Spring 2013, Post-CSD Conference Revision Julian Lee

Becoming More Democratic *without* Democratization: Consultation, Responsiveness, and Accountability as Political Participation in the PRC

ABSTRACT: Other than the 1998 Organic Law which mandated the implementation of rural elections nationwide, few Western observers have found much evidence that the Post-Mao "Reform Era" in the PRC (People's Republic of China) has included democratization. By standard scholarly accounts, the regime has, at most, become post-totalitarian, post-communist, or "softened" its authoritarianism. Especially since the administration of Hu Jintao and Wen Jiabao, the latter calling explicitly for political liberalization only in the distant future, most political reforms have been framed in terms of strengthening the authoritarian CCP (Chinese Communist Party) regime. This theoretical, empirical study suggests, contrarily, that the Chinese political system has become significantly more democratic, despite explicitly eschewing change toward "Western-style democracy." Without pursuing wholesale democratization, the PRC has effectively taken on democratic characteristics in pursuit of better governance, which many citizens conflate with democracy itself. To make the PRC's democratic progress legible, I offer an unconventional, systematic definition of democracy based on broader, deeper political participation. Democratic traits in a political regime are defined as consultation of the population, responsiveness and accountability to the same. These three elements add up to a new procedural minimum for democracy and offer a more institutionally flexible epistemology for revealing popular will than the current standard of Dahl's polyarchy. After discussing this novel definition of democracy, the study's second half enumerates empirical examples of democratic progress and outlines possibilities for further reform.

Introduction & Research Question. Political development is an ongoing process in all states, and it has no final destination. Reform is difficult and slow, while revolution is always tumultuous and very costly. Neither process of change is guaranteed to achieve its intended goals, and unintended consequences are inevitable. For varying ideological reasons, national regimes[1] may pursue democracy[2] and good governance[3] either in close conjunction or while heavily emphasizing one or the other. Neither leads to utopia, and while the 20th century thankfully disposed of such a destination as a political goal, competing ideologies still lead regimes to order their priorities differently.

[1] A regime is defined as approximately equivalent to a political system by which a government governs a polity (political unit). For clarity, this paper assumes that the PRC experienced a regime change after Deng Xiaoping rose to power in 1978, even though the ruling party did not change. Successive leadership transitions from Deng to Jiang Zemin, Hu Jintao, and Xi Jinping, respectively, are taken as changes in government or administration—not regime—as the "rules of the game" did not change to nearly the same extent as the split into the post-Mao era.

[2] This paper is very much about the meaning of democracy, going into far more depth in *systematically* defining it in the first section. For now, democracy is taken to mean "government by and for the people," though interpreting and implementing this is at the center of countless conflicts in the field of political science.

[3] Good governance is defined as performing well by both objective and subjective standards. Objective standards include the provision of "public goods," balancing political order and freedom (i.e. civil liberties), minimizing coercion, levels of corruption, etc. Subjective standards involve citizens' general perceptions of their government's performance, based more often on comparisons with the past and their personal expectations.

As a single-party authoritarian regime, the CCP leaders of the PRC clearly place a higher value on good governance than democracy, as democracy would by conventionally liberal definitions require multiparty political competition. Such a preference, this study contends, does not preclude democratic change, and the latter half of the paper provides evidence that changes in this direction are occurring. Sometimes the regime encourages or enables more democratic political participation with legal and institutional reform; other examples point to bottom-up, grassroots demands for an expanded role in the PRC's political process. In cases of top-down reforms, the objective is more likely to be better governance alone, while Chinese citizens increasingly conscious of their rights are likely to mix the two goals. Before giving examples, I explicitly state the central research question:

Can democracy be a serendipitous result of pursuing good governance in addition to the intended consequence of democratization?[4]

As a related subquestion, is it possible to improve government performance *without* becoming at least slightly more democratic?[5] Few would deny that rapid or imposed political liberalization[6] has worsened governance in some historical cases, occasionally contributing directly to state failure and disintegration. Critics of liberal democracy or democracy promotion have well made their cases in the literature of political culture. Returning to the central question, however, scholars have not thoroughly explored the possibility of becoming more democratic without framing political reforms as democratization. An authoritarian regime concerned with its legitimacy may well find that connecting the population more closely with the governing process improves provision of public goods, reduces corruption, and instills a genuine sense of popular empowerment. This study uses the PRC to show that good governance and democracy imbricate one another when either is pursued as an

[4] Democratization is defined as changes intended to make a political regime more democratic, in the grand sense of increasing (broadening and/or deepening institutions and policies which advance) government by and for the people. It is *not necessarily* a teleological pursuit of becoming like Western, liberal democracies.

[5] Lee Kwan Yew's Asian Values thesis has largely been discredited by survey data and academic work from the likes of Doh Chull Shin, but it is notable in regards to improving governance without becoming more democratic. Lee has repeatedly stated that regimes espousing "Asian Values" favor unelected but skilled technocrats in government and doubt the ability and therefore desirability of common people to participate in politics. In the sense that CCP cadres of the reform era became more educated than in the revolutionary period, governance may have been improved by appointing technocrats in top government positions, in an openly elitist system of objective meritocracy. It was on these same grounds that officials in the late Qing opposed democratization, finding traditional, supposedly meritocratic appointment the superior method, lest "private interests" expressed in elections lead factions to prevail over merit. See Kuhn, pg. 62, for discussion of Feng Guifen's poorly received reform proposals to let lower officials vote for higher ones.

[6] Political liberalization is defined as changes in the direction of Robert Dahl's polyarchy. This is often equated with democratization, however this study wishes to drive a wedge between the concepts. All political liberalization is taken to be democratization, but not all democratization is carried out by political liberalization. Other means to democratize exist and will be described throughout this study. Both of these processes are assumed to be explicitly declared, consciously enacted by political leaders. Neither happens unintentionally.

over-arching national goal. Both terms may best be thought of as higher concepts bridging regime types, something that designers of political institutions can strive toward but never fully achieve.[7]

A pair of related, opening assertions follow, to be supported with evidence in the latter half of the paper. First, it is possible for a regime to pursue democratization explicitly, yet fail to become more democratic, even after implementing liberal institutions like elections, freedoms of speech, assembly, press, and so on. By some accounts, China attempted this in its Republican Era at the beginning of the 20th century, and the result was far less democracy than chaotic warlordism, state weakness, and national disintegration.[8] Conversely, it is also possible to improve government performance with selective use of popular political participation, without teleological reference to democratization, and become effectively more democratic. This paper will argue that the contemporary PRC is on the latter trajectory toward rule by and for the people, and changing forms of political participation are the key to identifying this trend.

Bruce Gilley's 2009 book, *The Right to Rule*, offers another, more broadly comparative illustration of these possibilities, observing the recently democratized states of Eastern Europe. Since the fall of the Soviet Union, many countries in this region have liberalized their political systems, part of what Samuel Huntington called the "Third Wave" of democratization. A decade after political liberalization, Eastern European regimes rank uniformly as the *least* legitimate in Gilley's global sample, whether or not they democratized.[9] Despite near universal support for democratic political systems,[10] even almost fully democratic regimes rank below many authoritarian ones, while Taiwan and the PRC are paired at 12 and 13, respectively, out of 72 states.

Despite the loudly stated necessity of democracy for political legitimacy, why do these neighboring polities in Eastern Europe, China and Taiwan, with cultural affinities but obviously divergent regimes, rank near the same level? Firstly, we must keep in mind that democracy is a "social fact."[11] To some extent, Gilley's systematized definition of legitimacy may be approximating Harry Eckstein's concept of congruence, with the facts

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[7] Christopher Dandeker cites Mosca (1938) for the concept of democracy being a higher and intermediate concept bridging the ideals of liberal and state socialist regimes.

[8] Yang Liqiang's chapter in Wakeman and Wang's edited volume is particularly explicit in documenting the proliferation of political parties, voting, and other rights in the Early Republic, with results which were far from democratic or desirable. I have explored this in an earlier, historical paper on the Qing-to-Republican transition, and the topic will only appear sporadically in this study.

[9] See Fig. 1.1, Mean Legitimacy Scores by Region, in Gilley, pg. 18.

[10] See, for example, Ronald Inglehart's 2003 article, with World Values Survey support for democracy shown in Table 1, pg. 52, measured above 90% for a majority of countries, with only Pakistan and Russia given as outliers with support around 60%.

[11] See Searle for a lengthy consideration of social facts, as opposed to "brute facts" which exist beyond human perception and do not depend on people to agree on definitions, parameters, or means of measurement. Money is a social fact; a mountain is a brute fact.

of a normatively desirable form of government varying greatly from society to society.[12] As political culture clearly matters in this explanation, different ways of defining democracy could make the "objective" status of these regime types moot.

But just *how* differently can government by and for the people be defined? As a classic concept, democracy is subject to the same hermeneutical strategies as classic religious or philosophical texts.[13] The standard scholarly interpretation sequesters democracy in an entirely institutional definition, devoid of any consideration of performance or perception, as is common in comparative politics and democratization studies in particular. In strictest terms, only a *specific set* of institutions approximates democracy. An inflexibly liberal definition leads to an unnecessarily teleological, empirically contradicted, universal path of political development[14] which cannot explain why some democratic transitions "stall" or are never enacted. In terms of the PRC, the disciplinary standard definition renders any democratic elements illegible in the absence of national elections, despite strongly expressed, empirical evidence from citizens that China is *already* a democracy, as shown in Fig. 1, below.[15]

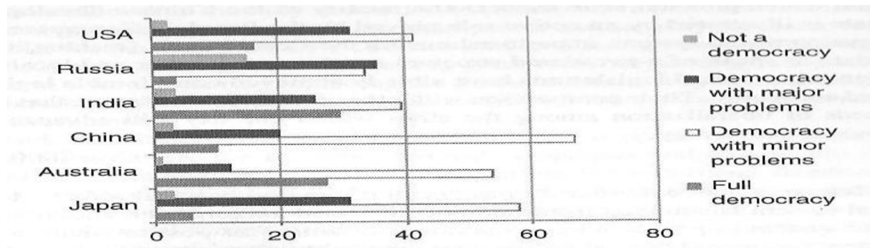

Fig. 1: Responses to Asian Barometer 2008 question 44: In your opinion how much of a democracy is your country today? Taken from Dingping Guo's chapter in Huang (Ed.), pg. 173.

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[12] Congruence theory holds that political institutions in a given regime will align with the predominant political culture of the population. Thus, imposing democratic institutions on a population which harbors authoritarian values like a single, strong leader is incongruent, and the values will eventually overwhelm and subsume the institutions.

[13] This is to say that foundational texts tend to be vague and subject to myriad interpretations, including some never intended by the author. Indeed, if an opportunistic demagogue wanted to garner support for a crazy scheme, s/he would likely peruse such texts for anything, no matter how minor, obscure, or distorted, which could be interpreted in his/her favor.

[14] W.W. Rostow and Dankwart Rustow's foundational works in economic and political development, respectively, are invaluable exercises in theory-building, but like most linear expectations, are unable to account for the readily apparent diversity of economic and political forms and changes. Like Almond & Verba's *The Civic Culture* and other classics of the time, the U.S. system was taken as an endpoint of political development, and all states were largely assumed to have liberal democratic futures, going through the same stages to get there. This is not to denigrate these studies' foundational theoretical contributions.

[15] I refer to my 2013 CSD Conference paper readers who believe that survey data like this can't account for the possibility that citizens "misperceive" their regimes as democratic, are "tricked" by the government to believe this, are afraid to give their real opinions, don't know what democracy really is, or are just plain *wrong.* The CSD paper also considers in far more detail than this one the possibility that China has its own, unique definition of democracy.

The polar opposite alternative is to allow regimes to call democracy whatever they like. This enables strategic leaders, cognizant of the concept's popularity, to set a particular value as the most important part, result, or indicator of democracy. Economic growth is the clearest example of this, and scholars such as Elizabeth Perry find strands of traditional Chinese thought favoring basic economic providence and prosperity as government's most fundamental objective.[16] Inglehart and Welzel portray the problems of legitimizing democratization instrumentally in that many citizens in the aforementioned Eastern European states and the original Chinese Republic expected "prosperity like that of the established democracies."[17] Yet although economic growth or good governance generally may be conflated with democracy in the popular imagination of the materially poor, the perils of relying solely on economic indicators or public opinion to indicate democracy are clear. The concept would become entirely subjective and unstable, devoid of lasting substance and easily co-opted by charismatic dictators known too frequently in history.

This study finds neither alternative appealing and so proposes a middle ground. Users of the first, solely institutional and inflexibly specified definition, for being the scholarly standard on which so many large-N comparative studies are based, limit democratic diversity. Cross-country comparisons inevitably assume a normative analysis, again largely unacknowledged, in which regimes are evaluated on the presence or absence or the even less objective *quality* of a very narrow set of institutions. Such an approach has great trouble accommodating "illiberal" forms of democracy which continue to grow in number.[18] Instead of a single, universal set of institutions, a return to democracy as a "background concept" allows us to account for truly important considerations of performance and perception.

The paper is structured as follows. First, the key term must be defined in a way which is maximally acceptable and coherent to scholars and citizens around the world. This entails consideration of the liberal standard of Robert Dahl's polyarchy, as well as alternative interpretations including concepts traditionally excluded by institutional definitions such as government performance and popular perception. The next section will systematically bridge these different conceptions with an emphasis on communication between the government

[16] See Perry, 2008.
[17] Inglehart & Welzel, pg. 119. They also suggest that disillusionment with democracy's lack of immediate results "may lead to declining support for democracy, if support for democracy is not intrinsically rooted in self-expression values."
[18] See Zakaria and Bell et al. on illiberal democracy. Modernization Theory as described by Inglehart and Welzel, of course, projects a global cultural convergence toward preferring liberal democracy, the best regime for individual citizens' "self-expression values." Perhaps in a few years when all global economic inequality is gone, this may be the case. Until then, it is of limited applicability to contemporary realities in the developing world.

and the population, given in political participation through consultation, responsiveness, and accountability (herafter C,R,A). After an abstract justification of this conceptualization and important concepts which facilitate C,R,A, I will explore empirically how political reforms and experiments in the PRC exemplify this study's systematized concept. As in the title, the most democratic changes in China are a result of pursuing better governance rather than an openly stated agenda of political liberalization, what we in the West tend to equate (or conflate) with democratization.

