

# The China Democracy Party and the Politics of Protest in the 1980s–1990s

Teresa Wright

**ABSTRACT** Does the appearance of the China Democracy Party signal a new level and type of political activism in China? This article explores the answer, through interviews with party members, primary documents and secondary sources. It finds that despite a number of continuities with protest actions of the 1980s – including an emphasis on legal, non-violent protest methods and a tendency toward intra-movement factionalism – the CDP displays some novel characteristics. The age, education, occupational status and prior protest experience of top CDP leaders suggest increased interaction among previously distinct social groups and decreased intellectual dependence on the state. Further, the communication methods of the CDP demonstrate the impact of newly available technologies such as the internet and e-mail. Will this new party ultimately succeed? Some point to Taiwan’s Democratic Progressive Party as a model, yet important differences outweigh the similarities. Nevertheless, although China’s ruling elites have succeeded in stifling overt CDP actions and display little interest in greater political reform, in the long run, the new features of political dissent exhibited by the CDP may foreshadow more potent challenges to single-party rule.

In the summer of 1998, Chinese intellectuals, students, and workers worked to create the first true opposition political party in Communist China – the China Democracy Party (CDP). By the winter of 1998, local party committees had appeared in 24 provinces and cities, and a national preparatory committee had been formed. Yet after this period of relative tolerance, China’s ruling regime arrested and jailed virtually all major CDP leaders. Currently, CDP members remain active overseas, and maintain an underground presence in the mainland.

Does the appearance of the CDP signal a new level and type of activism in China? This article explores the answer, through interviews with party members, primary documents and secondary sources.<sup>1</sup> It finds that despite a number of continuities with protest actions of the 1980s, the composition and activities of the CDP display some novel characteristics. Many of the continuities – including a continued emphasis on legal, non-violent protest methods and a tendency toward intra-movement factionalism – seem to derive from the state’s continued capacity and predilection for political repression. Yet the discontinuities indicate that China’s continuing market transition and immersion in the global economy have changed the form and method of intellectual dissent in

1. In 2000–2001, I conducted interviews with CDP members Wang Xizhe, Lu Siqing, Zhuang Yan, Xie Wanjun and Shi Lei. Through the course of these interviews, I was also given numerous e-mails and other documents related to the party. The CDP, CDJP, Hong Kong Alliance for Democracy, and Big News (“Da cankao”) websites also provide links to party documents and information. Issues of *China Spring* and *Beijing Spring* include important materials as well. Finally, a Human Rights Watch Report by Jan van der Made provides a wealth of information about the CDP.

remarkable ways. Looking at the membership of the CDP, it appears that as China's intellectuals have increasingly moved into professions open to those with no advanced education, the insulation of intellectuals from common citizens has broken down. Further, the CDP's lack of apparent political patronage within the Communist Party points to the increased autonomy of intellectuals vis-à-vis the state. Finally, the communication methods of the CDP indicate that the skyrocketing availability of global technologies such as the internet, e-mail, and international paging systems has bred powerful new networks that Communist Party elites may not be able to control.

Will this new party ultimately succeed? A number of CDP leaders point to Taiwan's Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) as a model for their own development. However, important differences between the two cases exist. Nevertheless, this does not necessarily mean that the CDP is destined to fail. Without a doubt, in the short term, China's ruling elites have succeeded in stifling overt CDP actions, and display little interest in greater political reform. Yet in the long term, the powerful forces of technology, increased interaction among previously distinct social groups, and lessening intellectual dependence on the state may pose new and more potent challenges to single-party rule.

### *Development of the China Democracy Party*

Following the harsh crackdown on political protest and autonomous organization in the spring of 1989, the expression of alternative political views was silenced in China as virtually all prominent dissidents were jailed, exiled, under surveillance or in hiding. Not until 1992 did the political atmosphere begin to soften. The first clear sign of a renewed loosening was Deng Xiaoping's famous "southern tour" of January–February 1992. Travelling to Guangdong province and Shanghai, Deng called for rapid economic liberalization and international opening, praising the market reforms and economic development of the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone. Shortly thereafter, US representatives travelled to China to discuss China's entry into GATT, and International Olympic Committee officials arrived to investigate whether or not they should hold the summer 2000 Olympics in Beijing. In an effort likely to bolster China's prospects on both accounts, the regime granted an early parole to 1989 student activists Wang Dan and Guo Haifeng. As the final Olympic committee vote approached in September, veteran activists Wang Xizhe, Wei Jingsheng, Xu Wenli and Wang Juntao (all of whom had been imprisoned since the early 1980s) were freed as well. Hopeful that this might signal an official loosening, and eager to rekindle the political work that they had been forced to end, these activists soon connected with one another and with other supporters of democratization.<sup>2</sup> Their activities

2. Interview with Wang Xizhe, 19 March 2000; Geoffrey Crothall, "Activist leaders meet for first time," *South China Morning Post*, 25 September 1993.

remained underground, however, as most of them were officially banned from participating in political activities for three years.

Between 1995 and 1996, CCP elites became sufficiently concerned about these actions that they began proceedings against a number of dissidents. Most prominently, Wang Dan and Wei Jingsheng were re-arrested and imprisoned, and Wang Xizhe, receiving word of his imminent arrest, fled to the United States.<sup>3</sup> Beginning in 1997, though, a renewed political thaw began, partly related to the uncertainty surrounding Deng Xiaoping's death in January, but also deriving from China's desire to participate as an equal in the international community. Significantly, US President Bill Clinton planned a visit in June 1998, and UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Mary Robinson was expected in September 1998. The first inklings of a political opening occurred in March 1997, when the National People's Congress amended the Criminal Law such that political crimes of "counter-revolution" would be repealed; they were replaced by a less political designation of offences regarding "national security." Next, in September, the 15th Party Congress stressed the need to govern the country by law, and for the first time made reference to human rights. In October, Chinese leaders signed the UN Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and intimated that, after years of resistance, they would soon sign the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights as well. The following month, Wei Jingsheng was released on medical parole and exiled to the United States. In March 1998, Foreign Minister Qian Qichen formally announced that the regime had indeed decided to sign the latter covenant.

In this more relaxed atmosphere, dissidents began to renew connections and organize. At first, scattered and small-scale actions appeared. One of the first to engage in public action was Xu Wenli, a veteran activist who was imprisoned from 1982 to 1993 for his participation in the "Democracy Wall" movement of 1978–80. Shortly after Qian's announcement regarding the second UN covenant, Xu applied to register a new organization, "China Human Rights Watch," in Beijing.<sup>4</sup> Around the same time, Anhui dissidents Mao Guoliang and Wang Donghai applied for permission to register a newsletter entitled, "China Human Rights News."<sup>5</sup> In Hubei, former Democracy Wall activist and political prisoner Qin Yongmin petitioned to publish "Citizen Forum."<sup>6</sup> In Henan, Xin Yangan and others used the occasion of the dialogue with the United States to begin publishing "Corruption Watch."<sup>7</sup> Groups named "Labour Watch," "Peasant Watch," "Religion Watch," and "Law Relief Hotline"

3. Interview with Wang Xizhe, 19 March 2000.

4. Xu Wenli, "Petition to establish 'China Human Rights Watch'," printed in *China Spring*, No. 175 (April 1998), p. 31.

5. Jan van der Made, *Nipped in the Bud: The Suppression of the CDP* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2000), pp. 5–6.

