Globalization and Blind-Eye Governance in China

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It is tempting to view the world market economy as the sole driver of China's process of globalization, and as one of the primary shapers of its internal changes over the last several decades. Symbolically, China broke with the global market in 1950 when it withdrew from GATT, and it soon moved toward a planned economy. With the economic reforms that began after the Cultural Revolution, however, China quickly felt the need to rejoin the world market, not least because attracting foreign investors and buyers requires a legal, regulatory, and accounting infrastructure that they can understand and trust. China thus returned to GATT as an observer in 1982, just a few years into the reform period, and finally joined GATT's successor, the WTO, as a full member in 2001. The events of 1989 slowed the process considerably, but did not change the long-term policy direction of re-entering a world system that had been shaped almost entirely in the West.

I want to argue, however, that this view of globalization is much too simple in several ways. First, it imagines a unified world system or, in some forms, a unified West. Instead, nations entering the streams of global discourse are exposed to a multiplicity of views, not a univocal drone. Second, it imagines the flow of globalization as a simple and single path, like a stream flowing downhill. Instead, a nodal image, where various

global forces are reworked and sent out again, might be more appropriate.[1] Third, it runs the risk of underestimating the powerful influence of earlier periods of globalization, in this case the strong legacies from China's experiences in the early twentieth century. Finally, while I certainly would not downplay the importance of the economy, much else in China's global experience has also played a vital role in shaping the current nature of the polity. For these reasons I will be looking at two rather different aspects of globalization that are not directly economic—religion and environmental organizations—and I will begin with events more closely associated with the modernizing May Fourth Movement of 1919 than with the demonstrations of 1989.

By pursuing global influences, I hope to shed light on forms of governance that have been evolving in China especially in the years since 1989. China is of course the one major Communist state that weathered the challenges of 1989 with its state structure fundamentally intact. Nevertheless, its actual forms of governance have changed enormously since the height of Mao's totalizing project in the Cultural Revolution. The underlying vision of how state and society should relate to each other has been transformed. Looking at religion and environmental groups allows me to concentrate on those aspects of informal politics that loom large in people's daily lives, even if they do not appear very clearly in official documents and pronouncements. In particular, I see a development toward more open forms of state-society relations realized through new forms of responsive authoritarianism and what I will call blind-eye governance—a "don't ask don't tell" attitude toward many social forms that lie outside the law but are

[1] In earlier work, I expand on one example of this: the influence in China of the very different reworkings of ideas about protection of nature in the United States, Japan, and the United Nations. See Robert P.

nevertheless mostly tolerated. These forms are hardly the direct result of globalization, but they are intimately twined together with much of China's global experience over the last century.

The Globalization of "Modernity"

Many waves of globalization have shaped contemporary China. I will begin in the early part of the twentieth century because that is when many Chinese elites embraced the ideas of modernity. They did this with much less anxiety and nativist reaction than we see in much of the rest of the poorer world, especially in colonies like India or most of Africa. The great symbol of this moment was the May 4th Movement of 1919, in which Chinese intellectuals first moved decisively away from the use of written classical Chinese, with the implied rejection of the entire world of imperial literati culture. "Mr. Science" and "Mr. Democracy" were watchwords for the movement, which comfortably embraced many Western liberal values of the time, from social evolutionism to freedom of the press.

The effects of this were especially clear for religious policy. The state cult and all the cosmological underpinnings of the imperial polity had been swept away by the Republican Revolution of 1911. The new Constitution embraced much of Western modernity, including an understanding of the necessary separation of Church and State. The Chinese form of this emulated the radical French version of secularity. (It differed significantly from Germany's solution to the problem, even though German examples were generally more important for the Republic's new legal system.) With the partial

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Weller, *Discovering Nature: Globalization and Environmental Culture in China and Taiwan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

exception of Christianity (which was small but important to the some of the elite), this meant systematic undercutting of the economic power of religious organizations, often by taking their land. It also entailed defining "religion" itself as a separate category of thought for the first time. It is no coincidence that the new term for religion, *zongjiao*, was borrowed from Japanese translations of Western terms at this time, along with many of the analytic social scientific and philosophical terms still in use today. No exactly comparable term had existed before. This new idea of religion took a largely mainstream Protestant form, with an emphasis on a sacred cannon, voluntary membership, and trained specialists.

