RESEARCH QUESTION AND METHODOLOGY

This is a study of the discussion about democracy in the Chinese press during the period beginning from 1978 and ending at the end of 1981. This relatively open period of discussion thus falls between the end of the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976) and the anti-bourgeois liberalization campaign of 1981. Of the various topics under discussion in 1978–1981, this particular study inquires into the theory of democratic centralism as understood by the Chinese Communist Party. Democratic centralism was not the only theory referred to in 1978–1981, since the writers of articles in China during this time often based their theorization about democratization on the Marxist class-based theory of democracy. Chronologically, the discussion of the theory of democratic centralism came first and opened the door for theorization of democracy in the summer of 1978. The theoretical approach of this study means that I will examine the question of democracy only on a textual and theoretical level, knowing that practical applications of this theory might differ considerably from the theory itself. Likewise, I will not deal with the theorization of practical arrangements for democracy, such as political rights, institutions, workplace democracy, elections, and the law, topics also discussed in the press during 1978–1981.

The period covered by this research roughly corresponds with the period Hua Guofeng led China (1976–1981). Periods of evident social and ideological change tempt historians. It is surprising that the Hua Guofeng period in China has attracted researchers so little, although it was a period of dramatic social and political changes. It involved active public discussion about the political course and institutional structures of the future. This discussion challenged traditional interpretations of Marxism. To a historian's advantage, this discussion not only introduced diverse proposals for the future, but also theoretical and practical problems the writers thought the former orthodoxy had caused. This particular study leaves out the first part of the paradigmatic change following the Mao era. It was during late 1976 to early 1978 that the necessary step of making the radical leftist position vulnerable to criticism was taken, but at this point the attack concentrated on tarnishing the leftist leaders without constructing concrete alternatives to their political platform. Therefore, this study focuses on the period of providing theoretical alternatives which begun in 1978 and lasted until the new reformist orthodoxy was established and legitimized in 1981. The discussions in 1978–1981 provided

the foundation for reformist orthodox views about the political process and institutions, but they simultaneously created a legitimate model for intellectuals to expand and challenge this orthodoxy prevalent through-out the 1980s.

I study discussions in the 1978–1981 period in light of the press materials of this time. In my study, I use both newspapers and journals to the degree they are indexed and available in the main libraries. Main indexes, such as the National Press Index collected by the Shanghai library[1] and the clip service collected by the People's University[2], list central, provincial and even some local newspapers, topical newspapers and journals, theoretical journals, and academic journals. In addition, some articles or theoretical journals occasionally listed articles dealing with certain topics. Apart from the ones indexed, my study uses numerous articles I spotted when going through newspapers and journals.

This study aims to make several contributions. One aim of my study was to locate articles pertaining to the 1978–1981 press discussion about democratic centralism and related topics and list them for future use.[3] The second aim is to introduce the content of this discussion. The third step is to introduce democratic centralism as a complete theory of democracy. Then, I will evaluate this theory in the context of democratic theories in general. Finally, I will compare explanations provided by Western research literature with this theory in order to open dialogue between foreign and indigenous explanations about the Chinese polity and political processes. In this research I will try to answer questions like: What is the Chinese theory of democracy? How does this theory relate to the large family of theories of democracy in the West? In what sense it is democratic? What strengths and weaknesses does such a theory have? Can the Chinese understanding of their political system deepen Western understanding about the Chinese political system?

Chosen period and sources

I will inquire into the Chinese theory of democracy through texts of a certain period. The period of 1978–1981 proves especially interesting for studying theory because political terminology and theory were redefined during this time. Periods of change appeal to historians because they offer insight into established values and new values emerging at the time. They reveal more about the Chinese communist theory of democracy than ordinary times do, because when certain con-

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[1]   *Quanguo baokan suoyin* (National Press Index), published by *Shanghai dushuguan* (Shanghai Library).

[2]   *Fuyin baokan ziliao* (Duplicated Press Materials), published by *Renmin daxue* (People's University).

[3]   Appendix I.

ceptions become contested many normally shared and implicitly accepted aspects of the theory are dealt with publicly. Thus, it becomes possible to study both lasting characteristics of the theory and its ability to answer temporal needs and adopt new viewpoints and aspects. To document all the changes in the discourse, I have left much space in this study for the twists and turns of the 1978–1981 press discussion itself.

In terms of political theory, the period of 1978–1981 is especially interesting because public discussion of this period derived from the entire history of democratic centralism in China. Some voices wanted to revive the old communist theoretical framework and principles in their pre-Cultural Revolution forms, while others developed or criticized interpretations prevalent during the Cultural Revolution. There were also some who wanted to understand what communist classics had originally meant with regard to certain ideas and concepts. In addition there were those who sought to improve democratic practice in China, while others wanted to contribute non-Marxist elements to this Marxist theory. This plurality of viewpoints meant that Maoist stress on participatory democracy could still flourish alongside a more procedural understanding of democracy. Chronologically speaking, the sources of 1978–1981 document how leftist interpretation gave way to reformist orthodoxy.

Apart from publishing chronologically multi-layered discussions, the period of 1978–1981 documents the beginning of the break-up of Marxist dominance in Chinese political discourse. Due to the need to express oneself in an accepted manner in an ideologically loaded political culture, the political discourse was still relatively united in 1978–1981. The ideological isolationism of the Cultural Revolution contributed to the domination of Marxist theory and parlance. Mastery of only one theoretical tradition led writers to formulate their calls for democratization mainly within the framework of the official theory. One shared framework was the theory of democratic centralism, causing many very different ideas about democratization to be expressed in democratic centralist vocabulary. Therefore, in 1978–1981 one theory was still used to communicate various issues and proposals. However, this situation began to change in the 1980s, when the press started to introduce foreign and non-Marxist alternatives. Nevertheless, the pluralization of discourses takes place only later in the 1980s.

Chosen question

Recent years have seen an upsurge of scholarly publications about Chinese democracy. Some writers have been sympathetic to or at least have taken seriously

the Chinese conception of democracy,[4] some others have thought the official Chinese understanding of democracy inadequate,[5] while many writers have denied the idea that communist China could be called democratic either because of the burden of its cultural values[6] or because China lacks some conventional democratic institutions and enough autonomy for its civil society.[7] Some have studied possible paths of future democratization in China,[8] mostly expecting that China would then adopt Western style electoral democracy and allow opposition parties.

Stein Tønneson sees that there are three possible ways to study democracy in non-Western countries.[9] All of them have been used in China studies. One is a procedural approach concentrating on the presence or absence of democratic institutions.[10] Another is a substantial approach focusing on actual popular participation.[11] The third possible scholarly approach is discourse analysis studying how the term democracy is used in non-Western countries.[12] However, this list does not exhaust all legitimate scholarly approaches. [13] It does not include research of either Chinese discourse or practice for theory formation or theoretical comparison,[14] which is the approach I will take. This approach is based on the customary practice in the sciences to base theories on empirical knowledge, which in the humanities mainly emerges from either practical observation or textual analysis. After theory formation, this theory is usually tested in reality or used to analyze practice.[15] All three approaches recommended by Stein Tønneson take the

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4   E.g. Des Forges 1993, Ogden 2002, Nathan 1986, Womack 1991 A.

5   E.g. He 1990.

6   E.g. Pye 1992.

7   E.g. Gilley 2004, Zhao 2003.

8   E.g. Gilley 2004, Lum 2000, Pei 1995.

9   Tønneson 1996.

10   In China studies, this approach has been used by Gilley 2004 and Pei 1995, among others. In addition, studies of Chinese elections and representative organs can be classified under the procedural approach. They include, e.g., Jacobs 1991, Li 1999, O'Brien 1990, Pastor and Tan 2000, Tanner 1999, Townsend 1967, Xia 2000.

11   In China, this approach has been used by Blecher 1983, Falkenheim 1978, Jennings 1997, Shi 1997, Tang and Parish 2000.

12   In China, the meaning and use of the term democracy in Chinese discourses is analyzed by He 1996, Nathan 1986, Xu 2001.

13   Stein Tønneson coined this list to criticize research which unnecessarily confuses different meanings of democracy.

14   E.g. Shih 1999.

15   Obviously, moves between the practical and theoretical do not cause conceptual confusion, at least as long as the scholar demarcates between them, as is customary in scientific research, especially in political and social research which builds theories on the basis of empirical observation and tests the theories with practical evidence.

definition of democracy for granted,[16] but this is exactly what my approach will challenge.

My approach has some things in common with discourse analysis. I inquire into how democracy was discussed in China and what kinds of political programs discussants implicitly or explicitly promoted. However, I will also show that this discussion is based on a distinct theory of democracy, and the relevance of this theory, like other theories of democracy, can be evaluated either by means of political philosophy or by comparing the theory to practice. Political philosophy evaluates theoretical cohesion and logical consequences of the theory. Political philosophy can also assess differences between various theories of democracy and compare their approaches. I will engage in this approach of political philosophy and the history of ideas. Another possibility is practical estimation of how well the particular theory describes actual political processes. In this respect, I will only give some evidence of the need for this approach on the basis of empirical evidence collected for other purposes.

Apart from theoretical aims, my approach contains certain normative ambitions as well. In my opinion, better knowledge about the Chinese theory can and should contribute to our general knowledge about political systems as well. To improve the quality of Western research on Chinese democratization, Thomas Metzger calls for a more empirical investigation. Instead of seeking unilinear developments towards the Western type of a polity, research should scrutinize convergence and divergence between political ideals and systems. This project needs both studies about the Chinese public political discourse and quantifiable data.[17] Chinese experiments with a form of democracy coming close to participatory and deliberative types of democracy can demonstrate something general about the possibilities and limitations of these traditions which Western political theorists can learn from. Simultaneously, comparison with Western theories contributes to the knowledge about how the Chinese could patch discrepancies in their system with some insights derived from the liberal and electoral types of democracy. As Brantly Womack remarks, "Precisely because of the vast situational differences between Chinese and Western politics, any generalizations about democracy that can span both of these cultures will mark progress toward a general theory of modern democracy."[18]

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[16]   Still, he does not hold that there is only one possible definition, but emphasizes that different approaches need different definitions. For him, procedural definitions are institution-based, while the substantial approach should understand democracy as popular influence and participation, and discourse analysis should be content with the use of the term as it is presented in the indigenous sources (Tønneson 1996).

[17]   Metzger 1998, p. 19.

[18]   Womack 1991 A, p. 55.

Another normative ambition in this study is to facilitate more dialogue between the Western and Chinese ways to conceptualize the situation in China. Unless Western scholars acquaint themselves with the Chinese views about the Chinese political system and the rationale for establishing such a system, their understanding of this system is likely to remain partial. Studying China merely from a Western perspective may provide interesting results and sometimes even new insight. Yet, in my opinion, Western scholars cannot adequately understand Chinese political processes unless they know what motivations the Chinese themselves have had for adopting these types of processes, practices, and institutions. As Stephen Angle remarks, we should evaluate political alternatives to our own systems not only from our own values, but also from inside. Thus, the research should pay attention to the coherency of their system, its groundedness in local values, and its relation to actual political and social life.[19] Only by knowing the Chinese theories, one can assert whether these processes satisfy the needs the Chinese themselves sought to fulfill.

Apart from a purely theoretical interest or a practical interest in improving political institutions, one possible reason for gaining better knowledge of Chinese theories is moral. Suzanne Ogden alleges that local Chinese dissatisfaction and criticism strengthens external critique of the Chinese political system.[20] This is not my aim. However, if some of my readers want to use this particular study for this aim, my study will provide an ample list of practical problems and neglected theoretical issues in the Chinese theory of democracy.

Chosen methodology

In this study, I will examine Chinese political theory from the point of view of the history of ideas. I will analyze certain written sources, namely Chinese press articles, in order to find out what these sources can tell about the time and the theory which produced them. In accordance with the basic methodology of historical analysis, I use written sources to reconstruct a certain discussion and theory from individual sources. By analyzing content of the sources, I will evaluate writers' open and covert agendas as well as their probable motivations for contributing to the discussion. I will put text into the context of simultaneous events and the general press discussion to pursue their contemporary meanings and implications. Apart from evaluating content and context, historical analysis seeks to reconstruct reasons behind writing a text and the uses of this text to influence contemporary events. Respecting the tradition of historical analysis, I expect that the Chinese

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[19]   Angle 2005.

[20]   Ogden 2002, pp. 356–357.

writers participating in the press discussion in 1978–1981, like individuals else-where, reflect their cultural and temporal background, but at the same time they reinterpret their sociopolitical situation and intellectual setting with purposeful aims for the future.

The basic methodology to study the history of political ideologies has been theoretically formulated by Quentin Skinner. As he put it, "political life itself sets the main problems for the political theorist" along with "intellectual context" of the texts, namely "earlier writings and inherited assumptions about political society", since "the nature and limits of the normative vocabulary available at any given time will also help to determine the ways in which particular questions come to be singled out and discussed."[21] In my study, political life appeared as the special historical environment arising partly from responses to the Chinese political system during the Cultural Revolution and partly from contemporary re-steering of the political and economic course away from that of the Cultural Revolution. Intellectual context, then, was the totality of the discussion, which provid-ed issues and a style for writers to share. Theoretical background and vocabulary within this intellectual context was mainly Marxist, but this particular discussion did not simply repeat official orthodoxy, but experimented within a much larger framework of Marxist theoretical tradition.

When studying the discussion about democracy in 1978–1981, I will mainly pursue two themes. One is to construct the Chinese theory of democratic centralism. The other is to detect practical political programs initiated within the discourse based on this theory. Thus, I try to sketch both lasting and temporal elements of the 1978–1981 discussion. In the course of this discussion participants reaffirmed the Chinese theory of democracy and simultaneously developed new aspects and uses for it.

In light of the chosen approach and methodology, I will avoid personalizing the discussion.[22] I study the history of certain discourses, not the individuals behind this discourse.[23] The press discussion of 1978–1981 had hundreds of participants, many of them writing under pseudonyms. Even if a researcher would succeed in detecting them all, the limited space of one dissertation would make it impossible to credit them more than superficially. It would be more or less casual to limit the discussion into only few participants, if the aim is to study the logic of the whole discussion, not individual contributions to it. Participants with high political or academic status did not necessarily initiate the most interesting points

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[21] Skinner 1978, p. xi.

[22] As Skinner 1978, p. xi, put it, one should not concentrate on personages of importance in isolation but should rather "surround texts with their appropriate ideological context."

[23] For some prominent individuals within this discussion see, e.g., Goldman 1994; Yan 1992. For intellectual groups in the 1980s, see Gu 2000 A.

of the discussion. Even more importantly, participants' personal backgrounds explain relatively little about their contributions to the discussion, nor would the introduction of personal backgrounds add much to our understanding of the theory. More than their personalities, the period itself dictated what kinds of questions were dealt with. All writers were strongly influenced by their more or less shared social and political reality and trends in current political discussion. Common experiences during the Cultural Revolution and shared hopes for reform explain the writings to a very large extent. In addition, publication policy of the time surely guided writers to use certain kinds of arguments and to select permissible topics to express themselves in public. This intellectual context was another important factor shaping the discussion regardless of writers' personal backgrounds and personal stylistic preferences.

Choices of an historian

Certain choices in this work relate to my background as a historian. This study constructs a general picture from fragmentary primary sources, as historical research tends to do. Historical research is essentially empirical and inductive: it proceeds from analyzing written sources to forming a general understanding of the situation. I have structured my study in this inductive manner too. This study begins by summarizing my experience reading the discussion, and then it proceeds to empirical chapters introducing the discussion itself. Finally, theoretical chapters construct a Chinese theory on the basis of this discussion. This is a sequence in a historian's work, while for a writer in the Chinese press discussion all three of these elements appeared interconnected. The nature of the press discussion of the time and the Marxist theoretical framework were elements to consider when writing the article itself. The technicalities of finding publicity influenced the selection of topics. Theory both shaped the discussion and, simultaneously, was a subject of this discussion.

The empirical chapters seek to explain causes, motivations, continuities, and change through written sources of a certain period. The theoretical chapters, then, exceed this temporal and spatial approach to construct a relatively lasting theory behind this particular discussion and place it in the context of general theorization of democracy.

Historians differ from social scientists in their relation to the language in original sources. While a social scientist seeks to formulate exact and general language to analyze social and political phenomena, historians make a clear distinction between past and present conceptualization.[24] As a historian, I have kept

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[24]   See, e.g., Koselleck 1985, pp. 90–91.

concepts and analytical devises of socialist Chinese political analysis in 1978–1981 separate from Western political theory. Accordingly, in the empirical chapters and in the chapter reconstructing the Chinese theory of democratic centralism I will keep quite close to the Chinese Marxism-colored vocabulary and theoretical background. The Chinese have adopted specific terminology and a theoretical framework which cannot be translated into Western concepts without losing some nuances. Besides, closeness to the original language will facilitate the use of my study in understanding the Chinese theory on its own terms or in understanding the intellectual history of the Hua Guofeng era. When I step out of the original language in the comparative theoretical chapters, distancing myself from the original language will help me explain features and consequences of the Chinese theory. Using Western terminology will then assist in comparing the Chinese theory with theories and concepts of Western theories of democracy.

Apart from making a clear distinction between the original language in sources and the language of analysis, historians make a clear distinction between the past action itself and its linguistic representations.[25] The history of ideas studies ideas already communicated in words that have an essentially conceptual content; some other forms of historiography use past written evidence to construct a view of what actually happened in the past. Nowhere in this study will I take the step to ascertain from my sources what the practice in 1978–1981 China was. Whether with Chinese press sources or with Western research literature, I am only researching textual representations of Chinese actuality. I will use these textual representations of Chinese political processes and activities for several purposes. Chinese press references to social reality are almost always colored, partly because examples in articles are deliberately selected to confirm or emphasize a writer's theoretical or normative message. Still, if articles brought some problems to the surface, I feel it safe to use them to show the existence of some kind of divergence between practice and the theory. Likewise, I treat Western research literature as textual representations, but recognize its value in pinpointing some similarities or dissimilarities between Western interpretations and the Chinese theory or its logical consequences. If similarity is found, there seems to be a case to conduct field research about this phenomenon and find out if the theory of democratic centralism can contribute to a better understanding of this phenomenon or whether the similarity is casual or irrelevant.

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[25]   See, e.g., Koselleck 1985, pp. 231–232.

Theory and discussion

The 1978–1981 press discussion used the general Chinese communist theory of democracy in a certain historical situation. This discussion reflected durable elements of the general theory but simultaneously answered temporal needs. The general theory can remain unchanged even if those who refer to it stress only a part of its contents or derive novel practical solutions from it. However, reinterpretations can also gradually change the basic understanding of the theory itself.[26] I will illustrate both the general theoretical framework and how the theory was used in dealing with particular problems and promoting aims of the period of 1978–1981. That is, this study seeks to be useful both for those interested in the Chinese theory of democracy and those studying the period of 1978–1981.

Discussions about democratic centralism during the 1978–1981 period cannot be separated from the needs of the state and society at the time. Apart from providing theoretical interpretations of the current Chinese political situation, argumentation in 1978–1981 suggested possible approaches and solutions to contemporary problems. I will analyze temporal elements in the discussion from the viewpoint of political argumentation and influencing. I will seek themes that seem to comment on contemporary events or needs; in addition, I will highlight writers' personal preferences concerning the Chinese political system and democracy in general. These preferences may become evident through practical examples, analogues to contemporary problems, or normative treatments of a theory.

Within the Chinese communist theory of democracy there are at least two dominant and comprehensive theories, namely the theory of democratic centralism and the theory of class principle of democracy. In this study, I will introduce the theory of democratic centralism, although I plan to return to the theory of class democracy in Chinese discourse in the future. It is sufficient to say here that these two theories are complementary ones. They often appear together in Mao Zedong's speeches, official Communist Party documents and press articles of 1978–1981.

The Chinese communist theory of democracy has never been a systematic corpus of writings.[27] It was not clearly defined in theoretical writings, but it was transmitted through political education, oral and written, among cadres and Party members and to a lesser extent disseminated to the masses. Transmission took

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26 This actually happened to the other main theory of democracy in the Chinese press in 1978–1981. The understanding of the Marxist class principle of democracy radically altered between 1978 and 1981. However, the theory of democratic centralism remained essentially the same throughout the discussion.

27 See Townsend 1967, p. 65, for elaborating this point.

place in various situations through studying speeches and writings of the leader-ship, governmental regulations, and newspaper editorials. Most writings about democracy, including those by Mao Zedong, were practical rather than theoretical in nature. Although the Chinese communist theory of democracy was an elastic theory for solving practical problems, writings and education shared a consistent theoretical framework. In many ways the transmission of Chinese political doc-trine resembles the transmission of religious "theory", such as Christian tradition, in which oral tradition and practical education comprise an important key for interpreting the texts.

This pattern of transmission and legitimacy of various practical interpre-tations within one theory means that it is possible to know the theory on a deeper level only after a systematic study of political education materials, press materials and other sources. Even then, there is an element of temporality involved, inviting some caution as to how much this particular interpretation of the theory is applica-ble to other periods. In other words, inductive findings themselves do not neces-sarily exhaust possibilities of different interpretations in materials not included in the quota. Nevertheless, despite these limitations the period of 1978–1981 is suitable for attempts to detect the general theory, because participants explicitly discussed the content of the theory and this discussion was essentially corrective, revealing much about earlier interpretations as well.

Theoretical approach

The history of ideas does not examine theories in a vacuum but tries to see these theories in a larger context of the history of human thought. One common approach is to inquire into the chronological development of certain ideas. I will not take this path. I will concentrate on contemporary interpretations in the 1978–1981 texts. I will not study the development of Marxist theory or the origin of the ideas under discussion. Rather than the development of Marxist theory, I view Marxism as a method of argumentation and a framework for interpreting present situations. Some participants in the discussion certainly wanted to thoroughly understand Marx, Engels and Lenin, but many others quoted them mainly in an instrumental manner to support their argument. Therefore, it could sometimes even be confusing to compare these arguments with the original interpretation in the Marxist classics.

Instead of pursuing the development of democratic centralism in Marxist or Chinese history, my approach comes closer to political philosophy in general. It compares the particular theory not with the ideas preceding and following it, but with other contemporary ideas. I will use Western theories of democracy and of the Chinese polity to evaluate strengths and weaknesses of the Chinese theory of

democratic centralism. To deepen understanding of democratic centralism, it is important to know how the Chinese theory answers standard Western questions about democracy and where it can complement Western understandings. In this way, it is possible to learn more about the theory of democratic centralism than by examining it only through the framework of this particular theory.

To my understanding, the Chinese theory of democracy was neither rhetoric to deceive democrats home and abroad, nor a method of legitimizing Communist Party rule. Even if the regime used appeals to democracy to legitimize its rule, as regimes in the West also do, it did not monopolize the discourse of democracy. It is obvious that in 1978–1981 some social actors used the theory of democratic centralism to articulate normative demands for the government and the Communist Party, partly to make them to live up to the official theory. Moreover, the regime itself was not a monolithic entity communicating authoritatively with the outside, but the theory of democratic centralism was also used in communications within the Party. Since the Party demanded that its members practice democratic centralism, this education must have had an effect on cadre behavior. At the grassroots level, cadre success is even measured by the mass line standards.[28] Therefore, the theory must have had some effect on the practice of Party work too. Naturally, the Party and cadre self-image can diverge from the practice, for example by causing not a democratizing effect, but rather a paternalistic type of responsibility towards the regime's subjects.

Democratic theory and practice

Seldom, if ever, does a theory turn out to be a complete and truthful description of reality. Because the theory of democratic centralism is a normative theory and the official self-image of political processes in China, I nevertheless assume that there should be some resemblance between the theory and its applications in reality, although this study attempts to make no estimation of to what degree it may be so. Even a cynic, assuming that the only use of the theory of democratic centralism in China would be to deceive the people, should recognize that such deception would not work for long unless it had some resemblance to people's everyday experiences. Otherwise such deception would prove dangerous by setting unreasonable expectations for the government. Moreover, in China the main indoctrination of democratic centralism was directed at Party members. When all Party cadres were taught that democratic centralism and the mass line are central virtues of healthy Party life and good cadre conduct, it is probable that a substantial number of them applied this theory, even if some did so only temporarily or not

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[28]   Lewis 1966, pp. 85–86

that wholeheartedly. Party cadres were encouraged to act upon these official values, and some must have even internalized them. Indeed, problems in cadre adherence to the mass line were a theme of renewed campaigns. When the masses were invited to participate in these criticism and self-criticism campaigns, the public acted as watchdogs of the Party cadres in the interest of Party discipline.[29] In normal times cadre success was measured by mass line related criteria of people's welfare and mass enthusiasm.[30] Even if governments tend to establish participatory systems to serve their own aims, it does not mean that the people cannot then use these systems for their own goals.

Using the press sources to study political thought escapes one major problem of source analysis, since the aim of the study is not to interpret social reality from written documents but to study argumentation and theory. Discussion about political theory is largely conducted through written articles, along with political speeches, meetings and personal discussions. Theoretical articles are the means to introduce one's theoretical ideas to wider audiences. As long as a scholar uses the Chinese press to study theory, one level of historical research, that of evaluating the source and its relation to historical events, is minimal. A later reader versed in Chinese political discussion and a contemporary Chinese reader are at a relatively similar starting line when it comes to understanding political argumentation and theory building. A more demanding task is to analyze political influencing through argumentation and theorization, when a historian tries to analyze intentionality which is mostly implicitly present in the text.

However, if a scholar uses Chinese press materials to interpret practice in Chinese society, confirming accuracy of textual representations becomes a much more complex task. Here I do not only refer to falsified models sometimes appearing in the Chinese press, but also to much more common problems of source analysis. It simply is not very easy to verify how truthful representation of real events in the text is.[31] It is much simpler to analyze how a text communicates with other texts and interpret practical examples as means of argumentation or theory building. Moreover, if one studies practice, the question of quantitative relevance

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[29] Steiner 1951, pp. 425–427.

[30] Lewis 1966, pp. 85–86.

[31] To make conclusions about grassroots reality, it is important, for example, to know the source of information of the case cited in articles. For example, this information must be evaluated differently, if reporters got the information, say about exemplary use of mass line techniques, from local cadres or from the local masses. Understandably it makes a difference if a cadre says he diligently listens to all mass opinions or if the masses say he does. Even more suspect would be such a story, if propaganda organs would have briefed the reporter to find a case of exemplary use of mass line techniques for the article. Likewise, one should doubt any article wanting to use the example they cite not for actual reporting, but for political influencing. Most of my sources belong to this latter type.

pops up. It is not enough to establish that the press has described particular cases accurately, but it becomes essential to find out how representative the case is. Finding a case here and there does not tell us how universally democratic central-ism was applied in daily political and economic processes.

Although the articles I analyze mostly introduce practical examples for education or for increasing the persuasiveness of their message, they contain some hints of concrete social and political problems. The need to discuss a problem was usually a mark of the existence of a problem. Apart from practical examples of authoritarian, "feudalistic" or "bureaucratic" forms of undemocratic behavior or institutional practices, problems were discussed in generalized or theoretical discourses. The strategy of addressing specific problems through the discussion of general phenomena was apparent in editorials and many articles. For example, there were typologies of certain phenomena hindering democratization in China or of different forms of bureaucratism. Simultaneously, in China theoretical discus-sion is often rooted in practical problems, since in Marxist tradition the usefulness of theories is measured in reality. Marxists often seek better theoretical formula-tions in order to find means to solve concrete problems.

The press sources reveal that local differences in the reality of democratiza-tion have been huge. On the one hand, the press revealed strong resistance among cadres towards democratization. They had obvious fears of losing their personal power or authority. On the other hand, in many work units or communes, cadres and masses alike seem to have shared enthusiasm to democratize. Apart from workshop leadership, as was recommended by the top leadership, some factories started to hold elections or primaries for almost every leadership post, factory managers included. The press reported this enthusiasm in favorable light.

Defining democracy

Jean-François Lyotard has coined the term *differend*, which refers to situations where certain speakers have defined the use of language so that it becomes impos-sible for others to express themselves in this language.[32] It seems to me that some Westerners have used the term democracy in a way that rejects all alternative uses of the term, dismissing not only non-Western definitions but also some Western traditions of democracy. In fact, as Steve Chan puts it, even in established usage democracy is "a matter of considerable intellectual – and indeed, political – con-testation." One can stress popular sovereignty, individual freedom, political par-ticipation, electoral competition, distributive equity or mass welfare, for example. This choice also defines which countries appear democratic and which not. For

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[32]   Lyotard 1988.

example, China can outperform an electoral democracy like India if judged by standards of local participation and mass welfare.[33]

Automatic rejection of the Chinese claims for democracy is arrogant and un-analytical. As Brantly Womack puts it,

> To assume that the Chinese do not know what they are talking about would be arrogant and would leave the researcher and the object of research with incompatible voca-bularies .... To assume that "I know what democracy is, and they don't" would presume a special access to truth on the part of the researcher, a claim to objectivity that would be only a product of the researcher's relative indifference and disinterest. Although one is not obliged to accept a usage uncritically, one is obliged to understand it before criticizing and dismissing it.[34]

When the Chinese claim they practice democracy in a form not fitting to the familiar Western model, we need to evaluate this claim critically, not reject it out-right. As Chih-yu Shih notes, "unsympathetic observers outside China curiously demand more evidence of Western-style democracy as a basis for agreeing to the mere existence of democracy with Chinese characteristics."[35] Instead of starting from the Western criteria and comparing them with the Chinese ones, we should proceed to the opposite direction and examine first the Chinese understanding and only then compare it with the Western understandings to see if there is any re-semblance between the Chinese and Western understandings. If there is not, then we can define Chinese theory and practice as undemocratic.

Borrowing a whole set of assumptions from one Western theory is unlikely to be very fruitful for understanding different conceptions of democracy. I believe that democracy can be rightfully based on many sets of values and presumptions: consensus instead of the majority principle or harmony and collective welfare instead of representation of pluralist interests. All these elements are present already in the democratic theories and practices of the West. As Barry Hindess ex-plains, ideas of democracy in Western thought are many, and they involve diverse ideas about the political constitution of society. Therefore, there cannot be one true account of democracy or any single principle to compare different theories of democracy. Quite the contrary, methods increasing democratic control according to one perspective appear to another approach as a corruption of democracy.[36] The need to admit plurality of legitimately possible forms and definitions of democracy means that the possibility of finding new forms and definitions of democracy cannot be ruled out.

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[33] Steve Chan 2000, pp. 180–181, quotation on p. 180.
[34] Womack 1991 A, p. 54.
[35] Shih 1999, p. xi.
[36] Hindess 1991, pp. 179–182.

Nevertheless, defining democracy as whatever is said to be democracy, even if said by representatives of a different culture, is unappealing as well.[37] Firstly, this definition would lead to relativism, with the danger of reducing democracy to a meaningless word. Democracy as a term is especially vulnerable to the danger of relativism, because it is used rather vaguely even by democrats themselves and because it is an appealing term which appears even in authoritarian rhetoric. Since I am trying to evaluate whether communist China has meaningful theories of democracy, relativism is exactly the danger I need to avoid. Secondly, this definition would make it impossible to call democracy anything that has never been said to be democracy (by representatives of a different culture), even if they have established forms of popular participation and influencing.

A scholar studying cultures other than his own needs to be able to evaluate foreign concepts of democracy without putting his own theories upon others. In order to avoid culturally bound assumptions and simultaneously to give democracy a universally acceptable meaning, research on democracy in non-Western cultures needs a definition that reduces democracy to its very essentials. This definition needs to be accurate enough to give democracy a definite meaning, it must not be too inclusive, and it should be general enough to allow many kinds of understandings, formulations, and applications. In my dissertation I understand democracy to mean popular influence in the political leadership or decision-making processes. In order to differentiate democracy from populism, which any type of government is capable of, this influence needs to use regular institutions, channels, or methods, and these institutions, channels and methods need to be available for the majority of the people subjected to these decisions.