6. Qin Yongmin, "Petition to publish people's periodical, 'Citizen Forum'," printed in *China Spring*, No. 175 (April 1998), p. 32.

7. "Corruption Watch" published three issues, which are reported to have reached ten provinces. See Qin Yongmin, "Announcement No. 2: China's human rights situation" (2 November 1998), reprinted in *China Spring*, No. 182 (December 1998), p. 70.

appeared as well.<sup>8</sup> Concurrently, these and other dissidents called for more attention to China's human rights situation in open letters and petitions to China's central government, US president Bill Clinton, and UN Commissioner Mary Robinson.<sup>9</sup>

At the same time, in early 1998 a number of veteran dissidents exiled or otherwise based overseas slipped into China. One of these visitors was Wang Bingzhang, a former medical student in Canada, and founder of the dissident magazine "China Spring" and the organization "Chinese Alliance for Democracy." Wang arrived in China in January 1998, with the goal of helping dissidents within China form an opposition party. Two weeks later, he was arrested and expelled. Many of the individuals that he contacted were arrested or detained; two were given prison sentences. All told, Wang and the other overseas visitors contacted domestic dissidents in eight provinces and cities.<sup>10</sup> Shortly thereafter, from its base in New York, the Chinese Democracy and Justice Party (CDJP) announced its formation. In its declaration, the party called for a government based on rule by the people, established through fair elections, and a system of law. At the same time, the group did not mince words about its "revolutionary" aim of "overthrowing" the current "small clique" illegitimately wielding political power.<sup>11</sup> By May 1998, the party had a functioning website.<sup>12</sup> It had no public members within China, though, and made no attempt to become registered as a legal organization in China.

Meanwhile, back in the early 1990s, then imprisoned 1989 student leader Wang Youcai separately had the idea of forming an opposition party. In 1997, feeling that the political atmosphere had sufficiently loosened, Wang broached the idea of forming a "Justice Party" with some dissidents in his local city of Hangzhou, in Zhejiang province. When Wang Bingzhang arrived in China in early 1998, he spoke with a number of these activists. They agreed with the idea of forming a party, but were concerned about Wang Bingzhang's plan simply to declare the party's existence, and also about the inclusion of possible revolutionary action in the party's charter. When Wang was expelled from China and others with whom he had made contact were punished, Wang Youcai and the Hangzhou group decided to form a separate party, and to proceed with greater caution and moderation than the CDJP.<sup>13</sup>

The group decided to make its first public announcement on the eve of

8. *Ibid.* pp. 70–71.

9. van der Made, *Nipped in the Bud*, p. 6. See, for example, Xu Wenli, "Open letter in support of China's entrance into the two UN Conventions" (1 February 1998), printed in *China Spring*, No. 174 (March 1998), pp. 36–38.

10. CDJP Newsletter Editors, "Actions and prices," 25 December 1998, CDJP website (<http://dinfo.org/cdjp>); Interview with Wang Xizhe, 19 March 2000. The cities and provinces were: Beijing, Shanghai, Liaoning, Shandong, Fujian, Guangdong, Jiangsu and Zhejiang.

11. "China Democracy and Justice Party Declaration," 22 February 1998, CDJP website (<http://dinfo.org/cdjp/Intro/xuanyan.htm>).

12. Interview with Xie Wanjun, 2 February 2001.

13. *Ibid.*

Clinton's visit, hoping that this timing would preclude official repression.<sup>14</sup> On 25 June, the group presented an "Open Declaration of the Establishment of the China Democracy Party Zhejiang Preparatory Committee," and a draft of the party constitution. The declaration was signed by Wang Youcai, university student Lin Hui, and former 1989 activist Wang Donghai, who had been contacted by Wang Bingzhang during his January visit.<sup>15</sup> The declaration was posted on the internet. The purpose of the CDP, it read, was to "establish a constitutional democratic political system, and ... a mechanism of separation of political powers ... the CDP firmly believes that a government must be established through the conscious approval of the public [and must be] established through free, impartial, and direct democratic elections." In order to defuse any potential repressive response, the group stressed that its goals would be sought peacefully, stating, "the CDP maintains that any political power obtained through the use of violence and violent intimidation is illegal without exception ... The CDP proposes an orderly social transformation, opposes chaos and hitting, smashing and looting, and the use of violence ... The CDP carries out its political goals in a non-violent, peaceful and reasonable fashion, promoting civilized dialogue to solve any disputes and differences. It opposes terrorist activities."<sup>16</sup>

Prior to this announcement, few other dissidents knew of Wang Youcai's recent activities in Hangzhou. Now, those familiar with the internet could read the news. In addition, the preparatory committee's statement and action were publicized through a key link in Hong Kong: former 1989 activist Lu Siqing. After more than a decade of political activism and official harassment, Lu fled the mainland in 1993 and established a residence in Hong Kong. A computer technician by trade, from 1993 to 1995 Lu collected information from mainland dissidents through e-mail and a personal paging system. In 1996, he began to release the news that he gathered to international news agencies. Thus, when the Zhejiang Preparatory Committee made its announcement, Lu quickly passed it on to other mainland dissidents, as well as to international news agencies.<sup>17</sup> This news was then posted on news agency websites and broadcast into China via Voice of America and Radio Free Asia.

Wang Youcai and his friends were eager to build a nation-wide party network, yet were well aware of the potential danger involved in such action. As Wang and many others in the Zhejiang group had "blackened" political records, they faced varying degrees of official surveillance. In addition, China's hotels ask for official identification and are required to maintain registration records that are regularly checked by local officials.

14. Human Rights Watch interview with Yao Zhenxian, 5 April 2000, cited in van der Made, *Nipped in the Bud*, p. 7. See also transcripts of Xu Wenli Press Conference on "July Tenth" Zhejiang Incident, *China Spring*, No. 179 (September 1998), pp. 31–32.

15. Interview with Wang Xizhe, 19 March 2000, and van der Made, *Nipped in the Bud*, p. 6.

16. Zhongguo minzhudang Zhejiang choubei weiyuanhui chengli gongkai xuan yuan (Open Declaration of the Establishment of the CDP Zhejiang Preparatory Committee), 25 June 1998. Translated in *ibid.* pp. 26–27.

