

# The Limits of the China Model

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# The Limits of the China Model

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on authoritarian capitalism

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## Glasshouse Forum's Executive Summary

Azar Gat claims that China may be able to combine authoritarian rule and economic development, and that a model of this kind can exert a considerable power of attraction also outside China.

In order to acquire a contrasting picture, Glasshouse Forum turned to China expert Johan Lagerkvist, who attracted attention for his study *China and the Internet: Unlocking and Containing the Public Sphere* (2006). A guiding principle for the leadership of the communist party is fear of political instability, says Lagerkvist. China is a country of extreme contrasts. It is the world's fourth largest economy and at the same time a very poor country, probably the most unequal country in Asia. Despite the democratic deficit, the regime possesses considerable popular legitimacy. An important reason for this is that it allows social protest as long as this keeps within certain boundaries. A Chinese process of democratisation will presumably build on a combination of pressure from below, from the grassroots movements, and from reformist leaders within the party, both a bottom-up and top-down affair.

In the longer term the major threat to the legitimacy of the regime is that it lacks a clear vision of the future. The Chinese leaders like to see China's soft power being strengthened in the international arena, but they know that it is too early to call China a superpower. They do not wish to launch a specifically Chinese model, but stress that everyone has to chart their own course and follow their own way forward based on their own prerequisites.

We will not see a new ideological Cold War between China and the West, says Lagerkvist, nor will there be a return of the authoritarian capitalist great powers. Economic modernisation leads to pluralism and equal opportunities for more people and China will not prove to be an exception to this. But the process is delayed for various reasons longer than that which seems desirable from the perspective of the West.

## Admiration for China and Its Economic Development

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the West's interest in China knew no limits. In France men in educated circles spoke with admiration about China and the Chinese dream, *Le rêve chinois*. The Sinic civilization became an important source of inspiration, which was an ideal to strive for, as Jesuits, traders, writers, and philosophers painted a picture of a state ruled by enlightened emperors and wise servants of the enormous imperial bureaucracy. This was built on the principle of meritocracy, as opposed to nobility and birth. European and American intellectuals upheld the Middle Kingdom as a culture and a polity that should be emulated. Chinese art and porcelain manufacture were all the rage; the worldliness and rationalism of Chinese officialdom stood in contrast to the influence of the Christian church on society, politics and thought in Europe. Now, at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, due to globalization we have come full circle.

Today, after more than three hundred years, the admiration for and interest in China is once again occupying centre stage for people, not just in the West, but also on a global level. In the eighteenth century China was very far away, which is not the case anymore. We perceive China to be nearer than ever before and we feel its restive dynamism in the economic, political, and cultural spheres. And again many Westerners take a keen interest in Chinese classical art and pop art, design, fashion and film. Among developing countries both non-democratic and democratically elected leaders marvel at astonishing growth rates and look to China as a model to learn from. The quick outburst and spread of SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) in 2003 and avian flu in 2005 have taught the world that it is not merely economically intertwined with the world's fastest growing power.<sup>1</sup> The choices made in Beijing become increasingly important. The question on everyone's lips is how this economic juggernaut and rising power will influence the world.

To be influential on a global level and to be a fully globalized country are two different things. Through its large gross domestic product (GDP) or cultural industry a country can have global clout without sharing other cultures' values and so-called modern views.

It may pertain to issues of religion, political liberties, the position and rights of women, and sustainable development. This distinction is important in order to understand the fact that China is rapidly taking part in globalization, while at the same time Chinese values and norms are globalizing at a relatively low speed. Not globalizing does not, however, have to mean inertia, as social change in China is both rapid and strong. It is possible to explain this paradox, as change is allowed by the party-state, as long as it is path dependent. In China today there is also an apparent return of older and non-Marxist values, after having abandoned communism as an ideology. Nationalism and revitalization of the Chinese nation were the conceived ways of filling the vacuum, as well as regaining legitimacy and the capacity to rule. In a time of rapid upheaval and change, simple *kouhao* (slogans) are not enough. People are in need of binding social glue. As shown in this paper, China's top leaders will have to realize that the lack of clear visions, not those formulated in budgetary terms, have become the true dilemma for its legitimacy to rule. China is becoming a middle-income country, facing problems that such a state will have to address, such as the political expectations of a middle class and environmental degradation, to name just two.

