, "Congruence Theory Explained," *CSD Working Papers* (UC Urvine: Center for the Study of Democracy, 1997): 19, http://www.escholarship.org/uc/item/2wb616g6 (accessed May 6, 2013).

Western states. Chinese political thinkers have also rarely ignored the teachings of the Confucians and attempted to apply certain concepts and ideals of Confucian statecraft to their contemporary societies. This distinctiveness of political culture may provide the foundation for China to develop a different form of democracy – a democracy enhanced by Confucian ideals and ethics, but not necessarily liberalism. What aspects would such a "Confucian democracy" possibly contain and how would the community of liberal democracies potentially perceive it?

2. The Impact of Confucianism on Chinese Political Culture

Like Christianity in Europe or Islam in the Middle East, Confucianism has greatly shaped behavioral patterns and cultural norms in China. The adoption of Confucianism in 136 B.C. as the "national doctrine" ensured its expansion and dominance over other philosophical schools of thought for centuries to come, while other doctrines and philosophies waned.[95] Nevertheless, major schools like Legalism or Mohism have influenced the workings of certain Chinese governments and Confucianism itself, therefore, the impact of these philosophical currents cannot be completely ruled out from a broader assessment of Chinese political culture.

Confucianism is not merely a set of distant historical norms with no contemporary value – it is a moral and ethical system still "drilled into a person's head from early age".[96] Confucian social ethics have been passed on through generations with the contribution of governments, which disseminated these teachings with the purpose of maintaining a certain level of harmony and order in the society. The Ming and Qing governments took an active interest in promoting Confucian ethics and instituted compulsory public lectures for citizens for this purpose. These twice-monthly lectures took place in every locality and were headed by specially appointed scholars who taught in the vernacular. The main topics of the lectures were: proper behavior, obeisance of parents, control of children, respect for seniors, avoiding lawsuits etc.[97] In effect, everywhere in the country the same models of behavior were held up for praise

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[95] Tan, *Chinese Political Thought in the Twentieth Century*, 6.

[96] Tien Hung-mao, ed., *Taiwan's Electoral Politics and Democratic Transition: Riding the Third Wave* (New York: M. E. Sharpe, 1996), 27.

[97] Patricia Ebrey, "The Chinese Family and the Spread of Confucian Values," in *The East Asian Region: Confucian Heritage and its Modern Adaptation*, ed. Gilbert Rozman (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), 75.

or blame and basic Confucian teachings were conveyed to ordinary people.[98] Even the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has occasionally found its way to Confucianism and traditional Chinese thought – either when Mao Zedong pondered the best strategy in the 1962 Sino-Indian War,[99] when Hu Jintao announced his concept of a "harmonious society"[100] or when the CCP decided in 2011 to raise a 31-foot bronze statue of Confucius near Tiananmen Square in Beijing (only to have it taken down several weeks later).[101]

Apart from emphasizing morals and ethics for everyday life, Confucianism also concentrated on statecraft or the practical workings of the government. The ideals of governing and the relationship between the ruler and the ruled were central to Confucian political thought. Confucian conceptions of statecraft have influenced many Chinese rulers and especially political thinkers from antiquity to the 20th century. Although some thinkers perceived Confucian teachings as a hindrance to progress and the adoption of modern political institutions, others have relied on it to lead China through modernity without succumbing to Western influence.

The following section will touch on and briefly analyze the traditional Confucian principles, values and perceptions which guided Chinese societies for centuries and that may serve as important indicators of Chinese political culture. Francis Fukuyama described the universal impulse in democracies to return to an "older, purer set of values" – similarly, the Confucian heritage may potentially hold key implications for a modern democratic society in China.[102]

There is little doubt that the Confucian cultural and political heritage is strong in China; however, the mere notion of "heritage" must be assessed carefully. "Heritage" has a multisided and complex character and must not lead to oversimplification. It may be tempting to identify one deep-seated principle or character trait that leads to a certain pattern of behavior, but a thorough analysis requires the interpretation of heritage against the backdrop of a changing historical context. Contemporary characteristics

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[98] Ebrey, "The Chinese Family and the Spread of Confucian Values," 82.

[99] Henry Kissinger, *On China* (New York: Penguin Press, 2011), 1−2.

[100] Yang Jiemian et al., *New Missions for China and US: Strategy-making & Policy-options* (Shanghai: Shanghai Institute for International Studies, 2006), 13.

[101] Andrew Jacobs, "Confucius Statue Vanishes Near Tiananmen Square," *New York Times*, April 22, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/04/23/world/asia/23confucius.html?_r=0 (accessed May 5, 2013).

[102] Cited in Gilley, *China's Democratic Future: How It Will Happen and Where It Will Lead*, 186.

must be seen not as straightforward manifestations of the past, but as part of a dynamic historical setting.[103]

2.1 Position and Obligation of the Ruler

The foundation of an effective Confucian system rests on four key tenets:

- a virtuous and legitimate ruler,
- a fairly selected professional elite bureaucracy,
- a meritorious ruling elite dedicated to serving the people,
- families, which are given the opportunity to enjoy the fruits of their labor and pursue various paths to prosperity.[104]

The ruler resting atop this traditional system (the Son of Heaven, tiānzǐ; 天子) has been given the "mandate of heaven" (tiānmìng; 天命) to govern "all under heaven" (tiānxià; 天下). His conduct must embrace three interrelated concepts seen as instrumental for proper governance – they are Benevolence (rén; 仁),[105] Rites (lǐ; 礼/禮) and Righteousness (yì; 义/義). The implications of these terms are extremely complex and a certain amount of simplification in explaining their function is thus inevitable.

In political thought, Benevolence is the most perfect virtue of a ruler and represents empathy, love and concern for others – a certain altruism that the king exerts onto his subjects. Rites may be described as "rules of proper behavior" or "etiquette" – it is a set of morals or duties, which embodies the entire spectrum of human interaction.[106] Government by Rites is necessary to ensure an orderly and happy society. Confucian scholar Xunzi stated that "when the individual's duties are not clearly fixed, he will become indolent in his work. The only means of solving these difficulties is to devise Rites, which make clear the social distinctions, so that everyone's rights and duties are both definite and universally known."[107] Righteousness (also translated as "justice") is the moral predisposition to do good or the fulfillment of obligation.

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[103] Gilbert Rozman, "The East Asian Region in Comparative Perspective," in *The East Asian Region: Confucian Heritage and its Modern Adaptation*, ed. Gilbert Rozman (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), 22–23.
[104] Ibid., 18.
[105] *Rén* (仁) has various translations and interpretations, including "perfect virtue", "goodness", "human-heartedness", "humanity" or "compassion".
[106] *Lǐ* (礼/禮) can be loosely translated as a "set of rules of proper behavior", "customs" or even "etiquette".
[107] Xiao Gongquan, *A History of Chinese Political Thought* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979), 185.

The employment and the respect of these three concepts constitute a prerequisite for proper governance. It is an obligation of the ruler to revere these traditional notions and thus serve as a "role model" for the people and a defender of the moral order.[108] The ruler is a "sage king", a "superior man", who in a way resembles Plato's "philosopher king". This ideal conception of a virtuous ruler provides for the overall centrality of the political order within the Confucian system. It is assumed that the political order has supreme jurisdiction over all domains of life and that the ruler has ultimate authority over social, religious, and family affairs.[109] Confucius' reply when asked about government is revealing in this sense: "To govern means to rectify." [110]

To further clarify his vision of proper government, Confucius created an analogy: "The character of the superior man is like that of the wind; the character of the small people is like that of grass. When there is wind over the grass, it cannot choose but bend."[111] The main concern of Confucius was for the sage king to "instruct" his subjects and promote moral behavior amongst them. Mencius, Confucius' follower, emphasized a different aspect of the ruler's obligation to his people.[112]

Mencius claimed that the primary duty of the ruler was to provide livelihood for his subjects. Ensuring that "the people are fed" is of primary importance because with "a constant livelihood the people have a constant mind. Without a constant livelihood the people will not have constant minds […] If the people are inconstant in their minds, there is nothing evil they will not do."[113] Mencius thus felt that there was no point in promoting moral behavior if people worried about their next meal.[114] The obligation of the ruler to provide his people with a certain level of subsistence is explicitly described in Mencius' conversation with the governor of Ping Lu:

> *Mencius said to the Governor there, "If one of your spearmen failed to report for duty three times in a single day, would you get rid of him?" "I would not wait for a third time!" was the reply. Mencius said, "Yet you, Sir, have failed to report for*

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[108] He Baogang, "New Moral Foundations of Chinese Democratic Institutional Design," in *China and Democracy: Reconsidering the Prospects for a Democratic China*, ed. Zhao Suisheng (New York: Routledge, 2000), 91.

[109] Daniel Bell, *East Meets West* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 131.

[110] Xiao, *A History of Chinese Political Thought*, 111.

[111] Ibid.

[112] Mencius (Mengzi) lived around 372-289 B.C. and is arguably the most famous Confucian after Confucius himself. He focused more on the implications of Confucianism for political life, serving numerous rulers.

[113] Mencius 3A.3.

[114] Daniel Bell, *Beyond Liberal Democracy: Political Thinking for an East Asian Context* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), 35.

duty frequently. In the lean years when the harvest fails, several thousand of the old and feeble among your people roll in the ditches and gutters, while the able-bodied wander [in search of food]."[115]

This obligation represents an interesting contrast to the individualism and liberalism in Western societies, where the responsibility to provide for oneself is given to each individual and not the ruler (the state).

The sage king can also be "fond of musical entertainment and money", but only as long as he "shares his fondness with the people".[116] This shows that, although the ruler is the supreme authority, he has certain responsibilities toward the governed and that his legitimacy and mandate are not infinite.

The possibility of "overthrowing" the Son of Heaven is a very ambiguous notion in Confucian teachings. The mandate of heaven can be withdrawn if a ruler does not respect the practice of Benevolence and Righteousness. Mere subjects, however, cannot dispose of an errant ruler – if an ordinary person finds himself in a state governed by a malevolent ruler, the Confucian solution is to *move* to another state to escape the tyranny.[117] Not even the ministers (the ruler's advisers) had the disposition to overthrow an untrue ruler: "When the prince is in grave error [the ministers'] duty is to warn him, and, if this should happen repeatedly and he disregards them, they should resign." Only the ministers of the "Royal House" (i.e. in the ruler's blood line) had the eventuality to "change the incumbent to the throne" if he disregarded their remonstrations.[118]

The eventuality of "slaying" a ruler also existed in Mencius' thought, but only under the precondition that Heaven withdraws the mandate and commissions someone upon whom the mandate is to fall:

King Xuan of Qi asked: "Is it true that King Tang banished Jie, and that King Wu slew Zhou?" Mencius replied: "Yes, it says so in the [historical records]." The King said: "But properly speaking, may a subject slay his prince?" Mencius replied: "A man who despoils Benevolence I call a robber; a man who despoils

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[115] Mencius 2B.4.
[116] Stephen Angle, *Human Rights in Chinese Thought: A Cross Cultural Inquiry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 88.
[117] Bell, *Beyond Liberal Democracy*, 141.
[118] Mencius 5B.9.

Righteousness, a ruffian. Robbers and ruffians are mere commoners. I was aware that that commoner Zhou was slain, but unaware that a prince was slain."[119]

Mencius' emphasis on the ruler's obligation to provide livelihood for the people laid the foundation for criticizing the government for not fulfilling its obligations. Nevertheless, Mencius indicates that "while people who act against a bad ruler cannot be blamed for what they do, they still do not act rightly".[120] This is a clear sign that the "right to rebel" was limited by the nearly absolute loyalty of the subjects to the ruler and that overthrowing a sage king by subjects was unthinkable.

