

**The Democratization
of China: A Near
Reality or a Distant
Improbability?**

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The China Model

- Do not expect China to follow Western **patterns**
- Vertical democratic **meritocracy**
- **Sustainable** if:
 - Citizens **support** democratic changes, but remain **loyal** to the party
 - Corruption is **ended**

Gradual Reforms

- “No country can adopt such **foundational elements** of democracy without eventually adopting the whole thing.” – Yasheng Huang
- Reforms by **the party**
 - Strengthen the regime
 - **Gradually** bring about democracy

The Fall of the CCP

- Performance **legitimacy**
- **Corruption**
- Choice of **reforms**
- **Regional** pressures

Research Question

Will China democratize in the near future, and if so, how?

Thesis

China is a **modernized** state with a **falling economy**. As the economy declines, citizens have begun to **question** and **protest** the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). In turn, the party has begun **repressing** people in order to **maintain power**. I predict that the CCP's **deteriorating legitimacy** will cause more individuals to **openly criticize** the regime, leading to **increased repression** in an unsustainable cycle. As domestic and **international pressures** mount, the CCP will crumble, making way for democratization.

China's Modernization

- **Urbanization:** 55.6%
- **Wealth:** Second largest economy
- **Industrialization**
- **Education:** 96.4% literacy



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Education, Middle Class, Relative Deprivation

- **Middle Class:** 2/3 of China
- Relative Deprivation
- **Unemployment:** 65%
- Ant tribes
- ✓ 43.9% Bachelor's
- ✓ 40.5% Associate
- ✓ 7.4% Master's



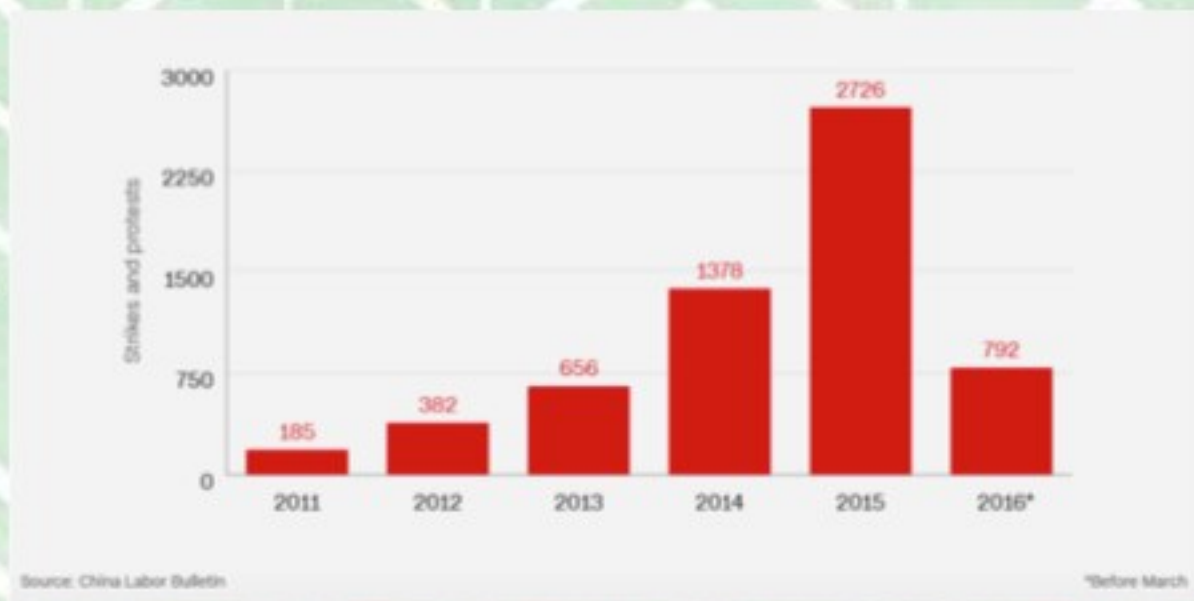
China's Economy

- **Slowest** growth in 25 yrs.
- **Devaluing** currency
- **FDI** fell 5.8% last year
- Labor is **cheaper** elsewhere



Criticism, Questions, and Protests

- Increased **strikes**
 - Unemployment
 - Unpaid wages, benefits
- **Vaccine** scandal
- **Caixin** news outlet



Repressive Response

- Increased **Censorship**
- **Public** shaming
- Arrests & **Jailings**
- **Travel** ban

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Story about Advisor's Free Speech Comments Removed from Caixin Website

Comments about people's right to speak freely prompt censors to delete Chinese-language article because it "violated laws and regulations"

By staff reporter Zhou Jingnan



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Open Criticism, Increased Repression

- Call for Xi Jinping to **step down**

“We have no choice but to point out that, precisely due to your gathering of all power into your own hands and making decisions directly, we are now facing unprecedented problems and crises in all political, economic, ideological, and cultural spheres... We feel that you do not possess the capabilities to lead the Party and the nation into the future, and we believe that you are no longer suitable for the post of General Secretary.” – March 30, 2016

- Journalists **Disappearing**
- **Blackmailing** dissenters; **kidnapping** family

Mounting International & Domestic Pressure

- **Hong Kong** protests
- United Nations **shaming**
- Wealthy population **migration**
- **Declining** foreign investment



Conclusion

Modernization + Falling **Economy**

Questioning, **Protests**

Repression

Open **criticism**

Deteriorating **legitimacy**

Increased **repression** + International **pressure**

Fall of the CCP + Room for **democratization**

Questions for Future Research

- Will uprisings lead to democracy?
- Will the CCP ideology change in order to maintain legitimacy?
- What does the future look like for ant tribe inhabitants?
- How does Hong Kong's desire for democracy affect China's future?

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