Defining Democracy Begins in the Background. The central term of this study begins from its linguistic roots, a "background concept,"[19] at the highest point on Sartori's "ladder of abstraction." Democracy is here taken to be "government by and for the people." The goal of beginning so abstractly is to have a commonly held understanding of the concept and avoid the outright disagreements over validity which always arise from operationalization for empirical studies. Even at this highest level, a different emphasis can be seen in Chinese and Western concepts. Reduced to two prepositions, *by* and *for*, Diamond & Morlino describe the split as one between the "quality of content" and the "quality of results." "Content" refers to democratic institutions, rights, and procedures familiar to anyone schooled in a liberal democracy. Doh Chull Shin's work on democracy in Confucian societies finds that a majority of Chinese citizens conceive of democracy "substantively," in terms of economic security and equality, as shown below.

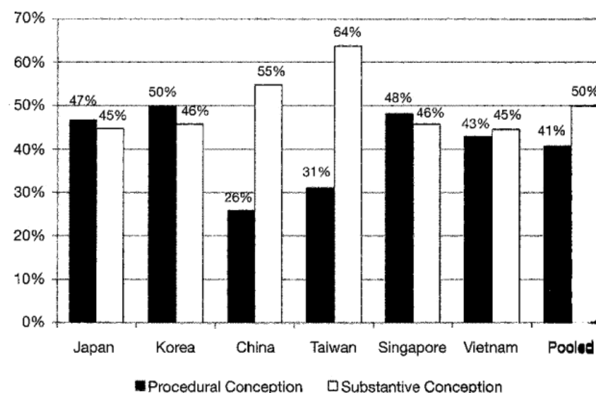

Fig. 2: Procedural and Substantive Conceivers of Democracy, according to the 2005-2008 Asian Barometer Surveys. Taken from Shin, pg. 242. Note that Taiwan is a liberal democracy yet remains, like the PRC, highly substance-focused in its conception.

In both the PRC and Taiwan, when given a choice among four "regime properties," which are the "most essential to democracy," economic security was the number one response by a considerable margin. While given low

[19] See the APPENDIX for a reproduction of Adcock & Collier's Fig. 1- Conceptualization and Measurement: Levels and Tasks. Their article guides much of this and the following sections' discussion of moving from background to systematized concepts.

priority throughout the region of East Asia, "protecting liberty" was an exceptionally rare response in the PRC and Taiwan, given approximately 1/10th as often as economic security.[20]

A divergent conceptualization held by Chinese and Taiwanese, even within Confucian East Asia, may have deep historical roots. The word "democracy" was not translated into Chinese as 民主 *minzhu* until the mid-19th century, with an evolving meaning eventually settling on "the people as masters."[21] In Chinese minds, 民本 *minben* –"people as basis"--is a far older, less foreign, and closely related term which may have an inherently high value similar to what liberals ascribe to democracy. Andrew Nathan suggests that late Qing intellectuals "analyzed [Western democracies] through the prism of *minben* ideas," leading to a belief that *minzhu* extended the "harmony of interests between people and ruler" and "socioeconomic welfare rights" in a legitimate state.[22] These ideas extend all the way to Confucius and Mencius and may explain the ubiquity of the CCP's legitimizing slogan, 为人民服务 *wei renmin fuwu*, or "serve the people." If a greater role for citizens in governance helps the CCP to serve the people, reforms in that direction should be expected. If not, only the small portion of PRC citizens whom Shin calls "fully committed" to democracy, based on liberal values, will press for democratization.[23]

In short, prying government performance and economic results from the Chinese understanding of democracy would be an arduous intellectual task of dubious merit. Rather than erasing or replacing good governance in *minzhu*, Westerners can more realistically convince PRC residents that democracy has a requirement of active citizenship.[24] If liberals insist on a definition of democracy exclusively "*by* the people" and the authoritarian CCP's performance legitimacy rests solely on paternalistic rule "*for* the people," we arrive at a

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[20] See TABLE 7.8 in Shin, pg. 240. Just 3.6% and 4.2% of PRC and Taiwanese citizens said protecting liberty was most important, while percentages ranged from 11.9% to 20.3% in Japan, Korea, and Singapore. Even "non-Confucian Asia" gives about double the rate of these countries, while the liberal West presumably gives it the highest ranking.

[21] For more linguistic considerations of the translation, see Lin Chun, pg. 132-3, and generally her third chapter, which explains why the PRC takes liberal democracy ("Western" or "bourgeois" in more commonly derogative terms) to be a "sham," inferior to the official "people's democracy," "socialist democracy," or "mass/great democracy" based on a "dictatorship of the proletariat." On the historical evolution of the term in the late Qing Dynasty, see Lackner et al.

[22] Nathan, 1985, pg. 127-8. Again, Perry's article touches on similar themes with regard to the division between civil and political versus socioeconomic rights, the latter being the CCP regime's avowed first priority.

[23] Shin's analysis of the East Asian Barometer surveys suggests that very few PRC citizens are fully committed to (liberal) democracy, due in large part to the prevalence of hierarchical values. Holding such values makes citizens less likely to be "well informed" about what democracy "is" and more likely to conceive of it as a hybrid of democratic and authoritarian forms.

[24] One needn't be a Marxist or otherwise revolutionary to find democracy impossible without *economic* security and equality. Prominent examples of Westerners who theorize democracy to result in economic redistribution include Joseph Schumpeter and T.H. Marshall, whose ideas of "social citizenship" reconciled workers with capitalism, according to Christian Joppke (pg. 9-14). Similarly, literature on the welfare state edges ever closer to including economic requirements in the definition of democracy. Arguably, a distinction still exists in Western "social democracy" texts and Chinese democratic thinking regarding whether economic providence and redistribution are things democracy *should do* and what democracy *is*.

conceptual impasse. This study's compromise is to include both, by being flexible in terms of institutions and taking popular perception of government performance into account. The key to ensuring that a government governs with meaningful popular participation, with the consent of the population and *minben* always in mind lies in open and frequently utilized channels of communication between the people and the government. A few more definitional considerations follow before proposing how to "systematize" democracy for our theoretical and empirical purposes.

Most relevant to this study's central question, the PRC may never frame political reforms toward Dahl's polyarchy as democratization. Stated as an attempt to provide an achievable, universal standard for liberal democracy which approximates "rule by the people" as an ideal type, close examination of any Western liberal state would likely render polyarchy also as just beyond the grasp of actually existing regimes. Here the concept's exclusivity is more relevant than its attainability, however. Polyarchy is fundamentally about "free and fair" electoral institutions and can also be viewed as more of a procedural minimum for democracy than a full standard.

At first glance, which is all most Western "China watchers" require, the PRC obviously fails to cross minimum thresholds to gain access to a tidy two-by-two table of political contestation and inclusiveness.[25] As Lin Chun's *The Transformation of Chinese Socialism* affirms and survey results confirm empirically, the CCP and citizens of the PRC are largely unified in viewing the country as already democratic. Political liberalization is more associated with Westernization than democratization, as evidenced in the rhetoric of outgoing president Hu Jintao and proud assertions by Chinese scholars that China must never "slavishly copy" Western political institutions.[26] Even if this difference is irreconcilable, the empirical sections will argue, we can still find evidence of political change in the PRC which has been in a recognizably democratic direction. Necessary for such analysis is an *alternative* procedural minimum which de-emphasizes elections and allows for other means of ascertaining and communicating "popular will" to the government.[27]

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[25] Later, empirical sections of the paper make more headway on inclusiveness than contestation. And for the record, there are simply *no* national elections in the PRC.

[26] Young-tsu Wong, of National Central University in Taiwan, frequently defends his subject, the early 20th Century intellectual Zhang Binglin, as not being against republicanism but also believing it inappropriate to "borrow any foreign model slavishly" (pg. 61).

[27] While the concept of "popular will" is much disparaged by scholars such as Riker, whose liberal form of democracy "against populism" can give its primary and minimal task as throwing bad politicians out of office, modern Chinese thinkers and leaders like Mao have much faith, perhaps misplaced, in the possibility of learning what the people want. The epistemological key to the will of the majority is some systematic form of consultation. In most representative democracies, consultation via elections reveals popular will on a very narrow topic: who does the majority want to hold office. Direct democracy via referenda broadens the range of issues greatly but is subject to its own pathologies, and

In the revolutionary period of the PRC and arguably rehabilitated in recent years, Mao Zedong's concept of the "mass line" offers a uniquely Chinese alternative for achieving democracy, albeit one whose actual practice fell fall short of the ideal.[28] Lin Chun states, "The mass line model in its ideal type is manifestly democratic notably because it is designed to encourage popular participation and deliberation for articulating and aggregating interests and preferences."[29] Nathan describes the ideal process as being defined with popular deliberation, and leaders were supposed to consult with the masses to ascertain their line.[30] Tianjian Shi finds that, in practice, the mass line meant, at best, "briefing people on policies after they are already made to resolve any doubts."[31]

If the "mass line" concept has been discredited in practice except among the most ardent leftists in China and the West, this study offers a far less communist-sounding model, outlined theoretically in the next section. It is important to keep in mind, however, that much of the democratic progress outlined in the empirical sections will be presented by the CCP and interpreted by citizens in the official rhetoric of realizing mass line politics. What I described earlier as becoming democratic without democratization, the regime describes as using *improved* "mass democracy" for better governance.

How we define democracy determines a major question relevant to this study and those who would dismiss a paper on democracy in the PRC outright for lacking "face validity." To what extent can democracy exist within an over-arching non-democratic system?[32] The obvious and most prevalent answer in the West is that an authoritarian or totalitarian regime absolutely removes any possibility of democratic governance, but like most absolutes, it ignores more subtle realities. The first national elections in China, for example, were conducted with full approval of the imperial Qing Dynasty in 1909.[33] Currently, elections in the PRC do not extend above the local level and are far from "free and fair," but as all scholars now agree, there is far more to democracy than

deliberative democracy may be the deepest form of consultation but also the most difficult and time-intensive to wrangle a single decision out of a population.

[28] In its most basic form, mass line democracy is a reciprocal process of two-way communication between citizens and the government. It requires government officials to interact closely with "the masses" to discover the people's true preferences. Officials then formulate policies based on these preferences and present them to the people with the intent of gaining popular support to legitimize policy. Critics of this process have been correct to find much coercion amidst the second step of presentation and persuasion, however they may also underestimate the amount of consultation conducted in the absence of elections.

[29] Lin, pg. 147.

[30] Nathan, 1985, pg. 64

[31] Shi, 1997, pg. 45. On pg. 47 he offers, further, that contacting of officials has always been quite common, and the "mass line" includes a requirement that officials listen to public opinion.

[32] A most extreme example was given at UCI's Center for the Study of Democracy Graduate Student Conference in 2013 by Michael Walker, currently at UC Riverside. Walker shows that recognizably democratic governing procedures exist even within a "total institution" like jail. China is no liberal democracy, but it is not a prison either. Unlike jail, moreover, an overwhelming majority of Chinese residents would describe their government as democratic, as evidenced in the 2008 East Asian Barometer survey. See Dingping Guo's chapter in Huang (Ed.), pg. 173.

[33] See Chang's chapter on the Provincial Assembly elections in Cochran & Pickowicz (Eds.).

elections.[34] Other elements more in line with this study's communicative and participation-centered definition are present and arguably functioning better than in some more conventionally democratic states.

In summary, democracy which consistently produces bad results may stay "the only game in town" indefinitely, but "critical citizens" are always looking for better institutions and rules to play the game. The preceding section has only given a definition of democracy as a background concept, satisfactory to elementary school students but only sufficient as a base on which to place more carefully specified requirements of how exactly "the people" might "rule" and benefit from such a form of government. Fundamentally, this paper concurs with Andrew Nathan's channeling of Liang Qichao, perhaps the leading intellectual of the early Republican Era. Liang believed that democracy is "chiefly…a means of communication between government and people."[35] Such communication may come via a variety of institutions, but it ideally shares three elements outlined in the next section.

Systematized Democracy: Consultation, Responsiveness, and Accountability (C,R,A). In conceptual conflicts, most empirical political science runs into trouble at the stage below conceptualization, in operationalizing ideas for objective measurement.[36] The results of this process are indicators by which the quality or change in a concept may be measured, and over time certain indicators become disciplinary standards. Conflicts over large ideas like globalization, development, or democracy, however, remain at the higher level of conceptualization—there is no systematized concept which is universally accepted.

As mentioned in the previous section, elections are just one means of consulting the population for political preferences and holding officials accountable. Schmitter and Karl's point regarding electoralism, made during the "Third Wave" of democratization in the early 1990's, is that equating democracy with the presence of elections reduces the concept to a proceduralist shell with an empty core where democratic values should be.

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[34] Schmitter & Karl call the over-emphasis of elections to achieve democracy "electoralism." Joshua Hill's dissertation on Qing and Republican Era elections also finds that China's intentions and use of this standard liberal institution were highly divergent. Political competition itself was an "unintended consequence" of elections, which were justified not for empowering individual citizens but to improve the quality of government officials. Candidates of highest virtue were expected to be almost objectively revealed, and electoral contests were expected to be decided with near unanimity. Such hopes were clearly and quickly dashed in the early decades of the 20th century, and it's questionable whether the Chinese government's and people's trust in elections has ever been fully established or restored. For a rather simplistic film parable illustrating this, see "Please Vote for Me," a documentary on a Chinese elementary school class monitor selected by a "semi-competitive" election. Hill also claims that China has mainly used elections as an instructive tool to shape citizens' political views and teach them how to participate in politics in an orderly, regime-sanctioned manner.

