Communist China Essay, Research Paper

Communism in an Economically Developing China The future of communism in China is unknown, as the world economy becomes more international. Communism has been in China since 1949 and is still present in the country s activities. Presently China is undergoing incredible economic growth and promises to be a dominant power early in the next century. China s social tradition has come under heavy pressure from forces of modernization generated in a large part by the sustained contact with the West that began in the middle of the nineteenth century. The Western incursion, not only refined China militarily but brought in its course new ideas- nationalism, science and technology, and innovations in politics, philosophy, and art. Chinese leaders have sought to preserve the nation s cultural uniqueness by promoting specifically Chinese blends of tradition and modernity. China has undergone several major political transformations from a feudal-like system in early historical times, to a centralized bureaucratic empire that lasted through many unpredictable changes till 1911, to a republic with a communist form of government in the mainland since 1949. Economic geography and population pressure help account for the traditionally controlling role of the state in China. The constant indispensability for state interference, whether for great public works programs or simply to keep such a large society together, brought up an authoritarian political system. The family prevailed as the fundamental social, economic, and religious unit. Interdependence was very prominent in family relations while generation, age, sex and immediacy of kinship strictly governed relations within the family. Family rather than nation usually created the greatest allegiances with the result that nationalism as known to the West came late to the Chinese. In principle, the elite in the authoritarian political system achieved their positions through merit rather than birth or wealth. There was an examination system that provided a vehicle for recruiting talented citizens to serve the emperor, which was a valuable and unusual institution in a society characterized by personal connections. Democracy, individualism, and private property were kept carefully in check. Central state authority, however, rarely penetrated to the local level. Chinese leaders invented bureaucracy to keep the country unified and mastered the art of keeping government small. The Chinese search for a modern state began in the nineteenth century when two major sources of disorder overwhelmed the imperial institutions: domestic disintegration and foreign invasion. Between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Chinese population had doubled and redoubled. The problem of the population explosion created tremendous pressure on the limited farmland to provide sufficient food supply. For economic, religious, of ethnic reasons, peasant uprisings began to erupt. Moreover, beginning with the Opium War of 1832-1842, the imperial army suffered a series of defeats at the hands of the industrial powers of the West. The image of a shattering imperial dynasty directed rebellion and dissolution within China, exemplified by the Taiping Rebellion of 1851-1864 that nearly toppled the Qing dynasty. (Zheng, Party vs. State in Post-1949 China, 30) The reform measures in the first decade of this century were aimed at replacing dynastic rule with a new form of government. Among the most significant changes was the abolition of the civil service exam in 1905, which virtually cut off the connections among the emperor, the ruling ideology, and the official gentry. This time the imperial rulers hoped to save themselves by experimenting with some new institutional adaptations. A revolution was menacing; students who had returned from abroad came with ideas harmful to the imperial rule. Following the overthrow of the imperial regime in the Revolution of 1922, central authority dissipated and the country was divided among regional warlords. Reunification, begun by the Nationalist government under the Kuomintang (KMT); was interrupted by the Japanese invasion in the 1930 s. The unparalleled institutional crisis hastened the Chinese search for alternative means of reorganizing China. Since the last dynasty, Qing, collapsed construction of a modern Chinese state had been the goal shared by many Chinese modernizers. For them, this magnificent goal meant that China could one-day stand in the world community on an equal footing with other member states. While the first two decades of this century may have saw China in Chaos, this time period also produced a free intellectual environment. (Qtd. Imfeld, China as a Model of Development, 10) A country in an emptiness of state power was ambiguously full of new ideas and new experiments. Chinese scholars disputed almost every Western Concept that was known to them. Some preferred a parliamentary system, whereas others favored a presidential system. Some supported a restored monarchy, and others sought a constitutional system of the American type. Within a decade or two, China in search of a modern state had experienced a remarkable shift of focus from monarchy to presidency, to parliament, and to a revolutionary party. The two largest parties in modern Chinese history were formed between the first two decades of this century. The Chinese Nationalist Party, or the Kuomintang (KMT), was formed in 1912 as a coalition of five factions within the alliance that overthrew the Qing dynasty. Led by Mao Zedong, the Chinese communist Party (CCP) came into existence nearly a decade