Essay

Heaven is High and the Emperor is Far Away: The Hong Kong/China Crisis in the Nation-State System Context

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Abstract

Before the nation-state system was devised China had developed a highly systematized philosophy of social relations known as Confucianism. This philosophy provided a collective sense of being Chinese still present as a kind of substrata upon which the current state has been built.

That being noted, China has still had to contend with persistent tribalizing forces in the form of ethnic, linguistic and religious divisions from the times of empire to present. In the past two centuries there has been the added challenge of Western influences and even occupation that profoundly shook Chinese assumptions of cultural superiority ultimately resulting in an ambivalent industrial transformation.

This piece utilizes reverse causal layered analysis (historical analysis by another name) to situate the current situation in Hong Kong in that context. By analyzing the Hong Kong protests and the Chinese response through the long lens of history, and specifically within the universal and perennial tension between globalization and tribalization, a probable resolution might be considered in which Hong Kong is absorbed over the next generation with an ensuing larger transformational global consciousness influence taking hold in China after that.

Context

The vast expanse of early human existence has been structured around small bands of foraging tribes under which prototypical governments were formed consisting ofcharismatic chiefs, skilled hunters and shamans as a primal type of divided government. This template would later evolve around sovereign, landed families and priests. Much of what we now view as human history would subsequently focus on scaled-up social entities known as "civilizations" manifested in city-states and later, empires (Auyang, 2014). However, these larger systems had little day-to-day control over the more populated hinterlands. To the extent that they did, it was in the creation and maintenance of monetary systems that obviated the need for barter, but also solidified central government control over the economic system. This has been the case across history and cultures. Imperiums everywhere have operated on a mafia-style model of exacting tribute in return for protection while leaving actual governance to local tribes and ruling families. What would come to be a truly unique feature in China in terms of its persistence was the establishment of an overarching Confucian/Han identity that would outlast individual dynastic rule over thousands of years. This melding of culture with nation set China apart from other imperia that would decay and fall with a distinct new order rising to take their place. One can see this in the early civilizations of the Nile Valley, Mesopotamia, and Rome that would last centuries, but fall so utterly as to even lose their written and spoken languages. Hieroglyphics,

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cuneiform writing, and the scripts of the Mayans and Harapa peoples of the Indus Valley are intelligible only to a fringe community of Egyptologists and Anthropologists. Classical Greek is likewise known only to scholars literate in that archaic alphabet, and Latin is relegated to the remnant students of the classical education model and the Roman Catholic priesthood (Saggs, 1989). This is not to discount the cultural legacies of non-Chinese civilizations, which continue to echo in an imperceptible collective consciousness over millennia, but no one is likely to identify strongly with, say, characters in an historical drama set three or four thousand years ago save the Chinese.

A key sustaining factor for prerevolutionary dynastic orders was an elaborate civil service system constructed to screen aspiring officials and confirm their alignment with the imperial value systems. The fundamental competencies of these officials included a command of the written language, which was a key binding agent in a land of innumerable local mutually unintelligible dialects. This standardized indoctrination and development process into the ever-higher strata of officialdom was a Chinese version of becoming a "made man" in mob parlance. It also institutionalized an extremely conservative, backward-looking collective mindset that would consistently resist any new ideas to incorporate into its governing canon.

Many might argue that modern values pertaining to governance have radically shifted away from those associated with classical Confucian philosophy particularly given the collapse of the Qing dynasty and the tumult of the last century (Bowles, 2016). Contemporary Chinese government is no longer masked in "miracle, mystery and authority" to borrow from Dostoyevsky. Still, the process of recruitment and advancement in the Chinese government is still largely based upon demonstrating a command of and loyalty to the Communist Party line as expressed by its ruling elites now personified by General Secretary Xi Jinping and State Council Premier Li Keqiang (Dreyer, 2015). Of course recruitment and advancement by demonstrating fidelity to orthodoxy is not confined to China, but are found everywhere. However, in China the legacy of authority being legitimized by demonstrating consistent ancestral rectitude is a quintessential cultural trait that has even sanctified a figure like Mao Zedong.