[35] Nathan, 1985, pg. 49, draws this definitive conclusion from the series "A Comprehensive Discussion of Reform", published in the journal *Chinese Progress*, which Liang also edited.

[36] This again refers to Adcock and Collier's FIGURE 1, reproduced in the APPENDIX.

This study avoids electoralism for a different reason, namely the absence of national elections in the PRC. It is also ultimately critical of Schmitter & Karl's rather authoritative list of democratic requirements. Focusing on the necessity of particular institutions, values, and freedoms can distract from a holistic feeling of popular empowerment and approval of the actual means of governance. The reliance on an objective, solely institutional definition allows the existence of equally pernicious democracies in which preventing the "tyranny of the majority" attenuates the fundamental principle of majority rule to a point where a powerful *minority* effectively controls the regime.[37] Knowing a non-democracy when the people fail to see or feel it has a seductively nonscientific appeal, reflected in the unpopular and minimally legitimate regimes with fully implemented liberal institutions. Perhaps it could be said that the means of ascertaining the presence of a background concept are necessarily less rigorous, more appealing substantively and epistemologically to laymen than political scientists.

Adcock and Collier describe the process of conceptualization as closely tied to the goals of research, and this study is no exception. Thus, while the systematized concept of democracy as C,R,A could be applied to any country, the primary task of this paper is to make democratic progress in the PRC legible to readers accustomed to thinking only in terms of declared political liberalization, a teleology which the CCP explicitly rejects. Each term in C,R,A will now be defined, to be taken up individually and empirically in the last sections on the PRC as a case study.

I *systematically* define democracy as consisting of three necessary elements: consultation, responsiveness, and accountability (C,R,A).[38] Each can be measured in terms of both what is promised in the polity's constitution and what the regime actually delivers. By "consultation" is meant asking the population what it wants, including any means to ascertain the will of the majority.[39] "Responsiveness" is simply acknowledging what the majority has requested by enacting policy or otherwise taking action in line with the request whenever possible, and in a

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[37] See Dahl, 1989, pg. 135-152, for a discussion of majority rule in the "strong sense" that a majority in approval should be necessary and *sufficient* for a polity to make democratic decisions. Schlozman et al. accuse American democracy of being effectively controlled by an affluent minority in far more nuanced terms in *The Unheavenly Chorus.* In Jack Snyder's *From Voting to Violence*, newly democratic nations are criticized for understanding little other than democracy's principle of majority rule, resulting in a tyrannous, bellicose majority likely to trample minority rights and pick fights with neighboring nations, as nationalist one-upmanship between candidates can readily lead to electoral success.

[38] A previous reader commented that I can't keep changing my definition of democracy, that I need to choose one and "stick to it." This is a misunderstanding of what I'm doing in this study: showing that my systematized concept is an alternative procedural minimum to Dahl's polyarchy. Both polyarchy and C,R,A are based on approximately the same "background concept." I am *not changing* this study's definition of democracy; I am making it more precise and applicable to the case this study explains, the PRC. As should be obvious, using the standard procedural minimum systematized concept of democracy, polyarchy, would not allow my case to offer very much to analyze.

39 Consultation with the public does not mean that all policies originate from the people. The government can and is very likely to make either specific or general proposals to "get the ball rolling." Starting with the people might be a deeper form, but asking them what they think of a government policy is still consultative. For Weller, in Gilley & Diamond's comparative volume, the democratic importance is less a matter of explicit consultation than maintaining "the mechanisms that allow information to flow up the political hierarchy" (pg. 118).

timely fashion.[40] Beyond fulfilling obligations to do or follow through with what laws and policies require of government officials, no easy initial assumption, "accountability" includes taking responsibility for implementation of policies, especially when they fail to achieve the intended results. An accountable government, including its individual members, accepts and faces consequences of failures and malfeasance according to what the majority deems appropriate.[41]

C,R,A approximates rule by and for the people fundamentally in assuming that for the people to "rule," they must be asked what they want, and the government must acknowledge and respond to popular demands substantively. This definition has no specific institutional requirements. Instead, it accounts for institutional malfunction which might cause citizens to perceive standard democratic practices and values like elections and free speech as adding up to something less than even a minimal sense of democracy.

C,R,A, to a greater extent than polyarchy, may be measured both objectively and subjectively. Objectively, the onus is on regimes claiming to be democratic to show that these elements are systematically present. Subjectively, individual citizens evaluate how meaningful and effective their political participation is in these terms.

These terms were not chosen at random to conceptualize democracy. Rather, they represent a condensation of the modified forms of authoritarianism used in recent scholarship to describe political changes in the PRC. By many scholarly accounts, the PRC is becoming a more democratic authoritarian regime, as expressed by adding one of C,R,A to describe the particular type of authoritarianism practiced in the past decade. Richard Baum and Jessica Teets use the term "consultative authoritarianism." James Reilly coins "responsive authoritarianism." Relevant to the coming section on political participation, Xi Chen pushes the limits of the non-democratic concept with "contentious authoritarianism." While these are certainly tactics used by the CCP

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40 The government can respond to public opinion in a number of ways. Negatively, it can be recorded and then suppressed, with punishment of leaders who expressed it. Recording but ignoring it would not count as a response. The government may acknowledge it (publicly) but downplay it in favor of the government's agenda and preferences, as when a leader is prompted to give a speech or make a statement but do nothing else substantive. The bare minimum for democratic responsiveness would be for the government to explain why the people are wrong, why their proposals and preferences are impractical, unreasonable, or unaffordable. The most democratic response would be to draft formal policy proposals and statements based on public opinion or otherwise take actions requested by it. Advocating within government for public opinion to be heeded would also be a clearly democratic response.

41 Borowiak's 2011 book, *Accountability and Democracy*, offers the concept of "critical accountability" which prefers that the government be "answerable" to, rather than "punishable" by, the populus. The subtle difference in the third element accords with the nuance in the previous factor, responsiveness, whereby the government must at least acknowledge popular demands publicly. In both cases, rather than doing exactly as any group claiming to be "the people" demands (which could quickly approach mob rule and a tyrannous majority), any deviance from public opinion must simply be justified. Also notable in his book is that elections play only a minor role toward the goal of accountability, with other, deliberative and sanctioning institutions figuring more prominently. For Tsai, in Perry & Goldman (Eds.), pg. 129, accountability means that officials fulfill their "community obligations." Schmitter's chapter in Diamond & Morlino's edited volume, pg. 21, suggests that including accountability in the definition of democracy means that new democracies will be "perpetually catching up" with consolidated ones, but it's difficult to object to the concept's importance on theoretical grounds.

regime to adapt and survive, in David Shambaugh's terms, such tactics have clearly democratic consequences and trajectories, should their use expand. The figure below illustrates regime types on a continuum, and the conceptual mixing around the middle is noteworthy.

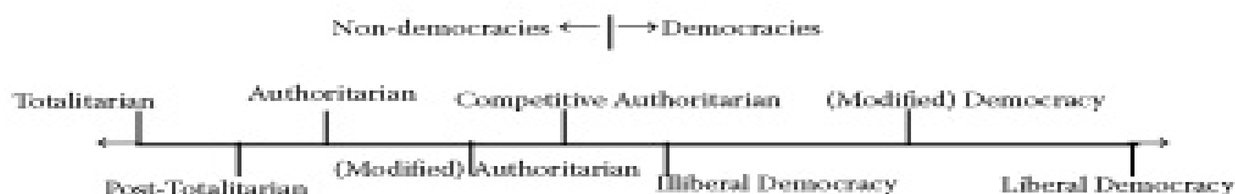

FIG. 3: Regime types on a continuum. As terms get refined and modifiers proliferate, the sets of defining characteristics get fuzzier, more subject to a particular author's chosen focus than a scholarly consensus.

Just as Collier and Levitsky point out in their article "Democracy with Adjectives," the scholarly phenomenon of making one's academic name by coining a unique form of rule by the people (short of liberal democracy) grows more active by the year on the other side of the democratic divide. By the accounts of scholars focused on electoral competition, "competitive authoritarianism" is about as close to democracy as a regime can get without actually being one.[42] Before considering rights and other facilitators of C,R,A, I wish to raise a brief objection to the concept of competitive authoritarianism being the closest form of authoritarianism to democracy, as it places too great an emphasis on elections.

With frequent and deeper use of national elections, Burma in the past few years may have leapfrogged the PRC in FIG. 3 and become a competitive authoritarian state on par with Singapore. If it is not obvious, despite the same regime categorization, that Singapore is better and more democratically governed than Burma, this study has very little use for formal regime types. Given the low state of economic development, ongoing and overt examples of oppression, and active campaigns of ethnic war, however, we should be skeptical whether Burmese citizens would describe the new regime as democratic at a rate approaching the PRC's. Certainly, if performance has any place in a democratic definition, the city-state of Singapore should well outpace both developing countries, and the People's Action Party is notable for staking its democratic claims on both electoral and economic performance. As Singapore's UN representative, Bilahari Kausikan, notes, there is a "critical

[42] Levitsky is involved on both sides: with Collier (1997) for democracy and Way (2002) for authoritarianism.

distinction between democracy as a political theory of legitimation of government and democracy as a mechanism or instrument of government."[43]

As systematized concepts go, C,R,A favors procedures but is flexible in terms of what institutions a democratic regime will choose to achieve them. The framework should be, in Kausikan's terms, recognizable to Western liberals as a "mechanism or instrument of government." Following these three principles, however, should also go a long way toward convincing citizens that they effectively "rule" a given polity, thereby substantiating a regime's democratic claims. Democratic values of the kind Schmitter and Karl emphasize are undoubtedly nice to have as well, and many such as basic freedoms of speech, assembly, and the press, are all but essential for C,R,A to function smoothly. The next section discusses these rights, though somewhat outside of the task of systematizing the concept of government by and for the people. For the sake of clarity, when I use the term "democracy" for the remainder of this study, I mean it in the sense just described, in terms of C,R,A. I will indicate when the concept is meant in terms of the more general "background concept," the more standard and specific liberal form approximated by Dahl's polyarchy, or the uniquely Chinese "socialist" form.

Facilitation of C,R,A. Liberal readers by this point are likely to be past the point of demanding consideration of basic freedoms and other rights which most studies consider essential to democracy. This section briefly considers these concepts in terms of facilitating the C,R,A process. While some freedoms are indeed necessary to make democracy work, contrary to Schmitter & Karl and liberals generally, they needn't be part of the *definition* of democracy.

This opening statement has more likely piqued than soothed the reader. To illustrate the difference between necessary elements (which I take to be C,R,A) and facilitators, let us consider the concept of government transparency. Transparency means the government reveals more than it conceals, keeps only secrets which are vital to national security, and even these are likely to be available to the public eventually, as guided by a Freedom of Information Act or cognate law. Democracies as a whole are presumed to have more transparent governments, but nowhere does Schmitter and Karl's discussion of what "Democracy Is…and Is Not" mention transparency.

[43] Diamond & Plattner, pg. 18. Kausikan's brief chapter directly addresses the "Asian Values" debate and disavows the existence of a "Singapore model," favoring instead notions of pragmatic solutions to very diverse challenges of governance.

Since 2008, even the authoritarian PRC has moved markedly towards transparency with a national "Open Government Information" law (OGI).[44]

Greater transparency facilitates better governance and more meaningful popular political participation, whether the regime is democratic or authoritarian. In the PRC's "Democracy Wall" period of the late 1970s, the concept of "democratic supervision" gained official support from Deng Xiaoping.[45] Similarly, Lily Tsai points out that current levels of transparency are woefully insufficient for citizens to monitor their local officials and sanction misappropriation of funds or other malfeasance.[46] As Florini et al. state, recent government initiatives to increase transparency aren't part of a full scale effort to democratize China. "In spirit, the regulations are motivated not by notions of freedom of information or the right to know as an end or a principle in itself, but by the instrumental goal of improving governance."[47] The point here is that government transparency is *not* democracy itself, nor even a necessary part of a systematized concept, but without easy access to information, the quality of democracy is inevitably reduced.

This study argues that the same relationship applies for freedoms of speech, association, the press, though attachments of these freedoms to the standard definitions of democracy are undoubtedly stronger. In the same vein, things like the rule of law, political equality among individuals, and minority rights are very nice to have, necessary for liberal forms, but not absolutely essential to popular governance. It is different to say that concepts like these are democratic in principle than to say they are part of a definition of democracy or achieved in actually existing democratic polities. Each is likely to be present to a degree, but it is very difficult to see concepts like equality as more than an ideal.

The aforementioned facilitators not only influence the functioning of democratic regimes. They also play a major role in ideological justifications of democratization. Below, I offer a contrast between liberal and Sinocentric reasons for becoming more democratic,[48] drawn from China's historical experience.

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[44] Florini et al., pg. 126.
[45] Nathan, 1985, pg. 89.
[46] Lily Tsai, pg. 255. Without more frequent and impartial audits by the state, local government officials in the greatly "decentralized" PRC are also able to hide real problems at the local level by simply *reporting* good government and economic performance to superiors (pg. 249).
[47] Florini et al., pg. 134.
[48] Daniel A. Bell's second chapter in Bell et al., "Democracy in Confucian Societies: The Challenge of Justification," undergoes a similar exercise of delineating illiberal reasons for democratization, finding each to be instrumental and not able to be proven empirically (pg. 36).

