



**June Fourth at 25:
Forget Tiananmen, You Don't Want to Hurt the
Chinese People's Feelings – and Miss Out on the
Business of the New “New China”!+**

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Abstract

Twenty-five years ago, in the early hours of June 4, the people's government in Beijing turned its guns on the people of the city who had risen in protests that spring to express their frustration with Party despotism and corruption. The refusal to this day to acknowledge the crime is matched by continued criminalization of those who still live under the shadow of Tiananmen, and with courage continue to pursue the goals it had put on the political agenda – some from within the country, others from exile. The Tiananmen democracy movement brought to a head the contradictions of “reform and opening” that had acquired increasing sharpness during the decade of the 1980s. The successful turn to global capitalism in the aftermath of the suppression has been at least as important as the censorship of memories in the “forgetting” of Tiananmen among the PRC population. In historical perspective, Tiananmen appears as one of a series of popular uprisings around the globe that have accompanied the globalization of neo-liberal capitalism. The discussion throughout stresses foreign complicity – including that of foreign China scholars and educational institutions – in covering up this open sore on so-called “socialism with Chinese characteristics”.





Keywords: Tiananmen, democracy movement, “reform and opening”, “socialism with Chinese characteristics”, global capitalism, China fever, Confucius Institutes

JEL classification: A14, H12, P16, Z13

I vividly recall the shrill voice of the announcer commenting on the scrawny youth standing in front of a column of tanks in Tiananmen Square on June 5, 1989: “If our tanks press forward,” he asked, “would that pathetic low life really be able to halt their progress?” I was 15 at the time. “That’s right!” I thought. “The soldiers were being truly merciful.”¹

Twenty-five years ago, in the early hours of June 4, the people’s government in Beijing turned its guns on the people of the city who had risen in protests that spring to express their frustration with Party despotism and corruption. Students from Beijing universities held centre stage in their occupation of Tiananmen Square. But people from all walks of life had risen, including workers who quickly organized themselves into autonomous workers’ associations. As a friend from Beijing Normal College (now Capital Normal University) told the author later that summer, “we were all there.” It was the “city-people” (*shimin* 市民) who bore the brunt of the government violence as they fought back to stop the troops from reaching the students in the square. The movement in Beijing triggered demonstrations in cities around the PRC, bringing out into the streets thousands of people of all walks of life, making the movement national.

To this day, it is not clear how many lost their lives – estimates range from the official hundreds to unofficial thousands. The numbers game is not likely to be resolved. The numbers are important so that the victims, named or nameless, may be preserved in historical memory, and the grief of parents and relatives assuaged. They are not crucial to assessing the criminality of the suppression. Even at the lower end, they stand witness to the hypocrisy of a state that would slaughter its own people in the name of defending them.² The refusal to this day to





acknowledge the crime is matched by continued criminalization of those who still live under the shadow of Tiananmen, and with courage continue to pursue the goals it had put on the political agenda – some from within the country, others from exile.

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A *People's Daily* editorial published on 26 April 1989 that contributed significantly to the escalating confrontation between students and the authorities blamed the protests on an “extremely small number of people” whose “purpose was to sow dissension among the people, plunge the whole country into chaos and sabotage the political situation of stability and unity”, and described the movement as a “a planned conspiracy and a disturbance. Its essence is to once and for all, negate the leadership of the CPC and the socialist system.”³ On June 5, in the immediate aftermath of the suppression, the State Council led by prime minister Li Peng issued an open letter addressed to the Party and the people that repeated some of the same charges and condemned the movement as a “counterrevolutionary riot” inspired by “Western” bourgeois ideas, instigated and financed by Hong Kong and overseas agitators. In the words of a *Beijing Review* editorial,

The plotters and organizers of the counter-revolutionary rebellion are mainly a handful of people who have for a long time obstinately advocated bourgeois liberalization, opposed Party leadership and socialism and harbored political schemes, who have collaborated with hostile overseas forces and who have provided illegal organizations with the top-secrets of the Party and state ... Taking advantage of students' patriotic feelings ... this handful of people with evil motives stirred up trouble.⁴

There was a kernel of truth in the charge, calculated to confound a public whose hesitant exuberance had collapsed overnight into “no-exit” (*meiyou banfa* 没有办法) pessimism. To quote from an article by this author written shortly after the event in collaboration with Roxann Prazniak,





Chinese government charges of foreign involvement, while misguided in their suggestion of an organized conspiracy, are not vacuous ... There is hardly any question about the contributions of the Voice of America which, as Chinese students proudly proclaim, shaped their understanding of the situation in the world, including the situation in China. Most intriguing is the conversion of the movement into a *Chinese* movement rather than a movement in the People's Republic of China. Chinese from Taiwan, the US and Hong Kong freely participated in the movement (in the PRC or from abroad) as if it were an ethnic movement and not a political movement in a sovereign state. Chinese secret societies were involved in smuggling people in and out of the PRC. And Chinese in Hong Kong freely admit (now with regrets) that funds from Hong Kong kept the movement alive past where it should have gone. It may be a function of racist attitudes toward the PRC (and Chinese) that the peculiarity of this situation, not to speak of its contribution to the final tragedy, has not been raised even as a question.⁵

Nation-states thrive off the celebration of their glories. Just as avidly, they seek to bury in forgetfulness that which reflects badly on them, or to deflect blame onto others. The PRC is no exception but for the unswerving faith of the Communist Party leadership that the best way to deal with any blemish on its record is to prohibit public recognition and discussion, and then pretend it does not exist even when the said blemish is in full public view – as if the mask of infallibility were a guarantee of legitimacy and political survival.⁶ Charges against Tiananmen dissidents of conspiracy and collaboration with outside forces hostile to the national interest – also common items in the ideological tool-box nation-states draw upon to discredit dissent – were gross distortions of peaceful patriotic protests triggered by anxiety about economic distress, bureaucratic corruption, and intra-Party conflict that further deepened uncertainty over the future of the decade-long “reform and opening”. But they served well to deflect attention away from the Communist Party, which increasing had come to identify national with party interest – much like the warlords of an earlier day who had been targets of the revolution. “Counter-revolutionary riot” would become the





official verdict on the movement. To this day, the Party has refused to budge from it – even with the rise to leadership of a generation that in its youth had themselves been caught up in the ferment for reform and democracy.⁷

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The PRC leadership has been quite successful in dimming memories of the event, and even turning it to political advantage, even though extinguishing memories has proven to be more difficult than clearing the protestors from Tiananmen. The Party has been assiduous in blacking out reference to Tiananmen in the media, including the Internet. But it has not been able to silence the “Tiananmen mothers” who, like “the Madres de Plaza de Mayo” in Argentina or “Cumartesi Anneleri” (Saturday Mothers) in Turkey, have refused to give up on the struggle to force the state to account for their missing children.⁸ Occasional incidents of fatal punishment inflicted on jailed activists bring back into public consciousness those apprehended at the time languishing to this day in the anonymity of incarceration.⁹ Others continue to call on the Party to reverse its verdict, knowing full well that they are likely to join their jailed comrades for their temerity. Most dramatic in these acts of remembrance are the annual demonstrations in Hong Kong to commemorate June 4, fueled by local anxieties about the progressive suffocation of freedom in the Special Administrative Region by oppressive practices emanating from Beijing, demographic “invasion” from the north that threatens everyday livelihood and welfare, and a corporate-dominated government that is more willing to follow Beijing’s dictates than to share political power and responsibility with the people it governs. Modeled after the Tiananmen original in 1989, the Hong Kong “Goddess of Democracy” (*minzhu nüshen* 民主女神), “temporarily” housed at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, keeps alive memories of June 4 as inspiration for local autonomy and democracy.