I am not alone in defining democracy through popular influencing[38]. For example, Jack Lively maintains that "no system which debars the mass of non-rulers from playing any part in the process of decision making can be deemed democratic; and no 'definition' of democracy that excludes such a role is tenable."[39] Albert Weale states that "in a democracy important public decisions on questions of law and policy depend, directly or indirectly, upon public opinion formally expressed

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[37] Here, I disagree with Stein Tønneson's view that for those who study Asian conceptions of democracy "it is mandatory ... to avoid having a definition of her own, even at the back of her mind". I believe that having an understanding about legitimate uses of the term does not prevent one from studying "Asian political cultures without a pre-established universalist (or 'Western') scale of judgment" (Tønneson 1996). After our discussion in March 1997, Stein Tønneson agreed that apart from discourse analysis, there are other rightful approaches to examine Asian conceptions of democracy, including mine.

[38] In this work I will use the word "influencing" as a term referring to popular or amateur influence or attempts to influence in political decision-making. Although influencing aims at influence, no real influence needs to actualize from influencing.

[39] Lively 1975, p. 51.

by citizens of the community, the vast bulk of whom have equal political rights."[40] Chih-yu Shih summarizes that in most Western definitions democracy refers to society exerting influence over the state from outside.[41]

Institutionalized and regularized popular influence is a less challenging version of definitions of democracy based on popular power[42] or full self-government by the people. Although many Chinese understandings of democracy come close to these radical definitions, due to the practical dimension of its political theory the Chinese would accept only conditionally some normative characterizations of democracy in this radical tradition. For example, the assertion that "the business of government [is] to accept and to implement the popular will"[43] was seriously compromised by the Leninist vanguard party model. Yet, in principle the Chinese might have fully agreed with such characterizations of democracy as "a continuous process of interaction between government and society, with a maximum involvement of the people in public decision making at every level,"[44] given by Anthony Arblaster.

Although definitions based on popular power and popular will can be used to describe the ideal of democracy, a realistic definition of democracy is needed when dealing with democracy in China, not least because practical evidence is required, not only by skeptics but also for empirical studies testing whether the theory I study here has any practical relevance. In practical terms popular power and popular will are evasive concepts: we sometimes know that popular will has had direct influence in political decision making, but more often it is impossible to show to what extent decision makers have considered popular initiatives or moods. Besides, often there is no single popular will, but differing and conflicting interests and opinions within society. If popular will is a contestable entity, popular influence is concrete enough so that it can be demonstrated, and to some extent even measured.

In a study about conceptions of democracy in non-Western countries, the universal definition of the essence of democracy needs to refer to something that really is typical of democracy and usually not of other kinds of political systems. Susan Ogden would assess political systems in utilitarian terms in order to have non-ideological and non-cultural categories for evaluating freedom and democracy in China. She proposes judging governance in terms of justice and people's wellbeing. In this way, the people living inside of the polity have the right to

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[40]   Weale 1999, p. 14.

[41]   Shih 1999, p. xii. However, he seems skeptical of the suitability of such definition in the Chinese context.

[42]   Arblaster 1987, pp. 8, 61–62; Womack 1991 A, pp. 54–55.

[43]   Arblaster 1987, p. 98.

[44]   Arblaster 1987, pp. 94–95.

evaluate governmental performance and universal standards of distributive justice and human development can be applied.[45] There is much insight in this approach. Yet, I want to preserve the distinction between good governance and democracy itself. Moreover, it is not self-evident that democratic governments are the most effective, just and popular governments in all situations. Brantly Womack asserts that the most basic characteristics of democracy are consensus and legitimacy.[46] Yet, non-democratic regimes can be legitimate and widely consented to. He sees legitimacy to include a rule benefiting the populace, decisive influence of the majority in decision making, and the protection of the minority.[47] These features could well be formulated into a definition of democracy, but it must be recognized that they can sometimes be in contradiction with each other. Still, it would probably be acceptable to define countries in which *all* of these three elements are present as democracies. In a laudable attempt to show that the West has something to learn about democracy from China, Roger Des Forges takes concern for popular interest or any counterforce to authoritarianism as features of Chinese democratic tradition,[48] although most would classify them not as democracy itself, but at best as preconditions for, or characteristics of, democracy. Therefore, this understanding as well is too wide to provide a standard for democracy.

Problems with standardization , liberal democracy

Often when Western theorists talk about democracy they limit their inquiry to the liberal democratic tradition only. However, it is problematic to take contemporary Western liberal democracies as a universal standard for evaluating democratic theories and systems, especially when evaluating non-Western political institutions and theories.

The first problem is historical. Liberal democracy happens to be a contemporary Western cultural construct. Richard Rorty, for example, contends that the emergence of liberal democracies was a mere contingency of history, the result of a chain of innovations that was by no means necessary or based on true or universally accepted principles. Although liberals have a reason to believe that this form of government is good, it does not mean that outsiders by any necessity need to do so.[49] Suzanne Ogden points out that because democracy is a social construct, it is highly subjective and fluid, to the point that in the course of history democ-

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45   Ogden 2002, pp. 358–368.
46   Womack 2005, p. 38.
47   Womack 2005, p. 38.
48   Des Forges 1993.
49   Rorty 1990, see especially pp. 52–56.

racies have redefined democracy according to their contemporary needs and values.[50] Jean Hampton demonstrates that logically liberal democracy cannot have universal justification. Since the value basis of liberalism is not neutral, reason itself does not make it necessary to embrace values like freedom and equality. Thus, liberalism cannot be made justifiable "apart from an appeal to what people happen to believe."[51] Finally, Bhikhu Parekh points out that it is against the liberal ideal of tolerance not to respect cultural diversity and indigenous choices of political systems.[52]

The second problem is cultural. Many scholars observe that the Western version of democracy is based on culturally distinctive and even uncommon values. Indeed, Western liberal democracy is based on individualism, but individualist values are not predominant in the world. Communal orientations seeing individuals not prior to but as parts of their societies are common not only in non-Western cultures but also in ancient Greek democracies. Since different societies define and individuate people differently, they also understand freedom, equality, rights, property, justice and authority differently. Most political systems emphasize harmony between a citizen and the state, supremacy of the public interest over an individual's rights, and legal limitations of the state.[53]

The third problem is philosophical. Some theorists point out that liberalist theoretical assumptions of an individual and his relation to society are not very realistic. Benjamin Barber argues that liberalism misconstrues people as non-social and thus essentially apolitical. Liberal democracy unrealistically apprehends a man in isolation as autonomous, making liberal democracy unable to build sound basis for such basic elements of democracy as citizenship, participation, public goods and civic virtue.[54] Likewise, Bhikhu Parekh finds it paradoxical that liberalism assumes that an open society can be created out of closed selves individualized to be separate from others and their societies.[55] Michael Sandel argues that the liberal conception of a free individual as independent from her community on which she nonetheless depends, actually minimizes democratic possibilities, because it shifts power to institutions designed to be insulated from democratic pressures and concentrates power to maximally protect an individual's rights. As the result, an individual finds himself subjected to powers he did not choose. Therefore, liberal democracy disempowers rather than liberates.[56]

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[50]   Ogden 2002, p. 12.

[51]   Hampton 1995, pp. 309–312, quotation on p. 310.

[52]   Parekh 1992, p. 169.

[53]   Parekh 1992, pp. 161, 170; Jowitt 1996; Nathan 1986, p. ix.

[54]   Barber 1984, p. 4, ch. 3–4.

[55]   Parekh 1992, p. 162.

[56]   Sandel 1984, pp. 93–94.

The fourth problem is that liberal democracy is a relatively elitist form of democracy. After all, democracy originally means rule of the people, but liberal democracy has often had problems accommodating popular participation. Indeed, in Western democracies people usually do not have an active role in government, apart from participation in the selection of leaders. In addition, many spheres, like bureaucracy, the economy and families, are not governed democratically.[57] Teivo Teivainen even sketches that there is a danger that with the tendency of insulating economic decision making from democratic politics, democracies may gradually be emptied of real decision-making authority and start performing decorative functions only.[58] Many liberal models of democracy even rely on the assumption of depoliticization and political apathy of the majority.[59] Bhikhu Parekh argues that the reason for liberalists' rejection of the Athenian form of democracy has not only practical but also ideological explanations, since the individualistic and elitist liberal democratic ideal was unwilling to accommodate community-centered visions of good life and trust in average citizens' political abilities.[60]

The fifth problem is that liberal democracies inadequately fulfill what we understand as democracy.[61] Brantly Womack underlines contradictions between the substantive claim that legislative democracy guarantees the power of people and its procedural outcomes. He concludes that legislative democracy is a popular form of government, but is not "the power of the people" and therefore cannot be the standard for democracy. Thus, the standard of democracy is either direct democracy unattainable in modern states or the standard must take into account people's own satisfaction with their system of government and their confidence that their interests are served.[62] The latter possibility naturally opens the door for other indigenous understandings and applications of democracy aside from the liberal one.

Moreover, liberal democracy does not form one indivisible package. Instead, liberal democracy involves several, sometimes contradictory elements. Democracy is but one of these elements. Many theorists distinguish between liberalism and democracy, and consequently traditions of limited state and popular rule, or personal liberties and collective decision making.[63] Others recognize tension

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[57] Hu 2000 B, p. 152.

[58] Teivainen 1997.

[59] Birnbaum 1978.

[60] Parekh 1992, p. 165.

[61] Holden 1974, p. xiv; Pateman 1970, pp. 15–16.

[62] Womack 2005, pp. 27, 30.

[63] Chan 2002, p. 39; Hayek 1960; Zakaria 2003, pp. 101–102. See summary of different standpoints on how liberal and democratic relate to each other in liberal democracy in Chan 2002, pp. 42–44.

between equality and freedom in liberal democratic tradition.[64] Balance between these different aspects of liberal democracy remains highly debatable. Robert Hefner argues that liberal philosophy is not the best guide to civil-democratic practice precisely because even Western democracies have stressed equality, freedom and tolerance to different degrees. Likewise, they have balanced individual and group rights differently.[65] Accordingly, Sylvia Chan shows that liberal democracy is an agglomeration of different sets of liberties. Particular institutional matrixes of each state define what kind of combination of economic, civic and political liberties each state has and in what historical order they have originally emerged. Not all elements of liberal democracy, such as a liberalized economy or extensive civil rights, are necessary corollaries of democratization, and benefits of liberal democracy can be enjoyed in various ways and in indigenous institutional settings.[66] Wei Pan argues that it is not elections, but the rule of law that causes a democracy to be of its liberal variant. Namely, it is rule of law, not democracy, that guarantees administrative checks and balances, and protects freedoms enjoyed by citizens, and these can be attained even without electoral democracy.[67] Thus, it is unlikely that Western countries have exhausted democratic combinations between all these various elements. Bhikhu Parekh underlines that political systems can combine liberalism and democracy differently from contemporary Western solutions according to their history, values and needs.[68]

Furthermore, an ideology or a political system is not automatically undemocratic, if it stresses these elements differently from the liberal tradition. For example, Marxism, its Chinese form included, tends to pay more attention to actual equality than liberal democracy does.[69] To create a more equal society, socialists are ready for massive redistribution of property. However, Bhikhu Parekh argues that a liberal tends to consider any government violating the right to liberty or property not only illiberal but also undemocratic.[70] Suzanne Ogden even points out that some Western "ideologically motivated concepts of democracy ... in the case of China conflate democracy with an anti-communist ideology."[71] Likewise, criticism of China for its poor human rights record and state intrusion in society are based on the liberal part of liberal democracy. Therefore, a balanced evaluation,

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[64]   Hayek 1960; Hefner 1998, pp. 26–27.

[65]   Hefner 1998, p. 25.

[66]   Chan 2002, pp. 2, 40–41, 232. About what kinds of links economic, civil and political liberties have, see pp. 44–51.

[67]   Pan 2003, pp. 7–8, 10.

[68]   Parekh 1992, p. 169.

[69]   See more elaboration on this topic in Ogden 2002, pp. 31–39.

[70]   Parekh 1992, p. 166.

[71]   Ogden 2002, p. 357.

such as Shaohua Hu's, gives a mixed picture of democracy in China, not outright rejection. Hu recognizes that the Mao era invited popular participation and brought definite improvements in socioeconomic equality. Yet, he finds human rights violations, political control over the whole society, and education of new socialist virtues to conflict with democracy.[72]

Critics blame the West for the subjective, ethnocentric, inconsistent, and even instrumentalist use of the concept of democracy. For example, US foreign policy interests have sometimes determined which countries are labeled undemocratic.[73] The term democracy is sometimes used as a catchword to assert the excellence of political systems sharing Western or non-communist values and institutions. Suzanne Ogden claims that the Western definition of democracy is ethnocentric to the point that democracy appears to be a national myth profoundly affecting self-perception of Western nationals.[74] Too often Westerners interpret divergence from their own systems as inferiority.[75] Bhikhu Parekh criticizes "Western triumphalism" which equates liberal democracy with modernity and wants to spread it to the non-Western world.[76] Ken Jowitt remarks that Western literature of democratic transitions too often comprises an ideological as much as a theoretical endeavor.[77] Wei Pan goes further to charge that an ambivalent and ideological conception of liberal democracy makes demarcating democracies from non-democracies arbitrary and makes it possible to blame all social problems in non-Western countries on the lack of democracy.[78]

Procedural definitions of democracy

One problem with much of Western mainstream theorization of democracy is concentrating on formal structures of power. Often, procedural definitions single out elections as *the* thing that makes a political system democratic.[79] They disregard the imperfectly democratic reality of Western democracies, such as actual inequalities criticized by Marxists and feminists.[80] In fact, political liberties under

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[72]   Hu 2000 B, pp. 111–113.

[73]   See, e.g., Steve Chan 2000, p. 181, Des Forges 1993, p. 38.

[74]   Ogden 2002, pp. 16–17.

[75]   Shih 1999, pp. xv–xvii.

[76]   Parekh 1992, p. 160.

[77]   Jowitt 1996.

[78]   Pan 2003, pp. 5–6, 8.

[79]   Shumpeter 1992, ch. 22. One does not need to be a Westerner to use the electoral system as the basis for the definition of democracy, see Pan 2003, pp. 7–8.

[80]   For feminist critique, see Mendus 1994.

liberal democracy are more circumscribed than economic and civil liberties.[81] Simultaneously, these definitions by definition leave out political systems not compatible with contemporary Western institutional arrangements, such as original democracy in ancient Athens. The example of Athens effectively demonstrates the problem in using contemporary Western democratic institutions as the criterion for democracy: this definition is indifferent to whether rejection of modern Western institutions arises from the want to uphold an authoritarian regime or from the belief that some other forms of democracy would be more democratic. Besides, understanding democracy to mean only some institutions familiar to Western democracies is circular, if the country in question rejects these forms, even if it happens due to disappointment in the recognized problems such as elitism and restricted forms of popular participation in Western electoral democracies.

When studying non-Western cultures, institutional definitions are also problematic because they are not value-free.[82] This kind of definition too easily denies that other cultures can have democracy unless they copy its Western forms.[83] The danger of too institutionally bound definitions is that they prevent us from seeing alternative models of democracy. As Brantley Womack puts it, since political institutions are shaped by history and culture, Western institutions of democracy "cannot be generalized into an abstract standard of democracy."[84] Bhikhu Parekh argues that Western political institutions like elections, multiple political parties and separation of powers cannot be transplanted or universalized. Their adoption can be unfeasible, because of costs, social consequences, or local values. Therefore, countries should have a right to choose for themselves whether Western institutions have value according to their cultural resources, needs and circumstances.[85] Western electoral values are not always preferred in a non-Western cultural setting. Wei Pan argues that belief in the fairness of majority rule is culturally Western. Instead of numerical majority, the Chinese culture has emphasized just governance.[86]

Douglass North observes that the same sets of rules provide different outcomes when imposed on two different societies, because in different societies social groups' bargaining power differs and actors have different subjective models

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81 Chan 2002, p. 188–189.

82 See Pateman 1970, pp. 15–16.

83 Of course, it is totally legitimate to pose such questions as which factors could catalyze China and other Asian countries to adopt competitive electoral democratic systems. The problem appears only when democracy itself is equated with electoral democracy.

84 Womack 1991 A, pp. 54–55.

85 Parekh 1992, p, 172.

86 Pan 2003, p. 18.

on which they base their policy choices.[87] Therefore, we cannot expect that Western-type institutions work elsewhere in the same way they do in the West, especially if institutions and practices supporting these institutions are absent. Some theorists maintain that successful democratization should even begin with these supporting institutions. For example, Fareed Fareed Zakaria sees that the supporting institutions for liberal democracy are capitalism and the rule of law. Without them, democratization has a danger of leading to tyranny.[88] Some even perceive these supporting institutions as more central to a Western type of governance than elections are. Wei Pan observes that when trying to export their democratic ideal to non-Western countries, Westerners too easily ignore that liberty and the superior governability characterizing the Western political systems do not arise from democracy only, but also from their particular legal tradition.[89]

Apart from being arrogant, it would be historically ignorant to equate the whole set of practices and values advocated as democracy with political practices in a certain time and place. After all, the origin of democratic systems lies in the Athenian republic well over 2000 years ago. During the following millennia, the meaning of the term and the desirable institutional settings for democracy have changed remarkably. If Athenians could criticize contemporary democracies for disregarding civic virtues or for replacing direct democracy with the system of representation, modern democrats could also accuse the Athenian *polis* of not having practiced acceptable democratic equality when it deprived the majority of its inhabitants of the right of political participation. Moreover, Athenian democracy found elections to be elitist and only believed choosing representatives by casting a lot[90] to be properly democratic. Hence, there cannot be a single procedural criterion embodying all democracies. If both the republic of Athens and contemporary representative democracies count as democracies, there are several legitimate democratic systems of government.

In fact, democracy is never wholly institutional. Democracy requires some institutionalization in order to set it apart from sporadic inputs of popular demands into a non-democratic political system and from personal conduct of some benevolent officials in a generally non-democratic system. Even if influencing and participation require procedural channels, such as elections, much of the democratic influencing and participation take place through informal, or at least unofficial, activities. Democratic institutions are merely a form, while it is important to recognize, especially in intercultural comparison, that extra-procedural elements matter in making a political system democratic. Because elections hardly seem to

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[87] North 1990, p. 101.

[88] Zakaria 2003, pp. 55–57.

[89] Pan 2003, p. 21.

[90] Dunn 1994, p. 242.

make a polity sufficiently democratic, Western democratic theory has supplement-ed elections with interest group pluralism, civil society activities or public deliberative opinion formation. According to these traditions, independent associ-ation and public opinion formation make decision makers address citizens' concerns more substantially than voting does. However, the influence of public opinion or the pressures from interest groups are not institutional. Therefore, reliance on the institutions mandated by procedural definitions only would leave democracy as a skeleton with very little chances for popular influence. As the United Nations Development Programme states, regular elections are not suffi-cient for democracy, but there is simultaneously the need for many other formal and informal institutions, such as representative legislature, rule of law, a well-functioning party system, as well as an unbiased media and civil society acting as watchdogs of the government.[91]

Moreover, constitutionally the People's Republic of China more or less con-forms to the institutional standards of democracy, except for the leadership role preserved for the Communist Party.[92] The Chinese constitution maintains that China is a republic and its highest power organ is the National People's Congress constituting of representatives elected (albeit indirectly) by the people. Therefore, strictly speaking it is not Chinese institutions *per se* that make many Westerners classify China as undemocratic. Rather, the claim that China is not democratic seems to be grounded more in the assumption that these institutions are not suffi-ciently democratic, partly because representative organs are not elected in free and fair elections and partly because in reality their powers are circumscribed by non-elected organizations like the Communist Party. Therefore, the constitutional basis and existence of institutions themselves provide very little help for determining whether, and on what grounds, China can or cannot be regarded as a democracy.

It is not easy to define what actually are satisfactory procedures and what counts as free and fair elections. David Collier and Steven Levitsky note that there is disagreement among scholars even on minimal procedural definitions about viable procedural standards.[93] According to Larry Diamond, now that it is generally recognized that democratic elections need civil and political freedoms to make political campaigning meaningful, it is difficult to judge exactly when fairness of elections has been violated. Systematic political violence to discourage opposition clearly violates fairness, but even in Western democracies incumbents enjoy advantage over the opposition when it comes to access to the media and

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[91]   UNDP 2002, pp. 54–55, 61.

[92]   Hu 2000 B, p. 2; Nathan 2000, pp. 29–30.

[93]   Collier and Levitsky 1995, pp. 433–434.

campaign resources.[94] Again, although some reasons to consider elections unfree and unfair are formal,[95] many of them are informal and uninstitutionalized practices, such as the intimidation of opposition candidates, electoral bribery or unequal allocation broadcasting time to different candidates. Often even the reason making an institutional practice undemocratic is not institutionalized itself. For instance, redrawing electoral districts is a normal process in democracy, but gerrymandering becomes questionable not because of the redrawing itself but because its purpose is to disadvantage the opposition.

Institutional definitions of democracy are sometimes argued to be useful for comparative studies, which need an exact basis for comparison and clear understanding about which political systems can be and which cannot be called democracies.[96] Some even argue that in the pluralistic world with varying sets of rights in different democratic countries, the only available objective, non-relative criterion for democracy is fair elections and freedom of speech.[97] Others are not that confident. According to Diamond, Linz, and Lipset, the boundary between democratic and undemocratic systems has become blurred because of the existence of less perfect democratic systems, which can be called semidemocracies, pseudo-democracies, low-quality democracies, low-intensity democracies, and the like.[98] Electoral competition is becoming an increasingly difficult criterion of democracy nowadays, when hybrid regimes have multiplied. Now ever more regimes have adopted the form of electoral democracy, but fail or are unwilling to practice fair and free elections.[99] Therefore, apart from regular, free and fair elections, comparative studies must also pay attention to inclusiveness of political participation and the extent of civil and political liberties.[100] Andreas Schedler has even introduced a new category called electoral autocracies for countries that, despite arranging elections, violate even minimal democratic norms.[101] He argues that elections can be instruments of authoritarian control and democratic governance alike.[102] It now seems that elections cannot be the sole criterion of democracy.

Moving focus outside of formal politics is often central for understanding political processes outside of the Western world. There informal politics, corruption, regionalism, or military pressures sometimes undermine outwardly democratic

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94   Diamond 2002, p. 28.
95   Legal limitations for opposition party formation and free speech, for example.
96   Huntington 1993, p. 11.
97   Zakaria 2003, p. 19.
98   Diamond et al. 1995, pp. 7–8.
99   Diamond 2002, pp. 22–24.
100 Diamond et al. 1995, pp. 6–7.
101 Schedler 2002.
102 Schedler 2002, p. 36.

electoral processes. At the same time, it is possible that non-Western countries, even those without competitive national elections, have customary practices or even working institutions for popular influencing. Open-mindedness would be advisable in order to find out what these institutions are in a particular country. Douglass North emphasizes that, along with formal institutions, there are informal rules of conduct and these informal, cultural constraints may have substantive continuity even when formal institutions change.[103] Consequently, Chih-yu Shih questions whether introduction of Western-style democratic institutions makes local people use these forms in democratic ways. People tend to use democratic forms for reasons of their own, and political forms may be of secondary importance in the ways they choose to participate. In the absence of democracy, other forms are used; and in its presence, there is no guarantee that motivations to participate are democratic. In these situations, culture and psychology are able to exploit democracy.[104]

Institutional definitions are even more problematic when the object of research is theory, as it is in this study. Those approaching democracy from a philosophical viewpoint have seldom been satisfied with merely institutional definitions of democracy.[105] Elections seem to poorly catch the wide range of democratic ideals. As Steve Chan puts it, throughout history, democracy has been used to emphasize very different, sometimes contradictory ideas, such as citizen participation, popular consent, freedom from infringement by the government, the welfare state, or electoral competition. The selection of aspects that are essential to democracy influences which countries appear to be democracies. For example, measuring democraticness according to the degree of political competition can lead one to ignore the extent of political participation.[106] Barry Hindess goes even further. Indeed, since there are many Western understandings of democracy, there is no single set of institutions that could satisfy the ideals of both republican and liberal traditions of democracy. Moreover, no institutional arrangement can bring all social activities and the external world under democratic control. Therefore, the ability of certain institutions to maximize self-government cannot be the same in different times or social contexts.[107] Barry Hindess' observation should high-light that it is questionable to use the institutional model of liberal tradition to

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[103] North 1990, p. 91.

[104] Shih 1999, pp. xiv–xv.

[105] E.g. Pateman 1970, p. 20. Lively 1975, pp. 49, 51, rejects the possibility of defining democracy in concrete institutional terms. About problems in using such institutional features as elections, opposition parties, or constitutional freedoms as conditions or definitions of democracy, see also Holden 1974, pp. 189–190.

[106] Steve Chan 2000, pp. 179–180.

[107] Hindess 1991, p. 192.

deny democraticness of a polity following the republican tradition. In the theo-
retical chapters I try to demonstrate that Chinese democracy derives precisely
from this republican tradition emphasizing participation and deliberation.

Besides, elections in their ideal form perhaps accord with the democratic
criteria of making the government accountable to the electorate and giving equal
political voice to an enfranchised population, but outside of this ideal world there
are both theoretical and practical reasons why elections can deliver relatively little
of this ideal. They are not very good at relaying the people's voice. Kenneth
Arrow has demonstrated that using votes to calculate preferences of the electorate
occasionally becomes mathematically impossible as soon as more than a single
issue with two alternatives is involved.[108] Election outcomes are unfocused, at
best, since they aggregate the public's perception of policies and policy agents
into a single signal.[109] James Hyland even ponders whether elections provide any
meaningful form for influencing "with respect to any particular individual, if all
of this [political] information is to be channeled through a single vote that is one
of millions the likelihood of its being effective is practically zero."[110] Barry
Holden finds no satisfactory answer to

> how can many and different individual decisions be combined in such a way that it may
> be said that all the individuals have made a decision (or set of decisions)? .... The prob-
> lems ... arise from the combining of individual votes into a 'decision by the electo-
> rate' .... Given the non-existence of unanimity then, how can it be said that there is a
> decision ... by all?[111]

Anthony Arblaster wonders if the minority is represented at all in majorita-
rian elections. At best, elections produce a result representing the will of the
majority, not the will of all.[112]

Furthermore, William Riker shows that any decision-making system can be
manipulated, because the choice itself will not be independent of the method by
which it was chosen.[113] G. Bingham Powell demonstrates that no particular elect-
oral design fulfills all expectations placed in elections, such as producing optimal
accountability and responsiveness at the same time.[114] Barry Hindess questions
whether democratic institutions function as theories of democracy assume.
Organizations are problematic in terms of democracy, because they, as active

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[108]   Arrow 1966.
[109]   Borre and Goldsmith 1995, p. 13.
[110]   Hyland 1995, p. 261.
[111]   Holden 1974, pp. 98–100.
[112]   Arblaster 1987, pp. 86–87.
[113]   Riker 1986, see especially conclusions on pp. 142–143.
[114]   Powell 2000, see especially conclusions on pp. 252–253.

actors with their own organizational aims, limit democratic self-governing of the community. Competition for electoral support is not the only function of the party organizations and may be far from the most significant determinant of governmental activities.[115] Jon Elster points out that the idea of making choices on the basis of individual preferences does not take into account that people tend to adjust their aspirations to available possibilities.[116] Actually, elections are only as good as the choice they offer. Not only do people have to adapt their choice to the available candidates and parties, but they usually have no way to choose other alternatives. Choosing between two unpleasant candidates is not a real autonomous choice at all. Bhikhu Parekh even argues that the liberal form of democracy has been designed so that elections are not instruments for the people to rule, but liberal distrust of the non-propertied majority has made liberals prefer representative government to representative democracy.[117]

Degrees of democraticness

Conventional wisdom classifies modern governments as either democratic or authoritarian. S. E. Finer distinguishes between governmental systems by three typologies: exclusion – participation, coercion – persuasion, and order – representativeness.[118] This typology is designed to demarcate other systems from democracies defined as participatory, persuasive and representative systems. S. E. Finer himself recognizes the possibility of imperfect forms of democracy, such as façade-democracies and quasi-democracies,[119] but some others find distinctions between democracies and dictatorships unproblematic.[120]

However, the issue is not that simple. The subchapters above demonstrated that democratic tradition is too diverse to be concentrated in a handful of simple indicators. Further, Brantly Womack finds it problematic to classify all governments that are not legislative democracies as authoritarian or dictatorships, because legislative democracies themselves give a relatively small role to the people.[121] The dichotomy fails at the other end as well. Chih-yu Shih emphasizes that authoritarianism does not refer to any single type of government, but includes considerably different types of governments. Tribal, feudal, military, or socialist

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[115] Hindess 1991, pp. 187–190.

[116] Elster 1983, p. 109.

[117] Parekh 1992, p. 167.

[118] Finer 1970, p. 40.

[119] Finer 1970, pp. 57–58.

[120] See, e.g., Huntington 1993, ch. 1.

[121] Womack 2005, p. 28.

systems are all typified as authoritarian, although they have little in common between them.[122] Sylvia Chan points out that democracy is too often equated with modernity, and the model for this modernity is the West. Therefore, non-Western countries are sometimes automatically labeled as authoritarian. As a result, "'authoritarianism' is a residual concept like the 'traditional'".[123]

Instead of using dichotomous indicators demarcating between democracy and authoritarianism, it would be more realistic to adopt more nuanced criteria for democraticness. In this way, it is possible to say, for example, that a system performs well in fair electoral competition, but does not meet democratic standards for guaranteeing equal articulation of interests and opinions. Since ideal democratic systems are missing in the actual world, it may be wise to evaluate many, if not most, characteristics of democracy in relative terms. Nuanced evaluation would be especially valuable in cultural studies needing to avoid culturally hegemonistic conceptions. Moreover, it could do justice to transitional political systems gradually adopting democratic institutions, most of which are located in areas where non-Western indigenous cultures are strong.

For more objective evaluation, democracy must be broken down into analyzable elements. Even within liberal democracy these elements can develop at a different pace and to a different extent. Sylvia Chan argues that different aspects of liberal democracy, namely economic freedom, legal rights and political rights, develop at different paces, and some states may even expand rights in one respect and restrict them in another. Economic, civil or political liberties might even have an adverse effect on other liberties. Hence, a comparison of different political systems should evaluate all of these different dimensions of liberal democracy separately.[124]

James Hyland has distinguished sortal and scalar definitions of democracy, the former having certain cut-off points determining when systems are democracies and when not, the latter measuring how democratic systems are in different aspects of democracy. James Hyland himself prefers measuring democracy in scalar terms in order to avoid arbitrariness and the blurring of meaningful similarities and differences.[125] Scalar definitions are evident, when scholars argue that a system becomes more democratic, if the people's influence becomes stronger and more effective, and that less effective popular influence makes a polity less democratic.[126] Scalar definitions could be used to evaluate different elements of

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[122] Shih 1999, p. 225.

[123] Chan 2002, p. 186.

[124] Chan 2002, p. 54–55.

[125] Hyland 1995, pp. 49–50, 68–69. Sortal and scalar definitions have other names as well. Samuel Huntington calls them as dichotomous and continuous variables (Huntington 1993, p. 11).

[126] Womack 2005, pp. 36–37.

democracy, such as the availability of chances for popular participation, respect of civil rights, political equality and inclusion, inclusiveness and fairness of political competition, and the liveliness of the civil society. They could be used to evaluate popular input in the different stages of decision making. James Hyland himself recognizes possibilities for more equal power sharing at all four stages of the democratic process, namely agenda setting, comparative assessment, decision making, and implementation.[127] In addition, they could be used to evaluate the performance of democratic institutions.