IDEOLOGY	END OR MEANS?	WHY INHERENTLY DESIRABLE? TOWARDS WHAT END?
Liberalism	End	Empowering individuals with "democratic rights" is a fundamental, universal good.
Legitimacy	Means	Dem. Broadens the base of gov't (i.e. away from autocracy & oligarchy), leads to better governance
Populism	End	Distrust in ability of elites & bureaucrats to be selfless, act in "the people's" interest, especially those who constitute the majority. Empowers "the people" over those w/ high socioeconomic status.
Paternalism	Means	For the benefit of a strong, stable state, people's interests must be the primary concern. Elites governing "for the people" is both democratic and better than liberalism b/c the people aren't "ready" to govern.
Chinese e.20th C. Statism	Means	Democracy cultivates/frees the individual to contribute to the highest priorities: a strong state, national (race) survival. If strong state can be achieved w/out democracy, however, neither liberal nor populist dem. is worth social "disharmony." (Combines all of above)

FIG. 4: Why become more democratic? Different ideologies justify it differently, and these affect the form a polity will pursue, the strength of commitment to realizing it, and the extent to which suboptimal outcomes are tolerated before abandoning it for another political system.

As mentioned in the introduction, it is virtually impossible to make a case that the PRC is actively pursuing democratization.[49] In pursuit of legitimacy and maintaining paternalist values of guardianship, however, the regime may make incremental democratic changes.

What exactly do C,R,A, rights, freedoms, and other commonly accepted principles of democratic governance facilitate? In a transition to providing more empirical evidence, the next section uses political participation to capture large-scale democratic changes in the PRC. With the aid of increased government transparency and openness, in addition to expanded rights and freedoms, the political opportunity structure of the PRC has become more democratic than at any time since 1949. Many in the West prefer to frame the increase in contentious political activity as evidence of Ted Gurr's "grievance theory," whereby people become politically active when they are personally affected or wronged by government policy or corruption. Instead, the expansion of the facilitators described in previous paragraphs, along with an overall increase in C,R,A to be described in the last sections, has lowered the costs of political action considerably. There is clear movement, regardless of overall intent or motivation, toward a democratic ideal which sees an active citizenry as normal and desirable.

Political Participation in the PRC. This section considers the concept of political participation in theory, including the expansion of the proportion of the population with real power and how this changes with regime types. I compare totalitarianism, authoritarianism, and democracy on three participatory criteria: 1. The

[49] Chinese authors like Dingping Guo (in Huang, ed.) are apt to say that reducing authoritarian controls is the same as democratization. Again, I emphasize that democratization is a consciously begun and undertaken process, not something that instantly happens when other goals are pursued. Even in the absence of an intentional, over-arching process of democratization, however, a regime may become more democratic.

percentage of the population expected to take part in the political process, 2. Whether political acts are voluntary or coerced, and 3. How contentious "normal" political acts are allowed to be. Expanding on the third criterion, participation is also considered in the context of whether political acts show support or opposition for policies and the regime, under opening and closing "political opportunity structures." These ideas are then applied to the PRC's revolutionary and reform era history, with a vigilant eye toward examples of C,R,A.

The central presumption of mass political participation is that popular input, feedback, and support legitimize government action and existence by empowering individuals (or society) to control the state. This should result in better governance in a virtuous circle, as in the C,R,A model, the government knows what the people want and works to meet popular desires or faces sanctions from the population.

Just as regimes have types, political acts of citizens can be categorized. The kinds of action which "count" as political participation are subject to variation according to normative theories of who should be doing what in a good government, political cultures in which the same act does not have "functional equivalence" across state borders, and regimes which give citizens very different opportunities to take part in the political process. Most definitions of political participation focus on voluntary acts intended to influence policy, policymakers, or determine who is in power.[50] Mao, of course, was not an exemplar of voluntarism, so a central point of this lengthy section is that to examine the phenomenon historically, the definition must be expanded to include mandatory, coerced calls to action from the head of state down to one's *danwei* (work unit) or commune leader. The methods and extent to which the PRC engaged the public in democratic C,R,A have varied greatly, and this section will show that much of the social mobilization in the PRC's past fell far short of meaningful C,R,A. Before launching into history, some theoretical guidelines are in order, beginning with the work of Tianjian Shi.

Tianjian Shi's *Political Participation in Beijing* is not only a landmark empirical study. It also provides much theoretical value for conceptualizing political participation in an authoritarian regime, laying the groundwork for using the concept as an indicator of democratic change. Andrew Nathan's oft-cited article on "authoritarian resilience" draws heavily on Shi for examples of "input institutions" which "allow Chinese to believe that they have some influence on policy decisions and personnel choices at the local level."[51] By both Shi's and

[50] Verba, Schlozman, and Brady are the most authoritative scholars on participation, and their model of "civic voluntarism" remains a standard for participation in democracies.
[51] Nathan, 2003, pg. 14.

Nathan's accounts, shifts in the modes and stages of political participation signal subtle changes in the post-Mao PRC regime.

Shi identifies three stages of political participation: agenda setting, decision-making, and implementation, with the most popular influence in China being in the third stage by means of *guanxi* (personal connections) and attempts to "circumvent rather than influence bureaucratic decisions."[52] With hardly any competitive elections at any level of the system in the late 1980's, most meaningful political participation occurred within the *danwei* and residents' committees (RCs).[53] More C,R,A directed at social groups than official organizations at the grassroots level, as well as a shift toward the first two stages, would signal democratization in progress, and several recent works suggest that both are occurring.

C,R,A targeting social groups and individuals is obviously democratic. Amidst already existing regimes which claim political equality under the axiomatic guise of "one person, one vote" and electorates congruent with the population, however, we tend to overlook the basic importance of broadening a regime's popular base. Increasing the number of people with political power in the system is a first and most likely way that a regime will become more democratic without openly declaring a process of political liberalization. To illustrate this under-emphasized point, another figure illustrates the number of people who "govern" a polity, in theory.

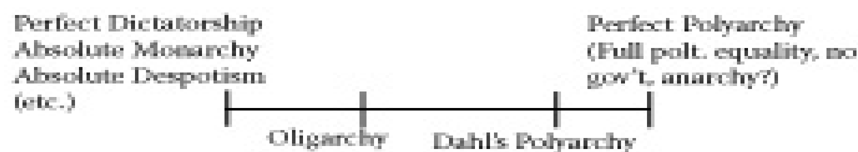

FIG. 5: How many people (what proportion of the population) govern the regime? To what extent do citizens have political equality within the regime?

In recent decades the PRC regime has increased the proportion of its population with political power at several levels. Selection of top leaders follows an almost linear expansion of both the number with real power and more democratic means of selection. While Mao Zedong occasionally chafed at the power wielded even by his closest confidant, Zhou Enlai, and cycled through several sycophantic would-be successors, Deng Xiaoping delegated responsibilities far more readily to the likes of Hu Yaobang, Zhao Ziyang, and Li Peng. Jiang Zemin's

52 Shi, pg. 9 for the stages, xi on circumvention.

53 As highlighted by Read and Xi Chen, economic reforms have decreased the prevalence and power of the former, while the latter remain highly relevant to politics on the ground level.

economic reforms were largely managed by his premier, Zhu Rongji.[54] Hu and Wen split power nearly evenly, and the Central Committee actually voted to elect the current president, Xi Jinping, and members of the new Politburo in 2007.[55] Excepting the audience member who threw his shoe at Wen Jiabao at a lecture in Britain in 2009, the highest level of PRC government is clearly more of an oligarchy than a dictatorship.[56]

Increasing the power of mid-range institutions like the People's Congresses and Chinese People's Political Consultative Congresses (CPPCCs) is covered in the empirical sections on C,R,A. In terms of expanding the ranks of politically empowered social groups, the 1982 Constitution was a watershed document which eliminated class enemies from the PRC's political vocabulary, paving the way for a "new elite" of private entrepreneurs to rise and claim political power similar to capitalists in non-communist states.[57] Jie Chen's *A Middle Class without Democracy* shows that others with rising socioeconomic status are politically active in the PRC, but in ways which support rather than challenge the authoritarian regime. As will be discussed in the empirical sections on elections, voting for local officials in rural areas now approaches universality, though the actual political influence of these contests is still very much in question.[58] Even groups which have been "losers" in the reform era, urban factory workers who lost their "iron rice bowls" with the privatization of State-owned Enterprises, have seen greater tolerance of and responsiveness to protests.[59] In short, the PRC is both co-opting and genuinely empowering social groups which might otherwise threaten CCP rule with means of political participation. Despite the strategy of CCP self-preservation, greater political inclusiveness for any reason should also be considered in terms of democratic enabling. A bit more theoretical discussion follows to guide the historical narrative of political participation in terms of regime types, continuing with the figure below.

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[54] Saich, pg. 88-92.

[55] Florini et al., pg. 72-3, note that use of voting within the Party had to be kept in low profile.

[56] Nathan's 2003 article is also prescient for seeing greater institutionalization of selection methods for top leadership by the earlier transition to Hu and Wen.

[57] See Kellee Tsai, Chen & Touve for accounts of how private businesspeople came to be appreciated as driving national economic development and eventually allowed in the CCP as part of Jiang Zemin's "Three Represents" reforms.

[58] While healthy skepticism is the prudent position from which to evaluate single-candidate or single-party elections, Martinez-Bravo et al. demonstrate empirically that elections make officials more accountable. As cited in Dali Yang's *Remaking the Chinese Leviathan*, innovations can even ensure single-candidate elections are effective in this regard.

[59] Lee, Solinger, and Wright all devote considerable attention to the plight of laid off workers and the insufficient compensation they have received from a still inchoate welfare state. More research on whether they actually found the more socialist era more democratic than the present would be very interesting. I suspect they would.

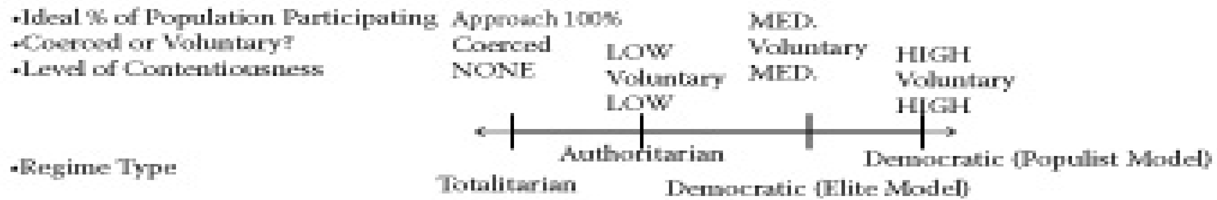

FIG. 6: Political participation expectations on a continuum of regime types. Note that democracies with mandatory voting laws challenge the expectation that participation be voluntary rather than coerced.

The basic expectations for how the masses are to contribute to the functioning of their political regime or influence policymaking and implementation are outlined by Linz and Stepan, the former having coined "authoritarianism."[60] To summarize the figure above, both totalitarian and democratic regimes rely on specific forms of popular political participation to function, with a majority of the population engaged.[61] Authoritarianism, in contrast to both, would prefer to foster a "parochial" or "subject" political culture within the polity, rather than encouraging residents to become participatory citizens with an interest or duty to express their political preferences.[62] A sizable portion of the population may be politically active under an authoritarian regime, but the types of acts and the extent to which they differ from official statements and policies are likely to be severely proscribed.

The second criterion in FIG. 6 is whether the citizen's political act was done under duress. As mentioned at the beginning of this section, considering political participation across regime types requires inclusion of acts which are essentially coerced, such as taking part in mass movements. While the authoritarian regime requires much less of its citizens in terms of participation, not all political acts will be voluntary, especially in the post-totalitarian stage of the transition. Even today's PRC, for example, subtle political requirements are placed on graduate students to be well versed in Marxism, even if they study the hard sciences, humanities, or other topics with no obvious political connection. Additionally, and in terms covered by Verba et al.'s civic

60 Only in the 2000 update to his *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes* does Linz really address Asia directly, and China only very briefly. The concepts themselves may be inextricably tied to the regions in the title of Linz and Stepan's collaboration on democratic transitions.

61 Elitist theories of democracy question whether governance of the polity benefits as participation approaches 100% of the population. Too much participation from the unwashed masses would likely involve gridlock, a divided populace, or worse, violence. In a similar vein, liberal democracy would object to forcing those not interested in politics to participate, while elitists again suggest that doing so empowers those with low knowledge.

62 These "orientations" come from Almond & Verba's classic, *The Civic Culture*, and should not be confused with normative evaluations of a regime's political institutions ranging from congruence and approval to "alienation." (A strong democrat under a non-democratic regime, for example, feels alienated by his/her polity's political institutions.) Elite Chinese "reformers" like Yan Fu and Kang Youwei, of the early 20th century in addition to Lucian Pye in the latter half, saw traditional Chinese elitism as an obstacle to democratization because it was far more compatible with authoritarianism.

voluntarism, the most normal acts of political participation, especially voting, may have a strong sense of duty attached to them. Peer and other pressures from social and political organizations also impinge on how voluntary a particular political act may be, but overall, the consequences of not acting are far less severe than in a totalitarian system. C,R,A on a basis which coerces the citizen to participate would be notably rare but still democratic.

The third criterion, contentiousness, refers both to how challenging the participation of citizens can be to the officially stated positions of the government and to how much diversity of opinion can be expressed. Some, such as Sidney Tarrow, define "contentious politics" as strictly collective activity outside of the regime's political institutions. Such a narrow definition would exclude the category-blurring, titular term used by Xi Chen, "contentious authoritarianism." I agree with Chen that formerly illegal or unconventional political behaviors like protests can be normalized without the creation of a new institution or even much noticeable change to existing laws. A primary advantage and strategy of "people power" in any regime is to make an illegal act so widespread as to make enforcement of the specific law prohibiting it impractical, though few states are as adept as the PRC at "making an example" of a few individuals or arresting leaders and organizers to counter such tactics. State-society-individual relationships have undergone many changes in the PRC, and each has increasingly learned how to challenge the next level up or down—to become more contentious—without stepping outside the boundaries of "normal politics" in the PRC.[63] As mentioned in the introduction, bottom-up democratic change may occur this way and be quite against the regime's preferences for order and stability. If social groups or individuals want more political influence, they may seize it without waiting for an institution to channel it in an orderly fashion, hoping that their actions will not be punished.