## Superpower China?

New books and articles discuss China as a model for the developing world (Peerenboom 2007; Kurlantzick 2007). Nonetheless, there is one element left out of most analyses, and that relates to the Chinese leaders not being willing or sufficiently secure to promote to the world their route to an alternative capitalism and a society controlled by the party-state. It is true that they are defending their model against outside attacks and that interest in the undisputable success and resilience of China's political system is growing in the devel-

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<sup>1</sup> The first major epidemic outbreak of SARS occurred in China between November 2002 and July 2003. There were 8,096 known cases of the disease, with 774 deaths. See the World Health Organization's (WHO) summary, <http://www.who.int/csr/sars/en/>.

oping world. It is also true that the Chinese party-state is investing heavily in external propaganda work. There is much talk about building a strong base for soft power around the world, and filling the brand name China with something positive, modern, and new. In fact, almost every self-respecting Chinese think-tank nowadays has its own index for measuring a country's comprehensive power (Leonard 2008). Chinese analysts are quite positive about the possibilities in closing the soft power gap that exists vis-à-vis the United States (Yan and Xu 2008). Thus, China's leaders are promoting China, but are they actively promoting a uniquely Chinese model that the rest of the developing world should emulate?

To answer this question, the mindset of China's political leaders must be understood. There are two connected words in the Chinese political vocabulary and mindset so often used that they have become both a mantra and a cliché. These two words are *political stability*. Not that the collapse-of-China school was entirely correct in its predictions about the imminent demise of the Chinese party-state, but nevertheless the regime's catch-all phrase needs to be taken more seriously. As David Shambaugh has noted, many of the systemic factors that led to the fall of the Soviet Union can be found in China today (Shambaugh 2007, 164). There is a genuine fear of widespread social unrest. Therefore a premium is put both on carrots, mostly by generating economic growth, and coercive sticks when necessary. This goes beyond the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) fear of losing its monopoly on power. The fear of *luan* (chaos) is also a cliché, but resides within many Chinese individuals who may be deeply frustrated with the ruling party's hold on power. Although there is an overall sense that the situation is under control, as evidenced in polls of popular support for the central leadership, *not* being elected by the populace does not go unnoticed by leaders such as Premier Wen Jiabao. In meetings with foreign observers Premier Jiabao has argued that multiple candidate choices in both indirect and direct elections will have to move up the administrative ladder (Li 2008, 8).

In recent years, China has maneuvered with more confidence in the international arena, participating in a range of multilateral forums in a way that was unimaginable in the past. Yet, at times it

feels excluded from the elite alliance of democracies. China is also an outcast in the eyes of (Western) world opinion, castigating the People's Republic of China (PRC) as the confidant of such "rogue states" as Sudan, Burma, Zimbabwe, and North Korea. Thus in both foreign and domestic policy the pendulum swings between confidence and fragility. The general trend points more to confidence, but as yet it is not enough to bolster a full-fledged promotion of a China model overseas.

China is also a peculiar case in being both poor and an economic powerhouse. China has contributed to the alleviation of global poverty by reducing poverty at home. According to the World Bank, since the economic reform program started in 1978, roughly 400 million Chinese have left absolute poverty behind, while another 400 million would have joined ranks with the poorest people had the one-child policy not been implemented. According to some scholars this is poverty reduction on a scale unprecedented in mankind (Naughton 2007). But as China together with Nepal are the most economically unequal countries in Asia (China with a Gini coefficient of 0.47, but probably closer to 0.50, higher than both India and the United States), there is a lot of political dynamite in the distribution of China's growth and wealth. Socioeconomic inequality is shown by the rapid rise of so-called mass incidents and social protests in recent years and the lack of a welfare system. The debate in society and internal polls shows growing resentment at the growing income gaps in society and conditions in the countryside have not gone unnoticed by the higher echelons of China's leadership. Otherwise, a shift of policy from "hard development" to President Hu Jintao's call for building a "harmonious society", would not have been possible. And Premier Wen Jiabao's focus since 2005 on remedying the plight of the peasants' would not be understandable either. This, however, will also lead to rising expectations in the countryside. New and tougher demands will be difficult to backtrack from when the new policies are put into effect, as a discernible trend in many studies of the Chinese countryside shows how peasants and small-town people are becoming more aware of their rights (Li and O'Brien 1999). Ordinary people are much more inclined than before to use mass media channels and lawyers in land disputes

and in their fight against environmental problems. The Party's solution to that has been the call for a more harmonious China by easing the taxes or fees imposed upon the people in the countryside. But what does a "socialist harmonious society" really mean? It could mean anything, and it can mean nothing. In that sense, it follows the modern Chinese political tradition of pragmatism – anything goes as long as it proves to be useful.