Scalar definitions are now accepted in international arenas, presumably exactly because they are culturally relatively value-free. The United Nations Development Programme states that societies can be more or less democratic. Democracy need not follow a particular model, and priorities in democratization vary according to the social context. Democracy depends on its history and circumstances, leading countries to be democratic in different ways. Although institutions of representation, elections, an independent judiciary, civilian control over the military and a free media as well as a vibrant civil society are central to democracy, they take different shapes and forms. Moreover, formal institutionalized political equality is often not sufficient to create equal capacities of participation among the populace.[128] The UNDP sees that democratic governance means respecting human rights, giving people a say in decisions that affect them, accountability, inclusive and fair rules and institutions, gender equality, freedom from discrimination, reflecting the needs of future generations in current policies, social and economic policies responsive to people's needs, and reduction of poverty.[129] All of these elements could be evaluated scalarly.

Culturalism

Some see Confucianism and the traditional Chinese political system as an anomaly to democratic political culture. Lucian Pye, for instance, claims that the Chinese politics have never permitted public representation of private interests, have averted conflict and differing opinions, have promoted identification with the ruler, and have sought political solutions to political, social, and economic issues alike.[130] In other words, Pye claims that Chinese politics lacks such basic features of Western democracies as interest representation, legitimate opposition, and demarcation between the state and a relatively autonomous civil. Because this kind

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[127] Hyland 1995, p. 57–67.

[128] UNDP 2002, pp. 4, 61.

[129] UNDP 2002, p. 51.

[130] Pye 1992, pp. 16–35.

of explanation sees culture as the factor determining that China is not a democracy now, it seems to implicate that culture deems China to stay undemocratic in the future as well.

The cultural determinist challenge can be answered in many ways. One way is to note that Chinese tradition is not exclusively authoritarian, but has some democratic traits as well. Amartya Sen argues that when labeling certain values specifically Western or Asian, one should not show their existence in the West or Asia but their absence from other parts of the world. Likewise, if trying to show that Western democratic values are unsuitable for Asia, one should not look for authoritarianism in Asian tradition but whether all proto-democratic values are absent. [131] In this line, researchers have found many positive elements in the traditional Chinese political culture that could support democratization in China. These elements include opposition to despotism, valuing participation in state affairs and even criticism of the government, meritocracy, and a moral requirement for an emperor to heed to the people's needs. Chinese legal tradition, its relativist and empiricist traditions, emphasis on education, cultural tolerance, and civic virtue all support democratic values. Institutionally, imperial China emphasized accountability of the state to the people and practiced local self-government. [132] Even consultation and the gathering of public opinion were practiced in early Chinese history, [133] although the groups consulted were perhaps not very inclusive.

However, seeking positive examples from Chinese history to counter cultural determinists' prediction of an undemocratic future for China perhaps falls into the same culturalist trap as the view it opposes. Firstly, this approach likewise interprets historical evidence in a modern context. As Shaohua Hu emphasizes, Confucianism is actually neither democratic or antidemocratic but a-democratic. Confucianism neither advocates nor opposes democracy, although it has both similarities and dissimilarities with Western theories of democracy. [134] Secondly, this approach may succeed in showing that cultural traditions are pluralistic, but not that they are not deterministic.

Another strategy to answer the culturalist challenge recognizes that cultural tradition surely influences people's expectations of their political system, but culture has an influence on the kind of democracy that results, not on whether democracy can be adopted in a non-Western culture. Instead of looking at history,

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[131] Sen 1997.

[132] Fukuyama 1995, p. 25; Hu 2000 B, pp. 24–25, 28–30; Lum 2000, p. 20.

[133] See, e.g., Shangshu 1990, pp. 21, 46, 396. Political thinker Guan Zi even suggested that special assembly halls for consultation should be established to know what the people think (Hsiao 1979, p. 332).

[134] Hu 2000 A, pp. 62, 69.

this approach researches democratic institutions or discourse about democracy in contemporary societies and explains differences between the Western discourse or practice and indigenous history and cultural tradition. In other words, this approach inspects path-dependency in institution building and local discourses. In this light, Western scholars have identified concern for the people's welfare, emphasis on the collective instead of the individual interest and objective instead of subjective interests, stress on internal moral controls over rulers instead of external institutional controls, prioritization of practice over procedure, emphasis on good instead of rights, concentration on social mobilization instead of voluntary participation, primacy of politics and emphasis on unity and social order as tendencies inherited from the traditional Chinese culture.[135] Chinese scholars see that the Chinese tradition of governance mainly depends on persuasion instead of power politics, shuns partisan politics, and emphasizes grassroots authority dealing with everyday state-society relations instead of formal government.[136] This approach avoids determinism, but the problem of demonstrating continuity to some extent remains. After all, direct continuity of political Confucianism was disrupted in the 1911 revolution,[137] making it difficult to determine whether contemporary phenomena have cultural roots or whether similarities result from superficial comparison or from the need to answer certain social needs.[138]

The third possible answer to culturalism doubts the validity of its methodological basis. Many scholars oppose a deterministic approach to cultures. They demonstrate that the Western democracies are of relatively resent origin. Thus, all democratic countries have overcome their earlier authoritarian cultures and learned new democratic values.[139] Non-democratic thinking is present not only in Asia, but in the West as well.[140] All cultures have elements that are undemocratic and others that are compatible with democracy. Besides, cultures are not static, but respond to social change. Furthermore, culturalist arguments have failed in the past, when cultures interpreted to be obstacles for democratization have democ-

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[135] These are Robert Ware and Brantly Womack's observations. See Womack 1991 A, pp. 59–60. Robert Ware's views are summarized in Ding 2001, p. 8.

[136] Pan 2003, pp. 23, 27, 31.

[137] A point that Francis Fukuyama makes against cultural determinism in his surprisingly culturalist article, see Fukuyama 1995, p. 26.

[138] For example, centrality of family relations could have cultural background, but it could arise as well from practical needs of division of labor in private agriculture and enterprise, or from housing and income policies, or from an uncertain legal and institutional environment where mutual trust is the best guarantee against uncertainties. In other words, practical expediency could make familist patterns desirable regardless of cultural background. Likewise, cultural encouragement of family relations would probably gradually erode, if family ties were to become socially (and emotionally) irrelevant.

[139] Gilley 2004, p. 10; Sen 1997.

[140] Friedman 2000; Svensson 1994, p. 4.

ratized.[141] Indeed, culturalism does not recognize that political culture is hetero-
geneous and evolving. Often cultural explanations even rely upon indicators that
have little practical effect.[142]

Others deny outright that culturalism is a valid viewpoint. As Fareed Zakaria
puts it, because cultures are complex, one finds in them what one wants. Besides,
the same traits are found in most other cultures as well.[143] According to critics,
culturalism does not respect historical development and social context but selec-
tively uses examples from historical and philosophical sources to support one's
own stance. Culturalists unanalytically lump together different usages of the term
Confucianism and confuse Confucian theory with Chinese reality. They cannot
prove causality between an ancient thought they cite and today's political or social
reality they explain. At worst, culturalists use a few ancient philosophical texts to
interpret all social phenomena in the country ever since.[144] Some Western scho-
lars looking for cultural factors in Chinese democratization compare ancient Chi-
nese values with contemporary Western democratic values.[145] Actually, neither
China nor the West had modern Western democratic ideas and values over 2000
years ago. To ignore that values, social systems, and practices evolve is a mistake
Edward Said already criticized in the 1970s.[146] Moreover, Andrew Nathan
comments that "the argument that culture causes action [is] circular, because
culture and action are measured with the same evidence" when culture is inferred
from people's historical behavior.[147] It seems safe to assume that cultural
influence is difficult to prove, even when it exists.

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[141] Huntington 1993, pp. 310–311. Huntington uses Catholicism as an example of such a
       culture.

[142] Lum 2000, p. 167.

[143] Zakaria 2003, p. 55.

[144] Said 1978, Christiansen and Rai 1996, pp. 20–23. Hu 2000 A, pp. 55–57.

[145] For example, Wang and Titunik (2000) contrast the traditional Chinese conception of
       minben, government for the people's wellbeing, with contemporary Western liberal
       democracy and argue that these traditions "differ in significant respects" (p. 85). It makes
       sense to point out that *minben* tradition has influenced Chinese conception of democracy
       (Nathan 1986, pp. 125–128), or to suggest that *minben* related values could assist democratic
       ideas and systems to take root in China, but Wang and Titunik's argument is irrelevant to
       these stands. Even scholarly arguments that the *minben* tradition is a democratic value in
       China or even a Chinese form of democracy, are not falsified by Wang and Titunik's argu-
       ment. After all, there is difference between a democracy and democratic values, and between
       the traditional Chinese political system and contemporary Western liberal democracy. A
       scholar sympathetic to the *minben* tradition can safely claim that different democratic
       traditions should learn from each other (this point is made by Des Forges 1993), not that they
       are the same. This is exactly an argument against those who take contemporary Western
       liberal democracy as the sole standard of democracy, like Wang and Titunik do.

[146] Said 1978.

[147] Nathan 2000, p, 26.

A fourth standpoint agrees that culture is a meaningful explanation of contemporary political culture, but it is by no means the only one or even the most influential one. Indeed, cultural tradition is only one of the many factors shaping a current political system, among many other political, social, and economic factors. Nor does democratic culture need to precede democratic institutions but can develop alongside with the democratization process.[148] Instead of culture, the actual process of democratization depends more on the acts and will of the political elites in power and in opposition.[149] Many scholars are convinced that democracy emerges with modernization. Economic progress, increased international contacts, and improved education have much more to do with increasing political autonomy and organization than culture has.[150] Independent political opinions and associations in the civil society then provide fertile ground for democracy.

Others are not that confident. Cal Clark openly argues that modernization has much less of an explanatory value than indigenous factors have.[151] Even adoption of Western-style democratic institutions does not automatically lead to the adoption of new values. Steven Chan maintains that in East Asia values are not individualistic but stress group conformity, collective wellbeing, and the role of the state. This ethos can continue even under the existence of elections and multi-party politics. Instead of emphasizing electoral rights and partisan contests, East Asian countries have emphasized economic welfare and merit-based social mobility.[152]

There is very little empirical or statistical studies about how traditional Chinese cultural values actually relate to political activities. However, the existing evidence hardly supports culturalist assumptions. Kuan Hsin-chi and Lau Siu-kai have found that, among mainland Chinese, Hongkongese and Taiwanese, the mainlanders hold most traditional political values but are also the most active political participators.[153] Tianjian Shi found the Chinese data to indicate that the relationship between economic development and change of political culture is more complicated than as described by modernization theorists, although education plays an evident role in making people transcend their traditional culture.[154] Likewise, Kuan and Lau found that traditional political orientation has less influ-

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[148] He 1996, p. 158; Ogden 2002, pp. 97–98.

[149] Diamond et al. 1995, pp. 16–19, 53–54; Huntington 1993, pp. 107–163.

[150] E.g. Fukuyama 1995, pp. 23–24. China specialists explicitly supporting modernization argument include Suzanne Ogden and Gordon White. Ogden 2002, pp. 83–84, 91–93; White 1994 A, pp. 81–82.

[151] Clark 2000, pp. 175–176.

[152] Steve Chan 2000, pp. 181–183.

[153] Kuan and Lau 2002.

[154] Shi 2000 C, pp. 555, 557–558.

ence on political participation than education, interest in politics and institutional factors,[155] making them predict that the impact of traditional values will become irrelevant when the educational level rises.[156]

In my opinion, the question of whether China can democratize because of its culture is misconceived. Culture is not a stable set of well-defined beliefs but a constantly redefined value system. Still, culturalism is correct in stressing legitimately different political cultures that must be taken seriously, but without adopting either deterministic or relativistic positions. Recognition of cultural difference should alert us to recognize healthy pluralism of political conceptions and institutions of democracy.

Yet, full relativism, taking anything claimed as democracy as democracy, is not an attractive alternative either. Both insiders and outsiders should be able to criticize local values and political institutions for injustices or symptoms of ungovernability or their theoretical approaches for inconsistency or impracticality. Instead of accepting that political systems are justified as such as long as they are based on local values, as relativists claim, there must be objective standards for what can be called democracy, but ones that value local innovation and variance. These standards should provide tools for showing which political systems and conceptions have enough resemblance with ideal democracy to count as democracy.

Political culture

Instead of traditional culture, political culture appears to be a more promising start to study why certain political ideas and institutions produce very different results in various countries, even among Western democracies. Political culture is usually defined narrowly as the beliefs and values concerning politics. It thus refers to psychological attitudes, not to behavior.[157] Gabriel Almond and G. Bingham Powell give the following definition:

> A political culture is a particular distribution of political attitudes, values, feelings, information and skills. As people's attitudes affect what they will do, a nation's political culture affects the conduct of its citizens and leaders throughout the political system.[158]

Institutionalists claim that institutions mould political culture. Institutions shape rational forms of human interaction. Therefore, skills and knowledge useful

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[155]   Kuan and Lau 2002, p. 311, 313.

[156]   Kuan and Lau 2002, p. 308, 315.

[157]   Hague et al. 1992, p. 135.

[158]   Almond and Powell 1980, p. 42.

in one institutional context are not necessarily useful in another, because the costs of a certain kind of behavior differ within distinct institutional settings.[159] Political institutions modify the form of political activities by constraining and promoting a certain kind of participation. They can either strengthen or suppress cultural orientation.[160] In addition, institutions reduce uncertainties by establishing rules for successful activities. People act and organizations evolve to take advantage of the opportunities defined by their institutional framework. This framework even modifies informal rules of action and cause adaptive expectations among actors.[161] Political activities, social group formation and composition, meanings and methods of politics, and definitions of social interests all depend on state structures and activities. These structures affect political culture by encouraging a certain kind of group formation and influencing on some issues, but not on others.[162] Political actors simply behave differently depending on how they expect the government to deal with the issue.[163] When the political procedures change, resources required for people to participate in politics may also change.[164]

I use the term political culture here in the sense that combines the traditional narrow conception of political culture and the insight of institutionalists. As Thomas Lum puts it, "political culture serves as a link between social and political traditions, on the one hand, and political institutions and behavior on the other."[165] In this wider sense, the term political culture assumes that political institutions, social stratification, cultural tradition, and many other factors have created a specific political culture that makes some kinds of political activities more attractive and less costly than some others. Institutions, political socialization, and personal values together create habits for people to act politically in certain ways.

In studying non-Western polities, benefits of the political culture approach are many. Although it is sometimes possible to trace the historical and cultural origins of its elements, political culture refers to a particular temporary situation, since institutions, social composition and cultural ways of thinking all change. It is even possible to measure many elements of political culture, such as typical political acts and political attitudes within a certain country. Moreover, the advantage of the political culture approach is that it respects people's own perceptions of their polity.

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[159]   North 1990.

[160]   Kuan and Lau 2002, pp. 300, 315.

[161]   North 1990, p. 95.

[162]   Skocpol 1985, pp. 21–23, 27–28.

[163]   Weaver and Rockman 1993, p. 29.

[164]   Shi 1997, p. 19.

[165]   Lum 2000, 15.

As Douglass North observes, institutions modify informal rules of action and cause adaptive expectations among actors.[166] Apart from shaping rational forms of behavior, socioeconomic and political environments and institutions tend to shape our perception of our interests and wants.[167] This observation suggests that existing institutions and distributional patterns shape our notion of what the ideal institutions and distributions would look like. Therefore, it is possible that people living in a certain institutional and cultural environment prefer political institutions working in ways familiar to them and delivering goods they have learnt to expect from their own political institutions. It is thus psychologically understandable that we believe our institutions work better than institutions elsewhere, but our belief of their superiority is not necessarily shared by ordinary people in the countries we criticize. As Stephen Macedo remarks, "Free democratic deliberation must be a prerequisite to any sound claim about what the people of Asia, or any other continent, really want."[168]

Political culture shapes political behavior and appropriate forms of elite-mass relations. A rational individual weighs different strategies and their probable effectiveness in the existing political and social environment when she chooses how to act politically. In the People's Republic of China, some channels of public self-expression, such as opposition party formation, may prove counterproductive and others, such as voting, may be less effective than in the West, but this does not mean that there are no other, perhaps even effective, forms of political action that Chinese citizens have learned to use. As Tianjian Shi puts it, political institutions shape people's strategies and resources for political participation. When lacking resources for certain political acts, people do not necessarily become apathetic, but can choose different acts requiring other resources.[169] Suzanne Ogden notes that the Chinese develop a sense of political efficacy through access to institutions familiar to them, which may considerably differ from Western political institutions.[170]

Already in 1960, Gabriel Almond argued for adopting a functional approach in comparative politics. He maintained that certain functions, namely articulative, aggregative, communicative, rule-making, and rule-applying functions are present in all political systems.[171] Therefore, we should find out how these functions are performed in different countries. When talking about possible democracy in China, we should find out how functions important to democracy, namely interest arti-

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[166]   North 1990, p. 95.
[167]   Sunstein 1995, pp. 199–202.
[168]   Macedo 2000, p. 60.
[169]   Shi 1997, p. 21.
[170]   Ogden 2002, p. 28.
[171]   Almond 1960, p. 11.

culation and aggregation, are conducted. This particular study will concentrate on the theoretical side of this issue and will show how the Chinese theory proposed these functions should be conducted. Not all systems for interest articulation and aggregation are democratic, though. Democratic interest articulation needs to be society-wide and to some extent equal; excluding a large part of society from interest articulation would certainly make a system undemocratic.[172] Democratic interest aggregation, then, needs to be such that no major social group or cleavage is systematically discriminated against in policy formulation. After knowing what Chinese processes of interest articulation and aggregation are, they can be compared with criteria of democracy to see whether they accord with these criteria.

Democracy, culture and values

Before stating my standpoint on the debate whether Western principles and institutions of democracy can and should be transmitted to non-Western cultures, I will introduce my understanding of what culture is.

Human beings tend to organize their lives and political systems in an attempt to solve problems arising from their current situations or ones they anticipate will rise in future. Many of these, e.g. subsistence or social stability, are universal issues and rational solutions to these are often relatively similar in various cultures. In general, an individual or a community seeks rational solutions to their problems and demands. Culture is one part in a set of values with which to evaluate this rationality. Thus, culture is in a constant interaction with social reality and the situations people need to react to. The content of a culture is indefinable in an exhaustive manner because cultural elements people consciously use depend on the situations we apply our cultural values to. A large part of a culture remains latent. Often cultural values include contradictory elements. Although culture consists of relatively stable and shared values, it at the same time is constantly redefined when people choose how to apply it in reality. Nor are cultural values the only values we choose from, in addition there are distinct individual and group values, and new values, including ones borrowed from abroad, are constantly introduced.

When speaking about the Chinese, I use the word to indicate values and forms of thinking inside the People's Republic of China reflected in my sources. These, of course are not the only possible ideas the Chinese could or even did

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[172] Using this definition, some could question whether ancient Athens was a democracy because of its narrow political inclusiveness. I agree that in a modern sense political inclusion in Athens was inadequate, but it does not automatically mean that a majority of the people were not politically represented. Although only a minority of the population in Athens was enfranchised, in premodern democracies the relevant unit was a household, not an individual.

hold, nor are these ideas such that only the Chinese could have. In my parlance, Chinese does not refer to origin. Many Chinese ideas and terms originated abroad; not only Marxist, but also traditional Chinese cultural values need not to be of Chinese origin. In comparisons between the Chinese and Western conceptions I, therefore, compare views and the theory appearing in my Chinese sources with those Western notions which help me to accentuate meaningful characteristics and consequences of this Chinese theory.

When talking about theories and assumptions about democracy in the West, I am referring to a much larger entity than any single theory, because one theory can at best express only a small part of the cultural values, everyday assumptions, and theories Westerners have about democracy. It would therefore be difficult, if not impossible, to choose one theory representing democracy in the West.[173] Comparing two cultures when one is defined by a single theoretical framework produced by this culture while another is a whole set of cultural values, traditional and modern, has the problem of contrasting two quite different levels of conceptions. Likewise, in introducing a Chinese theory I need to compare it with definite Western theories and avoid contrasting a coherent Chinese theory with Western cultural values. Because my aim is to explain democracy in China, I chose to consult parts of any Western theory of democracy I have found helpful for explaining the Chinese theory of democratic centralism. I have chosen theories that have meaningful similarities and differences with the Chinese theory. These theories will provide insight into how similar questions have been approached in political science.

Like any other values, Western democratic values are not without contradictions. Even Western democratic theories and institutions reflect these contradictions (e.g. whether democracy means representation or participation, and if it means representation, should the delegates represent the whole nation or their own constituency or represent primarily the interest or the will of the people). Cultural values among the common people are even more contradictory having many non-democratic elements coexisting with democratic ones (e.g. aspirations to elect a strong leader). Because democracy contains many different aspects both in theory and in practice, it often would be artificial to make comparisons with one predefined Western theory, when another one might have more explanatory power to describe some characteristics of, or misgivings about, the Chinese theory of democratic centralism.

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[173]   As a European who grew up in a democracy which derives from multiple sources, including liberal, Hegelian, and social democratic conceptions of democracy, to me a comparison between influences of Chinese tradition and liberal democracy, such as made by Nathan 1986, seems to make a comparison between a culture and a theory. However, perhaps his comparison could be taken as a comparison of Chinese and American cultural values.

Culture and democracy

My approach evidently leads to a relatively small emphasis on cultural differences. I admit their existence but argue that there is often as much variety within a culture as between cultures. There certainly is continuity in every culture, but it is difficult, often even impossible, to prove whether a certain phenomenon has direct roots in history or just answers certain needs of a particular time. Interlocked as these things are, I choose not to address them. If I point out some connection with the traditional Chinese thought, it should be read only as a similarity and a possible, but not proven, causal connection. How culture transmits its values is a complex matter. Familiar things are, naturally, easy to adopt. Marxism-Leninism certainly has many notions resembling those of traditional China. Both emphasize an individual's role as a member of a collective, take the wellbeing of the common people as the single most important justification for the government, and set ideological and moral standards for political elites. Yet, there are as many dissimilarities. Marxism stresses struggle instead of harmony, strives for social change instead of revering tradition, calls for equality instead of a hierarchical society, and emphasizes production more than learning. Marxism in its Maoist interpretation won in China exactly because it combined the familiar and the new: it had features acceptable to the Chinese and simultaneously offered a model to break with the tradition when the challenge from Western modernity caused many Chinese to consider their traditions unfit to save the Chinese nation.

A culture manifests in concrete situations. Rational considerations, social pressures, emotional dispositions or economic necessities explain how and whether culture is applied to a particular situation. Democratization and political theorization may, consciously or not, enforce cultural values or break with them, but also choose acultural or even universalistic approaches. Whichever, the main aim in discussing democracy is always political. Therefore, it always makes sense to talk about political motivations and considerations in such a discussion, while cultural background of argumentation can be insignificant, even meaningless. For example, in today's world people from all continents and cultural backgrounds can talk about electoral systems in the same terms, although one electoral system does not produce similar results in different political cultures. Moreover, continuity of cultural tradition is often very difficult to demonstrate causally, unless a person deliberately speaks about relations between democracy and her culture. It will be very difficult to prove, for example, whether it is Confucianism, Marxism, or practical considerations that make an average Chinese prefer political leaders who are concerned with ordinary people's welfare. Thus, I will leave the origins of ideas and their relations to the larger cultural tradition mainly untouched.

For the most part, the participants were involved in the 1978–1981 press discussion because of practical considerations. The most important source of democratic ideas was Marxism, having obvious and tractable influence on viewpoints and patterns of argumentation alike. The writers explicitly referred to the Marxist authorities and the Chinese communists' own experiences of state building when dealing with democracy. Mostly they ignored or even consciously emphasized their differences with Chinese tradition and with the Western bourgeois democracies alike.[174]

Choosing to speak only about the theory and not about culture will have two obvious benefits. Firstly, theory is a concrete object of the discussion. Dealing with the theory itself makes connections between arguments and their sources demonstrable. Writers themselves wanted to emphasize, evaluate, or reformulate a certain theory. Thus, a theoretical approach to their texts respects the writers' original intentions as well. Secondly, research of theorization recognizes people as active shapers of their environments and value systems, who react to the needs of their own time. I find this approach morally satisfactory and in accordance with my own empirical observations of people in China and elsewhere. Thirdly, theories can have universal application regardless of their non-Western origin, while the culturalist approach often implicitly denies that indigenous values can be employed in the West. A theoretical approach recognizes cultural diversity when it allows the Chinese to develop their distinctive theories of democracy, instead of taking Western theories as the standard and talking about cultural assumptions in applying Western theories.

In my opinion, there is no "Westerness" in democratic theory that makes it inapplicable in other cultures, nor does the "Chineseness" of the Chinese theory mean that there are reasons why China could choose to apply only a theory with "the Chinese characteristics" (although it is legitimate for them to do so). Whether non-Western cultures choose to adopt Western models depends on whether they suited to those values they prefer to stress in their culture and whether they provide satisfactory solutions to the situations they are facing. Unless they do, no laws and institutions can guarantee the continuity of democratic processes, not even in the West. We need only to look back to Europe in the 1930s to see that quite another set of values can replace democratic ones, if democracy fails to satisfy the needs of the people and the ruling elite.

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[174] Marina Svensson observes that the Chinese human rights discussion had a very ambivalent relation to the Chinese cultural past. Instead of idealizing indigenous values, the Chinese discourse has mostly blamed its feudalist past for present human rights problems in China. (Svensson 2002, p. 65.) The same is mostly true with discussions about democracy in general, although in 1978–1981 some articles cited a particular example from imperial China in a positive light.

The term democracy in Chinese sources

Although I use a textual approach, I do not believe that studying linguistics or concepts carries one very far.[175] However, I want to shortly summarize the most common meanings of the term democracy in the Chinese press sources of 1978–1981.

The Chinese understood democracy as the people's ability to influence the decisions made by their leaders. In terminology like democratic centralism, "democracy among the people and dictatorship over the enemy," as well as in the definition of democracy as "the people being masters in their own house," just to mention some usages of this type, democracy refers to popular participation in decision making, initiative from below, a right to supervise the leadership and criticize policies, or related ideas.

In addition, democracy in the communist Chinese parlance refers to tolerating differing opinions and solving social contradictions in non-coercive ways. This meaning is evident in sayings like "democracy among the people and dictatorship over the enemy," using democratic methods for handling contradictions among the people, as well as in the term "democracy in the sciences" (*kexue minzhu*). This usage of the term is in accordance with the Western understanding as well. One Western argument for democracy is that democratic elections and public discussion can minimize conflict.[176] Abstaining from violence in political conflicts is one main rationale given in support of democracy.[177] Here we come to some very basic characteristics of democracy: persuasion by rational arguments, willingness to accommodate different viewpoints and make compromises, and the

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[175] A linguistic approach is useful in finding out how concepts are used, but uses of concepts tell very little about the objects they refer to. An example of a mistake of confusing concepts and practice is Robert Weller's article in which he claims that "we cannot sensibly speak of civil society in China before the twentieth century, in part because state and society themselves were conceptualized so differently." (Weller 1998, p. 242.) The existence of a concept is quite a different thing from the existence of a phenomenon. For example, Moses Finley has demonstrated that there was no concept of an economy (or related terms like labor or production) in the ancient world, although ancient Greece and Rome surely had economic activity (Finley 1992, p. 21).

[176] Holden 1974, pp. 212–213.

[177] See, e.g., Warren 1996, pp. 254–255, 262. Lively 1975, pp. 139–140, maintains that J. S. Mill and Alexis de Tocqueville understood democracy as a government through persuasion and not coercion. Or as Lakoff 1996, p. 15, puts it, "government by discussion – in other words by free debate and negotiation among all parties – is very close to a definition of the aim of democratic government." See also Diamond et al. 1995, p. 16. Norbert Elias has equaled the democratization process to a civilization process towards growing tolerance and monopolization of the means of political violence by the state. See Elias 1982, pp. 114–115.

right to have and express various opinions. These characteristics are shared by the Western and the Chinese conceptions of democracy alike.

Unlike the two meanings given above which were self-evident elements in Chinese discussions about democracy and were built into democracy-related concepts, there were two more common meanings used in specific contexts. The third usage for democracy in the articles referred to equal power sharing. The Chinese understood proletarian systems to be more democratic than bourgeois democracies, because they are less elitist. The fourth meaning was rule by the majority. This meaning was often explicitly given as a definition for democracy in the 1978–1981 press. It was used when referring to class composition, but also in references to voting. Obviously, some used this definition for promoting majority rule in a political culture customarily preferring consensus. Majority rule corresponds closely with the Western understanding of democracy.

In addition, the Chinese used the term democracy in various other meanings in 1978–1981. These usually referred to issues related to democracy in the West as well: decentralization of power, freedom to choose (e.g. "democratic cultivation") or equality (e.g. "democracy for women"). Many of these uses are non-political and appeared rarely.

In 1978–1981, the Chinese discussed democracy both as a work style and as the state system. All the above listed meanings could be used in both of these senses. Likewise, in the Western parlance democracy sometimes refers to work style along with more institutionalized processes. For example, "parliamentary democracy" refers to an institutionalized state system, while we may blame a secretive and authoritarian politician for not handling affairs in "a democratic manner". Many Western methods of democratic feedback, such as a legislator's contacts with his or her constituency and the sending of letters to one's congressman, can be counted as what the Chinese would call a democratic work style (*zuofeng*).

Obviously, the Chinese usage of the term democracy is a legitimate one even in Western terms. Popular influencing, non-coercive means of solving social contradictions, equal distribution of power, and majority rule are all relatively the same issues that Western theorists refer to when talking about democracy. I thus disagree with cultural relativism which assumes that, because the term democracy is not of Chinese origin and because *minzhu* is not exactly identical to democracy, the Chinese do not really understand democracy as Westerners do.[178] Although

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[178]   Lei 1996. Lei Guang goes so far as to avoid use of the term democracy. His article has merits in studying etymology and different usages of the term *minzhu*. Unfortunately, he concludes that *minzhu* is far different from the Western term democracy, although according to his list of meanings, the democracy movement referred to democracy as participation, political rights, or checks and balances, all belonging to the Western democratic theory as well. Nor

the Chinese usages are not perhaps *exactly* the same as Western definitions, they fit well under the umbrella of ideas of democracy even in the West. This, of course, is not to say that Chinese culture and the social and political reality had no influence on the implications and applications of democracy in China.

Misconceived points of comparison

When examining the Chinese polity, research literature sometimes makes faulty comparisons between China and the West. Far too often research compares Western theory with Chinese practice and labels China as undemocratic because it does not conform to Western theories of democracy. Unfortunately, Western democracies seldom exemplify their own democratic theories very well, while descriptive theories based on Western political processes are not very democratic in essence.[179]

Many scholars seem to have an idealistic picture of Western political systems. It is very romantic to expect Western democracies to execute the people's will as such.[180] In fact, this is impossible considering the heterogeneous nature of contemporary constituencies.[181] Some Western theorists of democracy reject outright that democracy even means executing the will of the electorate.[182] The Chinese, as will be seen, see implementation of popular will as an important part of democracy but simultaneously affirm the role of political elites in decision making. Consequently, Western research sometimes concludes that the Chinese forms of popular influencing allow the Party to misrepresent the people's will.[183] Yet, this conclusion is unfair, since Western democracies likewise prioritize elite and ex-

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does he pursue the etymology and meaning of the Western term, obviously thinking them to be self-evident.

Firstly, etymology and meaning should be kept apart: very little can be said about the Western democratic theory and practice from the etymological roots of the term democracy in ancient Greek. Secondly, those who pursue the meaning of the term should differentiate between the basic meaning itself and its implications (what kinds of expectations, values etc. are involved in the use of the term) and applications (how it is implemented). Terms like democracy are wide and vague enough to allow quite a wide range of legitimate implications and applications not just in differing cultural contexts but inside one culture or country as well. Terms and their implications and applications can help explain one another, but are not explanations as such.

[179] See, e.g., Pateman 1970, p. 16; Womack 2005, p. 27–28.

[180] This idea is derivative of American populism, represented by writers like Tom Paine. For its problems, see Holden 1974, pp. 40–41.

[181] See, e.g., Pennock 1979, pp. 261–265.

[182] Schumpeter 1992, ch. 21.