If authoritarian states in general allow only political acts which express support for the regime and its policies, it would be useful to outline and incorporate what David Easton sees as the two primary types of support which may be expressed or withheld. Very briefly, diffuse support is said to be directed toward the regime, and specific support of actual policies is a measure of citizen's satisfaction which may fluctuate more without threatening the regime's stability.[64] Both of these forms require at least some interest in politics, though

[63] In Andrew Mertha's "Fragmented Authoritarianism 2.0," citizens know the rules of political participation and push them to their limits to achieve policy goals.
[64] What keeps authoritarian regimes vigilant most of the time is the potential for specific opposition to change rapidly, often in the face of non-responsiveness or incompetence at relieving discontent, into diffuse opposition.

perhaps when mobilized into shouting slogans on the street, the number and volume of supporters become more important than the depth or sophistication of support. An interesting comparison can be made with democracies by noting whether more supportive citizen participation will be observed (and self-defined) by citizens of authoritarian states than of democratic ones, as one of the major reasons why the latter are more critical is that they are *allowed* to be.

Democratic citizens holding what Shin calls "individualist values" are likely to find authoritarian regimes wholly unacceptable. In actually democratic regimes, however, this does not generally translate into overt displays of diffuse support, as is common to an often spectacular and ridiculous degree in totalitarian states. Instead the democratic regime is more often criticized for the areas in which it falls short of citizens' democratic ideals, as in the notion of Pippa Norris' "critical citizens."

In the eyes of an authoritarian regime like the PRC's, acts which express diffuse opposition—pro-democracy protests foremost among them—likely remain prohibited even as the regime becomes more democratic in terms of C,R,A.[65] The theoretical expectations outlined in FIGURE 6 can be compared to how the PRC has either demanded, encouraged, tolerated, discouraged, or banned individual acts of political participation through time, as below in FIGURE 7. Regimes' preferences and laws affect "political opportunity structures (POS)" fundamentally, and a particular POS has strong implications for explanations of individuals becoming "politicized" because they suddenly find their interests threatened or breached.

[65] As one resident of Zhangye, Gansu, who was particularly proud of the extent the PRC had reformed by 2004, told me, "We have just as much freedom of speech as you do." When I challenged him on grounds that he can't criticize the CCP freely, he responded that the American government doesn't allow citizens to plot to overthrow it or assassinate people. There is a slight difference of scale, but this anecdote suggests that the regime certainly has its optimistic defenders.

Regime Stance↓ Regime Type→	Totalitarian	Authoritarian	Democratic
Involuntary/Dictated	·Part. in "mass movement" political campaigns ·Voting		·Tolerance?
Encouraged/Expected	·Polt. enthusiasm/general support ·Cooperation with RCs & 单位	·Cooperation with RCs & 单位 ·General support of CCP or being apolitical	·Cooperation with RCs & 单位 ·Voting ·Signing Petitions ·Part. in NGOs ·Input & feedback on policy formation/implementation
Accepted/Tolerated (Carefully Managed by the State)	·Just "going through the motions" · "Contacting" for 关系 ·Part. in C.Rev. factions	· "Contacting" for 关系 ·Part. in GONGOs ·Criticism of policy ·*Licensed* street protest ·Signing petitions ·大字报	· "Contacting" for 关系 ·Street protest ·Worker strikes ·Volunteering for openly campaigning candidates
Discouraged	·Disunity & debate (Pluralism)	·Criticism of CCP, past leaders/policies/events ·Discussion of "sensitive topics" ·Suing the gov't	· "Buying the vote" w/ bribes or large campaign contributions ·Non-CCP candidates
Banned/Persecuted (by Society)	·Criticism of official ideology, Mao	·Discussion of a few "very sensitive topics"	·Advocating a return to totalitarian regime? ·Hate speech?
Banned/Prosecuted (in Courts)	·Non-Participation ·General dissent	·Unlicensed street protest ·Threats to "social stability" ·Public calls for democratization ·Rioting	·Plotting to overthrow the regime or assassinate

FIG. 7: How have PRC regimes viewed individual acts of political participation? This is entirely speculative, has a few continuities, and plenty of gray areas left intentionally vague.

Acknowledging some expansion of rights and improvement in governance allows us to pose questions to 1989 protesters as to whether their movement should be viewed as a success, with many of their demands now met by the regime (liberal democracy and corruption reduction notably excepted). Cheng Li still finds institutions of "public participation" to be "seriously limited," but they clearly exist and have expanded, compared to the recent

past in FIG.7 above.[66] The following historical discussion of political action in the Mao and Deng eras is overly brief, but it provides a background for showing contrasts in the contemporary PRC of the final three sections.

Any topic of the early PRC must be filtered through the political campaigns concocted by Mao Zedong. Just as the term "chairman" has gone out of style to denote the PRC's top leader, totalitarian politics saw its era come and go with Mao's passing. What continues to confound many Western political theorists is how this era of dictatorship could be confused by the Dear Leader and so many ordinary Chinese with democracy. Rhetorically at least, the dictatorship of the era lay not in Mao's godlike person but in the (rural) proletariat class, whom the PRC was founded to empower. Following the "mass line" under "socialist democracy" was quite compatible with high levels of popular political participation, but the direction of power has been seen by virtually all outside accounts to be top-down.[67] We can expect that the fervor with which Chinese citizens took part in mass movements will become more difficult to imagine with time, as few contemporaries are taken with ideology generally, let alone one guided by a utopian vision which benevolent demigods can only realize with extremely dedicated masses. While Saich's chapter on participation and protest carefully avoids the term "totalitarian," he does note that Mao found it insufficient "to accept a policy passively—one must be seen to support it actively."[68]

Excluding the Great Leap Forward and Anti-rightist Movement, which tend to get the majority of Western attention, there is much evidence that radical political reforms like land redistribution were undertaken with much enthusiasm by the majority of the population. Land reform, while clearly beneficial to a large proportion of the population and dependent on the benefactors to carry it out, required a revolutionary government to provide the opportunity for mass participation.[69] Mass canteens, backyard furnaces, and agricultural practices based on Lysenkoist pseudoscience all demonstrated that following ideological leaders could easily lead to disaster, but other than the very brief "100 Flowers" period, there was very little political space for dissent or even discussion of government policy. The 100 Flowers Campaign actually might have been a good example of democratic consultation, had the response following the airing of criticism not been the Anti-Rightist

[66] Li, pg. 603.
[67] Esherick et al.'s introduction to *The Cultural Revolution as History* notes that the "first generation" of scholarship on the Cultural Revolution, published before the event had concluded, disputed the top-down nature of the movement, seeing instead genuine grassroots action. As a body of work, early studies comprised a "specialized scholarly literature that looked remarkably unlike anything connected with the term totalitarianism" (pg. 3).
[68] Saich, pg. 210.
[69] Linz, pg. 107, finds China especially good at "using the whole community in the process of repression—the "speaking bitterness" against landlords and efforts towards "thought reform" with the participation of the work group or the community." Truly, the CCP alone could not accomplish its revolutionary goals without massive aid.

Campaign directed specifically at those who had participated. Fundamentally, for democracy to result from C,R,A, punishment of participants must be out of the question.[70]

To call the Cultural Revolution anything but contentious, both in terms of historiography and actual events, would be dishonest. Stanley Rosen's review of *Mao's Last Revolution* notes that "[l]oyalty to Mao the person became more important than loyalty to his policies."[71] Given that Mao was more interested in the big picture than the details of policy even in his younger years, the dictator's detached distance opened wide the possibility for conflict, though only within the constrained context of precisely how it would bring China's salvation and who were its true disciples. "Struggle sessions" to denounce a counter-revolutionary authority figure might be another example of consulting the people in a pseudo-democratic manner. These were highly participatory, but also had almost no space for discussion or disagreement—only a scripted harangue and list of crimes deliberated by a mob jury.

Later, Zhao Ziyang referred occasionally to the Cultural Revolution as an example of what happened when there was too much political participation.[72] The Hundred Flowers and Democracy Wall served similarly to raise party suspicion about any form of participation "that took place outside of its direct control."[73] This theme of comparison is made more explicitly by Calhoun and Wasserstrom, who find that the many older Chinese were hesitant to join in the later, more voluntary movement, despite having experienced the consequences of *not* participating to be just as dangerous.[74] By the end of the revolutionary period, in sum, attempts at real grassroots political participation which would be expected to receive a more constructive response in a democratic system, were summarily stifled in the transition to authoritarianism.

By most accounts, Deng Xiaoping deserves the most credit for making China the rising power it is today, and this was accomplished by jettisoning Marxist economics for the intentionally vague "socialism with Chinese characteristics," able to accommodate myriad contradictions and justify whatever policies top leaders deemed necessary. Although "revolution" continued to be a holy word for the regime, according to Liu Xiaobo, the role of

[70] A problem which complicates such a stark statement is who should be the target of criticism or punishment when a policy with a great deal of popular support goes terribly wrong. Certainly "the people" are fallible but also unlikely to admit to collective mistakes. A dutiful official who acted on clearly stated popular preferences is unfortunately more likely to receive the blame for failures in these cases. Requiring a supermajority or otherwise enacting anti-majoritarian procedures for decisions would be an unappealing alternative for a populist democrat.
[71] Rosen, pg. 806.
[72] Baum, pg. 221. As alternatives, consultative institutions between the government and the people needed to be strengthened.
[73] Saich, pg. 211.
[74] Calhoun & Wasserstrom, pg. 39: "the apparently risk-averse strategy of failing to get involved was often punished."

ideology behind any major changes certainly declined. Furthermore, the use of voting, even as most elections were non-competitive and none were multi-party, taking part in the Chinese political process of the 1980's and 1990's took on at least a superficial resemblance to the kind studied in the majority of political science literature.

In rural areas, Godwin C. Chu claims that farmers traded their unconditional loyalty to the party for an assertiveness after they had "become property owners, though still in a marginal way, and they wanted to protect their economic gains."[75] Reflecting more institutional than cultural change, Chi-yu Shih found that rural minorities participated in elections in the mid-1990's, which are given as the most obvious indicator of democratization, fearing that such action might lead to disunity rather than consensus.[76] This appears to have changed by the time Landry et al. conducted their research, in 2004, as they found that when some candidates lose—meaning that elections are contested—voter turnout rose in the villages they studied.

No other political gatherings in Tiananmen Square in the Reform Era will ever garner the attention of the 1989 crackdown, the quintessential event of contentious Chinese politics under Deng. Students, workers, and urban residents went far outside of approved channels to express their political preferences in 1989, but Ho-Fung Hung's concluding chapter finds many parallels between the "repertoires" of modern protesters and those of the mid-Qing. Where the 1980's as a whole vacillated between liberal and conservative "opportunity structures," the end of the decade erased once and for all any hopes that the earlier Democracy Wall movement was the start of something big and liberal in the PRC. The *Time* "man of the year" Deng was replaced with the brutal authoritarian dictator Deng in the West's popular imagination, and the point was made loudly and clearly that problems and mistakes should always be corrected by the Party itself.[77] Popular political participation could only be superfluous and interfere with the workings of the Party. Lessons likely learned by the regime include the importance of preventing local or group-specific dissidents from uniting, to capture the leaders and organizers beyond the public eye rather than using massive repression, yet the third chapter in Ian Johnson's *Wild Grass* shows how the Falun Gong rallies still caught the CCP unaware and unprepared.

[75] Chu in Hua (Ed.), pg. 60. Rising peasant protest is also given as a reason for expanding experiments with rural elections. This amounts to a significant change in political culture, short of calling for liberal democracy, but using the organizational skills gained in the Cultural Revolution to "organize mass demonstrations" (pg. 63).
[76] Shih, on pg. 293, also claims that the competitiveness of the elections made little difference to the voters who were interviewed.
[77] Nathan, 1985, pg. 37 makes this point more in reference to the Democracy Wall movement, though 1989 really drove this point home.

Journalistic accounts like Ian Johnson's and Philip Pan's both focus on biographical narratives which lend support to Gurr's grievance theory: portraits show heroic individuals who "were never political in the past" stepping outside their comfort zones to confront the government for wrongs inflicted. Recent social science approaches, in stark contrast, appeal to a more academic epistemology, and studies like Dalton et. al's 2009 article use a "hierarchical linear model" to find strong support for a resource-centric explanation of increased protest in the PRC. Xi Chen expands on both by accounting for the gradual opening of the PRC regime to citizen input in its "political opportunity structure," away from a "closed" system.[78] Neither of the latter two theoretical or methodological approaches precludes journalists from acknowledging the role of people having more resources and opportunities to express their dissent, both improvements provided by the regime, to an extent. Individual heroism simply makes for a more engaging narrative, geared largely toward a non-academic audience.[79] Grievance theory is particularly amenable to rights-based narratives and better fits the current Western narrative that the CCP regime is no longer totalitarian but still highly oppressive and decidedly not becoming more democratic.

To close this section, Ethan Lieb and Baogang He assert that a regime is not democratic simply because it is participatory.[80] The people's participation must have a clear and direct connection to political outcomes. In other words, political action should be clearly connected to democratic elements of C,R,A. Three long awaited empirical sections follow, with copious examples of how the contemporary PRC has broadened and deepened practices and institutions of C,R,A. As some examples overlap conceptually, it is necessary to outline how I have categorized particular practices. Elections, the CPPCCs, deliberative experiments and institutions, government websites, and public polls by the media are in the consultation section. Protests and government service centers are in the responsiveness section. Dali Yang's "administrative rationalization", Lily Tsai's "solidary groups," petitions, "Letters and Visits," and courts are in the accountability section.