By this definition, the local temple and household rituals of the great majority of China's people were not religion at all, but fit instead into another new usage entailed by the category of religion: they were superstition (*mixin*). Confucianism also fell out of the list of religions at this time, because its fit with the new definition was shaky. The result was a government that found much local religiosity embarrassing. The state often repressed it, banning rituals and turning temples into schools or government buildings.[2] This attitude continued to characterize the GMD regime even after its move to Taiwan.

The early Communists, of course, also accepted this basic understanding that the state should be entirely independent from religion, and that religion itself had little to offer in a modern world. Marx's own writings on religion were few, but they suggested that religion was an escape for the emiserated classes, and that it would simply fade away

[2] Rebecca Nedostup, "Ritual Competition and the Modernizing Nation-State," *Chinese Religiosities: Afflictions of Modernity and State Formation*, ed. Mayfair Mei-hui Yang (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008) 87-112.

as the end of exploitation allowed them to give up its false comforts.[3] Mao Zedong, however, also planted another seed in 1927, when he described religion itself as a major tool of exploitation, one of the four thick ropes that bound the Chinese people.[4] This less benign view would come to the fore many decades later, but for now the GMD and the CCP sounded rather similar notes, all generally unfriendly to religion, with the greatest difference being that the Communists worried more about the imperialist connections of Christianity.

The GMD regrouped official religions as social organizations of a kind—one for each of the recognized traditions like Buddhism and Daoism (with none, of course, for temple worship or Confucianism, neither of which now had a legitimate legal space). The goal was less an active civil society with religious participation than a structure that allowed effective political supervision. In this sense, religious policy matched the kind of corporatist structure that would become increasingly prevalent during GMD rule (especially in Taiwan) and more recently in the People's Republic.

The other main area I will be discussing here is environmental organization and protest. Of course, there was very little directly relevant activity at this point (as in most of the world), but the early twentieth century still brought two changes that would ultimately shape environmental action. First, there was the entry of the idea of non-governmental organizations (NGOs). International NGOs evolved from charitable Christian movements of nineteenth-century Europe and America. Pioneer groups like the Red Cross and the YMCA entered China early. This aspect of globalization brought

[3] Karl Marx, "Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of the Right," *The Portable Karl Marx*, ed. Eugene Kamenka (New York: Penguin, 1983 [1943]) 115.

much more than just new organizations: it promoted a universalist view of humanity and an image of a self-organized society conceived as independent from the state. As with the creation of a term for religion, China during this period also adopted *shehui* ("society") from Japanese translations of Western thought. NGOs were one of the important carriers of the new concept.

Second, the early twentieth century also brought completely new ways of thinking about the environment, including yet another term borrowed from Japanese to translate a Western idea that had no exact equivalent—*ziran* ("nature").[5] Western thinkers of the time did not have a single concept of nature. It was the time of John Muir's efforts to protect an unsullied pure nature as much as it was of the great canals, mines and railroads that utterly transformed nature for human benefit. The version that resonated most powerfully with China's new elite of the time, however, imagined a separate nature to be controlled. The earlier view of an intertwined humanity and cosmos was left behind in favor of military imagery of conquest and control. As with the new attitudes toward religion, these global influences had consequences that shaped much of the century that would follow.

The Rise of a Totalitarian Model

Communism has usually been as enthusiastically dedicated to the project of modernity as any form of market liberalism. It rejected free markets, but happily embraced ideals of mass production, efficiency, rationalization, and bureaucracy. Perhaps for this reason, in areas as diverse as religion and the environment, China had

[4] Zedong Mao, "Report on an Investigation of the Peasant Movement in Hunan," *Selected Readings from the Works of Mao Tsetung* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1971 [1927]) 23-39.

many more continuities across the Revolutionary divide of 1949 than we might expect. Religious policy in the 1950s still saw nominal guarantees of separation of Church and State, a broadly corporatist structure for incorporating recognized religions through national associations, and an abandonment of Confucianism. The primary difference, as I mentioned, was the generally harsher treatment of Christianity, although still within the same broader system of control. The new government, much like the Republic before it, continued to condemn temple and household worship as "feudal superstition." These practices were not yet thoroughly repressed, but temples and lineage halls tended to lose their former functions and become government buildings, just as under the GMD.