The Narrative of Chinese Primacy in Military, Economic and Cultural Power

China would hold a dominant position and influence throughout most of East Asia for the better part of five thousand years in each of the three dimensions of power.

It was potent by virtue of its large culturally homogeneous population, though it would experience invasions mostly from the West and North by Tibetans, Mongolians and Manchurians prior to its encounter with Europeans. These assaults would lead to that signature feat of monumental engineering, The Great Wall. In a very real way the Great Wall was a simple message to the rest of the world telling all to "Keep Out!". It is notable that there were instances where the two post-Wall invasions prior to the 19th century (Mongols and Manchus) were let in by the sentries without a fight. They allowed the invaders through the gates out of disgust with the emperor losing legitimacy (the "Mandate of Heaven"). In any case the vast majority of its military conflicts were internal. This is not unusual in that this is true of warfare in general. There are many more civil wars than international wars and in this China was no exception.

The historical roots of China's economic power were the large and agriculturally rich river valleys have been its primary natural asset, To the extent that there was trade, it was in silks and some precious minerals. Its mostly homogeneous Confucian ethic eschewed warrior culture that often plagued medieval Europe and Japan during the Tokugawa period. Its inward gaze kept foreign conquest to a minimum thus mitigating the squandering of resources on big military adventures. While there were occasional episodes of plague and famine, on balance China was economically self-sufficient.

It was its long-abiding cultural power that has been China's strongest suit. Confucian ethic and a large body of literary and philosophical wisdom made it a magnet for scholars from all over East Asia, especially from Japan and Korea, who were early adapters of the Chinese writing system. This author recalls the observation by one Korea expert that the Koreans were more Confucian than the Chinese ever were. Chinese-sourced knowledge was exported to effectively "Sinify" its neighbors. This is why the Mongol and Manchu invasions were not transformational events as the invaders were absorbed by the dominant culture (Kang, 2009). There is an apocryphal story of a Japanese general and retinue entering the Forbidden City in Beijing and being thoroughly cowed by its splendor despite Japan having achieved overwhelming technological superiority. Cultural power has been rebranded as "soft power" and the literature around that concept is become ever more vast as a policy strategy deployed by the Chinese

state (Zhu, Edney, & Rosen, 2019). This is not to say that China's attempts at projecting soft power beyond its immediate boundaries is fully effective. The evidence of its efforts thus far are mixed at best, if only because China's claim of self-evident cultural superiority is not uncritically accepted to say the least (Huang & Ding, 2006).

The 19th Century Threat to Chinese Primacy from Europe

In Europe, there arose a global merchant class that would be based in a port or at trading crossroads, but with networks extending eventually all over the world. This would manifest a nomadic band of essentially stateless entrepreneurs, the most familiar early figures in the West being Marco Polo and Christopher Columbus (Larrain, 2013). Later the Spanish conquistadors would come, fervent in their belief that exchanging Roman Catholicism for New World gold was a fair trade. The more secular English and Dutch had the better business model in bringing not just traders but settlers, often religious dissidents, who would bring along their women, creating sustainable segregated settlements. The French would trade for furs with the indigenous peoples in North America. However, they had a more limited pool of dissidents willing to go abroad, and those who did favored the slave-based plantation lifestyles of the Caribbean.

Like the priests who would come to function as the first bureaucrats (the word "clerk" is directly descended from "cleric"), these merchants cum capitalists would have the distinction of being profoundly transformative producers of wealth. Their sovereign patrons would receive a cut in order to secure the right to operate on their respective turfs. This rise of European colonization, first described as mercantilism, later morphing into what would come to be justified as capitalism, proved to be a powerful engine for wealth acquisition. It would not be confined to the initial wave of colonizers. The principles of capitalism would be diffused to indigenous compradors as well (Hoogvelt, 1978). This would have highly consequential impacts on the peoples inhabiting these trading outposts all over the world, which would come to include the port city of Hong Kong as a prominent colony of the British crown. Their interactions would have profound cultural impacts on the colonized that would loosen an already nominal acceptance of indigenous imperial rule. The Chinese of Hong Kong would be especially receptive to these new foreign influences particularly given their estrangement from the imperial center in Beijing.