Consultation in the PRC. For much of the Reform Era, the CCP has been able to cloak its authoritarian leadership in the legitimizing pillars of economic development and nationalism. As long as this over-arching goal and ideology were satisfied, leaders may have felt little need to ask what the people wanted. The pretense that the government can both manipulate popular desires and know them without asking becomes less tenable as the

[78] Xie & Van Der Heijden's article on environmental movements also discusses POS at considerable length.
[79] Such audiences may also be forgiven for taking journalistic accounts of individuals to be aggregatable into a conclusive proof for the "grievance theory" approach.
[80] Lieb & He (Eds.), pg. 134, note that a polity may deliberate without democracy or be democratic without deliberation. State-sponsored deliberation has low authenticity (pg. 139), but within an authoritarian state it can be a "governance-driven democratization process" (pg. 146).

people's expectations inevitably rise and diversify.[81] This section considers changes of degree and kind regarding how the government solicits information from citizens, especially in terms of elections and media.

Elections in China are the foundation not of democracy, but of 自治, *zizhi* or "self-government," as practiced in rural areas. Interestingly, *zizhi* is the same term used for autonomy, as in regions populated by ethnic minorities, was the term used at the end of the Qing for election to the national assembly, but is not to my knowledge invoked in contests for local people's congresses in urban areas. The minimal or complete lack of competition between candidates is decried in the West, and in this study's terms can be understood as an insincere consultation. There is no real point in asking who people want to govern if their options will all toe precisely the same "party line." Yet turnout rates are at least comparable to those in Western democracies, and studies like Tianjian Shi's (1999) and Landry et al.'s show that having more than one candidate is sufficient competition to interest voters, even if both or all are CCP members.

Still, in representative democracy, elections without the referenda of "direct" democracy reveal at most which candidate a majority wishes to hold office. This is far from popular will unless supplemented by frequent contacting, by no means guaranteed in the PRC or most liberal states. Nor will the elected official necessarily ask his/her constituents' opinions on every issue over the course of his/her term. The result is most likely a "thin" democracy increasingly discounted by political theorists in favor of "thick" versions which would result from more popular deliberation.[82]

Two institutions which could, in theory, be deliberative are the unwieldy CPPCCs, Chinese People's Political Consultation Conferences, and Public Hearing Meetings (PHMs). Baogang Guo sees real potential for CPPCCs to lead eventually to deliberative democracy. He lists four types of consultation related to these conferences, based on the type of decision to be made, among policy, legislation, personnel, and (large) projects, noting that the number of proposals submitted to these has gradually increased in the past decade. While many improvements in the consultation system have been noted, he finds fault in that these conferences are still only

[81] Again, Shambaugh takes this to be the regime's primary challenge for the future: meeting rising expectations. This conforms to the "reverse J-curve" approach to democratization, whereby a regime can survive by making incremental improvements in governance, but eventually incremental improvements will slow or stop while popular expectations continue to rise or even accelerate, based on past successes. When the non-democratic regime can no longer meet the people's expectations, they demand democratization.

[82] Since 1990, democratic political theory has taken what John Dryzek calls a "deliberative turn" away from elections as the institution du jour. His chapter in Gaus & Kukathas offers several alternatives and supplements to elections.

advisory, lacking "teeth" and adequate resources in addition to the usual problems of bureaucratization and unelected appointment of CPPCC members.[83]

If the CPPCC's still sound too official and exclusive of the general public, Ning Zhang's work investigates a theoretically more inclusive institution, "Public Hearing Meetings" or PHM's, with great potential for popular deliberation on policy, should the government choose to reform their structure. Experiments with these occasional, topical meetings are similarly constrained by a "hegemonic discourse" which can apparently only be analyzed to date in terms of whether popular response to the plans announced by the party are "supportive, neutral," or very rarely "challenging."[84]

If deliberation is a step up from basic consultation, some scholars have found examples which at least allow elites to have a say in the policymaking process. Michael Dowdle, in describing the Party's struggles with accepting pluralist conceptions of the public good, finds considerable evidence that bodies like the National People's Congress must consult with ever wider subsections of the population to achieve "substantive competence" in drafting laws.[85] Dali Yang also finds that the Legislation Law of 2000 has significantly increased the national and local legislatures' transparency, allowing for draft laws to be "routinely made available…for public comment."[86] Both of these examples, however, pale in comparison to the reform of national healthcare reforms in 2009.

Yoel Korneich and two co-authors have suggested in a recent article that Chinese leadership since the SARS crisis has been increasingly open to public suggestions for new agendas. The authors suggest that, on an elite level, real deliberation on Chinese healthcare options did occur, along with countless responses online for suggestions and complaints from average people. While the impact on the final draft of policy turned out to be "limited," and this by no means signaled the beginnings of full scale democratization, the government's solicitation of the public "attest[s] to an emerging form of participatory policymaking process in authoritarian regimes" which

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[83] Guo, pg. 70-74.

[84] Ning Zhang currently studies PHM's, though I don't know if she has published anything yet. The terms are from a handout given at UCI in 2012.

[85] In Goldman & Perry (Eds.), 2002, pg. 331.

[86] Yang, pg. 167.

could be repeated in the PRC on other issues and replicated elsewhere.[87] Other examples are perhaps less significant but still worth citing to show this was not an isolated incident of deliberation.

James Fishkin et al. sought in 2010 to show that deliberation is not just for ad hoc issues or more advanced democracies. Zeguo township in Wenling City conducted deliberative polling to collect average citizens' opinions on a variety of issues, with results that township leaders found "surprising."[88] In an illuminating but overall pessimistic book, Joseph Fewsmith finds the twice-monthly democratic consultation meetings in Wenling to be the most "successfully sustained" example of a meaningful institution for popular feedback on government policies, even evolving from mere announcements to actual debate.[89] He gives other examples of C,R,A in Maliu Township in Chongqing and the practice of vetting candidates publicly in Suqian, Jiangsu, but these are tainted by extreme circumstances: in Maliu the residents are desperately driven to extremely close supervision of government officials because the township is hopelessly mired in debt; in Suqian everything else about the leader who began the "public showings" was dictatorial.[90] These examples are presented as fascinating failures in democratization rather than minor successes, and especially if they are not as exceptional as Fewsmith portrays them, they are nothing to sneeze at in an authoritarian state.

Technology and mass media offer one more convenient portal for the government to solicit public opinion. Tianjian Shi again notes that the practice of writing to the media is not new. In the past, letters to the media were handled by the "Masses Work Office" for each media outlet, and the *People's Daily* received 800,000 citizen letters in 1979.[91] In the digital era, citizen letters and polls are a means of "scientific government, creating a direct channel of communication between the Party and the People," according to James Reilly.[92] Min Jiang and Heng Xu are more sanguine about the limited potential for real deliberation and discussion of politics in their survey of government web portals, but they do see real benefits of increasing transparency and accountability. Jiang and Xu agree with Patricia Thornton's chapter on opinion polling online: government websites and online

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[87] Korneich, MA Thesis, pg. 36. He suggests also that the entire ordeal of was not only a cathartic chance for the public to air its grievances with the previous system but also a golden opportunity for the government to show off its responsiveness.
[88] Fishkin et al., pg. 446, describes leaders who did not realize that common people cared so much about environmental protection.
[89] For the unintended moment when debate broke out, pg. 157, for praise as the only real success in China, pg. 166.
[90] Fewsmith, pg. 42-52 for Maliu, pg. 52-65 for Suqian.
[91] Shi, 1997, pg. 64-5. On pg. 66 he asks if this is real bottom-up communication revealing the popular will.
[92] Reilly pg. 129. He says that the media and internet create a "new opinion class" who are needed for the concept of "supervision by public opinion, *yulun jiandu*" (pg. 221-2). The opening of Yuezhi Zhao's chapter in Perry & Goldman (2007) makes light of the regime's use of technology, citing a possible member of the "50-cent army" who praises Hu Jintao's first foray online as the beginning of "internet democracy" in the PRC.

media outlets only ask about "safe" topics which are likely to have obviously "correct" answers, thereby "domesticating rather than measuring opinions" with limited choices.[93] Even if the topics are as bland as whether the CCP is meeting its policy goals, these polls can still communicate valuable information for the Party to gauge its popularity and know when to go ahead with an initiative or go back to the drawing board if opposition is strong enough to pierce leading questions.

In contrast to these tepid accounts of online consultation, Xiao Qiang finds a highly significant role for Chinese netizens to play in the political process.[94] As citizen blogs frequently get the scoop on the more cautious mainstream media, Qiang believes that liberal bloggers can set the "public agenda." This means bringing to the fore events and issues that the censors have yet to consider, and with enough public attention, online postings can spread like wildfire. In the extreme, viral online news not only makes censorship impossible but also occasionally forces the Party to comment on matters it would rather ignore or silence. Less subversively, Qiang sees opportunities online for "more forward-looking officials" to "cheaply collect information about society, to be more responsive to citizens' concerns, and to provide a safety valve that releases public anger."[95] For the time being, the regime remains pro-internet, in Qiang's view, and the web remains a source of hope for democracy in China as well as other, less tech-savvy authoritarian countries. Other than Qiang's contribution, this section offered more top-down examples of becoming more democratic. The next gives more examples of social groups making unsolicited demands on the government.

Responsiveness in the PRC. By William Riker's own account, the liberal model of democracy can, at best, ensure that governments who govern against popular will not govern long, as these unpopular administrations will inevitably lose elections.[96] While riots and revolutions can also be effective at "throwing the rascals out" of top positions, losing an election is likely a less costly method for both state and society than "democracy by other means". In both cases, "the people" who proudly take part in these political acts may have loftily naïve beliefs about what they can accomplish: what is needed for the people's participation to have an

[93] Heilmann & Perry (eds.), pg. 241. Thornton takes the practice of online polling as the way to find the "mass line" for the 21st century. The Party, she believes, is still very much concerned about the dangers of unguided public opinion and therefore is using the polls to depoliticize Chinese society.
[94] Xiao Qiang's chapter, "The Rise of Online Public Opinion and Its Political Impact," is in Susan Shirk's edited volume from 2011.
[95] Shirk, pg. 221. "…the internet can also help hold local officials more accountable—to central authorities as well as to the public."
[96] This can be used as an argument against term limits, as the accountability mechanism might only function where the same candidate can be elected indefinitely. Voters might also punish a party, but in both cases the results are mixed—incumbents generally win reelection even when sizable portions of their constituencies think they are doing terribly. As impeachment is even rarer than incumbent defeat, the likelihood of a woefully incompetent or unpopular leader maintaining office through the end of an elected term is still very high.

effect, for the people to rule, is a responsive and accountable government.

Baogang He cites the legacy of disastrous PRC mass movements to suggest that no contemporary regime can afford to ignore negative policy feedback without undesirable results, but even liberal democracies' relationship with public opinion is mixed. Even in the presence of fully implemented liberal democratic institutions, there is no guarantee that the government will respond to popular demands. This section considers unsolicited demands by the public for political action, including protests and a campaign to end a repressive institution of "custody and repatriation."

In terms of instantaneous government responsiveness, few liberal democracies could do better than the "government affairs supermarkets (GAS)" in Xiaguan, Jiangsu. Offering over 50 administrative services in one location, Florini et al. describe the process as smoother than ordering fast food. A single staff member works with members of the public "until the issue is resolved to the client's satisfaction." This innovative government institution has greatly increased government transparency, enabling more efficiency and a reduction of corruption. By the authors' account, the GAS also solicits feedback and evaluations from citizens, with the highly significant results that the government is more accessible and less powerful over society.[97]

The PRC is a rare case of an authoritarian regime which tolerates or even encourages protest, perhaps the most visible and contentious act in a citizen's reportoire. Authors like Peter Hays Gries and James Reilly document nationalist protest, tolerated but not coordinated by the state, as a new, though historically rooted phenomenon. Similar to anti-foreign popular protests in the early 20th century against war treaties unfavorable to China, Gries shows how anti-American and anti-Japan demonstrations in the late 1990's, repeated in the latter case in the mid- and late 2000's, are both popular and based in a concept of a national psyche for having suffered a "century of humiliation." The CCP of the 2000's incorporates public opinion into more and more aspects of governance, now even including foreign affairs with Japan, which Reilly connects directly with anti-Japanese demonstrations in the past decade. Some make a strong case that the most recent round of nationalist protest has actually involved state sponsorship, acknowledging the social pressures a little street demonstration helps to relieve.[98] But there is no doubt that even if xenophobia has been carefully inculcated in schools and managed by

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[97] Florini et al., pg. 57-9 for the quotation and full descriptions of the modern conveniences of GAS usage. Some of the authors' glowing remarks seem too good to be true, and one wonders if they received a special Potemkin Village tour on which to base their observations.

[98] See www.chinageeks.org for these assertions.

the party, such sentiments are genuine and being expressed more freely and more often by those who believe China's economic rise should include a redressing of past wrongs on the global stage.[99] Popular expression of perceived national interests is apparently less challenging than those of disenfranchised workers and farmers because these latter critics blame local and national governments for policies and deeds more obviously in the party's full control, but even these have become more normalized, judging from a comparison of Ching Kwan Lee's *Against the Law* and Xi Chen's recent book.[100]

Jessica C. Teets provides another recent example of the CCP co-opting society to meet its goals of appearing responsive to the public, though her concept of "consultative authoritarianism" fits better here than in the previous section. She finds many examples of "civil society" groups and individuals who are content with better government within authoritarianism over democratization. The government has of late been quite adept at using its GONGOs [101]to solve social problems, providing better goods and services without challenging the Party. In short, the government and social groups in her model recognize the comparative advantage of working together, with the government appearing more responsive and the volunteers satisfying their desire to do good in their communities.