Elite concepts of the environment, and especially the idea of bending nature to humanity's economic wants and needs, did not really change at all after 1949. Many of the Communist slogans that Judith Shapiro decries in her study of PRC environmental policy in fact began in the Republican era, and showed up in Taiwanese textbooks of the 1950s as much as in PRC ones.[6] These include claims like "Man must conquer nature!" that would have been almost unthinkable before the twentieth century. We even see long-term commitment to some of the same projects, most famously the Three Gorges Dam.

On the other hand, the idea of NGOs as independent voices of society was increasingly undercut and replaced by Soviet-style mass organizations in the 1950s. While this was not totally out of character with the corporatist tendencies of the GMD state, both on the mainland and later in Taiwan, it weakened even further the

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[5] Weller, *Discovering Nature: Globalization and Environmental Culture in China and Taiwan*.

[6] Judith Shapiro, *Mao's War Against Nature: Politics and the Environment in Revolutionary China* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

independence of social actors, empowering the state at the expense of society. This trend increased dramatically with the Cultural Revolution in China, the one period when the state truly embraced something like a totalitarian project.

This period brought systematic attempts to end anything that recollected older Chinese culture and that resembled a society independent from the state. For most religion this meant a rapid increase in repression of local temples and religious practitioners throughout the 1960s, to the point where there was almost no public religiosity. More institutionalized religions like Buddhism, Christianity or Daoism were reduced to a few tokens. For the environment, the introduced idea of humanity conquering nature continued to dominate, while remnants of earlier views (like fengshui) were repressed. NGOs were completely impossible, and even most of the mass organizations ceased to function as the leaders embraced an image of governance where society dissolved completely into the state.

Reforms and Beyond

The totalitarian project never succeeded completely in stamping out religion, local social organization, or even alternate ways of thinking about the environment. We can see this especially clearly for local temple religion (which itself strongly influences both potential civil associations and environmental views). Many places hid god images, which might be pulled out of hiding at safe moments. In one Shaanxi village during the Cultural Revolution, for example, people credited the spirit of Norman Bethune (a critical propaganda figure in the Cultural Revolution due to an essay of Mao's) with performing miraculous cures; his spirit was invoked by smoking *Yan'an* cigarettes, his favorite

brand.[7] Jing Jun writes that a female spirit medium had constructed a makeshift shrine at his field site in Gansu as early as 1975.[8] Some Christian house churches, as we now know, also continued to function throughout this period.

After the reforms began, however, China retreated rapidly from the totalitarian project back to an image where society had some separation from the state. To some extent this was a direct consequence of the reinvigorated role of the market, which is itself partially independent from the state. The reforms went far beyond the market alone, however, and we can see an enormous range of social changes beginning almost immediately with the start of the reforms in 1979. Local social institutions like irrigation associations or lineages rose again from the ashes. Not all of this activity had any kind of legal support, and thus it always felt the constant threat of repression. Nevertheless, growth was rapid and most groups that stayed local and apolitical thrived.

In religion, there was a quick return of the least institutionalized rural forms, because the very small scale offered no threat. This included ancestor worship (and most publicly the annual grave sweeping ritual) and even spirit mediumship, which the government continued to dislike but would usually overlook locally. Women often took the early lead, again probably because the state found them less worrisome.[9] More public and permanent revival took place soon afterwards, at least in some parts of China, with the construction or reconstruction of local temples, the reopening of churches and

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[7] Adam Yuet Chau, *Miraculous Response: Doing Popular Religion in Contemporary China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005) 47.

[8] Jun Jing, "Female Autonomy and Female Shamans in Northwest China," Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association (Atlanta, 1994) 4.

