Protest with Chinese Characteristics

The Market, the Media and the Evolution of Social Movements in China

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Word Count – 19,517

June 11, 2012

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1) Introduction

Within three decades China has transformed itself from being a self-dubbed third world state to being the presumed next world hegemon. In its rise the country has undergone major political reformation, changing from a near totalitarian, communist, pariah state to a socialist authoritarian state with a large degree of market freedom.

This transformation is largely attributable to the reforms started by Deng Xiaoping in 1978, which opened China's doors to the forces of the market with the decentralization of the Chinese economy. The state pulled itself out of the everyday lives of its citizens and its businesses and the result was an "economic miracle" with China's GDP grew exponentially - today standing at over 30 times what it was in 1980, while the standard of living has risen across the country.

At the same time as economic freedoms have steadily and progressed, political freedoms remain relatively uncertain. There had been assumptions both from within China and from outside of it that the loosened controls on the domestic market would in turn lead to a slackening of political restraint, however this has not entirely been the case. Political freedoms in China have come at a much slower pace than its economic reforms. Individuals and groups within China have repeatedly attempted to push the boundaries of political control in China with mixed results. There have been times that the Chinese Central Government has offered hints that they are willing to open the door on political freedoms, only to slam the door shut soon after.

A telling example of this was the protests in Tiananmen Square of 1989, a decade following the first of Deng's economic reforms. Students and workers took to the streets of Beijing with numerous grievances, such as corruption, unemployment and the desire for democracy, but the overlaying call was for political reforms. After months of uncertainty about how the CCP was going to react, and numerous signs that major change was imminent, the protests were swiftly and brutally cracked down on by the

People's Liberation Army (PLA) on orders from the Central Government (Zhao 2001). The two decades that followed the protests were a return to the slow process of trial and error for Chinese society as those seeking political reform waged a war of tiny battles in order to slowly gain more individual liberties.

Throughout the 1990s and the new millennium the Chinese Government has continued to be chastised both domestically and internationally for its inability to secure basic human rights for its people, its strict control over the flow of information as well as its harsh and often brutal treatment of dissenters.

Certainly it is easy to criticize the Chinese Government's brutal track record, one that continues to draw international ire this day, though the transition to a rights-promoting democracy may not be as simple as China's critics would put forth. Unlike numerous other authoritarian regimes of the past, there is reason to believe that there is a will within the modern CCP to better protect the rights of its people. Its penchant for suppression is not solely the result of paranoia and an utter lack of compassion, but rather has much to do with the precarious position the Party finds itself in. Since the reforms, the CCP's legitimacy atop China's political structure has become decreasingly based ideology and is almost entirely dependent now on economic performance and the maintaining of social stability (Zhao 2001).

The gradual regression of the Chinese state from the everyday lives of its citizens has meant that the CCP's legitimacy is increasingly based on its ability to serve the people. China's leaders are surely aware that the common predecessor to revolutions and regime changes is often the government's inability to put food on the table of its people – every society is three meals away from revolution, as the saying goes (Fearon & Laitin 2003). As long as unemployment is kept down and the standard of living continues to rise the legitimacy of the CCP will go relatively unquestioned.

However, nothing lasts forever and China's economic success is in no way exempt from this rule. Chinese authorities have managed to manoeuvre through the economic minefield of the latter half of the first decade of the 21st century but this in no way means clear sailing for the CCP from here on out. Much of China's economic success is based on its attractiveness to multinational corporations (MNCs) and foreign direct investment (FDI), which is attributable in large part to its seemingly infinite supply of cheap labour. Signs are showing, however, that the well of labour is in no way bottomless and, because of this, the individual worker is becoming less and less expendable, a factor that will inevitably drive the cost of labour up (Hou 2011). This can be coupled with one of the major benefits of China's economic reform, which is an increasingly educated – and rights-conscious – population.

Up until recently the fiscal benefits bestowed upon the Chinese Government from its rapidly burgeoning economy resulted in their overlooking of lower-level corruption by officials and labour rights abuses by industries (Edin 2003), but the aforementioned demographic factors of the Chinese workforce are making it increasingly difficult to do so. Chinese authorities are being forced to listen increasingly to the demands of its massive working population in order to maintain social stability. However, a clampdown on rights abuses at the workplace, and measures taken to ensure proper compensation for these workers, could drive cheap labour seeking industries to find another nation in which to set up shop (Hou 2011).

The gathering successes of Labour Movements of recent years have demonstrated that the Chinese Government is increasingly willing to make concessions with the working class that it has long claimed to represent as a central tenant to communism (King-Chi Chan & Pun Ngai 2009). Of course, there are economic incentives and a historical reasoning to defend this class. More spending power in the hands of more Chinese citizens means that the Chinese economy has to depend less on being the factory of the world and more so on being the factory for itself (Hou 2011). Historically the Chinese rural and working classes have been the drivers of regime change, including that which brought in the CCP (Wasserstrom 2010). However this transition is not one that can happen overnight, the slow reform to implement workplace rights-based reform is understandable. A complete overhaul would surely be economic suicide, which would inevitably lead to major losses in jobs, social instability and would put the legitimacy of the CCP into serious question (Hou 2011).

One major indicator of the party's willingness to allow for political reforms is the state-controlled media. Before Deng's reforms, the Chinese media was under the strictest of control and newspapers served as an organ of government propaganda and a direct link between the CCP and the people (Shirk 2010). However, like most other aspects of Chinese society, and certainly like nearly all other Chinese industries, the media has begun to separate itself from the tight grips of the CCP; where once the media was owned and operated entirely by the state, there are a large number of media outlets that have become largely privatized. While the Chinese Government still maintains a minimum of 51% ownership of all newspapers and television stations, economic reforms have had the effect of giving media outlets two bosses, the state and the market (Shirk 2011).

The changing state of the media industry has been a key indicator of evolving the state-society relationship in the China. No longer simply a mouthpiece for the CCP, the media has increasingly become an avenue for both the state and for Chinese citizens to interact with and understand each

other. On the one hand, the liberalization of the media has made it increasingly difficult for the CCP suppress unflattering stories and has increased the pressure on the government to react to popular grievances. On the other hand, the Chinese Government has still been able to maintain a high-level of control on the traditional forms of media and still utilizes them to influence and manipulate popular opinion (Shirk 2011).

More recently, other forms of communication have emerged to take roles in the interaction between the CCP and the Chinese people. The advent of the Internet and proliferation of cell phones have entered the relationship as a fast and cheap way for members of Chinese society interact with each other. The introductions of these technologies in other societies have been cited as being essential in changing the relationship between the state and its people. Some have even gone as far as to attribute recent regime changes – the Arab Spring, for example – to the key role played by social networking websites Facebook and Twitter (Shirky 2012) (Lynch 2011).

The Chinese Government certainly hasn't been blind to the reported power of the Internet to mobilize the masses against authoritarian regimes. The CCP has managed to transfer much of its policy of censorship, as it pertains to traditional media, to the confines of the Internet (Yang 2010). Blogs, chatrooms and messageboards offer no immunity to those who wish to voice their criticism of the Party and overly expressive Chinese netizens being whisked away by the police is no rarity (Yang 2010).

With the amount of control over both traditional and new forms of media that the Chinese Government still maintains, how much of a role can the liberalizing media and the Internet play in empowering social movements in China? Free-flowing information has commonly been seen as the kryptonite of authoritarian regimes, but is this the case in China?

To examine this further, this paper will look to the Chinese Labour Movement, arguably the strongest and fastest growing social movement in the country, and examine the way in which the changes in traditional media and the introduction of new media have affected its growth and successes. The rise of collective actions by modern workers will be compared with the Democracy Movements of the 1980s, which occurred prior to the liberalization of the media and the introduction of new media, in order to gain a sense of how social movements formerly developed and operated.

It will be argued that while these new communications technologies have played an increasing role in the lives of many Chinese, their roles in the Labour Movements are best characterized as attributes than factors. Cell phones as a tool used by striking workers to distribute updates and knowledge of tactics has

become a common story, but to equate their use with the formation and successes of these strikes would be overlooking some major elements that have been a key part of contentious movement in China for some time.

The evolution of traditional media, on the other hand, has had a greater effect on the growth of the Labour Movement than the other two factors, but still cannot be considered a central force behind the proliferation and achievements of recent strikes.

Instead, it will be demonstrated that the same forces that powered the Democracy Movement of the late 1980s are behind the Labour Movement of today. Today's migrant workers share similar grievances with the students of 20 years ago – simply put, frustrations from being left out of the benefits of reform that were and are being bestowed upon other groups the country.

The reason why the workers are succeeding now while the students of the 1980s met a tragic end has much to do with the differences in both the target, and the demands made of that target, between the two movements. The demands of today's Labour Movement largely coincide with the future goals of the CCP while the demands of the Democracy Movement were seen by the party as a direct challenge to CCP legitimacy. As mentioned earlier, the CCP has a deep ideological connection to the struggles of workers and farmers and this coincides with the need for China to transition to a more consumer-based economy. Because of this, the Central Government has largely remained a passive observer to the Labour Movement, stuck in a conflict of interest between supporting the working class and keeping foreign investment in the country. In fact, as has been demonstrated over the course of the first decade of the millennium, the Central Government has a tendency to be influenced by worker protests, as can be seen by numerous policy changes over the course of the first decade of the millennium.

30 years ago, this was not the case. In the late 1980s, the students were given the also given the impression that there was a significant portion of the CCP that sympathized with their cause and hoped that they too could force the government's hand with their actions (Zhao 2001). This, of course, proved to be a serious and fatal miscalculation for the movement that resulted in the events of June 4, at Tiananmen Square.

To fully understand the motives, actions and environments of these two protests, it is essential to understand the theory that can be applied to the cases and history that preceded them. Because of this, this paper will begin with a literature review of social movement theory followed by a brief history of the Mao Zedong years, a period upon which the movements draw many of their symbols and themes.

The reforms of Deng Xiaoping, which eventually became the sources of contention for both movements, will then be explained.

Next, the liberalization of the media through the course of the 1980s will be discussed. The transitioning role of the media, as it loosened itself from the grips of party censorship, plays a significant part in the explanations of how both movements unfolded, particularly in the cases of the 1989 protests in Tiananmen Square and the Honda worker's strikes of 2010.

Stemming from the discussion on the liberalization of the media will be a look at how the Internet and new technology have grown within China and how they too have effected modern movements of contention.

With the history of the to-be-examined factors laid out, this paper will continue with the core of its analysis with an examination of three key moments in the Democracy Movement, which will then be followed by a study of two large-scale strikes that served as defining moments of the Labour Movement.