An Elaboration on the Nation-State as Mediator Between Global and Tribal Forces

This section describes the hypothesis that the nation state is an invention that functions to mediate the forces of globalization and tribalization. Previous research was conducted by the author that created a crude index of government ministries devoted to managing tribal and global forces. Those ministries devoted largely to tribalization management included Home/Interior Affairs, Culture, Youth and Sports, Local Government Affairs, and Minority Affairs. Those ministries devoted primarily to globalization management included foreign affairs, trade/commerce, tourism, and mining/fisheries/forestry. Each ministry is devoted to serve these respective constituencies. The research analyzed 95 national budget allocations to each of these selected ministries. An index in which the cumulative budgetary allocations to ministries charged with tribalization management was divided by the cumulative budgetary allocations to globalization management. China ranked fifth of the 95 nations analyzed in allocations to tribalization management with 18.7 times of its annual budget going to domestic constituencies over global ones (Dolan, 2014). While this might seem somewhat counterintuitive given its status as a major trading country, and its well-publicized "Silk Belt Road" initiative in setting up a higher profile presence in Eurasia, China is still concentrating the vast majority of its governing resources to domestic social integration and economic development.

Examining the Deep Structure Underlying the Idea of China

This piece now turns to an analysis along the lines of a reverse causal layered analysis of the idea of China (running from its Taoist/Confucian/Legalist mythic roots through to its firmly established Han cultural narrative, then to the broad social attitudes of both mainstream Chinese and Hong Kong identities to ultimately explain the surface layer of litany in the form of the Hong Kong protests. This approach will help to help inform the current issue as a result of forces both immediate and deep.

Mythos: The Anarchy of Daoism to the Unifying Meta-Ideology of Confucianism

Any useful discussion of China must acknowledge its long and complex history with its nuances that cannot be contained in even an introductory treatment. Still, a good point of departure is the rise of Confucianism as China's common denominator in terms of majority Han identity that has also absorbed "Sinicized" minority communities in the Eastern portions of the country. The story is familiar to even novice students of Chinese history. As with later medieval Europe, ancient China was beset by constant warfare among rival kingdoms that, would, in the classical telling, pit brother against brother and father against son. Confucius, as he is called in the West, sought an ethical construct that would guide leaders to a wiser and more prosperous path for all people. His Analects outlined his vision of exemplar leadership with fidelity to proper ritual that would achieve the mandate of heaven and thus legitimize the state (Lai, 2017).

The dominant philosophy prior to Confucius was the ancient body of works ascribed to a historically ambiguous figure, Lao Tsu, collectively known as Daoism. Daoism's focus was on the ways of nature and not of societies per se. To the extent it had any guidance for people, it was on attention to its version of natural law that concentrated on process more than structure. The original text, *Dao I-Ching,* was essentially a book of divination that influenced people by purportedly tapping into the natural flows of earth and heaven. Vestiges of its influence still permeate Chinese culture particularly in the practice of *feng shui*, *tai chi,* numerology Chinese astrology and various fetishes around gambling. There are also echoes of Daoist thought reverberating in contradiction to government orthodoxy though mostly among intellectuals outside of the People's Republic of China (Rapp, 2012).

That noted, Daoism is at heart anarchistic in eschewing the designs of humanity imposed upon nature. Because of this view, Daoism is seen to have little utility in resolving social conflict or in embracing normative ideas of progress beyond cultivation of one's inner world and linking it to natural flows (Cott & Rock, 2009).

Confucianism superceded Daoism as a true governing philosophy and over the course of its development would generate various rival schools of thought, most notably between the Mohist and Legalist Schools. With the rise of the Qin dynasty, the first to truly unify China, it would be the Legalist School with its more specific, rigid and Machiavellian prescriptions for governance that would prevail (Fraser, 2011). The Legalist School would see rises and falls in its influence over the next 2,500 years, but saw a revival in the Maoist era as the Communist Party would rationalize legalist thought as a precursor to its own. This state embrace of Confucian legalism would mature over the decades and come to link state legitimacy to what was always at the core of Chinese culture, the best efforts of Mao's Cultural Revolution notwithstanding (Zhao, 2015). Thus the national motto, "Serve the People" is quintessentially Confucian in flavor and each political leader from Xi Jinping on down carefully cultivates an image of exemplar in word and deed in order to maintain the "mandate of heaven".