An important part of Chinese governments has always been bureaucracy. Bureaucrats (mandarins) were chosen on the basis of merit through a system of sophisticated imperial examinations. Only the well-versed in the Confucian classics were eligible for public office and only they could gain the respect and trust of the people. The selection of elites was crucial for proper government because they were expected to be "wise and rational" in their endeavors.[121] Huang Zongxi, a 17th century Confucian scholar, even called for replacing the moral restraints of the ruler (represented by Benevolence, Rites and Righteousness) with a certain "balance of power" – he envisioned a meritocratically selected "assembly of scholars" to advise the ruler, since it was assumed that "only the great man can rectify what is in the monarch's mind".[122] The ideal of political meritocracy or "elevation of the worthy" has thus been intrinsic to Chinese political culture.[123]

2.2 Perception of the Individual and Authority

The role of the individual in a society, the nature of his/her relations with the state and authority patterns are an important source of political values and thus instrumental to the assessment of political culture. Authority relations in the family, schools, social associations, and the workplace create norms that are then carried over to the world of politics. Taking Germany as an example, pundits have argued that the authoritarian and

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[119] Mencius 1B.8.
[120] Angle, *Human Rights in Chinese Thought: A Cross Cultural Inquiry*, 125.
[121] Olwen Bedford and Hwang Kwang-Kuo, *Taiwanese Identity and Democracy: the Social Psychology of Taiwan's 2004 Elections* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 160.
[122] Li Cunshan, "Development of Democratic Concepts in China," in *China, Vol. II: The Transformation of Chinese Socialism*, Lin Chun, ed. (London: Ashgate, 2000), 164.
[123] Daniel Bell, "Meritocracy is a Good Thing," *New Perspectives Quarterly* 29, No. 4 (Fall 2012): 9.

patriarchal German family predisposed the German society to accept the same patterns in the behavior of the Kaiser.[124]

The authority patterns practiced for centuries in China have upheld a hierarchical social system that exceeds the family. The family was considered the basic unit of society and the proper model of government. Relations between ruler and subject were seen as analogous to those between parent and child.[125] Traditional Confucian ethics also prescribe a very different role to the individual than Western liberalism does. In the West, the connection between the citizen and the modern state is rather *reciprocal* (but not "standing in the way" of the individual), while in China, it is traditionally *hierarchical.*[126]

From early age, Chinese children are taught to be selfless and to defer to collective norms. They are generally told that their identity is entirely derived from belonging to some larger group or community – it is this group that provides an individual with his/her own identity. The individual is expected to show a certain level of sacrifice for his/her community/society, without expecting to receive much in return.[127] The traditional Chinese society is rather collectivist – the life purpose of the individual being doing good for the society and relying on it for his/her very existence. Society is not composed of *individuals*, but is an *association* of individuals.[128] Personal benefit must succumb to the common benefit – interests of the individual have very little legitimacy. Being individualistic and pursuing personal interests may be perceived as egocentric, disrespectful for others, as a barrier to the achievement of communal goals and as a threat to social cohesion. The seeming benefits of serving the common good are described by Huang Zongxi:

> *"In the beginning of human life each man lived for himself and looked to his own interests. There was such a thing as the general benefit, yet no one seems to have promoted it; and there was general harm, yet no one seems to have eliminated it. Then someone came forth who did not think of benefit in terms of his own benefit*

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[124] Russell J. Dalton and Doh Chull Shin, eds., *Citizens, Democracy, and Markets Around the Pacific Rim* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 6.
[125] Ibid.
[126] Shi Tianjian, "Cultural Values and Democracy in the People's Republic of China," *The China Quarterly* 162 (June 2000): 541.
[127] Lucian Pye, "The State and the Individual: An Overview Interpretation," *The China Quarterly* 127 (September 1991): 448–449.
[128] He, "New Moral Foundations of Chinese Democratic Institutional Design," 92–93.

but sought to benefit all-under-heaven. [...] Thus his labors were thousands of times greater than the labors of ordinary men."[129]

This anti-individualist attitude was quite logically conducive to accepting the Marxist-Leninist critique of bourgeois individualism.[130]

The philosophical school of Legalism took the opposition to individualism to its limits. Leading Legalist thinker Han Fei Zi (ca. 280–233 BCE) rejected all private endeavors, which were not beneficial to the ruler or the state. In other words, "government and society should leave virtually no room for the individual's private life".[131] Han Fei Zi's elevation of the ruler and absolute suppression of subjects was one extreme, while the other extreme was the (nearly libertarian) thought of Zhuang Zi.

Zhuang Zi (ca. 369–286 BCE) advocated "letting the world alone", because order is created "spontaneously" when things are *not* governed – this is almost a "laissez-faire" ideology from today's perspective. The thought of Zhuang Zi is regarded as the most "thoroughgoing of all individualisms and most extreme of libertarian philosophies" (Chinese and foreign).[132] An interesting question posed by Chinese scholar Xiao Gongquan (1897–1981) arises when considering Zhuang Zi's "liberalism". European individualism and liberalism have often been expanded and developed into revolutionary thought and protest against tyranny and authoritarianism – why did Zhuang Zi's thought wane and not develop into similar currents? [133] The most plausible answer is that this "liberal" philosophy was an exception in the traditional Chinese thought and had no other match or following, while European liberalism was facilitated by Christianity, which gives more focus to the individual.

Chinese communitarianism must be seen in the perspective of the principle of "favoring the intimate". Confucianism prescribes ethical requirements to favor those with whom one is closest (i.e. family, friends, and one's community – in that order) – it does not advocate any norms, which emphasize cordial and trustful relations between non-kin.[134] The relationship between oneself and others is assessed along two social

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[129] Cited in Angle, *Human Rights and Chinese Thought*, 85.
[130] Gilbert Rozman, "The East Asian Region in Comparative Perspective," in *The East Asian Region*, ed. Gilbert Rozman, 27–28.
[131] Xiao, *A History of Chinese Political Thought*, 388.
[132] Ibid., 316.
[133] Ibid.
[134] Bedford and Hwang, *Taiwanese Identity and Democracy*, 158.

dimensions: intimacy/distance and superiority/inferiority.[135] In this sense, Chinese political culture can be perceived as fairly intolerant. Lucian Pye states that the: "political culture knows no equals, only superiors and inferiors and that the Chinese perceive a sharp divide between friend and foe."[136] This "intolerance" is further strengthened by the principles of filial piety and loyalty to one's superiors, which are seen as core Confucian ethics for ordinary people.

Filial piety is the ultimate virtue of respect for one's parents and ancestors. The idea of filial piety is premised upon an "indisputable fact" that one's body exists solely because of one's parents and ancestors and that it is a continuation of the parent's physical lives.[137] Family members were often conceptualized as an analogy of one single body. Hierarchy of the family is upheld by the insistence on deference and loyalty to superiors. Absolute agreement with superiors was crucial to maintaining a Confucian social order: "What the superior thinks to be right, all shall think to be right; what the superior thinks to be wrong, all shall think to be wrong [...]; if people should make common cause with inferiors and not agree with the superior – this is what deserves punishment from above and condemnation from below."[138]

Subjects are basically ordained to passively depend on the Benevolence of their ruler and on the society's betters (the "elite").[139] This particular perception of authority also leads to a notable level of political passivity in Chinese political culture, despite the fairly high level of participation in various associations and guilds. The problem is that these groups were oriented inward, providing identity and security to its members, rather than pursuing particular interests. In addition, the individual was not really active in joining associations, since membership was mostly ascriptive – i.e. depending on one's place of birth and family.[140] In contrast, guild membership in medieval Europe had to be hard-earned.

The traditional passivity of the Chinese populace and its reliance on hierarchy to assure a stable social order was exploited by the CCP. During the Mao era, the Communist Party assigned the class level of each family according to the status of the head of the household at the time the PRC was established. The fortunate belonged

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[135] Hwang Kwang-Kuo, "Filial Piety and Loyalty: Two Types of Social Identification in Confucianism," *Asian Journal of Social Psychology* 2, No. 1 (April 1999): 166.
[136] Cited in Andrew J. Nathan and Shi Tianjian, "Cultural Requisites for Democracy in China: Findings From a Survey," *Daedalus* 122, No. 2 (Spring 1993): 111.
[137] Hwang, "Filial Piety and Loyalty: Two Types of Social Identification in Confucianism," 169.
[138] Xiao, *A History of Chinese Political Thought*, 236.
[139] Bell, *East Meets West*, 189.
[140] Pye, "The State and the Individual: An Overview Interpretation," 451, 453.

among the "five red categories", while the "five black categories" were considered as "bad elements" within the society and had basically no hope for any upward mobility.[141] Lucian Pye noted that at the outset "the people were surprisingly docile, accepting as almost normal and useful the idea that everyone should belong to some group and have a classification which reflected moral goodness and badness" and also that people seemed to take it as normal that **"there should be neighborhood committees, with old 'Aunties' keeping an eye on everyone's movements."**[142]

Traditional Confucian ethics predispose a view of the state as a web of personal relations rather than an institution comprised of laws, rules and offices. In this sense, a certain affinity between Confucian ethics and the Leninist *nomenklatura* system adopted by the CCP can be found – this affinity is further supported by the so-called guānxì (关系) system of relations.[143] Guānxì describes the dynamic of personalized networks and contacts (not necessarily of equal social status), which can be translated into some form of influence or benefit. This perception of personal relations is traditionally central to Chinese societies. In democratic Taiwan, for example, the practice of guānxì manifests itself in the high level of clientelism (or particularistic favoritism, which is connected to the Confucian principle of "favoring the intimate").[144]

2.3 Harmony versus Chaos

Confucianism essentially believes that the nature of humans is good and that virtuous leadership can strengthen this goodness in people and produce good behavior and social order. In other words, it idealizes the "micro-level, personalized moral suasion" to ensure order.[145] In contrast, Western liberalism does not place trust in the goodness of human nature to ensure social order, but rather in the rule of law and institutions that create checks and balances. This distinction is further reflected in the perception of "chaos" in both societies.

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[141] The "five red categories" included revolutionary cadres, revolutionary martyrs, revolutionary soldiers, workers and poor and lower-middle peasants. The "five black categories" consisted of landlords, rich peasants, counter-revolutionaries, criminals and rightists. Lu Xing, *Rhetoric of the Chinese Cultural Revolution: The Impact on Chinese Thought, Culture, and Communication* (Columbia SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2004), 55.

[142] Pye, "The State and the Individual: An Overview Interpretation," 456.

[143] Jeremy Paltiel, *The Empire's New Clothes: Cultural Particularism and Universal Value in China's Quest for Global Status* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 41.

[144] Bedford and Hwang, *Taiwanese Identity and Democracy*, 160.

[145] Rozman, "The East Asian Region in Comparative Perspective," 16.

In the West, the antithesis of chaos is *order*. Order is "artificially" upheld by a set of laws and rules constraining certain forms of conduct. In traditional Chinese culture, the antithesis of chaos is *harmony*. Harmony is considered to be the "natural" state of affairs, only as long as all individual parts of the universe perform their duties and offices with loyalty and sincerity – thus order is potentially achieved "without law".[146] This state of relations, referred to as Great Harmony (dàtóng; 大同), benefits "all under heaven" and is the ultimate goal of a Confucian society.

The principle of harmony can have vast implications for political life. While liberalism recognizes conflict as a basic human condition and has adapted political institutions to settle conflicts, Confucianism has a tendency to deny/ignore conflict for the sake of maintaining harmony. Although harmony is ideally achieved without coercive force, in practice, the success of accomplishing harmony rests on paternalistic authority, which may lead to suppression.[147] Open disagreement among politicians and their inability to reach consensus may be viewed by the public as disrupting social harmony and even as "unethical action".[148] In the same light, Chinese leaders (past and present) seem to view the manifestations of individualism and dissent as "obstreperous acts of disorder" or as threats to harmony and thus a legitimate cause for suppression.[149] It can be said that Confucius himself was also wary of dissenting public opinion, claiming that "[w]hen right principles prevail in the kingdom, there will be no expressions of opinion among the common people."[150] The responsibility for fostering the "right principles" in the kingdom rested with the ruler.

The specific means by which harmony is to be achieved and maintained were disputed by Chinese political thinkers. An "idealist" interpretation would assert that moral constraints suffice to achieve harmony. On the other hand, the "realist" interpretation would claim that when relations turn bitter and consensus cannot be reached, laws are needed to sustain social order. However, the role of law in a Confucian society is somewhat different from its Western conception. Confucianism conceptualizes laws as an "instrument" of the ruler to govern – not a "social contract" among the population.[151]

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[146] Thomas B. Stephens, *Order and Discipline in China: The Shanghai Mixed Court, 1911–1927* (Seattle WA: University of Washington Press, 1992), 4.
[147] He, "New Moral Foundations of Chinese Democratic Institutional Design," 92–93.
[148] Bedford and Hwang, *Taiwanese Identity and Democracy*, 76.
[149] Pye, "The State and the Individual: An Overview Interpretation," 466.
[150] Xiao, *A History of Chinese Political Thought*, 332.
[151] Bedford and Hwang, *Taiwanese Identity and Democracy*, 163.