Memories of Tiananmen are nevertheless challenged by increasing obliviousness to what the movement stood for, as well as to its present-





day repercussions. The forgetfulness that comes with the passing of time is no doubt an important element. If time does not necessarily heal, it still throws over the past the cover of new concerns and challenges that filter the memories and give them new meanings. The “forgetting” in this case, is an enforced forgetting, which exacts pain and punishment for remembering, and denies to the generations who did not personally experience the event all knowledge of it except perhaps a passing reference now and then to the victory over the attempted counterrevolution by “an extremely small number” of misfits. Indeed, on a rare occasion when reference to Tiananmen has appeared in print, a newly acquired “soft power” approach has been in evidence in testimonials by experts on “how well China has done, economically and politically, since 1989, upholding the official verdict that the government acted correctly in crushing the 1989 protests.”¹⁰ The experts variously attributed the incident to youthfulness, anxiety about the reforms, and an immature reliance on “the West” over native resources. If a Chinese millennial has any knowledge of the event, it is at best likely to be along the lines of, “The Chinese government is not evil. They did it out of good intentions. If they had had more appropriate equipment, they would have done a better job in 1989 ... The Chinese government didn’t tell the truth, but the West didn’t tell the truth either because they didn’t like China’s rising.”¹¹ The knee-jerk patriotism of a foreign student in an alien environment is reinforced in the case of students from the PRC by an atavistic patriotic education intolerant of any criticism at home or abroad, whether the subject is Tiananmen, Tibet, Xinjiang or the Republic of China in Taiwan. That many of these students are offspring of Party cadres enriched by corruption adds an additional motivation for defense of the Party line.

Much more so than the passage of time or censorship, with the phenomenal economic, social and cultural transformation of the PRC during the past two decades, Tiananmen seems to belong to an entirely different age that is best left behind. This is the message conveyed by the apparent desire to shift emphasis from the event to the economic development made possible by political stability in its aftermath. It is likely the utmost desire of the Party itself. An eloquent example of this





desire is the intriguing case of Wu'erkaixi, a student leader in the movement, who was among China's most wanted after June 4. Having managed to escape into exile, he studied in the US, and subsequently moved to Taiwan where he has been living for a number of years. In recent years, he has made a number of attempts to get himself arrested so that he can go back to see his aging parents. He has repeatedly been refused entry into the country. It is not every day that a country refuses to get its hands on its most wanted voluntarily submitted. It is difficult not to conclude that the Party simply does not want any of the publicity that would attend his return, especially a criminal trial guaranteed to open the gates to a flood of memories, and possibly serve as a lightning rod for social and political conflict. That Wu'erkaixi is of Xinjiang Uighur origin is no doubt an additional consideration of no little significance in the midst of ongoing government efforts to quell Uighur resistance to Han colonialism.¹²

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Government efforts to relegate Tiananmen to a different age have fallen on receptive ears both in the PRC and abroad. There is good reason for this because from both Chinese and global perspectives, it does belong in more than one sense in a different world than that of the present.

The suppression of the movement brought to an end a decade of uncertainty and unrest that had accompanied the changes ushered in by "reform and opening" after 1978. Tiananmen was a tragedy, not only because of what transpired on the night of June 4, 1989, but also because it was the product of the seemingly inexorable sharpening of the contradictions in the course of the decade that the reforms had given rise to, culminating in the fateful events of that night. One of the most remarkable things about Chinese society in the 1980s was the contradictoriness of the messages it conveyed to the observer, within or without the PRC. Evidence of impressive economic progress on all fronts coexisted with accumulating evidence that something had gone very wrong. Continued economic growth was accompanied after 1985 with increasingly severe inflation (ranging from 30-50 per cent





annually), problems in agriculture (decline in grain production, shortage of fertilizer, and deterioration of the agrarian infrastructure), industry (failure to register increases in productivity). Increasing wealth for some was accompanied by problems of unemployment and poverty, exacerbating the problem of social division. Social vitality, evident in the flourishing of individual entrepreneurial activity, was accompanied by signs of social deterioration (appearance of beggary, prostitution and criminal activity ranging from petty theft and street muggings to organized crime in the peddling of drugs and sale of women and children) and social breakdown (ranging from worker strikes and peasant attacks on granaries to social banditry, including train robberies). Release of political controls to encourage economic growth was accompanied by unprecedented political corruption. The opening to the world which ushered in a cultural revival brought with it a cultural disorientation that not only intensified dissatisfaction with a seemingly incoherent socialist system beyond redemption but also produced disaffection with the very idea of being Chinese. The new emphasis on producing an educated elite was accompanied by decline in the educational system. New vitality in the realm of culture, unprecedented since the establishment of the People's Republic, was accompanied by alienation and moral indifference, even social irresponsibility. Students on campuses revolted against Party control which they felt obstructed the educational excellence that would be the guarantee of future prospects.¹³ The massive student demonstrations that erupted in December 1986 in east central China appear in hindsight as a dress rehearsal for what was to come in 1989.¹⁴ By late 1988 and early 1989, there was every sign that Chinese society was in deep trouble and that the reforms had run into a dead end. The government and the Communist Party, in turn, seemed incapable of dealing with the problems its policies had created, riddled as it was with corruption, factionalism and the organizational incoherence it displayed as these social and ideological tendencies worked their way into the very constitution of the existing political order.

The Tiananmen movement was the making of a generation that had come of political age in the midst of this social, cultural and political



incoherence. Youth who had been rusticated during the Cultural Revolution were returning to the cities, radicalized by their experiences of poverty and backwardness in rural China that had further deepened their cynicism of the Communist Party. Their younger counterparts, born at the tail end of the Cultural Revolution, experienced politicization as they sought to overcome uncertainties provoked by the unsettled question of whether the future lay with socialism or capitalism. Party efforts to depoliticize them by the discipline of “socialist spiritual civilization” fell on deaf ears against evidence of Party corruption and infectious materialism. At the same time, criticism of the system by prominent intellectuals like Fang Lizhi and Liu Binyan reinforced a new political idealism nourished by exposure to novel political philosophies and cultural practices that came with the opening to the outside world. The mix of idealism and cynicism would be very much in evidence in 1989.¹⁵

These contradictions disorganized the Party leadership even as they sought to bring the events under their control. The Party almost lost it in May-June 1989. The possibility acquired additional urgency from the global context. 1989 was to mark the end not just of historical socialism but the era of revolutions in modern history. Whether or not the PRC leadership in China perceived it in these historical terms is beside the point.

The Tiananmen movement was to prove every bit as profound in its consequences as the turn to reform ten years earlier. Between 1989 and 1992, when the decade-long enthusiasm for Deng Xiaoping of global capital turned into condemnations that made him into a villain second only to Mao Zedong, the Party leadership made a decision to resolve the contradictions that had brought about June 1989 simply by abolishing the entrapment between socialism and capitalism, opting for capitalism as the choice for China’s immediate future. Deng’s visit to the South in 1992, described in imperial terms (*nanxun* 南巡, or “progress to the South”), reaffirmed what had been accomplished in the special economic zone of Shenzhen. His conclusion that it was time not to worry about whether the path followed was socialist or capitalist, so long as it worked, echoed his statement of the early 1960s, that “it did not matter



whether a cat was black or white so long as it caught mice.” That had landed him in hot water for two decades as a “capitalist-roader”. His injunction in 1992 had an electrifying effect, albeit in a politically antithetical direction, similar to Mao’s statement back in late 1957 that “people’s communes are good”, which had led to the communalization of the country within months.

This time around, the message was to jump into the sea of capitalism, and many followed Deng’s advice. The Party made a conscious decision at the time that consumption might well serve as a substitute for politics, so that there would be no repetition of Tiananmen in the future. The “spiritual solutions to material problems” of a decade earlier were now to be replaced by material solutions, at least for those sectors of the population prone to demands for political participation, whose political desire could be replaced by the desire for the good life. There was something of an important bargain here: so long as the Party delivered the goods, its leadership would go unchallenged. The freedom to consume would pave over the “cries for democracy”¹⁶. In the aftermath of Deng’s trip to Shenzhen a local official quipped, “Let them [young people] have their desires! If they have money, they can do what they want. Just no more Tiananmens!”¹⁷ If hedonism was preferable to political involvement, Chinese capitalism of the kind associated with Singapore showed the way to controlling the socially degenerative consequences of capitalist development. In his talks in Shenzhen in 1992, Deng noted that through “strict management”, Singapore had succeeded in preserving “social order” while developing rapidly. He thought that China could borrow from the Singapore experience to do even better.¹⁸

The turn to a culture of consumption was accompanied from the early 1990s by a revival of “traditionalisms”, symbolized by the term “Confucianism”, that rounded out the circle by bringing together modernity and tradition, which had been an aspiration going back to the origins of the Chinese Revolution – except that it was neither the modernity nor the tradition that the revolution had sought to achieve. It was quickly obvious that Confucianism was subject to the same instrumentalization (and commodification) as socialism had come to



be.¹⁹ The revival of tradition came as a relief to those who had mourned its passing all along. Official commentators were quite explicit that the revival of the Confucian tradition was intended to supply values of order and ideological unity at a time when the population had lost faith in socialism or its promises. Confucianism also held the promise of orderly development, as had been promoted since the early 1980s by cheerleaders of the authoritarian developmentalist regimes of East Asia. The late 1980s had witnessed, side by side with the calls for democracy and “civil society”, the promotion by some of so-called “new authoritarianism”, inspired by the likes of right-wing political scientists in the United States such as Samuel Huntington.²⁰ The Confucian revival was entangled in these various efforts to find remedies to the contradictions created by efforts to articulate socialism to capitalism.²¹ In the end, however, what mattered the most was the offer of consumerism (of commodities, socialism, or Confucianism) in exchange for the abandonment of political democracy.