17. Interview with Lu Siqing, 28 June 2000.

Members of the Zhejiang committee skirted these limitations in a number of ways. First, they simply made a public appeal for broader support and organization in their declaration, stating: “The CDP calls upon persons of the democracy movement in the various regions nation-wide to enter the CDP, to prepare and establish local committees of the CDP in the various provinces and cities, to elect and appoint delegates, to take part in the National Delegates Congress and to organize a nation-wide committee.”<sup>18</sup> Secondly, Zhejiang Preparatory Committee member Wu Yilong, a Zhejiang University Master’s student with a relatively clean political record, made a 16-day tour around the country to encourage the establishment of more preparatory party branches.<sup>19</sup> To avoid detection, Wu did not contact potential members by phone, and did not sleep in hotels.<sup>20</sup> Thirdly, by 1998 many dissidents across the country knew the pager number and e-mail address of Hong Kong-based Lu Siqing, as radio broadcasts on Radio Free Asia and Voice of America had included this information.<sup>21</sup> Lu had their contact information as well. Thus, through him, potential CDP members could relay messages to one another.<sup>22</sup> Finally, the CDJP immediately announced its full support for the new party, creating a special link for the CDP on its web page, and instructing its underground members in China to switch their support to the CDP. Consequently, many of the other dissidents who had been contacted by Wang Bingzhang in early 1998 now became founders of local CDP branches.<sup>23</sup> With all of these varied communication methods working in tandem, preparatory committees began to form in 24 cities and provinces.

Aware of the group’s precarious position, Wang Youcai and the Hangzhou group consciously emphasized the *preparatory* nature of the committees, and worked hard to follow legal channels. Both China’s 1982 Constitution and the UN Covenant on Civil and Political Rights guarantee the right to form political parties. Yet, no legal procedures had been encoded in China to allow new political parties to establish a legal status. In this ambiguous situation, CDP leaders decided to test local official responses by having branch preparatory committees attempt to register with their local civil affairs bureaus. The Zhejiang committee tried this tactic on the same day that it published its open declaration, travelling to the Zhejiang Province Civil Affairs Bureau to apply for formal legal status.<sup>24</sup> The authorities accepted the application, but gave no response. Four days later, Wang was interrogated for eight hours and told to cease his political activities. The next day, Wang returned to the Civil

18. Open Declaration of the Establishment of the CDP Zhejiang Preparatory Committee.

19. Hong Kong Alliance for Democracy website, document 2749 (<http://www.alliance.org.hk/records/2749.HTM>).

20. Human Rights Watch interview with Yao Zhenxian, 5 April 2000. Cited in van der Made, *Nipped in the Bud*, p. 8.

21. Interview with Lu Siqing, 28 June 2000; e-mail from Hubei branch, 21 February 2001.

22. Interview with Lu Siqing, 28 June 2000.

23. CDJP Newsletter Editors, “Actions and prices.”

24. van der Made, *Nipped in the Bud*, p. 7. See also Hong Kong Alliance for Democracy website, record 608 (<http://www.alliance.org.hk/records/608.HTM>).

Affairs Bureau to explain his cause, but was told that his appeal dealt with uncharted territory, and thus could not be accepted.<sup>25</sup>

Soon after President Clinton departed from the mainland, on 10 July Wang Youcai invited CDP activists to attend a “tea party” in Hangzhou to discuss strategy. As they assembled, the authorities made their first repressive response, breaking up the meeting and detaining Wang and 14 others who had assembled. Most of the others were soon released, but Wang was charged with the political crime of “inciting to overthrow the state.” Dissidents within China and overseas petitioned the government and called for international measures to press for Wang’s release. Amazingly, given that indicted suspects are seldom released from detention, Wang was allowed to return home on 30 August. He remained under heavy surveillance, though.<sup>26</sup>

Seeing this as a positive sign, other local preparatory branches tested the waters. Interestingly, at least one was encouraged by veteran dissidents now exiled overseas. In August long-time democracy activists Wang Bingzhang, Wang Xizhe, Xu Shuiliang, Fu Shenqi, Yang Jianli and Zhuang Yan gathered in Boston to discuss the new party. Although they disagreed on tactics, Zhuang Yan, an exiled Shandong native who had spent time in jail for his involvement in the Democracy Wall Movement and the demonstrations of 1989, suggested that he contact some Shandong dissidents and encourage them to organize a preparatory party branch. Consequently, Zhuang got in touch with Xie Wanjun, a Shandong student leader in 1989 who had never been jailed, but had been harrassed and encountered difficulty finding a job upon his graduation from Beijing Agricultural University. Xie contacted some friends in Shandong to begin a preparatory CDP branch.<sup>27</sup> On 10 September, Xie and Liu Lianjun (a writer in his early 30s) brought their petition to register the Shandong Province Preparatory Committee to the provincial Civil Affairs Bureau’s Office of Social Groups. As an extra precaution, their statement emphasized that the committee “upholds Chairman Jiang Zemin’s position as chief of state, and recognizes the CCP as the ruling party during the period of China’s political reform.”<sup>28</sup> The petitioners were greeted by three officials who read from what appeared to be a prepared statement that presented four conditions for registration: the group must demonstrate assets worth RMB\$50,000 (roughly US\$6,000); the group must apply for an office space bearing its name; the group must submit the résumés of its chair, vice-chair, and secretary; and the group must submit the names of 50 CDP members. Xie and Liu were concerned that the name list was a ploy so that authorities could more effectively repress the party, but they were heartened by the fact that the officials had

25. *Ibid.*

26. van der Made, *Nipped in the Bud*, p. 8.

27. Interviews with Zhang Yan, 1 February 2001, and Xie Wanjun, 2 February 2001.

28. Xie Wanjun, Liu Lianjun and Jiang Fushi, “China Democracy Party Shandong Preparatory Committee Registration Petition,” 6 September 1998, CDP website (<http://209.75.88.222/cdp/docs/shandong090698.htm>).

not rejected them outright.<sup>29</sup> In this atmosphere, a third local preparatory committee attempted to register in Hubei province. Its members were greeted with the same response.<sup>30</sup>

Shortly thereafter, a central Ministry of Affairs official announced that provincial bureaus did not have the power to register political parties.<sup>31</sup> Taking this as a clear sign that efforts at the provincial level would be fruitless, CDP activists from a number of areas attempted to register with the central Ministry of Affairs. With these efforts, though, the limits of official patience wore thin. First, on 13 September activists from Jilin, Heilongjiang and Liaoning provinces mailed an application for registration of a “Northeastern Preparatory Committee of the CDP” to the Ministry of Civil Affairs in Beijing.<sup>32</sup> A couple of weeks later, police in Jilin branded the group “an illegal organization,” and detained branch member and labour activist Tang Yuanjuan.<sup>33</sup> Next, on 16 September, four veteran dissidents associated with the Beijing branch who planned a second registration attempt with the central Ministry were either interrogated, threatened or found their homes ransacked. Police clearly warned one: “We’re still under the Communist Party’s leadership. Setting up political parties is not permitted.”<sup>34</sup> Members of the Shanghai branch found their petition for registration returned, and received more stern warnings during a police visit to one of the member’s homes. During this exchange, the member reports being told: “You can’t go on like this – we’ll take you in. This is a directive from above. This is political activity, political thought.”<sup>35</sup> On 23 September, the five committees that had been rebuffed issued a joint statement decrying their treatment. The next day, Shandong committee founder Liu Lianjun was detained. In October, three more local groups – in Sichuan, Guizhou and Henan – attempted to register.<sup>36</sup> The Sichuan group’s application was refused outright, while the other two received no response.<sup>37</sup>