[183] Anagnost 1992, p. 198.

pert views on many occasions and even when they are responsive to popular will elites have to choose which of the competing popular opinions to promote.

Western democratic self-perception is often more equal and free than real Western democracies are. All modern democracies have political elites far more active and powerful in politics than an average citizen. Therefore, showing the Communist Party and its members as being more influential than an average citizen is not a negation of democracy. Further, all political systems propagate their official values through multiple channels, ranging from their agenda-setting capacities to maintenance of public education systems. Thus, dominance of official values in political socialization does not negate the possibility of democracy, not even in China. However, if dominance of official values suppresses all other views, democraticness becomes threatened. Lack of freedom of speech can be fatal to democracy, although all existing democracies regulate public expression and association to some degree.

All political systems demand obedience from their citizens. Democracy is a means for formulating rules that the majority can consent to and the recalcitrant will be coerced to obey. Therefore, disobedience of the state is not democratic, not even in China, although democratic freedom of expression is usually understood to tolerate some forms of civil disobedience. It is possible that popular disobedience can sometimes catalyze a democratization process in a non-democratic country, but disobedience itself is not democratic. An analytic distinction between democratization and opposition to a non-democratic regime is often poorly established in Western research. There need be no correlation between the two. There is adequate historical proof that democratic selection can favor leaders who previously served non-democratic regimes,[184] like there is of advocates of democracy bringing about non-democratic rule when they are in power. Authority and ability demonstrated under non-democratic rule can be valued by electors in democracy. Nevertheless, the assumptions that if the Chinese could vote, they would automatically vote the Communist Party out of office are common in Western research literature. This assumption seems to explain the surprised reaction on behalf of scholars who found that village elections have made villagers more compliant in executing state policies.[185] Actually, Western theories of democracy have generally emphasized that democracy brings legitimacy and governability.[186] If democracy generates legitimacy in the West, why would it not in China?

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[184] Japan is a good example of a country where political elites during the Second World War militarism period were later elected to the parliament and chosen as prime ministers during the post-war period of democracy.

[185] Oi and Rozelle 2000, pp. 537–539, quotation on p. 539.

[186] See, e.g., Lakoff 1996, pp. 8–9; Weale 1999; pp. 199–200; Womack 2005, p. 29.

Some studies of Chinese democracy suffer from too narrow a conception of Western democracy. For example, He Baogang thinks that Chinese democratization depends on some value changes, including adopting right-based political conception in place of traditional Chinese duty-based morality, basing politics on checking evil impulses of human nature instead of cultivating goodness of human nature, and giving up the idea of common good as the object of state policies.[187] Yet, all of the values he opposes in China also belong to the Western democratic tradition, although not always to American liberalism. For example, John Plamenatz holds that democracy is a system of institutions securing certain political and private rights and ensuring performances of certain political duties.[188] Following the rights and duties theory of democracy, Chinese democracy could follow from reformulating and institutionalizing citizens' duties and extending duties to both commoners and rulers alike in a way that the respective rights would be secured. In addition, there is a strong European tradition valuing democracy for cultivating virtues of responsible, community-regarding citizens.[189] This democratic tradition sees that democratic politics are possible exactly because citizens have the potential for altruism and cooperation. The common good is an essential principle in republican democratic for tradition, social democratic tradition, and deliberative democracy alike. Likewise, a democrat has no need to accept that politics means using power to maximize values,[190] or that society is only an association of individuals,[191] although He seems to expect that these are standard democratic assumptions.[192] Thus, although He Baogang makes a justified comparison between Chinese ideas of democracy and some forms of Anglo-Saxon liberal democracy, he loses sight of alternative Western paths for democratization, which might serve Chinese democratization better than liberal democracy, not least because there are more shared values.

The structure of this research

I have arranged this study in four parts with different scholarly aims. There are two methodological and one historical, four empirical, four theoretical, and three comparative chapters. This first methodological chapter has introduced my methodology and basic assumptions, including reasons to abstain from polarization bet-

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[187] He 1996, pp. 96–119; He 2000, pp. 90–97.

[188] Plamenatz 1977, pp. 181–203.

[189] For an idealized view of republican citizen virtues, see Arendt 1959.

[190] Plamenatz 1977, p. 164, 181–182.

[191] Taylor 1989; Sandel 1984.

[192] He 2000, pp. 90 and 93, respectively.

ween the democratic West and authoritarian China and engage in more nuanced study. The historical and methodological part continues with a chapter introducing historical background for the press discussion in 1978–1981. The second metho-dological chapter examines the methods, strategies and techniques of the Chinese political discussion. Although it draws together what I have learned from empiri-cally studying this discussion, the methodological chapter is placed in the begin-ning for the convenience to readers who are not familiar with argumentation in the Chinese media. This analysis will help them to follow argumentation in the empir-ical chapters. For a historian, the understanding of meanings and contents of texts arise empirically during the process of reading and placing the texts into their proper contexts of related writings, the medium used, contemporary events, and the aims sought. Therefore, this chapter simultaneously reveals my approach to the textual analysis of my sources and presents my analysis of the strategies used when participating in the Chinese press discussion in 1978–1981. Later, I confirmed my impressions with interviews of a writer and an editor active in the 1978–1981 discussion. Although this chapter represents both the premises and the results of reading the Chinese press materials, it is by no means circular. One is not used to explain the other. Rather, because historical research itself requires a scholar to use the power of his subjective understanding, understanding and re-sults develop together. The methodological chapter, thus, summarizes what I have learnt from the Chinese political discussion and argumentation during this research. It reveals my own methodology and understanding of source analysis needed for researching the Chinese press sources. In addition, it will serve the study of political communication and the press in China.

The empirical motivation for this study is to introduce how the Chinese press discussed democracy, or more accurately, democratic centralism and related topics in 1978–1981, and how this discussion commented on contemporary events and ongoing democratization. Hence, the central questions in these chapters are what was argued and why. The empirical chapters gather, introduce and analyze a discussion previously only partially known in the West. In the empirical chapters, I will leave room for the Chinese argumentation and vocabulary and try to explain writers' social and political motivations. The four empirical chapters introduce the contents and development of the discussion about democratic centralism, anar-chism, and bureaucratism. If democratic centralism represents the correct combi-nation of democracy and centralism, anarchism and bureaucratism both deviate from their ideal balance. Anarchism rejects centralism, while bureaucratism tries to centralize without democracy. The fourth chapter about the Paris Commune model introduces institutional conclusions thus derived. Apart from being of theoretical interest, these chapters naturally serve those who want to know more about the history of the period 1978–1981.

The theoretical chapters seek to extract a coherent theory from the preceding empirical study. The first theoretical chapter will introduce the content of the theory of democratic centralism in Chinese political terminology. After knowing how the Chinese themselves perceive democracy, the second step is to evaluate whether and in what respects, this understanding accords with conventional Western understandings about democracy. The next three chapters compare the Chinese theory with Western traditions of democracy, not only with the standard liberal theory, but also with traditions of participatory and deliberative democracy, in order to evaluate whether the Chinese theory of democratic centralism forms a legitimate theory about democracy. Since the Chinese theory falls closer to participatory and deliberative forms of democracy than procedural and representative liberal democracy, it also provides some evidence about pros and cons of participatory and deliberative forms of democracy.

After knowing the Chinese theory and how to evaluate its democraticness, this knowledge can be used for comparison. Although my comparison is by no means comprehensive and final, it aims at opening more dialogue between Chinese and Western political theories. One of the theoretical chapters will compare the Chinese theory with some common theories and models about Chinese society. Western research can benefit from the understanding of the Chinese' own perceptions and motivations. Although similarities between indigenous and foreign theories do not prove that these theories are correct descriptions of the Chinese practice, convergence can mean that the phenomena described by both are somehow essential. In this way, the Chinese theory can strengthen some Western theories against other competing theories. Likewise, comparison between theories can breed new kinds of explanations and approaches. Another possible step after knowing an indigenous theory would be researching how well this theory describes the reality in China, a task not taken in this study. Yet, in the two theoretical chapters I suggest where to look if someone engages in this kind of research. In these chapters I will examine some findings of Western research which seem to fit well with either democratic centralist, participatory, or deliberative forms of decision making and political influencing. Although my theoretical study cannot demonstrate causality between scholarly findings and their possibly democratic centralist causes, it can suggest ways of explaining these findings. Moreover, these findings can demonstrate the need to consider the democratic centralist model seriously. Because some Westerners may presume that even fine theories of democracy used by the Chinese communists have only propaganda value, it may be of interest to note that the Chinese theory of democratic centralism and Western research actually examine many similar characteristics of Chinese political life.

There are also some other uses for knowledge about the indigenous Chinese theoretical position I will not pursue, but encourage others to explore. After knowing theoretical backgrounds, we have better means to understand not only the theoretical finesse of Chinese political theory, which is a sufficient motivation for intellectual curiosity itself, but also how the Chinese viewed democracy and the process of democratization. This allows critics of the Chinese polity to direct their criticism towards the essential. Demonstrating that China is not a liberal democracy is a weak form of criticism, since China does not claim to be one. Instead, after knowing how the Chinese themselves understand democracy and on which premises they have built their political system, a critic can show where their approach may fail in producing democratic results and results the Chinese themselves want to bring about.

THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF THE DISCUSSION

The background of the discussion

The period of 1978–1981 owed its theoretical openness to its historical context. The Cultural Revolution explains why the leadership, the press, and the public all welcomed the discussion about democracy. After the Cultural Revolution and death of Mao Zedong, there was the need for reevaluating the successes and setbacks of Chinese revolutionary history. Some need for the reorientation of political and economic policies was generally recognized. The leadership widely understood the need to stabilize political life after the long period of disruptive campaigns undermining popular morale and splitting the leadership. New leaders commonly wanted to increase popular support for the system. Simultaneously, the leadership widely accepted diversification of economic production in order to better fulfill people's material needs. What perhaps began as fine-tuning grew into a radical change of the political line and theoretical orthodoxy. In this situation, anyone keeping within a certain ideological framework and skilled in political jargon was invited to introduce her understanding of the most feasible and ideologically correct ways to produce desired social and political improvements. The national leaders either did not want to or could not keep this discussion in line. Leaders themselves wanted to pool wisdom about ideas for future development more widely than before. Simultaneously, the power struggle among the national leaders made it difficult for any single leadership vision to dominate the discussion, since ideas controversial in the eyes of one leader could often blossom under the auspices of other leaders. When one leadership camp emphasized the interpretation of ideological tradition for the new era, the other stressed practical feasibility. Understandably, both of these criteria, ideological correctness and practical success, provided much leeway for independent interpretation by Party members and societal actors alike.

At the time, the leadership was divided between those who had entered the national political arena in the course of the Cultural Revolution, the foremost of them being Premier and Communist Party Chairman Hua Guofeng, and leaders who had been overthrown by the Cultural Revolution, including Vice-Chairman and Vice-Premier Deng Xiaoping. Nevertheless, the leading members of both groups affirmed the need for democratization. Mao's followers like Hua Guofeng had inherited many of Mao's participatory conceptions, including the belief in the

need for mass movements and mass participation in order to achieve economic and political change. Hua and his followers conducted the movement to criticize the theoretical and moral failures of the Gang of Four, whom Hua himself had ordered to be imprisoned soon after the death of Mao Zedong. Hua Guofeng saw the Gang in terms of a mistaken political line and misuse of power. The solution he suggested was a very Maoist one: more mass criticism and mass participation would remedy economic difficulties and rectify the political line. Thus, the decision to democratize was a natural outcome following his line of thought, especially since mass demonstrations hailing the end of an over-politicized period and the nomination of Hua as the supreme leader had demonstrated the strong popular support he held in 1976. Ever since his downfall, historians have underestimated Hua Guofeng's role in pursuing political and economic reforms, but in fact his Marxist position included a tradition of democracy belonging to a direct democracy type of popular participation. This was the tradition Hua had regularly appealed to since 1977.

Another influential group in the leadership consisted of old revolutionary leaders returning to power after the Cultural Revolution, during which many of them had been criticized and removed from their posts. The foremost figures sharing this background were Deng Xiaoping and Secretary-General of the Communist Party Hu Yaobang. Even if many scholars sympathetic to reform have emphasized Deng Xiaoping's part as the leader of the reformists, some Western researchers have credited Hu Yaobang for promoting a new open political atmosphere,[1] while others have noticed the role played by the Party Vice-Chairman Chen Yun.[2] Even before the Cultural Revolution, most reformists had believed in political institutionalization and the role of material rewards in accelerating economic growth. During the Cultural Revolution this approach had left them vulnerable to accusations of downplaying mass participation and fostering economic exploitation. As a result, during the Cultural Revolution many had been persecuted because of these opinions, strengthening their belief in the need for a new political line. In their eyes mass movements during leftist periods had led to political persecution, social chaos, and economic inefficiency and imbalance. To many of them, popular movements in 1978–1981 soon seemed to turn into movements similarly disruptive to normal social and economic order. However, reformists were interested in institutionalized popular feedback contributing to economic progress and guarding against the return of ultra-leftist rule.

The power struggle within the top leadership made it difficult for the leadership to effectively limit the discussion, especially since both lines, followers of

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[1]   Goldman 1994.

[2]   See Baum 1994, pp. 10, 78–79, 82, for Chen Yun's politically permissive views and tolerance of democracy and petition movements.

Deng Xiaoping and those of Hua Guofeng, were pro-democratic, although they defined the term democracy differently. Inability to resort to, even to define, the theoretical orthodoxy gave latitude for those who wrote for the press. The fact that the Party had admitted its fallibility made it difficult for the Party to limit discussion in the name of its alleged ideological truths. As long as the orthodox line was under reevaluation, many seemingly sincere attempts to discuss possible measures were tolerated. Apart from a divided leadership, the plurality of standpoints in the press benefited from the shared attempt to break away from the conformist and repetitive language of the Cultural Revolution. Prevalent slogans advocated mind emancipation, taking practice as the sole criterion of truth,[3] breaking forbidden zones and letting hundreds of schools contend. An experienced writer was able to utilize this atmosphere to demand democratization in even more explicit terms than the leadership did.

Many historians, both Chinese and Western, tend to portray the years 1978–1981 in terms of a power struggle between leftists and reformists, or even on a more personal level between Hua Guofeng and Deng Xiaoping.[4] Still, at least as important as the differences between them was the obvious willingness of the two lines to cooperate in solving certain concrete political, economic and social problems. There was enough common ground in the belief in nationalism and Marxism and in the aims of bringing economic growth and welfare to the masses that the leadership could, for the most part, accommodate their different visions of priorities and concrete measures for several years.

Reasons for open press discussion about democracy

The reasons for the absence of open discussion about democracy before 1977 can be explained by the political conditions of the Cultural Revolution. According to many articles in 1978–1981, during the Cultural Revolution democracy was understood as a bourgeois concept not to be raised under socialism. Although this is too simplistic of an explanation, since the Cultural Revolution had democratic calls of its own, it is probably true that an open *discussion* about democracy and its contents in the press had been impossible during the early 1970s because of the stiff theoretical and cultural policies of the time.

The media reveals at least six reasons for introducing democracy to the arena of open political theorization around 1978. Firstly, there was the practical reason. Because the Cultural Revolution had violated many aspects of democracy, such as

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3 For introductions of the practice discussion, see Brugger and Kelly 1990, ch. 5; Dutton and Healy 1985; Misra 1998, ch. 1; Schoenhals 1991; Womack 1987.

4 See, e.g., Baum 1994, part 1.

individual freedoms and political equality, reviving socialist democracy was felt to be necessary. The Party itself expected many benefits from democratization: by reviving old Party traditions of mass line style leadership and by relaxing social pressures, the Party sought popular support for its cause and a better environment for economic innovation.

The second, and no less important, reason was theoretical. Articles argued that the theoretical line needed correction because Lin Biao and the Gang of Four had distorted the interpretation of socialist theory. Along with the general reevaluation of socialist theory and its practical applications, the theory of democracy and practical questions of democratization became a topic needing clarification.

The third possible reason was the legitimization of the rule of the new leaders. Mao Zedong had understood his line to be correct partly in terms of democratic centralism. While he himself allegedly had correctly balanced the two elements of democratic centralism, all of his challengers, like Chen Duxiu, Li Lisan, Wang Ming, or the Gang of Four, had customarily been criticized for ignoring either democracy or centralism. By announcing themselves as adherents of the correct democratic centralist tradition, contemporary leadership gained an aura of being Mao Zedong's faithful followers and acquired tools for demonstrating the correctness of their own line and discrediting the leftist line in the press.

Fourthly, it was a part of Party tradition to believe that it owed its success to its good relations with the people. By using this rhetoric in the press, the Party educated cadres about desirable leadership methods and reminded commoners about times when the Party had been successful and popular. After excessive use of coercion and social stigmatization during the Cultural Revolution, the Party was experiencing a legitimacy crisis for which democratization was hoped to be a remedy. Here, democracy presumably helped revive the people's trust in the Party, because it assisted in the reestablishment of close relations between the people and cadres and because it invited commoners' aid in solving problems inherited from the past.

Fifthly, the press saw democracy as a method of preventing future disasters on the Cultural Revolution scale. Many articles posited that the rule of Lin Biao and the Gang of Four had been possible only because the democratic system before the Cultural Revolution was incomplete and therefore unpopular leaders were not sufficiently accountable. As a result these leaders had been able to destroy earlier democratic practices. Articles suggested that democratic supervision and elections could put a quick end to the political aspirations of people like the Gang in the future; others offered assurance that since the people support the correct socialist line, the people would use their democratic rights to protect true socialism.

Sixthly, democratization was to create a good political and social environment for modernization. Articles advocated that only by permitting free expression, could people's creativity and enthusiasm benefit production, and if the people could elect leaders whom they support and willingly follow, able and hardworking individuals would emerge to lead collective production.

The Chinese Press in 1978–1981

In China, only some publications were directly under central Party or government organs. In addition to these, there were provincial and local publications under the control of Party or government branches; there were journals of political theory mostly under the control of provincial Party committees; there were journals published by mass organizations and the army; academic institutions published their own journals; cities and even some workplaces had their own publications. Beginning in 1978, each year saw the birth of more journals,[5] many having publishers who were under less direct official control.

In 1978, press censorship was still the under the control of Central Propaganda Bureau chief Zhang Pinghua, who belonged to Hua Guofeng's circles. By early 1979, reformists succeeded in capturing this post for Hu Yaobang. Hu Yaobang himself held relatively liberal opinions about the limits for discussions in the press and in officially promoted arenas. Yet, below the center, the Central Propaganda Bureau controlled publication mainly through issuing guidance about what topics could be dealt with and how. In China, censorship was left to editors, apart from some editorials and important articles checked before publication by the leadership.[6]

In 1978–1981, central propaganda organs were unable to control the media completely due to the emancipate the mind policy demanding more varied and truthful public expression. The openness of provincial and local media depended largely on who held the power in the area. Control of the press also depended on the personalities of the leaders of the organ publishing the newspaper or journal. Newspapers and journals under reformist controlled organs, e.g. the People's Liberation Army, had a different line than more leftist publications and organizations.[7] At the lower levels of administration, editors had different conceptions of a suitable publication line. They tried to follow policy winds, which in 1978–1981

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[5] For data about the decentralization and pluralization of newspaper publication since 1978, see Wu 2000.

[6] Schoenhals 1992, p. 99.

[7] Based on assistant professor Jin Guangyao's presentation given to me in Sept 1993.

may have been quite confusing when different leaders and different central publications had divergent standards. Compared to dailies, specialized publications, like academic journals, had more room to operate, although often under thick theoretical disguise.

Already in 1978–1981, the Chinese press was by no means a single, united platform. It was able to convey relatively varied views about democratization. What could not be said in the center, may have been publishable in the periphery. What could not be published for larger audiences, may have been publishable in academic journals or closed circulation publications. Once published elsewhere, central papers like *Renmin ribao* (The People's Daily) sometimes reprinted the material.

Even central publications were not limited to one line at the time. *Renmin ribao* was edited by the liberal Hu Jiwei, who followed the emancipate the mind policy rather than the strict orders of the Central Propaganda Bureau under leftist control.[8] Yet, although *Renmin ribao* opened many fields for public discussion, it by no means provided the main arena for the discussion about democracy, especially after the beginning of 1979. Another central publication *Hongqi* (Red Flag), the theoretical journal of the Party center, which had held an importance equivalent to that of *Renmin ribao* during the Cultural Revolution, was declining. It held more leftist – although not antidemocratic – views than the press in general. Both publications were able to print their differing lines during the period of power struggle among national leaders, but their destinies also reflected its end: when the new reformist leadership had consolidated its power by 1982, Hu Jiwei was replaced and the publication of *Hongqi* was discontinued. Obviously, views deemed to be too leftist or too rightist for the taste of the newly established leaders were wiped out. If 1978 had meant more freedom in the press along the lines of the mind emancipation policy, 1981–1982 obviously saw the restructuring of the press and reevaluation of its tasks under the reformist leadership.

The course of the discussion

Already in 1977, Hua Guofeng had promoted the mass line in his speeches and the new Party constitution contained references to democratic centralism. Discussion about democracy bubbled under the surface all through late 1977 and the first half of 1978, when terminology of democracy began to appear all the more frequently. In March 1978, the National People's Congress passed the new constitution with its recognition of people's political rights. In the same session, Hua Guofeng introduced democratization as one of the tasks to pursue for the national

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8   Presentation by Jin Guangyao, Sept 1993.

goal of modernization. Consequently, the constitution and Ye Jianying's report concerning it initiated autonomous discussions about democratization in academic publications.

Discourse about democracy grew into an open and common discussion in all the newspapers and theoretical journals only after the publication of Mao Zedong's speech stressing the importance of democratic centralism in all the main publications on July 1, 1978. In the beginning, the discussion mostly repeated the tones and terminology of Mao's speech, but the importance of democratization could not be overlooked. Despite all the enthusiasm, most of the 1978 discussion was still repetitive and theoretically shallow, but the breakthrough should not be undervalued: democracy was now described as an essential and even inseparable part of the socialist theory. In accordance with the slogan "seek truth from facts" and the debate about the criteria of the truth, democracy was shown to be the best method for receiving correct information about the social and economic reality for more accurate economic planning.

At first, the discussion about democracy had a strong Party character, although it certainly attracted wider interest among people concerned with the destiny of their country. In 1978, theoretical discussion even in the major dailies seems to have been written with Party members and cadres in mind. Its main purpose seems to have been to educate politically active people to understand and practice the correct political line. For this purpose, dailies carried articles about exemplary implementation of democracy and about failures to respond to popular initiatives. At this point, democracy was mostly seen as a style and method of leadership: Cadres should listen to the people and leaders should consult ordinary Party members in order to find out about local realities, moods, and suggestions, to let the people vent their feelings, and to build up authority and support for themselves and the Party. Articles from this period are often written in the name of a party branch or a university faculty, and many others are memorandums of meetings listing comments made by various participants. Articles signed by one or two individuals became more common only in 1979.

The Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee of the Communist Party of China in December 1978 is a turning point in recent Chinese history. It marked both the official death bell for the Cultural Revolutionary line and the recognition of the reformist policy line. Theoretically this meant replacing the prioritization of class struggle with the emphasis on the need to modernize backward productive forces. The press referred to this plenary session throughout the 1978–1981 discussion as the standard by which to evaluate both the theory and the democratization process. When the limits of discussion later narrowed, many critics seem to have appealed to this meeting to defend social freedom, since so many articles in the spring of 1979 and some in 1981 tried to convince

readers that the leadership was continuing to adhere the line of the Third Plenary Session.

By the end of 1978, individual social actors had picked up the discussion about democratization. Obviously, the people had taken the democratization program as their own. Newspapers began publishing readers' letters either articulating their personal opinions about democracy or asking about how to correctly understand democracy. Along with letters concerned with theoretical matters, the press printed letters exposing power abuses by local leaders. This became a permanent practice. After the 1980 communal elections, for example, the press revealed how some leaders had refused to accept local election results.

Not incidentally, the beginning of the Democracy Wall Movement occurred at this moment.[9] The movement had both theoretical and practical dimensions: while theoretical discussion took place in unofficial publications and on wall posters pasted on Xidan Wall and, later, in Yuetan Park, petition movements gathered those with concrete grievances to appeal their cases in Beijing. Some radical leaders of the Democracy Wall Movement and the petition movement in Beijing were arrested already in March 1979, but wall posters continued to appear in less central locations in Beijing until the end of 1979. Localities and universities had their own democracy walls, unofficial publications, and petition movements. Some of these movements still continued in 1980 when county-level elections provided opportunities for political campaigning.

The most open period of discussion, although not the most theoretically innovative, fell between December 1978 and February 1979. During this period, more questions and problems were discussed in the open. Apart from the official press, which I am studying, the beginning of 1979 saw a surge of unofficial publications, so called *minban kanwu*.[10] Willingness to participate in the discussion created numerous new, often short-lived official publications, not seldom named after the slogans of the openness policy, such as *Sixiang jiefang* (Mind Emancipation), *Xin changzheng* (The New Long March) and *Minzhu yu fazhi* (Democracy and Law).

From March 1979 onwards, the leadership saw it necessary to limit the discussion. The media started to run attacks on views deemed too radical, for example, ones interpreted to urge for adopting a bourgeois democratic system and theory. The strict trend culminated in March, when Deng Xiaoping defined the Four Cardinal Principles, which prohibited questioning socialism, Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong thought, proletarian dictatorship, and the leadership of

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[9]   Histories of Democracy Wall Movement include Garside 1982; Goldman 2002; Goodman 1987; Kent 1993, ch. 4; Nathan 1986; Paltemaa 2006; Rosen 1985; Svensson 2002, ch. 10.

[10] For writings posted on the Democracy Wall and printed in unofficial publications, see Seymour 1980, Lin 1980, Widor 1981 and 1984, Goodman 1981, Chen 1984, Benton and Hunter 1995, ch. 4.

the Communist Party in public political discussions. Yet, official press articles stressed that these limits were not meant to hinder democratization itself but to give a correct orientation for the discussion.

Stricter tones in the discussion did not live for long, though. Already in the following summer, the discussion was enlivened after Hua Guofeng's report about governmental work had stressed the need to institutionalize democracy. From this point on, the discussion gained more theoretical insight and familiarity with democratic theory and institutions. Until then the nature of discussion had been Party-centered and theoretical, but from that point onward it became more academic in nature. Many topics were discussed under highly theoretical titles, like rule of law, feudalism, or alienation. Supposedly, a bulk of this discussion was of less interest to a general reader, but she found still many familiar and practical democratic topics in the press, the foremost ones discussing workplace democracy and elections. Elections were codified in the electoral law of 1979 which was first implemented in the county-level elections conducted in 1980, both occasions inviting the interest of the press.

When the leadership had determined democratization to be a priority, as it had in 1978–1981, contents and procedures of democracy needed to be explored. Academic discussion served this purpose. In 1978–1979 the intellectual news-paper *Guangming ribao* (Enlightenment Daily) carried several important articles pushing for the expansion of limits for political theorization, but Party members and cadres still participated most actively in the discussion. One reason for the lateness of academic discussion is related to disrupted academic life during the Cultural Revolution. Consequently, publication of academic journals and even regular enrollment in universities resumed only around 1978. Another push for academic discussion came from the leadership, especially from Hu Yaobang, who in early 1979 invited academicians to participate in theoretical discussions at the Central Party School.[11] Theorization in academic and political journals was less restricted, but their circulation was limited. Their theoretical level was more pro-found and views more varied than in other publications, but even dailies carried both varied and theoretically rich discussions. However, around 1980 newspapers began to allocate more space for timely news reporting instead of theory building. This change seems to reflect the new conception that practical information is more important for social development than theoretical correctness.

The discussion gained theoretical depth throughout its course. More aspects of and approaches to democracy were introduced as the discussion proceeded. When inquiring into the historical background of theories or origins of pheno-mena, many writers became familiar with non-Marxist viewpoints. Pluralization

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[11]　Goldman 1994, pp. 47–57, Yan 1992, ch. 8.

led to new dimensions in the discussion. Along with normative or theoretical approaches, some writers began to discuss history. Although these writers often used historical allusion or a theoretical framework to speak about the present, others turned to history to gain better understanding of democracy itself.[12] Simultaneously, ideological limitations loosened and gave way to more balanced judgment of the topics. The question was no longer whether topics were bourgeois or not, but how to evaluate and implement such conceptions under socialism.[13]

Along with theoretical innovation, the moments when the leadership stated its official position widely influenced the course of the discussion. Such occasions as the Central Committee plenary session in December 1978, the declaration of the Four Cardinal Principles in May 1979, and governmental reports in the summers of 1979 and 1980 all directed the course of future discussion about democracy. Yet, the most influential single document was probably "Resolution on Certain Questions in the History of Our Party Since the Founding of the People's Republic of China"[14] in 1981. In it the Party evaluated its past performance and theoretical lines. This document marked the formation of a new orthodoxy. When the official theoretical line was given, it could not be openly questioned, although before the formation of orthodoxy these questions had been openly theorized. Now articles turned to explaining this new orthodoxy. The communication again adopted a stricter top to bottom pattern, leaving less space for attempts to influence from below. Once more in Chinese history, an orthodox interpretation prevailed. This interpretation had been formed and developed in theoretical discussions during the preceding few years, the public part of which had been staged in the press.

The discussion dried up at the end of 1981, when the leftist stance waned with the position of Hua Guofeng, and leftist views largely disappeared from the press in the course of the campaign against bourgeois liberalization.[15] The term bourgeois liberalization already appeared in the discussion in the early part of 1981, but systematic condemnation began as late as September of that year. Although many publications still adhered to a freer atmosphere until the end of the year, *Renmin ribao*, a former forerunner, did not publish any article about democracy after October 1981. In June 1981, Hua Guofeng was ousted from the

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[12]   The famous establishment intellectual, political theorist Yan Jiaqi turned to history, including both Western philosopher Montesquieu and Chinese experiences during the Cultural Revolution, for inspiration and for articulating his opinions. See his own description of his motivations and points he wanted to make in Yan 1992, pp. 43, 175–177, and Mok 1998, p. 52.

[13]   For one example, the discussion about human rights, see Salmenkari (in print).

[14]   In *Major Documents of the People's Republic of China* 1991, pp. 137–203.

[15]   However, this break was less than complete: for example, controversial topics like alienation and humanism continued to be discussed in the press even after 1981. For these discussions, see Kelly 1987 and Brugger and Kelly 1990, ch. 6.

leadership. Leftist mass-based democratic theory exited from the stage with its most powerful supporter. The reformist policy line emphasizing economic reform and the interpretation of socialism stressing practical results rather than ideology became the new, unchallenged orthodoxy. The drive for conformity silenced many non-orthodox voices.

Democratization evidently seemed like a less urgent task now. By 1981, China looked very different from the China of 1978. Acute problems inherited from the Cultural Revolution had been mostly solved: enemy class labels had been removed, opinion articulation and artistic creation were largely freed from their ideological straitjacket, and the economy was being steered in a consumer-friendly direction. As a result, the populace was quite supportive of the new policy line. The threat of reemergence of new Cultural Revolutions had diminished after the ousting of the leftists from the national leadership and after the sentencing of the Gang of Four in 1980. Simultaneously, the previous three years had already demonstrated that democratization was a more challenging process than had been anticipated in 1978. The democracy movement had demonstrated that political activities of the masses could endanger social order. Besides, discussion about political reform and democracy had developed beyond what leaders had expected. In addition, reformist leaders now sought unity among their ranks to strengthen their position. It was easier to concentrate on economic development instead of political reform, on which their opinions diverged. For these reasons, the new leadership wanted to steer China towards a new period of stable development, where the need for democracy was affirmed but democratization had much less urgency than it had four years before.[16]

The leadership and the discussion

I refrain from personalizing the 1978--1981 discussion, partly because concentration on a few key figures shows disrespect for the varied discussion which had hundreds of participants and numerous arguments. Top leaders' will or power games do not provide a very fruitful approach for studying ideological and theoretical developments in all of their variance. Likewise, writers' political connections explain the course of the discussion relatively incompletely, when this discussion has hundreds of participants further developing earlier ideas or challenging rival arguments.