later. The ideas of Karl Marx and Lenin began to appeal to the well-educated Chinese because their Russian Revolution has just occurred in 1917. The CCP wished to modernize the economy, destroy old loyalties to the family and locality, mobilize mass political participation and establish new commitments to the party and nation. The Chinese parties became involved when the newly installed constitutional framework was falling apart. Western-style parliamentary systems disintegrated and the political parties had to find a way to establish government again. The CCP and the KMT disputed the issue till October 1949.In Tiananmen Square on October 1949, Mao Zedong proclaimed the People s Republic of China s (PRC) establishment. The CCP using a Marxist-Leninist system of government took control of the economy and dominated major institutions including schools, labor unions and peasant associations. China nationalized all capital-goods industries and pursued a policy of rapid, state-directed industrialization with the special emphasis on the development of steel and defense related industries. Agriculture underwent major social and technical changes with a land-reform program that redistributed all large landholdings to the peasants by 1952. (Lai, Grolier, 2-3) The railroad network developed further into Western and Northwestern China, giving more access to all. Striking economic and social advances occurred in many areas, but there were also disastrous food shortages and starvation, as well as bloody violence. War still occurred between the KMT and the CCP. Each struggled for power. Other anti- Communist groups were also engaged in all types of sabotage activities against the new regime. Soon the Korean War breaks out and Mao Zedong commits himself to supporting Kim II Sung. The whole country is mobilized and joins the war against the United States. Now the PRC is left with many challenges mainly reconstructing the economy, consolidating the revolution, and fighting two wars at home and in Korea. The country assumed military control. In November 1952, the military operations ended and the political and economic situations were stabilized. The Communist Party resumed more active control and invited high-ranking military officers to administrative committees. The revolutionary party carried out China s political and economic programs through mass mobilization. (Townsend, Political Parties in Communist China, 25) The PRC had developed a program to reorganize and modernize a peasant army now operating in a new environment. This military modernization program includes streamlining a ground force; establishing a navy, air force, and technical services; upgrading weapons and equipment; setting up military academics; promoting education and military training; formulating military regulations, rules and ranks. These steps were taken to regulate their army, the People s Liberation Army (PLA), as they returned from Korea. When Mao died in September 1976 (Zheng, Party vs. State in Post-1949 China, 161) his revolutionary ideas died with him. At the next National People s Congress meeting, the nation was called to achieve four modernizations in agriculture, industry, national defense, and science and technology. (Metzler, Divided Dynamism, 161.) The modernization program gained momentum after Deng Xiaoping managed to return to power. The Congress decided to change its priority of the Party from political campaigns to economic development. Leaders devoted tremendous attention to reestablishing a legal system. Laws and regulations were needed to regulate many new types of economic activities and relationships resulting from market reform and privatization. Local economy in China became more diversified due to regional developmental strategy and integration with the international market, provincial legislatures were also strengthened. Although Deng Xiaoping had once inspired many people in China when he called for economic modernization and legal development, he often disappointed his supporters more than often than his opponents. Den s support for establishing a legal system was not unqualified. After he suppressed the Democracy Wall movement in March1979, Deng laid down the four cardinal principles, namely, upholding the socialist road, the dictatorship of the proletariat, the leadership of the Communist Party, and Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought, thus setting the ultimate limits on legal developments in China. Beginning with the initiation of economic reforms in 1978, efforts have been made to correct the structural imbalance this policy produced. Abundant coal, petroleum, and natural-gas reserves aid China s economic development. Industrial machinery, chemicals, manufactured goods, steel, and textile yarn are the chief imports. Textiles, garments, telecommunications, and recording equipment are the leading exports. Under rural reforms introduced in 1979, the land was contracted to individual peasant households, giving the peasants more freedom to choose crops they grew and to sell any output exceeding assigned levels on the open market. The reforms led to dramatic gains in agricultural production and the emergence of millions of specialized households producing cash crops and engaging in nonagricultural activities. Party leadership was reshuffled in June 1989 after two months of large-scale pro-democracy demonstrations. Hu Yaobang, who was party chairman since 1981, resigned in 1987 after student protests and accusations from Deng that he didn t mind student, protests. In April 1989, news came that Hu had died from a heart attack. Largely intellectuals and