Meanwhile, on 5 October, China signed the UN Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, publicly extolling its commitment to the protection of human rights. At virtually the same time, new regulations on the formation of social groups were signed into law.<sup>38</sup> The new rules were similar to those presented to the Shandong committee in September, but with an additional article barring former political prisoners from leading non-profit organizations.

29. Interview with Xie Wanjun, 2 February 2001. See also van der Made, *Nipped in the Bud*, p. 8.

30. *Ibid.* p. 9.

31. *Ibid.*

32. *Ibid.*

33. *Ibid.* p. 10.

34. “Chinese police tell dissidents they can’t form party,” Associated Press, 18 September 1998. Cited in *ibid.* p. 10.

35. Human Rights Watch interview with Zhou Jianhe, 7 April 2000. Cited in *ibid.* p. 10.

36. “Henan branch application for registration,” 2 October 1998 (fax to Zhuang Yan).

37. van der Made, *Nipped in the Bud*, p. 11.

38. For a detailed discussion of these new regulations, see Tony Saich, “Negotiating the state: the development of social organizations in China,” *The China Quarterly*, No. 161 (March 2000), pp. 129–133.



In early November, apparently without first consulting other local branch members, some CDP members in Beijing upped the stakes. First, along with four fellow Democracy Wall activists, Xu Wenli declared the establishment of the “First CDP National Congress Preparatory Work Group,” making the first reference to the existence of a national party-related body.<sup>39</sup> Secondly, three of these activists joined a fourth in Tianjin to form a “CDP Beijing–Tianjin Regional Party Branch.” Importantly, this new group consciously omitted the word “preparatory” from its title, thus implying that the party was already active.<sup>40</sup>

### *Crackdown on the CDP*

These moves caused confusion within the nascent party, and sparked the wholesale fury of central authorities. Beginning in December, ruling elites harshly cracked down on top CDP members, meting out long prison sentences to dozens.<sup>41</sup> Meanwhile, the fragile democracy party – now lacking its founding members, and also uncertain as to its proper status – entered a new and uncertain phase. In most areas, a second level of leadership assumed control and continued party activities. Some groups followed the lead of the Beijing–Tianjin group and publicly changed their status to “branches,” while others felt that this action was too brash, and chose to remain “preparatory committees.”<sup>42</sup> The various groups also offered individual declarations and protests against the trials and imprisonment of CDP leaders. Communist party elites were not amused. A planned meeting of the “National Congress Preparatory Work Group” in Wuhan was waylaid by official threats to planned participants, and a number of gatherings in Hangzhou were broken up. The only public CDP meeting to come to fruition during this period was on 28 February, when US Secretary of State Madeline Albright was in Beijing.

In July and October 1999, two more waves of trials and lengthy sentences resulted in the imprisonment of most second-tier CDP leaders. By the end of the year, party members within China had ceased virtually all public activities. Only one – He Depu, a fellow at the Academy of Social Sciences in Beijing – continued openly to proclaim his CDP membership. In March 2000, He was expelled from the academy and placed under strict surveillance.<sup>43</sup> Nevertheless, He continues to issue occasional statements, and calls himself the spokesman of domestic CDP

39. Xu Wenli, “China Democracy Party First National Congress Preparatory Work Group Announcement,” 6 November 1998 (<http://www.freechina.net/cdp/gonggao/gg1.txt>). A second statement by the National Congress lists Wu Yilong as the contact person (van der Made, *Nipped in the Bud*, p. 13, n. 50).

40. Interview with Xie Wanjun 2 February 2001; Interview with Zhuang Yan, 1 February 2001; van der Made, *Nipped in the Bud*, p. 12.

41. See Hong Kong Alliance for Democracy website (<http://www.alliance.org.hk>) and *ibid.* Appendix II.

42. Groups in Shaanxi, Hebei, Henan, Liaoning and Hunan all became “branches.” *Ibid.* p. 17.

43. *Ibid.* p. 22.

members. Other known members of the CDP in China have curtailed their public party activities, and are watched closely as well.<sup>44</sup>

Meanwhile, some key CDP founders managed to escape the country, ultimately arriving in the United States. One of them, Shandong preparatory committee founder Xie Wanjun, escaped from surveillance and fled to Russia in June 1999. He was later invited by overseas activist Zhuang Yan to enter the United States under the sponsorship of the China Civil and Political Rights Research Institute. Zhuang and the Institute also invited CDP activists Zhu Zhengming and Wang Wenjiang to the United States, but they were arrested before they could flee.<sup>45</sup> Once in America, Xie quickly connected with CDJP representatives in New York, and worked to maintain and expand the party in this highly repressive atmosphere. Xie decided to work with an already-existing support team in China that had helped CDP members “behind the scenes,” but had never publicly declared an affiliation with the party. These individuals comprised what Xie calls the “second line” of the party. As they were not under surveillance, Xie claims that these secret party members could communicate with overseas party members like Lu Siqing in Hong Kong or Xie in New York without much risk of official notice.<sup>46</sup>

After Xie arrived in the United States, he worked with CDJP headquarters to recruit new members in China. First, they encouraged underground members to contact like-minded relatives or friends. Secondly, Xie established a separate web page for the CDP, so that it was no longer attached to the CDJP page. Shortly after the site appeared, Xie was contacted via e-mail by individuals wishing to join the party. Consequently, Xie set up a sign-up page, allowing new members to use an alias to register. Once registered, they were given instructions and informed about general party news.<sup>47</sup>

Of course, even Communist Party spies could access the CDP site and register. Indeed, Xie and other CDP leaders suspect a number of cases of attempted infiltration. They point to a number of specific individuals who joined the party, but were later uncovered to have official connections, or who subsequently behaved in a way that damaged the party.<sup>48</sup> In addition, in January 2000, the group’s office in New York was burgled. The perpetrators ignored valuable equipment, but stole all materials appearing to contain information and a bug scanning device. Consequently, the group has moved its headquarters to the back office of a cosmetics wholesaler, and has been careful to restrict the flow of high-security information to those with known backgrounds. Members signing up through the internet are not given the names of other members; each remains an “independent” party member. Even for those who are

44. Interview with Xie Wanjun, 2 February 2001.

45. Interview with Zhuang Yan, 1 February 2001; interview with Xie Wanjun, 2 February 2001; letter from Xie Wanjun to Zhuang Yan via the Russian Consulate, 9 June 1999.

