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
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?
Bibliography


Bibliography


Bibliography


Rowen, Henry S. “When Will the Chinese People Be Free?” *Journal of Democracy* 18, no. 3 (July 2007).