Thus, contemporary China is a country of contradictions, the like of which it is hard to find anywhere else in the world today. It is the world's fourth largest economy in U.S. dollars, and is set to overtake Germany as the world's largest exporting nation this year. Yet, on an individual level, GDP per capita, China only recently overtook countries like Cape Verde. The PRC will soon be ready to make manned spaceflights to the Moon, yet we still get news stories of slave labour in brick kiln factories from provinces in the interior. Thus, the Chinese leaders know that it is still too early to call China a superpower. There are too many pitfalls, tests, and reforms that China's one party-state must first go through. The fact that many Chinese analysts do not readily accept the superpower hyperbole spun by Western spin-doctors has to be taken seriously.

### **The Staying Power of the Chinese Party-State**

Notwithstanding the rise of a middle class and social protests among disenfranchised groups, many surveys have shown that interpersonal trust, as well as trust in party and state institutions, is high in China, despite the ban on independent social organizations and the existing undemocratic political system (Chan and Nesbitt-Larking 1995, 306; Chen, Zhong, and Hillard 1997, 60; World Values Survey 2000). The Chinese regime's ability to rehabilitate its legitimacy since its low point of 1989 has puzzled many scholars. The authoritarian political system has proven "resilient" in upholding a political status quo, when general theories of authoritarian regimes, along with empirical impressions of the situation in China, might lead one to expect low levels of perceived legitimacy (Nathan 2003, 14). Observers point to restored legitimacy, such as high economic

growth and the disappearance of socialist ideology, but fail to recognize the importance of nationalism as a crucial ideological component in building legitimacy for the CCP.

To understand China's authoritarian resilience in the context of rapid market reform, I would argue that there is a need to appreciate the continued importance of both institutional legacies and gradual adaptation to socioeconomic realities. In applying models of state corporatism, the current Chinese situation can be exemplified as a corporatist arrangement imposed by the state on society in an effort to effectively pre-empt the emergence of autonomous interest groups, as described by Philippe Schmitter (1974). The corporatist model has been employed to explain many aspects of the state-society relationship in China (Unger and Chan 1995, 29). It has been argued, though, that the Chinese state is ideologically more ambitious than many other corporatist authoritarian states (Dahua Yang 2004, 6). It is precisely this ambition and the use of a pragmatist-nationalist ideological framework, together with high-speed economic growth, that is the major reason why the Chinese party-state is able to maintain its grip on politics. It has been claimed that while external forces change Chinese culture fundamentally, earlier values do not disappear, as they shape the possible responses to incoming influence (Weller 1999, 138). Robert Weller also argues quite correctly that the mere existence of social organizations does not automatically lead to democratisation, and that corporatist arrangements may have a long life span, as they can erect "effective limits on it [democratisation] – through a combination of repression and control" (p. 143).

The classical corporatist state recognizes the existence of independent societal interests; it merely wishes to manage the aggregation and articulation of these interests. In sharp contrast though, the current ideology of the CCP entails no less than the monopolization of the articulation of societal interests. Therefore, the hegemonic position occupied by the Communist Party in Chinese politics remains largely uncontested. A description of the institutional arrangements alone is, however, not enough to explain the ways that political and public discourse are shaped in order to defend the status quo of the political system.

We need to distinguish between specific and diffuse regime support. Specific support has to do with how happy individuals are with concrete government policies. Diffuse support has to do with overall citizen satisfaction of their existing system of governance (Dimitrov 2008). Current research shows that, while the Chinese are dissatisfied with the specific actions of local officials, there is still widespread diffuse support for the regime. For many years local corruption, illicit taxes, and mistreatment of peasants have led to social unrest and mass incidents in the Chinese countryside. People have travelled to Beijing to petition the central government on ongoing abuse in the provinces. For a long time this phenomenon has been useful for the central leadership who worries about, and often denounces, the behaviour of local bullies. However, this “scapegoat function” is increasingly becoming more of a burden than an asset (Lagerkvist 2005). Especially so since Premier Wen Jiabao, in his report to the National People’s Congress in 2007, promised to ease the plight of the peasantry by abolishing taxes on farmers and introducing welfare reforms in the educational and health sectors. If not well implemented, the hidden anger may be directed at Beijing, which now takes more responsibility for overall social reform in the countryside. Thus, there is popular legitimacy for the central leadership despite a huge democratic deficit.