1.1) Counter-Arguments

Because this paper is runs counter to popular sentiments, and the burgeoning hype over social media, there are some obvious counter-arguments that might be put forth against the claims being made in this paper. The most notable would come from those authors who would advocate the major impact that modern technology has made on the ability for social movements to subvert authoritarian governments (Lynch 2011).

Clay Shirky argues that the low-cost of social media compensates for the disadvantage that disorganized and undisciplined groups face. Since authoritarian regimes usually ban or severely limit any formal organizations other than their own, the majority of movements that rise up against these regimes lack the vehicles of social movement organization that most democratic states have. Thus, contentious groups within authoritarian regimes would likely benefit from and be empowered by technology that's so easy to use (Shirky 2012).

Shirky does have a point, the speed and efficiency of new communications technology is likely to give unorganized groups, particularly those spread over long distances, an advantage over what they had at their disposal before.

However, the problem with undisciplined groups is that in the face of a threat they are more likely to crumble, and social media cannot overcome this. The ties of a strong network of close relationships are what keeps a movement together in the face of a threat, the speed and efficiency of social media does not build the strong ties necessary to build these types of networks. For example, if a relative or close friend of yours asked you to come protest with them over something that's likely to draw police attention, you're probably more likely to attend than if someone that you met in a chatroom were to ask you the same thing – you're also probably more likely to stay with and support your relative after the police arrive.

Furthermore, authoritarian governments, particularly the one covered in this paper, are well aware of the power of the Internet and communications technology. In China, for instance, if a citizen posts criticism of the state on a public messageboard and it's not removed or bombarded with a string of pro-Marxist, anti-capitalist counterattacks, it means that the censors of the Chinese Government are tolerating that post – the regime, or at least the censors that they hire, is far from being composed of a bunch of bumbling technologically-ignorant beings, still wondering how to use a mouse.

Citizens in authoritarian regimes are equipping their fight with social media technology, but authoritarian regimes like China are countering right back, and there is little evidence indicating that netizens are winning the battle with the CCP in the struggle for Internet supremacy (Yang 2011).

2) Literature Review

This paper was inspired out of the curiosity that the Chinese state invokes. There exists no state quite like China, an authoritarian communist state making a relatively successful and peaceful transition from a state-controlled to a hybrid free-market economy. Historically, the China has an exceptionally rich history, one with the longest uninterrupted state tradition in the world (Zhao 2001). Despite the fact that the last dynasty of the Chinese Empire concluded in 1911, many symbols and relics remain an integral part of the nature of the Chinese state today.

Speculation has run rampant since the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) came to power over the direction that China is headed in. Will it become the next hegemon or will it collapse under its own power? Will China democratize or will authoritarian rule maintain a permanent fixture of the Chinese state? What will China do with its growing power?

While a paper speculating on the future of the Chinese state would be fascinating, there are already far too many pundits making their assessments of China's future, and far too many unpredictable factors involved to making an educated calculation on what is to come. After all, how many would have predicted in 1956, when Mao Zedong came to power, that this predominantly agricultural nation torn by decades of war and a national pride dismantled by a century of colonialism, would rise to challenge as a world hegemon 50 years later?

With this in mind, this paper will instead be focused on the China of here and now, and those groups who have sought, and continue to seek, to alter the structure and the dynamics of the country from within.

It is true that there exists a vast amount of research focused on social movements, pioneered mainly by the now famous names of Charles Tilly, Sidney Tarrow and Doug McAdam. The work that these authors produced (and continue to produce) on revolutions, coups, and social movements was innovative for its time and has served as the bedrock of analysis for most modern scholars studying contentious action. Much of the foundations of this paper will draw upon their theories.

To offer a brief overview of their theory, in assessing the Democracy Movements of the 1980s, these authors attributed the initial successes of the movement, especially in the lead up to the Tiananmen Square protests, to the political socioeconomic structure that set the stage for microprocesses that lead to the movement to occur. The convergence of historical, cultural, transnational, political and economic forces created the setting where timely strategic interactions were able to both provide the spark for the movement and close off alternative directions for the movement to head in. Again, building off of their explanations for the 1989 Movement it will be argued that a very similar setting within China is occurring in today's Labour Movement, with the path of China's economy contributing to a growing political opportunity structure and the experience of past workers protests expanding the movement's repertoires of contention.

While admittedly this paper will fit into an already crowded field spawned by these authors, it will hope to slip into a subcategory that has yet to be fully explored. For China, in particular, there has been substantially less work conducted in the field of social movements. The reasons for this may seem obvious, obtaining quality information about the way in which contentious movements have formed within China, a state that tends to censor most information that has the potential to threaten regime stability, is rather difficult. However, this is not to say that there has been a complete dearth of

scholarship on the issue. Yongshun Cai, Goubin Yang, Dingxin Zhao and Kevin O'Brien have compiled thoroughly comprehensive and well argued scholarly works on the subject of contentious movements in China and this paper will be an attempt to build in their work in the field. It must be said that many of the cases that this paper will draw upon would not be available if it weren't for their years of fieldwork. However, this study will attempt to separate itself from their work and prove itself to be unique in two distinctive ways.

1) Cell phones and the Internet

Goubin Yang is largely the specialist within the category of the growth of the Internet in China. However, while Yang's most recent work has examined the effect of the Internet in more spontaneous protests and one-time events, this paper will attempt to relate his work to longer lasting movements and groups that seek to transform Chinese Government policy.

Yang makes convincing arguments and gives persuading examples of how the modern technology, in particular the Internet, has mobilized protests in China. However, the cases he uses to argue for the empowering effect of the Internet generally involve low-risk, short-term contentious action (Yang 2009). Critics of the empowering effect of the Internet generally point to the inability of the modern technology to give individuals enough incentives to continue with contentious action once the stakes are raised. In partial defense of Yang, I will use a number of his examples of higher-risk contentious actions that were facilitated by or organized via the Internet. Modern technology, after all, does lend a number of advantages to groups pursuing contentious action:

a. Social networks can form, coordinate and mobilize now with greater speed and efficiency than ever before. Massive amounts of people can be given the same message simultaneously, whether it is directives or news of contentious action, the ability to instantly disseminate knowledge is a vital tool for the coordination of large movements.
b. Grievances can be shared amongst massive amounts of people across an exceptionally larger area of space. Citizens can now share their issues and experiences on a far larger scale leading people to build networks that may have never had the possibility to form. When individuals identify a large number of people that share the same or similar grievances with a regime, the psychological power of the regime's legitimacy has the

potential to lose its grip, leading to what Doug McAdam terms a “cognitive liberation” within the population (Howard 2011).

c. Expedience is coupled with the higher prospect of confidentiality. This is particularly relevant in states authoritarian states with tight controls on the flow of information and who possess a certain (likely justified) paranoia about dissident activity. As Susan Shirk states: “The Chinese leaders’ fear of free flowing information is not mere paranoia; some comparative social science research indicated that allowing ‘coordination goods’ like press freedom and civil liberties significantly reduces the odds for authoritarian regimes to survive in power.” (Shirk 2011 p.6) From a cost-benefit perspective of an aggrieved citizen living in an authoritarian state, the low risk of getting caught and punished for participating in a contentious digital network makes it a more attractive option than meeting in person.

The social movements occurring across the Middle East, dubbed the Arab Spring, were largely attributed in Western media to social networking sites (Facebook, Twitter), increasingly powerful search engines (Google), and text messaging. Naturally, there were far more factors at work than simply the implementation of modern social networking tools, but the significance of modern tools in helping these movement along cannot be entirely dismissed (Howard 2011). Elements of all of the above features were present and have been noted to have contributed to the movements’ success. Certainly the responses on the part of the regimes of the region indicated that they too saw these new technologies as a threat. Authoritarian governments across the Arab world scrambled to limit or shut down the flow of information through these new devices, often to no avail (Howard 2011).

2) The liberalization of the Chinese media.

As will be elaborated on later, the Chinese media has undergone significant changes both in the way it reports the news and the way it interacts with the state and the society. No longer simply an organ of the CCP, the media has the growing ability to dictate, on its own terms, what news the people will receive.

As noted by Susan Shirk, the widespread dissemination of information leads to a general understanding of what is common knowledge. During the period that the Chinese media was still under the complete control of the CCP this effect worked in the favour of the party, as it drew support for popular party policies. However, as the party loosened its grip on media outlets the sources of information expanded and CCP lost some of its advantage in dictating popular opinion (Shirk 2011).

To use an analogy of Thomas Schelling, echoed by Shirk: 'the participants of a square dance may all be thoroughly dissatisfied with the particular dances being called, but as long as the called has the microphone, nobody can dance anything else' (Shirk 2011 p.6). The liberalization of the media multiplied the number of people holding microphones and the dawning of the Internet age delivered a microphone to the doorstep of 384 million Chinese homes.

The logical assumption would be that an increasingly liberalized media and the diversification of opinions would greatly accelerate the way in dissenting voices can disseminate and sway the public in their favour. Certainly this was the idea behind the many Cold War strategies of the West as they broadcast the Voice of America over the Eastern Bloc countries of the Soviet Union and smuggled various other information producing technologies such as fax machines and photocopiers behind the iron curtain (Shirky 2012). However, much as it has been proven that these efforts did not substantially contribute to the downfall of the Soviet Union, the multiplication of voices in the Chinese media has not significantly undermined the CCP's monopoly over public opinion. As Daniella Stockman has found in her studies of the anti-Japanese protests of 2005, the Chinese Government has not only been able to cope with the growing array of voices but actually utilize the liberalization of the media to serve its own means (Stockman 2011).

Still, this does not mean that the opening of the Chinese media to the market has gone without any positive effects on popular contention. This analysis will hope to explain those effects.

2.1) State-Society Relations Theory

The analysis will also draw substantially from the work of Dingxin Zhao and his study of the democracy protests of 1989 and the Tiananmen Square incident of June 4 of that year. Zhao's research on the causes of the Tiananmen Square massacre is both thorough and comprehensive. Because of Zhao's

extensive research and knowledge of the events of Tiananmen Square it would be nearly impossible to conduct an analysis of high-quality without borrowing from his casework. Because of this, many of the methods employed by Zhao in his analysis of Tiananmen Square will be used for the detailing of the events of 1989 and mirrored for the explanation of the Honda strikes of 2010.

For example, Zhao's theory of continuous state-society interaction will serve as a basis to understanding how the Honda strikes took shape. As will be demonstrated, the two movements have strong parallels when compared in this manner. However, this paper will be unable to replicate, to the same intricacy, Zhao's analysis of micro-level processes and individual interactions for the Labour Movement, due to an absence of usable information for the Honda strikes. Instead, this analysis will be primarily focused on utilizing the structural-causes component of Zhao's argument.