46. Interview with Xie Wanjun, 2 February 2001.

47. *Ibid.*

48. *Ibid.*; *Beijing Spring*, No. 81 (February 2000), p. 21; “Letter from 25 provincial branches.” The suspected individuals include Shi Jun, Hu Anning and Wang Xijun.

recruited in the mainland through ties of kinship or friendship, new members know only the identity of their recruiter. Each recruiter is instructed to bring aboard only two new members, thus forming a series of three-person branches whereby an individual member knows only two others.<sup>49</sup> In this way, the party has followed a strategy of maintaining a public existence, and even continuing to grow on the mainland, although its expansion and actions have been severely stifled.<sup>50</sup>

### *Continuities with Protest Actions of the 1980s*

In many ways, the story of the CDP is a familiar repetition of the cycle of loosening-protest-repression that has been repeated since Mao's death in 1976. In addition, the CDP also exhibits at least two other prominent characteristics of dissent in the post-Mao period. First, as with virtually all protest actions since 1976, the demands of CDP activists generally have been moderate – calling for gradual reform rather than a rapid transformation or revolution. Of course, the very goal of forming an opposition party represents a major departure from the more timid dissident demands of the past, indicating that at least some pro-democracy individuals on the mainland have lost hope in reforming the CCP from within. Yet at the same time, even this more radical aim was framed in non-threatening terms, with early efforts emphasizing the members' continued loyalty to Jiang Zemin and the preparatory nature of their actions. Similarly, CDP activists, like most in the post-Mao period, sought to attain their goals through peaceful and legal means.<sup>51</sup> Just as activists from the Democracy Wall period to the protests of 1989 referenced China's constitutional guarantees of civil liberties in defence of their activities and appealed to governmental bodies such as the NPC, CDP activists sought to work within legal and institutionalized governmental frameworks.

What accounts for this continued caution? CDP leaders state that it was their fear of repression. Many of the party's top leaders had already spent many years in prison for their dissent, making them well aware of the CCP's fickle and often harsh response to political threats. Moreover, the CDP leadership realized that in order to make a real impact on Chinese society, the emerging party would have to persist for more than a few days, allowing it to expand throughout the nation.

At the same time, though, this general emphasis on moderation was somewhat undercut by the increasingly confrontational behaviour of some CDP leaders. Similar to many political actions of the 1980s, and particularly the protests of 1989, as early CDP actions were frustrated by government intransigence, some activists raised the stakes and pressed authorities for a response. Moreover, those who felt the need for more

49. Interview with Xie Wanjun, 2 February 2001.

50. "Letter from 25 provincial branches"; letter from Wang Xizhe.

51. Of course, the CDP argument that that legitimate power can only be peacefully acquired was also a fairly clear dig at the CCP.

radical action displayed little concern with negotiating or compromising with others who might disagree. In this way, early efforts emphasizing the local, preparatory nature of the emerging party cells transformed into the formation of regional and national groups, as well as actual party “branches.” Still, though, even these more bold actions were accompanied by moderate rhetoric; in no case did CDP members on the mainland speak publicly of the need for revolution or the overthrow of the Communist Party.

Nevertheless, such disagreement over tactics helped to fuel the same kind of factionalism and intra-movement discord that appeared in many protests of the 1980s. Indeed, divisions resulting from strategic differences were present almost from the start of the party’s formation. For example, although many of the mainland dissidents contacted by Wang Bingzhang in 1998 later formed preparatory CDP branches, most disagreed with Wang’s more radical ideas regarding the party and chose to organize separately. At the same time, Wang did not wish to compromise, and declared the establishment of the CDJP without any real mainland support. This weakened the opposition party movement by splitting its ranks and distracting it from its real goal, and also confused potential opposition party members.

Divisions among mainland CDP activists abounded as well. As early as July 1998, reports surfaced of disagreement among leaders regarding who – if anyone – should serve as the party’s spokesperson.<sup>52</sup> In addition, a lack of communication and negotiation regarding party strategy led to confusion and division. For example, a number of CDP leaders expressed dismay at the formation of the North-eastern Preparatory Branch, arguing that it was too early for the nascent party to amalgamate into larger groupings. Further, some expressed concern that doing so might spark the ire of the authorities.<sup>53</sup> Some CDP leaders on the mainland were also unhappy with Zhuang Yan’s invitation of Xie Wanjun, Zhu Zhengming and Wang Wenjiang to the United States, arguing that this only fuelled the CCP’s charges that the CDP was being supported by foreign traitors. More specifically, they feared that this had hastened Wang Wenjiang’s arrest.<sup>54</sup> In addition, when Xu Wenli and others decided to form a regional party branch and a national preparatory committee in early November, they did not first seek consensus among other members. Consequently, those who disagreed with this tactic had no means of negotiating a compromise. In the end, they simply persisted in their more moderate “preparatory” work. This, too, led to great confusion, as it was unclear whether party branches and a national committee were actually in existence, or if the party was simply in a preparatory stage of formation. When the crackdown on the CDP began shortly after these more bold actions by Xu and his colleagues, many of the more moderate members

52. See *China Human Right Watch*, No. 133. Reprinted in *China Spring*, No. 179 (September 1998), p. 80.

53. See “Statement from overseas” and “Letter from 25 provincial branches.”

54. E-mail from Wang Xizhe to Xie Wanjun, 6 August 1999.

became bitter, feeling that these “reckless” actions had hastened the negative official response and severely damaged the opposition party movement.<sup>55</sup>

At the same time, divisions among overseas dissidents were exacerbated during the course of the CDP’s establishment and repression. Such tensions have been present for years, becoming especially severe following the relatively large-scale exile of student and intellectual participants in the movement of 1989. The development of the CDP marks another crescendo in this conflict. To begin, some overseas dissidents disapproved of Wang Bingzhang’s visit to the mainland in January 1998. In addition, when Wang Bingzhang, Wang Xizhe, Xu Shuiliang, Fu Shenqi, Yang Jianli and Zhuang Yan gathered in Boston to discuss the new party in August 1998, they disagreed over their proper role regarding the party and its actions. After the meeting, many of these dissidents ceased friendly communications with one another. Some engaged in separate activities vis-à-vis the CDP, while others decided to simply watch the developments on the mainland.<sup>56</sup> These exiled dissidents also clashed over who, if anyone, should be the “true” overseas spokesperson for the CDP.<sup>57</sup> When the crackdown on the party began in 1998, exiled Democracy Wall activist Wei Jingsheng voiced his opposition to Xu Wenli’s activities, publicly stating that most CDP leaders in China were CCP spies. Others, such as Wang Xizhe, vocally supported jailed CDP members and called for their release. In addition, some overseas CDP members are suspicious of the sole remaining public CDP leader in the mainland, He Depu, expressing concern that he is being “used” by the CCP, and is no longer connected with the “real” domestic CDP organization. Others continue to work with He.<sup>58</sup>