The bargain worked. And the circumstances were auspicious. The PRC’s full-scale incorporation in global capitalism coincided with the globalization of capital with the fall of socialism globally. The PRC would emerge by the end of the decade as one of the motors of globalization. A labour force, trained by a socialist revolution carried out in its name, was now rendered into a forcefully submissive force of production for a global capitalism, in the name of a socialism that was postponed further and further into the future. Oppression and exploitation were still there, to be sure, but they could be pushed to the background as passing abnormalities soon to be replaced by plenty as the forces of production advanced, and the country had a genuine basis for socialism. In the meantime, consumer goods were made widely available to a population starved for them by decades of revolutionary puritanism.

Deng Xiaoping was the architect of these policies in a very real sense, but efforts to make him into a Chinese capitalist saint ignore his faithfulness to Bolshevik elitism, which was also his legacy to the reforms.²² His successor, Jiang Zemin would complete the counter-revolution that Deng had initiated.²³ By the early part of the twenty-first



century, under Jiang's leadership, China was able to claim a place for itself among the ranking powers of the world – not by virtue of ideological priority as a socialist state but as a country on which capital globally had come to depend. It also had come to emulate other capitalist societies in the increasingly unequal distribution of wealth and welfare between classes, genders, and between urban-rural areas, as well as its contribution to pollution that threatened not just its own future but that of the globe as a whole. Jiang Zemin's "important thought of three represents"²⁴, something of a joke even among Communist Party circles, sought to make the Communist Party into an instrument of development that would serve the most "advanced" sectors of the country – which translated readily into the making of the Party into a party of the urban economic ruling classes. The contradictions this time around were not of socialism, but of successful incorporation in global capitalism.

The 1989 generation were products of a post-socialist milieu in which the experience of the Cultural Revolution was still very much alive despite its official repudiation in 1978, and the future of socialism still presented itself as a central issue of contention. The Communist Party has still not abandoned its pretensions to socialism, but its ritualized reaffirmations of "socialism with Chinese characteristics" have ceased to have any meaningful connection either to its own policies or to the population at large – except perhaps to legitimize the plunder of public goods in the name of development. In the two decades after Tiananmen, PR Chinese society has gone through further "cultural revolutions" that mock the Cultural Revolution Mao Zedong had launched to guarantee socialism as the PRC's future. In the late 1990s, the turn to markets, advertising and consumption were viewed by its agents some as a "second cultural revolution", more powerful by far than the original in its staying power. More recently, Internet activism has been described as another "cultural revolution". Whatever we may choose to make of these appellations, they are indicative of the transformation of PRC society and culture.²⁵

Chinese millenials have come of age in the context of "China's rise" by successful exploitation of opportunities provided by the globalization of capital, which has also fueled nationalist fervour and cultural



introspection. The restructuring of domestic spaces and the PRC's relationship to the world at large has induced the transformation of intellectual orientations and "the structures of feeling". Despite the cosmopolitization of everyday life that has accompanied the globalization of PRChinese society, however, in contrast to the Tiananmen rebels' thirst for cultural and philosophical understanding of the outside world, the present generation is shielded from the world outside by an education that instills in youth the provincial narrow-mindedness of an exuberant nationalism. The Tiananmen generation, too, had been raised on the nationalist education of the early 1980s that already sought in nationalism a substitute for socialism. But this was still a nationalism that drew its logic from a century of revolution. The nationalist ideology that came to the fore in the 1990s turned for inspiration to the very traditions that the revolution had sought to overturn. Even as the PRC inserted itself in global capitalism, it began to turn its back on the universalism that had informed the revolutionary movement. In this sense the PRC has followed a trajectory similar to that of the Guomindang in the 1930s. In its "superior" ability to police unwanted ideas of human rights and democracy, it has been more effective in enforcing among the people the provincial mentality of the Party itself.²⁶

The regime's efforts to depoliticize the population have worked, but only up to a point. Coercion is readily at hand to make up where ideological education falls short of silencing dissent. The PRC population readily expresses its frustrations on everyday matters. The agrarian population, popular source of the Chinese revolution, readily fights back against the state to protect its rights. The industrial sector is marked by frequent worker strikes against poor pay and oppressive working conditions. And though present-day concerns are different from the anxieties and hopes that drove the generation of 1989, youth is quite contentious. The contestation is there, but its effectiveness in achieving its goals should not be exaggerated. Party and government organs strictly regulate and circumscribe the sphere of protest, and are prepared to nip in the bud any tendency to politicize social issues.²⁷



It is not only Party control that conditions protest. It is constrained also by popular concerns about jeopardizing “China’s rise”. The Communist Party itself is by no means monolithic. It has its own advocates of greater democracy and the rule of law in governance. Popular ferment is also an eloquent indication of cravings for more effective civic and political participation and voice among social groups empowered by development. While talk about democracy (and kindred notions such as freedom and human rights) is an ongoing feature of political discourse within the Party and among the public at large, however, it would seem to be trumped for most people by concerns for stability and continued development.²⁸

These concerns are no doubt exacerbated by nationalist cravings for “China’s rise”. The patriotism instilled in youth by a chauvinistic nationalist education can even become an embarrassment in forcing the state to take positions in international relations it might well desire to avoid.²⁹ Popular patriotism draws energy from its entanglement in pervasive aspiration to achieve the good life which may be fulfilled only by further “rise”. In contrast to the anxieties of the earlier generation about the future – personal or national – the present generation is taught that the future belongs to the PRC – evidence for which seems to be readily available in the rapid advance of an otherwise obscene consumerism that has become a defining feature of present-day PRC culture, driven by a predatory global capitalism that looks to the PRC as the source of its future customers. Democracy is by all appearances a remote concern to the new “middle classes” so long as the Party can guarantee the freedom to consume.

It would be interesting, were it allowed, to see what the contentious Internet clientele would make of the Tiananmen movement. Despite radical transformation, the two periods have commonalities arising from frustration with the despotic rule of the Communist Party. Party abuse of the people is an ongoing issue. So is the demand for democracy. The problem of inequality surpasses what the generation of 1989 might have dared to imagine. Private exploitation of public resources by Party members places the PRC among the most corrupt countries in the world. These commonalities might or might not enter the evaluation of June 4.





The views expressed by the Harvard student cited above are likely representative of prevailing sentiments, especially among the new generation. Such sentiments no doubt draw at least some plausibility from the subsequent careers of Tiananmen veterans who have gone their various ways, some of them to Wall Street, justifying suspicions that they had been motivated by elitism if not opportunism.³⁰

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Memories of Tiananmen among the foreign public and scholars of China have also been significantly attenuated by the PRC's phenomenal development and the radical changes in its relationship to the world. The number two economic power in the world has quickly learned to emulate the imperial policies of number one, embellishing them with "Chinese characteristics" in which memories of the imperial tribute system of an earlier age are blended with the legacies of a revolution that for half a century sought to challenge the capitalist world order. Hype about "China's rise" celebrates the PRC's return to the "normalcy" of the capitalist world system. It is forgotten in the process that the PRC all along has been a major power, but as a Third World socialist threat to the global capitalist system. Those old enough may still remember US officials in the 1960s declaring solemnly that if the "Red Chinese" were not stopped in Vietnam, "we" would have to fight them in California!