The Mohists believed that legal sanctions, rather than moral and social ethics, are a mode of attaining order. A similar view, but more extreme, was held by the Legalists.[152] Main legalist thinkers Lord Shang (390–338 BCE) and Han Fei Zi deprecated Confucian moralism and thought strict obeisance of harsh laws was vital for sustaining order. The ruler occupied a status that was above the law – whether the ruler himself obeyed the law was not an issue.[153] Laws were thus conceived to enlarge the powers and authority of the ruler – this is contrary to laws devised in modern constitutional nations, which aimed to curb or at least clearly delineate the powers of the monarch.[154] In this sense, what the legalists advocated was "rule by law" or "rule with law" rather than the modern notion of "rule of law".

Chinese political thought also pondered the question of "perpetual peace". For Mencius, an ideal world would be unified under the auspices of one Benevolent emperor. Mencius claimed that a sage king wins the hearts of people simply by his Benevolence. If a ruler engages "in true government, displaying Benevolence, then state servants throughout the world would seek employment in [his] Court, farmers would seek to farm in [his] territory, merchants would seek to set up their warehouses in [his] markets, and travelers would seek to travel on [his] highways."[155] According to this view, "all under heaven" would voluntarily turn to the truest ruler, bringing prosperity and order. In such a case, there would be no use for expansionist wars and peace would be achieved in a natural or spontaneous way.

Nevertheless, Mencius also makes the case for "just" war, which slightly contradicts the above-mentioned reasoning. A true king should not be satisfied with a small state; he should attempt to spread Benevolence across borders, to bring his virtuous government and harmony to all peoples. The most appropriate means is through moral power – if Benevolent practices are applied by the ruler "then all within the four seas [the entire world] would raise their heads in expectation to him, hoping that [he] would become their prince."[156] However, if moral power fails, use of armed force can be justified, for example in the form of "punitive expeditions".[157]

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[152] It is important to note that legalism was a leading philosophy during the Warring States era of Chinese history – a very chaotic and brutal period. Legalist thought reflected the practice of this era and therefore advocated a social order resembling martial law.

[153] Xiao, *A History of Chinese Political Thought*, 403.

[154] Ibid., 347.

[155] Mencius 1A.7.

[156] Mencius 3B.5.

[157] Bell, *Beyond Liberal Democracy*, 33.

War is considered to be just only if it strives to enforce peace and Benevolence – any other war is unjust. The aim of war must be to bring down a tyrant and liberate the people from his vicious rule. It must be led by a ruler who has gained the trust of the people and the population should "approve" of the invading powers:

> *"If by your occupying it the populace of Yan would approve, then do so […] But if the populace would disapprove then you should not occupy it. [Because when] the people see in the invading armies something hotter than fire, more menacing than flood, they will revert once again to their former allegiance."*[158]

This intervention must also meet the conditions of proper hierarchy – only higher authority (i.e. large states) can attack lower authority (i.e. small states) and not vice-versa. Mencius made this explicit in his conversation with King Xuan of Qi:

> *"When major states serve minor states it is pleasing to Heaven. When minor states serve major states it shows reverence to Heaven. It is who pleases Heaven that will protect the whole world, and he who reveres Heaven that will retain his own state."*[159]

By today's terminology, the Confucian concept of "punitive expeditions" could be paralleled with "humanitarian interventions" and the Benevolence of a ruler can be perceived as a form of "soft power". Also, the emphasis on the spread of Confucian ideals of government marks a certain form of "cultural imperialism" and, in a way, aims for the universalization of Confucian values, in order to achieve a peaceful world. This "cultural imperialism", however, was limited mainly to Chinese territories (i.e. its vassal states).

Attaining the state of Great Harmony was an undeniable goal of good governments, even though the means were disputed. Harmony was a requisite not only on the domestic level, but was ideally sought on a global scale. However, scholars claim that the "enduring appeal of the utopian myth of harmony" has "blind[ed Chinese] rulers and reformers alike to the realities of disharmony, [and thus] retard[ed] the development of a strong theory of rights."[160]

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[158] Mencius 1B.10.
[159] Mencius 1B.3.
[160] Cited in Angle, *Human Rights and Chinese Thought*, 208.

2.4 The Conception of Rights and Duties

Human rights and rights in the broader sense are an essential component of modern societies. For a democratic system and especially for democracies founded on liberalism, the key question is what rights people possess vis-à-vis the government – in other words, where are the lines that the state cannot cross in the interactions with its citizens.

In a June 1993 speech to the United Nations Conference on Human Rights, the head of Chinese delegation Liu Huaqiu made the following statement:

> *"The concept of human rights is a product of historical development. It is closely associated with specific social, political, and economic conditions and the specific history, culture, and values of a particular country. Different historical development stages have different human rights requirements."*[161]

Apart from the attempt to excuse certain human rights breaches in contemporary China, Liu's statement alludes to an important point. Is there a pluralism of human rights, or is the basic set of human rights universally applicable to all societies? Philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre argues that the conceptual differences between competing moral traditions can be so great that words from the moral language of one culture cannot be translated into words of another culture's moral language.[162] MacIntyre's argument is particularly relevant for the study of human rights.

Historically, the concept of a universal set of rights, inherently entitled to every individual by the mere virtue of being a human being, can be traced to the period of Renaissance, Humanism and the Protestant Reformation in Europe. Further developed in the Age of Enlightenment, the concept of inherent human rights culminated in the United States Declaration of Independence and hence in the Bill of Rights. Given that no such intellectual discourse concerning human rights took place in Chinese history, the concept started penetrating Chinese thought only after China "opened up" to the outside world. The absolute novelty of the concept for the Chinese was manifested by the fact that for a long time no exact translation existed for the term "human rights".

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[161] Cited in Marina Svensson*, Debating Human Rights in China: A Conceptual and Political History* (Lanham MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002), 61.

[162] Cited in Angle, *Human Rights and Chinese Thought*, 6.

One of the earliest translations of human rights was *quánlì* (权利).[163] Decomposing the term into individual characters unveils an interesting reasoning behind this particular translation. The character *quán* (权) means "power" and *lì* (利) means "benefit" or "interest". From a Confucian perspective *quánlì* meant "power-and-profit" and it was perceived so by 19th century Chinese people who came into contact with this word. This translation shows a very "utilitarian" perspective on the concept of rights and reflects the fact that "rights" were typically conceived as "grants from the state rather than natural rights which individuals possessed by reason of birth".[164]

The utilitarian conception of rights is, in part, influenced by the Confucian emphasis on the ruler's obligation to provide subsistence for his subjects. This may be interpreted as the only inherent human right and acknowledged so even by neo-Confucian scholar Song Lian (1310–1381) who believed that "the only material wealth a man might legitimately possess was the minimum needed for the continuance of life".[165] However extreme, Song admitted (consciously or unconsciously) that men possess certain "rights" that are inalienable – in this case the economic "right to subsistence".

In the same vein, the traditional Confucian concept of *mínběn* (民本) has to be understood in the context of people's subsistence "rights". *Mínběn* was interpreted by Chinese scholars of the late 19th and early 20th century in order to demonstrate that traditional Chinese political thought contains similarities with democratic ideals. Their arguments were supported by a telling analogy: "the people are like water, the government is like a boat, and the water can carry the boat but can also submerge the boat."[166] However, the connection with democratic principles was rather illusory since *mínběn* in practice is somewhat comparable to Abraham Lincoln's "of the people" and "for the people" but it does not extend to "by the people".[167]

Composed of characters which translate as "people" (民) and "root" or "source" (本), loosely translated as "people-as-the-root", *mínběn* alludes to the notion that people are the original source of political authority of the state. The concept holds that only

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[163] Contemporary Chinese language uses the term *rénquán* (人权). The first character translates as "man" and the second as "power".
[164] Randall Peerenboom, *China's Long March toward Rule of Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 43.
[165] Angle, *Human Rights and Chinese Thought*, 83.
[166] Wang Enbao and Regina F. Titunik, "Democracy in China: The Theory and Practice of Minben", in *China and Democracy*, ed. Zhao Suisheng, 80.
[167] King, "Confucianism, Modernity and Asian Democracy," 172.

when the people flourish will a state be strong, while the well-being of both rulers and officials is decidedly less important than the well-being of the people.[168] This view was strengthened by Mencius, who claimed that it "is the people who are primary, the gods second, and the ruler last." [169] At first, this may seem as a contradiction of the Confucian emphasis on humility and reverence of subjects toward their ruler, but the exponents of *mínběn* never abandoned the idea of an authoritative ruler standing above the people.[170] Confucians were basically silent about people's participation in politics or decision-making.[171] The central theme of the concept was ensuring the material well-being of the populace and not any political rights vis-à-vis the state. *Mínběn* was, again, accentuating the people's "right" to subsistence.

According to Randall Perenboom, this "utilitarian" understanding of human rights (i.e. rights as a kind of interest) prevails in China until this day and presents a contrast to the deontological conception of rights in the West (rights as moral duties). This dichotomy may be explained by the fact that moral duties are already embedded in Chinese society, due to the Confucian advocacy of Rites and prescription of a hierarchical order, where each subject has a particular responsibility:

> *"In human relationships –*
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> *Between father and son is obligation,*
>
> *Between husband and wife obedience;*
>
> *Elder brothers are friendly;*
>
> *Younger brothers are deferential.*
>
> *Between seniors and juniors there is rank order;*
>
> *With friends there is cordiality.*
>
> *A ruler shows respect;*
>
> *A subject shows loyalty.*
>
> *These ten duties*

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[168] Angle, *Human Rights and Chinese Thought*, 124.
[169] King, "Confucianism, Modernity and Asian Democracy," 172.
[170] Wang and Titunik, "Democracy in China: The Theory and Practice of Minben", 82.
[171] Ibid., 83.

Are shared by all people."[172]

Once more, respecting these hierarchical duties ideally ensures a well-ordered society, without an urgent need for codified or even implied "rights". Putting this into perspective with Ronald Dworkin's classification of political theories on which a certain society is founded, a Confucian society can be regarded as duty-based. In his 1977 book "Taking Rights Seriously", Dworkin distinguishes between three kinds of political theories which form the basis of a society – a goal-based theory, rights-based and duty-based. Rights-based and duty-based societies place the individual at the center – both, however, in a different light. Duty-based societies are concerned with the moral quality of the individual's acts, because they suppose that it is wrong for an individual not to meet given standards of behavior. On the other hand, a rights-based society protects the value of individual thought and choice and thus is concerned with the independence rather than conformity of the individual.[173] The official Chinese morality, "imposed" by the CCP, might be considered as goal-based, since its ultimate goal is a communist society.

Dworkin adds "that the different types of theories would be associated with different metaphysical or political temperaments, and that one or another would be dominant in certain sorts of political economy."[174] A democratic society, however, should ideally be rights-based – since it recognizes "equal liberties, institutional protection of rights and fair procedures for democratic institutions".[175]

Due to these apparent and prevailing differences in the perception of human rights in China and the West, Stephen Angle elaborates a plausible kind of moral pluralism and demonstrates that Chinese ideas of human rights do indeed have distinctive characteristics. He "endorse[s] Liu Huaqiu's pluralism […] but [he] reject[s] his isolationism". Despite the differences of perception, Angle argues that cross-cultural moral engagement through dialogue is legitimate and even morally required to bridge differences.[176]

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[172] Cited in Ebrey, "The Chinese Family and the Spread of Confucian Values," 70.
[173] Ronald Dworkin, *Taking Rights Seriously* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), 171–172.
[174] Ibid., 172–173.
[175] He, "New Moral Foundations of Chinese Democratic Institutional Design," 89–90.
[176] Angle, *Human Rights and Chinese Thought*, i, 258.