My decision to avoid conclusions about political history and leadership positions concerning the discussion arises partly from the objectivity problems in the

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[16]   For an insider's view of reasons making democratization a less central issue, see Chen 1995, pp. 135–140.

available information. Both in China and abroad the present history writing about the Hua Guofeng era is strongly influenced by the Chinese official and academic interpretations. As many reformist leaders and intellectuals had suffered during the Cultural Revolution, they have understandable prejudice towards the pre-1978 period and any political lines deriving from its ideals. Moreover, reformist leaders owed their positions to ousting all leftists, including Hua Guofeng. Hence, it is in their interest to publicly legitimize these acts and dismiss any evidence that could prove their decisions questionable. Considering these reasons, it is unlikely that the present Chinese scholarship treats late 1970s leftism and Hua Guofeng in fair light.

Because I use sources from the 1978–1981 period in this study, I let my primary sources tell the story, knowing that this story is incomplete and biased, not least because of the nature of the press material. Writers were simply not allowed to criticize contemporary leadership openly. Therefore, the press does not tell whether there was public discontent with Hua Guofeng before his fall.[17] Still, through the press materials it becomes apparent that, apart from the reformist platform, China had a strong leftist advocacy of democratization in 1978–1981. Apparently Hua Guofeng still held much prestige among sympathizers of democracy in 1979, although by 1981 reformists already dominated public discussion. Thus, the reformers did not hold a monopoly over the political theorizing. For example, reformists did not become the main authoritative source to quote in support for democratization at the time.

The press material I am using is useful for studying theorization and representations of contemporary persons and events. However, this material tells very little about top leaders' roles and motivations. Moreover, censorship created a manipulated image of reality, useful for research of official stances and representations of reality, but not of reality as it really was experienced by people. Censorship prevents dissemination of alternative voices wanting to reveal matters distasteful, shameful, or contradictory to the officially upheld presentation of reality. Censorship caused writers to express their relationships to the political system in ways acceptable to the system itself. It is, for example, not clear what the writers' personal preferences about leadership arrangements were. Even when articles supported some leaders' statements, emphasizing similarities between one's own and a leader's opinions may have been a technique for finding pub-

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[17]   Eye-witness reports from the Democracy Wall Movement give some evidence, though, of both Hua Guofeng's popular support and early criticism against him. Philip Short found that the Democracy Wall audience generally supported Hua (Short 1982, p. 250). Roger Garside shows that there were individual posters openly criticizing Hua Guofeng (Garside 1981, p. 211) but also ones supporting him (pp. 200–201) on the Democracy Wall. Still, he argues (on p. 178) that "At no time was Hua the object of a concerted campaign of criticism, veiled or open."

licity for one's own views; when writers openly opposed some leaders, it meant that official permission to criticize these leaders had been granted. Besides, only a fraction of writers had access to inside information about central decision making, although more had access to inner-Party communication. Therefore, many writers had to rely on the information in the press for knowledge about leadership affairs. Hence, here I only expect that through my sources there is a veil over many interesting questions of the Hua Guofeng period I do not even try to open.

Yet, in 1978–1981, national leaders significantly shaped contemporary political discussion, not least because dissension among them created conditions for varied discussion. Leaders' personal stances were voiced during the discussion, either directly by themselves or by their assistants whom they delegated to represent their ideas in public or by independent writers who cited top leaders' statements. Certain leaders even wrote articles with their own names and many others composed or gave guidelines to newspaper editorials. Leaders dealt with democratization in their speeches, some published and some only known to participants of the meetings at which the speeches were given. Even if the general public did not always know the content of these speeches, intellectuals and party theorists present for their delivery sensed official backing for some ideas and perhaps continued to develop them. Many leading establishment intellectuals and Party theorists belonged to groups forming around certain leaders, such as leading reformist, Hu Yaobang. [18] Leaders also took an active role in shaping the discussion when they sought independent intellectuals, whose arguments and facts suited their wish to challenge the standard information filtered through official bureaucratic channels. [19]

Lower-level actors like article writers sometimes engaged in the top level power struggle by publishing statements favoring some leadership figures or policies initiated by a certain leadership faction. Yet, other writers seem to have picked up any leadership citation supporting their own ideas despite its origin. Although some writers probably considered their career mobility when writing articles suited to particular leaders' tastes, most writers probably prioritized their own political stances and chose with which leaders their sympathies lay accordingly.

The press does not show any direct connection between the rise of reformists and democracy becoming a topic. [20] Although articles commonly lauded results of the Third Plenary Session of the Party Committee in December, changes in discourse did not follow the destinies of the reformist faction in any clear pattern.

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[18] For a detailed study of intellectuals in Hu Yaobang's circles, see Goldman 1994.

[19] For an example, see Gu 2000 A, p. 149.

[20] David Goodman's assertion that the discussion about democracy began in late 1978 when reformists secured their positions in a certain number of central meetings is definitely wrong. See Goodman 1987, p. 297.

Democracy became a common theme in the summer of 1978. It was a theme con-temporary to the discussion about practice as the criteria of truth and may thus be related to reformists' efforts to emphasize practice and popular opinion over ideo-logy. However, the reading of early articles makes this conclusion by no means self-evident, since many early articles dwelled in very leftist themes like contin-uous revolution and mass activism. Moreover, the theme of democratic centralism had been bubbling under the surface since the new Party constitution was passed in 1977. The Paris Commune theme and the discussion about the correct under-standing of proletarian dictatorship[21] continued from the criticism campaign against the Gang of Four, and civil rights became an issue with the new constitu-tion of 1978 passed under auspices of Hua Guofeng and Ye Jianying not belong-ing to the reformist camp. Therefore, reformists cannot get the all the credit for launching the discussion about democracy; moderate leftists were at least as active in bringing the issue to the fore.

New radicalism was injected into the discussion around November 1978, and themes of this period continued until the end of February 1979. Reformists can claim some credit for the thematic change around November 1978, when they undermined leftist grounds by recognizing the anti-Gang of Four protest move-ment of April 1976 and called for elections in work units. Yet, many themes at the time were extremely leftist: radicals wanted to do away with the state through full democratization of power structures. These tones echoed the Cultural Revolution more than the evolving reformist agenda.[22] Reformists were certainly responsible for emphasizing order and economic growth as limits for the use of democratic rights. Consequently, reformists were responsible for all the periods when discus-sion about democracy was restricted, as happened in March 1979 and in 1981.

Deng Xiaoping did not initiate the discussion. Democracy was already on Hua Guofeng's agenda in the summer of 1977 when Deng had only moderate power. Publication of Mao Zedong's speech of 1962, which finally catalyzed the discussion, points to at least approval by Hua's circles.[23] Deng Xiaoping made

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[21]   The discussion about the correct understanding of proletarian dictatorship bred even more influential and innovative discussion about democracy than the theory of democratic cen-tralism, but this discussion belongs with the theory of the class principle of democracy.

[22]   In 1978 the reformist agenda had not yet developed to the maturity and depth it would later on. Many writers still took some leftist presumptions for granted in 1978, although they identified with reformists. In periods of change, it is only natural that writers reflect both old and new in the same piece of writing. Therefore, clear demarcation between topics belonging to either leftist or even reformist agendas were artificial in 1978.

[23]   In 1978, the Chinese press certainly would not have published Mao Zedong's unauthorized speeches. Considering that Hua Guofeng was in charge of editing the fifth volume of Se-lected Works of Mao Zedong in 1977, it is unlikely that any speech by Mao would have been published without the approval of the official editing committee including Hua Guofeng. The speech was most likely even edited by that committee before publication.

several contributions to this discussion. Deng, for example, brought work unit elections to the discussion in late 1978, but also checked the discussion by defining the Four Cardinal Principles as its limits in March 1979.[24] In June 1979, Hua Guofeng's report about governmental work catalyzed the second blooming period of the discussion. And, when the discussion was finally brought to an end with the anti-bourgeois liberalization campaign in the autumn of 1981, Hua's power had already waned.

Nevertheless, indirect influence by reformists was decisive. First of all, the existence of differing leadership lines left much room for writers to maneuver in. Secondly, reformists launched the mind emancipation movement which they nevertheless could not control. When they called for permission for a hundred schools to contend and urged to take practice as the criterion of correctness, they had to leave some relevant substance for mind emancipation. The press and writers then filled this space. Thirdly, reformists were seriously interested in finding new models for development. They turned to intellectual trends and actual social variety to find new policy initiatives.[25] This possible alliance with the leadership must have encouraged intellectuals to offer and develop their own viewpoints.

It appears that democratization itself was not a strategic piece in the power struggle.[26] Instead, both moderate leftists and reformists saw democracy as necessary for reviving the Chinese Communist Party leadership after the Cultural Revolution. All leaders were for democratization at the time, although they had differing ideas about democracy. In 1978, different viewpoints were not clearly demarcated. At the time, the theory of democratic centralism was used both, and often at the same time, to support the leftist mass line tradition and reformist understanding about the importance of practical results for evaluating the success of socialism.

Contemporary intellectual discussions

The theoretical climate in China had begun to move away from the Cultural Revolutionary line already before 1978. Preceding the discussion of democracy, two important concepts paved the way for the open discussion about the political system and theory. One was the double hundred (*shuang bai*) policy, which revived the 1950s slogan of cultural and theoretical discussion, which allowed a "hundred schools" to contend in developing arts and sciences. Another was the

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24   "Uphold the Four Cardinal Principles" in Deng 1984, pp. 166–191.

25   See, e.g., Zweig 1989, 181–182; Gu 2000 A, pp. 148–150.

26   This is quite a common view, though. See, e.g., Goldman 1994, pp. 42–45.

mind emancipation (*jiefang sixiang*) policy seeking to break away from the conformity and uniformity of the latter part of the Cultural Revolution.

The discussion about democracy did not take place in isolation. The press provided space for several public discussions about political, social, cultural and economic issues. Some influential intellectual debates touched on democracy as well. The 1978 epistemological discussion about the criteria of truth gave ammunition to some writers who were writing about democracy. The new interpretation of the proper time and scope of class struggle,[27] which criticized the Cultural Revolution's extension of struggle methods to the socialist period and to new social groups, had many social and economic implications. In terms of democracy, it argued for solving non-antagonistic contradictions by democratic methods. In other words, this discussion also advocated a plurality of political and cultural ideas.

Historians debated about feudalism claiming that Cultural Revolutionary ideas about power concentration and an egalitarian economy misunderstand socialism.[28] Under historical guise, this discussion advocated decentralization, pluralization, democratization and supervision of power. The discussion about alienation[29] under socialism called for more autonomy for individuals, and some writers openly promoted democratization as the means to attain greater self-determination. Not all discussions hastened democratization, though. Voices cautious about disorder or confusion of class lines tried to inhibit the discussion about democratization throughout its course.

In 1978–1981 democracy was not discussed only in the context of the theory of democratic centralism. Another prominent theory of democracy appearing in the Chinese press was the class theory of democracy. The Chinese tend to distinguish between the nature of the state (*guoti*) and the system of government (*zhengti*). Thereby, it is not surprising that they have different theories for both aspects of democracy. The theory of democracy based on the first, *guoti*, type of category concentrates on the class nature of the state. This theory is familiar from Marxism. It asks which classes hold power in political and economic institutions and how equally power is shared among the populace. This theory of democracy is far more complex than the simple conclusion that if the proletariat (with the peasants) form the majority of the population, any rule in their interest is more democratic than rule by a minority. Yet, this simplification gives a hint of the type of questions dealt with under this theory, questions such as: Who has democratic rights under the system? When it is acceptable to use coercion? What is the proper

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27   Misra 1998, ch. 3 and 4.

28   See Sullivan 1993 introducing criticism of feudalism in the People's Republic.

29   Kelly 1987; Brugger and Kelly 1990, ch. 6.

use of democracy on the one hand, and coercion on the other? What kind of concrete relations do ownership and political power have?

The system of government (*zhengti*) refers to the institutional arrangement of the state. Institutions have relatively little to do with the class nature of the state. A republican system, constitutions, and elected legislatures can be used in bourgeois and socialist systems alike. However, the Chinese communists have not defined democracy in institutional terms. Rather they have examined democracy in institutions in terms of how they process popular ideas. Thus, the questions they ask/consider/delve into/analyze here are how popular voice enters into decision making, how it is processed and, finally, implemented. The result is the theory of democratic centralism.

Changes in the political system in 1978–1982

Along with the discussion about democratization, simultaneously concrete changes took place in the political system. The press discussion proposed some of these changes, it supported certain leadership-initiated modifications, and praised institutional arrangements already in the making. Although the 1978–1981 discussion changed the Chinese political system less than participants had intended, it can be judged as influential. Many of its points received the attention of leaders and legislators.

In a legal sense, the period of my research falls roughly between the two constitutions, one ratified in March 1978 and the other in April 1982. The former had called for institutionalization of democratic rights, including rights of mass participation; the latter wanted to regularize Chinese political life and, thus, it both discouraged political participation outside officially defined lines and strengthened regulation and the law. The 1982 constitution, for example, subjected the Communist Party to the law. Even in between, in 1980, the 1978 constitution had been amended and some mass-based political rights, such as writing wall posters and holding mass meetings, were suspended.

1978–1981 was a period of reestablishing institutions after the Cultural Revolution. The Cultural Revolution had disbanded many earlier institutions and set up its own revolutionary institutions. Even many remaining institutions, such as the National People's Congress, continued to convene regularly only after the Cultural Revolution had ended. In 1977–1978 many long dormant organizations were revived. Apart from institutions, the period of 1977–1982 saw the rehabilitation of masses of people, whose political rights had been revoked during the leftist campaigns.

The National People's Congress resumed its regular work in February 1978.[30] Now its tasks and powers veritably increased in practice. It, for example, was given the right to decide the composition of the state council, although the Party Central Committee still nominated candidates. In addition, the people's congresses were given the legal right to supervise the government at the corresponding level. Kevin O'Brien has asserted that the period between 1978 and 1981 saw the liveliest National People's Congress sessions ever before the 1990s. These sessions criticized cadre corruption and wrongdoings, they summoned ministers to answer inquiries, and they elected leaders with secret ballots permitting voting against candidates.[31] At the local level, people's congresses convened regularly, and their work became institutionalized. In order to give more power to people's congresses, their standing committees now remained active during their recess.

The new Election Law of 1979 extended direct elections up to the communal-level people's congresses. It also demanded a certain amount of competitiveness as well as secret ballots and the possibility for popular nomination of candidates. The new law was tested nationally in the 1980 communal elections.[32]

Mass organizations and professional associations resumed their activities. The official trade union, All-China Women's Federation, and the Youth League all held national meetings in September and October 1978. Eight small democratic parties resumed their consultative position after they held a joint meeting in October 1979. An important representative setting for their work, the Chinese People's Political Consultative Congress, a deliberative organ representing different social strata, had reemerged already in December 1977.

The legal system was emphasized more than it ever had been before during the history of the People's Republic. After the lawlessness of class struggle during the Cultural Revolution, the leadership began to pay attention to legislation. The first step was passing the constitution in 1978, followed by special legislation from 1979 onwards, the first seven laws including criminal law and electoral law. The people's procuratorate and judicial organs, whose activities were disrupted during the Cultural Revolution, were reestablished in 1978 and 1979, respectively. Committees for inspecting discipline at central and local levels of the Party were established in December 1978 as new organs to supervise Party members among the administrative personnel.

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[30] For comprehensive introductions to the changes in the Chinese political system see Pu 1990 for a topical and Chi et al. 1998 for a chronological presentation. In details and dates for this subchapter I follow these presentations, unless otherwise specified.

[31] O'Brien 1990, pp. 97–98.

[32] Benton and Hunter 1995, document 29; Nathan 1986, ch. 10.

The Communist Party role in Chinese politics was reevaluated from both a theoretical and a practical viewpoint. The press and some leaders[33] suggested that the Party power had overgrown, resulting in inefficiency and mistakes due to an absence of institutional checks. They wanted to make clear institutional relations between different organs and reduce overlapping tasks. The Party work should be separated from governmental work, leaving policy formulation as Party terrain, while execution and routine decision making belonged to the domain of the government. Government and enterprise decision-making powers needed clarification and separation as well. The Party thought it would become stronger if it abstained from administration and enterprise management in order to concentrate on its role of overall guidance and social negotiation.

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[33] See, e.g., Deng Xiaoping's "On the Reform of the System of Party and State Leadership," in Deng 1984, pp. 302–325.
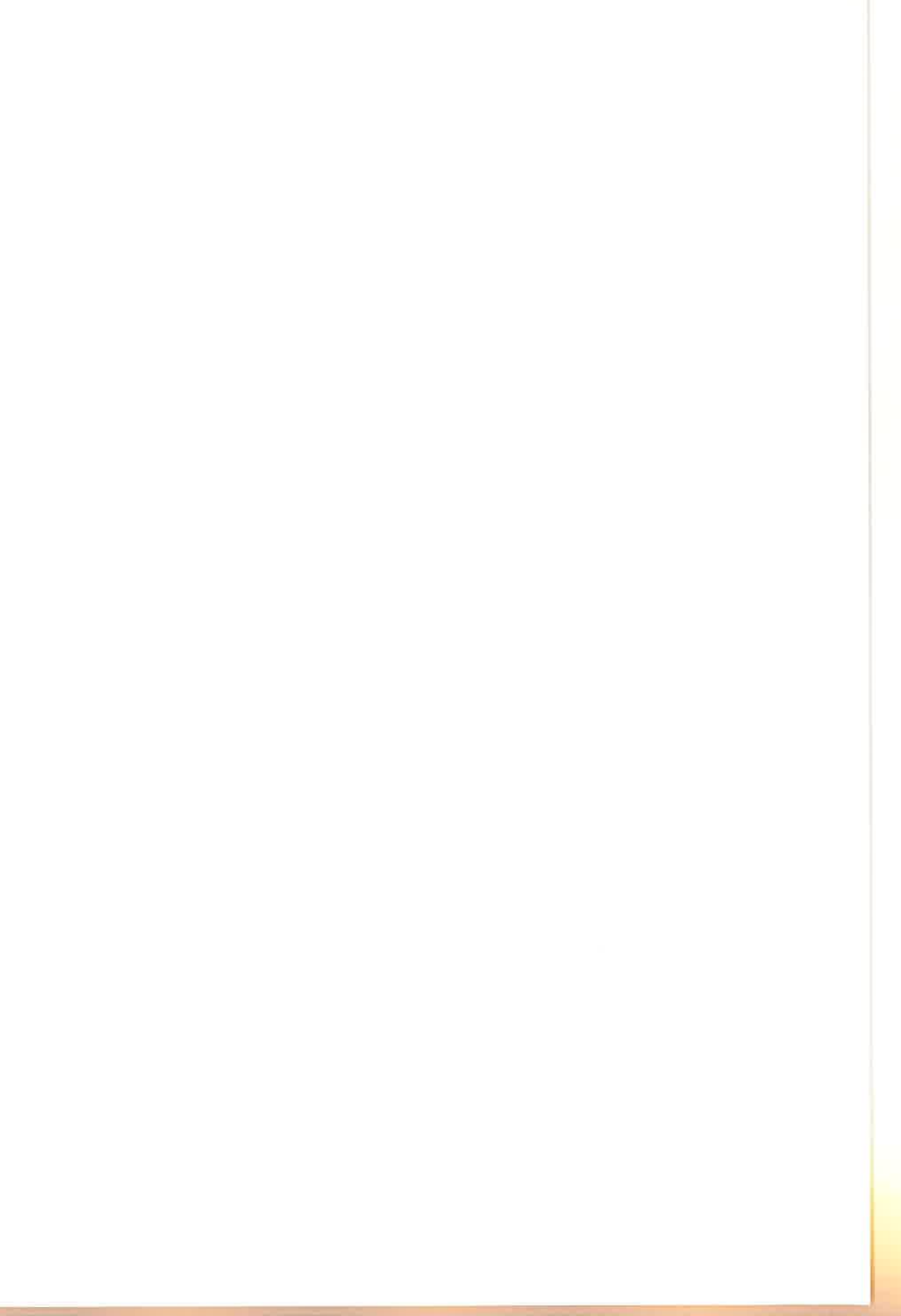
POLITICAL DISCUSSION IN 1978–1981 CHINA

Post-Cultural Revolution leadership rejected narrowly ideological and class-conscious limits on public discussion which had been in place during the Cultural Revolution. The 1978–1981 mind emancipation movement openly returned to the "letting the hundred flowers blossom, letting the hundred schools contend" policy in effect in the 1950s. Another source of inspiration derived from Chinese Communist history was the Yan'an rectification movement of 1942 which, according to the 1978–1979 interpretation, had overcome ideological differences through discussions and political education aimed at uniting and rationalizing theoretical understanding. Both of these periods had allegedly perceived ideological discussion as a medium for learning and developing ideas. They had sought to uncover social contradictions in order to solve them. But the most fundamental aim had been to create unity amongst the viewpoints and find the correct solution. Thus, differing ideas had been recognized as useful, but pluralism was only a method for other ends, not the end product itself. As Mao Zedong put it, "The only way to settle questions of an ideological nature or controversial issues among the people is by the democratic method, the method of discussion, criticism, persuasion and education, and not by the method of coercion or repression."[1] Yet, both movements had upheld an exclusively Marxist standpoint, as did the 1978–1981 discussion with the Four Cardinal Principles as its limits.

Again in 1978–1981 it was permissible to stage a theoretical debate and advocate different standpoints in the search for the best solutions. The slogan "seek truth from facts" reveals the conviction that correct policies are formulated during the discussion. At the time, the leadership itself was searching for the future course after the disillusionment of the Cultural Revolution, but it was uncertain about the contents of the new political line. The press, then, had its own important role in the contemporary mind emancipation movement. It was the arena for venturing into formerly forbidden areas (*jinqu*) and letting various constructive ideas contend. The press not only expressed support for actual changes taking place in political and social life, but also actively provided ideas for formulating the new ideological line and even tested their soundness in political debate.

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[1]   "On the Correct Handling of Contradictions among the People", Mao, Selected Works, vol. V, p. 389.

The press as democratic centralist media

To understand the role of the Chinese press in the 1978–1981 discussion, it is important to see that the press itself formed a democratic centralist information system for the Party. In other words, the press was a channel for communication both "from the masses" and "to the masses".[2] The Communists surely used the press to mobilize the people for centrally set aims and to propagate views the Party had defined as correct. In addition, the press channeled supervision of state agents and mass conditions to the Party.[3] In 1978–1981 the press also provided an arena of discussion to reach theoretical consensus over issues of political or social importance. This function meant that the press was one arena for the process of social negotiation and thus centralization. Although the limitedness of the public sphere possibly reduces or even distorts the information available to the leadership,[4] it would be a mistake to dismiss the fact that there is some relevant space in media left for influencing from below.

The press was also a democratic centralist media in the sense that it was under Party control and accepted Party guidance as to acceptable contents for publication. The media was thus a part of "centralism on the basis of democracy and democracy under the centralized guidance" (*minzhu jichu shang de jizhong, jizhong lingdao xia de minzhu*), to use a common quotation about one aspect of democratic centralism in 1978–1981. As Mao Zedong had said, the media was an arena for public contention between advanced and backward ideas among the people in order to persuade the people to adopt the most reasonable viewpoints. Still, Mao strictly excluded counterrevolutionary ideas from this discussion.[5] As a result, the press is a medium for educating the populace about communist consciousness. Furthermore, this democratic centralist model does not see the press as independent from the state and Party but rather as a channel reaching from the people to decision makers and relaying the state and Party messages to the populace. After all, Party and propaganda principles of the media are indisputable.[6]

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[2]   For mass line journalism, see Zhao 1998, pp. 24–31. About different possible relations between the Party character and the people character of the press in Chinese journalistic debates, see Gan 1994, pp. 41–43.

[3]   Of the supervisory function of the media, see Hsiao and Cheek 1995; Nathan 1986, pp. 155–157.

[4]   Tsou 1991, pp. 281–287.

[5]   "In Refutation of 'Uniformity of Public Opinion'", in Mao, Selected Works, vol. V, pp. 172–173.

[6]   Journalism studies in China emphasize that the main principles for journalistic work are the truthfulness principle (*zhenshi xing*), the guidance principle (*zhidao xing*), the mass principle (*qunzhong xing*), the struggle principle (*zhandou xing*), and the Party principle (*Dang xing*).

Chinese journalists take guidance of public opinion as their task, and even use such expressions as "struggle against guidance by incorrect public opinion."[7]

In practice, as Yuezhi Zhao notes, the Chinese press tends to side heavily with top-down communication at the cost of bottom-up communication.[8] Yet, there have been times when the press could publicize a relatively large variety of contemporary theoretical and practical discussions. In 1978–1981 one reason for openness was that the leadership had recognized the need for redefining theoretical understanding of Marxism and re-steering the course of socialist development. If the leadership itself was convinced of the need for change, it was uncertain of the road to take and proceeded to "cross the river by feeling the stones."

Vertical and horizontal dimensions of the discussion

The press discussion of 1978–1981 involved both vertical and horizontal functions. Vertical functions refer to dialogue between the leadership and society. The vertical dimension consists of two-way communication in the democratic centralist manner. The People's Daily editorials, for example, served as a form of top-down communication in a very authoritative sense. Reportage or letters-to-the-editor revealing individualized problems had both vertical and horizontal functions. They informed the leadership about local situations, but simultaneously educated society about good and bad performances measured according to official aims. Evidently, the vertical function was not unidirectional and the initiative could come from the leaders and masses alike.

Horizontal functions refer to the media role in promoting discussion inside society. The horizontal dimension of political discussion refers to attempts to convince society with arguments that did not originate from the political leadership. In theoretical debate, writers simultaneously discussed issues among themselves and with their readers. Often the part of society directly targeted was quite limited, consisting mostly of political theorists, academic circles and Party cadres. The highly theoretical discussion in academic or Party publications probably meant that both readers and writers were intellectuals or Party members. Yet, a part of

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The guidance principle refers to the media's role as propagator of Party lines, and the struggle principle includes both the media's role in opposing class enemies and its supervisory role in reporting about occasions of malfeasance within the socialist state system. (Li 2001, chap. 12.)

[7]　Gan 1994, p. 45. According to Gan Xifeng, experienced journalists are even skilled in unifying opinion guidance and objective reporting in one piece. (p. 46.) While Westerners often tend to distinguish between objective facts and the ideological message, this Chinese interpretation sees that objective facts need not be compromised when using them for educative purposes.

[8]　Zhao 1998, p. 30.

the 1978–1981 discussion served larger audiences. This part of the discussion appeared in newspapers. Larger audiences took part in the discussion as well, as occasional writings by worker activists and soldiers demonstrate.

The horizontal dimension usually tried to build support for certain ideas or stimulate discussion within society. In 1978–1981, theory building was a typical field having both vertical and horizontal dimensions. The vertical dimension was evoked from above and below alike. National and local leaders communicated their understanding of correct theory and permitted or prohibited topics, while many writers engaged in theory building because they assumed that the leadership should base decision making on correct theory. The horizontal dimension of the discussion was manifested as intellectual inquiry appealing to society for further discussion and even seeking support for ideas one either introduces or backs.

The press even allocated some space for ordinary people to participate in the discussion. For example, the People's Daily also provided a space for ordinary readers to write for commentary columns.[9] Likewise, the press published more letters from readers, now addressing concrete complaints, than it did before.[10] Some horizontal discussion took place through the letters-to-the-editors columns. The press received piles of letters concerning cases of cadre corruption or the persecution of devoted Party member Zhang Zhixin[11] during the Cultural Revolution, for example, some of which were published. Evidently, the public not only actively followed political discussion in the press but also reacted to it. This is only natural, since one part of the mass principle of Chinese journalism is to let the masses participate in newspaper work (*qunzhong ban bao*).[12] Interestingly, the official press also introduced ideas originating in unofficial publications run by the democracy movement.[13]

Public horizontal discussion did not seek to arouse an independent opinion to pressure the leadership. Rather, it primarily served or complemented vertical functions of the discussion. Some functions are difficult to classify as either horizontal or vertical, since a part of the discussion explained the official line to the wider public, but not necessarily exactly in a vertical manner. When writers engaged in finding theoretical arguments to support a certain policy or official statement and convince society of the rationality and importance of this policy or initiative, their motivation, I believe, sometimes was not to serve as a mouthpiece for the leadership but to cause political change.

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[9]   Wu 1994, p. 204.

[10] Chu 1994, p. 7.

[11] For the story of Zhang Zhixing and its publicity, see Garside 1982, pp. 278–284; Nathan 1986, pp. 20, 25–26.

[12] For this principle, see Li 2001, pp. 236–238.

[13] Goldman 1994, p. 46; Widor 1984, p. 67.

The press must have contributed to non-official discussions as well. It introduced and connected thoughts and topics for private and social discussions. Indeed, the Chinese media is the major stock of social knowledge, allowing the general public to make sense of the changing environment both within and without the Chinese polity.[14] In 1978–1981 media outlets were still few and politically orientated, which directed people's interests as well. Tao Sun, Tsan-Kuo Chang and Guoming Yu show that when readers mostly depended on Party organs for their political information and cognitive orientation to social reality, readers also prioritized and were interested in information about politics and the Party leaders' activities.[15] Therefore, press discussions most likely spilled over to private conversations, political study sessions, and professional meetings. I have found on other occasions that even private political discussions in China often repeat the official vertical communication,[16] as is natural, when the official communication is the main source of information about major political and social events. Hence, non-vertical communication in China fits well with Elemér Hankiss' concept of the second public, referring to culture not fitting with the norms of the official first society, but not forming a truly independent and alternative social sphere.[17] However, even if most of the non-official discussion was not directly oppositional, individual dissident voices existed as well.

Levels of discussion: the leadership, society, and the press

At least three levels of communication had their impact on the press discussion: the discussion inside and around the top leadership, the discussion in the press, and the discussion in society at large. These levels of discussion sometimes shared the same participants: a theorist perhaps wrote articles, but also gave lectures, discussed democratization privately, participated in theoretical meetings organized by the leadership, and sometimes even participated in the democracy movement.[18] I do not study statements of the leadership in this work, nor do I study unofficial discussion or the democratic movement as the most visible part of unofficial discussion. They are introduced and analyzed in many other studies by various

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[14]   Chang et al. 1994, p. 52.

[15]   Sun et al. 2001, see especially pp. 205, 213.

[16]   Salmenkari 2005, pp. 202–203.

[17]   Hankiss 1988.

[18]   An example of an intellectual active in all these fields is Yan Jiaqi. He had a part in the unofficial publication *Beijing Spring*, wrote articles for the official press and participated in conferences for theoretical work to which he was invited by the top leadership. See Yan 1992, pp. 43–49.

writers.[19] Yet, the press did not discuss democracy in a vacuum, but commented on and developed views of leadership and views of society at large.

In the 1978–1981 discussion, the leadership defined the orthodoxy, aims of democratization, and limits for the views that could be publicly expressed. Apart from establishing correct interpretations to limit the discussion, the leadership initiated many topics for the discussion. Leaders sometimes actively took part in the press discussion. Editorials and commentaries in the official press were often provided or revised by political leaders.[20] Leaders sometimes wrote articles themselves and sometimes instructed editors or their subordinates to write one.[21] Naturally, instructions for editors about what could or could not be published originated in the political leadership. However, leaders also guided press discussions passively, since writers, perhaps to reduce risk, to make their views sound authoritative or to anticipate the political climate, often appealed to leaders. The speeches of Hua Guofeng, Ye Jianying and Deng Xiaoping were closely followed and their tones were repeated by the press, although the need to quote authoritative sources diminished in the course of discussion. Articles picked up for discussion many questions from the speeches of the top leaders, including themes like democratization itself, elections, and the institutionalization of democracy.