To give an understanding of Zhao's theory of state-society relations, it is necessary to begin with a very brief overview of his definitions. Zhao borrows from Michael Mann in his definition of the state, which is "a complex, territorially centered organization with a differentiated set of institutions, including military organizations." The state's strength, which plays a large role in creating opportunities for contentious action to occur, is determined by the level of cohesion among its elites and its "infrastructural power," defined by Zhao as the state's ability to penetrate society, generate revenue and mobilize the masses for various purposes (Zhao 2011).

The next definition required for Zhao's theory is that of state-society linkages, which contains both a psychological and an economic dimension. The psychological dimension is the perceived legitimacy of the state by the general populace and that which affects the perceived legitimacy of the state. The economic aspect of the definition is the ability for the state to secure fundamental necessities (employment, food, housing, etc.) for the population (Zhao 2011). In short, state-society linkages are the relationships between the state and its society.

Finally, the nature of society Zhao defines as primarily based in its structure – "the spatial relations among people as well as in terms of the density, diversity, and relationships of social organizations in a society" (Zhao 2011 p. 24) – society is rather self-explanatory, but in essence it is an environment with relationships and institutions that define how group of individuals within a nation interact with one another.

3) Caveats

The goal of this paper at the outset was to provide a thoroughly comprehensive detailing of the way in which social movements come about in China. Due to time and resource constraints, the study has been left less thorough than what it has the potential to be.

Much of the facts and figures relied upon in this paper are from secondary sources and this study has benefitted greatly from the body of work that has come before it. In some cases, in particular the description of the Honda strikes later in the piece, newspaper articles were relied upon in order to obtain a more intimate view of the movement. This is the result of the freshness of the case, in that very little academic work has been published on that specific event. It is accepted that this portion of the piece has not been held to the highest standards of academic scrutiny, but for the purposes of this paper it was a necessity.

It is also an admission that the examples given in this paper are by no means reflective of every event within each movement. Instead, they were chosen because they are the most high-profile events in their specific movements, and can generally serve as an example of how smaller events likely played out as well.

4) Background

4.1) Mao's Iron Rice Bowl

In the early days of Mao Zedong there existed the concept of the "iron rice bowl" and the "clay rice bowl," policies that stipulated a relationship between the Chinese people and the CCP that held that the individual should work for the good of the collective, and in return receive social welfare from the state (Kochar 2010). This policy had its roots in communist ideology, as the CCP, like most other communist parties, maintained its legitimacy on the basis that it was the vanguard of the proletariat, the protector of the masses (Wasserstrom 2010).

To begin with, all citizens were given the "five guarantees:" food, shelter, clothing, medical care and proper burials. In the cities, the iron rice bowl policy ensured that workers were guaranteed lifetime employment along with a package of social benefits, including medical insurance, housing and education. If a worker died, his job was often passed on to his or her children (Kochar 2010).

In the rural areas the clay rice bowl policy entrusted the distribution of social welfare to cooperatives who divided the labour and wealth amongst the community, providing similar insurance benefits as the urban workers received in the city (Kochar 2010).

The CCP also attempted to manipulate market forces in order to reduce the burden of poverty by fixing wages and the prices of essential goods, such as food, transportation and housing, while also providing subsidies to help those who were less well-off (Kochar 2010).

This, of course, was no perfect system – far from it, in fact. Millions of peasants died of starvation during the Great Leap Forward as a result of this system and the incredible strain that Mao's policies put on these cooperatives (Kochar 2010).

Mao's two decades of rule were certainly marred by his frequent purges and social experiments that went horribly wrong. However workers still think of this as a time when they could always count on receiving their basic necessities. Despite all of the suffering that was caused during this time, Mao continues to play a symbolic importance to the migrant workers of China.

4.2) Deng's Reforms 1978-1989

After nearly three decades of an often brutal rule under Mao Zedong, Deng Xiaoping informally took the reins of the CCP and soon overhauled the mindset of the party. Under Deng, China's economy flourished and the nation rapidly rose to international prominence facilitated almost entirely by his economic restructuring.

Deng had developed a reputation for prizing economic reform while he was a high-ranking official in the CCP, this reputation led to his being purged on numerous occasions only to be brought back into the inner-circle soon later. With the death of Mao, and after a brief power struggle at the top of CCP leadership, Deng was able to implement the reforms he believed would catapult China to the status of world leader (Wasserstrom 2010).

The first of these reformations was the elimination of the commune system implemented during the Mao years. The incentive-less system of quotas set for farmers, with state ownership over whatever goods they produced, was replaced by lower benchmarks with freedom for peasants to trade or consume their excess product (Kochar 2010).

The reform first began in experimental fashion in a few select regions and worked with remarkable success. Farmer's newfound freedom, and incentives to overproduce, led to a dramatic increase in production in the test areas. The introduction of the market, rewarding the hardest working farmers with increased profits, led to a near immediate increase in the quality of life in the area. Soon, the Chinese Government decided to extend the reforms to the whole country. The result was a dramatic improvement in nationwide agricultural productivity as well producing a labour surplus in rural areas where villagers were no longer required to work the land (Hou 2011). The result created a sense of entrepreneurship within the Chinese farming community and sowed the seeds for the market reform that would characterise the next decade.

The next stage was more outward looking. Deng oversaw the creation of Special Economic Zones (SEZs) where local authorities were granted the authorization to conduct external trade without having to go through the Central Government and a sizable amount of bureaucratic red tape that they had in the past. Much like Deng's rural reforms, SEZs were first implemented on a small-scale, with the status only given to four areas at first but then extended to hundreds more as the initial tests proved successful (Hou 2011). This reform brought in large amounts of foreign direct investment (FDI) for the first time since the CCP came to power.

The ball of reform continued to roll after this as the Chinese state gradually withdrew its control over the economy. The Chinese Government introduced the concept of a "coordinated commercial economy," separating various State Owned Enterprises (SOEs) from the direct control of the Central Government. Prior to Deng's reforms all enterprises and resources were owned by the state. From the macro to the micro-level which, by extension of the guarantee of employment, included an individual's own labour (Hou 2011).

The fever of entrepreneurialism swept the country and nearly every industry that was not considered an essential service became subject to privatization. By the mid 1980s, with privatization in full swing, it was apparent that Deng had set loose the wild stallions of the market forces and the CCP was simply trying to hold on to the reigns.

The reforms provided an immediate financial gain for those who were in a position to take advantage of it. Entrepreneurs, those with the finances to partake in enterprise ownership and particularly industrious farmers, all benefitted from the retreat of state control. However not all segments of Chinese society reaped the rewards of the reform.

When the CCP loosened its grip on the market it also reformed social welfare provisions. In 1983 the Central Government reshaped its policy to place the onus of these provisions on both the employer and the employee, meaning the common worker and the enterprise became responsible for establishing insurance and welfare provisions. Laws were set in place that stipulated the amount of social security an employee should receive from his or her employer, but the oversight and implementation of this was in the hands of the enterprise, no longer the government (Kochar 2010).

In the same year, the guarantee of a job was removed from state policy – enterprises were given the ability to hire and fire when they pleased within an established quota. Chinese workers could no longer rely on "cradle-to-grave" social welfare. The citizens were left to their own devices and, like many other aspects of Chinese society at that time, the increasingly influential forces of the market.

The guarantee of a job to every person in society led to a large degree of inefficiency and redundancy at the workplace. The loss of this guarantee led to significant downsizing within numerous state-owned enterprises (SOEs) as by 1996 more than half of these enterprises were reporting losses owing to the massive costs of labour and social welfare (Kochar 2010).

SOEs were forced to either layoff large quantities of workers or shutdown completely, as a result many workers found themselves without a job living on compensation that was legally owed to them by their employers, which was 50% of their wage plus medical insurance. The issue was that many of these SOEs, suffering from massive losses already, could not afford to pay this compensation to laid-off workers (Kochar 2010).

By the early 1990s workers began to take to the street to protest over unemployment and unpaid compensation and pensions. The rising number of strikes and protests over the course of the decade pressured the government into implementing a state-provided unemployment insurance in 1999 that included welfare provisions such as housing and medical costs and by 2001 covered 100 million beneficiaries by 2001 (Kochar 2010).

However, in 2002, it was clear that the Chinese government was feeling the strain of providing welfare for such a large population and continued its efforts to rid itself of excessive financial burdens as it redefined housing as no longer falling under the category of material welfare. Not long later, medical insurance too was deemed a responsibility of the worker and it too was removed as a component of state unemployment insurance (Kochar 2010).

4.3) The Liberalization of the Media 1989-Present

During the Mao years the media in China was utilized as a tool for the CCP to deliver propaganda. The government's tight control on the content of newspapers meant that the media was in essence the face of the party (Shirk 2011).

Prior to Deng the media played a substantial role in propagating Mao's brutal campaigns. The propaganda distributed by the media defined the enemies of the state and in doing so pitted neighbours and relatives against each other during episodes of purges and, in particular, the brutal Cultural Revolution during which Deng and his family suffered immensely (Kissinger 2010).

With Deng's reforms in 1978 the party loosened its control over the media and allowed market forces to creep in. Deemed an essential service by the CCP, the reforms within the media were slower than they were in other industries. During the 1980s the Central Government allowed only marginal commercial influence on newspapers, although there were a number of notable attempts to experiment with the newly granted freedom – the first commercials were aired and the broadcast and printed messages began to stray from the Party line (Di 2011).

Gradually, foreign investment began to made inroads into the Chinese media industry. Wary of stepping on any party toes, the initial projects launched were non-political publications on topics such as fashion and computers. The Chinese version of *Elle* magazine, for example, was launched in 1988 (Gang & Bandurski 2011).

True reform, however, did not come until the early 1990s beginning in 1992, with a Hong Kong businessman named Yu Pinhai. Yu started a joint venture with Chinese newspaper *Xiandai Renbao* and introduced Western techniques of reporting and editing. *Xiandai Renbao* immediately presented competition to the official papers in its city of Guangzhou as it covered politically sensitive topics while the other newspapers continued to reproduce the stories published in the flagship paper of the CCP, *the People's Daily*. Although *Xiandai Renbao* was ultimately shutdown in 1995, its existence became the catalyst that ultimately opened up the Chinese media to reform.Beginning in the mid-1990s other newspapers and television stations begin to stray from the usual practice of regurgitating the Party line. Official papers began to produce liberalized spinoffs that had the goal of producing more marketable, reader-grabbing news (Gang & Bandurski 2011).

Much like it had cut back on social welfare provisions for citizens, the Central Government began to reduce subsidies for most media outlets (Gang & Bandurski 2011). Because of this, these media outlets had to use advertising in order to support their product. Media outlets were thrown into market competition with one another to produce more desirable products, which inevitably entailed running increasingly politically risky stories to attract more readers. Even *the People's Daily* underwent reforms to increase its competitive nature such as introducing a section for "letters to the editor" that permitted a degree of state criticism (Gang & Bandurski 2011).