students lost all hope for the democracy movement, because they desired for Hu to come back to power, since while he was in office he had a leniency towards student movements. Saddened by Hu s death and angered by Deng s decision not to remove the accusations made against Hu, students, intellectuals, and city residents poured into Tiananmen Square to mourn the death. This had gone on for months until June 3-4. The efforts to seek a peaceful means to the crisis through the national legislature were aborted by gunfire.) Fully equipped PLA went on a rampage in Tiananmen Square and killed hundreds of innocent civilians. (Zheng, 165-166) Fundamental human rights provided for in China s 1982 constitution has been ignored in practice especially when citizens challenged the CCP s political authority. This event is an example of the severe restriction of freedom of association, religion, speech, and press. In 1979, the United States established relations with the People s Republic of China and transferred diplomatic recognition from Taipei to Beijing. A 1979 Joint Communiqu reflected this change, and Beijing agreed that the American people would continue to carry on commercial, cultural, and other unofficial contacts with the people of Taiwan. Taiwan was separated from China, but the United States accepted the One China policy that acknowledges that Chinese on both sides of Taiwan maintains that there is one China and that Taiwan is a part of China. The 1979 Taiwan Relations Act, and a Third Joint Communiqu signed in 1982, further defined the United States-China relationship as well as unofficial U.S. relations with the people of Taiwan. Following the People s Republic of China government s suppression of the democracy movement at Tiananmen Square, the United States and other nations imposed a number of sanctions against China. Some of the Tiananmen sanctions still remain in place. The Trade Act of 1974 requires an annual review of China s emigration record for China to keep its most favored nation trading status. This annual review remains in effect and since 1990, has been the focus of efforts in both the executive and legislative branches to assess an overall relationship with China including China s performance on human rights issues. In May 1993, President Clinton signed an Executive Order tying renewal of China s most favored nation status in 1994 to progress in several human rights areas. Although China did not achieve overall significant progress in certain areas identified in the Executive Order, the President decided to renew China s most favored nation status in 1994. He noted that China met the two mandatory requirements of immigration and prison labor. The United States has continually pressed China on the core human rights issues. (Mining Co. COM, U.S.-China Relations ) In economics and trade, there are two main elements to the United States approach to China. The United States seeks to fully integrate China into the global system. China s participation in the global economy will provide for the process of economic reform and increase China s venture in the stability and prosperity of the locale. The United States also seeks to expand U.S. exporters and investors access to the Chinese market. China wants to become a part of the World Trade Organization. In order to gain entry all prospective World Trade Organization members are required to conform to certain fundamental trading disciplines and offer significantly expanded market access to other member of the organization. Seeing China s entrance to the World Trade Organization will contribute to China s economic reformation and help the United States and other World Trade Organization member s economies grow and will help the world s most populated country. The United States economic relationship with Hong Kong is closely tied to United States-China relations. Under the 1984 Sino-British Joint Declaration , Hong Kong will become a Special Administrative Region of the People s Republic of China. United States concerns over this transition include economic and investment issues. The United States has substantial economic and social ties with Hong Kong, with an estimated $8 billion to $10 billion invested there. There are 900,000 U.S. firms and 30,000 American residents in Hong Kong. The United States is Hong Kong s second largest market, importing $10.2 billion in 1995, and Hong Kong is America s 14th largest trading partner, $14.2 billion in United States exports in 1995. (Qtd. Mining Co. COM, U.S.-China Relations. ) China today has also become more decentralized that it used to be. If economic modernization continues to be the top priority for the recent regime, we are going to see more deviating interests between the center and localities, and among miscellaneous regions. It is likely that China will move further toward a federalist solution to the country s chronic problems of oscillation between central control and local sovereignty. A political or even military crackdown on defiant regions is not unattainable, but it can be orchestrated only at expense of economic thriving, this leading to more regional conflicts and social tensions. China s fast changing economy and society also demand similar state institution. After more than four decades of Communist Party rule, China today is still confronted with the century old problem of how to build a modern Chinese state. The Chinese leaders and people have yet to meet the most serious challenge of the 20th century. Failure to reorganize China in changing domestic and international environment will almost certainly lead toward disastrous consequences for China.