In the period of 1978–1981, a heated discussion took place in society about the lines Chinese development should follow. The democracy movement discussed democratization on wall posters and in unofficial journals. Party theorists and academic circles developed democratic theory in meetings and conferences as well as in private discussions. Workers and peasants dealt with the current political discussion in the press within their regular political study sessions. Judging from the press sources, some of them adopted the democratization theme and acted upon the ideals of the Cultural Revolution emphasizing mass movements and wall posters as methods of channeling mass initiative and supervising leaders. Many also embraced new democratic methods acclaimed by the current leadership and voted in workplace or communal elections. University campuses were centers of both wall poster movements and electoral campaigning. Some grassroots-level cadres warned against the new upsurge of popular participation because they worried about losing their personal authority in the course of democratization, but

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[19] Documents of the Democracy Wall movement are published in Widor 1981 and 1984, Seymour 1980, Lin 1980, Chen 1984, Goodman 1981.

[20] Guoguang Wu provides an insider view of practices of editorial and commentary writing in the People's Daily, a mouthpiece of the national leadership. Wu 1994, pp. 196–199, 201. At lower level newspapers, the practice has probably been more or less the same, but under the control of city or provincial authorities.

[21] For leaders' role, see Chu 1994, pp. 8–9. For leaders' ghost writers, see Schoenhals 1992, chap. 3.

others saw the benefits of new popularly based authority for their personal prestige and for advancing local interests.

The unofficial or unpublished discussions provided space for a greater variety of opinions than official and published discussions did. This unofficial discussion was not necessarily more positive towards democracy than the official one, although generally speaking one must express more standard views in public. In unofficial discussion, more cautious, even antidemocratic, views can be articulated as well, while cautious published voices could only formulate their opposition in the "yes, but" form. Besides, official discussion was usually more theoretically sound than the unofficial one, Democracy Wall Movement publications included. Thus, the press was able to theorize about democracy and not just vaguely sympathize with it. Nevertheless, the unofficial sphere provided a space for some of the most radical opinions, such as calls for multi-party democracy[22]. Real opposition to or disillusionment with the communist government record could be expressed only in the unofficial sphere.

The press between the leadership and society

The press was an intermediary between the Party and society. On the one hand, the press was one of the most important arenas where the leadership introduced its stances and policy lines. On the other hand, the press was the information channel for the leadership. This was true both in a practical and a theoretical sense. Alternative views were theorized in the press before some of them came to be included in orthodox standpoints. After the formulation of new orthodoxy, the press clarified the contents and the meaning of the accepted theories and terminology for lower-level organs and society. In addition, the press was an arena for the public part of the discussion in society. Cadres, political theorists, historians, and political activists introduced their views in the press articles. Simultaneously, the press was not passive towards opinions the leaders did not support. Unwanted trends in society received negative publicity: they were criticized or the press tried to convert their sympathizers by arguing against their viewpoints.

Generally speaking, the center led the discussion in the press. Partly this happened through guidelines for publishable contents for editors. Writers, for their part, obviously followed speeches and statements by the leadership and the publications of the central leadership, *Renmin ribao* and *Hongqi*. Official statements and central publications gave writers and editors a sense of what the political line was and what was allowed for publication. These two channels sometimes led to different directions. When the press was sometimes more liberal than the leader-

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[22] Nathan 1986, pp. 90–92, 208, 219. For one original suggestion, see Chen 1984, p. 223.

ship, it created in society a false sense of confidence to touch certain contentious topics.

As can be expected, local newspapers and journals often carried on discussions initiated in the central publications. Yet, local publications did not always wait for cues from the center. Generally speaking, already in the early period of the discussion, local newspapers published more theorization about democracy than the central publications, often after a relatively small hint from the central publications or official speeches. Sometimes local newspapers also continued the discussion and openness longer than the center. Obviously, distance from the center provided more space for editors, if they wanted to occupy it. Andrew Nathan asserts that localities provided more space for developing ideas because middle and lower-level cadres themselves often were unsure about the central policy in a rapidly changing and factionally unpredictable political climate.[23] Discussion about democracy was not the only field where provinces allowed more space for public discussions than the center did. According to David Zweig, local papers published information about local agricultural experimentation before central papers did and the People's Daily could publish it in reports from localities before mentioning these examples in editorials.[24] Still, I did not find factional lines to be an explanation for whether or not daring articles were published in provincial papers. Such centers of economic reform experiments as Anhui and Sichuan were not exceptionally open to democratization discourse: Anhui Daily being fairly active and Sichuan Daily even being relatively restrained in theorization about democracy.

Academic publications and political theory journals had a special place in the discussion due to their limited but theoretically orientated readership. In times of theoretical fermentation, they actively participated in formulating and introducing new theoretical interpretations. Academic and Party publications printed much theorization about political theory and system, but mainly in theoretical language and about questions of theoretical interest. Although they carried some openly normative articles and many articles referring to the general discussion, their main approach was theoretical or historical.

Argumentation in the discussion

In the 1978–1981 discussion in China, as in any political discussion, participants tried to convince others of the correctness of their own views and on the importance of certain ways to frame, prioritize, and solve common problems. In any

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[23]   Nathan 1986, p. 41.

[24]   Zweig 1997, pp. 62–64.

political discussion participants must find language that conveys their message and is acceptable to publishers and readers alike. Influencing in politics entails finding a persuasive argument. This usually requires adopting widely shared and accepted terminology and discourse that are comprehensible and able to attract wider audiences. To be effective, arguments must be understandable and acceptable to the public.

When it comes to channels, terminology, and methods of persuasion in political discussion, each country has its own peculiarities. Any political system allows some freedom for presenting one's ideas, while in any system this freedom is not total. To attain publicity, a promoter of a political program must convey his message through accepted channels. Most members in each political system learn to use available channels and formulate their argumentation in a form acceptable to publishers and to the public. I see no difference between China and the West in the need to offer one's message in an understandable, interesting, and persuasive form, although particular criteria of what is persuasive and publishable, naturally, differ as they differ between publications within one system as well.

The Chinese press offered an arena for political argumentation and influencing, at least in such a relatively open period as 1978–1981. Using this public arena required following certain rules of argumentation and formulation and the sensitivity to changing political atmosphere. Yet, at least for an amateur writer formulating oneself in the way that meets publishing criteria often requires conscious effort to adopt the style of the publication in question, both in China and in the West. Even if the styles of political discussion in socialist China differed from the styles in Western countries, they were not necessarily less transparent to an educated Chinese reader than the Western forms are to Westerners (I assume here, that neither are totally transparent). Quite likely, a Chinese writer was as attentive to required style as a Western writer is when selecting different styles for an academic journal and a newspaper article. Like the Western writer in this example, a Chinese writer does not necessarily need to restrict his message although he selects the required style of writing. Suzanne Ogden contends, "In general, China's intellectuals believe it is not *what* they say but *how* they say it (and where they publish it) that can protect them from censorship."[25] Even when a writer could express his ideas only partially, he could still engage in purposeful political influencing.

A minimal space for influencing would allow the strengthening of the supported political messages through repetition and explanation. In 1978–1981 China, the space for purposeful political influencing in the press was far larger than that, though. There were open spaces to find and explore. The press discussion engaged

[25]   Ogden 2002, p. 351.

in "creative renegotiation and expansion of new policy openings initiated by the state."[26] When writers were forced to direct discussion of their various political programs to permitted areas, they engaged in enlarging the boundaries of the permissible. Zhongdang Pan introduces how journalists, working in an institutional locale that features rigidity, forbidden zones, and uncertainty, use microsituational and opportunistic strategies to expand permissible areas of expression.[27] Some writers consciously strove to expand limits, others simply treated topics in novel ways which resulted in the expansion of the limits of public expression. When many different voices use the same opening, this opening itself is likely to expand.

Publication criteria

Although both writers and scholars can anticipate general lines for what cannot be published in China, it was seldom certain what meets publishing criteria. Apart from the changing standards of censorship during such a politically lively period as 1978–1981, editors had their own line, which may have been more daring, ready to touch the limits, or more cautious, attempting to avoid any mistake and predict leaders' moves. Therefore, publication criteria differed temporally, locally, between different types of publications, and between publications. However, as Guoguang Wu points out, because there is an inherent conflict between political control and the professional criteria of good journalism, journalists are often inclined to circumvent and resist control.[28] Likewise, belief in the journalist's responsibility towards the people and supportive letters from the readers can support journalists' willingness to challenge limits.[29]

Writers probably faced the dilemma between using publishable form and language and including their own arguments for social change. To guarantee publication, many writers evidently sought to follow certain rules for writing: they quoted Marxist classics to support their arguments; they followed the lines, topics and vocabulary put forward by the leadership; they set their discussion in the context of earlier discussion; they hid their message under theoretical guise or allusion. Yet, even following the earlier discourse did not help, if the political line or the editor changed. There were examples of topics which abruptly ceased to be discussed, presumably because of censorship or authoritative criticism of a certain

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[26] Akhavan-Majid 2004. Although Roya Akhavan-Majid examines non-state actors, lower level state actors participated in this same renegotiation. In fact, sometimes even top leaders had to use strategies to have their unorthodox views published. See, e.g., Misra 1998, p. 22–23; Zweig 1997, p. 62.

[27] Pan 2000, p. 194.

[28] Wu 1994, pp. 210–211.

[29] Liu Binyan in Mok 1998, pp. 129–131.

viewpoint.[30] However, a daring editor may have published an article breaking through earlier boundaries and bringing the whole discussion with it.

Apart from writers, editors had an important role in shaping the discussion. They selected the material for printing. In addition, editors may have helped writers by editing articles to meet the official standards or by publishing an article with a cautious remark that the article "despite its mistakes" was published for further discussion. Naturally, editing may have watered down the writer's original intentions as well. In selecting and editing, editors served the state by repeating official statements and filtering messages they published according to official criteria. Still, editors have their own sympathies and understanding of good journalism, which they consciously let influence their selection of materials. Guoguang Wu shows how journalists circumvent, resist and defy control. They make choices within the limits of political restrictions. They, for instance, keep silent on topics they don't like or allocate more space for less censored genres.[31]

I assume that in 1978–1981 article selection for publication was always somehow unpredictable to writers, although they generally managed to cope with the standards. In order to gain publicity, writers probably used conscious effort and calculated strategies. Although authorities gave unambiguous guidance about certain topics, names, or concepts, the press allowed writers to develop other themes. New standards emerged when the press discussion overstepped the limits of appropriateness as understood by the leaders who then reacted. As Andrew Nathan puts it, "In a culturally managed society, it is hard to give clear definition to official standards of acceptability. When the line changes, the boundaries blur, to become clear again as the authorities praise or ban specific works."[32] Still, after the Cultural Revolution leaders were not willing to stage purges and targeted criticism of works, not persons.[33] Interestingly, it seems that after 1978 even writers punished for their outspokenness could participate in the discussion, often under a pseudonym.[34]

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[30]   However, editors did not always heed orders. Michael Schoenhals tells how the Central Propaganda Department rejected the formulation "opposing 'will of authorities'" already in June of 1979, but it was still in use in the Central Party School and the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences until 1981, when the Central Propaganda Department gained the backing of the PLA General Political Department. (Schoenhals 1992, pp. 51–52.) Schoenhals credits this disobedience to the power struggle among the national leadership, but perhaps discussants refused to comply because the official policy "seek truth from facts" provided them with legitimization to continue to develop the issue.

[31]   Wu 1994, pp. 208–209.

[32]   Nathan 1986, p. 21.

[33]   A famous example of this trend was the case of a play written by Bai Hua, see Gray 1990, p. 394.

[34]   Goldman 1994, pp. 19, 57.

Adaptation of the message

Chinese society occupies space available in a political system that practices strong central control, which is not as intrusive as totalitarian theory assumes but which had practically no legal or institutional checks for Party or state interference still in 1978–1981. Society has to take in to account the possibility of state or Party interference in its operations. Users of the official press channels needed to formulate their message in order to have it published. Coping with possible state interference required conscious strategies, which probably had not become automatic habits to follow. In his interviews with important establishment intellectuals Ka-ho Mok found that all of them stressed that they had to formulate their message to meet the official requirements and calculate moments for publishing.[35] According to his study, political atmosphere, patronage and social position all influenced what an intellectual could publicly express.[36]

The official press operated under state control and the writers knew that all too well. Not only did they try to gain publicity in official channels, but they were integrated into the state in various other ways as well. In 1978–1981 most people in China, including university personnel and journalists, depended on the state for their employment and career. This situation not only meant that they needed to keep a low profile when state politics so demanded, but some were obliged to produce articles pleasing to the state.[37] Those who were Party members were subjected to Party education and disciplinary methods if they overstepped acceptable limits. Although they no longer faced the danger of persecution, some participants were demoted or transferred to work outside of national centers or lost their Party memberships.[38] Establishment intellectuals tried to remain within the officially permissible area, although using and bending it to their objectives. Their position differed from those who published unofficial journals outside of direct state control. Using unofficial channels allowed more freedom of expression but also subjected participants to harsher methods of state control, such as possible imprisonment, whenever authorities chose to intervene.[39]

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[35]   Mok 1998, pp. 52–53, 57, 61, 64, 71, 92, 119, 121, 129.

[36]   E.g. Mok 1998, pp. 61–63, 97–99, 121–126. In fact, Mok seems to expect more patronage than the intellectuals themselves admit to having. Quite likely, patronage was not a primary concern for intellectuals when publishing their views, although it may have actually opened channels for publicity in practice.

[37]   See, e.g., Liu Binyan's experiences in Mok 1998, pp. 121–122.

[38]   See, e.g., Goldman 1984, p. 57.

[39]   See Salmenkari 2004, pp. 236–237, 242–243, for the difference between state control through continuous regulation among establishment intellectuals and harsher methods of particularistic state intrusion to control unofficial intellectual circles.

Insight into a writer's role

In order to confirm some of my assumptions about writing for the Chinese press in 1978–1981 based on textual analysis, I interviewed one writer who participated in the 1978–1981 discussion.[40] His name is Jiang Yihua and he works at the history department of Fudan University in Shanghai. As a historian he used historical research as the form of argumentation. The academic nature of historical research may have facilitated him to publish his views. I interviewed him on May 26th, 1999.

Before he was submitted to criticism for his outspokenness in 1962, Jiang Yihua had been able to publicly discuss such problems as bourgeois labels for intellectuals and posit that the main problem in China was the peasant problem when the Party emphasized class struggle. After that he could not express himself publicly before 1979. He could publish his writings with his own name only in 1979 after he had been rehabilitated, although even then his name first appeared among other writers. He had used a pseudonym until 1978 and continued to use one on some occasions even afterwards.

In 1978 the ideological climate changed, but everyone still had their doubts because earlier campaigns had brought problems for almost all intellectuals. Yet, Jiang Yihua recalled that he had rejected considerations of his personal safety because he felt he had a responsibility to do his part in preventing the Cultural Revolution from reemerging. Past political problems brought courage too, because he already knew the difficulties he could face. Yet, writers considered their own safety, for example, by veiling their criticism of Mao Zedong or Marxism-Leninism in criticism of Lin Biao and the Gang of Four.

In 1979–1981 Jiang Yihua published research about such topics as the still unfulfilled quest for democracy and science in the May 4th Movement (1919), roots of agrarian socialism in the Chinese Communist Party program during the pre-revolution period, the extremely egalitarian ideal of the Taiping state, and Lenin's own evaluations that the Soviet Union had adopted too much from Russia's feudal tradition and too little from the advanced Western countries. In all of these articles he actually discussed contemporary problems of Chinese socialism. He said, though, that the current interest was not the only reason for selecting topics, but he also selected topics with source materials familiar to him.

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[40]   Writers' role in the discussion and methods used to gain publicity in China would deserve a study of their own. However, this is not attempting to be such a study. Using interviews is itself not central in this research, but the interviews give the reader some insight into personal roles and strengthen the argument based on textual analysis familiar to all historians.

To my question regarding whether he could discuss every fundamental problem he wanted to in his articles, Jiang Yihua replied that he could discuss them all, but he had to consider how to give them an acceptable form. For discussing problems, one method he used was studying original ideas and circumstances. Instead of accepting the conventional Chinese interpretation, he directly studied Marx and Lenin as well as unedited versions of Mao Zedong's works. He wanted to know the real situation in socialist thought and not, as had been the habit, use only such parts that pragmatically happen to fit one's own agenda. Jiang Yihua also researched real historical development to study how some phenomena, such as overemphasis of class struggle, emerged and to find the sources of ideas adopted to Chinese socialism. The third method of argumentation Jiang Yihua mentioned was using byways in criticism, for example by criticizing the Gang of Four, Kang Sheng, or Wang Ming instead of Mao Zedong for mistakes. Generally, Jiang Yihua said, the 1978–1981 discussion still shared the traditional view that socialism was the most advanced political system and attempted to improve socialism. Yet, as he already wrote in 1981, leaders cannot decide how Marxism evolves, but true understanding of Marxism arises from research of the actual development.

Insight into an editor's role

In any system, an editor has an important role in deciding what to publish. In China, the editor shouldered not only the responsibility for the reliability and quality, but also for the political correctness, of the published content. Therefore, there is no doubt that editing shaped the political discussion in the press.

To get some insight into the editing processes I interviewed a former Party Committee propaganda head of one university in Shanghai in May 2000. He had held this post from 1978 to 1982, and during this period he was in charge of all academic publications, inner-university publications and broadcasts, and student associations in his university. His university Party Committee was directly subordinate to the Shanghai City Party Committee.

He said he had received clear instructions about unpublishable topics from the central government and the Shanghai Party Committee. If these guiding principles (*fangzhen*) were unclear, he was supposed to ask the Shanghai Party Committee to ratify whether the article could be published or not. Generally, though, he himself or the university Party Committee head could resolve the cases.

Generally, he said, there were four kinds of situations when he needed to consider articles' suitability for publication. Firstly, there were cases where he had received clear instructions not to publish such materials. For example, he offered a clear no, when his university's journalism department students had drafted a proposal for a media law, which would have abolished the Party control over the

media. Neither did he agree to publish the results of the opinion poll conducted by the students revealing that around 80 percent of the interviewed students doubted the future of the Communist Party and Marxism.

Secondly, there were times when he had not received instructions on how to handle (*chuli*) the topics covered in certain articles. For example, when he received an article discussing the influence of Stalin's Soviet Union in Eastern European countries, he felt that it is not only an academic but also a political question. At the time, the central government publications had not published any articles on a similar topic, which would have been a sign that the topic could be discussed. Therefore, he took the article to some professors specializing in the area. After their approval, he agreed to publish the article.

Thirdly, some articles could be published after deleting unacceptable parts. For example, when criticizing Whateverism some students openly directed this criticism against Hua Guofeng as well, which was not permitted at the time. He published such articles but deleted references to Hua Guofeng in them. Fourthly, all nonpolitical and purely academic questions could be discussed. For example, he allowed sympathetic evaluation of rightist figures of the May Fourth Movement (1919), namely Hu Shi and Lin Yutang, although the former Communist interpretation have seen these critics of early Chinese communism in quite a dark light. For him, this appeared to be only a new interpretation of history.

He saw he had a responsibility towards the writers as well. He always explained to the writers why their writings could not be openly published, and often urged them to use inside (*neibu*) channels to make their ideas known to the municipal and central governmental authorities. Since most of the writers who overstepped the limits were still students, he saw their transgressions as a sign of immaturity and as still remaining within the limits of the mind emancipation movement. Therefore, he wanted to guide (*yindao*) them rather than to punish them. He himself tried to avoid situations where former mistakes could damage students' future careers, although he knows that such instances happened at his university as well.

He said that the Party Committee propaganda head could use his own discretion over how wide a discussion he decided to allow. Some universities had much stricter standards than his own, because their propaganda heads were concerned about their own job security. He himself believed in the mind emancipation policy and, therefore wanted to allow space for publishing different ideas, although he simultaneously recognized the need for political stability. The most difficult task for him was to combine mind emancipation with the Four Cardinal Principles, which had been issued by Deng Xiaoping to keep the discussion within Marxist limits. Although Deng did not see any contradiction between the two, actually the two policies were leading in different directions.

He said that the Shanghai dailies *Wenhuibao* and *Jiefang ribao* had similar kinds of approaches to mind emancipation to his own, but since they had wider circulation they had to be more discrete in their publishing policies.

Building an argument

Chinese writers used numerous styles of argumentation. Some applied universal styles of rational argumentation, including supporting one's argument with logical or practical evidence or questioning other participants' views on the grounds of logical or feasibility problems. Writers demonstrated the plausibility of their argument or benefits of the action they advocated; they tried to prove that their program could solve certain problems; they pointed out logical and methodological problems or unwanted consequences of their opponents' arguments; they appealed to readers' emotions to discredit their opponent's argument; they listed possible counterarguments for their democratization plans and then disproved them one by one.

In addition to these universal techniques, the Chinese had more peculiarly Chinese styles of political argumentation. One was authorization of one's arguments by referring to Marxist classics or Chinese leaders' statements. Explaining Lenin, Mao Zedong or Hua Guofeng one could either affirm official values or direct discussion to new areas by explaining authoritative text anew. Guoguang Wu calls this kind of articulation the "birdcage" method. In it commentators pick up a leader's general idea and develop an article around the idea, sometimes includeing their own interpretations and omissions.[41] Sometimes writers gathered proposals that individually belonged to the Party reformists' program, but together implicated more systemic problems.[42] Often, reference to leaders' statements was only strategic. Many writers included officially sanctioned statements only in the first and last paragraphs, developing their own ideas quite freely in the middle. For example, a typical article mentioned in the first paragraph that a specific leader had referred to this problem on such-and-such occasion and called for the solving of the problem in order to facilitate modernization at the end. In this way they linked their own message to the official state objectives and possibly coped with censorship.[43]

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[41]   Wu 1994, pp. 201–203, 209.

[42]   Nathan 1986, p. 99.

[43]   Writers may have expected that busy censors or editors (like many other busy readers wanting to get a quick impression of an article) started by checking the first and last paragraph to evaluate whether the article required further reading. Although an article about democratization most likely was then read through, these two paragraphs had already given the censor an impression about how to interpret the text. Another possibility is that editors some-

Explanation was one form of argumentation. It relied on previous authorization either by contemporary leadership or communist classics. Explanation could draw attention to democracy by explaining related terminology or parts of Marxist doctrine. The stronger form of explanation involved interpretation of terms or theoretical principles. Even a small quotation or a single concept in official terminology could offer grounds for scholastic inquiry into the meaning in original texts through linguistic or contextual analysis. Interpretation was often sincere, but sometimes also strategic and so controversial that several debates revolved around the interpretations.

Often the Chinese both stated problems and suggested solutions openly with no special theoretical backing or rhetorical subtleties. However, many articles used subtler methods of criticism and argumentation. It was quite typical to develop an argument simultaneously on two levels. On the surface this kind of argumentation developed Marxist theory or researched historical phenomena. On a deeper level all this argumentation fit all too well with the contemporary social and political problems. Sometimes articles openly mentioned that many of these historical problems still continue or pointed out that China has not done well in practicing these aspects of Marxism. Sometimes they left this conclusion for the reader to make. Leonard Chu calls this kind of argumentation "esoteric expression."[44] Sometimes writers protected themselves by expressing their ideas with obscure brevity or with disclaimers and "yes-but" statements or slipping in a careless phrase.[45] Yet, my experience is that most veiled arguments dwelt long in details until analogy itself became clear or the reader was prepared to anticipate conclusions to come. According to Michael Schoenhals, the problem of veiled criticism is that the writer has no way to ascertain that his text is read as he meant it.[46] Still, this was only one type of argumentation, since there was space for more direct forms of argumentation as well.

Correcting mistaken views was a common form of argumentation. This kind of argumentation criticized a view it disagreed with, often a view that had not appeared in the press in its affirmative form. This kind of argumentation of views that "some comrades think ..." provides insight into issues debated in society but outside the press. Often arguments under attack were distorted or extracted out of context or translated into the official Marxist language. Nevertheless, with careful reading this kind of argumentation provides insight into discussions outside of the

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times added such paragraphs to make the article publishable. After all, editors used many methods to publish daring materials, like adding the editor's careful remark that this article is published for discussion despite its mistakes.

[44] Chu 1994, p. 11.

[45] Nathan 1986, pp. 95, 97.

[46] Schoenhals 1992, p. 124.

press and even more into the official reactions to unofficial discussion. This kind of criticism was targeted not only against the Gang of Four and the Democracy Wall Movement, but also against local-level cadres' arguments revealing their unwillingness to democratize their work styles.

One form of argumentation was questions and answers. Sometimes the question appeared in a letter-to-the-editor asking about a problem of ideological understanding, which the newspaper answered. Some articles set their message inside a fictional discussion, often between an experienced cadre and a youth asking for ideological advice. Writers used their imagination also by writing literary novellas staging possible alternatives for future development in China. *Tragedy in the year 2000* was the most famous story envisioning a new dictator in China if the structural problems of the Chinese political system remain uncorrected.

Historical analogy is an old Chinese method of argumentation inherited from Confucianism. Through the criticizing of past phenomena articles called attention to contemporary problems. Apart from providing a guise for discussing contemporary problems, this form of discussion arises from the Confucian belief that history can reveal certain universal principles. Hence, present day phenomena can be explained by analyzing their historical predecessors. In the 1978–1981 discussion, articles adopted this method especially for criticizing feudalism or anarchism. Of these, feudalism provided safe grounds for exposing over-centralization of power and favoritism during the Cultural Revolution, while articles turned to early 20th century anarchism to find theoretical arguments against contemporary social unrest. Reminding readers that the Guomindang had evidently failed because the masses did not support its rule was perhaps the strongest kind of warning for the Communists. Thus, articles adopted historical analogy to criticize both Communist leaders and unwanted social phenomena.

Uses of theory

Following Marxist discourse was one element of persuasiveness in the 1978–1981 discussion. Marxist discourse was needed to bypass censorship,[47] for sure, but also to persuade readers socialized in Marxist ideals and vocabulary. Therefore, even leadership sought properly Maoist citations to support their stance.[48] For ensuring democratization, articles attempted to change the action and the thinking of Communist Party cadres and the Party leadership. Marxist argumentation resembling official Party information was more likely to convince them. A Marxist approach helped build coalitions and alliances around certain views. Even among

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[47]   Schoenhals 1992, p. 21.
[48]   Schoenhals 1992, pp. 61–62.

the leadership, as Kalpana Misra observes, radical reformists needed the backing of more ideologically oriented reform-minded politicians.[49]

Sonia Ryang shows in practice how the use of ideological language does not need to emerge from ideological conviction, but can indicate conventional, socially approved ways to speak even about everyday issues in a politicized environment.[50] Andrew Nathan observes that in the 1980s people in China tended to analyze politics using official jargon and accepted many official values, although the media audience understood and accepted that reported facts have an official meaning and some even viewed their political system with skepticism.[51] Michael Schoenhals is thus correct to stress that repetition of ideological language promotes acceptance of its values.[52] Moreover, most ordinary and academic readers had grown accustomed to Marxist reasoning and terminology. Therefore, even a participant skeptical of Marxism used either neutral or Marxist terminology in order to guarantee receptivity for his ideas. After receiving a mostly or solely Marxist education with very few possibilities to familiarize themselves with other forms of thought, most participants in the 1978–1981 discussion had no access to equally compelling political theories. In the discussion of 1978–1981 Marxism provided a shared theoretical framework and phraseology. It also provided standards for inquiry in political science.

The use of Marxist rhetoric was also a means of avoiding the political stigma of being anti-socialist, which after decades of political campaigns was a wise precaution. Indeed, to avoid hazards people argue their own position in the language not appearing to deviate from orthodoxy.[53]

The special usefulness of Marxist argumentation in socialist China arises from the orthodox position of Marxism as the state ideology.[54] As such Marxism was a strongly normative theory. The Party demanded that the all of the political elite behave according to Marxist standards. Writers certainly understood how to appeal to this normativity. One common strategy was to demand that cadre behavior should fit in Marxist standards of respecting and listening to the masses. Kapana Misra remarks, "Paradoxically, the ritualistic 'upholding' of socialist ideals

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[49] Misra 1998, p. 194.

[50] Ryang 1997, pp. 48–49.

[51] Nathan 1986, p. 189, 191.

[52] Schoenhals 1992, p. 21.

[53] Townsend 1980, p. 424.

[54] Appeals to ideological norms can be used to protect interests too. For example, the official Women's Federation has been able to counter demands that women should return home in times of unemployment by emphasizing orthodox Marxist requests for the empowerment of women (Wang 2000, pp. 68–69).

make the CCP a legitimate target of criticism for pursuing policies and lifestyles inimical to those ideals."[55]

In its simplest form, Marxist quotations provided affirmation of a writer's own arguments. A writer decorated his arguments with quotations showing that a Marxist authority shared her concerns. Marxism provides a vast source of ideas and authoritative quotations for serious theorization and instrumentalist interpretations alike. In 1978–1981, a writer could choose either the original text or its official interpretation for reference. He could turn to any authoritative theorists or political leaders for official support. Many classical Marxist writings are not comprehensive theoretical analyses, but reactions to various practical situations. Thus, Marxism provides a vast array of quotations for a writer to use to support very divergent ideas. As Kalpana Misra observes, in the late 1970s intellectuals' aims diverged from those of the leadership and they used different parts of Marxist tradition. They, for instance, wanted to limit the state and establish a legitimate private sphere.[56] Marxist discourse itself provided good opportunities for social criticism and for emphasizing the need for democratization. Sophisticated analysis evaluated Chinese Communist practice in light of Marxist theory or updated the theory in light of practice. Therefore, I do not share Michael Schoenhals' assumption that limiting how something is expressed, necessarily limits content and makes tackling specific problems difficult.[57] Certainly, Chinese intellectuals had been socialized in ways that limited what they saw as viable solutions, as political socialization does everywhere, but they were highly capable of expressing novel ideas and dealing with concrete problems even when using highly ideological and even formalistic language.

More sophisticated writers made use of Marxist vocabulary and theoretical inquiry to demand for change. Because Marxism was the orthodoxy, redefining orthodoxy or correcting its interpretation were powerful arguments. Some articles pointed out the difference between Marxist theory and Chinese practice to demand for serious application of the theory. Others reinterpreted Marxism in radically new ways totally questioning certain former beliefs. The Marxist argument that socialism is a period for the withering of the state, for example, was used to challenge the view that socialism meant class dictatorship and to call for the widest possible democracy. For those who want to engage in serious political criticism, Marxism offers powerful analytical devises for criticizing any existing political and economical system. For a devoted believer and a strategic user of Marxism alike, Marxism gives a normative weapon to call for the change of all

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[55]   Misra 1998, p. 16.
[56]   Misra 1998, pp. 11, 14.
[57]   Schoenhals 1992, pp. 21–22, 28–29, 125.

structures that had not led to increased political and economic emancipation under socialism.

Although I examine Marxist argumentation as a strategy of political influencing, a writer might genuinely have had Marxist conviction. He might have earnestly sought the correct interpretation of Marxism and sought to build truly socialist democratic institutions. Apart from cadres, who most likely had some belief in the official ideology of the system they worked for, intellectuals generally still seem to have widely shared socialist conviction.[58] Even the main participants of the contemporary democracy movement understood themselves to be socialists.[59] Nevertheless, it seems that an anti-Marxist platform may have had some receptivity at the time as well,[60] although it remained strictly outside of the official political channels and appeared in the official press only as negation of its arguments. The mainstream, however, was probably more interested in knowing what the genuine Marxist line is before deciding whether to support or reject it.

Although most participants in the 1978–1981 discussion were not satisfied with the Chinese record in democratization, they saw problems in the Western systems as well. Although the 1978–1981 discussion admired concrete Western methods and institutions able to cope with certain problems evident also in China, many writers were not willing to accept Western political and economic inequality either. Listing problems in Western political systems in the 1978–1981 discussion surely was a propaganda method and a way to disgrace political opponents, but it is quite likely that many writers more or less agreed with this criticism.