The Tiananmen suppression brought back these memories of "Red China". The turn from revolution to reform in 1978 expectedly had been greeted with an orgy of enthusiasm for the PRC, and especially for Deng Xiaoping. For a decade, until the eve of the suppression, Deng was the golden-haired boy of Americans and Westerners in general. He was hailed as the greatest revolutionary of the twentieth century who had returned China to its proper historical path after three decades of aberrant revolutionary socialism. In the US, he had been named "man of the year" more than once (*Time*, 1979, 1985; *National Review*, 1985).

A decade of "China fever" evaporated when on June 4, 1989 the Communist Party called out the troops to put an end to the movement. In the aftermath, it was hard to find anyone to put in a good word for the





Chinese government or its leaders, at least publicly. The insults heaped upon Deng equaled in their negativity the extravagance of the praise bestowed upon him earlier. He was called a butcher, placed in a category reserved of the likes of Fidel Castro, Kim Il-sung, and the Romanian Communist dictator Nicolae Ceaușescu, and, perhaps most irredeemably, charged with resurrecting Mao Zedong's policies – a bugaboo of the US government, press and many establishment China scholars.³¹ Scholars who had been admirers of his “revolutionary” policies discovered suddenly that those policies had created “the worst of all worlds”³². One professional anti-Communist, a consistent critic of the Communist Party, perceived in these uniformly negative appraisals “a remarkable and truly moving unanimity on the issue of China”³³. Not everybody gave up on China. Realist “soft anti-Communists” continued to hope that China might yet be eased out of communism “peacefully” by the effects of a “market economy”.³⁴ Leaving aside ethical questions which are of little interest to “Realist” policy makers and advisers, they would be right in the long run – although from a contemporary perspective, the results are less than benign!³⁵

While suspicion of the PRC remained alive for the next few years, as relations with the outside world were “normalized”, there was a return by the end of the 1990s to enthusiasm for the PRC which in the new millennium would reach orgiastic proportions, possibly unequalled since the European *Chinoiserie* craze of the 17th/18th centuries.³⁶ The China hype would reach a crescendo by the time of the 2008 Olympics and the 2010 Shanghai Exposition. It has been tempered somewhat since then in the face of the PRC's sneaky expansionist moves in East and Southeast Asia. But the PRC is still hot, if more of a threat to US hegemony and world peace, not to speak of the environmental health of the earth.

Underlying this China hype is the phenomenal economic development of the PRC that has catapulted it to second place in the world economy by GDP, even if on a per capita basis it remains one of the poorest countries in the world. The PRC, unsurprisingly, is an attractive example to many in the developing world who no doubt feel empathetic to its challenge to imperial Western domination of the last two-three centuries, and a counter-balance to a hegemonic US with a



seeming addiction to war. More importantly, as it has emerged as the “factory of the world” and the primary consumer of developmental resources, it has created a “market dependency” that has made it indispensable to the continued welfare of economies around the world, including economies more advanced than its own. When the US and Europe were thrown into economic turmoil with the recession of 2008 their financial institutions had managed to engineer, the PRC’s ability to overcome the adverse effects of the recession made it into a beacon of salvation of sorts for both businesses and populations in search of a way out of their economic woes.

A most important aspect of these changes has been the unprecedented expansion of social and cultural exchanges. For the last decade, everyone – from “wealth management” firms like Bain Capital, of Mitt Romney fame, to all the major auto companies in the world, from top-notch peddlers of luxury goods from Europe to Hollywood, from US universities opening up campuses in the PRC to National Basketball Association players – has located in the PRC as the new land of opportunity, with promises of unbounded future riches of one kind or another. In the capital in Beijing, the hyper-developed coastal urban conglomerations around Guangzhou and Shanghai, and Chongqing and Chengdu in the interior, expats share in the new life of luxury with few equals in the world. There are more than 300,000 foreign students in the PRC. There are trading communities of Africans, Arabs and others that are reminiscent of trade in the treaty ports of imperial China. So long as they stay out of politics – and the sight of security – the PRC might seem to these groups as an exciting playground, in many cases freer than where they came from. They in turn are allowed to bring world culture into the midst of Chinese society; at least so long as they stay away from those aspects of world culture that might “hurt the feelings of the Chinese people” or transgress “Chinese” cultural and political norms – which include a great many things from Tibet to Xinjiang, Falungong, Tiananmen, democracy, human rights, constitutional government, etc., etc. Fair enough. If the Chinese people cannot speak about those things, why should foreigners!



Movement in the opposite direction is equally intense. Going out into the world (*zouxiang shijie* 走向世界 – and now, *zouchuqu* 走出去, “getting out” pure and simple) has almost become obligatory for professors and government personnel. The Kennedy School at Harvard has become home away from home for top-level officials who receive instruction in the latest methods of political management (including “soft power”), followed by institutions like the Sanford School of Public policy at Duke University for lower-ranking personnel. In cumulative numbers, two and a half million PRC students have been schooled abroad. The great majority of them have stayed abroad, peopling business, and cultural and educational institutions.³⁷ Since 2004, more than 300 Confucius Institutes have been established around the world (around 70 in the US) to add what officialdom considers to be “Chinese culture” to the PRC’s many exports. The PRC has its own colonies in the Chinese labourers sent abroad to work on projects abroad, many of them government funded. We could add to these officially sanctioned exports the many – poor peasants to multi-millionaires – who move abroad in search of livelihood or to secure their wealth, some of it ill-begotten. If world culture has become part of the PRC, it is also the case that “Chinese culture” in one form or another has become part of global cultural sensibility.³⁸

These changes have also transformed the Communist Party. As Mao suits have given way to Western garb, Marxist literature has been replaced in the Party’s education by management texts.³⁹ In the Party and national institutions like the National People’s Congress, billionaires and millionaires have unseated the peasants and workers who had made the revolution against them. Remarkably, through these radical changes, the Party has stuck to the narrative of revolution, adding a new chapter to it with every change of leadership, construed as one more step in the unfolding of “socialism with Chinese characteristics”.⁴⁰ In 1989, the movement’s suppression was justified by charges of “counter-revolutionary” conspiracy to overthrow socialism. For the last decade, renaissance and renewal have replaced revolution. The revolutionary narrative now incorporates elements from native traditions that a century of revolution had sought to overcome and eradicate. But the Party still



presents itself as the personification of the revolution and the nation, and defender of “socialism with Chinese characteristics” against any attempt to turn the country in a liberal “bourgeois” direction. In foreign affairs, too, it invokes its “semi-colonial past” to manufacture a sense of kinship with people of the Global South. It disguises its expansionism with the cloak of anti-imperialist struggle to retrieve territories “stolen” from it by imperialists of a former age. And it continues to behave as if it is still determined to pursue the revolutionary goal of transforming the global order dominated by the same old imperialists. What this new order might be is puzzling to the outsider, as the PRC’s economy is already integrated with that of the global capitalist economy, and its new ruling class (including top officials in the Party) hobnobs with the new transnational capitalist class. Unlike in Cold War days, the political and military supremacy the PRC seeks is hard to credit as anything but a striving for imperial hegemony within the global capitalist order. Nevertheless, legacies of the revolution are readily available to justify continued containment of political and cultural demands from its citizens, and to cloak imperial activity abroad.

None of this should be news to anyone even remotely connected with PRC affairs. Nevertheless, PRC leaders have been quite successful in containing foreign criticism as well through a combination of hard and soft power. While military threats to neighbours have become commonplace, economic blackmail still provides the most effective weapon against those who displease the PRC by thwarting its imperious (and imperial) claims. The PRC readily uses the threat of denying economic participation in its riches to retaliate against anyone who contradicts one or another of its proliferating claims (as in the case of its neighbours in East Asia, India and Australia), or breaks one of its prohibitions – especially regarding the Dalai Lama.⁴¹ Visiting dignitaries are regularly chastised for their transgressions. It denies visas to foreign journalists who in the authorities’ opinion report unfavourably on its leadership. Scholars are denied visas for their work on the oppressed minorities, especially in Tibet and Xinjiang. When a US citizen of Taiwanese descent decided to have a mural on Tibet painted on a building he owned in the small town of Corvallis that is home to Oregon



State University, officials from the PRC Consulate in San Francisco were dispatched to warn the mayor of consequences if the “transgression” was not stopped.⁴²

The hubris of PRC officialdom has been puffed-up by the adulation extended to them by those filled with awe at the country’s economic growth and promises, as well as by an Orientalist inflation of its cultural charms, which reached fever pitch between the Beijing Olympics of 2008 and the Shanghai Expo in 2010, both of which set new standards in vulgar excess.⁴³ The PRC has deployed “soft power” tactics to exploit this adulation. The most egregious product of its efforts to project “soft power” has been the notorious “Confucius Institutes” already referred to above.