2.5 Tradition meets Modernity

Western thought has been slowly penetrating Mainland China since the first half of 19th century, but the Qing court and Chinese political thinkers have been holding on to traditional statecraft and relying on institutions, which have served the country for centuries. The defeat of Qing Dynasty China in the Sino-Japanese war of 1894–1895 served, in a way, as a "wake up" call for the Chinese in realizing that their country needs to go through a substantial modernization in order to be capable to stand up to the outside world. The lowly position of China was in large part caused by the fact that for too long the Chinese "looked on [their] country as the world and regarded the rest as barbarians".[177]

Modernization was mostly needed on the political level and Chinese political philosophers began formulating plans of reforming the stale imperial system. The central question was how to achieve balance between tradition and adoption of new (Western) concepts, such as republicanism, democracy and constitutionalism. Some intellectuals viewed Confucianism as a hindrance to progress, while others advocated the adaptation of Confucian norms to Western concepts. This disagreement was epitomized by two rival Confucian schools of thought – the so-called New Text and Old Text. The former was in favor of constitutional monarchy, while the latter pushed for republicanism.[178] From the early Kang Youwei (1858–1927) to Chiang Kai-shek (1887–1975), the main concern was always the interaction of Confucianism and modern political concepts in political life.

One of the historically first attempts to reform the Chinese political system was the so-called Hundred Days Reform of 1898, an analogy to the Japanese Meiji Restoration. According to its architect Kang Youwei, the reform sought to locate within the Confucian thought a "forward-looking reform-oriented strategy to achieve political cohesion and vigor" and somehow harness Confucian thought "to the twin engines of democracy and nationalism".[179] The reform process, undertaken by Emperor Guangxu, was short-lived and ended in a *coup d'état* conducted by Empress Dowager Cixi. Nevertheless, the reforms introduced aspects of Western thought (e.g. the reformers

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[177] Pankaj Mishra, *From the Ruins of Empire: The Intellectuals Who Remade Asia* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 2012), 136.

[178] Yu Ying-shih, "Address on the occasion of receiving the John W. Kluge Prize," (Address of Yu Ying-shih on the Occasion of Receiving the John W. Kluge Prize at the Library of Congress, Princeton, December 1, 2006), http://www.loc.gov/today/pr/2006/06-A07.html (accessed May 6, 2013).

[179] Gilbert Rozman, "Comparisons of Modern Confucian Values in China and Japan," in *The East Asian Region*, ed. Gilbert Rozman, 171.

called on China to become a constitutional monarchy) to the Chinese political system and even though they were not implemented, they remained the topic of further discussions.

Kang's visions for China and the world were still very much confined within Confucian thought and he later even proposed to establish Confucianism as a national religion.[180] In his treatise called "Book of Great Harmony", he envisioned a utopian moral society transcending ethnicities, races and civilizations.[181] After the unsuccessful reform attempt, Kang Youwei still believed that a wise and paternalistic monarchy could lead China into modernity. He held that republicanism was unsuitable for China since neither the Chinese people and intellectuals had any experience or knowledge of this form of government. Moreover, he argued that in order to have a parliament of manageable size, one elected official would have to represent 800,000 voters, which he assumed was impossible – as Jean Jacques Rousseau, Kang believed that democracy was practicable only in small communities.[182]

A typical line of argument against democracy – not only Kang's – was the issue of reciprocity between voter and elected official. How could the voters get to know well all the candidates to select the right one? How could the elected official know the wishes of all the people he represents? He also criticized the rule of law in modern democracies and claimed that Confucian virtue should serve as a foundation for Chinese moral life and social order. Such arguments reflected the central influence of traditional Confucian political thought: meritocracy and reliance on government by elites.

Liang Qichao (1873–1929) rejected democracy for China on similar grounds. A disciple and follower of Kang Youwei, Liang was one of the most prominent scholars in early 20th century China. In 1903, he visited the United States and became disillusioned with democracy in practice. Liang was mostly surprised by the extreme inequality: "70 percent of the entire national wealth is in the hands of 200,000 rich people, and the remaining 30 percent is in the hands of 79,800,000 poor […] How strange, how bizarre!" he reported.[183] He also noticed that corporate interests played an important role in policy-making and that frequent elections lead to short-sightedness of politicians and cheap populism. People entering national politics were third-rate, even mediocre,

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[180] Tan, *Chinese Political Thought in the Twentieth Century*, 27.
[181] Mishra, *From the Ruins of Empire*, 166.
[182] Tan, *Chinese Political Thought in the Twentieth Century*, 24.
[183] David R. Arkush and Leo Ou-Fan Lee, eds., *Land Without Ghosts: Chinese Impressions of America from the Mid-Nineteenth Century to the Present* (Berkley CA: University of California Press, 1989), 87.

and thus Liang came to the conclusion that U.S. democracy was best at the local level.[184]

After his trip to the U.S., Liang began to question both liberalism and democracy. Individualism "inspired minority demands, undermined common beliefs, championed undisciplined freedom, and opposed national goals" [185] and therefore, "private interest must be sacrificed for public".[186] He argued that government by the people is a historical illusion, because the masses are easily swayed by demagoguery and populism. For Liang, the "gentlemen scholars" of old China were a moral example of good government – again, a reference to the rule by elites.

Liang did not believe in revolution as a means of restoration, because he deemed it was a destructive process which would only do harm to the people.[187] In addition, he saw that the village or community-based mentality of the Chinese people was a great obstacle to nation-building and thus he opposed democratic form of government in China, instead being attracted to the authoritarian regime in Japan.[188] Liang's emphasis on Confucian morals was rarely explicitly mentioned, but his opposition of individualism and advocacy of government by elites was clearly based on Confucian tenets.

On the other hand, Confucianism was perceived by certain intellectuals as an insurmountable impediment to China's modernization. Chen Duxiu (1879–1942), the later co-founder of the CCP, held that "in order to advocate democracy [the Chinese] are obliged to oppose Confucianism".[189] Chen was also a leading figure in the May Fourth Movement, which besides its anti-imperialist stance advocated the so-called "Mr. Science" and "Mr. Democracy". This formula was coined by Chen and its propagation concentrated around the "New Youth" (*Xīn Qīngnián*; 新青年) magazine established in 1915. Intellectuals connected with the "New Youth" called for a wholesale and indiscriminate adoption of Western concepts. Science and democracy

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[184] In the period when Liang visited the United States, the progressive movement was very strong and such problems were openly criticized by the American society. It is possible that Liang's criticism was influenced by progressive journalism and critical popular sentiments of the time. Mishra, *From the Ruins of Empire*, 172.

[185] Tan, *Chinese Political Thought in the Twentieth Century*, 32.

[186] Paltiel, *The Empire's New Clothes*, 65.

[187] Tan, *Chinese Political Thought in the Twentieth Century*, 32.

[188] Lai Cheng-chung and Paul B. Trescott, "Liang Qichao, Sun Yat-sen, and the 1905−1907 Debate on Socialism," *International Journal of Social Economics* 32, No. 12 (December 2005): 1052.

[189] Yu Ying-shih, "The Idea of Democracy and the Twilight of the Elite Culture in Modern China," in *Justice and Democracy: Cross-Cultural Perspectives*, Ron Bontekoe and Marietta Stepaniants, eds. (Honolulu HI: University of Hawaii Press, 1997), 200.

embodied the vitality of the West that China lacked. Moreover, democracy was perceived as absolute freedom from traditional restraints. This new political system had the potential to release the creative individuality of the Chinese people that Confucianism suppressed for centuries.[190]

"New Youth" magazine represented the most radical current in China's modernization thought, symbolized by the telling slogan "Down with Confucius and Sons". Nevertheless, a major part of intellectuals focused rather on finding the right equilibrium between traditional Confucian ethics and modern Western concepts.

Sun Yat-sen (1866–1925) was well-versed in Confucian classics, having read the "Four Books" and "Five Classics" in his childhood.[191] It was therefore no surprise that in the revolutionary fervor he claimed that "We [China] must revive not only our old morality but also our old learning. If we want to regain our national spirit, we must reawaken the learning as well as the moral ideals which we once possessed." He saw the success of China's "national revival" in creating a "living synthesis of the fundamental principles of Confucius and the needs of our time."[192]

Influenced by the thought of American political economist Henry George and the English Fabian Society, Sun was enthusiastic about the Bismarckian social model.[193] Sun was an overall proponent of socialism in China and his proposals often coincided with those implemented later by Mao Zedong.

Sun's political and social foundation was very anti-liberal – he perceived the individual in a traditionally Confucian manner as a heterocentric figure, belonging to his natural community. Only in the natural community could an individual achieve full humanity. His thought also reflected the duty-based political philosophy of Confucianism in agreeing that the individual was not born with natural rights, but rather with natural obligations and responsibilities. From such a vantage point, hedonistic individualism (i.e. the traditions of liberalism) was understood to be not only profoundly

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[190] Mishra, *From the Ruins of Empire*, 182.

[191] The "Four Books" included "The Great Learning", "The Doctrine of the Mean", "The Confucian Analects", and "The Works of Mencius". The "Five Classics" included "The Book of Poetry", "The Book of Records", "The Book of Rites", "The Book of Changes", and "The Spring and Autumn Annals". These works are considered to be the classical texts of the Confucian tradition.

[192] Cited in James Gregor, "Confucianism and the Political Thought of Sun Yat-sen," *Philosophy East and West* 31, No. 1 (January 1981), 55.

[193] Lai and Trescott, "Liang Qichao, Sun Yat-sen, and the 1905-1907 Debate on Socialism," 1051.

counterrevolutionary, but fundamentally immoral as well.[194] Like John Stuart Mill, Sun adhered to the notion that individual freedom should be limited.[195]

It may seem that Sun's famous concept of the Three Principles of the People was based on Western thought and ideals, but, in part, it can be perceived as a continuation of *mínběn* and other Confucian principles.[196] The three components of Sun Yat-Sen's concept are traditionally translated as "nationality" (*mínzú*; 民族), "democracy" (*mínquán*; 民权) and "livelihood" (*mínshēng*; 民生). The overall context of these words is important in order to understand particular nuances of Sun's thought. *Mínshēng* is a clear reference to the traditional aspect of Confucianism advocated by Mencius – the obligation of the ruler to ensure subsistence for his subjects. The principle of *mínzú* was anti-imperialist – it sought to create a Chinese nationalism to unite China against foreign intrusions. When first formulated in 1905, *mínzú* also reflected a certain level of traditional Han chauvinism as Sun repeatedly claimed it necessary to "drive out the Manchus" (鞑虏 – this pair of characters was used as a very pejorative reference to the Manchu dynasty and Manchu people).[197]

Mínquán, on the other hand, was used in the late 19th century and could be loosely translated as "people's authority" and for the most part it referred to the (limited) authority of the people as a group. The goal of *mínquán* advocates was not a full-scale democracy, but rather an institutionalized, consultative role of the people in a constitutional monarchy. The term used for genuine Western democracy was *mínzhǔ* (民主). In giving preference to *mínquán* instead of *mínzhǔ*, Sun arguably never aimed to adopt a full-scale (liberal) democratic system in China.

In fact, this was demonstrated by Sun's fairly ambiguous understanding of democracy as such. He defended democracy on the grounds that it could help energize and mobilize the Chinese people in building the nation's power, but when concerning political efficiency, he deemed that a party system resembling Leninist centralism would be better for China.[198] Sun's political party, the Kuomintang (KMT), stressed that the Chinese people are not ready for democracy and that the country will have to

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[194] Gregor, "Confucianism and the Political Thought of Sun Yat-sen," 63−65.
[195] Tan, *Chinese Political Thought in the Twentieth Century*, 127.
[196] Wang and Titunik, "Democracy in China: The Theory and Practice of Minben," 80.
[197] Qian Wenhua, "Sunzhongsan Xuanze Minzhuzhuyi Sixiang Mailuo" (Sun Yat-sen's Ideological Thread of Choosing Democracy), *Qingdao Daxue Shifan Xueyuan Xuebao* (Journal of Teacher's College of Qingdao University) 28, No.3 (September 2011), 65.
[198] Bell, *Beyond Liberal Democracy*, 150n.

undergo a period of "tutelage" before being capable of adopting (limited) democracy. This period of tutelage would be overseen by the KMT.