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[58] Ding 2001, p. 4. Some participants have preserved their ideological orientation even after emigrating to the West. Wang Ruoshui, a leading figure in the discussions about humanism and alienation beginning from 1980, still underlines "emancipation of humanity by overcoming various forms of alienation" in Marxism; and Su Shaozhi uses almost identical reasoning to that of the 1978–1981 discussion in his analysis about evils of the political system of socialist China. See Wang 1992, p. 57, and Su 1993.

[59] Even Wei Jingsheng, whom his personal friend Roger Garside (1982, p. 257) mentions as "perhaps the only activist ... who could accurately be described as a dissident" in the democracy wall movement, labeled himself "as a democratic socialist and, like many in that tradition, perceived a great gulf separating democratic socialists from those who join and lead Communist Parties." One enthusiastic supporter of not only of socialism but also the reformist faction within the Communist Party among the participants of Democracy Wall movement was Wang Xizhe, see Wang 1985, pp. 253–256.

[60] I have been told that a candidate in Fudan University elections in 1980 ran on an anti-Marxist platform, but the rivaling Marxist candidate with more grounded understanding about the contents of Marxist theory had no difficulty in defeating this anti-Marxist candidate. I heard this story separately from two senior teachers at Fudan.

Special emphasis on political theorizing

In 1978–1981, writers taking part in the political discussion primarily grounded their argument in theory. Partially this style of political argumentation was inherited from the Cultural Revolution. The values of the Cultural Revolution had prioritized theoretical reasoning over practical issues. In addition, vague theoretical and historical debates often had offered more space for political influencing than more direct modes of speech during the Cultural Revolution era. In 1978–1981 writers were still skilled in mixing theorization and historical allusions to mask their arguments in some ambiguity. Naturally, this strategy was meant to make political argumentation publishable and relatively safe in an environment of controlled publicity and censorship.

Theoretical inquiry suited the needs of the time, when China was looking for a new interpretation of Marxism, and when the former ideological dogmas seemed to provide inadequate answers for future challenges. In 1978–1981, the most influential discussion revolved around the question of finding better theoretical guidance for future development. Thus, proceeding from the theory to practical solutions was the most natural way of reasoning, when there was a need to reevaluate official values determining the official attention and emphasis given to practical issues.

The participants and channels also explain the highly theoretical level of the discussion. A large part of the discussion took place in Party and academic journals. Political theorists had traditionally used Marxist language, while academic inquiry itself encourages theorization and historical research. However, dailies provided another important arena for political discussion, which demonstrates that theoretical discussion was directed towards much larger audiences as well. The fact that highly theoretical discussion was targeted to such a large audience tells something about Chinese audiences. By 1978–1981 even a common peasant or worker had received enough education about Marxist theory and terminology to be able to follow theoretical discussion in newspapers, although perhaps not in all its subtleties. A composition of Democracy Wall Movement activists show that politically motivated ordinary workers even wrote theoretical arguments by themselves.

In 1978–1981, the most influential argumentation sought theoretical support to achieve concrete aims. Interestingly, principally theoretical orientation is not only atypical for political discussion in the West, but also in present-day China. Political discourse in the West and present-day China alike addresses the concrete issues of policy making and legislation, while theory formulation is mostly left for professionals and specialized publications. Of course, new values and political

aims partly explain why theoretical discussion is not particularly encouraged in present-day China, where evaluations in terms of Marxist class analysis and terminology of exploitation might prove quite explosive.

Saving socialism, blaming institutions or individuals

One strategy in the 1978–1981 discussion was to affirm socialism while blaming theoretical misinterpretation, incomplete institutions, or treacherous individuals for all problems. I do not claim that it was only a calculated strategy to make one's views publishable, but rather is it quite likely that many participants had a true conviction for improving the socialist system or finding the true interpretation of socialist classics. Nevertheless, in scrutinizing the logic of political discussion, I bypass subjective motivations and concentrate on argumentation techniques.

Articles approved of Communist Party activities to some degree, but censured the Party's mistakes in some respects. In this way, they affirmed the Party's position and appealed to its ability to improve its performance. Ming Xia describes this kind of method as a way of embedding supervision into support of the government or exploiting law and the Party line to supervise leaders.[61] A usual way was to show that policies implemented after the Cultural Revolution were the correct first steps in a series of measures needed to correct problems. In this way articles linked their platforms with those of the government, but urged for much more substantial corrective measures. Other articles returned to the history of the Communist Party to find exemplary Party performance to provide a model applicable to the current period as well. They, for example, affirmed the selfless and democratic spirit of the Yan'an tradition, the Party image of this golden period, to urge the Party to promote its cadres' selfless behavior or to permit wide and open discussion that allegedly had been a reality in Yan'an.

Most articles tied their argument to some concrete statements of the leadership or to policies which had been implemented, as if they would only be disseminating the message or elaborating on further steps to take in that line. In fact, they often suggested much more radical change than leaders had done. For example, regardless of their thorough analysis, they could limit their specific policy recommendations to those approved by the Party.[62] The opposite strategy was used as well. Many writers linked phenomena they opposed with overthrown leaders and blamed them for suppressing something that they promoted. One could

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61   Xia 2000, pp. 196–197. Ming Xia examines people's congresses' methods for influencing, showing that even state organs resort to the same kinds of tactics that the press does for supervising leaders and arguing for new policies.

62   Nathan 1986, p. 97.

implicate almost any customary practice in Chinese politics by blaming the Gang of Four for introducing it or for benefiting from it. For example, many articles stressed that adequate institutions could have prevented class enemies from achieving prominent positions. Sometimes writers even blamed their mistaken ideological stances for distorting institutions or ignoring their importance. Blaming mistaken interpretation of socialism for the catastrophe of the Cultural Revolution was both an ideological and a class explanation. Terminology used in attacks against Lin Biao and the Gang of Four, like accusing them of capitalist revival, revisionism, and feudal fascist dictatorship, clearly indicate normative exclusion from socialism. Therefore, linking them and a certain practice almost automatically meant that this practice was typical for incorrect class position. Naturally, the Gang of Four was a handy guise for blaming other leftist leaders, including Mao Zedong, without mentioning their names.

The 1978–1981 discussion essentially adopted a reformist, and not oppositionist, approach. The reformist outlook made it acceptable to inquire into true problems and sketch even radical solutions to these problems. At the same time the discussion did not challenge the system or the Communist Party rule. This kind of argumentation was relatively effective as well. Many suggestions presented in the discussion were later adopted as policies or appeared on the national leaders' agenda, because so soon after the Cultural Revolution reformist leaders could agree with the urgency of change as long as their own position was not challenged.

Writers' theoretical orientation

The difference between the two approaches to Marxism was one basic tension in the discussion. There were two obvious lines in the discussion, which I will call the ideological and the historical approaches. Both accepted Marxism as orthodoxy, but they disagreed on how to understand Marxist guidance of social and political inquiry. Generally speaking, in the 1978–1981 discussion the historical approach gradually took over in all fields of discussion, although the ideological approach made its comeback during each attempt to restrict discussion.

The ideological approach was a kind of dogmatism. It had no understanding of historical change. It used quotations from the socialist classics to prove that its stance was correct. The ideological approach tended to see things as either black or white. It did not see any value in economic and political plurality, if the correct ideology prevails. It used highly emotional techniques to influence a reader, including personal libel and emotionally loaded vocabulary. Typical ideological evaluation was disapproval of anything initiated by the bourgeoisie. Whateverism,

accepting as truth everything that Mao has said or wrote, was an extreme stance of this type.

The historical approach used the "seek truth from facts" framework as a basis for its evaluation. The historical approach saw political and social factors in historical perspective. It stressed both change and a particular historical situation. Even Marxist doctrines are formulated in a certain historical situation, which may change. For the historical approach, Marxism was a correct methodology and framework to explain historical change rather than the collection of unalterable truths. It attempted to be impartial, which usually meant listing both benefits and drawbacks rather than drawing a balanced overall picture. Typical evaluation by way of the historical approach saw one person responsible for both achievements and mistakes. When using Marxist terms and quotations, the historical approach tried to derive the original meaning of Marxist writings and explain texts within the context of the contemporary situation and other texts. Sometimes this approach openly reproached the instrumentalist use of Marxism out of context for supporting one's own stance. Instead of condemning something as capitalist, the historical approach sought a proper socialist interpretation for the concept.

Writers participating in the 1978–1981 discussion can be classified according to their theoretical orientation. A former Party Committee propaganda head of a university in Shanghai I interviewed in May 2000 named four types of theoretical trends (*liupai*) in the press in the 1978–1981 period. Firstly, numerous writers affirmed the whole Chinese revolutionary experience, including the Cultural Revolution, and Mao Zedong Thought in its totality. The second, a relatively small group consisted of those who rejected the Cultural Revolution and sought to reestablish (*huifu*) the pre-Cultural Revolution thought and system. They were advocating such ideas as the people's democracy and the people's congress system. The third trend promoted reform (*gaige kaifang*) under the Communist Party. This trend questioned the entire earlier revolutionary road of China, not only the Cultural Revolution. The fourth view wanted to learn from Western democracy and freedom. They advocated such ideas as a competitive multi-party system; the people's congresses' autonomy from Party control; the right to publish non-Marxist ideas; and the diversification of the economy and the ownership system. This was a rapidly growing group having appeal among university students.

Uses of practice

The discussion of 1978–1981 cited many practical examples, both historical and contemporary. In the context of theoretical argumentation, writers' aim seldom was to report what had happened but to use these examples for arguing in favor of a certain viewpoint. Practical examples provided a context for a compelling argu-

ment. Many writers chose their examples because of their political program rather than adopted a program because it corresponded with their empirical observations. Hence, practical examples provided by the press are very interesting for studying argumentation, but one should be cautious in expecting that these examples are necessarily compatible with reality.

In China, official messages are regularly concretized into models for educating members of society.[63] By emulating official techniques, many writers hoped to draw attention to the need to democratize or to halt uncontrollable changes. As models, stories were seldom about average cadres, work units and localities. Instead, the educative function of the press made it report cases that were better or worse than average. Model reporting tends to select and overemphasize, sometimes even falsify, evidence. It is not meant to report facts, but to teach people how they should or should not act. Positive examples included work units and communes, where cadres showed proper concern for mass initiatives or conducted fair elections. This reportage usually held a carrot: a democratic atmosphere allegedly corresponded with good economic performance. Although very telling, negative examples were usually about the worst cases, which makes them ungeneralizable. Nevertheless, choosing any problem for education through negative examples usually indicates that the problem itself is representative enough to deserve attention. Repression of criticism, dictated elections, and first secretaries who overruled party committee meetings were all given as negative examples of undemocratic cadre action. Likewise, articles defiled their political opponents by quoting their words out of context in order to deprive their views of any appeal. Therefore, citations of political pariahs in the press should not be read as argumentation against genuine views of the Gang of Four or Wei Jingsheng.

The Chinese press used examples in another way as well. The Chinese had adopted the typical communist use of evidence in "history proves" fashion. This kind of argumentation purposely searched for historical lessons in order to affirm or to deny particular viewpoints. The typical argumentation of this kind was, "History proves that the Party has prospered whenever it has upheld regular democratic work style, but has given chances to usurpers to harm cadres and the people, when it has not." Naturally, this kind of argumentation is instrumentalist and selectively looks for historical evidence only to support the argument.

Despite more balanced historical evaluation on the basis of seeking truths from the facts in 1978–1981, the discussion about democracy mostly used histori-

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[63]   Bakken 1994, pp. 135–145, understands use of models as typical for the Chinese imitative-repetitive culture. Nevertheless, I doubt that we need to culturalize use of models in China. It is enough to note their wide pedagogic use for socialization and political education and in setting of preferable norms. Apart from possible cultural factors, there are numerous other obvious reasons for employing models, such as the need for concretization of social norms in society with relatively low levels of education and even literacy.

cal evidence for explaining contemporary development or even for arguing for a certain political platform. Writers selected their historical viewpoint in order to discuss contemporary problems, either for discussing problems through historical allusion, or for explaining contemporary developments in light of historical evidence. The discussion about feudalism touching absolutism, favoritism, and excessive state control, with evident analogies to the Cultural Revolution, is possibly the most apparent example of this kind of argumentation.

Some writers sought historical evidence or foreign examples to smash conventional ways of conceptualizing problems. This kind of argumentation advocates practice as opposed to dogmatism. This approach is not necessarily instrumental, but can look for a truthful picture of history. For example, to refute the stance that human rights is a bourgeois concept not applicable to socialist China, some writers looked for evidence of workers' movements advocating human rights or of third world countries' agenda for human rights not defined by the West to argue for the need to take human rights seriously in China as well.[64] In this volume we will see that serious research of history could smash conventional ways of limiting and promoting democratization alike, when conventional one-sided images of anarchism and the Paris Commune alike were rejected.

Strategies and techniques to influence a political system

There were several types of common strategies for discussing problems in China in 1978–1981. Affirmative argumentation looked for official statements to repeat, explain or develop. This style of argumentation relied on the People's Daily articles, top-leaders' speeches, and official documents as well as on quotations from Marxist classics. The introduction and repetition of official ideas was meant to emphasize convergence between one's own ideas and those of authoritative persons. This kind of argumentation was used for informative, emphatic, factionalist, instrumentalist and safety-conscious reasons alike. Some articles were simply news stories reporting what leaders said. Others repeated official words to emphasize their meaning, since repetition can make the message itself look important. Factionalists probably selected quotations by the leaders whose position they wanted to strengthen. Instrumentalists were not concerned about whose quotation they used as long as it could advance their own platform. Since their need to promote their own message was primary for these writers, they did not mind quoting strategically. They could quote something out of context and did not even mind distorting the original idea. Safety-conscious writers primarily wrote their own

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64   Salmenkari 2006.

views but used quotations to show that their ideas were permissible and had authoritative backing.

Educative argumentation looked for good or bad examples of democratic performance. Writers either revealed concrete malpractices or listed common problems in policy implementation; others praised exemplary performance. Example was a special form of education offering good or bad performances for readers to study in order to improve their own behavior. Educative or normative argumentation took both theoretical and practical forms. A typical line of reasoning could be that a cadre should uphold the mass line style of leadership or collective leadership because otherwise he could not be a theoretically sound Marxist or an efficient leader on a practical level.

Apart from practical examples, educative argumentation thus often analyzed theoretical terms or Marxist writings for practical use. Most of this theoretical educative argumentation had a moralist aspect as well. Moralist argumentation saw a causal relationship between theoretical understanding and practical behavior. Articles described how a true communist was supposed to act due to having mastered Marxist theory. For example, if one recognizes that the masses, and not the leaders, are the motive force of history, he is willing to respect mass initiative. Moralist argumentation thus drew the model for concrete behavior from theory. Moralist argumentation was class conscious and warned people of bourgeois or feudal thinking if they behaved in incorrect ways.

Corrective argumentation sought to replace an established term or theoretical understanding with a more accurate interpretation. Reinterpreting Marxist theory was a special form of corrective discourse, since the aim was not only to find a more accurate understanding about the issue but also normatively to make people act upon this new understanding. This style of argumentation arises from the Marxist conviction that a correct theoretical understanding should lead to correct political action. In special cases corrective argumentation could also demonstrate some ideas or forms of action either as socialist to affirm them or as non-socialist to reject them. For example, when some procedures and terms acclaimed by radical leftists were labeled as feudal rather than socialist, they were wiped out of the reservoir of practices and terms available for socialists in one stroke. All of these types of argumentation were used both sincerely and strategically, but other discussants were most sensitive to strategic argumentation of the corrective type and sometimes pointed out that one was taking logically or factually indefensible turns.

Instrumentalist argumentation linked the kind of behavior or institution it promoted with positive results. It tried to convince the cadres to listen to the masses so that local economic performance could improve, obviously hinting that increased production would improve the cadre's position towards both the superiors and the masses. This kind of argumentation appealed to negative

consequences as well. It, for instance, tried to dissuade activities or terminology possibly leading to social unrest. For the writer the behavior or institution itself was probably more important than alleged social consequences, but by linking the two the writer could convince others of its desirability or harmfulness. Still, there probably were sincere users of instrumentalist argumentation, who truly believed that democratization really is beneficial for economic progress, for instance.

Influencing within a limited public space

Chinese public space was definitely quite limited in the 1970s and 1980s. Ka-ho Mok describes that possibilities for influencing remained structurally and institutionally constrained, but still left some autonomy for intellectuals to find strategies to respond to their unique environments.[65]

A limited public space brings both conveniences and inconveniences for a writer. Certainly, inconveniences include the need to carefully consider style and wording in order to not only meet publishing criteria but also to avoid any negative consequences for being too outspoken. Yet, paradoxically, it was precisely the limitedness that probably made messages appearing in this public space all the more influential. To make this point, it is useful to make a comparison with the present Western information societies, where so much information is available through television, newspapers, the Internet and the media that we are unable to read, adopt, and process it all. Freer public space makes it easier for each individual to publicize his views, but often reduces the visibility of various views competing for audiences with a multitude of other messages within various media outlets. The result may be more selective reception of messages, which reduces responsiveness to opinions not appearing within one's customary channels.

In 1978–1981, Chinese writers apparently were quite aware of the discussion as a whole. Articles commented on the ideas of other writers regardless of where they first appeared. Even arguments appearing in more marginal journals were often known to other writers. Apart from certain central publications, many theoretical journals probing into the most timely or controversial issues seem to have been widely read. Some articles took on the task of citing and summarizing previous discussions. Topical publication indexes and clip service publications assisted in the nationwide search for materials. It is probable that non-written means of disseminating ideas existed as well. The topics must have appeared in professional and casual discussions taking place among academic colleagues, Party associates and friends. Finally, when propaganda departments publicly

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[65]   Mok 1998, p. 64.

criticized certain views, they seldom chose the original publication but publicized criticism in a more widely distributed one.

The limited public sphere seems to have been influential not only among colleagues but also in communication with the leadership. Leaders themselves sometimes commented on issues raised in the discussion.[66] Many institutional and practical improvements suggested in the press discussion found a response in decision making as well. However, it is impossible to show only on the basis of press analysis whether proposals such as limited tenure originated in the press or if the press simply supported publicly reforms some leaders had suggested privately. Whichever way, the press played a role in appealing to the leadership to adopt this idea.[67] The press did not act as a pressure group for reforms, but rather as a think tank, which developed theoretical arguments and practical visions for development. This is only natural, since, as Stephen Angle notes, democratic centralist consultation is closer to giving advice than to voting. Therefore legitimacy of democratic input comes from its correctness.[68] In this interaction between leadership and the press, sometimes the press developed ideas that the leadership or some leaders then grasped, and sometimes it advocated and developed ideas introduced by one of the leaders.

The Chinese press as a public sphere for political discussion

The Chinese press forms a public sphere in the sense of providing publicity and mass distribution for some ideas and deliberations. However, according to the customary use of the term, a public sphere should also allow an arena that is outside the realm of direct state control for exchanging opinions. In China, all publications faced rather strict official control because of state ownership of the publishing institutions and because of the fact that official guidelines for publica-

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[66] Deng Xiaoping's "On the Reform of the System of Party and State Leadership" (in Deng 1984, pp. 302–325) is an example of a leader's speech adopting certain proposals developed in intellectual discussions and contributing to further discussions. It comments on over-concentration of power, life-long tenure, and separation of tasks of the Party and the government, which were issues promoted in intellectual discussions.

[67] For example, in 1980 Vice-Premier Deng Xiaoping successfully used the appeal for separating Party and state functions to demand then supreme Party and state leader Hua Guofeng to choose either premiership or Party chairmanship. The topic of separation of Party and state roles was commonly referred to in the press at the time, either under the auspices of Deng or because it was a logical outcome of contemporary critical theoretical discussions. Either way, the press was effective in building the pressure, thus making it difficult for Hua Guofeng to resist. Moreover, Deng Xiaoping most likely picked the idea up from either closed or public intellectual theorizations of the time, since the idea itself is of a highly theoretical nature and hardly an invention of a political leader.

[68] Angle 2005, p. 527.

tion policy were sent down from the center. Some power-free communication took place outside of the official public sphere, though. On university campuses, in meetings between participants of the democracy movement, and in private encounters many unofficial ideas, including critical ones, were voiced. The examples of an unofficial university campus questionnaire in Shanghai revealing wide mistrust of the Communist Party,[69] or a national network of democracy movement organizations,[70] demonstrate that there even was a kind of weak public sphere for opposing the government. However, the state controlled this unofficial sphere through sporadic interventions such as arrests and closures of publication venues.[71] The question of a public sphere in China, therefore, proves complicated, and because of state control some scholars might prefer to reject its existence outright. However, some other features of a public sphere, such as rational public deliberation, were evident in the 1978–1981 discussion.

Jürgen Habermas identifies rational-critical debate as the main criterion for a public sphere. According to Habermas, however, "power-free flow of communication within a single public"[72] for reaching rational consensus through debate does not characterize present day public spheres in the West. Instead of advancing rational discussion aimed at finding common interest, nowadays the commercialized public sphere serves private interests. In politics, true power evades the public sphere. Instead, communication takes the form of non-public transactions between parties, single-interest pressure groups, and the bureaucracy. Present day democratic politics even tend to offer voters persons and slogans to identify with, rather than issues to debate. Simultaneously the public sphere has expanded but, instead of facilitating rational-critical debate, the mass media shapes public debate among an uncritical public.[73]

Regardless of whether one accepts Jürgen Habermas' historical conclusions, the above model offers tools for analyzing the Chinese public sphere. Using these terms to analyze the public discussion in the China of 1978–1981 demonstrates that the Chinese public sphere was not free from state and Party control. In the

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[69] Interview of a former Party Committee propaganda head at one university in Shanghai, May 2000.

[70] Chan et al. 1985, p. 27.

[71] For the difference between control through sporadic interventions and regular control, see Salmenkari 2004, pp. 236–237, 242–243. For an example of the Party permitting more heterodox opinions if they were expressed through Party approved channels as rather than unofficial channels, see Chan et al. 1985, p. 27. Sporadic state interventions in 1979 included the removal and closure of Xidan Wall and arrests of the most outspoken activists. For details, see, e.g., Nathan 1986, pp. 32–36. Campaigns against certain ideas the leadership found unappealing exemplify less drastic and more focused, but still sporadic state interventions.

[72] Habermas 1989, p. 202.

[73] Habermas 1989, ch. 5 and 6.

Chinese public sphere participants did not promote their views autonomously from the state, but acted under the state umbrella and mainly for the purpose of influencing the state. The Chinese political culture allows influencing either through established organizations or as unorganized individuals.[74] This influencing should not be oppositional, but should offer constructive suggestions for improvements. Still, these limits did not mean that publicized opinions could not be innovative and critical. As Ben Xu observes, in 1980s China, political engagement "was seldom openly confrontational, and critics often poached ideas from the official ideology. This maneuvering sort of political action colored the palette of the 1980s intellectual enlightenment in noticeably oppositional, humanist hues."[75] Likewise, Geremie Barmé notes that although intellectuals in the 1980s "avoided direct confrontation with official ideology, these intellectuals in effect began to challenge its dominance in every field of thought."[76]

Evidently, in 1978–1981 China provided room for rational and often even critical discussion. The main public method to influence politics was discussion. Although discussion rejected outright some possible but forbidden solutions, China permitted critical discussion to find the best solutions for national development. If the Chinese media did not fulfill the role of the marketplace of all ideas, it still provided for a "marketplace of Party ideas"[77] or rather all ideas not prohibited by the Party. Unlike largely fragmented Western political discussion, China formed a true public in the sense of discussion involving everyone in a single public sphere. Through study sessions and propaganda, this public extended itself even into work units and people's communes. Although availability of information differed greatly among layers of political discussion, practically every Chinese adult was somehow involved in it. Exclusive or unofficial public spheres, like theoretical conferences or the Democracy Wall, could express more heterodox ideas, but they only reached a relatively small number of people.

If there was a public sphere in 1978–1981 China, this sphere proves to be quite different from contemporary Western public spheres. The strength of official control and the dominance of official opinions certainly hindered political influencing. Nevertheless, it might be that using a common language within one non-fragmented public sphere simultaneously facilitated influencing and receptivity to ideas expressed within this public sphere.

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[74] And even within established organizations like the Party differing opinions are legitimate only if they are individually held, not if they are minority group opinions (Starr 1979, p. 211).

[75] Xu 2001, p. 120.

[76] Barmé 2000, p. 203.

[77] Winfield and Peng 2005, p. 265.

Terminology in the discussion

Michael Schoenhals argues that the Chinese Communists have developed political control through language. They defined the proper language to use in the press and social sciences. Deviators from this official language run the risk of being accused of heterodoxy and of not passing the standards for publication. Formalization of political language thus hinders expression of ideas and even innovation.[78] After reading hundreds of articles published in the course of discussion about democracy in 1978–1981, I doubt whether the language itself was an obstacle for expressing opinions and finding solutions. Marxist discourse is rich in its ability to critically scrutinize political relationships in any society, including a socialist one. For example, the 1980–1983 press discussion about alienation under socialism could, according to a Western scholar, "threaten the legitimacy of Communist government,"[79] although it was conducted in fully Marxist vocabulary. Obviously, Marxist orthodoxy and orthodox vocabulary itself is a slippery tool in the hands of any power holder. Actually, after Chinese intellectuals have adopted other discourses from the West, their attention has been directed towards other issues apart from the political system and social problems, while the strongest political criticism comes from Neo-Marxists.[80] Although Marxist orthodoxy was an obstacle to public promotion of certain solutions, and perhaps even for conceiving some possible solutions, as any form of hegemonic language is, it did not prevent Chinese writers from identifying problems and seeking new solutions.

Michael Schoenhals thinks that the Communist Party chooses preferred "scientific" expressions in the public discussion for their utility in attaining certain policy goals and avoiding "ideological confusion".[81] However, the 1978–1981 period was a period of "seeking truth from facts" publicly bowing to the truth of practical experience. During this period, political press discussion often criticized instrumentalist use of language. The discussion sometimes attempted to find conceptual clarity, sometimes even to prevent action based on conceptual misunderstanding. Instead of utilitarian interpretation, this search for conceptual clarity meant the search for more transparent terminology capable of expressing the meaning of a concept to a non-versed reader as well. A paragon case was promoting use of the term "the people's democratic dictatorship" over the term "proletarian dictatorship" to emphasize the role of democracy and other classes in socialist

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[78]   Schoenhals 1992, pp. 14, 20–21.

[79]   Gray 1990, p. 395.

[80]   Xu 2001, p. 132, 134; Barmé 2000, 215.

[81]   Schoenhals 1992, pp. 8–10.

rule. Therefore, unlike Michael Schoenhals assumes, truthfulness also played an important role in adopting more "scientific" formulations.[82] Moreover, not all conceptual innovation was directed from above, as the attempt to conceptualize some political problems by using the term alienation, now extended to describe phenomena under socialism as well, aptly demonstrates.[83]

Types of discourses in the discussion

Jürgen Habermas has identified five types of argumentation based on the field they attempt to clarify. Theoretical discourse deals with truthfulness or efficacy, practical discourse deals with social norms, aesthetic criticism evaluates adequacy of standards of value, therapeutic critique deals with sincerity of expressions, and explicative discourse seeks comprehensibility or well-formedness of symbolic constructs.[84] The Chinese press contained all of these types of argumentation between 1978 and 1981. Aesthetic criticism was not directly present in the discussion about democracy, although these years meant the widening of acceptable artistic criteria both in theoretical discussion and in practical artistic creation. The new trends of literature even indirectly emphasized the need for political change, either by revealing personal tragedies writers hoped would be prevented in the future or by publishing fiction about administrative ineffectiveness or social problems.[85]

The discussion about democracy contained all other four types of discourse. Articles used theoretical discourse in an attempt to find the correct theoretical interpretation or to find universally applicable and efficient administrative practices. Some others chose practical discourse and tried to establish proper administrative norms or standards for good cadre behavior. Therapeutic critique, admitting one's irrationality and subjectivity, was a minor trait, consisting mostly of cadres' self-criticism of their mistakes. For example, cadres publicly acknowledged losses caused when they, instead of consulting the masses, had forced their own impractical views on others. Explicative discourse seeks to improve comprehensibility by inquiring into linguistic rules and constructions. Some articles sought to make their point through clarifying the meaning of terms and expressions. They analyzed the original versions of Marxist classics to find a more exact understanding of terminology or formulated more transparent concepts not vulnerable to misinterpretation.

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[82] Schoenhals 1992, pp. 9, 11.

[83] About the content of the alienation discussion, see Kelly 1987.

[84] Habermas 1983, pp. 19–23.

[85] It involved recollections of personal tragedies during the Cultural Revolution, so called "scar" literature, and exposure literature revealing problems like bureaucratism and corruption. For a good collection with a good introduction of these styles, see Siu and Stern 1983.

Jürgen Habermas has asserted that in rational argumentation participants can agree on or challenge other's views on three levels. A listener can agree or disagree on factual content, on normative rightfulness, or on the truthfulness of self-expression. Apart from the objective world, statements can have relation to the social world and to the subjective world.[86] In 1978–1981, articles reprimanded commonly shared enemies, such as the Gang of Four, but also evaluated other writers' arguments on the grounds of all three of these kinds of rationality. Claims of factual incorrectness included cases of purported misunderstanding of the term or its context. Some statements declared that certain views do not fit in socially agreed aims and norms, including arguments which addressed the fear that some theoretical formulations could be used to incite social disorder or strengthen authoritarian practices. Insincerity of an argument was claimed in some instances, usually by demonstrating that a participant had built his argument not for theoretical validity but for strategic uses, like when selective choices of historical examples were used to promote one's own views. When it came to people labeled as political enemies, including the Gang of Four and democracy activist Wei Jingsheng, articles rejected their opinions for their claimed incorrectness, reprimanded their ideas because they would produce unwanted results, and ridiculed their asserted insincerity and ulterior motives.

Researching argumentation

In any political system, the rationale of political decision making is formulated and rationalized in discussion. This discussion takes place within the leadership, in academic circles, among citizens, or in communication between leaders and ordinary citizens. Some of the discussion is disseminated through the media. There is no basic difference between communist China or Western democracies in this respect, although there may be differences in the channels, participants, and proper content and vocabulary of the discussion.

Although China controlled the media relatively strictly in 1978–1981, control itself does not prevent a many-sided discussion. Any system sets limits for proper discussion. No political system allows public discussion undermining its own existence (e.g. calls for criminal or terrorist activities) or overstepping certain limits of propriety (e.g. libel), nor can or will any channels of information transmit the whole variety of messages. All publications have criteria for proper style and vocabulary[87]. Instead of emphasizing the existence of limits, one should rather try to see where these limits are in each particular political system.

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[86]   Habermas1983, pp. 99–100.

[87]   For style sheets and restrictions in Chinese and Western media alike, see Schoenhals 1992, pp. 1–2, 52.

Nevertheless, the Chinese discussion has its own peculiarities. Compared to more varied Western discourse, the Chinese discussion allowed public expression only in Marxist or, at best, neutral discourse. This kind of environment both narrows the discourse and unifies it. It makes participants speak about problems with a shared vocabulary and theoretical framework although not necessarily with shared aims. When a multitude of problems and ideas are discussed in a shared language, outward unity might complicate the reader's ability to recognize different aims.

Nevertheless, a controlled press simultaneously offers some convenience for a scholar, who can anticipate what kind of argument is *not* likely to bypass censorship. With more open Western media which have more unpredictable criteria for publication, it is much more difficult to evaluate what was not published. Since not everything relevant is ever published, due to many trivial reasons ranging from lack of time and space to more subtle reasons including the need to convince and to argue rationally about emotionally loaded or value-based opinions, an ideologically controlled press like that in China actually helps a scholar guess *some* of the hidden factors influencing argumentation. In addition, it is easier to generalize when the press discusses fairly homogenous topics in a relatively consistent language. In the West, it is difficult to find consistency among multiple theories, approaches, and viewpoints, often expressed in different publications.