Cultural Narratives: A Nation is a Dialect with an Army

There are three contradictions that are bound up in the invention of nation that pertain directly to China. The first is described by Benedict Anderson in *Imagined Communities* (1991), which focused on the origin and proliferation of nationalism. The principle thesis of the book was in linking the adoption of print technology that enabled a near universal means of communication in the vernacular of linguistic communities worldwide. The analysis here shifts the focus more intently on the linguistic element that is a core binding agent in communities. There is ample prima facie evidence that supports both the unifying and divisive capacities of language. The Anglophone world from England to Australia finds both common heritage and easy interaction as with the Hispanic and Francophone linguistic communities globally. Common language facilitates trade as well as cultural affinity further binding communities economically.

In the case of China, linguistic solidarity has long been problematic with mutually unintelligible dialects often as proximate to each other as a ridgeline away. It was just the written language that bound people together as a nation but only among those who could read. China's peasantry, like those elsewhere in the world, with boundaries mostly a day's walk away. Given the Chinese written language is comprised of ideographs with nominal associative logic to the characters (radicals and phonetics), with the standard of literacy requiring knowing at least five thousand of them, power in China required formalized study. For a much longer period than experienced in the West, the majority of the Chinese people were illiterate or nearly so. Even the introduction of woodblock printing, invented first in China was problematic for typesetting was enormously difficult. Chinese take twice as long to learn reading

and writing their own language than in alphabetic realms.

Simplifying Chinese characters was one of the most significant legacies of the Maoist Era. Subsequent universal introduction of the Mandarin Chinese as the national standard dialect throughout the educational system, all broadcast and later on-line media has provided a linguistic commonality and a critical binding agent. This has had a two-edged result in bringing about significant, even critical cultural solidarity and greater opportunities for its people to be productive members of society, but also keep China's written language effectively unintelligible outside of the country. This is in contrast to the phonetically based scripts found in Arabic, Western alphabets, Cyrilic, Korean Hangul, and even Japanese kana where at least words can be sounded out. The effect is a "Great Wall" to all but the most motivated to learn the economic world's de facto lingua franca, English, the exception being Hong Kong (Li, 2018). More to the point of this section's theme though is how the linguistic divide continues to persist between the Putonghua (Mandarin) Chinese in the northern and mid-coastal parts of China and the persistence of Guangdong (Cantonese) dialect in the heavily populated southern areas of Guangdong, Guangxi, and Hong Kong with Hong Kong being especially problematic given its Anglo colonization experience that often obliges its residents to be trilingual.

The North/South Divide

The linguistic standardization project was essential to China's national development in every sense of the term. Generations of post-revolution children were to be exposed, en mass, to the common tongue of Putonghua (Mandarin) Chinese (ironically the dialect of the Manchurians from the other side of the Great Wall). This enhanced a sense of national identity beyond the aforementioned ancient binding agent of Confucianism. It helped to mitigate though not entirely eliminate other tribalizing forces found in virtually nation. In the case of China's long history, the North/South divide has been especially salient. The Chinese South has long had a reputation for rebelliousness. There is a reason why China has two major cities with the word for capital (Jing) in their names, those being Beijing (Northern Capital) and Nanjing (Southern Capital). Historical forces moved political power back and forth between these regions as dynasties rose and fell. While both regions' economies were predominantly agricultural, the northern regions tended to grow the hardier crops of barley and wheat, and favoring noodles as a staple, while the South was primarily a rice growing and consuming society. Over millennia these dietary differences had an effect on the stature with the Northerners significantly taller on average.