[9] For reports of early spirit mediums, see Jing, "Female autonomy and female shamans in northwest China."; Kenneth Dean, *Taoist Ritual and Popular Cults of Southeast China* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

monasteries, and the public reappearance of Buddhist, Daoist, and Christian clergy.[10] Kenneth Dean, for example, suggests that over 100 temples had been rebuilt in one Fujian county alone during the 1980s.[11] I saw dozens of new earth god temples in remote areas of Guangxi in 1985, and revived large local temple festivals have been documented as early as 1978 and 1979.[12]

Almost all of this goes on under the noses of local officials, who choose to look the other way. In one case, for example, a well-known Hong Kong medium in the 1990s made regular trips to the mainland with her followers to construct and consecrate new local temples. Officials knew, of course, but they always arranged to be away on business during the consecration ceremonies.[13] In another case, Gao Bingzhong describes an association that raised money from the townspeople to construct a temple to the local dragon deity, and also received funds from the government to construct a museum dedicated to "dragon" (i.e., Chinese) culture. The building carries signs indicating its double identity as both temple and museum. No one is really fooled by such maneuvers, of course, but the diplomatic illusion works for both sides.

Temple festivals in parts of China can now attract up to 100,000 people. There is a great deal of regional variation in this, but local temple worship has come back strongly at least in some parts of China; it is especially clear in the southeast (particularly Fujian) and parts of the northeast (Gansu, Shaanxi). Buddhism's rapid increase (measured in

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[10] I ignore Islam here, even though it is an important part of the story, due to a combination of space and knowledge limitations.

[11] Dean, *Taoist Ritual and Popular Cults of Southeast China* 64, 84, 100, 211.

[12] Chau, *Miraculous Response: Doing Popular Religion in Contemporary China*; Bingzhong Gao, "An Ethnography of a Building Both as Museum and Temple: On the Double-Naming Method as an Art of Politics," paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Anthropological Association, December Washington, D.C., 2005.

terms of both temples and the few polls) has also been regional, and has been especially marked in its old strongholds like the lower Yangzi region.

Christianity has had a spectacular growth rate, especially for Protestantism, often in its more charismatic and evangelical forms. Even the official numbers indicate an enormous growth since 1949, from under a million to about 16 million. The actual number is unknown, but certainly much higher. Many estimate something in the range of 80 million, or very roughly 5 percent of the population. The most rapid growth has been in the house churches, which have no affiliation with the state-mandated religious organizations and are therefore technically illegal, just like village temples. House churches met even during the most repressive period of the Cultural Revolution, but the really rapid expansion has occurred after the reforms.[14]

There has been serious conflict between house churches and official churches in some places, and direct repression by the state in others. Although tension continues, especially when churches expand into realms the government considers political, the dominant pattern has increasingly been for the state to turn a blind eye to house churches as the reforms have continued. In many cases, these churches are large, clearly marked, and can attract up to several hundred worshippers at a time. There is no doubt that authorities are well aware of them.

Let me turn now to the environment and NGOs. The dynamics here are quite different from religion in many ways, but like religion they illustrate the rapid increase in personal and social space since the reforms began. They also show a similar pattern of

[13] Liu Tik-sang, personal communication.

corporatist control of some activity, accompanied by still more blind-eye governance. China's legal structure for NGOs first developed in the mid-1980s. The model imagined an explicitly corporatist relation between state and society: one organization had a monopoly on representation for each social sector or issue (like the environment), with strong political controls on registration. The niche for the environment was taken by a group registered with the Environmental Protection Bureau (later the State Environmental Protection Agency), and it was largely the creation of that office.

Other groups thus had to register more creatively. Global Village Beijing, like many other groups that were NGOs in intention but found their niche already filled by state-affiliated groups, simply registered as for-profit companies. This was a far easier process. Still others registered as NGOs but with inappropriate units. Friends of Nature, the earliest of the more independent groups (founded in 1994) registered under the Academy of Chinese Culture within the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. We see these techniques across the entire NGO sector. Religious groups, for example, are not allowed to pursue non-religious functions like poverty relief or emergency aid, but they typically do so anyway by registering an apparently secular and independent NGO under the name of lay followers.