Why does such intra-opposition conflict seem endemic in both post-Mao and post-Deng China? Some suggest that the Chinese Communist tradition of glorifying radicalism and intolerance spurs an unwillingness to compromise and tendency toward intra-movement splits.<sup>59</sup> Others argue that, at least in the case of mainland-based dissidents, the fear of punishment makes activists hesitant to compromise with others whose intelligence, competence or loyalty might be in doubt.<sup>60</sup> Indeed, as with the movement of 1989, the development of the CDP has been rife with accusations and suspicions of infiltration, as well as a fear that ill-advised

55. *China Human Right Watch*, No. 133. “Report from the CDP in 25 provinces.” Some interviewees claim that the more radical actions undertaken by Xu in November had connections with Taiwan.

56. Interview with Zhuang Yan, 25 September 2000.

57. Interview with Zhuang Yan, 1 February 2001; “Report from the CDP in 25 provinces”; “Wang Xizhe reponse to report.” When mainland members of the CDP became aware of this overseas discord, they expressed their dismay (see “Report from the CDP in 25 provinces”).

58. Interview with Wang Xizhe, 19 March 2000, Zhuang Yan, 25 September 2000, and Xie Wanjun, 2 February 2001.

59. See, for example, Liu Xiaobo, “That holy word, ‘revolution,’” in Elizabeth Perry and Jeffrey Wasserstrom (eds.), *Popular Protest and Political Culture in Modern China: Learning from 1989*, 2nd edition (San Francisco: Westview Press, 1994).

60. See, for example, Teresa Wright, *The Perils of Protest: State Repression and Student Activism in China and Taiwan* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2001).

decisions might imperil mainland activists. At the same time, it may be the case that the dangerous atmosphere on the mainland means that only individuals with exceedingly confident, unyielding temperaments assume the risk involved in action. In the case of overseas dissidents, another factor seems to be at work as well. Upon exile, many activists struggle to find an identity and a livelihood in their new foreign home. In this often difficult quest, many feel it crucial that their status as a prominent Chinese dissident be maintained. Such status brings financial support, and also provides these individuals with a sense of purpose despite what may be their lifetime exclusion from the mainland. Yet, as increasing numbers of dissidents have fled or been forced out of China over the past decade, the competition for such status has risen. Unfortunately, this precarious position seems to fuel a tendency among overseas dissidents to dismiss, and even denigrate, other activists whose notoriety threatens their own.

### *New Characteristics*

Despite these continuities, the evolution of the CDP displays some novel characteristics that may bode ill for the continued dominance of the CCP. First, the Chinese Communist leadership's decision to open global telecommunications technology to the general public has provided dissidents with valuable new communication mechanisms. The clearest spark of this opening was Deng Xiaoping's famous "southern tour" of early 1992. Publicly extolling the special economic zones for their market-oriented changes and insisting that China become even more open to the international economy, Deng's tour "sparked a stampede for telecommunication services" in China.<sup>61</sup> In May 1994 China formally joined the global computer network, and in early 1996, the internet opened to the Chinese public.<sup>62</sup> By this time, China boasted an estimated 55 million landline telephone subscribers and 7 million mobile phone users. As of late 1997, some 600,000 were logging on to the internet. Since then, the number has doubled every six months.<sup>63</sup>

After a brief period of nonchalance regarding the internet's diffusion in China, by the middle of 1995 the CCP began to discuss the need to limit public access. In 1996, the regime called for the "healthy development of international computer information exchanges," but also declared that activities "prejudicial to state security ... or public order" would be treated as criminal offences.<sup>64</sup> The communist regime has utilized a number of methods to limit such "criminal" activities. First, it controls the main backbone networks for internet use in China.<sup>65</sup> Through this

61. Kathleen Hartford, "Cyberspace with Chinese characteristics," *Current History*, Vol. 99, No. 638 (September 2000), p. 256. An expanded on-line version of the article can be found at <http://www.pollycyber.com/pubs/ch/>.

62. Geoffry Taubman, "A not-so world wide web: the internet, China, and the challenges to nondemocratic rule," *Political Communication*, No. 15 (1998), p. 263.

63. Hartford, "Cyberspace with Chinese characteristics" (online version), pp. 1-2.

64. Taubman, "A not-so world wide web," p. 264. Excerpts from the policy can also be found in FBIS, 8 February 1996.

65. Hartford, "Cyberspace with Chinese characteristics" (on-line version), p. 3 and n. 10.

control, the regime has intermittently blocked the IP addresses of sites deemed to be corruptive (including CNN, the *New York Times* and *Playboy*).<sup>66</sup> Secondly, these backbone networks formed their own internet service providers (ISPs), which provide access to the net for individual users.<sup>67</sup> Finally, the government has attempted to restrict access to undesirable sites through pressure on content providers, search engines and producers of other kinds of software. Though official regulations are ambiguous, many self-censor out of fear of punishment for allowing access to potentially “subversive” sites.<sup>68</sup>

How successful have these measures been? Although most neophytes lack the skills to circumvent these restrictions, more sophisticated users report little trouble accessing the sites they desire. As one such user stated in 1997, “if you really want to find stuff, then you’ll get through the wall ... it’s easy to get access through sites in Northern Europe or Japan ... you hit upon one, you just take a trip round the neighbourhood to the links they provide and you’ve got yourself a gold mine.”<sup>69</sup> Efforts to trace e-mail and pager messages to specific users are problematic as well. Hundreds of public internet cafes have opened in China, and although the owners are required to maintain registration records for users, in reality these regulations are regularly skirted. Further, free e-mail accounts are readily available, and require no verification of a user’s true identity.

These media opened up a new world to Chinese dissidents, allowing for methods of communication and information dissemination that provided them with a vast potential audience and the ability to network at the national level. Earlier political movements in the post-Mao period, in contrast, were severely constrained in this regard. For example, during the Democracy Wall movement of 1978–79, dissidents could only post “big-character posters” or distribute hand-copied or mimeographed materials on street corners. As Andrew Nathan notes, such limitations made for extremely restricted circulation: “Considering the inconvenience of obtaining materials and the tedium of copying, printing, and collating the magazines ... [democracy wall activists] were fortunate to be able to publish five hundred or so copies of a single issue per month.”<sup>70</sup> By the time of the student demonstrations of 1989, communication and information technologies had spread to a degree, and participants made regular use of fax machines and e-mail to relay news and ideas. For the most part, though, these media facilitated communication between domestic and overseas parties, and were not widely available for intra-country contacts. Indeed, even in 1989, the main method of communication was face-to-face, achieved only by physically travelling to the location of the desired person or group. The main “publication” medium remained the big-

66. *Ibid.* p. 6.