Much as with other agrarian cultures there was little mobility with peasants tied to their lands and mostly marrying someone within a days' walk of their home village (almost always arranged by parents). What made Chinese culture unique was the widespread value given to education with its prospect of meritocratic social mobility. It served as a means to enter the imperial bureaucracy, albeit on its terms (Elman, 1991). It had the power to demonstrably rationalize and legitimize the Chinese state and sense of Chinese national identify even before the formal creation of the Western nation-state system. It reinforced Confucian orthodoxy and faith in guidance by superior men among the people, while also providing a practical means to at least give the appearance of open competition (Yen, 2015).

Social Causes: The Legacy of the Tai Ping Rebellion

The stakes under the old imperial civil examination system as it teetered along in the last Chinese dynasty were still literally make or break with entire village communities' fortunes on the line. A native son succeeding in passing the exams would bring much needed patronage and candidates were thus under severe pressure to make the grade. This was especially true with the ethnic minority peoples interspersed throughout Han dominated China proper as the route to any semblance of prosperity relied on having one of their own placed in office to care for their interests. No better example of this was found in the case of the Hakka minority aspirant Hong Xiuquan, who had twice failed his initial examinations and was out to succeed on his third and final try. On his way to take that last exam he encountered a British Protestant missionary who was now ranging freely to proselytize after the Qing defeat in the Opium War. The tale goes that he absently took the missionary's pamphlet, and again failed his exam, at which point he returned home, had a severe nervous breakdown that made him bedridden in a delirium for several days. Upon waking from his unconscious state he would much later find and read the pamphlet. He subsequently

interpreted the dreams he experienced while in breakdown to be a revelation that he was the younger brother of Jesus Christ. He determined his earthly mission was to rid China of the devilish influences of a corrupt dynasty and its bankrupt Confucian system. The result of his visions would result in a 14-year civil war that nearly toppled the Qing dynasty. The only reason the Tai Ping army did not capture Beijing and topple the Qing dynasty was that the British opted to supply needed arms to the imperial army determining, over the objections of the missionaries that it was better to prop up the devil they knew. The Tai Ping rebellion killed an estimated 20 to 30 million people (Platt, 2012).. By comparison, the total estimated killed in World War I was about 20 million. There was massive internal migration with some places, including Anhui Province so depopulated that they did not recover its pre-rebellion population for at least a century. The rebellion helped to trigger a spasm of other rebellions in China, even spreading down to Vietnam where an offshoot group of Tai Ping adherents held out for years.

There are three reasons for this section to be taken as a significant element in understanding Chinese state concern about the potency of regional dissent.

The first reason is that virtually no Westerner, outside of a few China specialists, are aware of the Taiping Rebellion let alone its magnitude. It would be as if someone sought to understand the U.S., Spanish, and Russian experiences without knowing about their relatively recent civil wars and revolutions. While the Taiping Rebellion is well over a century-and-a-half old and eclipsed by the Japanese invasion of China, and the Chinese Communist Revolution, the lesson of state disintegration in the face of popular revolt is not lost among Chinese government elites.

The second reason is that this revolt began from the margins and spread beyond the imagination of any government official of the day. The enduring lesson for the present Chinese government learned from the Taiping Rebellion is to avoid complacency in the face of protests lest things get out of hand. Put within the context of the Hong Kong protests is that of a sense of skittishness over any social movement, especially religiously driven ones, as seen with the crackdown on the Falun Gong followers, Tibetan Buddhists and Muslim Uighurs.

The third reason is that appeals to Han ethnic identity may not provide sufficient social solidarity in the face of a governmental system that people feel alienated from. While Tai Ping leader Hong Xiuquan was himself Hakka, this group was considered a Han subgroup more than an ethnic minority in its own right. Hong Kong residents similarly regard themselves as mostly being resolutely Han, but they are not likely to be bound to Beijing by simple ethnic identity.