“Soft power” was proposed by the Harvard scholar Joseph Nye to refer to the intangible aspects of power (such as cultural power) that make its holders attractive, and enable persuasion rather than coercion in international relations – sort of like the Gramscian notion of hegemony. Propaganda may be part of it, but it is more than propaganda, at least in the sense of disguising or misleading. It also entails offering the self as an example that others may be tempted to emulate. The PRC deployment of the idea has reduced “soft power” to propaganda, which possibly also has something to do with the Chinese notion of propaganda (*xuanchuan* 宣传), that conveys also a sense of propagation, dissemination, making known, and, therefore, education. Be that as it may, Confucius Institutes are governed by an “autonomous” unit (Hanban) directly under the PRC Ministry of Education, but ultimately under the propaganda branch of the Party, as is the Ministry of Education itself, along with many other units of Party and government, including the Party’s own research institutes. Remarkably, the PRC was successful in placing these institutes on university campuses where in addition to teaching and cultural activity, they could also keep an eye on scholarly activities that went against its prohibitions, and if possible head them off – this is at least the impression yielded by a number of incidents around the world to keep the Dalai Lama or talk of Taiwan independence off campuses. The refusal – in violation of the equal opportunity laws of Canada – of the institutes to hire members of the Falungong, has recently led the



Canadian Association of University Teachers to call for the dismissal of the institutes from college and university campuses. Spurious comparisons to the German Goethe Institutes or the Alliance Française ignore that these institutions are not located on university campuses, and are not subject to the kinds of restrictions that are demanded of the Confucius Institutes by the dictates of the propaganda bureau. Soft power in service of cultural attraction should include the living culture of society, not just its clichéd historical legacies. This is rather a challenge in the case of the PRC where some of the most creative intellectuals and artists who are admired globally find themselves in jail, under house arrest, or subject to severe restrictions on speech and creativity. Defenders of these institutes have been silent over the removal from Tiananmen of the statue of the sage after whom they are named. Intellectually oriented Party members scoff at the song-and-dance version of Chinese culture that the institutes promote, while linguists have complained of their restriction of Chinese language teaching to official Mandarin, which is more and more problematic as local languages assert themselves in daily life in the PRC.⁴⁴

The primary acknowledged goal of the institutes is to spread the teaching of Chinese language and culture around the globe. One of their most remarkable characteristics, however, is to bring cultural and business relations together in the localities where they are established, while sugar-coating cultural work with the promise of economic benefits. This was a major attraction in many instances in the US, especially in the midst of the economic recession. As the institutes have spread, they have diversified, tailoring their offerings to their broader institutional contexts. While the Hanban has refrained from imposing restrictions on a university like Stanford which no doubt seems like a plum catch, where they can in lesser universities and smaller institutions they have not hesitated to assert their prerogatives. It is interesting that university and college administrators, who protest against charges of the restriction of academic freedom, refuse to make public the agreements they have signed with the Hanban on the grounds that concealment was part of the agreement!⁴⁵



The receptivity extended to the Confucius Institutes is inexplicable given their insipid contribution to university education in a country like the US where studies of China have been a significant part of the academic curriculum for half a century, not to speak of top institutions like Stanford, Columbia or the University of Chicago. Scholars of China, of course, always want more China studies. University administrators always want money – especially when outside sources are dwindling, as has been the case in the US for some time. The culture-business-education nexus of the institutes has also arrived at an opportune time, when business seeks to shape education and educational institutions behave increasingly like businesses. The combined pressures of business interest and the ideology of globalization have shifted attention from the education of citizens to the training of global citizens – for whom the PRC may well be a destination as the seemingly top player in the global economy. Past concerns about “conflict of interest” between donors of funds (including the state) and academic freedom have retreated before financial interest and business pressure. Since the September 11 attacks on the New York World Trade Center, dissident academics have been punished for speaking out against US policies or Israel, raising questions about the realities of academic freedom in the US, let alone elsewhere. A reductive multi-culturalism demands that “the other” must be respected – no matter how despicable. The PRC’s success at capitalism without democracy has made authoritarianism respectable in influential quarters who perceive the “exuberance of democracy” as an obstacle to efficient business and government. The behaviour of the global elite in recent years has confirmed long-standing doubts that capital’s commitment to democracy stops at the boundaries of the so-called “market economy.” In the Orwellian language of a Trilateral Commission report in 1975, “... the effective operation of a democratic political system usually requires some measure of apathy and non-involvement on the part of some individuals and groups ... In itself, this marginality on the part of some groups is inherently undemocratic, but it has also been one of the factors which has enabled democracy to function effectively.”⁴⁶





Ironically, the multi-culturalism that calls for cultural sensibility to others also views with disdain “cultural imperialist” advocacy of democracy, human rights, universal values, and so on and so forth, ignoring the importance of these to millions in the Global South, including in-between societies such as the PRC, India, Turkey and many others. It does not seem anything out of the ordinary under these circumstances to find US university professors who respond to criticisms of the mistreatment of their colleagues in the PRC by questioning the appropriateness of applying the “Western” idea of academic freedom to other societies.⁴⁷

It will be interesting to see, in this context, how educational institutions will remember Tiananmen – if they do at all. It is more than likely that they will view it as a nuisance dragged out of the past. There are many, of course, who are unhappy with the trends I have observed above, including many scholars of the PRC and Chinese intellectuals and academics working abroad or in exile. Hong Kong will remember for sure, and the tragedy will be the subject of much notice in academic publications and the press. As far as US universities are concerned, it remains to be seen. A group of concerned scholars, intellectuals and concerned professionals have circulated a letter to all the Confucius Institutes in the US urging the commemoration of June 4.⁴⁸ So far there have been no takers!

* * *

In historical perspective, the private and public trauma of Tiananmen was also the trauma of the radical transformation of the PRC. It hardly matters whether Tiananmen represented the death-pains of socialism (by then, already post-socialism) or the birth-pains of the authoritarian capitalist society that the PRC has become. From a global perspective, it seems hardly fortuitous that a decade-long unrest exploded in spring 1989. The very day of the suppression, the Solidarity Union in Poland which had overthrown communism there went to the polls for new elections. A few months later the Berlin Wall fell. The rest, as they say, is history.





Less obvious but equally significant was the context of “actually existing socialism” in the 1980s in an ascendant neo-liberalism which would in short order be named “globalization”. The transformation of societies globally over the last four decades has been marked by popular protest against forced subjection to the vagaries of a new global economy and the inequities it has created, devastating environmental deterioration that has accompanied the globalization of the developmentalist faith, and uncertainties about the future even among those who have been its beneficiaries. States have responded to proliferating popular protest by the intensification of authoritarian controls and repression that are very much the realities of contemporary life. Had the Tiananmen tragedy occurred today, it most likely would have been tagged as “Occupy Tiananmen” along with “Occupy Tahrir” or “Occupy Gezi”. It had its precedents, too, of which the most traumatic was the bloody overthrow in 1973 of the Allende government in Chile that in some ways inaugurated the neo-liberal era. This is easily overlooked in the US, as the overthrow of an elected communist government was “our” thing, unlike the Tiananmen suppression perpetrated by a Communist state. Henry Kissinger, the guiding light of “realists” in US foreign policy who has played a major part in “forgetting” Tiananmen infamously declared of the anti-Allende coup he had helped engineer in 1973 that “we cannot let a country go Communist due to the irresponsibility of its people.” In a contemporary perspective, a proper commemoration of Tiananmen of necessity calls for deep reflection on our times, and what they may yet bring.