67. ISPs owned by the official CHINANET claim two-thirds of China’s total subscribers. *Ibid.* pp. 3–4.

68. *Ibid.* p. 7.

69. Geremie Barmé and Ye Sang, “The great firewall of China,” *Wired*, June 1997. Cited in Taubman, “A not-so world wide web,” p. 267.

70. Andrew Nathan, *Chinese Democracy* (Berkeley: University of California Press 1985), p. 15.

character poster. As demonstrated in numerous studies of the movement, these limitations slowed the spread of information and hindered rapid communication among protestors.<sup>71</sup>

In contrast, the electronic media that became more widely available in China in the 1990s greatly aided the efforts of the CDP. Communication via pager, e-mail and websites enabled like-minded dissidents to hear of the Zhejiang committee's activities immediately, and to co-ordinate efforts at registration. These media also allowed members in various cities and provinces to alert other members quickly of any repressive measures against them and of shifts in official responses. For example, when word spread that provincial offices had been forbidden to take registration requests, committees from a number of areas simultaneously shifted their focus to the national Ministry of Affairs.<sup>72</sup> Finally, in virtually all cases of organized dissent in China prior to the 1990s, activities have ceased upon the incarceration of the top leadership. In the case of the CDP, however, global communication technologies have allowed the party to persist despite the lengthy sentences meted out to both first and second-tier leaders. Importantly, these communication media also have helped the *falun gong* to survive harsh official repression.

In addition, the development of the CDP indicates that the insulation of intellectuals and students from common citizens that was especially evident during the protests of 1989 has broken down. Looking at the membership of the CDP, it appears that as China's intellectuals have moved increasingly into occupations not requiring any advanced education, the line between the "intelligentsia" (*zhishifenzi*) and other social groups has blurred. Indeed, the CDP membership includes individuals of widely ranging age, educational background and protest experiences. Although a complete compilation of the backgrounds of the CDP membership does not exist, I was able to find information about 83 prominent CDP leaders via my interviews, CDP documents and e-mails, the Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Democratic Movements in China, issues of *Beijing Spring*, and Appendix II of Jan van der Made's report for Human Rights Watch. Although these data are far from complete, they provide an interesting indication of the party's demographic composition.

These data show that the most common protest experience for CDP leaders was the protests of 1989, followed by dissidents from the Democracy Wall movement of 1978–80. Notably, nearly 5 per cent of the CDP leadership also had a history of labour activism. Finally, interviewees estimate that 20–30 per cent of CDP members had no prior protest experience.<sup>73</sup>

The age breakdown of CDP leaders is interesting when one considers that young adults in their 20s have been the most active participants in most of the major political movements in the post-Mao period. Why, then, does this not appear to be the case with the CDP? One explanation

71. See, for example, Wright, *The Perils of Protest*.

72. See also e-mail from Lu Xinhua to Zhuang Yan, 16 March 2001.

73. Interviews with Zhuang Yan, 1 February 2001, and Xie Wanjun, 2 February 2001.



**Table 1: Prior Protest Experience of Prominent Mainland CDP Members**

<i>Prior protest experience</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
1976	1	1.2
Democracy Wall	12	14.5
1989	21	25.3
Labour activism	4	4.8
Other	8	9.6
Unknown/none	44	53.0
Total	90	108.4

*Note:*

Total is more than 100% because some members have had more than one prior protest experience.

might be that young people in China today are simply more satisfied than their elders. As the reform era has progressed, young people generally have benefited more than the old, and also have been little affected by the phasing out of the “iron rice bowl.” In addition, individuals who were too young to have fully participated in the demonstrations of 1989 are unlikely to have a political record that might hinder their employment possibilities. In contrast, many individuals with prior protest experience are forever marked with the brand of “political activist,” and as a result must struggle to make ends meet. Thus, these individuals have much less to lose by engaging in protest, and greater grievances with the current system. Interestingly, the *falun gong* also seems to include a disproportionately large number of older persons.

Looking at education levels, it is particularly notable that the CDP leadership includes both “educated” and “ordinary” citizens, though the vast majority fit into the latter category. Similarly, nearly half of the most prominent CDP leaders were “ordinary” workers employed in factories or engaging in other unskilled or semi-skilled labour. This demonstrates the increasing political activism of workers in the 1990s – the very develop-

**Table 2: Age of Prominent Mainland CDP Members in 1998**

<i>Year of birth</i>	<i>Age in 1998</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
1979–	19 and younger	1	1.2
1969–1978	20–29	4	4.8
1959–1968	30–39	21	25.3
1949–1958	40–49	13	15.7
1939–1948	50–59	10	12.0
–1938	60 and older	2	2.4
Unknown	unknown	32	38.6
Total		83	100.0

Table 3: Education Levels of Prominent Mainland CDP Members

<i>Highest level attained</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
High school	2	2.4
Trade school	2	2.4
University	13	15.7
Graduate	2	2.4
Unknown*	64	77.1
Total	83	100.0

*Note:*

\*It is likely that in most cases, these individuals have less than a high school education.

Table 4: Occupational Status of Prominent Mainland CDP Members

<i>Occupation</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Worker*	41	49.4
Self-employed	4	4.8
Professional**	9	10.8
Intelligentsia***	12	14.5
Government cadre	2	2.4
Soldier	1	1.2
Peasant	1	1.2
Unknown	14	15.7
Total	83	100.0

*Notes:*

\*includes both private and public-sector.

\*\*includes: accountant, manager, computer technician, engineer, electrician.

\*\*\*includes: professor, student, scholar, lawyer, publisher, artist.

ment that CCP leaders feared most in 1989. In fact, all types of workers, from unskilled to professional to private entrepreneurs, filled the top ranks of the CDP. In addition, the occupational status of CDP leaders provides further evidence of a declining division between intellectual and other kinds of political activists. Indeed, it shows that by the 1990s, it had become increasingly difficult to differentiate between intellectuals and other social groups. For example, a number of CDP members who attended a university or beyond did not engage in strictly intellectual pursuits upon graduation (or their expulsion from university or graduate school). Many of these individuals encountered difficulty in seeking employment after their time in university, and were forced into the ranks of unskilled or semi-skilled labourers. Others chose non-academic professions out of an interest in greater financial gain.