The East-West Chinese Divide

While the North-South Chinese divide has a long history of episodic schisms, the East-West Chinese divide is unique both in terms of ethnic identity, religion and economy. In this lies a knottier issue for perpetuators of the Chinese nation-state. The Chinese traditionally regarded the peoples on the peripheries of their realm as barbarians. They did not look physically like Han Chinese and have radically different cultural practices in religion, diet, economy and overall lifestyle. An example of this divide can be seen in a typical slur against the Tibetans that they "reeked of butter". This is from a people who have until recently been so unused to consuming dairy products of any sort that they commonly have lactose intolerance from lacking the enzymes necessary to break it down. The Han Chinese were and continue to be a mostly agrarian and fishing society, the peoples in Western China were and largely still are herding peoples. The practices of farming and herding are largely regarded as incompatible uses of the land, This conflict roughly was replicated during the range wars of the American West when farmer settlers began fencing their homesteads to protect their crops from free ranging cattle. In the case of Tibet, since at least the early 1970s Chinese officials sought to concentrate nomadic herders in villages, corralling the livestock and feeding them in these static locations. This allows a "Sinification" of these peoples by settling them and providing a means for both acculturation and surveillance.

More recently, the need for the vast mineral resources found in the west of the country has sparked a massive internal migration of Han Chinese miners into the region, also acting as a Sinicizing cultural agent. In every Western Chinese province and autonomous region, Han Chinese now significantly outnumber the indigenous peoples of those lands even with those indigenous peoples always being exempted from the old one-child-only policy. The latent memories of the Taiping Rebellion are now prominently displayed in the internment of about one million Uighur people, almost entirely due to deep suspicion of their Muslim faith. From the Han Chinese point of view,

this action is entirely reasonable as a prophylactic against another Taiping event. Taking this logic over to the Hong Kong context, there is less intense but still abiding concern over the cultural allegiance of non-Buddhist, Taoist, or Chinese folk religion adherents that make up roughly seventeen percent of the city's population. The subjugation and attempts to Sinicize the herding peoples of Western China is ongoing and, from the view of Hong Kong residents, a frightening glimpse of their own potential fate.

Litany: Han Suspicion of Non-Han Influences Specific to Hong Kong

"No people are more ethnocentric than the Chinese" was a message this then young China expert wannabe would read in one form or another throughout his undergraduate studies. There is no hard metrics for this, but it is fair to observe that the relationship between the Han Chinese and the peoples around its periphery arcing counterclockwise from Japan, Korea, Russia, Mongolia, Tibet, India, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Burma, and the rest of Indo-China and out to the Philippines and, lest we forget, Taiwan, suggests they did not see themselves as in a community of equals. The epithets of "barbarian" and "foreign devils" were casually used and centuries old. The enormous and ultimately futile effort to close China from the world was a policy even up and through the Maoist era. It is, of course, worth noting that the Chinese hold no monopoly on xenophobia and that distrust of others is a primal response in our species as a whole. The Han suspicion of outsiders, though, is intensified by a very long history of being first, the most advanced civilization for millennia, followed by a still cutting recent history of humiliation at the hands of foreign powers up until the Communist revolution of 1949. Hong Kong has been, in many ways, a thorny reminder of that over century-long episode.

So now at the level of litany, the popular attitude among Mainland Chinese towards the recent protests is dismissive at best. For them, Hong Kong residents are little more than privileged brats who never experienced the hardships that have finally resulted in a resurgent China (Myers & Mozer, 2019). If the People's Liberation Army were to sweep in and completely bring Hong Kong into the Chinese fold by force, it would be none-to-soon in their eyes.

Suggestions for Considering the Futures of China and Its Dissident Territories

Broadly speaking the Chinese are acutely aware of their identities as a people and of their long cultural legacy. It is useful to note that along with their Japanese and Korean neighbors, historical dramas of imperial times are still heavily produced and watched, which effectively links their ancestral heritage to contemporary audiences. This reinforces a long-view despite the volatile experiences over the past 150 years or so. As a result of this attitude projecting where relations will be with Beijing and Hong Kong, Beijing and Taiwan, and Beijing and its Non-Han Western peoples over the coming generation may not yield any significant transformation; but in the same breath might see everything change. What is most likely to remain constant is that there will be a collective idea of China and of being Chinese. This might have the unintended effect of alienating those non-Han minorities who's own histories tend to be suppressed or sanitized. The Beijing and Hong Kong conflict may be seen as relatively more urgent given the scheduled full administrative absorption of Hong Kong into China in 2047. Given that this date is roughly a generation away, it might lead to some initial complacency that may build in urgency as that deadline nears, all things being equal (the least likely scenario).