Notes

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- * Dr Arif Dirlik lives in Eugene, Oregon, in semi-retirement. He was formerly Knight Professor of Social Science and Professor of History and



Cultural Anthropology at the University of Oregon and Professor of History and Cultural Anthropology at Duke University. He was also formerly a Distinguished Visiting Fellow at the Peter Wall Institute for Advanced Studies, University of British Columbia, has held honorary appointments at China Center for Comparative Politics and Economics, Central Compilation and Translation Bureau, Beijing, the Center for the Study of Marxist Social Theory, Nanjing University, Northwest Nationalities University, Lanzhou, PRC, and has taught at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. Arif Dirlik is one of the most important critics writing at the nexus of globalization, postcolonial theory, historiography, Asia-Pacific Studies, and capital critique. He has published over fifteen books and numerous articles. His 1997 book *The postcolonial aura: Third World criticism in the age of global capitalism* (Westview) is a trenchant analysis and critique of postcolonial theory, and an assessment of its adequacy to the contemporary situation. *After the revolution: Waking to global capitalism* (Wesleyan, 1994) posed a similar set of challenges to Marxist theory, calling for a new set of oppositional practices and modes of critique that respond to the situation of a newly hegemonic global capitalism and the demise of the socialist states. Dirlik's other books include *Places and politics in the age of global capital* (ed. with Roxann Prazniak, Rowman and Littlefield, 2001), *Postmodernity's histories: The past as legacy and project* (Rowman and Littlefield, 2000), *What is in a rim? Critical perspectives on the Pacific region idea* (Westview, 1993), and *Anarchism in the Chinese Revolution* (University of California, 1991). His works have been translated into Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Turkish, Bulgarian, French, German, Portuguese, and Spanish. Dirlik recently (Fall 2011) held the Rajni Kothari Chair in Democracy at the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies in Delhi, India. In Fall 2010, he served as the first Liang Qichao Memorial Distinguished Visiting Professor at Tsinghua University, Beijing. Dirlik serves on the editorial boards of over ten periodicals in Chinese, Asian and Cultural Studies, and is the editor of two book series, "Studies in global modernity", with the State University of New York Press, and "Asian modernities" with the Chinese University of Hong Kong Press. His various recent book-length publications include *Selected works of Arif Dirlik* (2010, in Turkish), *Snapshots of intellectual life in contemporary China* (2008, special issue of *Boundary 2*), *Pedagogies of the global* (2007), *Global modernity: Modernity in the age of global capitalism*, and two edited volumes, *The formation and indigenization of the disciplines in China: Sociology and anthropology* and



The end of the peasant? Global capitalism and the future of agrarian society. His other publications in English include *Revolution and history: Origins of Marxist historiography in China, 1991-1937*, *Origins of Chinese Communism; Marxism in the Chinese Revolution*, *Schools into fields and factories: Anarchists, the Guomindang and the Labor University in Shanghai, 1927-1932*, and recently, *Culture and history in postrevolutionary China: The perspective of global modernity*. Dirlik was born in Mersin, Turkey, in 1940. He has a B.S. in Electrical Engineering from Robert College (now Bosphorus University) in Istanbul and a Ph.D. in History from the University of Rochester, Rochester, NY. <Email: dirlikster@gmail.com>

1. Murong Xuecun, "Beijing's propaganda crisis", *The New York Times*, March 17, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/18/opinion/murong-beijings-propaganda-crisis.html> (consulted same day).
2. These numbers, even at the high end, are insignificant compared to the millions who lost their lives in previous episodes of revolutionary "high tide" during land reform in the early 1950s, the Great Leap Forward of the late 1950s, and the Cultural Revolution. The difference from these earlier episodes is nevertheless quite significant. Loss of life during the earlier episodes was part of revolutionary mobilization in which political struggles found expression in social struggles. What was novel about June 4 within the PRC historical context was the broad social opposition to the Party-state characteristic of popular struggles against conservative dictatorship. The Party still had broad support among the population, but rather than call on its supporters, it chose to suppress the protests with military means, also characteristic of run-of-the-mill dictatorships. In these years, and subsequently, the experience of the Cultural Revolution has made the Party fearful of any mass activity – and the people beyond its control.
3. "IT IS NECESSARY TO TAKE A CLEAR-CUT STAND AGAINST DISTURBANCES", *Renmin Ribao* (People's daily) editorial (printed April 26, 1989), Beijing Domestic Service, reported April 25; Foreign Broadcast Information Service, April 25, pp. 23-24.
4. "Notes from the editors: On the events in Beijing", *Beijing Review*, 32.26 (June 26 - July 2: 7-9, p.7, quoted in Rowena Xiaoqing He, "Curriculum in exile: teaching Tiananmen at Harvard", *Curriculum and Teaching Dialogue*, 14.1-2 (2011-2012): 53-66, p. 56.
5. Arif Dirlik and Roxann Prazniak, "Socialism is dead, so why must we talk about it? Reflections on the 1989 Insurrection in China, its bloody suppression, the end of socialism and the end of history", *Asian Studies*



Review, 14.2 (July 1990): 3-25, p. 16. This article was written upon the authors' return from a six-month stay in Hong Kong (Summer) and Nanjing (Fall). The personal encounters and experiences that informed it are carried into the present article as well. I have made a few changes when quoting from that text, mainly changing "China" in the original text to "PRC". Our nomenclature is the source of much ideological confusion that easily degenerates into racial and racist identifications of "China" and "Chinese". Daily reference to the PRC as China in all manner of conversation ignores that there is more than one Chinese state. And Chinese are not all PRC citizens – for the generations born abroad, are not even from "China", except by remote ancestry. We need at the very least to make a distinction between states and their ethnic constituencies that overflow borders. The foremost example of such a distinction would be between Israel and Jew – a relationship of difference as much as of identity.

6. This self-deceptive (and self-defeating) attitude is apparent on even the most urgent questions, as well as on trivial matters. For a recent example, see, "China deletes media reports calling Beijing 'unlivable'", Yang Fan for Radio Free Asia Mandarin service, tr. By Luisetta Mudie, *Eurasia Review*, February 14, 2014, http://www.eurasiareview.com/14022014-china-deletes-media-reports-calling-beijing-unlivable/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+eurasiareview%2FVsnE+%28Eurasia+Review%29 (consulted 14 February 2014). Recently, censorship has been extended to Hong Kong with the complicity of Hong Kong government and "tycoons". See, Wilfred Chan, "Hong Kong journalists: Freedom is at an all-time low", CNN, Monday, February 24, 2014, <http://www.cnn.com/2014/02/24/world/asia/hong-kong-press-freedom/> (consulted 24 February 2014). What effect this will have on June 4 commemorations this year remains to be seen.
7. Andrew Jacobs and Chris Buckley, "Elite in China molded in part by Tiananmen", *The New York Times*, June 3, 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/06/04/world/asia/chinas-new-leadership-has-ties-to-tiananmen-era.html?pagewanted=all> (consulted 8 February 2014). The elite includes the current prime minister, Li Keqiang.
8. Needless to say, it is not just the mothers. For a tragic case, see, "Father of Tiananmen victim commits suicide after years of official obstruction", *The Telegraph*, 28 May 2012, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/china/9295329/Father-of-Tiananmen-victim-commits-suicide-after-years-of-official-obstruction.html> (consulted 8 February 2012).

9. "China dissident Li Wangyang found dead in hospital", *The Guardian*, Wednesday, 6 June 2012, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/jun/06/china-dissident-li-wangyang-dead> (consulted 8 February 2014). Li had been condemned to twenty years imprisonment for his activism in Hunan to establish autonomous labour unions. He was found hanging in his hospital room with his feet touching the floor. The authorities' claim that he had committed suicide was greeted with widespread skepticism given the circumstances. Suicide under suspicious circumstances is so pervasive that some in China refer to it as "being suicided." See, for a case not directly related to June 4, "Dissident's father dies in disputed suicide", *news24*, 2014-02-08, <http://www.news24.com/World/News/Dissidents-father-dies-in-disputed-suicide-20140204> (consulted 8 February 2014).
10. "Global Times breaches China's official media silence on Tiananmen", *The Wall Street Journal*, June 4, 2009, <http://blogs.wsj.com/chinarealtime/2009/06/04/global-times-breaches-chinas-official-media-silence-on-tiananmen/> (consulted 8 February 2014).
11. Cited in He, "Curriculum in Exile", p. 53, from one of the PRC students in her symposium on the subject. Some Chinese officials did say at the time that the excessive violence had been due to lack of riot control equipment and experience with riot control. In subsequent years, the PRC has made up for this lack by learning from the US and Israel. The language of "evil" regrettably is all-too-common in the discourse on the PRC.
12. For a report, see, "Wu'er Kaixi: The Chinese dissident who can't get himself arrested – not even to go home and see his sick parents", *The Independent*, Sunday, 09 February 2014, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/wuer-kaixi-the-chinese-dissident-who-cant-get-himself-arrested--not-even-to-go-home-and-see-his-sick-parents-8963140.html> (consulted 9 February 2014). In an essay written before his incarceration, Liu Xiaobo wrote of the "Tiananmen paranoia" of the PRC state. But the paranoia is not entirely misplaced, as in "I may be paranoid, but that does not mean they are not out to get me." In the case of Wu'erkaixi, it is also sign of considerable political perspicacity. For Liu, see, "China's Tiananmen paranoia", *Wall Street Journal*, June 2, 2006, <http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB114919520411069026> (consulted 9 February 2014). Liu views Tiananmen as a "lightning rod" for dissent in the PRC.
13. The author was witness to one of the first of such revolts on the Nanjing University campus in May 1984, quickly dubbed the "May 28 movement" by the student leaders.