It is, however, also important to note that increasing political participation in politics may come in ways acceptable to, and strategically allowed or initiated by, the Communist Party. As an example, peasant demonstrations in the countryside, as well as worker protests in urban areas that are *not* brutally put down, can be seen as adaptations to changing economic realities (Oi 2004, 269). Adaptation is also visible in making the Organic Law of Villagers’ Committees an official law enabling villages in China to conduct democratic elections at the village level. It can be viewed as introducing a safety valve to increase Party legitimacy (Li and O’Brien 1999, 132). Thus, social protests are allowed as long as they remain within certain boundaries. Although it can be argued that the party-state dictates where the lines are drawn, it is nevertheless the case that the realm of freedom has expanded as a result of ongoing social processes within these boundaries (Oi 2004, 274). In this sense, stability,

continuity of control, and gradual change are achieved and tolerated by the party-state, while the citizenry has been allowed more public space than ever before to air its grievances.

The poor have less social and political capital and thus often resort to violent protests in the countryside. Interestingly, it may, therefore, be possible to assume that the forces for change of the political status quo grow stronger in middle-poor and semi-educated areas rather than rich areas with higher living standards and relatively more freedom. Due to the arrival of new technology and commercial media, the poor now know how much better their lives could be. The winners on economic reform are quite content with the status quo, while the ones who have not yet won see their expectations receding, and are starting to fight for their rights to equal opportunity – although as of yet inside current political arrangements, not wanting to overthrow it. But, given a serious recession in China or even worse environmental degradation, demands for a more thorough overhaul of the system of governance may also emerge, as was reflected by student demonstrations in 1989. A very illuminating example of environmental protests occurred in the Chinese city of Xiamen in June 2007, when smart mobs texting on their mobile phones rallied to protest against the government. In this case, the local government at first seemed willing to negotiate with the protesters, which may indicate that more deliberative politics are about to come to China. So, is the democratisation in China to be a top-down or a bottom-up affair? I believe that democratisation has to involve the demands and protests from the grass roots, as authoritarian leaders are most unlikely to give up power. But it is likely that a democratisation movement in the future must involve reform-minded leaders inside the Party too.

Party adaptation to changing circumstances is also visible in that Chinese analysts have tried to learn the lessons from the implosion of the Soviet Union. One very important observation coincides with the one Paul Hollander made about the nomenclature of the Soviet party-state bureaucracy. Many Chinese noted how a severe “crisis of faith” (*xinyang wei ji*) pervaded Soviet society. This social condition was said to have been the cumulative result of years of “leftist” and totalitarian policies, an unappealing and overly dog-

matic party ideology (Shambaugh 2008, 73). As a consequence of the realization that Chinese socialism faced immediate threats not just from so-called peaceful evolution from abroad, the remedy for China's emerging crisis of faith was to appeal to nationalism (S. Zhao 1998).

It is a commonplace to argue that the continued hold on power by the CCP is dependent on economic growth and development (Fewsmith 1997, 478; D. Zhao 2001, 441). The implicit argument is that increased levels of welfare and decreasing levels of poverty "buy" trust and acquiescence from the public into a tacit acceptance of the status quo. Along the lines of economic logic there are those who argue that, with an increase in post-materialist values, critical citizens will emerge as a mass phenomenon (Wang 2005, 156). In China, the regime-enhancing effect of economic development presently dominates the regime-eroding effect. Wang Zhengxu rules out arguments that persuasive propaganda, or whatever is left of strategies for persuading people through the news media, has any part in the regime-enhancing effect, and argues that achieving those aims will become even harder in the future (p. 159). Trying to measure the effects of mass media propaganda, in its totality is, however, an extremely difficult task (Ellul 1965, 265). Several Chinese scholars have argued that the Chinese government is moving away from the propaganda model, and that the Party's dominant role is increasingly difficult to uphold (Latham 2000, 654; Lee 1990, 3). However, it is deeply misleading in dismissing the role of propaganda, asserting that only economic growth generates political legitimacy. Although observers see the older propaganda model as losing its validity, this perspective neglects the emergence of a new framework of propaganda and information dissemination. Indeed, it makes little sense to seek the factors for democratic "delay" only in rapid economic growth. Despite the enormous growth of the internet in China and the rise of alternative television programming, talk radio, and a growing plethora of popular magazines and news-weeklies, most ordinary citizens and journalists still conform to the hegemonic position and line of the Communist Party and government policies.