It is important to note that in the context of the early 20th century, the Chinese intellectuals' opposition to democracy was not surprising. Democracy did not have very wide support in Europe and, as mentioned, even Woodrow Wilson preferred the term "republicanism" to "democracy". In China, the political system was considered to be a mechanism or a mere instrument for achieving the "national revival" of China. In the same sense, individual rights were seen as subordinate to the imperative of creating a strong state.[199]

Another interesting Confucian aspect in Sun's thought was his incorporation of the so-called Examination Yuan (*kǎoshìyuàn*; 考试院) in his scheme of a "Five-Power Constitution".[200] The Examination Yuan was charged with selecting government officials through a carefully devised examination system and is still a functioning political institution in contemporary Taiwan.[201]

Sun Yat-Sen's successor Chiang Kai-Shek (1887–1975) was a fervent advocate of Confucian values and moral ethics. Chiang argued that any modernization absorbed from the West could flourish only if judged by Chinese standards and he condemned those who "blindly" followed and cultivated Western ways.[202] To encourage and safeguard traditional Confucian moral values and personal discipline, Chiang launched the so-called New Life Movement. In order to rekindle the spirit of the KMT after being forced to flee the mainland in 1949, Chiang related to the works of Confucius, Mencius and other Confucian scholars as the only spiritual weapon against the CCP. Chiang made Confucianism, along with Sun Yat-Sen's Three Principles of the People, the ethos of the "new" KMT.[203]

The thought of other early 20th century intellectuals demonstrated the distorted picture of democracy in China. Democracy was often seen in very utopian or unrealistic terms – for example, according to Zhang Dongsun's (1886–1973) ideal the United States and Great Britain had not reached a high degree of democracy, rating their

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[199] Mishra, *From the Ruins of Empire*, 293.

[200] The "Five-Power Constitution" proposition from 1906 included five independent branches of government – the executive, the legislative, the judiciary, the supervisory and the examinations branch.

[201] Li Chenyang, "Where Does Confucian Virtuous Leadership Stand?" *Philosophy East and West* 59, No. 4 (October 2009): 532.

[202] Tan, *Chinese Political Thought in the Twentieth Century*, 169.

[203] Steve Yui-Sang Tsang and Tien Hung-Mao, eds., *Democratization in Taiwan: Implications for China* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), 3.

quality at "a mere 40 on a scale of 100."[204] This was a harsh judgment, which Zhang failed to justify. Interestingly, Zhang favored the Czechoslovak political model of the interwar era.[205] He saw the main difference between Chinese and Western political thought in the fact that there was no "philosophy of individuality" in the Chinese tradition, only the idea of the "integral whole" to which the individual belonged. Also, he claimed that in the Confucian tradition, there was a "notion of rites but no notion of rights".[206]

Another scholar, Zhang Junmai (1886–1969), pondered the possibility of merging the freedom of democracy with the effectiveness of dictatorship. In Zhang's view, authority and freedom were not mutually opposed but supplemented each other. He proposed a plan of modified (or regulated) democracy, which he labeled "national government". In his "national government" scheme, the National Assembly (elected by the people) would select an Executive Council, which would basically have the powers of a dictatorship, but limited to a five-year term.[207]

The above-mentioned efforts to modernize China demonstrate the struggle of Chinese intellectuals to adopt foreign concepts, which have absolutely no roots in a society they wished to apply them to. Most political thinkers of the time realized that China was simply "not ready" and "too big" for a liberal democratic system and that Western concepts had to be somehow modified to suit or even be applicable to Chinese political culture, social norms and authority patterns, influenced for centuries by Confucianism.

2.6 Failures of Democratic Experiments in China

Despite various attempts, never in its history did China practice full-scale democracy. The Qing dynasty tried to introduce certain democratic principles in 1909 when it called for an election of provincial assemblies, but the franchise was limited to 1 % of the population and freedom of speech was limited by law. After the fall of the Qing Dynasty a parliament was elected – this time the all-male, economically elite franchise formed 10.5 % of the Chinese population. Another parliament was elected in 1918, but

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[204] Edmund S. K. Fung, "Socialism, Capitalism, and Democracy in Republican China: The Political Thought of Zhang Dongsun," *Modern China* 28, No. 4 (October 2002): 416.

[205] It is questionable how much knowledge Zhang actually had about Czechoslovakia, but the reason for his preference may have been the industrial output of the country and the inherent aspects of socialism – points he advocated for the development of China.

[206] Fung, "Socialism, Capitalism, and Democracy in Republican China: The Political Thought of Zhang Dongsun," 418, 423.

[207] Tan, *Chinese Political Thought in the Twentieth Century*, 259−260.

both elections were marred by high levels of corruption. The parliament seldom exercised its powers and its members were increasingly corrupt. Elections held in 1947 and 1948 were neither competitive (due to the KMT's quasi-Leninist one-party dominance) or all-inclusive (they were held only in areas controlled by the KMT). The People's Congress system of the PRC, introduced in 1954, holds certain democratic credentials, but only on paper – the Chinese "parliament" is often referred to as a "rubber-stamp legislature", passing any law proposed by the CCP.[208]

Andrew Nathan lists nine general reasons for which these democratic experiments failed in delivering their desired or stated outcome:[209]

- Ideology – political movements have "cloaked" themselves in democratic thought, but their vision of democracy resembled a kind of benign authoritarianism or a "mystical solidarity between the state and the people". The more powerful a democratic movement was, the less its sought democratic solutions for China's problems.

- National security – democratic institutions were incapable of effectively coping with China's persistent internal and external threats.

- Militarism – the governments' reliance on the military and the problem of regional militarism and warlordism.

- Political culture – intolerance of conflict, a yearning for authority and a stress on personal loyalty hinders the proper functioning of democratic institutions.

- Underdevelopment – the population was too poverty-stricken and ill-educated to take any interest in politics. Whichever institutions were formed, they always represented "elite democracy".

- Peasant mass – peasant culture was seen as inhospitable to democracy. The peasants' attitudes were perceived as anti-urban, anti-foreign, anti-intellectual and authoritarian, thus if given the chance to vote, the peasants would reinstall dictatorship.

- Ill-designed constitutions/institutions – the ambiguously worded constitutions led to conflicts between branches of government and paralyzed democratic institutions.

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[208] Andrew J. Nathan, "Chinese Democracy: The Lessons of Failure," in *China and Democracy*, ed. Zhao Suisheng, 22–23.

[209] The following points are adapted from Nathan, "Democracy in China: The Lessons of Failure," 23–32.

- Moral failure of democrats – abuse of power by democratic movements and inability to unite.

- Elite transactions theory – China was a big empire that broke up, leaving in place military and civilian elites. Each elite group saw its political interests in a different perspective and did not see any benefit in sharing power with the other group. The theory emphasizes that democracy is firmer and more stable if it evolves gradually from the pre-existing system than from a broken system.

Xiao Gongquan adds four characteristics intrinsic to modern nation-states, which China lacked throughout its political history:

1. Political power is established through national self-determination;

2. There is recognition of the coexistence of other nation-states and the maintenance of reciprocal diplomatic relations;

3. Law is respected and political institutions are stressed – there is no one-sided reliance on social relationships and morals as means of governing;

4. Ever wider popular participation in political power.[210]

A hypothetical democracy in contemporary China may no longer be facing the same obstacles as the democratization processes in the first half of the 20th century. Nonetheless, the past may serve as a source of experience from which modern democrats can draw valuable lessons. However, a certain level of political engineering may be conducive to establishing a stable democratic system in China. A democratic model that is congruent with China's political culture may facilitate the acceptance and proper functioning of democratic institutions in China, without the failures of previous democratic experiments.

3. A Confucian Democracy?

As an alternative to democracy, liberalism and human rights, certain Asian leaders and scholars have advocated the concept of "Asian values". This concept is founded on the assumption that East and Southeast Asian societies respect a unique and distinguished set of values formed by the Confucian tradition that are not congruent with most Western political concepts or even "antithetical to Anglo-American democracy".[211] The leading proponent of the "Asian values" discourse was Singapore's former Prime

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[210] Xiao, *A History of Chinese Political Thought*, 25–26.

[211] Yung-Myung Kim, "'Asian-Style Democracy': A Critique from East Asia," *Asian Survey* 37, No. 12. (December 1997): 1131.

Minister Lee Kuan Yew, who has argued that the "expansion of the right of the individual to behave or misbehave as he pleases has come at the expense of orderly society."[212] Mahathir Mohamad, former Prime Minister of Malaysia, held similar views.[213]

The problem with the "Asian values" discourse was that it mainly served the likes of Lee or Mohamad to legitimize or justify their authoritarian form of government. In this sense, the Confucian emphasis on hierarchy, harmony and loyalty to one's superiors can be exploited to legitimize authoritarianism and scapegoated as a barrier to democracy (or modernization).[214] An *a priori* assumption that Confucian political culture is incapable of adopting modern democracy is misleading and hinders constructive dialogue about China's political future.

Societies with a historically notable level of Confucian influence (Japan, South Korea and Taiwan) have shown to be capable of adopting democratic political systems. However, it is important to mention that these three states have all undergone a long period of authoritarian or one-party rule and Taiwan and South Korea fully democratized only after the end of the Cold War.[215] Moreover, the democratization of these countries was facilitated by the strong impact of their alliance with the United States. Washington has pushed for democracy in Taiwan, for example, because it has had a hard time justifying its military support of the non-democratic regime to the American constituency. Still, certain scholars argue that democracy in these three countries is only a "façade" and that citizens support liberal democracy "in name only". For example, Professor Hahm Chaibong says that "very few Koreans understand either the theoretical assumptions or the normative standards that undergird liberal democracy and its institutions, and that once they are explained to them few would espouse liberal democracy with as much ardor or enthusiasm."[216] Japan, on the other hand, is deemed to be governed by its bureaucratic elite rather than its elected politicians.[217]

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[212] Cited in Dalton and Shin, *Citizens, Democracy, and Markets Around the Pacific Rim*, 98.

[213] For an overview of Mahathir Mohamad's vision of the "Asian Values" concept see Mohd Azizuddin Mohd Sani et al., "Malaysia in Transition: A Comparative Analysis of Asian Values, Islam Hadhari and 1malaysia," *Journal of Politics and Law* 2, No. 3 (September 2009): 110–118.

[214] Michael Robinson, "Perceptions of Confucianism in Twentieth-Century Korea," in *The East Asian Region*, ed. Gilbert Rozman, 217.

[215] In Taiwan it was the rule of the KMT; in Japan it was the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and in South Korea it was the authoritarian regime of Park Chung-hee and subsequently Chun Doo-wan.

[216] Bell, *East Meets West*, 152.

[217] See for example Chalmers A. Johnson, *Japan: Who Governs? The Rise of the Developmental State* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1995).

Confucian tradition must be considered when pondering the prospects of Chinese democracy – as Chinese-American historian Yu Ying-Shih argues "Confucian values and ideas have permeated Chinese everyday life for so many centuries that it is inconceivable that they can be eradicated in a span of several decades [of CCP rule], even by revolutionary violence."[218] But rather than anti-democratic, Confucianism should be approached as being "a-democratic" – at least in the sense of adopting "minimal democracy".[219]

The assessment of Chinese political thought and Confucian political culture in part 2 of this paper reveals that Confucian tradition may essentially turn out to be incompatible with *liberalism* rather than democracy. Therefore, the adoption of a genuine Western liberal democracy may show to be problematic. Certain aspects that can be perceived as "anti-liberal" are summarized in the following table:

Confucian tenet	Political implications
Meritocracy/elitism	*Elected* politicians, as opposed to systematically *selected* politicians, may lack legitimacy and confidence in the eyes of the general public; reliance on elites leads to passive citizenship
Emphasis on harmony	Suppression and intolerance of opposing and dissenting ideas for the sake of maintaining social order
Duty-based morality	Duties overcome rights; facilitates the intrusion of the state in an individual's life
Communitarianism	Individual interests and rights are inferior and subject to the interests of the community; facilitates the infringement of individual rights
Loyalty to authority/centrality of government	Facilitates authoritarian rule or hegemony of one ruling elite; government perceived as paternalistic
Social hierarchy	Hierarchy can be exploited to ensure loyalty to government; some individuals may be perceived to be above the law
Emphasis on livelihood/subsistence	Government essentially focuses on providing economic rights at the expense of political rights; legitimacy is measured essentially by economic performance

According to Almond and Verba's classification of political orientations, traditional Chinese political culture can be labeled as *subject* or even *parochial*. The central question, however, is how and to what extent the Confucian tradition affects contemporary Chinese political culture and what could thus be the political implications for a democratic China.

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[218] Yu, "The Idea of Democracy and the Twilight of the Elite Culture in Modern China," 207.