14. Julia Kwong, “The 1986 student demonstrations in China: A democratic movement?”, *Asian Survey*, 28.9 (September 1988): 970-985.
15. Arif Dirlik, “Spiritual solutions to material problems: The ‘Socialist Ethics and Courtesy Month’ in China”, *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, 81.4 (Autumn 1982), pp. 359-375. One of the most incisive analyses of the cultural transformations at work during this period is to be found in Ci Jiwei, *Dialectic of the Chinese Revolution: From utopianism to hedonism* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994).
16. This was the title of a book, Minzhu Han, *Cries for democracy: Writings and speeches from the 1989 Chinese democracy movement* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989).
17. Cited in Aihwa Ong, “A momentary glow of fraternity: Narratives of nation and capitalism in East Asia”, paper presented at the symposium “The rise of ‘Asian’ capitalism: Class, nation, state and new narratives”, The New York Academy of Sciences – Section of Anthropology (25 February 1995).
18. Zhonggong Shenzhen Shiwei Xuanchuanbu (Propaganda Section of the Shenzhen Municipal Committee) (ed.), *Deng Xiaoping yu Shenzhen* (Deng Xiaoping and Shenzhen) (Shenzhen: Haitian Publishers, 1992), p.9. Deng’s comments prompted the sending of a high level delegation to Singapore in July 1992 to investigate the secrets of social order there. See, Zhongguo Fu Xinjiapo Jingshen Wenming Kaochatuan, 1993. The volume contains reports on housing, labour unions, opposition parties, ideological propaganda, etc., as well as an account of a conversation with Lee Kuan Yew, who seated his guests on “two sofas arraigned around a bust of Confucius”, and lectured them that “it was not necessary to ‘desinicize’ (*fei Zhongguo hua* 非中国化) in order to achieve modernization” (*ibid.*: 19).
19. Arif Dirlik, “Confucius in the borderlands: Global capitalism and the reinvention of Confucianism”, in Dirlik, *Culture and history in postrevolutionary China* (Hong Kong: Chinese University of Hong Kong Press, 2011), pp. 97-155.
20. For a sampling of discussions in China in the late 1980s, see, Stanley Rosen and Gary Zou (ed.), *The Chinese debate on the new authoritarianism, Chinese Sociology and Anthropology* (M.E. Sharpe), 23.2 (Winter 1990-91).
21. The best guide to recent discussions of Confucianism in the PRC is John Makeham, *Lost soul: “Confucianism” in contemporary Chinese academic discourse* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008).



22. For these tendencies, see, Maurice Meisner, *The Deng Xiaoping era: An inquiry into the fate of Chinese socialism, 1978-1994* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1996).
23. David Harvey, *A brief history of neo-liberalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007). Harvey includes Deng Xiaoping among the leaders (others being Ronald Reagan, Margaret Thatcher and Augusto Pinochet) who were responsible for the neo-liberal turn. If Deng played a crucial part in turning the PRC toward a market economy, however, it would be more accurate to say that it was under Jiang Zemin that neo-liberalism was consolidated in Party ideology.
24. The “three represents” refers to the necessity for the Communist Party to always represent “the development trend of China’s advanced productive forces, the orientation of China’s advanced culture and the fundamental interests of the overwhelming majority of the Chinese people”. The most important consequence of the “Three Represents” was the admission into the Party of the new bourgeoisie and business people (along with intellectuals as representatives of culture).
25. See, Arif Dirlik, “Markets, power, culture: The making of a ‘Second Cultural Revolution’ in China”, *Asian Studies Review*, 25.1 (March 2001):1-33, and, Guobin Yang, *The power of the Internet in China: Citizen activism online* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), pp. 213-218. For “post-socialism”, see, Arif Dirlik, “Post-socialism – Reflections on ‘Socialism with Chinese Characteristics’”, in Arif Dirlik and Maurice Meisner (ed.), *Marxism and the Chinese experience: Issues in Chinese socialism* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1989), pp. 362-384.
26. The question of cosmopolitanism vs. provincialism in the Communist Party was the subject of a brilliant essay by Joseph R. Levenson, *Revolution and cosmopolitanism: The Western stage and the Chinese stages* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1971).
27. Yang, *The power of the Internet in China: Citizen activism online*, offers an illuminating discussion. See, also, Orion A. Lewis, “Net inclusion: New media’s impact on deliberative politics in China”, *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, 43.4 (2013): 678-708. Popular struggles against illegal land appropriation, labour abuse and environmental destruction are well documented in reportage on the PRC. See, for example, “Chinese villagers attack factory after reports of pollution”, *The Guardian*, Wednesday, 12 February 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/feb/12/chinese-villagers-factory-polluting-police-baha-attack> (consulted 12 February 2014). For strikes in the industrial sector, see, *China Labor Bulletin*,



- “Searching for the Union: The workers’ movement in China, 2011-2013” (February 2014). If I may add an anecdote, in the fall of 1993, I happened to share a train ride from Shanghai to Nanjing by Party cadres from Nanjing returning from a required study session in Shanghai of Jiang Zemin’s report in the 14th Party Congress the previous year. They were very unhappy cadres, with *sotto voce* references to “bastards” (*hundun* 混蛋) in charge who were abandoning socialism.
28. For a discussion by a highly respected Party intellectual, see, Yu Keping, *Democracy is a good thing: Essays on politics, society, and culture in contemporary China* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 2009). Yu himself is a “graduate” of the ferment surrounding the Tiananmen movement in 1989. He gained recognition at the time as part of a group advocating “Mr. Luo (law)” in addition to the May Fourth slogans of “Mr. Science” and “Mr. Democracy” that the protestors had made their own. See his essay calling for human rights as a necessary ingredient of reform, “Lun renquan” [on human rights], in n.a., *De xiansheng, Sai xiansheng, Luo xiansheng yu dangdai Zhongguo: Jinian Wusi Yundong qishi zhounian* [Mr. Democracy, Mr. Science, Mr. Law and contemporary China: commemorating the seventieth anniversary of the May Fourth Movement] (Beijing: International Culture Publications, 1980, pp. 25-30.
 29. The “spontaneity” of popular nationalism is easily exaggerated. While there is no reason to question the propensity of the public to nationalist enthusiasm, it needs to be remembered that state propaganda organs play an important part in proactively shaping public opinion, in the press but especially on the Internet. See, Yang, *The power of the Internet in China*, pp. 50-51.
 30. Yang writes that in contrast to the present, when the Internet has enabled participation by broad sections of the population, “the main force of this cultural blossoming [in the 1980s] consisted of intellectuals, writers, artists and professors. Its elitist bias was exposed most starkly during the climactic event of that age – the student movement in 1989. During that movement, despite belated efforts to unite with workers and peasants, students and intellectuals not only dominated the stage of political action, but deliberately tried to distinguish themselves as the torchbearers – the ‘chosen few’.” (*ibid.*, p. 214). We might add that this was encouraged by reporting on the event which almost completely ignored participants outside of the Tiananmen occupation. For further discussion, see, Dirlik and Prazniak, “Socialism is dead”. A thoughtful self-critical discussion of the event by one of the leading participants is to be found in Shen Tong