This conformity of views among an increasingly well-educated

and well-travelled citizenry is reflected in the opinions of ordinary Chinese who angrily commented on the social unrest in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) in March 2008. Being able to watch, listen, and read only snippets of information about the killings and street protests in Lhasa in the state-controlled media, they verbally attacked the Dalai Lama, Tibetan separatists in exile, and a Western world "afraid of China's rise". Thus, in the upcoming Olympics, different "information bubbles" are taking shape,<sup>2</sup> one Western, one Chinese, and possibly a third bubble overlapping with the Chinese to be found in other third world countries.

### **A New China Model?**

Today there is much talk of China becoming a capitalist role model for the developing world. Numerous developing countries, both authoritarian and democratic, look to China, and invite experts to lecture on law, economics, and politics (Peerenboom 2007, 9). Martin Dimitrov has argued that China's developmental experience is attractive to two groups of countries. The first group consists of countries such as Russia, the Central Asian states, and Venezuela, whose rapid economic growth rates are based on the extraction of natural resources. The second group is resource-poor autocracies such as Vietnam and Cuba (Dimitrov 2008, 27). Arguably, another set of countries is the world's poorest, which are those in sub-Saharan Africa. Should China perhaps be viewed as a golden opportunity, even a new model for development, for Africa to become a more developed part of the global economy? Will China continue to reduce poverty on a global scale, actively engaging in other third world countries by investing in them, or becoming an important donor of foreign aid?

Randy Peerenboom discusses China as a possible paradigm for developing states. He argues rather incorrectly, saying that "China

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<sup>2</sup>) On April 3, 2008, this metaphor was corroborated in a discussion with a political analyst at the Chinese Embassy in Stockholm.

has attempted to persuade other countries to follow its lead” (Peerenboom 2007, 9). Peerenboom does not give any clues as to which Chinese leader or scholar tried to convince a particular foreign leader that China’s route to development is correct. On the contrary, Chinese observers, such as Li Zhibiao, have argued on the part of African developmental specialists and leaders:

*If African nations really want to study and learn from the Chinese experience, firstly, they must thoroughly understand the differences between their national situation and China’s. Secondly, they must in earnest research the complete contents of China’s and even other countries developmental experience. (2007)*

This is a far cry from telling people their model of success is a “one size fits all” solution to be emulated everywhere. The same argument is also to be heard from China’s governmental agencies. The Chinese government’s State Council Leading Group Office of Poverty Alleviation and Development, has, just like China’s Africa watchers, stressed the importance of formulating policies that are context-specific, as opposed to fixed. As the factors causing poverty vary, different approaches were needed in different regions in China. Gradual reform is also seen as key to introduce pilot projects on a small scale to test different developmental ideas on a local level (Davies 2007, 34). This, together with a multidimensional approach to poverty reduction, with a focus on capacity building of farmers, and a long-term focus where growth is coupled with poverty reduction, were said to be key lessons.

Likewise, Li Zhibiao advises African nations that they must consider their own situation, and not copy mechanically from others. While Li does not want to paint an overly rosy picture of the results brought by the post-Mao economic reforms, he still believes there are a few pillars of wisdom in the Chinese reform experience that Africa can study. First, he argues that it is important to take the path of gradual economic reform in order to avoid the outbreak of severe unrest. Second, he believes that an opening up to the outside world is necessary, as the Chinese reforms were carried out against the background of rapidly developing globalization. Without open-

ing up, China could not have made use of foreign direct investment. China’s Africa watchers are cautious, meaning they do not want to project any false hopes into bilateral relationships with African countries. This is a switch from the earlier phase of Chinese development assistance in the 1960s and 1970s when “emissaries of socialism” went to Africa, convinced that China’s solutions would also fit African problems. Rather than taking advice from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), China has adapted basic economic principles according to its own circumstances and perceived needs. The question posed by many observers and pundits is whether China represents an alternative capitalism to that of the Atlantic capitalism, which prevailed in the previous Cold War clash between economic models. There are, however, quite a few scholars, policymakers, and intellectuals in China that beg to disagree with the foreign talk about a Chinese model (or a so-called Beijing Consensus) superseding the Washington Consensus. Loosely labelled “the new left” these debaters, together with journalists and writers, focused on the drawback and the dark side of China’s reforms.