Both the religious and environmental sectors thus share a minority of groups that are officially incorporated by the state, and act within its legal blessings. Both, however, also have extremely large penumbras of groups that push the margins of the law (registration under an inappropriate unit, a village temple calling itself a museum) or are

[14] Alan Hunter and Kim-Kwong Chan, *Protestantism in Contemporary China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Jialin Liang, *Gaige Kaifang Hou de Zhongguo Nongcun Jiaohui [Chinese Village Churches After the Reforms]* (Hong Kong: Jiandao Shenxueyuan, 1999).

simply extra-legal. It is highly likely that no government officials are fooled at all by these evasions in either sector. Instead, it is a case of politics with a wink and a nudge, blind-eye governance. Such techniques rely on the threat of enforcement of the letter of the law at any moment. We have seen this in the attempts at large-scale repression of house churches in parts of Anhui and Henan, or in the massive de-registration of NGOs following some important political crises, especially the Tiananmen demonstrations of 1989 and the Falun Gong demonstrations of 1999. In each case, though, growth has picked up again unabated after the period of repression. More frequently, a single group may be harassed, pushing it back away from some political line. Even occasional and arbitrary repression accomplishes the major goals of this form of governance—it minimizes potential threats by creating powerful self-censorship and keeping the scale of organization small. It has the benefits of allowing a certain amount of social self-organization, which eases the burden on the state in some arenas like delivery of welfare benefits or monitoring the behavior of local polluters.

The post-1979 period that saw these developments also marked China's rejoining of the world economy in many ways. Nevertheless, the direct influences of globalization on both religion and the environment were not great. The most obvious might be the role of foreign missionaries. There is no doubt that missionaries were attracted to China and came from many parts of the world—South Korea's role has been just as important as that of America or Hong Kong. Many of these people come as English teachers (more blind-eye governance). Yet we should not forget that China already had significant pockets of Christianity, going back over a century in some Protestant cases, and over four hundred years for some Catholic villages. Foreigners were an important source of funds and

Bibles immediately after 1979, but it also seems clear that China's Christian community is expanding primarily through its own internal dynamic, and that the situation would probably not be very different if there were no missionaries. For Islam, foreign funding has also been important in mosque construction in the West, but again the internal dynamics seem far more important.

The indirect effects of globalization on religion, however, are much clearer. The greatest of these is simply the flood of new information and experience. Here I would include not just new media like the Internet or cell phone messaging, and not just the new openness to outside sources of information through old media, but the entire world that goes with the expansion of consumption in a market-driven economy—the multiplicity of products, images, and ultimately alternative self-conceptions that the marketplace encourages. This has shaken many of the sureties of the Maoist period and helped drive new searches for values and selves. For some this search takes religious form, for others it is social contribution through NGOs, and so on.

In the world of popular religion, the most important effects of globalization came from the Chinese global ecumene, realized through visits from Hong Kong, Southeast Asia, and Taiwan. Taiwan's influence may have been the greatest, partly because they could not visit at all until the late 1980s but then flooded in, and partly because the level of local religiosity in Taiwan was so high that there was a huge drive to visit mother temples on the mainland. The religious effects were largely limited to Fujian, the origin for the ancestors of most Taiwanese families, but they were powerful. The hope of investment by Taiwanese entrepreneurs, or of large payments for social contributions like

education or medical care, encouraged local cadres again to turn a blind eye to the revival of massive local temple rituals that these visits encouraged.

More generally, China has also felt some influence from the broad growth of a humanistic and philanthropic Buddhism (again with a strong base in Taiwan), not as direct actors in China, but as a source of influence on both religious groups and NGOs. The most obvious examples are Taiwan's Buddhist Compassion Relief Tzu-chi Foundation and the Buddha Light Mountain association, both of which provide public charity, education and emergency relief. Both are widely known and emulated (on smaller scales) in China. In Islam as well, especially in the northwest, Muslims have been thinking hard about the new global waves of rationalizing and modernizing Islam (sometimes in the name of a return to fundamentals).

For NGOs, the situation is complex. The NGO forum that accompanied the 4th UN Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 had a powerful effect in spite of the state's enormous discomfort with the event at the time. There was increasing official talk after that about the positive role that NGOs could serve, which meshed with official statements at the time about needing a smaller state and a bigger society. In addition, many NGOs greatly welcomed the infusions of cash that foreign connections could bring, and many foreign NGOs and governments sought to promote the activities and capacities of Chinese NGOs. On the other hand, and not so very different from the situation of Christians, NGOs with strong foreign ties could be damaged in the eyes of both the government and local supporters by appearing insufficiently nationalist.