Local officials in charge of television stations found it increasingly difficult to balance station budgets with declining government subsidies. In 1979 these stations were given the green light on permitting advertisement as the Central Government made a recommendation that these outlets begin to look for self-funding (Miao 2011).

Much like their counterparts in the newspaper industry, television stations became increasingly reliant on advertising revenue and less so on government funding throughout the course of the 1980s. By 1990 advertising revenue, USD 21 million, for the official CCP flagship station, CCTV, was more than double the government funding that it was receiving, USD 9 million (Miao 2011). By 2011 the station's advertising revenue had risen to USD 605 million (Miao 2011).

The result was that the television industry, previously a financial burden on the government, became a cash cow. "In 2004, the total advertising revenue of Chinese television was USD 3.74 billion, of which about USD 967 million was earned by CCTV alone and another USD 1.87 billion was earned by the provincial television stations. It is estimated that advertising accounts for more than 90 percent of the total revenue of the Chinese television broadcast industry." (Miao 2011 p.96)

These reforms, of course, did not mean that the CCP's influence had vanished from the media. During the reformation, media outlets continually tested their boundaries, dubbed "playing table tennis on the edge." Countless publications were shut down, and media personnel were fired or imprisoned for overstepping the line set out by the Party. The government still maintained a firm control over what was deemed publishable and what topics were banned (Gang & Bandurski 2011).

Newspapers were forced to find and strike a delicate balance between the producing a marketable product, and staying within the lines laid down by the CCP. Media outlets played a dangerous game, the costs of which were dire on each side. Cross party lines and face the punishment, sound like a party mouthpiece and lose readership and revenue.

Editors and reporters soon found ways, however, of coping with the situation. One tactic was to publicize breaking news before the party had a chance to give a directive on the matter. The other was to ignore party instructions and hope that the punishment for doing so was not too severe.

An interesting example of creatively adhering to directives given by the propaganda department of the CCP while still catering to readership occurred in the lead up to the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games. Liu Zhihua, the Vice-Mayor of Beijing who was responsible for the construction projects of the Beijing games, was stripped of his official party rank on allegations of corruption (Gang & Bandurski 2011). The Central Government, likely fearing that this news could quickly turn into an international news story and taint the games, issued a reporting ban on the story meaning any interviews with officials, experts and people related to the story were prohibited. The only information available was a carefully worded news release given to all newspapers. Being bound to only use the words of that news release, almost every paper produced the same article (Gang & Bandurski 2011).

The dilemma faced by the competitive commercial papers was that this story was fascinating and likely to draw in a vast number of readers if published and marketed properly, and yet they were bound to produce only the mundane details handed down by the party. Because of this, commercial papers were forced to find creative ways of catering to the market demands, while staying within the lines (Gang & Bandurski 2011).

People's Daily, the official paper of the CCP, covered the story by placing the article on page four, just above the weather report, with the title of "Standing Party of Beijing Party Congress Opens 28th Congress," minimizing the impact of the real story, the firing of a top party official. On the other end of the spectrum, the commercial spin-off of *People's Daily* ran the same article as its official affiliate, but placed the headline at the top of the front page with the title "Vice-Mayor Liu Zhihua Removed from Office" (Gang & Bandurski 2011).

Possibly the most creative tactic employed by a newspaper in coverage of the Liu Zhihua story is that employed by Shanghai's *Oriental Morning Post.* While interviews related to the story were forbidden, a reporter from the *Oriental Morning Post* pulled descriptions off of government websites that detailed the job functions of Liu Zhihua as well as the committees he sat on and the projects he was involved in – information not given out in the official press release. Due to the fact that all of this information was obtained from government sources the reporter was not in violation of the reporting ban, and yet the

Oriental Morning Post was able to deliver a more descriptive story than many of its competitors (Gang & Bandurski 2011).

The significance of the burgeoning gap in the styles of reporting between the official, semi-official and the commercialized papers is that certain papers began to gain the trust of readers as a reliable, unbiased source of information (Stockmann 2011). In particular, papers that were seen as the furthest from being organs of the party were seen as the most trustable sources by readers, the result being that the more credible media outlets played an increasingly influential role in the shaping of public opinion. This emergent aspect of the industry has transformed the media from a tool solely of the state to one that can be used by a variety of actors both within government and the population.

> "*By the time President Hu Jintao came to power in 2002, the media commercialization process was already in high gear. The president's own media policy was, as expected, a marriage of commercialization and control, the policy, called the Tree Closenesses (to reality, to people, and to life), urged journalists to make their reporting more relevant by moving away from dull regurgitations of official news releases. The Three Closenesses was about creating more savvy, lively and believable media products. The policy reiterates the imperative of party control, or "guidance," but also underscored what had already become obvious – the media now had two masters, the party and the public."* (Gang & Bandurski 2011 43)

The media also began to serve the as a window through which the government and the public can gain a sense of the other's stance on an issue (Gang & Bandurski 2011). Whereas once media outlets were a one-way street through which only the government could deliver its opinion to the masses, after the reforms the media were increasingly being used by the government to gauge public opinion on issues as popular opinions were increasingly publicized and broadcast.

The changing relationship between the media, the Chinese Government and the Chinese people has certainly raised questions about the effects it has on social movements within the country.

5) The Democracy Movement

To examine how the market and the media have altered this relationship, this analysis will begin with one of the largest and most publicized events since the reforms – the Democracy Movement of the 1980s.

The death of Mao sparked a power struggle atop the CCP over the direction of the party and who should lead it. The split was seemingly between the left-wing hardliners who wanted to see a China's authoritarian nature remain, much like in the days of Mao, and the reformers led by Deng Xiaoping (Zhao 2001).

Deng was initially purged, but then rising up the party again to become tantamount leader of the Party. Deng strongly advocated that the pursuit of knowledge and allowance of criticism was an essential component to China's growth as a nation. The iron-fisted governance of Mao had been replaced with what seemed to be a kinder and gentler regime. Deng had supported, in limited bursts, dissident opinion. At first, there was a perception that with Deng in charge the time to speak one's mind had finally come – this perception kick-started the famous Democracy Wall Movement of 1978-79.

5.1) Huang Xiang and the Democracy Wall Movement 1978-79

The roots of the Democracy Wall Movement can be traced back to a demonstration in Tiananmen Square 1976 that was inspired by the death of Zhou Enlai, Mao's right-hand man and somewhat of a moderate in comparison to Mao. It is believed that, despite the horrible atrocities that were committed during the Cultural Revolution, Zhou Enlai's messages of moderation to the masses and the Red Guard youths carrying out the violence during the period helped quell the brutality of the movement to a degree.

In the last year of Mao's life Zhou disappeared from the political scene. Overwhelmed by the leadership struggle that was brewing over the Mao's successor and chastised as being a moderate by the leftist side of the CCP, Zhou retreated into isolation.

Stricken with cancer, Zhou made one final public appearance in 1975, at a meeting of the National People's Congress (NPC), the first since this assembly had met since the Cultural Revolution. He delivered a speech that began with carefully worded praise for the Communist Party and the Cultural Revolution, as well as his allegiance to Mao. After toeing the party line for the first half of his speech, Zhou subtly changed his tone and began speaking of the "four modernizations" that China must reach by the end of the century in order to grow as a country – agriculture; industry; national defence; and science and technology – and told the crowd in front of him that these were the instructions of Chairman Mao (though no evidence of these instructions being given exists) (Kissinger 2010).

When Zhou passed away one year later, mourners poured into Tiananmen Square to commemorate his death. The mourners used this opportunity to place poems and symbols around the square advocating the four modernizations and issuing subtle attacks on the hard-line left-wing group – "the Gang of Four" – that came to power after the death of Mao. The night after the mourners had gathered, authorities removed their poems and posters. This led to a confrontation the next day between the mourners and the authorities, with many being arrested. Soon after the confrontation between the protesters, official newspapers publicized the event as a planned incident by counter-revolutionary hooligans (Broadsgaard 1981). Deng Xiaoping, the chief rival to the Gang of Four, was deemed responsible for inciting the incident and was dismissed from his post.

After a two year long power struggle between the factions, with Deng and his allies ending on top, Deng reversed the decision on the Tiananmen Square incident and released those imprisoned. To the youth of China, the releasing of the prisoners had a large symbolic effect. This signified a change in how the state, now under Deng, would treat criticism. It also hinted at Deng's intentions to pursue Zhou's plan of liberalizing and modernizing the nation (Zhou 2001).

Under Deng the first publication arose that offered criticism of radical leftism, the *China Youth Daily*, which criticized the personality cult of Mao and praised those taking part in the Tiananmen Square incident. Poems and posters advocating reform began circulating more openly, which culminated in the beginning of the Democracy Wall Movement (Kelliher 1993).

In 1978, a poet named Huang Xiang was inspired and encouraged by his close friends to publicize some of the poetry he had written during the days of Mao. The group, likely sensing the new opportunity under Deng to voice their criticism of the previous regime, travelled 1500 miles to Bejing. In October, the group arrived in Beijing and snuck down an alleyway with sheets of Huang's poetry and paste and plastered his work on the walls. Their actions began to draw attention from bystanders, and soon the crowd grew. Huang began to read his poetry, critical of Mao and the Cultural Revolution, to the growing crowd (Emerson 2004).

Huang and his friends' efforts inspired others and soon other posters and poems plastered the downtown core of Beijing. The criticisms and expressions displayed in the posters varied widely in what their targets and objectives were. Some advocated a return to more Marxist style governance, criticising officials of becoming elites, and others encouraged the continuation of liberal reform. The overall

purpose of the wall, however, was a call for the regime to listen more to the people's concerns (Kelliher 1993).

Deng had, at first, supported this movement, and agreed that the CCP could benefit from a bit of criticism. However, as the movement continued to grow over the span of a year, calls for democracy began to flourish. The developments began to increasingly question the Party's legitimacy and Deng was forced to crackdown on the movement in 1979, first moving the posters to a difficult to access location and then banning them altogether along with arresting the more vocal advocates of democratic reform (Kelliher 1993).

5.2) Fang Lizhi and the Democracy Protests of 1986

Though the crackdown on the movement resembled some of Mao's purges, such as the Cultural Revolution and the Hundred Flowers Campaign, sudden intolerance by the authorities may have been spawned more out of fear of what it could become as opposed to a Mao-style ploy to weed out dissidents.