This points to an important definitional problem regarding the term “intellectual.” In China, this designation typically has been based simply on the education level of an individual. During the Maoist era, for example, persons with a high school education or more were generally (and negatively) branded as “intellectuals.” In the post-Mao period, the term has come to refer to those with a university education or higher, and the negative connotation has been lost. Yet in most industrialized democracies, where a far larger portion of the population receives a university education, the term “intellectual” is much more narrowly employed, typically being reserved for those who engage in academic or symbolic pursuits. These definitional differences are perhaps most apparent when trying to categorize the occupation of “lawyer.” In this article, I have used the Chinese understanding of “intellectual,” such that university-educated lawyers fit in this category. Yet most citizens of the industrialized world would find this designation puzzling, preferring to describe lawyers as “professionals.” Indeed, in the past decade or so, the Chinese definition has become increasingly strained, as there has been a decreasing amount of overlap between one’s educational background and one’s occupational pursuits.

#### *Comparisons and Conclusions*

What will be the ultimate impact and importance of the CDP? One obvious case for comparison is the Democratic Progressive Party in Taiwan. Indeed, many CDP activists point to the DPP as a model for their own success.<sup>74</sup> Yet how comparable are the two cases? Certainly, some similarities are apparent. First, both the DPP and the CDP arose in the context of sustained economic growth and social differentiation in a market (or at least quasi-market) economy. As many have argued, such economic development inexorably leads to the growth of civil society, and ultimately democratization; thus, both parties may appear to represent a culmination of this process. Secondly, in both cases external pressures devolving from the ruling regime’s desire for greater integration and legitimacy in the international community pressed it to ease social and political controls. And finally, although most top CDP leaders are now serving prison time, still-active CDP members note that the Taiwanese dissidents who later formed the DPP also persevered through severe repression and lengthy jail sentences before finally meeting with success.

Yet, on balance, the differences between the two cases outweigh the similarities. First, the international positions of Taiwan and China are highly dissimilar. Taiwan, a tiny pariah “nation” and sworn enemy of the mainland regime, needed the security of US protection, pressing the Kuomintang (KMT) to make good on its claim to represent “free China.” In contrast, China faces the international community from a position of power, and has no real need for protection by the United States or any

74. *Ibid.*

global body. Thus, China's ruling elites give only as much as they please politically, and have proven largely unphased by external warnings about political repression and human rights violations.

Secondly, although the proposition that economic development and differentiation always lead to democratization may sound commonsensical, clear evidence to back this claim is lacking. Indeed, China's economy has grown at a phenomenal rate over the past 20 years, and Chinese society undoubtedly has diversified, but there has been no steady movement in the direction of greater political loosening. Rather, a cycle of opening and repression has repeated itself, often ending in increased political controls. Further, as careful empirical work by Przeworski and Limongi indicate, once a certain level of economic prosperity is reached, authoritarian regimes may actually become *more* entrenched.<sup>75</sup>

This potential is underscored by the reality that the CCP, unlike the KMT, has never espoused Western-style democracy in its legitimating ideology, and not a single top CCP leader has publicly indicated a desire that China become a multi-party state. Rather, political loosening – when it has occurred – has been seen only as a means to the end of economic modernization, and not as a valuable end in and of itself. Moreover, since the purge of Zhao Ziyang and many of his compadres in 1989, advocates of political reform even for this purpose have been virtually non-existent within the top ranks of the CCP. The contrast with the democratic component of the KMT's "Three Principles of the People" and the political views of Chiang Ching-kuo is telling.

Finally, although CDP leaders look to the DPP as a model, their strategies differ dramatically. The DPP did not appear suddenly, but rather was the culmination of nearly a decade of organization and networking without any reference to the formation of a political party. The CDP, in contrast, began with an open declaration of preparations for the establishment of an opposition party, hoping later to form a network and organization to support it.

Yet, just because the CDP does not appear likely to repeat precisely the experience of the DPP does not mean that it is doomed to failure. Transitions to democracy evolving through "pacts" between the ruling elite and opposition, such as occurred in Taiwan, are only one type of transition from authoritarian rule, and do not apply to all cases. As seen in numerous East European countries, ruling regimes sometimes collapse, leading to a clear break with the old system.<sup>76</sup> And, in these cases, it is often the earlier-suppressed opposition that rises to take the old regime's place. Furthermore, ruling elites sometimes change, and in China it is virtually assured that the current leadership will be replaced within the coming decade. Certainly, those directing the CCP today will attempt to install like-minded successors,

75. Adam Przeworski and Fernando Limongi, "Modernization: theory and facts," *World Politics*, Vol. 49, No. 2 (January 1997), pp. 155–183.

76. For a thoughtful discussion of these differences, see Valerie Bunce, "Comparative democratization: big and bounded generalizations," *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol. 33, Nos. 6/7 (August/September 2000), pp. 716–18.

but, as is exemplified by Chiang Ching-kuo in Taiwan, new leaders can be unpredictable.<sup>77</sup>

In the short term, however, prospects are rather bleak. Interestingly, this may be due in part to the relatively estranged relationship between CDP leaders and CCP elites. Unlike many political movements in the post-Mao era, the CDP arose without any apparent political patronage or tacit support within the Communist Party.<sup>78</sup> In addition, although the demands of the CDP were couched in moderate, loyalist terms, the very goal of establishing an opposition party demonstrates a clear break from earlier emphases on reforming the Communist Party. Some might see this as a positive development, indicating that the “loyal opposition” of the 1980s has finally broken its dependence on the ruling regime.<sup>79</sup> Yet, the CDP has not met with any more success than did previous opposition movements. Indeed, it might be argued that the CDP has been less successful than earlier, more loyalist movements; at present, at least, it has been repressed without any perceptible influence on the thought or behaviour of ruling elites.

Still, CDP members are hopeful, asserting that they have become an “internet-based guerrilla force” that is presently hidden, yet is growing in strength and support.<sup>80</sup> And the diversified composition of the CDP indicates that individuals from all backgrounds and sectors of society are ready and willing to challenge the domination of the CCP. Coupled with the vast growth of other forms of political, economic and social unrest, in the long run, these forces may indeed spell the demise of single-party rule in China.<sup>81</sup> For now, though, the power and determination of China’s current ruling elite continue to reign supreme.

77. For a detailed analysis of the rising “fourth generation” of leadership within the CCP, see Li Cheng, “Jiang Zemin’s successors: the rise of the fourth generation of leaders in the PRC,” *The China Quarterly*, No. 161 (March 2000), pp. 1–40. At the same time, it is important to note Li’s recognition that “relatively little is known about the sociological profiles and other characteristics of this generation of leaders” (pp. 3–4).

78. Interviews with Wang Xizhe, 19 March 2000, Xie Wanjun, 2 February 2001, and Zhuang Yan, 1 February 2001.

79. For elaboration on the concept of “loyal opposition,” see Merle Goldman, *Sowing the Seeds of Democracy in China: Political Reform in the Deng Xiaoping Era* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994).

80. Interview with Xie Wanjun 2 February 2001.

81. For a dramatic, and unusual, assessment of this unrest on the part of the CCP, see the CCP Department of Organization’s recent report, “China investigation report 2000–2001: studies of contradictions within the people under new conditions.”