[219] Hu Shaohua, "Confucianism and Western Democracy," in *China and Democracy*, ed. Zhao Suisheng, 62.

3.1 Dynamism of Political Culture

The formation of political culture is an evolutionary process that must be assessed in the context of contemporary socio-economic developments. The dynamics of shifting political attitudes and behavior can be hindered or stimulated by various phenomena. While the CCP has exploited the "anti-liberal" aspects of Confucian tradition to authoritatively govern China, reforms brought forward by Deng Xiaoping in the late 1970s and early 1980s have introduced a certain level of liberalism in the economic sphere and an increasing number of semi-competitive village elections in certain Chinese provinces. The cultural impact of globalization and the growing possibilities of the Chinese to travel and study in democratic countries may potentially be a factor in shaping political attitudes and perceptions of government, yet the effects are to be seen. The rapid economic development in China could also foster shifts in political culture. According to the so-called modernization theory, the increase of GDP per capita has a causal effect on democracy.[220] However, it is unclear whether modernization theory can be used to understand the patterns of political participation in market-reform China.[221] Recent studies have demonstrated that income and democracy are positively correlated, but that there is no evidence of a causal effect.[222]

Given the qualitative nature of political culture, its quantitative aspect can be analyzed through public surveys and opinion polls. Surveys conducted in the last ten or twenty years may reveal the effect of market reforms and external cultural influence on Chinese political culture or the persistence of certain Confucian characteristics.

Andrew Nathan's and Shi Tianjian's survey analysis looks at the "cultural requisites for democracy" in China.[223] They focus on three main aspects, which they deem are crucial for establishing democracy: 1.) perceived impact of government on daily lives; 2.) political efficacy; and 3.) political tolerance. The outcome of the survey shows that only 5.4 % of the Chinese believe that the actions of their local government are salient to their lives, compared to 35 % in the U.S., 23 % in the United Kingdom and

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[220] The theory was advocated by Seymour Martin Lipset in his article "Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy" *The American Political Science Review* 53, No. 1 (March 1959): 69–105. Lipset claimed that that economic development sets off a series of profound social changes that together tend to produce democracy.

[221] Wooyeal Paik, "Economic Development and Mass Political Participation in Contemporary China: Determinants of Provincial Petition (Xinfang) Activism 1994–2002," *International Political Science Review* 33 No. 1 (January 2012): 100.

[222] Daron Acemoglu, Simon Johnson, James A. Robinson, and Pierre Yared, "Income and Democracy," *American Economic Review* 98, No. 3, (June 2008): 836.

[223] Nathan and Shi, "Cultural Requisites for Democracy in China: Findings from a Survey."

33 % in Germany. The scores for national government were not much higher – 9.7 % Chinese say that the central government has "great effect" on their lives, compared to 41 % in the U.S. or 38 % in Germany. In both cases, nearly 72 % Chinese claimed that government has "no effect" on their daily lives. It is interesting to note that despite the firm grip of the authoritarian Communist regime, the Chinese do not perceive their government to play a crucial part in their lives.

The sense of political efficacy is, according to Nathan and Shi, a powerful determinant of people's involvement in politics. Political efficacy is defined as "the feeling that individual political action does have, or can have, an impact upon the political process." The absence of this feeling causes political apathy and withdrawal. Only 0.9 % people in China claimed to "understand national-level affairs very well" and 41.5 % stated that they do not understand them "at all". In the United States, United Kingdom and Germany the percentage of those not understanding national-level affairs "at all" was around 15 %. Concerning the "expectations of treatment by governmental bureaucracy", 57 % expect to be treated equally (83 % in the U.S. and U.K.), while 24.2 % do not expect equal treatment (9 % in U.S. and 7 % in U.K.).

Political tolerance shows the starkest contrast between China and other developed countries. Only 17.4 % Chinese would "allow unpopular expression" in the speaking arena and 10.3 % would allow it in both the teaching arena and publishing arena.[224] In the United States the numbers are 51.8 % for the speaking arena, 17.6 % for the teaching arena and 51.8 % for the publishing arena. Findings show the highest level of political tolerance in Germany.

Nathan and Shi emphasize in their findings that the examined attributes are highly affected by the level of education – more educated individuals tend to have perceptions closer to those of individuals in democratic states (but still not at the same level).

In another survey, Shi Tianjian found that 20 to 30 % of the Chinese population has attitudes favorable for democratic behavior – this share may seem small, but it exceeds that of other democratic countries such as Mexico and comes even close to Italy, for example. Shi also noted that grassroots village elections have little effect on

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[224] The particular question asked was, "There are some people whose ideology is problematic, for example, they sympathize with the Gang of Four – should such people be allowed to express their views in a public meeting, as a teacher in a college or express their views by publishing articles or books?" Propaganda of the CCP (i.e. the enforced adherence to official party ideology) may have had a significant impact on the outcome of this particular survey.

people's political orientations and attitudes. Although citizens living in areas with semi-competitive elections tend to be more interested in political developments and in the role of governments, the existence of these elections has not yet changed people's attitudes towards power and authority nor made them support reform.[225]

Interestingly, most successful cases of village elections are found in the interior of the country and in poorer provinces. In rich coastal areas, the interest and enthusiasm for elections seems to be relatively low. Chinese seem to hold rather an instrumentalist conception of democracy. Village democracy is meant to improve the village's economic growth and development, and it loses value if village development is already well under way.[226] In a sense, grassroots elections in China do not seem to support modernization theory and the opinion that village democracy is the first step in a bottom-up democratization process. As Allen Choate notes, "Village democracy is not based on liberal, individual rights-protecting and capitalist economy-enhancing premises. Instead, it is founded on social and economic collective ideas, and is seen as a means to other ends."[227]

The inverse correlation between wealth and village democracy is also demonstrated by a study of village elections in rural China. The study draws the conclusion that "a higher rate of economic development reduces the likelihood that Chinese villages will hold semi-competitive elections in an accelerated manner; that is, the higher the rate of economic development in a county, the less likely that elections in villages located in that county will be semi-competitive."[228]

In a Beijing area study, respondents were asked to identify the "most important value" from a pre-established list – 56 % stated that "national peace and prosperity" is most important, while only 6.3 % claimed that "individual freedom" is the most important value. Other answers included "political democracy" (5.8 %) or "social equality" (10 %). According to this poll, it seems that similar to the first half of the 20th century, the "rejuvenation of the Chinese civilization" is the most important goal for the

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[225] Shi, "Cultural Values and Democracy in the People's Republic of China," 558.

[226] Bell, *East Meets West*, 143.

[227] Allen C. Choate, "Local Governance in China: An Assessment of Villagers Committees," in *The Asian Foundation Working Paper Series*, February 1997, 16, http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/apcity/unpan018197.pdf (accessed May 6, 2013).

[228] Shi Tianjian, "Economic Development and Village Elections in Rural China," in *China and Democracy*, ed. Zhao Suisheng, 244.

Chinese. Interestingly, the study also showed that income had no effect on the manner people responded in the poll.[229]

In a similar vein, Chinese students were asked to identify "the most important issue that needs to be handled in the area of political reform". A mere 6 % answered that the most important issue is "to have civil liberty and rights"; the most frequent answer was "to have a clean government" (47 %).[230]

These polls show that Chinese society does not yet hold the full spectrum of political attitudes that are deemed to be conducive to adopting democracy (see chapter 1.6). Instead certain "anti-liberal" aspects of political culture, which arguably derive from Confucianism, still prevail among the Chinese population. Market reforms may not have had such an impact on political attitudes as modernization theory would predict, but instead it could be as the theorists of political culture suggest: cultural pathologies tend to be durable and stable. Therefore, perhaps a longer period of time is needed before Chinese political culture becomes more liberally-oriented. Such a transformation can arguably be observed in Taiwan as it seems that the society is "turning away from some Confucian cultural traditions" and embracing some concepts "embedded in democratic rule-of-law thinking".[231]

3.2 Democracy with "Chinese Characteristics"

Chinese political culture is unique and in many aspects very different from that of the United States or other Western nations. While political culture may not be the sole determinant in shaping the political system, China should not be expected to adopt liberal democracy in the very form that has taken root in Western societies. Instead China may adopt "a democratic model with 'Chinese characteristics' and therefore practice democracy which is suited to [its] culture and people's needs."[232] Chinese proponents of democracy also state that the "form of democracy which China will ultimately take is uncertain. There is good reason to believe that the U.S. model of democracy will not be accepted by Chinese people for historical, cultural, and social reasons. Policymakers in Washington should be careful not to impose their own values

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[229] Daniel V. Dowd, Allen Carlson, and Shen Mingming, "The Prospects for Democratization in China: Evidence from the 1995 Beijing Area Study," in *China and Democracy*, ed. Zhao Suisheng, 197.

[230] Chan Che-po, "The Political Pragmatism of Chinese University Students at the Dawn of the Twenty-first Century," in *China and Democracy*, ed. Zhao Suisheng, 217.

[231] Bedford and Hwang, *Taiwanese Identity and Democracy*, 200.

[232] Yu Keping, "Democracy in China: Challenge or Opportunity?" *Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation*, 8, http://www.ash.harvard.edu/extension/ash/docs/democracyinchina.pdf (accessed May 6, 2013).

and views on the Chinese, as doing so is likely to cause a domestic backlash within China and could ultimately delay or derail the democratization process."[233]

The adoption of democracy with "Chinese characteristics" may, to a certain degree, be influenced by the fact that a number of Chinese scholars see flaws (which certain Western political theorists also discuss) in liberal democracy, which a "Chinese democracy" could potentially overcome. For some critics, the instance of one-person-one-vote raises doubts about good governance. Western individualism leads people to vote on behalf of their "narrow material interests" and they do not consider voting for the "common good". A poorly informed voter will not be able to make the best decisions, and his vote may be motivated by his "immediate interests" without any regard for "future voters".[234] Famous dissident Fang Lizhi and other democracy movement leaders in China, for example, have allegedly expressed anxiety over a democratic formula that would give equal voting rights to peasants.[235] Also, in a "country that has valued meritocracy and the *selection* of bureaucrats for many centuries, the general public may be suspicious about, and impatient with, *elected* politicians."[236] Liang Qichao's criticism of the "short-sidedness" of American politicians is still a relevant argument in contemporary China against certain aspects of democracy.

Chinese scholars harbor the hope that Chinese democracy will "surpass" traditional forms of democracy practiced in Western countries and introduce a "Chinese model" to the world that will be "even better".[237] The "Chinese model" will ideally be stripped of the flaws that the Chinese see in Western democracy and enhanced by China's particular political culture – as Beijing University scholar Yu Keping notes, "A democratic system is a marriage of universality and particularity".[238]

Similarly, when considering the adoption of Western concepts such as capitalism and market economy in East Asia, it is clear that these models have also been adapted to suit the regional cultural context. East Asian capitalism is more community-oriented and thus strengthens the cohesion of communities and the emotional links between its

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[233] Yu Liu and Chen Dingding, "Why China will Democratize," *The Washington Quarterly* 35, No. 1 (Spring 2012): 59.

[234] Bai Tongdong, "A Confucian Improvement of Democracy," *New Perspectives Quarterly* 29, No. 1 (Winter 2012): 13, 15.

[235] Bell, *East Meets West*, 217.

[236] Li Cheng, ed., *China's Changing Political Landscape: Prospects for Democracy* (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution, 2008), 6.

[237] Gilley, *China's Democratic Future*, 247.

[238] Yu Keping, "Democracy in China: Challenge or Opportunity?" 9.

members.[239] The "welfare" or "collective" capitalism of East Asian countries is arguably a reflection of the Confucian communitarian ethic.

If achieved, democracy in China will likewise be a reflection of Chinese political culture. Institutional design will be adjusted to Chinese particularism to attain initial stability of the political system and democratic consolidation. A certain level of political engineering may be needed to address problems that have surfaced during the process of democratization, such as social and territorial cleavages.[240] Given that a chaotic initial creation of democratic institutions may contribute to internal and external conflict,[241] institutions should be engineered with sensitivity to Chinese circumstances and congruent with Confucian social norms.