Despite his about-face on the Democracy Wall, Deng continued on with his reforms and continued to preach about the importance of knowledge and free-thinking – compared to the Mao era, intellectuals became much freer to associate with a greatly reduced risk of punishment. In the meantime, his reforms began to receive criticism from both ends of the spectrum. On the left, he had critics fearful that his reforms would lead to the downfall of the CCP and the rise of capitalism. On the right, students and intellectuals criticised his reforms for going too slow, and calls for political change soon rose again (Kelliher 1993).

In 1986 an astrophysics professor named Fang Lizhi, like many other intellectuals at the time, became frustrated with the slow progress of political reform in the country. Despite the rhetoric coming from the party that encouraged the flow of free thought, intellectuals still faced occasional punishment for apparently overstepping their bounds (Buckley 1991).

Fang had been delivering speeches to students in university campuses across the country in which he would voice harsh criticism of the party's treatment of intellectuals and students as well as question Marxist ideology. His speeches weren't simply rants either; full of comic delivery and satire, he managed to encapsulate and galvanize his audiences with his oratory skills (Buckley 1991).

His tour inspired a group of his students to take to the streets and call for democracy. Fang, in actuality, was against the demonstration, thinking it would be swiftly crushed by the Chinese Government, and instead had hoped merely to persuade his students to think more critically. However, instead of heeding his warnings to restrict their criticism to the campus, most protests left the confines of the university and demonstrated on the streets of their respective cities (Buckley 1991).

Waves of protests soon spread across the country, peaking in 1987, subsiding in 1988 and then rising once more in 1989 (Wasserstrom 2010). While the overlying ideology associated with the protests was democracy, the students actually had only a relatively vague idea of what democracy meant. In actual fact, most of their grievances stemmed from the frustrations of everyday student life in China at the time. While some of the student's demands were democratic in nature, such as the ability to elect their own student leaders, many were mere annoyances government control – such as being banned from dancing at concerts (Kelliher 1993).

The concept of democracy was really more symbolic of a desire for general change in the way the Chinese Government affected their lives. Much of this can be attributed to Western culture that had been slowly trickling in with Deng's reforms. The political theories and ideologies inspired the students, though in actuality most of them were still unsure about what these ideas entailed (Kelliher 1993). In essence, despite the gradual rise in the quality of life within China as a result of Deng's reforms, the doors had been opened to criticism and CCP was increasingly being blamed for China's backwardness and its widespread social ills.

Hu Yaobang, the General-Secretary of the CCP at the time, was ordered by Deng to dismiss Fang and two other leaders of the democracy protests in the late 1980s from the CCP, in essence costing the three their jobs. Hu refused and was subsequently blamed by his political opponents for being too soft on the protesters and their leaders. The mounting criticism eventually led to Hu's resignation in 1987 (Wasserstrom 2010). Two years later Hu died of a heart attack, and once again students and intellectuals clamoured into Tiananmen Square to mourn the loss of a political ally.

5.3) One Month in Beijing 1989

On April 15, 1989, the night that Hu died, about 80 posters appeared on the campus of Beijing University. Most of these posters mourned his passing, but some, much like after the death of Zhou Enlai, criticized the party (Zhao 2001). Within a few days the number of posters grew to 570, with the majority now echoing government criticism (Zhao 2001).

On April 15 the first demonstration took place, as a group of 600 students from the University of Political Science and Law went to Tiananmen Square to lay a wreath for Hu. Later that evening, students at Beijing University also began to head towards the Square when they heard that other students were marching in the streets, though they were unaware of the exact reason for the demonstration (Zhao 2001). In fact, as Zhao describes, the purpose of the movement seems to have been made up on the go. This was the exchange that occurred between the leaders of the two groups, when one was asked the purpose of the demonstration:

Student A: I don't know either. It is you guys who initiated this.

Student B: Then we should set several demands.

(Zhao 2001)

The students discussed and eventually came up with a list of demands: the renouncing of the injustices committed against Hu Yaobang and prior pro-democracy demonstrations; freedom of the press, including objective news coverage of demonstrations in official papers; the legalization of demonstrations; increased benefits for intellectuals; and the publicizing of the salaries of government officials (paraphrased for length purposes) (Zhao 2001).

Initially the demonstrations were festive, an excuse to skip class and get together with other students. However, rumours soon spread about failed promises by officials to meet with the students as well as police brutality and the mood within the demonstrators turned more aggressive, culminating in the students throwing objects at government buildings and policemen. The police responded by loading the protesters on a bus and shipping them back to their universities. At some point during the course of this altercation, students received cuts on their hands. The students claimed it was as a result of police brutality, while the government countered back by saying it was the result of the students breaking the windows of the bus. From Zhao's interviews, he found that the government was likely telling the truth in this instance (Zhao 2001). Regardless, the sight of bloodied students on campus and the rumours of police brutality inspired even more, formerly apathetic, students to join the cause.

Hu's state funeral took place just west of Tiananmen Square on April 22 and tens of thousands of students came to attend. Already emotional from the rumours of police brutality, the crowd became even more restless as their calls to meet with Premier Li Peng went unheeded. Attempts by the

authorities to maintain the order were only met with increased opposition, and the police and students began to push, despite attempts by student leaders to calm the situation down (Zhao 2001).

On April 25, CCTV, the official party television station, broadcast an editorial run in *People's Daily* entitled "It is Necessary to Take a Clear-Cut Stand against Turmoil," targeting the student movement. The broadcast alleged that if the movement, caused by antigovernment conspirators, continued then the whole country would be thrown into disorder. The intention of the piece was to send a message to students that their actions would not be tolerated any more (Zhao 2001).

In the past announcements such as this had generally deterred student movements from continuing, fearing punishments. However, the implied anti-patriotism in the report only seemed to anger and galvanize the demonstrators as memories of the 1976 incident in Tiananmen Square were reawakened (Zhao 2001). After the broadcast aired, student organizations began to assemble on campuses and the students began to reframe their slogans and chants to reflect support for communism and Marxism, in order to counteract the statements of the government (Zhao 2001).

On April 27 between 50,000 and 100,000 students marched on Tiananmen Square, breaking through police barricades along the way. The overwhelming presence and success of the students' actions convinced the government to meet with the students to discuss their demands. However, with the students sending approximately 70 delegates to the discussions, all with varying demands and viewpoints, talks stalled and failed to produce any serious results (Zhao 2001).

In early May, General-Secretary Zhou Ziyang, who had been in North Korea on a diplomatic mission, returned to Beijing. Zhou had been known to be sympathetic to the student's plight and a strong advocate of progressive reforms. Zhou abandoned the hard-line approach used in the April 26 editorial and took a more conciliatory tone, calling the student movement "patriotic," stating that their concerns were legitimate and that they would be addressed. Hearing these concessions many of the students returned to class. With the students beginning to in-fight over the direction and goals of the movement, and the interest of the protesters waning, student leaders organized a hunger strike to recapture attention, presenting the concessions made by the government as a ruse in order to stop the protests.

The hunger strikes began on May 13, just prior to a visit from Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev. The strikes drew passion from around the country, including the media, which for the first time began reporting positively on the demonstrations (Zhao 2001). In this time period, Zhao argues that the media had grown tired of reporting negatively on the student movement that was fighting for freedom of the

press – among other things. Because of this, the government briefly lost its ability to censor the media, which led to the media's about-face. During this time, public opinion showed that it followed what was being reported on closely, believing it to be unbiased for the first time since the beginning of the reforms. This can be contrasted with the rumours that had largely been the preferred source of information up until that point (Zhao 2001). The other impact of the change in the coverage of the news was the impact it had on the protests themselves. Because the public was unaware that the members of the media were rebelling in their own way, it was assumed by many that the change in coverage by the media was a sign of a deep schism within the CCP, and that the faction sympathetic with the protesters was winning the battle (Zhao 2001).

Because of this, lower level officials in charge of work units at factories also were under the belief that the Party had changed its stance on the protests. The result was that these officials permitted the workers under their charge to leave work and participate in the protests, significantly adding to the strength and size of the movement (Zhao 2001).

The media managed to cover the protests positively for five days before the government regained control and negative coverage of the protests resumed. However, by this point the movement had already been strengthened in numbers and had been given signs that the protests were contributing to a larger struggle for power within the party (Zhao 2001).

The details of the latter portion of the demonstrations and the eventual bloody crack-down by the government are well known, and for the purposes of length constraints will not be elaborated on here. What is important is the way in which the movement was initially mobilized and how the media contributed to that mobilization.

5.4) Analysis of the Movement

5.4.1) The Structural Factors

Throughout the 1980s reform-minded Intellectuals who had been suppressed during the Mao years came out in opposition to the CCP, increasingly voiced their opinion more openly on how China should be changed. Part of this resurgence in criticism was likely the result of being silenced for so long, the other part was the fear that left-wing hardliners would soon retake the country and return it to the days of Mao (Zhao 2001). It was the push for political reform that became the rallying cry of the students in 1989.

From a Western viewpoint it would appear that the students were united in calling for elections and democratic reform. However, Zhao's studies find that the most common grievance amongst the students was simple frustrations over reforms that promised big changes and yet didn't appear to be offering them any benefits. The students felt the reforms had simply allowed for the ills of capitalism to seep in – corruption and greed – without any of the benefits of democracy, a concept that they only had a vague conception of but still believed that it would be better than what they had at the time (Zuo & Benford 1995).

In 1975, a year before his death, Mao's years his right-hand man Zhou Enlai set forth four goals for the future of China, called the "Four Modernizations," which heavily stressed an emphasis on science and technology. This spurned a spike in enrollment rates in universities across the country. However as Deng's reforms took their effect, the economic rewards weren't given to university students and intellectuals, entrepreneurs and those already wealthy enough to invest in businesses ended up being the prime benefactors. The students in the 1980s, on the other hand, found themselves faced with immense competition from those around them, as the majority of the new job openings were appearing in the factories. There was a feeling that their education had been a waste, and students were unsure of where they were going to find a job in the new economy (Zhou 2001).

Students weren't the only population that bore the financial brunt of the market reforms. Workers who had depended on having a job and social security in Mao's years ended up being laid off as the SOEs privatized and shut down. The reforms marked the end of the era of "the Iron Rice Bowl," and without proper labour legislation enacted to compensate the workers who suffered from the market reforms many Chinese citizens were left to find temporary employment without job security or labour rights (Friedman & Lee, 2010, p. 509).

The end result was that China had large sections of its population left in the wake of the reforms, not receiving the benefits or the changes that they thought they would. The frustrations were evident throughout the 1980s, and they culminated with the tragedy at Tiananmen Square.