Ideally it would be useful for both parties to begin negotiations early, but given the likely shifts in conditions on both sides some contingencies might be worth considering. It is beyond the scope of this piece to delve into the range of options for consideration. Rather the contribution here is more to provide an informed context for futurist colleagues to incorporate into their own analyses. This author would strongly urge an appreciation of the issue's complexity and suggest a systems approach, modeling and scenario work, all with an eye to the role of nations as mediating agents between globalization and tribalization. For instance, it would be critical to consider the relative rates of acculturation towards a globalized consciousness in China that might include dialectical cycles of advancement towards global consciousness and retrograde episodes of nationalism all with an eye towards the reflexive tendency for China to turn inward. Conventional International Relations and area studies approaches can have limited utility though they have yielded numerous unsatisfactory to disastrous outcomes when translated into policies as with the American Vietnam War and Russian occupation of Afghanistan in the 1980s when Soviet

thinking saw that country as an exposed pawn between a revolutionary Iran weakened by a war with Iraq and a Pakistan highly focused on its rivalry with India. Certainly any unilateral or collective direct intervention in defense of democracy would result in a resolute and very dangerous reaction by China.

The wild card of information technology and increased Chinese tourism are also important as the Chinese government has tended to use the former to build an informational Great Wall, while the latter may slowly create a more cosmopolitan middle class. In other societies middle classes generally share very similar values not entirely foreign to the Chinese already as seen in both Hong Kong and Taiwan and even in China proper. While speculative, a Taiwan model of loosened personal freedoms might be a template for the mainland to consider, though no one in the Chinese government would dare to proffer that vision, certainly not now.

Final Thoughts

If one invokes the metaphor of history as a weight, regarded as apt among many futurists (Inayatullah, 1998), then it is important to incorporate the heavy weight of history carried in collective Chinese thought. This need not be ancient history. There is the memory of Tiananmen, 1989. While effectively suppressed from most Chinese domestically, the leadership would be loath to have the world witness anything like it again. There is also the state obsession with suppressing religion and religious movements like Falun Gong, Tibetan Buddhism and Islam. Such heavy-handedness would be the worst-case scenario for the government and thus an unlikely fate for Hong Kong. That recent polling shows very broad support for opposing attempted changes to Hong Kong criminal law at the behest of the Chinese central government authorities is also not lost in Beijing. With no overt pressures to exert full control until 2047, the patient approach appears to be the strategy though this might not preclude other sooner attempts at incrementally bringing Hong Kong more tightly into the rest of China.

There is also the likely countervailing influence of the significant number of Chinese nationals who have done university studies overseas, and who will begin to fill the ranks of state apparatuses as promising technocrats. This immersive long-term exposure to non-Chinese cultures during their studies interestingly may not have an immediate effect as this author recalls exit interviews with Asian and Pacific grantees at East-West Center in Honolulu, Hawaii indicating graduates having a lower opinion of American culture than when they first arrived. Nonetheless, the long-term effects of overseas study indicates a real connection with both classmates and professors did occur, fostering a network of relationships that lasted for years after these graduates left. This is borne out by a large social science networks study this author personally analyzed while a research intern in the Center's Culture and Communication Institute. The study was never published, but apparently kept in-house. It was telling, however, that the two lead researchers, Krishna Kumar and Sripada Raju would subsequently publish an article critical of Asian sociological dependence on Western academia (Kumar, & Raju, 1981).

Thus the metaphor of a Chinese state python grip closing in on Hong Kong might be further applied to a larger, and subtler grip of globalization and its values slowly coiling around China itself. Thus comes the contradictory perception of the Hong Kong protests as either a popular movement by the cosmopolitan offspring of a global world order, or itself a proto nationalist movement consistent with a long history of Southern Chinese resistance to Northern Chinese hegemony. Discussion on that point might a good point of departure moving forward as the ongoing drama in Hong Kong moves to an uncertain becoming. In the smog-choked nation of China, Heaven may still be high, but the emperor is approaching.

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