- (with Marianne Yen), *Almost a revolution* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1990).
31. The former US ambassador to the PRC, Winston Lord, in *Newsweek*, 18 December 1989, p. 36.
 32. Roderick MacFarquhar, “The end of the Chinese Revolution”, *The New York Review of Books*, 20 July 1989, p. 9.
 33. Simon Leys, “The curse of the man who could see the little fish at the bottom of the ocean”, *The New York Review of Books*, 20 July 1989, p. 29.
 34. US senators who voted to sustain then President Bush’s veto of a bill granting automatic visa extension to Chinese students gave this as the most common reason for their vote. It was also suggested repeatedly on US television by experts close to the government such as Michael Oksenberg and Kenneth Lieberthal.
 35. For a critical discussion of “dreams” of remaking China in the US image, written in the aftermath of Tiananmen, see, Richard Madsen, *China and the American Dream: A moral inquiry* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1996). Which US they might have in mind is another question, and an important one which is rarely addressed.
 36. For a sharp analysis of *Chinoiserie* in contemporary PRC, with reference to the “Mao fever”, see, Ruth Hung, “Red nostalgia: Commemorating Mao in our time”, *Literature Compass*, forthcoming. The *Chinoiserie* exceeds Mao, needless to say, and involves generous promotion of clichés about “5000 years of Chinese history”.
 37. The wealthier among these students make their own playground abroad. For a report on PRC students at the University of Oregon, see, Diane Dietz, “Bringing the bling: College students are flocking from China, many of them wealthy”, *The Register-Guard*, February 23, 2014, p. A1, A8/9.
 38. For the figures cited here and related matters, see, “Why are overseas Chinese students not returning to China”, *chinaSMACK* (from Xinhua news), Thursday, November 7, 2013, <http://www.chinasmack.com/2013/stories/why-are-overseas-chinese-students-not-returning-to-china.html> (consulted 12 February 2014), and, Robert Frank, CNBC, “Where are China’s millionaires going?”, *USA Today*, February 9, 2014, <http://www.usatoday.com/story/money/business/2014/02/09/china-millionaires-leave-country/5228219/> (consulted 12 February 2014). The relationship between wealth and power is analysed in James Reilly, “China’s economic statecraft: Turning wealth into power”, Lowy Institute for International Policy, 27 November 2013, <http://www.lowyinstitute.org/publications/>



- chinas-economic-statecraft-0* (consulted 21 February 2014). I am grateful to Tim Summers for bringing this article to my attention.
39. Frank N. Pieke, *The good Communist: Elite training and state building in today's China* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2009).
 40. See, Arif Dirlik, "The discourse of 'Chinese Marxism'", in *Modern Chinese religion: 1850-present, value systems in transformation*, ed. Vincent Goossaert, Jan Kiely, and John Lagerwey (Leiden and Boston: Brill, forthcoming).
 41. Natalie Thomas, "China says it will win West over to its view on Tibet, Xinjiang", Reuters, Wed, February 19, 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/02/19/us-china-tibet-idUSBREA1109520140219> (consulted 19 February 2014). "China" does not say anything, of course – countries do not speak, people do – but Zhu Weiqun of the United Front Work Department "criticized foreign leaders who meet the Dalai Lama, many of whom have later found themselves frozen out diplomatically by Beijing. Those who do so should 'pay a price', Zhu said, 'We can only push the West to change its way of thinking if we let them understand that China's power cannot be avoided ... and that the West's interests lie in development and maintaining ties with China, not the opposite.'" There is no pretense here to questions of legitimacy or right or wrong. It is a simple, and somewhat simple-minded, assertion of power.
 42. "China asks city in Oregon to scrub mural for Tibetan, Taiwanese independence", NBC News, Wednesday, September 12, 2012, http://usnews.nbcnews.com/_news/2012/09/12/13833952-china-asks-city-in-oregon-to-scrub-mural-for-tibetan-taiwanese-independence?lite (consulted 14 February 2014).
 43. In the US, the servile reporting on the PRC contrasts sharply with the negative reporting on Russia, which has reached its own crescendo during the ongoing Sochi Olympics. The legacies of the Cold War may be a partial explanation, but only a partial one, as the PRC was also an "enemy" at the time, and a more "erratic" one at that. Attitudes toward the PRC began to change in the late 1970s, under the Carter administration, when the national security adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski sought to recruit the PRC as an ally against the "Russian bear". With Mao gone and the PRC firmly brought into the capitalist fold, except for the brief hiatus during the Tiananmen period, a benign orientalism has led to a mindless adulation of the PRC while the hostility to Russia continues (past the Gorbachev interlude). For a critical discussion of the reporting on Russia, see, Stephen F. Cohen, "Distorting Russia: How the American media misrepresent



- Putin, Sochi and Ukraine”, *The Nation*, March 3, 2014, <http://www.thenation.com/article/178344/distorting-russia#> (consulted 20 February 2014).
44. For Canadian universities, see, “Teacher body calls for closure of Confucius institutes”, *The Epoch Times*, 10 January 2014, <http://www.universityworldnews.com/article.php?story=20140109190740549> (consulted 14 February 2014). The suppression of linguistic diversity in the PRC is discussed in, Michael Churchman, “Confucius Institutes and controlling Chinese languages”, *China Heritage Quarterly* (Australian National University), no. 26 (June 2011), http://www.chinaheritagequarterly.org/articles.php?searchterm=026_confucius.inc&issue=026 (consulted 14 February 2014).
45. The most extensive critique of the Confucius Institutes has been penned not by a China scholar but the distinguished anthropologist Marshall Sahlins. See “China U.”, *The Nation*, November 18, 2013, <http://www.thenation.com/article/176888/china-u#> (consulted 14 February 2014).
46. Quoted in Nafeez Ahmed, “Are you opposed to fracking? Then you might just be a terrorist”, *The Guardian*, January 21, 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/environment/earth-insight/2014/jan/21/fracking-activism-protest-terrorist-oil-corporate-spies> (consulted 14 February 2014). The “exuberance of democracy” is how the former prime minister of Singapore, Lee Kwan Yew, described the Philippines’ developmental woes. See, also, Arif Dirlik, “King Kong in America”, *Boundary 2* (Summer 2014), forthcoming. For foreign business complicity in PRC censorship, see, Gwynn Guilford, “Is Microsoft’s Bing spreading the Chinese government’s censorship around the world?”, *Quartz*, February 11, 2014, <http://qz.com/176048/is-microsofts-bing-spreading-the-chinese-governments-censorship-around-the-world/> (consulted 14 February 2014).
47. This was proposed by a professor of English at Wellesley College in the US seeking to deflate the controversial sacking from Beijing University of the economics professor Xia Yeliang on the grounds that he was a “bad teacher”. Professor Xia also happened to be a critic of the Party-state. In this author’s experience, most PRC universities would have to shut down if bad teaching were made into a serious criterion of employment. See, Thomas Cushman, “China’s war on thought is being waged in Western universities”, *THE CONVERSATION*, 28 January 2014, <https://theconversation.com/chinas-war-on-thought-is-being-waged-in-western-universities-22430> (consulted February 14, 2014). It is reported that



Professor Xia will join the libertarian Cato Institute in the US. See, Tamar Lewin, “Chinese dissident lands at Cato Institute with a caution to colleges”, *The New York Times*, February 9, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/10/us/chinese-dissident-lands-at-cato-institute-with-a-caution-to-colleges.html> (consulted 15 February 2014). Xia will also be joining Cushman’s Freedom Project at Wellesley. Warning against the pitfalls of collaboration with PRC universities, Xia also observed that, “I can’t say we’re headed toward another Tiananmen Square, but there’s definitely a crackdown on dissidents.” It is disgraceful that while oppressed intellectuals and academics around the world yearn for “academic freedom” and democracy, university faculty in the US should be exploiting cultural studies criticism to defend authoritarianism and worse in the name of cultural sensibility. See, Michael R. Gordon, “Chinese ask Kerry to help tear down a firewall”, *The New York Times*, February 15, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/16/world/asia/chinese-ask-kerry-to-help-tear-down-a-firewall.html?hpw&rref=politics> (consulted 15 February 2014). Revealingly, “during the meeting, Mr. Kerry sometimes seemed inclined to see a glass half full, while the bloggers were worried that it was emptying.” The Wendy Doniger affair in India with Penguin Books caving in to threats from religious thugs is another sad example of deference to so-called “cultural difference”, which often translates into political or economic calculation.

48. Names available at <http://www.June4commemoration.org> Several scholars have acknowledged that while they would like to sign on, they are unwilling to do so for fear of reprisals.