5.4.2) The Ecology that Bred the Protest

Despite the widespread grievances across numerous sections of the population, China lacked a developed civil society with organizations capable of placing pressure on the regime to change. Social movements in democracies often use previously established institutions to use as a gathering point to coordinate their actions (McAdam, Tarrow, Tilly 2001). For example, the black churches of the Southern

United States are commonly given varying degrees of credit for empowering the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s (McAdam, Tarrow, Tilly 2001). China's civil society had yet to develop to this extent. There was a vacuum left by the withdrawal of the Chinese Government from everyday life that civil organizations had yet to fill, because of this, the Democracy Movements of the 1980s remained relatively unorganized and exerted little power (Zuo & Benford 1995).

What occurred during the 1980s, according to Zhao, was the result of campus ecology. During Mao's years university campuses were built compact and walled in and the students of the time were given the task of self-monitoring – particularly during the purges, where students were given the duty to out rightists and capitalists (Zhou 2001).

However, with the enactment of the reforms and the ushering in of a new era in China, the close confines of the university campus, and the neighbouring universities, provided the organizational structure necessary for a social movement to occur. Because students were so easily able to communicate with others, and witness demonstrations in front of them, mobilization was facilitated by the ecology of the student community. The ability for spatial settings to form bonds among people and galvanize social movements, Zhou argues, is commonly overlooked (Zhou 2001). As will be discussed later, this theme is repeating itself in the social movements of today.

5.4.3) The Role of the Media

As demonstrated by the first two movements discussed in this section, the media throughout the 1980s was still heavily controlled by the CCP. It was used in all three instances as a means to intimidate the protesters and inform them that the Party would not tolerate the demonstrations for much longer.

During the 1989 protests there were journalists eager to push forward with their hopes of a freer press. Those journalists and editors sympathetic to the student movements began to actively contradict the directives of the CCP. As the media rebelled their coverage became increasingly positive of the movement (Zhao 2001).

The positive coverage of the movement, in turn, led local officials who were in charge of work units at the time to believe that the Party was in support of the movement. Because of this, they allowed workers to leave the factories and join the students in protest. Adding to this, other citizens and students reading the news also came away with a similar interpretation of the positive coverage as the work-unit leaders, and gained the impression that because the Chinese Government was allowing coverage of this event they must be in support of it and thus the threat of repression was minimal. The

media in 1989, though used as a tool of state control throughout the decade, played a significant role in adding to the power and force of the movement in 1989 (Zhao 2001).

5.4.4) The Outcome of the Movement

One could make an argument that the Democracy Movement achieved some successes. In many ways it established precedence for the villager and workers struggle that would follow a decade later. The efforts of the students established a repertoire of contention in China not seen during the Mao years. Protesters that came in the wake of the Democracy Movement learned what actions worked and what didn't; what responses to expect from the government, and what tools, such as the media, that you could use to elicit those responses.

However, the Democracy Movement achieved relatively little in the way of tangible success. Over the course of the 1980s, students and intellectuals engaged in a protracted tug-of-war session with the Chinese Government, one that they ultimately lost.

One reason why they students did not see any concrete gains, such as policy changes, or even fiscal benefits, likely had a lot to do with timing. Freshly emerged from the strict authoritarian days of Mao, the Chinese Government wasn't ready to concede ground and have their hand forced by the citizens just yet.

However, three other major causes seem to stick out - the first being the target of the Democracy Movement. The students targeted leading figures in the CCP, which was bound to elicit a response. They had made the mistake in thinking that there were other high-ranking officials within the party who supported their cause and that would help them achieve their goals – the media, as discussed, helped perpetuate this idea during the Tiananmen Square protests. As the Labour Movement described later will demonstrate, success for protesters comes a bit easier when the target of the protests is a lesser actor, such as a Local Government or a company (Zhao 2001).

The second misstep on the part of the Democracy Movement was its unwillingness to partner up with other protesting groups. The students and the intellectuals were generally unwilling to associate with workers, and certainly not with the peasants. The former were seen as too poorly educated to truly understand the ideology behind the movement, while the latter were seen as carrying this characteristic as well as being sympathizers of the CCP (Zuo & Benford 1995).

While the students were willing to march with the workers, and at times were involved in inviting them out to join the protests, workers demands were largely lost in the shuffle of the demonstrations (Zuo & Benford 1995). Because of this, the students and intellectuals did not present as formidable a mass as they would have if they had shown a united front.

That being said, the students themselves were hardly united. As demonstrated when the Chinese Government finally agreed to concessions in 1989, 70 student association delegates showed up, with hardly any consensus with regards to the goals of the movement, as already stated, many of the students only had a vague idea of what democracy actually meant (Zuo & Benford 1995).

T he third flaw of the movement relates to just this, pursuing unspecific goals based on ideology. The students called for a variety of reforms, but many of them were vague, and certainly not changes that could be made overnight. Demands of democracy and freedom of the press involve enormous changes in policy, particularly for a government that was strictly authoritarian just 13 years prior.

In all, the students' demands were unorganized, and so too were they. Their goals were difficult to reach and, as a group seeking large-scale change within the Chinese Government, they did not form enough power-alliances to bolster their own bargaining power.

The next stage of movements, however, overcame these mistakes.

6) The Worker's Movement

After the bloody crackdown of June 4, 1989 significant movements subsided for a few years. After the turmoil of the 1980s the Chinese Government continued its torrid pace of economic growth, exponentially bolstering its GDP and becoming the "factory of the world."

China's economic success is well-known, but this success hasn't trickled down to every group in society. The structural deficiencies that led to the 1989 movement have yet to be addressed. While the CCP's current leadership has the benefit of the experiencing and learning from the 1980s movement first-hand, the issue remains that the current regime is still susceptible to the same issues that triggered the events of the late 1980s, and this has become increasingly apparent in the first decade of the new millennium.

To begin with there still exists signs that cleavage between the hard-line left-wingers and the moderates of the state's elite. This is partially evident by the sacking of highly-ranked official, and candidate for one

of the top positions in the CCP, Bo Xilai and subsequent rumours of a retaliatory coup attempt in the days following. Bo was seen as a rising star in the Chinese political scene and represented the factions within the CCP who were hoping for a return back to Maoist days. Bo had a penchant for using traditional symbols in speeches, enacting Maoist reforms at the local level and embarking on a campaign against corruption[1].

The CCP learned from the 1989 Movement that public displays of leadership struggles could sow the seeds for social instability, but that hasn't prevented rumours from spiraling around the turmoil that surrounds the Communist party leading into the next leadership changeover slated for next year. Regardless of whether or not there is a divide in the party, the appearance of one in 1989 proved to be enough to give the students enough hope that there was an exploitable opportunity to stage a massive protest.

The clash within the CCP coincides with increasing numbers of clashes at the local level between government officials and villagers. For a number of years it has become commonplace for Local Government officials to be accused of corruption and cronyism. The Central Government has made attempts to quell the tensions by eliminating the thousands of years-old agricultural tax, but other grievances remain. China's rural land reform policy, where rural land can be bought off villagers by local officials in for the purposes of allowing for the expansion of industry and commerce, is uprooting villagers and often government corruption is leaving them without the compensation that they're entitled to under law (Cai 2010).

On the labour front, the Central Government is having a difficult time forcing local officials to enforce labour laws within their regions. The problem that lies in this instance is that local officials' performance is judged on their ability to promote economic growth – it can be seen as in the officials' best interest to ignore abuses of labour laws if it encourages businesses to settle and remain in their region.

Workers in these regions have found it exceedingly difficult to have their grievances with their employers addressed and are becoming disenchanted with the Local Governments' ability and willingness to act. Contentious actions by workers have continued to rise annually since the early 1990s, largely fuelled by the same reasons that compelled the students to protest in the 1980s – frustrations with a society that has little to offer them.

[1] "The Sacking of Bo Xilai" - 14 April 2012 The Economist

The following sections will describe two of the most influential, and certainly the most publicized workers protests in China. Afterwards, the two strikes will be compared with the Democracy Movement.

6.1) The Liaoning Strike 2002

In 2002 the largest strike of recent years in China took place in Liaoning when approximately 10,000 workers from more than ten factories took to the streets against the Local Government (Cai 2010).

The Liaoyang Ferroalloy Factory was established during the Mao years in 1956, employing close to 10,000 workers during the subsequent decades. However in the 1990s, like many state-owned factories of the time, the plant began to lose money (Cai 2010).

As the losses piled up, worker payments began to be delayed, at first by a couple months, then growing to 22 months. When the company finally declared bankruptcy in 2001 the debts of the factory had grown to over six times the sum of its assets, and the sum owed to the workers in both pay and insurance grew to just under 50 million RMB (Cai 2010).

The workers attributed the poor-performance of the factory to mismanagement and corruption by those in charge of the company's oversight. Beginning in 1999, with rumours of bankruptcy pending, workers began distributing petitions through a variety of channels of the government without substantial results (Cai 2010).

Workers also started to discuss other means of protest on the factory floor. An informal union emerged with elected representatives as its leaders and on May 15 the workers organized a protest blocking a major road near the factory. Police intervened and arrested three leaders organizing the protest. Following the arrests 3000 workers marched on the city government and demanded the release of their leaders; the government complied and promised the workers that their retirement pensions would be paid (Cai 2010).

Achieving success and realizing the power of their collective action, the informal union began to develop in complexity. The union grew to have public representatives and secret representatives. The public representatives maintained the same role as the leaders before, while the secret representatives produced posters, handbills, and publications. The secret representatives were also put on stand-by, should something happen to one of the public representatives the secret representatives were waiting to fill the vacancy and preserve the momentum of the movement. Each representative was designated a specific group of a few dozen workers to keep contact with (Cai 2010).

Leading up to 2002, the informal union were able to successfully mobilize the workers into various forms of protests and public petitions. For example, in 2000, workers began to organize trips to Beijing, fully funded by donations from employees within the factory, to petition to the central authorities for the full payment of their owed-dues and insurance expenses. However, with the exception of freeing their imprisoned leaders in 1999, the union was unable to secure substantial economic gains lost from the failures of the factory (Cai 2010).

The Local Government had been largely handcuffed by the workers actions. The ferroalloy factory was not the only industry in the city experiencing serious financial difficulties and the city's coffers had run dry, the Local Government was not able to afford to keep the factories running or pay the workers their owed dues. Understanding the hardships faced by the municipality, the Central and Provincial Governments avoiding interfering in the affairs of the Local Government (Cai 2010).

However the incidents of 2002 altered the standoff between the Local Government and the workers. Three months after the factory declared bankruptcy, already fueled by the prospect that they may never see their dues, the workers became incensed by a lie by a local leader on television who claimed that all laid-off workers were receiving their dues. The statement was enough to incite the workers into organizing a protest in March, which began with the posting of letters to the people of the city their intentions and reasons for the protest (Cai 2010).