3.3 Possible Scenarios for China's Democracy

The key question is how particularities of the Chinese political culture can be projected in an institutional design. Bai Tongdong of Fudan University argues for the creation of a hybrid regime – "a Confucian form of ideal government" – which he calls "Confu-China". Bai posits that Confu-China should adopt and firmly endorse the rule of law and human rights and that the government should have ultimate responsibility for the material and moral well-being of the people (similar to the Mencian "right to subsistence"). The government should also be responsible for providing "civic education" for its citizens that would aim at fostering compassion and proper relationships between people. Politicians should be morally superior and willing to extend their compassion to the constituents (similar to the concept of Benevolence) and also intellectually superior (meritocracy). Such a state would ensure the respect of the people for their government and thus social order.[242]

Bai is also concerned with the fact that in some cases "citizens are indifferent to many [policy] matters, and they lack capacity to make sound judgments." Confu-China would address this issue by encouraging voters to "take a class and participate in discussions, or take a test specially designed for [the issue], before being allowed to vote." Votes would even be weighed based upon the voter's performance in the tests or class. Bai's hybrid regime would also maintain an additional branch of legislature

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[239] See Ronald Dore, *Stock Market Capitalism: Welfare Capitalism. Japan and Germany versus the Anglo-Saxons* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

[240] See Benjamin Reilly, *Democracy and Diversity: Political Engineering in the Asia-Pacific* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

[241] Russet, "Why Democratic Peace?" 109.

[242] Bai, "A Confucian Improvement of Democracy," 22.

composed of "learned and experienced elders" used to "check the popular will" (in other words, a "guided" or "controlled" democracy) .[243]

In a similar vein, Daniel Bell postulates that Chinese legislature should be based on meritocratic foundations. The Chinese imperial examination system, however imperfect, had its "admirable aspects" in providing political stability and a certain level of respect for the government. With some modification, Bell argues, the examination system could be used in modern China to select the "best" politicians in "free and fair competitive examinations". The *selected* officials would form the upper chamber of the legislature, while the lower house would be *elected* by the public.[244] Bell suggests that an ideal form of government for China is a model "that reconciles minimal democracy with elite politics" (i.e. ensuring not much more than free, competitive periodic elections).[245]

In a reaction to Bell's "elitist upper house", Bruce Gilley claims that "attempts to create such undemocratic bodies in Latin America, Africa, and Southeast Asia have been a disaster – recluses for cronyism and people-hurting policies."[246] Gilley raises an important point, but Bell's meritocratic conception of Chinese politics does not necessarily have to be "undemocratic". This problem could possibly be tackled by giving passive suffrage only to citizens who pass examinations. Hence, people would select their officials from a pool of "thoroughly examined candidates", who would possess a "guarantee" that they are morally and intellectually able to govern properly.

The duty-based morality and the community-orientation of the Chinese society could be satisfied by certain aspects of modern communitarian theory. The advocates of communitarianism, such as Robert Bellah and Amitai Etzioni, argue "that the rights of individuals must be balanced with the responsibilities to the community." Communitarianism emphasizes the connection between the individual and the community and in the American context aims "to temper the excesses of individualism in the light of a strong assertion of the rights of the larger society".[247] In this sense, propositions have emerged that the United States Constitution needs a "Bill of Duties"

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[243] Bai, "A Confucian Improvement of Democracy," 24.

[244] Bell, *Beyond Liberal Democracy*, 168−172. This concept is partially applied in Thailand, where a portion of the representatives is selected on the basis of their expertise.

[245] Ibid., 150.

[246] Bruce Gilley, "Confucian Rule in China: In the House of Virtue and Talent," *Taiwan Journal of Democracy* 3, No.1 (July 2007): 157.

[247] King, "Confucianism, Modernity and Asian Democracy," 168.

to offset the Bill of Rights.[248] Perhaps such a "Bill of Duties" would be a suitable tool in China given the anti-individualist features of Chinese political culture.

The Chinese democratic justice system would possibly be very different from that in Western democracies – by adopting a "Bill of Duties" the difference would be even greater. Japan, for example, is deemed to have a "dual tracked justice system". While the formal process is "governed by substantive and procedural rules of special statutes, codes, and constitution common to the criminal justice systems of other industrial countries in the West", the parallel informal system has no Western analogue. It involves a pattern of "confession, repentance, and absolution". This means that "from the initial police interrogation to the final judicial hearing on sentencing, the vast majority of those accused of criminal offenses in Japan, confess, display repentance, negotiate for their victims' pardon and submit to the mercy of the authorities."[249]

The most frequent argument of Chinese scholars is that democracy in China should be implemented in a "step-by-step" manner. The most notable proponent of this approach is Yu Keping of Beijing University, who claims that "similar to economic development, political reforms in China are likely to be incremental reform – incremental democratization." Yu acknowledges that it is "impossible for an overall breakthrough to occur immediately" and believes that "occasional breakthroughs may occur in some areas."[250] Incremental democracy is claimed to be sensitive to Chinese circumstances and cultural traditions and will provide steady and gradual political development in China.[251] The CCP tolerates Yu's frequently published essays calling for "democracy" in China – this may be a sign that the party sees "incremental democracy" as a "safe" model for "democratizing" China.

If incremental democracy were to be guided "from the top" by the CCP (which it so far is), it is highly probable that China would become a "neo-authoritarian state" – a paternalistic country stripped of official ideology and ruled by highly competent technocrats. The network of the CCP would remain in place and communist cadres would very likely maintain their political status. In this case, the Chinese political system would perhaps be similar to the regime in contemporary Singapore. Full-scale

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[248] King, "Confucianism, Modernity and Asian Democracy," 168.

[249] John O. Haley, "Confession, Repentance and Absolution," in *Mediation and Criminal Justice: Victims, Offenders and Community*, Martin Wright and Burt Galaway, eds. (London: Sage Publications, 1989), 195.

[250] Yu Keping, *Democracy is a Good Thing* (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution, 2009), 28.

[251] Yu Keping, "Ideological Change and Incremental Democracy in Reform-Era China," in *China's Changing Political Landscape: Prospects for Democracy*, Li Cheng, ed. (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution, 2008), 53.

democracy would not take root because it would be hindered by the remnants (both institutions and people) of the old regime. Thus, China would become a "benign authoritarian state" – a regime type advocated by the proponents of the "Asian values concept" as the most favorable political system for East Asian societies.

It is interesting to mention that the model of "incremental democracy" resembles the Taiwanese formula of "democratization by installment", which was favored by the Kuomintang before actual democratic transformations took place in the 1980s.[252] All in all, the existence of a democratic Taiwan may serve as a valuable comparison or model for the mainland and as a practical demonstration of how such a model works (or does not work[253]) in a Chinese setting – with the exception that Taiwan is many times smaller in territory than the Mainland.[254]

The above-mentioned propositions for a hypothetical Chinese democratic regime may seem unrealistic or even utopian, but they illustrate well both the role of Confucianism in contemporary political thinking and the various paths Chinese democracy could take in the process of democratization. However, some paths may be so divergent from the standards of Western democracies that eventually the "community of democracies" will not accept the Chinese regime as a "genuine" democracy.

3.4 The United States and Chinese Democracy

As mentioned in chapter 1.5, mutual perception of political regimes plays a crucial part in shaping bilateral relations. The United States supports the establishment of democratic regimes, because they present apparent benefit for U.S. national interests, American allies and the international community as a whole. To be "accepted" among the "community of democracies", young democratic regimes are expected to meet certain formal criteria and norms defined primarily by the United States, or Western countries respectively. When democracy deviates in some way from the standard model of liberal democracy, the given regime is expected to "correct" itself and is often approached as non-democratic. However, this "deviation" may be caused by structural and cultural particularities of the given country, which may turn out to be inhospitable

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[252] Li Cheng, "Assessing China's Political Development," in *China's Changing Political Landscape: Prospects for Democracy*, Li Cheng, ed. (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution, 2008), 18.

[253] Julian Baum and Gerrit van der Wees, "Taiwan's Imperfect Democracy," *The Diplomat*, February 7, 2012, http://thediplomat.com/2012/02/07/taiwan%E2%80%99s-imperfect-democracy/?all=true (accessed April 5, 2013).

[254] At the time of Taiwan's democratic transformation, Taiwanese intellectuals and political elites were much more "westernized" in every aspect than the Chinese are at present – this further facilitated the adoption of democracy. Tsang and Tien, *Democratization in Taiwan: Implications for China*, 168, 171.

to certain aspects of liberal democracy, and thus the "correction" might prove extremely difficult, if not outright impossible.

In this sense, the mutual perception of political regimes depends in large part on semantics – that is, how each state defines democracy. For the United States, liberalism forms a vital part of democracy – as Marc Plattner points out, one "can't have one without the other".[255] But certain countries may find it hard to adopt liberal practices in all spheres of life. By organizing periodical competitive elections, Russia and Iran arguably meet the definition of "minimal democracy", yet the countries are not perceived to have democratic political regimes.[256] The benign effects of democracy are thus limited to a community of democracies, in which every actor perceives the other as a democratic regime.

To better understand these dynamics, the following figure summarizes the "expectations" of democracy promotion as described in the first part of this study and the challenges, which may disrupt these premises:

Expectations		Challenges
Democratic compliance – a democratic regime will be more inclined to accept and abide by international norms and will not seek to disrupt the international order		*Democratization/transformation process* – states undergoing a transition from authoritarian regime to democracy tend to be unstable, more war-prone and susceptible to internal conflict
Shared values – democracies share similar values as the respect for the rule of law, human rights etc.; thus they tend to have related interests on the international and domestic scenes		*Mutual perception* – democratic peace has empirical relevance among liberal democracies; if a democratic state does not perceive the other as a democratic state, the pacifying effects of democracy may become void
Peaceful relations/democratic peace – statistically, democratic states rarely engage in military conflicts due to the normative and structural restraints of their respective political systems		*Rivalry* – a rival relationship based on ethnic, economic, political or other animosities may negatively influence relations between democratic states
Trade relations – a democratic country is expected to adopt a capitalist market economy and keep its internal market open to foreign investment and products		*Power transition* – during a transition of power between an aspiring hegemon and the standing hegemon, the probability of conflict increases; how will this theory play out in a democratic dyad?
Mutual trust – democratic regimes have higher levels of mutual trust, because of their "predictability"; this leads to more stability in relations		

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[255] Marc Plattner, "Liberalism and Democracy: Can't Have One Without the Other," *Foreign Affairs* 77, No. 2 (March/April 1998): 171–180.

[256] It is true that the "freedom" and "fairness" of elections in both countries is highly contested.

In the case that China adopts a democratic political system, the characteristic features of its democracy may, in some cases, be antagonistic to Western practices of liberalism. Chinese political culture is undergirded by Confucian ethics and morals, which heavily influence the perception of the state's (the government's) role in an individual's life. The impacts of Confucianism may be a decisive factor in the design of Chinese democracy. The democratization process in China may thus foster a *non-liberal* democracy. A *non-liberal* Chinese democracy may not be accepted by the "community of democracies" and therefore, applying the democratic peace theory to the U.S.-China democratic dyad may not bring the anticipated pacifying effects.

In addition, it is very likely that Beijing's own "Grand Strategy" will remain intact, even after China becomes democratic. China's "Grand Strategy" has basically remained the same since the downfall of the Qing Empire and it is based on very pragmatic and "calculative" foundations. China strives to regain the economic, technological, and strategic power to compel the recognition of its status in the world. The strategy aims to maximize China's "comprehensive national strength" – a mixture of technological, economic, political and military power.[257] The ultimate goal is to revive Chinese power in the world, gain the status of a respected great power and undo the "century of humiliation".[258] On the rhetorical level, this "Grand Strategy" has very ambitious undertones and may potentially pose a threat to American interests. Nevertheless, this is mostly a question of how much of China's "Grand Strategy" is only pure rhetoric and how much of it will actually materialize.

The consequent rivalry between the two countries may significantly alter their relationship, despite China's democratic regime. China is an aspiring great power and arguably seeks regional hegemony. The possibility of a future power transition between the United States and China would further raise the stakes and, again, distort the democratic dyad relationship.