These Chinese analysts reflect the thinking of Western economists who have convincingly argued that China’s developmental road has been unique and extremely complex. China’s economic policy making produced dramatically different outcomes in different periods of transition (Naughton 2007, 107). Thus, just like many Chinese observers, they argue that the lessons for others to learn should be more general than specific, focusing on cautious policy making and on the local situation (McMillan 2004).

### **Concluding Remarks: The Limits of Economic Growth**

As I have tried to show in this paper, there is little reason to conceive of a wholesale China model. First, there never was *one* model, as different economic experiments were tried in different places. Second, there have been both successes and failures. Third, the gravest and most important test still awaits the Chinese leadership. This is how to solve the growing problem of a democratic deficit and the demands from a changed social landscape in the future. China’s leaders

have reasons to be wary of the road ahead. Therefore, notwithstanding a greater weight in international affairs, they are not yet ready to promote a China model to the world.

If anything, it seems as if a consistent focus on economic growth will not solve all kinds of problems. The Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) would make an interesting case study. One of China's most respected social scientists, Li Jingjie, studied the collapse of the Soviet Union in depth. The most important advice he gave to the central leadership in Beijing concerned their policies toward ethnic minorities. He emphasized the importance of understanding the complexity and underlying causes for ethnic tensions and conflict. He argued that there must be clear guarantees for autonomy and equality between ethnicities. To Li, the fundamental way to mitigate ethnic tensions, however, lay in prioritizing economic growth. Moreover, he warned explicitly of the danger in introducing political pluralism in a multiethnic region, as that could lead to negative formations of public opinion and even hate crimes. Other Chinese scholars who conducted in-depth political and sociological studies, arguing that the encouragement of ethnic Han Chinese migration to Tibet and over-promotion of the tourism and entertainment industry would lead to increasing resentment among ethnic Tibetans, particularly the case in Lhasa, were ignored by political leaders.<sup>3</sup>

The recent unrest in Tibet, however, is likely to be the tip of the iceberg. High economic growth in the TAR did not lead to an easing of an economically induced ethnic conflict. On the contrary, the uneven distribution of wealth has aggravated ethnic tensions. Social cohesion cannot be bought forever, and a blueprint for political participation and inclusiveness in decision-making must become a priority. Deng Xiaoping was certainly right in saying that “development is a hard truth”, that people want to live better, healthier, and happier lives – and are prepared to work hard for this. But as the Indian Nobel laureate in economics Amartya Sen has argued, all the benefits of freedom do not appear through measuring GDP, a truth which is likely to become increasingly apparent in China. The challenges ahead for the Chinese leadership will be more political than economic – demands for legal rights, transparency, and democratic accountability. After having almost completed the “first transition”

to a market economy, China must prepare itself to embark on the ultimate challenge of making the “second transition” to more democratic politics. This arduous task will prove to be the greatest challenge to the Chinese leadership in the future and will consume most of its energies. Francis Fukuyama once predicted the end of history. Now, others claim we are witnessing the return of history itself and a new struggle between democracy and autocracy on the world stage (Cf. Kagan 2007; Gat 2007). I believe the latter scenario is not very likely, or at least that it will not foment a very intense conflict or clash between fundamental values. More importantly, China does not yet have any other ideas than that statism, gradualism and local cultural context should decide the capitalist route to material well-being. As it also lacks the ambition and capacity to win the hearts and minds of others outside China's borders for a “China model”, we are unlikely to see any bad old ideological cold war between the entrenched but defensive authoritarian capitalist powers of Russia and China and the democratic capitalist world. Establishing a functioning rules-based democratic system takes time, but history shows that economic modernization brings with it pluralisation and equal opportunities for more people. China and Russia will not be exceptions to this rule. But for varying reasons, they will be transformed at a later stage than the West would wish.

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3) Interview with Wang Jinhong, political scientist at Guangzhou Normal University, Guangzhou April 9, 2008.

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