The Chinese often build their argument in a multi-leveled form, where the surface level is complemented by a deep level of allusions. On the surface level the writer for instance criticized the Gang of Four, or studied Marxist theory, or conducted historical research, but in fact the problems credited to the Gang or feudal rulers or criticized by Lenin alluded to systemic problems still continuing in socialist China. Usually this kind of allusive argumentation is not difficult to follow in the context of the whole discussion. When many articles simultaneously used the same topics to discuss contemporary problems or mistakes during the Cultural Revolution, some quite openly tied their discussion to the present discourse about democratization. Nor is it difficult to see where discussions about democratic aspects of Marxist theory would lead to. Sometimes Marxist theorization took much more difficult forms, because many philosophical principles could be understood only in the context of earlier interpretations. Although historical allusions often prove complex to decipher, such themes as the problems of an authoritarian regime must have carried a clear message for the contemporary readers. Besides, historical analogies often talk about problems themselves, albeit through a looking glass of history, which the Confucian historiographical tradition already saw as having universal value for moral judgment and modeling correct conduct.

I did not find analysis of Chinese articles especially problematic after I, through reading numerous articles, had learnt the language and common forms of argumentation used. The implicit levels of argumentation are meant to be transparent enough for most educated Chinese readers, and are, therefore, mostly understandable for any attentive reader versed in the contemporary discourse. Of course, at times a writer may fail to articulate in a sufficiently transparent way, simply because this kind of argumentation was intentionally ambiguous in order to secure the writer's own position and access to official public channels. Since I followed the discussion in its totality, I was able to put each individual article in its context in the discussion. Finally, as a historian researching a period of dramatic change I mostly managed to decipher comments referring to contemporary concerns and events, since it was relatively simple to understand what events or phenomena writers could be alluding to and what kind of change they were promoting.

Historians analyze sources to evaluate why a document was written and what kind of influence its writer wanted to produce. In terms of J. L. Austin's distinctions, the Chinese political discussion included locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary speech acts, that is, expressions of states of affairs, acts performed through a speech act, and attempts to produce an effect on the listener.[88] Sometimes the same article simultaneously contains factual elements, acts of education or performances of political loyalty, and implicit attempts to produce a certain effect on a reader.

For studying documents of Chinese political discussion, I would distinguish at least three important elements in political writings. One is the theoretical background including its special terminology, which most of the Chinese theorists share. Shared theoretical background provides terminology and to some extent an analytical model for argumentation, but is not an argument in and of itself. An argument itself contains two kinds of elements. A writer chooses a certain argument for two reasons: to present his opinions and to produce certain effects. In the first respect an argument is argumentative, in the second it is persuasive. This division corresponds roughly with Jürgen Habermas' differentiation between communicative actions oriented to reaching understanding and communicative actions with strategic orientation to success.[89] A careful historian must separate these three elements of argumentation. For example, a theoretical statement can be used simply because of shared theoretical background, or for the attempt to gain better theoretical understanding, or for communicating persuasively to people who are more receptive to messages expressed in theoretical language than to other arguments.

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[88]   Austin 1962, pp. 95–101.

[89]   Habermas 1983, p. 286.

Confusing theory with argument

Western scholars have obvious strengths in studying the Chinese political system
due to their strong analytical and methodological tradition and ability to observe
phenomena from a certain distance. Nevertheless, too often they lack the ability to
place texts in their proper contexts. In studying the Chinese conception of democ-
racy, theory, argument, persuasive elements, and cultural values in Chinese
writings are often confused. This misunderstanding prevents a scholar from seeing
the true message. Any of these approaches can be confused with any other catego-
ry: an argument can be read as being based on cultural values or theory, persua-
sion may be seen as a factual conviction, while points in which a Chinese writer
shows his mastery of Marxist theory may be read as an argument by Western
scholars. Furthermore, the Western interpretation is often ahistorical: any Chinese
document written can be used as proof of a general Chinese understanding.[90]

I can easily illustrate this situation with one Western notion of the Chinese
understanding of democracy, namely that of instrumentalism. This argument
states that the Chinese theory sees democracy as a means of economic develop-
ment and not an aim itself.[91] Some scholars have noted such an interpretation is
unfair, because Westerners likewise believe that democracy has functional
benefits, including its ability to regulate conflict, increase regime quality and
legitimacy, and bring stability. Moreover, Chinese democrats use utilitarian
arguments to convince leaders to accept democratic institutions.[92] In other words,
Andrew Nathan and He Baogang notice that some scholars read persuasion as a
factual statement of the writer's own conviction. For persuasive reasons, the
1978–1981 discussion argued that socialist democracy would speed up economic
growth, consolidate proletarian dictatorship, facilitate correct centralization, and
prevent revisionism. In addition, Nathan and He show that instrumentalism
assumes essential difference between Western and Chinese beliefs where there
actually is none.

In addition, instrumentalist interpretation suffers from limited sources and a
very partial understanding of the Chinese theory. There were evident instru-
mentalist voices in the 1978–1981 Chinese discussion, claiming that democracy
was not an end, but only a means, or that democracy was permissible only for

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[90]   Not only cultural determinists are to blame for ahistorical quotations and for choosing a
       particular statement to represent a general cultural trait (see Christiansen and Rai 1996, p.
       22). Sometimes scholars have even interpreted a single article in the official press as the
       official Chinese understanding.

[91]   He 1996, p. 43; Svensson 1994, p. 2.

[92]   He 1996, pp. 247–248; Nathan 1986, pp. 224–225, 232.

promoting economic development. The latter stance survived for only a few months.[93] The former, despite its origin in Mao Zedong's statements,[94] was not the only, and not even the final stance developed in the debate over whether democracy is a means or the aim. The debate ended up accepting that democracy cannot be the aim in a final sense but that it is a valuable aim of revolution and socialist construction. In other words, deriving the official Chinese stance from a handful of individual articles demonstrates more than partial or even selective use of Chinese sources. It suggests that the scholar in question assumes that the Chinese press conveys only one official voice and that anything published in the press thus reveals the united official stance.

The reason for assuming instrumentalism arises partly from misreading some dialectical conceptions in the Chinese theory. Dialectical unity of democracy with centralism and dictatorship was often expressed with elliptical statements, in which centralism or dictatorship need democracy, but they likewise make democracy possible. Mao Zedong himself made this dialectical relation clear and stated, "We cannot overcome difficulties without democracy. Of course, it is even more impossible to do so without centralism, but if there's no democracy there won't be any centralism."[95] This dialectical relation already demonstrates that democracy cannot be understood only as a means, since without democracy centralization will fail and there will be no democratic centralism to speak of. Dialectical need for democracy was definitely not an instrumentalist statement, as the common saying "there is no socialism without democracy" (*mei you minzhu, jiu mei you shehuizhuyi*) based on this theoretical stance reveals. Socialism was defined as a proper balance of two kinds of processes, democracy and centralism as well as democracy and dictatorship, and rejecting either part of the unity means questioning socialism itself.

Political discussion and totalitarianism

The totalitarian model presumes that the media in China would merely be a medium for propaganda. Its contents would be decided by the central leadership and would be strictly censored by propaganda departments. Therefore, under totalitarianism the contents would be highly repetitive, and the only self-initiated

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93   E.g. Huang Ge and Li Xunyi, *Jiefang ribao*, March 12, 1979, p. 4; Nie Shiguang and Xiong Shihe, *Jiangxi ribao*, Apr. 16, 1979, p. 3; Commentator, *Gongren ribao*, May 22, 1979, p. 1. This practically was the time frame of such argumentation. In the summer of 1979 more substantial calls for democratization took over again.

94   Schram 1989, p. 109.

95   Mao, "Talk at an Enlarged Central Work Conference" as translated in Schram 1974, p. 163.

motivation for journalists and writers would be to show their political activism, if even that.[96]

The fact that I have been able to conduct research that treats the Chinese as active political actors intentionally shaping the future of their political system, is itself an empirical statement against totalitarian theory. The content of the discussion introduced in this study proves that in 1978–1981 there was space for genuine societal voices and not merely for the top-down flow of state-initiated messages in the official state-controlled media. The following chapters will demonstrate that the media did not disseminate only one orthodox voice, but contained meaningful discussion, and at times even discord and debate. Obviously, writers were by no means automatized individuals, but active participants in a discussion appealing to society and the leadership for political change. They were even able to use state controlled channels like the press, which indicates that the state did not even try to exterminate all public space, although it certainly sought to control messages relayed through the official channels.

I will not attempt to answer whether China had a civil society in 1978–1981. The answer to this question depends on the factors considered sufficient to compose a civil society. It would be possible to assume the existence of a civil society in a very weak sense in the China of 1978–1981 with electoral campaigns, wall posters, underground publications, and academic and political seminars. Interestingly though, although China may have had a civil society in a political sense in 1978–1981, it perhaps did not have it in an economic sense. Without an independent economic sphere, a civil society is likely to remain very weak. Even if the term civil society might be overstretched if it is used to describe China, there obviously was a genuine society able to promote platforms not on the official agenda and able to use official structures for society-initiated activities. At least, China had an evident second society. Elemér Hankiss uses the term second society to describe a culture not fitting with the norms of the official first society, although it does not form a truly independent and alternative social sphere. The second society is not opposite to the official first society but functions in different ways from it.[97]

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[96] For a short description of the totalitarian media model, see Sartori 1987, pp. 99–101. The totalitarian image of the media is still common, although Western scholarship does not classify post-reform China as totalitarian. For example, the contemporary Chinese media is described as one head with many mouths (Wu 2000).

[97] Hankiss 1988.

Political discussion and factionalism

Another relatively common Western approach used to explain political theorization inside China is the factionalism model. [98] The factionalist approach analyzes leadership roles, leaders' backgrounds, followings, attitudes and stances in order to explain development in China. The factionalist model absolutizes the power of decision and sees implementation as an unproblematic process which does not affect the actual policy. Thus, it sees relative strengths among leadership groups as the key to analyzing politics. This approach would analyze different policy preferences and interests within the leadership. Certainly, leaders' preferences and personalities, as well as leadership coalitions and the use of pork barreling to create a workable intra-elite consensus, can be used to explain how policies are chosen in all countries. Moreover, cultural factors may play some role in strengthening loyalties within leadership circles, since factions and clientilism play an important role in East Asian politics outside of China as well.[99] Still, it would go against common sense and any modern understanding of historical processes to explain all decisions and social activities solely in terms of leaders' will. Although this kind of analysis provides some insight into the Chinese political processes at the top level, it provides very little explanation about developments in society.

When it comes to the research of the Chinese press, factionalist analysis can reveal some changes in censorship practices or explain how a specific article found its way to newspapers under the auspices of a particular individual leader.[100] It is meaningful to ponder why the leadership allowed or even encouraged discussion in the relatively centrally controlled press. As Kalpana Misra has noted, reasons such as promoting more flexible economic policy and rehabilitating numerous comrades persecuted during the Cultural Revolution made many leaders sympathetic to theoretical discussion in 1978–1981.[101] If no one in the leadership would have been favorably disposed to a discussion over political and social change, open press discussion would certainly have been impossible in 1978–1981. Yet, concentrating on the leadership level is quite insufficient, though, if the aim is to study political discussion in society. Although in China the

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[98]   Hamrin and Zhao 1995, pp. xxx–xxxi, Nathan 1990, chap. 2.

[99]   For example, the Liberal Democratic Party of Japan is known for its overt factions as means for electoral success and career concerns. See, e.g., Hrebenar 1992, pp. 263–266.

[100]   E.g. Schoenhals 1991.

[101]   Misra 1998, pp. 9–10.

leaderships' political views explain control of public space for discussion, they do not dictate the discussion itself.

There were clearly government initiated or supported discussions, for example, viewpoints emphasizing social order surely reflected concern among political leaders at the national and local levels alike.[102] Still, these discussions often did not end the way they began. For example, the concept of human rights first appeared in denials of its applicability to socialism, but soon others accepted that China should recognize the concept and participate in its redefinition in international arenas with other third world countries.[103] Although changes concerning this topic can reflect different policy lines within the leadership, societal actors' influence on some other issues is undisputable. For instance, criticism of anarchism began as a normative discourse against social disturbances, but academic discussion later directed it to historical inquiry of anarchist thought.

According to the factionalist model, discordance among different leaders provides for some space in society for the pursuit of different interests or for the support of divergent policy lines. Moreover, sometimes editors and publishers ignored leaders' instructions.[104] Some Western scholars have followed factionalist presumptions in studying the political discussion evolving since 1978.[105] In 1978–1981, the Chinese leadership was obviously experiencing a power struggle. The ousting first of the Gang of Four (1976), then of the Whateverists (1978), and finally of Hua Guofeng (1981) proves this fact. Although it may partly explain why varied discussion was possible in 1978–1981, power struggle is an insufficient explanation for the content of the discussion. Even if many articles were written as a result of some political impulse of the leadership, the writers themselves are not thoughtless and voiceless marionettes. They tend to reflect their own ideas in their writings and promote leaders not necessarily for factional reasons but for the political platform these leaders support. For writers who are distant from the central or local power centers, the best way to influence national politics is to articulate their policy platforms persuasively in the hopes of convincing some leaders. Moreover, much of the press discussion did not seek to maximize any leader's power. Instead of concentrating power in the hands of another group of leaders, the main theme in the 1978–1981 political discussion was to decentralize and institutionally check decision-making powers.

There definitely were certain high-level establishment intellectuals who had access to the centers of decision making as advisors and in think tanks serving

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[102] National leaders' concerns are reflected in the issuance of Deng Xiaoping's "Uphold the Four Cardinal Principles", Deng 1984, pp. 166–191.

[103] Salmenkari (in print).

[104] Wu 1994, p. 210.

[105] E.g. Goldman 1994, see especially pp. 35–41.

certain national leaders.[106] At this level it is probably quite correct to assume that these intellectuals depended on their political patrons in the leadership. Many intellectuals not only depended on their employer but also actively sought to influence the leadership through elite networks. However, sometimes researchers assume too much patronage even at this level.[107] Moreover, it is very possible that the most interesting opinions were usually expressed by writers without patronage. Indeed, intellectuals with high political patronage sometimes had their writings screened and needed to be careful to preserve their close relationships with the state leaders.[108] Thus, lower level writers were probably freer to develop ideas, but lacked close relations to persuade leaders. Hence, a factional tie involves tradeoff between freedom to experiment and access to empowering elite relations.

In 1978–1981, most of the public political discussion in China took place outside of this limited sphere of establishment intellectuals. Most of the writers participating in the press discussion were academicians, students, local cadres, and other politically active people, who had no direct connections to leadership. They naturally depended on the facilities their university or local newspapers allowed for discussion, but they had no direct patronage. The local publishing criteria depended partly on the central example, and therefore indirectly on central patronage for editors like Hu Jiwei in the People's Daily, who certainly had much influence in what newspapers and journals dared to publish. However, here the question is not of patronage, but of intellectual atmosphere.

Textual analysis and proving factionalist influence

Along with ordinary academicians, cadres, workers and soldiers, the leadership also participated in the general discussion in 1978–1981. Some Party theorists and leaders' aides, and perhaps even some lower level academicians, had surely received official guidance or gained high level official backing for publishing their controversial articles. On many occasions, even top leaders, perhaps through their ghost writers or close allies, must have reacted to the press discussion in order to influence its content. Nevertheless, for the most part these cases cannot be proven through mere textual analysis only.

Although there was a power struggle going on inside the leadership and although articles sometimes even openly demonstrated their support for a leader

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[106] One reason for the prevalent image of patronage of intellectuals is that intellectuals gathering around Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang emigrated to the West after their faction lost its position and they have been readily available for Western research.

[107] For example, Fang Lizhi defied his interviewer's expectation that he had any patrons (Mok 1998, p. 92).

[108] Mok 1998, pp. 66, 71.

or a political line, mainly against the Gang of Four and Whateverism, factionalist aims of supporting Deng Xiaoping against Hua Guofeng are difficult to prove apart from some clear cases in 1981. Although an article perhaps would not quote a leader the writer detests, quoting a leader in the 1978–1981 discussion did not necessarily mean support for a leader. Rather, an authoritative quotation was a method of argumentation. Quoting Hua Guofeng or quoting Lenin served as a similar kind of justification for the argument. The contemporary leaders most credited in articles included Hua Guofeng, Ye Jianying and Deng Xiaoping. Of them, only Hua was cited generally, while the others were referred to only in the context of particular questions. Ye Jianying was most acclaimed in the context of the 1978 constitution and legislation in general, while Deng Xiaoping appeared most often in late 1978 and early 1979 after he had recommended work unit level elections. More often reformists were cited more through their achievements than by name, such as by promoting adherence to the line of the Party Central Committee session in December 1978 or by referring to the reformist document "Resolution on Certain Questions in the History of Our Party" of 1981.

Writers quoted Hua Guofeng most often, although the ideas they promoted might have been discussed elsewhere in more detail. For example, Deng Xiaoping treated problems of bureaucratism in depth in his "On the Reform of the System of Party and State Leadership"[109] in 1980. Yet, although the problems he touched were widely discussed in the press, articles did not quote his speech but rather quoted the report on governmental work given by Hua Guofeng. Hua Guofeng's authority as the state leader could explain the frequency with which he was quoted. It possibly also meant that Hua's speech was public when Deng's possibly still was not, although it probably was well known to the party theorists who reflected its themes in public. In the case of Deng Xiaoping, influences were not unidi-rectional. Although the press certainly developed some of Deng's views, Deng commented on and developed many ideas which appeared in contemporary dis-cussions.[110] Other leaders probably reacted to the social and political environment below the central leadership level as well.

Apart from his supreme authority and possible popularity as a leading figure of the new political line, the frequent quoting of Hua Guofeng coincided with his position as the top leader who articulated many statements of the leadership and whose comments were most likely to be printed. The fact that articles cited Hua less in 1980–1981 than before reflected the attempt to reduce the quoting and emphasizing of individuals in general, and thus does not show whether his popu-

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[109] Deng 1984, pp. 302–325.

[110] See, e.g., "Uphold the Four Cardinal Principles" (in Deng 1984, pp. 189–191) in which Deng Xiaoping explicitly presents his personal views about some issues in contemporary theo-retical discussions, which he nevertheless hopes to continue to develop various viewpoints.

larity had decreased or not. Throughout the years of 1978–1981, persuasiveness of authoritative origins or backing was decreasing, while more attention was paid to the content of an argument. Besides, even if Hua's name appeared less than before, no other leader replaced him in articles, and most of the articles of 1980 still seem to have treated Hua in a positive way. In 1981, Deng Xiaoping's name appears here and there illustrating that some writers substituted quoting Hua with quoting Deng. Quite likely, though, the criticism of Whateverism, which seems not to have involved Hua in 1978,[111] targeted him in 1980–1981 when the theme was revived.

Using mere press materials to prove what each leader's own theoretical stance was not uncomplicated either. Indeed, leaders' publicized speeches were sometimes compiled from several sources and the ideas may have come from the advisors writing the speech and not from the leaders themselves.[112] For example, it is difficult to ascertain from the press sources which ideas in the report on the government delivered by Hua Guofeng came from Hua himself and which were views of the collective leadership.[113] Besides, leaders had their own political programs as well. To attain their aims, they had to present their arguments in a persuasive form: this meant calming down opponents, compromising with other members of the leadership, convincing skeptics, satisfying their own allies and supporters, appealing to the masses, and obeying party discipline and the rules of publicity. A leader must present not only his political platform but also his personal power interests in the form of a persuasive argument. Therefore, what leaders publicly said is not necessarily exactly what they believed. Moreover, showing convergence between a leader's stance and an article does not show the direction of influence, unless a leader's statement is publicized before the article is. If a press article precedes a leader's statement, it could mean that the press has convinced a leader. Likewise, it could also mean that a leader has promoted a certain viewpoint and supported its publication even before he could publicly state his opinion as a leader constrained by intra-leadership rules of outward unanimity.

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[111] To my understanding, in 1978–1979 articles interpreted Hua Guofeng not as a dogmatist but as a reviver of pre-Gang of Fourist interpretation of Maoism, including the mass line tradition then positively evaluated in the press. Although historiography, reflecting the post-1981 view, has mainly labeled Hua Guofeng as a Whateverist (e.g. Schoenhals 1991), contemporary scholars did not do so. For example, Sullivan 1980, saw that Hua Guofeng did not belong to the Whatever faction, but balanced between the Whatever and Practice factions and shared some opinions of both.

[112] See source analysis of one Deng Xiaoping's speech in Tanner 1999, pp. 169, 214.

[113] Stuart Schram have discovered that sometimes Hua Guofeng was forced to present as his own reports rewritten by reformists (Schram 1984, p. 27).

Another possibility is that the writer heard about a leader's support for the topic in non-public arenas and was therefore encouraged to publish his view.[114]

Thus, I leave analyzing theoretical stances within the leadership to others with a greater number of inside materials than the press can provide. Unfortunately, the inside materials available for foreign scholars are not likely to fully cover this gap, because interviews tend to reflect later developments and many intellectuals and administrators' reformist sympathies. Official mainland Chinese history writing shares the same bias because there is little space for the questioning of the origins, and thus the legitimacy, of the reformist line. Although this study cannot provide the final view of leadership positions in 1978–1981, it still seems safe to summarize from the press materials that Hua Guofeng's role in promoting open political discussion and democratization was considerably larger than most available studies have assumed.

If proving factionalist traits is nearly impossible through the textual analysis of press materials, textual analysis can still point out cases which seem to evade any factionalist aims. The 1978–1981 discussion involved many topics which can hardly represent any leader's views. I doubt that any Chinese leader would, for example, initiate topics that implicitly demand lifting any Party control over political life. This would hardly be in the interest of any leadership faction. Contemporary discussions about alienation and humanism are well-known examples of public discussions that hardly serve any ruling faction. Even Western scholars have been astonished to see that although these topics "threaten the legitimacy of Communist government the regime refused to make either of them a major political issue".[115]

One possible way of using textual analysis to gain some insight into the central Party influence on the discussion is the comparison of publications having open and restricted (*neibu*) circulation. I had access to many restricted circulation publications, like the Central Party School publication *Lilun dongtai* (Theoretical Trends). Restricted publications are meant to provide an arena for opinions too daring for open circulation or not yet backed unanimously by the leaders. However, publications of limited circulation during 1978–1981 prove disappointing to a reader expecting openness, albeit some interesting ideas first appeared in centrally published *neibu*-publications. Compared to open publications, centrally edited publications of limited circulation were often conservative and cautious in their views about democracy. Still, some provincial theoretical Party journals with

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[114] For example, Wan Li, constrained by the image of consensual collective leadership, let land reform in Anhui proceed in secrecy, in order to take it up as a promising example, when the time was ripe to publish results. Even then, local papers could publish this experimentation before central papers could. (Zweig 1997, p. 14, 61–64.)

[115] Gray 1990, p. 395.

neibu-status were on the frontline of theoretical innovation. This seems to suggest that conflict among the central leadership provided space for local and open publications at the time, possibly because leaders were unable to forge a consensus among themselves. However, the Party still managed to tightly hold the reins in the centrally controlled publication channels, including publications with restricted circulation.

What factionalism cannot explain

As must already be evident, I am interested in society, not in leadership roles. Therefore, I will examine political influencing through the argumentation and the theoretical finesse of the discussion. For explaining the course of the 1978–1981 discussion, I have found it fruitful to research the political aims of argumentation in the context of the general discussion and the sociopolitical environment rather than the participants' ties to the leadership. Arguments become understandable in the context of other discussants' views, which they support, weigh, criticize, or stimulate by introducing novel viewpoints. Even if writers have factionalist ties, their arguments appear in the context of the discussion. Although factional leaders can control publication channels, they cannot control reception. Even highly backed opinions are vulnerable to possible criticism or nonchalance, at least when the press provides space for rational evaluation of viewpoints as it did in 1978–1981.

Although the factionalist model may explain interaction between the leadership and some individual intellectuals, or can explain some occasions when a leader played an initiating, escalating, or inhibiting role in the discussion, it does not explain the course of the discussion in its totality. The discussion in 1978–1981 by no means was mere repetition of leaders' input, but rather it allowed writers to probe into questions as long as they did not overstep the limits of what was deemed publishable. For example, some researchers have studied the discussion about practice as the sole criterion of truth from the factionalist viewpoint. They have concentrated on the beginning of the discussion demonstrating how Deng Xiaoping's and Hu Yaobang's circles forced the slogan onto the publication agenda in order to undermine the positions of dogmatic Maoists.[116] However, the article introducing the slogan was originally privately submitted to *Guangming ribao*, although it was published and edited under the auspices of Hu Yaobang.[117] Later the discussion spread to academic circles, which found that with regard to much of the knowledge in the sciences, as in mathematics, practice is not the sole

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[116] E.g. Schoenhals 1991.

[117] Womack 1979, p. 774.

criterion of truth. [118] Probably for this reason, the slogan disappeared from political jargon in the press, although other similar slogans, such as "seek truth from facts" remained. One can hardly suppose a factionalist move here, when simultaneously the reformist faction was politically strengthening its positions. Rather, the factual discussion demonstrating problems with the slogan explains this move simply and credibly. Political expediency thus had given way to rational analysis.

Furthermore, the distribution of ideas is not unidirectional. There must have been instances when the press discussion and theoretical conferences made leaders adopt a certain viewpoint. After all, it is not very credible to think that leaders would form their opinions in a vacuum without any input of ideas from outside. In China as elsewhere, the press is one source for the leadership to get information about society and new ideas. Western research knows several cases from the 1980s, when theoretical or local solutions identified in publications were adopted as policies or laws. [119] The factionalist viewpoint tends to overvalue personal and power relations between leaders as the cause for decisions, at the cost of changes in ideas and the environment. For example, the cyclical alteration between more relaxed (*fang*) and more tightly controlled (*shou*) periods is often interpreted on the grounds of leaders' preferences and power games. [120] In such explanations, it appears that Deng Xiaoping first approved the Democracy Wall and then wanted to restrict it based on power calculations alone. [121] However, a leader like Deng Xiaoping can simultaneously value popular initiative and order, making him change his mind about the desirability of the means of popular input if social order is endangered. Likewise, it sounds credible that the leadership decides to tighten control when social actors test the limits of permitted public expression. Based on his fieldwork, Zhongdang Pan introduces how official countermeasures at times need to put journalism in order after journalists have used microsituational and opportunistic strategies to expand permissible areas of expression. [122] Similarly, changes in theoretical paradigms and orthodox values influence policies, as demonstrated by comparing the Mao era China with China in the 21st century. State socialist values simply produce different policy choices than the market liberalist framework does.

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[118] For some of these debates, see Brugger and Kelly 1990, chap. 5.

[119] See, e.g., Parris 1993, pp. 253–256; Tanner 1999, p. 127, 136–148, 216–217. Ann Kent argues that in the late 1970s the leaders co-opted the Li Yizhe slogan of "socialist democracy and a socialist legal system." (Kent 1993, p. 146.) However, this slogan appeared in the press far before national and local leaders had recognized the Li Yizhe group in December 1978. See, e.g., Yu Xinchi, *Jiefang ribao*, May, 5, 1978, p. 2.

[120] Baum 1994, pp. 5–9.

[121] E.g. Goldman 1994, pp. 42–45.

[122] Pan 2000, p. 194.

To summarize my approach, I will concentrate on the course of discussion, since the press in 1978–1981 permitted the publication of interesting, varying, creative, and critical views through which writers were able to promote their political programs. It would be difficult to derive such argumentation and counter-argumentation from strict censorship and the mere repeating of formulas given by the leadership. Neither can the mere power relations between followers of varying camps in the top-level leadership explain all analytical disagreement over arguments. The factionalist model also cannot explain occasions in which the discussants found fault in the Communist Party leadership system itself. Rather, many participants evidently participated in the discussion in the attempt to introduce, support, or contest arguments either for analytical purposes or for promoting the kind of political change they believed in.

1978–1981 discussion as changing paradigms

Rather than the factionalist approach, I would use Thomas Kuhn's theory of paradigms to illustrate the course of the discussion about democracy in 1978–1981. Thomas Kuhn inquires into the development of the sciences and has found that scientific revolutions often follow the formula in which one theory gains an orthodox position in the scientific world, until further research finds that this theory is unable to explain certain phenomena and a new theory able to explain these problems becomes a new orthodoxy. Unlike the times when one paradigm prevails, the periods when the old paradigm recedes and the new one gradually gains general acceptance are periods of discussion about fundamental problems of the theory.[123]

Paradigmatic analysis fits with the Chinese situation for the obvious reason that there were relatively strict demands for orthodoxy in public political theorization in the People's Republic. The Chinese formed a relatively isolated community with a relatively unified political education and style of public political expression. Therefore, a change in the official orthodoxy truly marked a change in the ways of conceptualization and expression. The second reason for similarities between scientific exploration and the ideological developments in socialist China, interestingly, seems to arise from the claims of the scientific nature of Marxism. This tradition expected Marxism to combine correct theory and practical success. When there was an evident contradiction between theory and practice, a paradigmatic crisis sometimes emerged. In 1978–1981, the reformist camp relied on this tradition. To promote its own rival paradigmatic approach, it produced empirical counterevidence to point to inconsistencies between the former orthodox theory and practical results. Consequently, one main paradigmatic revolution in the

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[123] Kuhn 1970.

official Chinese communist orthodoxy demanding reconsideration of the funda-
mental interpretation of Marxist theory took place from 1976 to 1982.

In the years between 1978 and 1981 the reformist paradigm replaced the
former revolutionary paradigm. To oversimplify somewhat, the revolutionary
paradigm emphasized political and economic equality, class struggle as a means
to promote social equality, direct mass participation, and popular attack on all bas-
tions of elitism in political institutions. The reformist paradigm, then, prioritized
economic affluence and was willing to tolerate some social inequality, if it could
increase efficiency and development. The reformist paradigm wanted to institu-
tionalize rules of decision making and social life. The reformist paradigm did not
discard Marxist discourse, but it reinterpreted its contents and aims in crucially
novel ways. Therefore, the change which took place between 1978 and 1981 was
more than a change of leadership styles and concrete political aims. This was a
more fundamental change of theoretical and methodological approach. The new
paradigm rejected former dogmas and treated Marxism as a method of inquiry and
subjected its principles to the test of practice. As a result, not only did the theoret-
ical background of social inquiry change, but the main problems of society were
also viewed anew. For example, the former egalitarian ideal was seen increasingly
as causing inefficiencies in the economic system and limiting individual choice.
The former class struggle approach to equality was now seen as a cause of in-
equality, when it subjected some to political struggle. Mass participation through
unofficial channels was later conceived as a threat to stability and established
democratic institutions.

An orthodoxy itself limits discussion, while open discussion is typical for a
period when an old paradigm has proved its ineffectiveness and a new paradigm
has not yet replaced it. Harsh criticism aimed at breaking the orthodoxy evolves
into discussion about alternative views until the new orthodoxy is formed and
educating readers about the new theory and values becomes the main aim of the
discussion. These three stages were evident in the Chinese press discussion: 1976
to 1978 was the period of heated attack on the Gang of Four on a personal and
theoretical level; from late 1978 to 1980 a relatively open and many-sided discus-
sion prevailed; by 1981 the discussion was calming down and emphasis was now
on introducing the new orthodoxy.

In the course of changing paradigms, the nature of political discussion chang-
ed. Persons, naturally, changed as well. Paradigmatic change established new
leadership and new theorists. Although I do not argue that a change in a discourse
itself produces changes in the leadership, changing political ideas do bring in new
people and new people provide for the change of paradigm. I would not explain
the changes in the Chinese leadership merely in terms of power struggle. Apart
from Hua Guofeng's inability to build lasting support for his position, his defeat

in maintaining the Party Chairmanship in the Party Central Committee session in June 1981 implicates defeat of the revolutionary paradigm. Hua was a figurehead for supporting the old paradigm that the majority of the Party Central Committee members already believed to be outdated for guiding China's current development. His ailing support thus directly correlates with him representing the old orthodoxy at a time when it already had been replaced by the new paradigm.