Democracy cannot be taken as a panacea to China's great power ambitions and perhaps "imperial" ambitions. The means by which China was to regain its status were always viewed as subject to the ultimate goal of Chinese revival. Whereas the United States considers democracy as an *end* in itself for any society, in China the political system and ideology were conceived of as the *means* to the end of China's regained

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[257] Paltiel, *The Empire's New Clothes*, 5.
[258] Also known as "the hundred years of national humiliation" – this term refers to the period of foreign intervention and imperialism by Western powers and Japan in China between 1839 and 1949.

status. Even Sun Yat-sen did not readily accept democracy and considered the benefits of different types of political systems to achieve the "revival of the Chinese nation".[259] Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping also viewed the political regime as a "mechanism for achieving China's real purpose".[260] The situation is similar in contemporary China. As polls showed, "national prosperity" seems to be the most important value among Chinese respondents. A democratic China would likely continue pursuing policies similar to those of Communist China to gain the respect of its people.

Chinese claims of features in the South China Sea and of Taiwan would remain a question of national prestige and a drive for natural resources. The build-up of the Chinese military and the power projection of its navy into the Indian Ocean and beyond would be considered as an essential part of China's regained power. The growth of domestic economy would be crucial in sustaining and consolidating democracy. If the democratic government would not be capable of maintaining the GDP per capita growth of the communist regime, Chinese people might become disillusioned with the economic performance of their government and idealize the return of the old regime. Democratic China would therefore not rush to revalue its currency to the level desired by the United States, since a sudden revaluation would potentially damage the domestic economy. Other contentious issues between Washington and Beijing would remain in place and would possibly be even harder to solve with a Chinese government accountable to its electorate.

The question of mutual perception may turn out to be the greatest vulnerability of the normative aspect of U.S. democracy promotion. Even though the United States pushes for democracy around the world, it often seems indifferent or even intolerant of cultural particularities, which affect the formation of democratic regimes in the given countries. Yet the viability of democratic institutions may hinge on the sensitive accommodation of local political culture and democratic values and norms. The consolidation of democracy may turn out to be easier if the "new" democratic regime is congruent with the political culture of the society for which it is created, regardless of some "non-liberal" aspects at the outset. Political culture is subject to slow, but stable change and thus the "non-liberal" aspects of a young democracy may be eradicated within a certain number of years. Some analysts suggest that democratic norms and

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[259] Qian, "Sunzhongsan Xuanze Minzhuzhuyi Sixiang Mailuo," 66.

[260] John L. Thornton, ''Long Time Coming: The Prospects for Democracy in China,'' *Foreign Affairs* 87, No. 1 (January/February 2008): 2.

behavior need not precede the process of democratization, but rather can follow an elite-led transition – in other words, a political culture conducive to democracy may emerge as a response to the experience of the democratic transition.[261]

Concluding Thoughts

The assessment of Confucian political thinking and ethics has shown that certain aspects of Chinese political culture may – from the Western perspective – be anti-liberal. Terms like meritocracy and elitism have pejorative connotations in Western countries, whereas in China these notions refer to the competence of politicians and their ability to govern. Communitarianism is often perceived in the United States as a socialist or even communist trend in political philosophy – in China, some features of communitarianism may serve to strengthen the cohesion of the community and family, the primary building blocks of Confucian society. The role of the government in people's lives is also viewed in a different light in China and the United States. Historically, Chinese rulers were perceived as the guarantors of the "moral order" and social "harmony" – this required the rulers' active involvement in the dissemination of Confucian ethics and morals. The Chinese may thus be more prone to accept the intrusion of the government in shaping their moral values and less tolerant of dissenting views than the Americans or other Western nations.

The ruler's obligation to provide "subsistence" for his people has been a central tenet of Chinese governments since the times of Confucius and arguably until today – on March 16, 2013, at the close of the National People's Congress' annual session, China's president Xi Jinping emphasized the role of the government to materially provide for its people, saying that China will realize its dream "by closely depending on the people. [The government] must incessantly bring benefits to the people." Xi also noted that China should "strive to achieve the Chinese dream of great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation."[262]

Nevertheless, these features of Chinese political culture can be exploited to provide (artificial) support for an authoritarian regime. In contemporary China, it may seem that the rising middle class – which, according to modernization theory, is the

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[261] Mark Tessler and Eleanor Gao, "Democracy and the Political Culture Orientations of Ordinary Citizens: A Typology for the Arab World and Beyond," *International Social Science Journal* 59, No. 192 (June 2008): 197.

[262] Xinhua, "Xi Promises Benefits to People in Realizing 'Chinese Dream'," *China.org.cn*, March 17, 2013, http://www.china.org.cn/china/NPC_CPPCC_2013/2013-03/17/content_28269287.htm (accessed April 10, 2013).

main driver of democratic change – in fact supports the communist status quo.[263] The underlying logic of middle class support for the current government of the CCP is well demonstrated with a statement by Eric X. Li, founder of Chengwei Capital, a Chinese venture capital company:

> *"In 1949, the country had been suffering from years of war and economic stagnation. The average life expectancy was 41; the literacy rate was 15 percent; GDP was nothing. Now life expectancy is 75; literacy is at 80 percent; and GDP is a multi-trillion-dollar number [...] If I'm at a board meeting, and the proposition on the table is to take a company that's engineered an enormously successful turnaround and to fire that company's top executives, replace the entire management system, and do everything differently, that doesn't make sense. The one-party system has taken China from 1949 to today [...] I think the answer is clear."*[264]

The economic performance of the communist regime is beneficial to the middle class, which at this point mostly prefers "economic rights" over "political rights". However, the tipping point when the middle class starts demanding political rights may come very suddenly. Authoritarian governments create conditions in which people's genuine preferences are virtually unknown. Vaclav Havel's parable of the greengrocer who hangs a pro-regime slogan in his shop window "because everyone does it, and because [...] if he were to refuse, there could be trouble" is an example of the phenomenon of "preference falsification" in repressive states. A large portion of the population may want change, but "when each actor weighs the benefits of stepping forth against the danger of being punished for doing so, most stay silent".[265]

In order to help foster China's democratization from the outside, the United States should primarily seek to maintain peace and stability in the region. External threat leads to the creation of paternalistic or authoritarian regimes and hinders democratization. According to the "reversed causal arrow hypothesis", first and

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[263] Joshua Kurlantzick, "One Step Forward, Two Steps Back," *Foreign Policy*, March 4, 2013, http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2013/03/04/one_step_forward_two_steps_back (accessed May 7, 2013).

[264] J.J. Gould, "Chinese Democracy: Will It Ever Be More Than a Guns n' Roses Album?" *The Atlantic*, July 2, 2012, http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/07/chinese-democracy-will-it-ever-be-more-than-a-guns-n-roses-album/259349/ (accessed April 10, 2013).

[265] Andrew Nathan, "China at the Tipping Point? Foreseeing the Unforeseeable," *Journal of Democracy* 24, No. 1 (January 20013): 21. This particular factor may, to a certain extent, distort the objectivity of opinion polls and surveys.

foremost, a peaceful external environment must be present for the process of democratization to occur.[266] Increasing tensions in the South China Sea or on the Korean Peninsula will help the current CCP regime and to foster nationalist sentiments, rather than the installation of democracy. A peaceful "neighborhood" will be conducive to China's democratization.

A hypothetical democratic transformation in a country the size of China will undeniably be very difficult to manage. The chief objective of the process should be the installation of a viable democracy – i.e. a democratic political system that will survive the transition process and be consolidated after it passes Samuel Huntington's "two turnover test".[267] The design of democratic institutions should be adapted to Chinese political culture and social particularities – the United States, in turn, should respect this "democracy with Chinese characteristics", even with its possible "non-liberal aspects".

However, these "non-liberal aspects" should be justified only by ensuring "good governance" – although the term is quite vague, Francis Fukuyama has recently attempted to conceptualize and measure it.[268] The important point of Fukuyama's essay is that he implicitly states that democracy is not necessarily connected with a liberal democratic system and that good governance can possibly be achieved by other forms of political systems. Western societies tend to view democracy as an intrinsic part of good governance and believe that more democracy means better quality government, but Fukuyama claims that this "postulated relationship remains just a theory".[269] Hence, an authoritarian regime can be well governed just as a democracy can be badly run.

If a comprehensive and objective scale of measuring "good governance" existed, one could put aside the regime type and ideology of a given state and observe it solely through the lens of the respective government's performance and output vis-à-vis its polity (society). Even though the concept of "good governance" needs further research and discussion, it arguably has the potential to bring similar benign effects that are expected of liberal democracy. It may also represent a compromise between the U.S.

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[266] Rasler, *Puzzles of Democratic Peace*, 38.
[267] According to Huntington, a democratic regime can be considered as consolidated after it achieves two after-election government turnovers. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*.
[268] See Francis Fukuyama, "What is Governance?" *Governance*, March 3, 2013, http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/gove.12035/pdf (accessed May 7, 2013).
[269] Francis Fukuyama, "Blog: What is Governance?" *The American Interest*, January 31, 2012, http://blogs.the-american-interest.com/fukuyama/2012/01/31/what-is-governance/ (accessed April 10, 2013).

promotion of liberal democracy and Beijing's insistence on a political system "with Chinese characteristics".

The bilateral relations between China and the United States, the two most powerful players in the international community for the years to come, will be shaped not only by their economic links, but increasingly by their political encounters. Therefore, the type of political regime that evolves in China is key to the formation of mutual perception and the positive relations of the two countries. Many facts support the assumption that China will eventually adopt democracy – however the route and timing of this process are hard to determine. The United States should be prepared to accept and respect Chinese democracy, regardless of its "deviation" from the "standard route" of liberal democracy. China, in turn, should ideally seek to install a viable democracy that ensures good governance.

Souhrn

První část této práce se zaměřuje na teoretické ukotvení americké zahraničně-politické strategie šíření demokracie v rámci tzv. Velké strategie (Grand Strategy). Z hlediska Spojených států je šíření demokracie pragmatickou strategií s cílem hájit vlastní bezpečnost a své národní zájmy. Tato strategie nemá jen normativní charakter – tedy šíření liberálně-demokratických hodnot s cílem vytvořit skupinu států se stejným či alespoň podobným hodnotovým systémem jako USA – nýbrž i aspekt ekonomický. Liberálně-demokratické režimy mezi sebou chovají vesměs kladné obchodní vztahy, které posilují vzájemný mír. Šíření demokracie tak lze do jisté míry přirovnat k tzv. „politice otevřených dveří" (Open Door policy), kterou Spojené státy aplikovaly vůči Číně již na přelomu 19. a 20. století a která měla za cíl prohloubit vzájemné obchodní vztahy. Od 70. let 20. století začala mít velký vliv na politiku šíření demokracie tzv. teorie demokratického míru, podle které nedochází mezi demokratickými režimy k ozbrojeným konfliktům. Z tohoto pohledu je přirozené, že demokratizace autoritářské Číny by byla v zájmu Spojených států a ostatních demokratických zemí. Čína však prošla odlišným kulturně-politickým vývojem než západní demokracie a její politická kultura nemusí být nakloněna liberálnímu pojetí demokracie.

Druhá část práce se zabývá definicí určitých znaků čínské politické kultury, které mohou mít značný vliv na formování a přijetí hypotetického demokratického systému v Číně. Tyto znaky jsou definovány na základě konfuciánské etiky, klasického a moderního politického myšlení a určitých společenských norem, které byly po staletí ovlivňovány konfuciánským myšlením. Analýza těchto znaků je zpracována na základě textů klasických konfuciánských a neo-konfuciánských myslitelů a čínských politických vůdců a myslitelů z počátku 20. století.

Pokud Čína v budoucnu projde demokratizačním procesem, vzájemná reflexe amerického politického režimu a čínského režimu bude hrát klíčovou roli ve vývoji bilaterálních vztahů. Vzhledem k tomu, že je čínská politická kultura silně ovlivněna konfuciánstvím, které, mimo jiné, zdůrazňuje meritokracii, hierarchické uspořádání společnosti, loajalitu k autoritám, komunitarismus, společenskou harmonii a morálku založenou na povinnostech každého člena vůči své nejbližší komunitě, je velice pravděpodobné, že Čína nepřijme model západní liberální demokracie, nýbrž model, který je zasazen do specifické čínské politické kultury. Demokratický model, který bude kongruentní s politickou kulturou a společenskými normami, bude mít větší šance

přestát období nestability mladého demokratického systému, než model, který bude přejatý z vnější. Spojené státy však mohou model „demokracie s čínskými znaky“ vnímat jako „neliberální“ a tudíž celkově jako „nedemokratický“. V takovém případě nemusí být naplněn obecný předpoklad, že demokratizace ČLR bude mít pozitivní vliv na vzájemné vztahy.

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