Teets' example fits nicely within Andrew Mertha's concept of "fragmented authoritarianism 2.0," in which concerned groups with a good understanding of "the rules" of political participation in the CCP insert themselves into "openings for influence" created by fast socioeconomic change. As long as such groups continue to demonstrate loyalty to the regime, they will be counted on as a source of information and can affect "the policy-*making* process, not simply the *implementation* of policy already agreed upon in Beijing."[102] Recalling Tianjian Shi's three stages of influence, this is a clear example of democratic change which prolongs the life of an authoritarian regime. Such powerful individuals in fragmented authoritarianism are not satisfied with simply resisting bad policies; they seek and often succeed in changing and influencing the process to create good policies

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[99] Also in international terms, many nationalists favor intervention in Burma to stop ethnic conflicts from spilling into Yunnan. Thompson suggests that the CCP is holding to its commitment not to interfere in the "internal affairs" of other states, but this example shows the possible dangers involved in democratizing fully.

[100] This is to say that Chen believes times have changed since Lee wrote. Protests are now much more common, and even leaders needn't worry as much about being prosecuted afterwards.

[101] Government-Operated Non-Government Organizations, one of the contemporary PRC's finest oxymorons. In addition to chuckling at the regime's finding good Samaritans and environmental activists to be a potential threat, the expansion of these groups should be taken as a real example of becoming more democratic with more meaningful political participation. Better still and likely more legible to the West would be allowing INGOs greater access to the PRC or dropping the GO- requirement altogether.

[102] Mertha, pg. 999. Emphasis in original.

in line with their interests. In cases like these, the reduction of repression is a like a non-response to contentious political participation—if certain acts are no longer punished, actors are encouraged to repeat them and emboldened to "push the envelope" of what the regime will tolerate.

Another novel concept with a lot of overlap between C,R,A and Mertha's modifier, the "responsive authoritarianism" James Reilly uses to describe the current PRC regime, is worth considerable attention. The term suggests that only one of the three elements may be obviously present, but the presence of *any* should challenge a designation as pure authoritarianism. As previously mentioned, all regimes must respond to sufficiently organized, popular movements, but responding in and of itself does not indicate that the people rule.[103] In the case of Reilly's term, when only responsiveness is present, this suggests that the regime would *rather not* consider the people's preferences, but is effectively forced to do so. The result is "social liberalization without political democratization," whereby government non-response to the people's expressed preferences causes mobilization, described elsewhere as "the Wukan Model".[104] According to Robert Weller, violence may sometimes be the only way to get higher authorities' attention to a non-responsive local government,[105] but although this empowers the people, again retroactively, the reactionary nature of the process hardly seems democratic. Instead, responsive authoritarianism consists of what Reilly calls "alternative techniques to assess and respond to select segments of public opinion" while *staving off* democratization.[106] If consultation and accountability were also evident in these cases, and the objectives of the villagers could be accomplished without violence, this would closely approximate this study's definition of democracy. Without them, and with violence in their place, one suspects that greater awareness within China of events like Wukan would diminish popular democratic perceptions of Chinese citizens rather than fortifying them. Violent events and terms like responsive authoritarianism do not harm my argument; rather, they show that while democracy has yet to be achieved in the PRC, trajectories toward it can be perceived.

[103]Responding only to a single, well-organized "mass incident" especially would not denote democracy, but if such tactics are repeated to the point where they (or some other method short of protest, such as threats to take to the streets if a particular demand isn't met) become routinized, the process begins to resemble democratic responsiveness, albeit still adversarial, inefficient, and of highly questionable institutionalization. Officials may never like to act on popular demands, but whenever they do it's worth asking the extent to which democracy is operative.

[104]Reilly, pg. 130. Stanley Lubman describes the model, essentially one in which the public takes collective, violent action against corrupt government officials, especially in retaliation for illicit sales of land, in a blog post in the *Wall St. Journal*: http://blogs.wsj.com/chinarealtime/2012/11/19/wukan-still-unsolved-and-still-significant/

[105]Gilley & Diamond, pg. 129.

[106]Reilly correctly notes, later on pg. 220, that his primary concern, foreign policy, is a "difficult case" to show the influence of public opinion. Popular demands for a harder line against Japan may well be made by a majority, but the CCP must toe a line between allowing these to be expressed in street protests without damaging relations with a major trading partner.

As mentioned throughout this study, Xi Chen's 2012 *Social Protest and Contentious Authoritarianism in China* strongly disagrees that violence and punishment are all that ever result from protests. Instead, he finds that "troublemaking tactics" are effective as "tolerable but undesirable from the standpoint of the authorities," who are genuinely "constrained by the general ideological and institutional framework of mass line politics."[107] Furthermore, he claims that "social protests in China can best be understood as contentious bargaining," part of a strategy of "popular contention" in the absence of other institutions to moderate political conflict.[108] For largely the same reasons of preserving moral standing described by Lily Tsai, officials are moved by symbolic gestures of loyalty from citizens and may feel their role and responsibility as a virtuous official affirmed by less confrontational acts of protest, such as petitions presented on bent knees, with wailing accompaniment.

Philip Pan's *Out of Mao's Shadow* offers one more concrete example of what can happen when widespread public outcry results from media publicity of a repressive institution which enabled police brutality. After an editor for the *Southern Metropolis Daily* published a shocking article about a university graduate who was beaten to death in a *shourong* station[109] in 2003, the issue caught the attention of Premier Wen Jiabao. Students and law professors in Beijing had made a request that the National People's Congress review the constitutionality of such stations previously, and the news story raised public awareness of this small campaign greatly. Wen "convened a meeting of his cabinet and abolished the *shourong* regulations, effective immediately," and the nation's 700 stations were shut down.[110] This extreme example is unique not only for the government's swift, positive response, but also for the number of actors and institutions which were involved. It is suggests that institutional injustices which had gone largely unnoticed throughout the reform era could no longer be kept secret and inevitably became intolerable to an engaged public and a responsive government. Invoking the constitution, as in Pan's example, is also becoming a frequent tactic for citizens to hold the government accountable.[111]

Accountability in the PRC. This third trait of democratic governance is a very strenuous one which even liberal democracies in the West struggle to realize. Before assessing whether government officials have been more

[107] Xi Chen, pg. 21-2.
[108] Xi Chen, pg. 206-7.
[109] *Shourong* stations were detention centers which were paid to take in troublesome vagrants, homeless, unemployed, and people without national ID cards, and this frequently involved severe beatings and death.
[110] Pan, pg. 256, and generally his ninth chapter on "The Newspaperman," Cheng Yizhong. Unfortunately, Cheng would eventually be sent to prison for this and other incendiary articles published under his watch.
[111] Ian Johnson's first chapter on the "peasant champion" lawyer, Ma Wenlin, is a prime example of informing common folks of their constitutional rights, leading to collective and ultimately legal action, unfortunately too lengthy to summarize here.

accountable in recent years than in the past, I must clarify a few examples of what is *not* included in this study's use of accountability. It's firstly important to emphasize that the democratic accountability of the C,R,A model is not the same as the top-down bureaucratic accountability described by Lily Tsai, Pierre Landry, and Yumin Sheng. As the PRC is an unusually "decentralized" state with much local government discretion, "party discipline" is a primary concern for the center.[112] Suisheng Zhao notes that the government's response to the SARS crisis in 2003 was not necessarily greater transparency or a guarantee that future crises would be handled better, but another institution for internal review, the *ganbu wenze zhi* or cadre accountability/responsibility system.[113] Showing true authoritarian colors more clearly than any other example, there is palpable concern within the Party that if local elections succeed in making local officials more accountable to citizens, these officials may become *less* compliant with central directives.[114]

The CCP's response to recent consumer protection scandals is another counter-example of note.[115] Capital punishment is very unlikely to represent democratic accountability.[116] After President Roosevelt spat out his meal while reading *The Jungle,* he did not immediately sentence those responsible for deplorable sanitation conditions to death; the regulatory FDA was a more obviously reliable and democratic way to handle corporate corner-cutting and contamination.[117] Dali Yang, for one, admits that quality control is still lacking in many sectors of the economy, but there is increasing acceptance that increased regulation, including anti-counterfeit efforts, is good for both the CCP and the public.[118] Furthermore, even or perhaps especially if citizens with torches and pitchforks storm the factories, democratic accountability must not turn into mob accountability by going around proper legal channels.

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[112] Yumin Sheng, pg. 10, points to strategic appointments in the continuing Nomenklatura system for maintaining loyalty, accountability, and compliance at the provincial level to the center.

[113] Zhao, pg. 235. This system appears to be another attempt to achieve accountability within the system rather than to the people. He asserts nonetheless that the Hu-Wen administration has been more responsive to popular demands than previous leaders on pg. 236.

[114] Yumin Sheng, pg. 241, claims that this problem impedes the expansion of elections to higher levels than township or county government, effectively making "any meaningful shift within the Chinese polity toward greater democracy." Fewsmith, pg. 106, expresses the same concern in terms of responsiveness to locals via elections which might work too well. Florini et al., pg. 64, question whether giving up the power of appointments will really reduce compliance with the central government.

[115] Melamine to increase protein levels in diluted milk powder, diethelene-glycol replacing more expensive but less toxic glycerin in toothpaste, pet food, toy paint scandals are the most prominent examples of these.

[116] Yang, pg. 231-3, questions whether such harsh punishments lead to greater accountability, favoring instead more frequent, preventative audits by regulatory agencies.

[117] I expect this story is apocryphal.

[118] Naughton & Yang (Eds.), pg. 134-142 on the PRC's more nimble use of all its corporate extremities to have more effective regulation of financial industries, taxes, manufacturing, etc.

The use in recent years of "human flesh search engines" online[119] muddies the preceding, absolute statement considerably. If the legal system is consistently unreliable in bringing justice to the people, the phenomenon of popular or "vigilante" justice will likely continue unabated. The ability to sue the government was a major step forward for China's legal system in 1990, with passage of the "Administrative Litigation Law (ALL)", but as Minxin Pei and Yuchao Zhu note, the likelihood of citizens' success in pursuing such cases is extremely low.[120] Interestingly, Benjamin Liebman finds that even by 2008, the Chinese court system has been riven by pressures for "professionalism and populism," with the latter leading to popular opinion having as much power in legal decisions as the law or "public security."[121] "Judicial democracy" might be a net positive for accountability to the people, but it would likely deepen China's image as a nation ruled by personal connections rather than laws. The "consultative rule of law regime" favored by Pan Wei as an alternative to democratization is intended to separate consultation from the courts, and furthermore, Randal Peerenboom believes that such a regime itself would depend on the extent to which "new elites" in CPPCCs and courts can be held accountable.[122] The case is a familiar one in which virtually everyone favors an impartial legal system until one personally finds it necessary to subvert it for personal gain or to avoid punishment.

Taking a page out of the playbook for the Cultural Revolution and lowering the stakes, public hearings, evaluations and hotlines can be an effective tool to solicit popular criticism for democratic accountability. Dali Yang's fifth chapter in *Remaking the Chinese Leviathan* is full of examples of these, though some of his predictions for full "administrative rationalization" have proved overly optimistic. Even if confined to more affluent, coastal areas, however, Yang's examples of increased accountability are worth enumerating. The government service centers mentioned in the preceding Responsiveness section often have open windows which serve as walk-in "anticorruption agencies."[123] In Zhuhai, Guangdong, leaders invited the public to "evaluate the performance of government agencies and staff" in 1999, and far more than an empty exercise in legitimization,

[119] When the Chinese blogosphere hears of a case of wrongdoing which law enforcement has ignored, the media has censored, or the courts have adjudicated in a grossly biased manner, it is common practice for netizens to post the names and addresses of those they deem to be the "guilty parties." Destruction of property and violence are often the result, and examples abound of individuals who were targeted not for committing any statutory crime but for running afoul of fervent nationalists, whose online presence and activism IRL is quite formidable. The example which comes to mind is of the Chinese student who dared to moderate the opposing protests between Chinese students and Tibetans on a campus in Texas in the lead-up to the 2008 Olympics. Her family was subjected to much harassment back in China after being identified and publicized in a human flesh search engine.

[120] Pei, 1997. Zhu's chapter in Guo & Hickey is described in greater detail near the end of this section.

[121] Heilmann & Perry, pg. 177.

[122] Both Pan Wei and Peerenboom have chapters in Zhao's edited volume.

[123] Yang, pg. 172.

the results had consequences for retention of officials' positions. The result was a competition to provide the best services, to "connect with the public through administrative innovations, including well-staffed telephone hotlines and web sites" and a spike in public confidence in government.[124] Finally, in the notoriously corrupt construction industry, Yang notes successful use of competitive bidding with public results as a means to greater accountability.[125] It is difficult to withhold skepticism of these accomplishments, especially as the diffusion of these readily apparent "best practices" has been both slow and far from complete. Such examples may add a few upright officials to a national mosaic of corrupt, career bureaucrats to whom any attempt to increase accountability, whether top-down or bottom-up, is a threat to their local fiefdoms.

At the level of the village, Lily Tsai finds Chinese-style social capital revival to be the key to government accountability. In a study of over 300 villages, she reports that those which have "solidary groups" encompassing the entire village[126] give officials the opportunity to embed themselves within these for enhanced "moral standing" within the community. To maintain this moral standing, officials must act on their obligations for efficient provision of "public goods" like roads and schools. Most import is her critique of liberal democratic elections as a panacea, even where the 1998 Organic Law has been well implemented, the presence or absence of solidary groups is a stronger determinant of accountability.