On March 11 and 12, the workers from the Ferroalloy factory took to the streets to protest and were surprisingly joined by striking workers from 10 other factories in the area, totalling a protest 10,000 strong, holding a pictures of Chairman Mao and decrying the local official who made the controversial statement(Cai 2010).

The sheer size of the movement attracted substantial attention from overseas media, as it was one of the largest protests by Chinese workers up until that point. The size of the movement also posed a significant threat to social stability, one that local officials could no longer ignore (Cai 2010).

The Local Government initially responded by arresting a few of the leaders of the strike, but was limited in taking a heavy handed approach due to the amount of attention the event was receiving from foreign media. Anything but a quick and orderly end to the strikes would have the potential to result in an embarrassinf moment for all levels of government (Cai 2010).

As the strikes continued, the Local Government channeled all available resources into giving the workers their owed dues, and after two months, the workers had been paid half of their compensation. Coupled with this, numerous government cadres who the workers deemed responsible for the failures of local industry were imprisoned on charges of corruption. After a year, the workers had been paid in full for all of the dues that they were owed. Furthermore, Local Government officials met personally with most workers to discuss solutions to the problem. The results of these talks were that the poorest households received substantial compensation packages of insurance and pension, and the workers as a whole received improvements in the city's reemployment services (Cai 2010).

6.2) The Story of Tan Zhiqing, Little Xiao, Qi Wei and Nanhai Honda 2010[2]

Tan Zhiqing came from a small village in Hunan province in central China. Growing up Tan was passionate about the poems of Mao Zedong, the novel Romance of the Three Kingdoms and well-remembered learning about the Guangdong-Hong Kong harbour strike of the 1920s.

Tan was once an aspiring university student, hoping to attend Wuhan University in the neighbouring province of Hubei but after failing his entrance exams he was left with little recourse but to join the waves of other young migrant rural workers (approximately 7 million from Hunan province alone as of 2009) heading to work at the factories on China's coast.

In the past, rural migrants who left their villages to pursue factory jobs in the coastal cities returned wealthy, and "legends of making big money" spread throughout the rural areas, including Tan's hometown.

Initially Tan's prospects looked bright – he had found a job with Honda, a major multinational company, where presumably there would be both job security and opportunity to move up the company ladder. However, after three years and still making only 1300RMB (192USD), with three pay raises during that time that amounted to no more than 100RMB (15USD), Tan decided that the dream was dead. Recalling those in the generation before him returning home with 1000RMB per month, Tan believed that the workers of his generation were left in the dust of China's economic miracle.

In March of 2010, Tan spoke with his friend Little Xiao, who was also thinking of quitting, about the idea of staging a strike. Little Xiao sympathized with Tan, and the two continued to discuss the idea in the

[2] Story transliterated from a June 2, 2010 article in the China News Weekly "Avid Young Reader of Mao Zedong's Poetry from the post-1980s generation leads the Honda strike"

following months. Tan and Xiao shared many things in common – they were from the same province, joined the factory at the same time and worked in the same department.

On April 29, Tan quit his job, giving the one-month notice needed to ensure that he received his full pay. Following his resignation, Tan and Xiao organized a group of 20 other coworkers, all of whom had been working at the plant for more than a year and many of whom were also from Hunan, to help them organize the strike.

On May 17, Tan arrived at the Honda plant, put on his all-white uniform, and walked into the factory like he had for the past three years. However, on this day, Tan did not report to his usual station, rather he pressed an emergency button sounding a siren and shutting down the assembly line and shouted "Don't work for such low wages!" 50 other coworkers joined Tan and Xiao, but the majority stayed still in wonderment and fear. Tan and his fellow strikers were not deterred by the level of inaction by their colleagues, they continued ahead with their plans to stage a sit-in in front of the factory.

When the Japanese managers of the factory arrived an hour later they attempted to compel the strikers back to work through an interpreter. Tan refused, and news of the rising confrontation spread through the factory via text messages. Soon more employees dropped their tools and the entire production line of the plant came to a halt.

Four hours after the strike began, 100 strikers met with management in the dining hall of the factory to discuss suggestions for the improvement of workplace conditions. Tan felt that management was eager enough to end the strike that its actions to address the worker concerns were genuine. Four hours after the sit-in began the plant's production line started up again with formal negotiations between the workers and the management scheduled for May 20th and 21st.

During those days, though the plant's normal operations had resumed, production dropped nearly in half. The employees, emboldened by the actions of Tan, Xiao and the other strikers, had realized that there was an opportunity to achieve the wage increases that they desired. As confessed by a worker, Qi Wei, after the sit-in their "hearts were not in it."

The employees elected delegates to negotiate with management on the 20th and 21st, where the workers demanded a wage increase of 800 RMB monthly for all employees as well as a 15% annual increase in subsequent years. Management rejected the proposal and countered with a 55 RMB monthly wage increase for formal employees only, trainees would not receive a benefit. On the 22nd,

Tan and Xiao led 300 strikers back outside to resume their sit-in signing the Chinese national anthem and "Unity is Strength," a military song emphasizing the power of solidarity). While the strikers assembled outside, loudspeakers announced that Tan and Xiao had been sacked.

The firing of the two leaders led to the proliferation of the strike and the plant's operations were again halted and Tan and Xiao became martyrs of sorts to the strikers. Management sent drafted memorandums demanding that employees "never lead, organize, partake in go-slows, stop work or strike" and sent them to the trainees dormitory for them to sign. For days, not one agreement was signed.

Qi Wei lived in this dormitory with the other trainees of the plant. He was born in 1992 and also had aspired to a life other than that of a migrant worker – his original plan was to enter into hospitality. However he enrolled in a technical school and learned the trade of operating digitally controlled machine tools. Before his education had been completed Qi had already completed Honda's competency tests. Once graduated, Qi and 40 of his classmates at the technical school had joined the trainee ranks of Nanhai Honda. The use of trainees such as Qi, fresh out of vocational school, reduced Honda's labour costs dramatically.

In response to the memorandum drafted by management, the striking workers drafted a six-point outline of workers demands, highlighted by their primary claim for a wage increase of 800RMB as well as guaranteed scheduled raises. Furthermore, the workers demanded that they be in control of electing their own union leaders, and that they not be represented by the ACFTU, which had largely sided with Honda in both remaining silent and at times attempting to bully the workers back into the factory.

Negotiations continued and the strike gathered increasing attention. By May 28th international and domestic media were gathered outside the gates of the factory to report on the strike, the walkout had gained widespread attention. Workers managed to stay up to date on the happenings of the strike through the QQ instant messaging service, an Internet-based text-messaging service operated through cell phones. They were also able to stay in touch with reporters, lawyers and labour rights activists through the same service. By May 30th the domestic media was given a blanket ban on covering the strikes. However, word of the strike had already spread throughout China.

On June 4th, with pressure coming down on the managers from both local levels of government and the poor publicity now spread worldwide. Workers and management reached a deal that gave all employees a raise of 500 RMB, as well as scheduled raises and a formal apology from the ACFTU. Workers posted

their successes and advice for other workers on the QQ messaging service soon after. Before the month of June was over, copycat strikes and sit-ins began at four other Honda plants resulting in similar successes.

6.3) Analysis of the Movement

6.3.1) The Structural Factors

China's economic miracle has left its share of the Chinese population on the outside looking in, most of these outsiders come from the rural areas. Taking into account the frustrations that the rural demographic must be feeling, there's little wonder that the most contentious segments of society are the rural migrants and the peasants. However frustrations from rising inequality don't immediately translate to contentious action, otherwise a much larger segment of the population would be in the streets protesting. Rather, frustrations from structural inequality serve as the kindling to contentious action; in order for protests and large scale movements to manifest themselves, a spark needs to occur, and when frustrations are high, the spark can be very small.

The growing divide between the wealthy business class, powerful bureaucrats and the rural population often provides enough fuel that even a simple rumour can set the flames of contention alight. Protests can arise over a relatively minor abuse by one of the first two parties, digging up long harboured resentment over growing economic inequality. Yongshun Cai found that 11 out of the 44 large-scale protests that he studied were sparked by a single incident of perceived social injustice (Cai 2011).

Take, for example, the case of Yu, a migrant worker who accidentally struck a public official's wife with a pole while working. After Yu refused to apologize, the official's wife slapped Yu, and the official proceeded to beat Yu with the pole. The official then allegedly threatened that he would pay 20,000 RMB to have Yu killed. The event incited a riot of more than 30,000 people who burned police cars and destroyed Local Government offices (Cai 2011).

In another famous case, a car carrying the owner of a private hospital hit a high school student riding his bike. Rather than helping the boy, the owner and other men exited the car and beat the boy in anger over the damage sustained to the car with the owner supposedly stating that "300,000 yuan is enough for a life." After the boy was transported to the hospital the owner and his men were taken to the police station for questioning. A mob of angry citizens surrounded the police station and refused to leave.

When a rumour spread that the boy was going to succumb to his injuries the mob grew violent, burning a police van and looting a local department store (Cai 2011).

Much of the same factors are at work when examining the rising number of worker protests. The environmental causes of the workers protests are there, as they feel left out of the rewards offered to other members of society. The resentment felt by the workers towards their wealthy managers alone does not mean that contentious action is sure to occur, rather, the underlying frustrations have simply setup a rich environment for a protest to occur.

The difference between the workers protests and the aforementioned incidents of spontaneous rioting is the coordination and camaraderie between the workers. As Cai demonstrates, spontaneous and uncoordinated protests in China often have a higher chance of turning to violence, as well as resulting in lower chances of seeing success (Cai 2011). The workers on the other hand, from working, and often living beside one another, develop a sense of unity. Thus when a spontaneous event fosters contention, strikes, protests and sit-ins are often longer sustained and have a higher chance of success.

6.3.2) The Ecology that Bred the Protest

Chinese civil society still has not developed to the extent of that in developed nations. Often government groups serve as imitation versions of Western social organizations. Take, for example, the All-China Federation of Trade Unions (ACTFU), which is intended to serve the interest of Chinese workers but more often acts as a labour board than it does a representative union. When collective bargaining with an employer is carried out, the workers are nearly always left out of the mix.

To counteract this injustice, the workers organize themselves into ad-hoc unions when grievances become too great to bear in a very similar fashion to the way in which the students did in the 1980s. Much like the ecology of the campuses of the 1980s, the factories and the workers dormitories mean the workers spend many hours with one another. As demonstrated with the previously discussed cases, the strikes were organized primarily at the workplace or within the workers dormitories. Despite the absence of a formal union, aggrieved workers have been able to use the close proximity within which they work and live with one another to form strong networks.