If there were no direct ties to foreigners for either religion or NGOs, I expect that current situation would not be radically different from what it is today. Still, global

influences have been absolutely crucial in less direct ways. Earlier in the twentieth century they were responsible for core terms like "religion" or "nature," as well as for shaping basic understandings of those things that continue to influence action today. The expansion of the market has been crucial in creating a niche for new moralities, supplied by both NGOs and religions. And the retreat of the state from a totalitarian project has created a space where even extralegal groups (again in both religion and NGOs) have been able to thrive through blind-eye governance. Recent globalization has thus been most influential in spreading ideas about social organization (like NGOs) and about alternatives to an older socialist concept of self (through religion, among other things), rather than through its direct organization of NGOs or religious groups.

While I hesitate even to mention eastern Europe at this conference, a comparison reveals large differences in the potential of groups like temples or NGOs to affect national movements like those of 1989. In religion, for example, China simply had no equivalent to the churches of Poland or East Germany. The old state cult collapsed with the fall of the last Emperor, and it had no existence apart from that state. Confucianism, if we want to call it a religion at all, had been badly discredited through the entire twentieth century, and is only now beginning to find to find some respectability again. In 1989 it had no institutional base of support at all. As for the rest, none of the important Chinese religious traditions had been closely tied to the state for almost a millennium. At the national level the state exerted some control over them, but none had ever occupied a position in the nationalist imaginary comparable to the position of the churches in many eastern European countries. The Chinese state's strategy of letting religion grow locally had successfully created two levels of religion: at the national level, the five official,

corporatist religious organizations were quite tame, while at the local level temples and house churches thrived but had little potential to scale up their activities and strong incentives to stay out of politics. Finally, again unlike some of the other Communist countries, most of China's elite was profoundly irreligious as a result of both its own traditions and the twentieth century's powerful secularization there.

For NGOs, China already had a robust development by 1989, but the state's corporatist strategy was relatively successful in reducing their independence. In many ways, they had a bimodal structure similar to religion—controlled and obedient at the national level, and given more freedom of action below the radar, but only if they remained small and apolitical. No independent social organizations on a large scale were possible. There was thus nothing comparable to Solidarity in Poland or to the environmental movement in Czechoslovakia. Instead, the primary unit of social mobilization in China in 1989 remained, ironically enough, the work unit (including the universities, for students). In big cities where the movement centered, these were at the time still primarily state-owned.

Thus none of the new social forms that had been developing so quickly since the reforms began in 1979 were major actors in the Tiananmen demonstrations of 1989. This is not really an argument for the success of the Maoist project in breaking down independent social groups and merging everything into the state. As we have seen, just the opposite had been happening for a decade. Instead, we can attribute the quiescence of these groups to the success of a new image of state/society relations—an authoritarian corporatism that brought large organizations under the careful wing of the state. Local groups—from NGOs registered as businesses to temples—could be governed with a

blind eye, but only if they remained small and apolitical. They could be controlled through occasional repression, either to draw clearly whatever political line these groups could not cross, or simply at random to remind people who makes the rules. This strategy, too, was the product of a post-reform globalization. In particular, China was looking closely at other non-democratic economic successes in its region. Malaysia and especially Singapore loomed large as models for successful governance. Even Taiwan, which democratized in 1987, was a model. After all, while Western scholars tend to see it as a case of inevitable democratization, it also shows that an authoritarian one-party state can deliver rapid economic growth in a relatively quiet political climate for many decades on end.

In the end, the events of 1989 in China were little more than a blip in the development of these new forms of post-reform governance. The repression that followed after June 4th led to many NGO losing their registration and to harsher conditions for many religious groups. None of this lasted long, however, and both kinds of organization soon resumed their growth. Much the same happened again after the Falun Gong demonstrations a decade later, with a period of repression leading to renewed increases.

Legacies of 1989 in China

The long-term consequences of the events of 1989 pale compared to what happened in other Communist countries at the time. Rather than leading to fundamental political or economic shifts, 1989 in China brought a temporary retrenchment, but ultimately saw a return to the trends that had already been developing for a decade: an economic turn away from central planning toward market incentives, and a political

system that retained commitment to one party rule under an authoritarian structure and relatively corporatist ideal of the relation between state and society. If anything, watching the events that unfolded in Russia and its former allies reinforced China's commitment not to emulate its neighbors at all, to continue moving ahead with gradual economic reform but not to budge on the political front.