Tsai's book stands in contrast to the findings of Florini et al. and Martinez-Bravo et al., who all find significant increases in local officials' accountability as a result of elections. Linking local officials' promotions to the percentage of "yes" votes in annual party congresses led one to describe the change in accountability in terms of previously "having had both eyes looking up, now at least one eye looking down."[127] Such successes may explain why, despite the CCP-preferred candidate usually winning no matter how competitive the elections were allowed to be, actually competitive contests were spreading, but only "very slowly."[128]

Authors such as Yuchao Zhu and Lacey Bradley-Storey offer evidence that even the imperfect Chinese legal system offers citizens a real chance to try to redress grievances. The democratic effectiveness of institutions

[124] Yang, pg. 177, 184.
[125] Yang, pg. 195-6.
[126] Temple associations, which have been revived in the reform era, are presumably easier to (re-)build than lineages. It is also doubtful whether her mechanism can work at higher levels of government than the village, as no group will exist to encompass a wide enough proportion of the population.
[127] Florini et al., pg. 76.
[128] Florini et al., pg. 86.

like the Administrative Litigation Law (ALL) and petition system, *xinfang* or "letters and visits", is severely compromised by conflicting conceptions of whose purposes they serve.[129] According to Bradley-Storey, the CCP sees these channels largely as a means to substantiate the party's democratic claims as being responsive to the people. Zhu finds that people are reluctant to use the court system because it is at once non-traditional and unfamiliar, complex, and results in success in only about 20% of cases.[130] Portrayed as a dismally hopeless mess in Zhao Liang's documentary, *Shangfang (Petition)*, the centuries-old tradition of traveling to Beijing in search of justice has received contradictory support and suppression in recent years.[131]

While entertaining formal complaints from citizens may seem to be retroactive consultation at best, if central leaders were committed to open communication between the population and the government for accountability, it would be of mutual benefit to both state and society. As Bradley-Storey notes, the practice of petitioning was revived by the CCP initially to connect the party to the people, to make suggestions for improving governance.[132] Such hopes were likely overwhelmed by the number of complaints which came pouring in from the provinces, some four million cases in 2004.[133] In the end, Zhu suggests that strengthening the National People's Congress would be the best route for government accountability and justice, as the legal system is too fraught with conflicting missions and inefficient practices.[134]

Who should come to the rescue of these dour assessments but, once again, Xi Chen? In the more open POS which has developed since the 1990s, citizens in the *xinfang* (letters and visits) system can choose whether to behave obediently to establish themselves as loyal and reasonable claim-makers or utilize "trouble-making" tactics to put pressure on officials.[135] Whether by persuasion, disruption, publicity, or elite advocacy, Chen finds that petitioners and protesters achieve their desired outcomes often enough, and in ways which suggest a strong

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[129] A parallel can be drawn with these and elections in 20th century China, which Hill claims were not really means for the people to communicate their preferences to the government, but rather tools for the government to show the population what the recommended limits of political participation would be, to condition citizens' behavior to be more orderly (than protests and riots), and what topics were subject to public discussion and debate.

[130] Guo & Hickey, pg. 109.

[131] In 2005, a new law ended the ban on continuous or repeated petitioning while also supposedly making it illegal to intercept and harass petitioners. A survey found that 71% of petitioners found their treatment actually worsened after the law passed (Guo & Li, pg. 175). A 2009 law preventing petitioners from going to Beijing or any level higher than the provincial government could either be read as the Party giving up on the system (not benefitting enough from it) or the fact that most petitions are a result of "lower-level mistakes and errors" (pg. 176). Similarly, local unresponsiveness to such complaints is believed to be behind most local protests, so it would seem to be in the central government's interest to strengthen or at least streamline this process.

[132] Guo & Li, pg. 161.

[133] Guo & Hickey, pg. 111.

[134] Guo & Hickey, pg. 116.

[135] Xi Chen, pg. 158. On pg. 186, the tactic of self-immolation is stated on the extreme of disruptive tactics, but one may question whether this is an option for most protesters.

historical continuity extending into China's dynastic past.[136] Chen notes that although even successful petitioners, especially elderly ones, believe they pay "too high a price" to have their basic needs met, popular collective action has become "common or even 'normal' in China,"[137] despite the events of 1989 and the pessimism which followed.

Of the three elements in C,R,A, real democratic accountability proves ultimately to be the most fundamental and difficult to realize. If fully developed democracies still struggle with how best to achieve accountability, we should not expect an authoritarian, developing country to be exemplary. Nonetheless, we can see that some attempts have been more successful and lasting than others. Virtually all of China knows that the legal system must be improved to improve governance and accountability, and a more legally focused essay could likely find evidence of improvement in the reform era.

To conclude these three empirical sections, I should address Joseph Fewsmith's contention in 2013's *The Logic and Limits of Political Reform in China* that democratic change is not yet significant because innovations and experiments have only rarely led to lasting institutions of popular rule. This study's response can be put in terms of C,R,A and Sebastian Heilmann's "guerrilla policy style." Heilmann's claim is that the Party prefers maximum flexibility to address problems swiftly and in innovative or unorthodox ways. Even if perennial anti-corruption campaigns may be a sign of Mao's "invisible hand," we should not dismiss them as less effective than institutional solutions. In Heilmann's assessment, shared by Shambaugh, flexibility makes the CCP more adaptive, likely to persist and even increase its legitimacy based on tangible examples of better governance. Acknowledging the diversity of China leads to more specialized, even individualized C,R,A, and many problems of governance may be best addressed on an ad hoc basis, as today's institutional solution may become tomorrow's obstacle. The very existence of a nationwide competition for political innovation, the basis for Florini et al.'s *China Experiments*, suggests a creative spirit which would prefer not to be constrained by brittle or ineffective institutions.

Conclusion. This study's major goal has been to question and probe the false image of the PRC as a monolithically oppressive, stagnant regime. Instead, central encouragement of political experimentation and a uniquely "decentralized" government hierarchy make China one of the most exciting cases for both comparative politics and political theory. That said, readers expecting an unqualified endorsement of the PRC's democratic

[136] Again, see Ho-fung Hung for examples of supplication as loyal subjects in the Qing dynasty, usually under the guidance of a local elite sponsor.
[137] Xi Chen, pg. 189.

progress have inevitably been disappointed, and few dyed-in-the-wool liberals will be convinced by the preceding sections. This study has not claimed that China is a democracy, only that Chinese leaders enabled change in that direction as a side-effect of pursuing better governance. Critical scholarly analysis requires me to find a counterpoint for each example, but overall the very fact that such acts have been attempted and documented shows real democratic change. The ratio of democratic or repressive, authoritarian examples which could be cited is not at issue—not every significant event in any country has a journalist or academic on call for documentation.

In conceptualizing a new systematized concept, there are dangers of reinventing the wheel or reducing a treasured idea to slogans more befitting of an infomercial (i.e. democracy in "three easy steps!"). The justification of a C,R,A framework is to understand the PRC's political changes and detach the regime's pre-existing democratic claims from hackneyed revolutionary ideology. China and its CCP leader make a good case for idiographic status, though this won't prevent other regimes from looking to the reform-era PRC as a replicable alternative to neoliberal economics and political liberalism. Undoubtedly, there are other authoritarian countries which are using the PRC as a model for increasing legitimacy, economic growth, and practices of good governance. While I've proposed a novel democratic framework to better understand the PRC, it is not derived solely from China and should thereby have wider applicability than a single case. I'm not aware of any other proposals for an alternative procedural minimum to polyarchy, but their existence and excessive ambition or naivety would not be surprising. Distrust of electoral institutions should not disqualify other regimes from pursuing greater C,R,A—or democracy—by other means.

Many regimes currently exist which place a higher value on survival through better governance over democracy. Whether increasing popular political participation and control over government is a good way for authoritarian regimes in developing countries to ensure their survival remains an open, empirical question. This study has provided evidence that at least one authoritarian regime, the PRC's, does not fear democracy, if the regime itself can take credit for resulting improvements in governance and expanded provision of rights.

Obvious objections may be raised to my consideration of the current CCP as paragons of good governance. Again, I consider the PRC neither a democracy nor a "tight ship" without serious structural problems. I have been more interested in highlighting and analyzing changes toward democracy and better governance than claiming that the current system is good or bad, efficient or inefficient, likely to collapse or survive.

Another objection is that until some basically recognizable democratic institutions are fully in place, it is premature to utter "China" and "democracy" in the same sentence. Yet studies of democratic transitions which wait until elections or another necessary institution takes a mature or recognizable form are often caught off guard by these very changes. Noting earlier changes in a democratic direction, especially before or without leaders openly embracing political liberalism, clues us in to forces which could be the spark to light a democratic prairie fire. Most importantly, accounts of Chinese citizens show us that political changes which appear minor or hardly tip the scales irreversibly toward democratization are nonetheless often deeply significant in people's lives. Albeit with a lot of "help" from the CCP, by no means everyone in China remembers or commemorates the Tiananmen Square Incident of 1989. Reforms like allowing private businessmen to join the Party or abolishing rural taxes, by contrast, are lightning rods in Chinese society, figuring far more in popular perceptions of democratic change.

A third, major objection which I must concede to is that the scattershot examples cited do not add up to a system-wide democratic regime change. The great extent of decentralization and local experimentation (not to mention diversity) in the contemporary PRC does make a single pattern of democratic change unlikely, but the fact remains that not all of these examples have been very influential. Few, in Fewsmith's assessment, will stand the test of time. The mere fact that government officials and citizens have attempted more popular political participation in the forms of C,R,A should count for something, especially in contrast to the totalitarian and "hard" authoritarian past in recent memory. Indeed, recent memories account for Tianjian Shi's surprising observation that Chinese citizens think more progress has been made in democratization than in policy performance.[138] To some extent, many of us may be unable to see democratic progress in the PRC not only because we are Western liberal democrats comparing an authoritarian country to our own liberal democracies. Unlike older Chinese people, most of us are not referring to the Mao and Deng eras as our baseline of comparison because we have not experienced these regimes as they have.

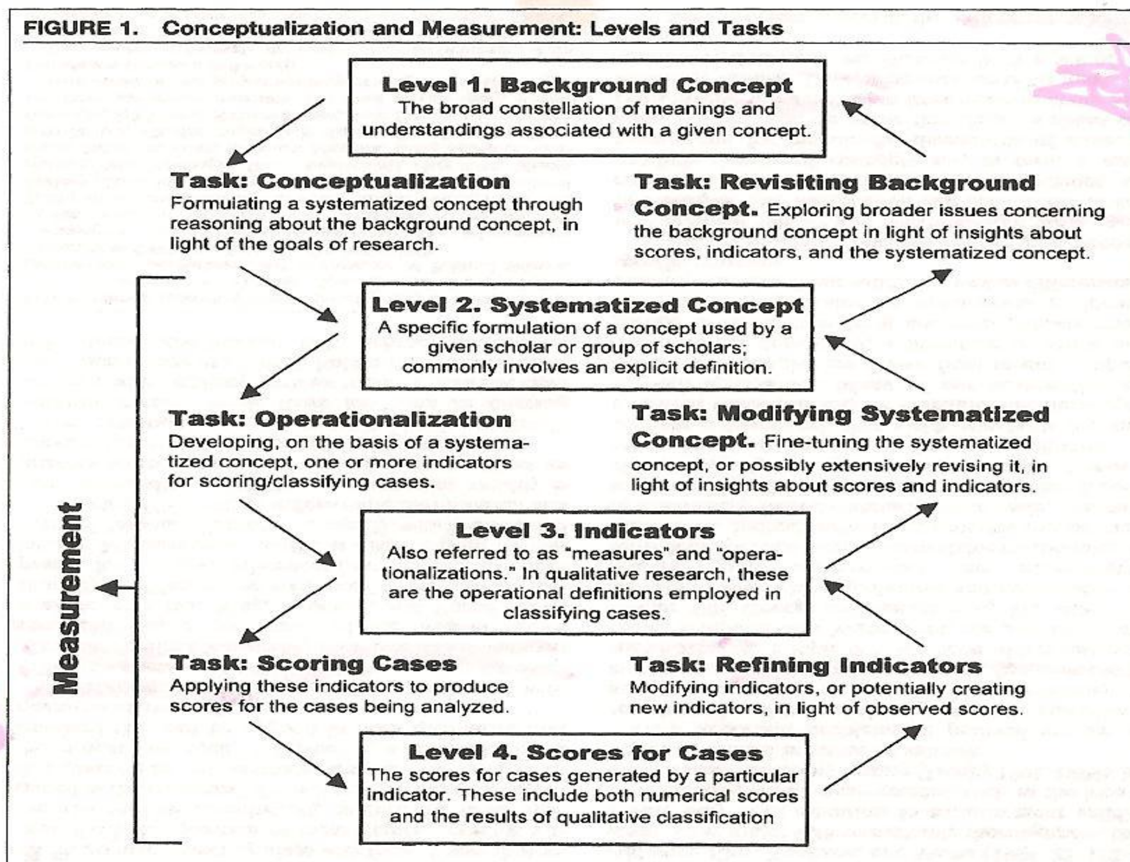
How far can unintentional democratic change go? Presumably no farther than increasing popular political participation improves governance and increases CCP legitimacy. Bottom-up democratization short of

[138] Shi (pg. 219 in Chu et al.) attributes these odd findings both to differences in conceptualizing democracy and also to memories of the PRC's turbulent, impoverished past (differing "baselines" of comparison). "Democratization" in this comparison includes freedoms, equality, "popular influence", and an independent judiciary, which are perceived to have gone in a more democratic, preferred direction than corruption, law and order, and economic equality. Younger generations, not surprisingly, tend to be more in line with a liberal definition, so an argument can be made that a convergence of Chinese and liberal definitions of democracy is on the way.

revolution seems unlikely, and examples of a political party intentionally reforming itself out of power are exceedingly rare.

To the Western ear, Chinese opera is a decidedly acquired taste, perhaps indistinguishable from the opposing concept of noise, and China's cultural ambassadors are quite forgiving of those who fail to appreciate the art form as music. Without an admittedly radical re-conceptualization of democracy as a systematized concept, Western, liberal observers are equally likely to miss democratic progress in the PRC. If only an equation of political liberalization and democratization is "legible" to us, excluding other deep and diverse political reforms with democratic implications, this would be a great scholarly and intellectual loss.

APPENDIX (TAKEN FROM Adcock & Collier's article, "Measurement Validity: A Shared Standard for Qualitative and Quantitative Research")



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