In further analysing the effect of social networks within migrant worker populations, it can be useful to examine a similar phenomenon, one that occurs amongst immigrant communities. Ample literature has been dedicated to the importance of social networks for the successful adaptation of international migrants. Previously established communities in receiving countries can be vital for incoming migrants

to find housing, employment and education. Contacts within these previously established networks of ethnic communities reduce the risks associated with immigration for the migrant particularly as the community becomes increasingly broad and well developed (Liu, Li & Bertrung 2012).

Within China, a similar phenomenon has been occurring. For successive generations rural migrants have been flowing from the villages and farms of Central China with the hopes of taking part in the economic miracle taking place in the coastal cities. While the rural migrants of China are, in a broad sense, of the same ethnicity as their urban counterparts, many socioeconomic and cultural differences would place them in a distinct category. The rural migrants of China speak a different dialect of Mandarin or Cantonese, one that is often inaudible to those in the cities (Liu, Li & Bertrung 2012). Their relatively impoverished lives on the farms have led them to lead far different lives than those in the cities, who have reaped the rewards of China's successes and have been living in a society that increasingly resembles the Western world than it does the China of old. The Chinese *hokou* system, which dictates that rural migrants can only take up temporary residence in cities, has legally ensured that villagers do not perceive of their host cities as home. At tremendous social and economic disadvantages compared to their urban counterparts, the rural migrants are often isolated both socially and spatially – with most living either in the dormitories of factories or, for the privileged few who have managed to find a steady income, low-income neighbourhoods dubbed "urban villages" (Liu, Li & Bertrung 2012).

Due to these factors, among others, rural migrants in China integrate into host cities in much the same way as international migrants do. They depend on kinship and identifiable communities in order to aid in their integration into the large cities, they socialize and interact primarily or solely with those with the same background and economic status, most importantly, they see a barrier between themselves and the urbanite Chinese around them (Liu, Li & Bertrung 2012).

Much like international migrants, there is also a burgeoning divide between the new and the old generations of migrant workers. The newer generation of migrants is generally better educated than their predecessors. The efforts of their parents' generation provided the wealth for the newer generation to attend higher levels of school. Higher education has also led to a greater desire among the newer generation to move to cities and choose a career path that doesn't involve the family farm. These desires are in part motivated by the greater education and exposure to urban life that they've received, but also by the expanse of cities into rural areas. The land available for farming is gradually shrinking and the prospective life of living on minimum subsistence in the countryside is far less appealing than the allure of seemingly endless jobs and opportunities in the city (Liu, Li & Bertrung 2012).

The result of the differences between the generations is reflected in who the generations of workers tend to associate with. The new generation, as demonstrated by the studies of Liu, Li & Bertrung , have more consistently found commonalities with those who they work with than generations of the past. The colleagues that they share workspaces with will generally be of the same educational background and share the same goals and values, as well as hardships and grievances, than those in their hometown, or even those in their neighbourhoods which, with the slow emergence of the service economy are becoming more socioeconomically heterogeneous.

As Yongshun Cai demonstrates through his work, the strength of popular protests, and their ability to achieve success rests heavily on the strength of the network (Cai 2011). It is evident from the above cases that many of these workers formed strong networks of trust with their fellow co-workers. From a social movement theory perspective, this strengthens the resolve of the movement, reducing the risk for the individual involved in participating in the movement, knowing that he won't be abandoned by those around him when faced with a confrontation.

6.3.3) The Role of the Media

The evolution of the media has also seemingly played a role in the growth of the Labour Movement. Unlike the Democracy Movement of the 1980s, the Labour Movement of today has the benefit of a more liberalized media who has greater freedom to cover what they would like. Still, as Stockmann demonstrated in her studies, the Chinese Government still has a hand on the switch of censorship – it is just less willing to use it now than it was during the 1980s (Stockmann 2011).

The presence of the media during the Honda strikes demonstrated that the Chinese government was tolerant of the strikes for a time. This could be because of the conflict of interest mentioned earlier – knowing the need to protect the working class and yet not wanting to scare off foreign investment. The fact that the media was banned from covering the incident after a few days may have also been an indication that the government still was unsure about whose side it wanted to take in the matter. Nevertheless, the two day window in which the strikes received nationwide attention could have been what spawned the subsequent copycat strikes thereafter. However, another development in the media has also been given credit for the proliferation of strikes in 2010, the growth of social media.

Yang claims that there is a working-class culture that has developed online in China. The workers don't simply share strategies for strikes and protests; much of the online society that has been created online involves networking, the sharing of personal experiences, poetry and prose (Yang 2011).

Certainly Social media and social networking has transformed the nature of communication. While telephones are one-to-one, and newspapers and traditional media are one-to-many, for the first time with the development of social networking communication has become many-to-many. The consumers of news suddenly have become the producers. In China, where the media has always been under tight control, this could be a significant development.

However the demographics of China's Internet generation indicate that the Internet may not be playing that large of a role after all. The most recent report of the China Internet Network Information Center (CINIC) found that migrant workers compose only 1.7% of the internet's population, despite composing approximately 9% of the population.[3] This doesn't mean that the group isn't tech-savvy, as the new generation of migrant workers is primarily composed of former students who represent the highest portion of internet users at 30.7% of the population.

What is more likely is that this population – with the amount of hours that they work, low pay that they receive and the minimalist design of their dormitories – does not possess the means of accessing the Internet that other demographics do. The Internet in China is still a privilege for the more well-off, and often the more well-off are less likely to have grievances worthy of protesting over.

The new media technology that likely plays a more important role in communication within workers is cell phones. Cell phones are cheaper and are possessed by over 500 million Chinese today.[4] It was the QQ messaging service over cell phones that helped spread the word amongst workers at the Honda factory, not chatrooms.

6.3.4) The Outcome of the Movement

Much like with the Democracy Movements, there are two sides that can be argued in terms of success for the workers movements. The fact that workers strikes continue to rise can be seen as evidence that the Labour Movement has not achieved the reform that the workers want and need. As of today, unions are still banned and ACFTU remains an unusable organ for grieving workers to use as representation. Labourers still need to fight and protest on a workplace to workplace basis and this indicates that no sweeping reform has improved the ability for workers to fight against the more powerful Local Governments and enterprises.

[3] http://www.cnnic.cn/uploadfiles/pdf/2010/8/24/93145.pdf
[4] Ibid.

Still, the success stories for the workers protests continue to happen. Workers that brave intimidation practices by enterprises and the officials are more frequently receiving at least a portion of their demands. It certainly has helped that the Central Government has announced workers' strikes to be a problem between the workers and the employer, even if that is the lower levels of government, and that the Central authorities have no reason to intervene.

The policies aimed at improving working conditions for workers, including the facilitation of complaint lodging and the mandatory increases on minimum wage, indicate that the Central Government at the very least does not see the workers as a threat, and at the very most sympathizes with the movement.

A major reason for this is that workers very rarely target the Central Government for criticism when they protest. Of course, they differ from the Democracy Movement in that their goals aren't political reform – but they could be. The workers, who are banned from having unions and are suffering from low labour law standards could benefit greatly from overarching political reform in their favour. With a population in the hundreds of millions, they would also be a significant force in a fully democratic system.

Rather, most strikes generally have specific goals aimed at the enterprise and Local Government, such as higher wages, lower hours and better insurance plans. In fact, it is common place, as can be seen in the two aforementioned examples, for workers to use communist symbology (singing old communist songs at rallies, holding pictures of Mao etc.,) to show their allegiance to the Central Government.

The other aspect that could be contributing to their success is their composition. While the Democracy Movement was composed of various factions that differed greatly in their goals and motivations for demonstrating, the workers tend to be fairly homogenous on a plant-to-plant basis. Again, as shown above, many of these workers come from the same backgrounds, often the same towns, and share the same grievances.

These workers are also different than workers in the past. The workers of today are no longer uneducated rural folk, happy to make ends meet. Instead, these workers have usually received a moderate amount of education – college or vocational school – and have desires beyond that of returning to the family farm once a year with their annual salary (Zuo & Benford 1995). Their education has also made them more literate than workers of the past, and more rights conscious. Modern workers are more aware than generations of the past when they're being taken advantage of.

While the Labour Movement still has many reforms to elicit from the government, and many battles to win with oppressive employers, the single-case victories that have been occurring throughout the past decade indicate that headway is being made.

7) Conclusion

Both the Democracy Movement and the Labour Movement have been born out of similar frustrations with society and have utilized very similar mobilizing mechanisms.

In both situations common frustrations included the corruption of local officials, worries over employment, the inability to elect their own leaders and representatives. Both cases, in many ways, resemble the extreme version of the problem that plagues the youth around the world, a realization that life outside of school is not as good as they were told it was going to be.

In nearly all cases outlined in this paper, demonstrations were mobilized the acts of an individual who sensed an opportunity and had a tight-knit support group to urge him on. Also, in all cases the frustrations stemmed from social frustrations, and though this environment provided the reasons for protest to occur, it was the strong ties of friendship and camaraderie that reduced the risk for the individuals who took the first steps in these movements.

Once the first steps were taken, the ecology of the area in which these steps were taken become the next factor in turning a single action into a movement, whether it was the close confines of a university campus or a factory dormitory. The close proximity of those to the action compelled those with similar grievances to join once the risk of acting was reduced by the initiators. Movements then fed off of whatever signals they received from the elites, whether that is the government or the managers of an enterprise, and altered their actions accordingly.

Ultimately, the Democracy Movement was not able, or willing, to find allies or structure its demands well enough in order to achieve their ultimate goals, whereas in many strikes in China at the moment are finding a way to have their demands met.

The five major incidents outlined above demonstrate varying ways in which the major segments of these popular movements played out, and the different mechanisms they used to place additional pressure on the elites. As the Labour Movement continues to grow and fight for its demands, it's likely that the tactics used by workers will continue to vary, much as all of the incidents outlined above had.

It has been demonstrated that the media, and social media, have played a role in the movements albeit to varying degrees. Traditional forms of media, newspapers and television, play a unique role in the relationship between the Chinese state and society. During the Tiananmen protests, the traditional media's brief rebellion from the government caused a domino effect that eventually led to the growth of the movement. In the Labour Movement, the media has played a lesser role, but their presence and coverage of a strike still serves as a key indicator of how the government approves or disapproves of the workers actions.

New media technologies do not appear to have altered the repertoires of contention among the workers by much. Both strikes outlined above were formed without the aid of social media. However, it was present and did play a role in spreading news, but there is little indication that the use of QQ on its own inspired any individuals to protest when they would not have otherwise.

As China continues to liberalize and reform, so too will the means of contentious action within the country. This is also surely not the end of the evolution of the Chinese media and the Internet. The future of social movements in China will be an interesting one, as these two phenomena continue to evolve side-by-side.

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