That very commitment, however, helped lead to a number of innovations in governance intended to consolidate rule in a way very different from the Maoist era. One of the key issues was to find mechanisms to create a responsive authoritarianism—to solve the problem of how to get feedback from the people without subjecting the state to the risks of open elections. These techniques include allowing letters and petitions to the state, granting some access to legal recourse, giving the media a little more investigative freedom, and even allowing localized demonstrations.[15]

One side effect of this informal side of rule has been the increase in what I have called blind-eye governance—the combination of a willingness to look the other way most of the time plus an ability to maintain control through occasional repression. We can see this in many sectors in China today, including religion and NGOs, as I have discussed here. Most of China's rapid religious growth over the last several decades has taken place in this legal gray zone, including Christianity and local temple worship. This is even true of some Buddhism, although Buddhism in general has tended to be more cautious. The recently opened Lingshan Buddhist Palace in Wuxi, for example, is a massively large and spectacularly sumptuous Buddhist compound that houses a

[15] See Tianjian Shi, *Political Participation in Beijing* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997); Andrew J. Nathan, "Authoritarian Resilience: China's Changing of the Guard," *Journal of Democracy* 14.1

community of monks and hosts international Buddhist meetings. Nowhere, however, does it refer to itself as a Buddhist temple or even a religious organization; it is instead a commercial joint enterprise with the Wuxi tourism office.

The world of NGOs, including environmental ones, is similarly complex in its relations to the state, which range from the obedient corporatist organizations imagined in the law to a wide range of false registrations (sometimes even including religious groups). No one is actually being fooled by most of these techniques, but they do at least allow local officials to claim deniability if there is pressure from above. Blind-eye governance contributes indirectly but importantly to responsive authoritarianism by allowing a certain amount of societal self-organization, which can then remove some burdens from the state like buffering family and community members from economic and health disasters (as religion often does), delivering needed social goods like old age care or emergency relief (as both religious groups and NGOs do), or monitoring difficult issues like the environment. One of the legacies of both 1979 and 1989 for China has been the continuous move away from the totalitarian model of governance and toward an authoritarian and corporatist model that assumes a social world separate from the state. Blind-eye governance may have been an unintended consequence of that legacy, but it is nevertheless an important contributor to the process.

Globalization has also been an important shaper of these new forms of governance, but not so much in the direct ways that we usually imagine through missionaries for religion or direct foreign funding and control for NGOs. Those things exist, of course, but the internal dynamics tend to be more powerful. Instead, the influence of

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(2003): 6-17; Robert P. Weller, "Responsive Authoritarianism," *Political Change in China: Comparisons*

globalization has tended to be indirect but nevertheless crucial. The Chinese elite's early twentieth-century embrace of modernity had enormously powerful effects that continue today. They range from the terms in which people understand and speak about religion to the legal frameworks for its control; from the frameworks for understanding nature and the environment to the very idea of NGOs. Global influences on things like religion or environmental action continue to be important today partly through direct contact (e.g., the Ford Foundation, or Taiwanese temples leading pilgrimages back to the mainland), but especially through less direct means like the flow of information or the broad changes that come with any move to a market economy.

The global connections of the economy are in some ways more obvious than what I have been discussing. By focusing on religion or environmental action, however, I hope to point at some of the ways in which globalization has helped shape a broad social reconfiguration of China—one which also has significant consequences for governance and for the possibility of consolidating any future democracy. I have been inspired in a way by a line of Alexis de Tocqueville when trying to explain why he emphasized religion in the United States even though, unlike much of Europe, it appeared to have no political power at all: "In the United States religion exercises but little influence upon the laws and upon the details of public opinion; but it directs the customs of the community, and, by regulating domestic life, it regulates the state."[16] By helping to direct the "customs of the community," these developments in both religion and NGOs have helped

with Taiwan, ed. Bruce Gilley and Larry Diamond (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2008) 117-33.

[16] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, Translated by Henry Reeve, revised by Francis Brown and Phillips Bradley, 1835 (New York: Vintage, 1945) 314-15.

reconfigure state/society relations in China in way that reflects both globalization and the lessons China took from 1989.