

## China: From 1989 to “1984”

——Testimony at the Congressional Hearing on Rise of Authoritarianism

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### 【the Shock of Tiananmen】

The CCP established a totalitarian state in 1949 that surpassed the Third Reich in terms of the total control of the society and the private spheres. After Mao died in 1976, especially after China adopted the “socialist market economy” in the early 1990s, most scholars in the West who studied China considered China to be an authoritarian state. But it is not the truth. It is still totalitarianism, a “sophisticated totalitarianism”, which is strict and refined without being brittle and dogmatic; cruel and barbaric without being chaotic. It is powerful in economy, technology, and official narratives.

Thirty years ago, CCP crushed a non-violent democracy movement with machine guns and tanks. All democracies in the world condemned the Tiananmen massacre, sanctioned Chinese dictators, and supported Tiananmen activists in jail or in exile. Soon after that, however, Western leaders could not wait to welcome Chinese butchers and dictators with their red carpet, eager hugs and state banquets. Only 17 days after the Tiananmen massacre, President George H. W. Bush sent a secret letter to Deng Xiaoping and then dispatched a secret envoy to meet with Deng later. By 1991, the Bush administration had eased or eliminated many Tiananmen sanctions. In 1994, the U.S. government renewed China’s most-favored-nation (MFN) status, delinking trade to China’s human rights. In 2001, the U.S. provided China with a permanent normal trade relations (PNTR), and China was allowed to join the WTO. Then, China was given the opportunity to host the Olympic Games, the World Expo, APEC and G20. Not a single country has boycotted these games and events hosted by China. China has repeatedly been voted in as a member of the UN Human Rights Council, despite the facts that China’s human rights situation is among the worst in the world and that the Chinese government has arrogantly undermined and manipulated the UN human rights mechanism.

In 2010, with the phenomenal growth of the economy, China became the second largest economy. It was believed that China’s embrace of market economy and globalization will certainly promote its freedom and democratization, but this is not the case. On the contrary, today’s China is farther away from democracy than it was in 1989. Economic power and high technology have greatly strengthened the CCP’s control. China is quickly moving towards a fascism with Chinese characteristics, and thus is increasingly becoming a threat to global freedom and democracy. Tiananmen massacre shocked the world, but there is another shock: the Relative Strength Comparison between China and the west has been a terrifying turnaround since 1989.

There are various explanations for the “China miracle”, but it seems that few understand or admit that the “low human rights advantage” is one of the main reasons. Abundant cheap labor, low wages, low welfare, and poor working conditions. No environmental protection. No collective bargaining, no right to strike, no independent labor unions. No free press, no freedom of demonstration and assembly, no judicial independence. In this world, no country that respects human rights, basic welfare, and democracy can replicate this advantage. No wonder “goods made in China flow into the whole world, and capital from the whole world flows into China” (Qin Hui). It is ridiculous that Chinese government attributed this achievement to the so-called “China model” and peddled it around the world, since if all countries adopt the “China model”, there won’t be any “China miracle.”

### 【How CCP Tightened Its Control】

People are interested in talking about the rise of China, but in reality, it is the rise of the CCP or the Chinese government, not the Chinese people. People living in China do not have access to Google, Facebook, Twitter or YouTube, nor do they have the rights to protect their houses or land. They do not have freedom of expression, religious freedom, or right to vote. (Winnie the Pooh was banned!) Chinese people lack access to fresh air and clean water. Ten of thousands of human rights defenders, lawyers, dissidents, bloggers, and journalists have been thrown into prisons. Political prisoners have died in custody, including the Nobel Laureate Liu Xiaobo. Family members of rights activists are targeted. Rights NGOs are shut down. Torture, enforced disappearance, forced eviction, and miscarriage of justice are rampant. Since 1999, more than 4,000 Falun Gong practitioners have been tortured to death during detention. One Hundred and fifty-three Tibetans self-immolated to protest the persecution against them. Demolishing Churches, burning Bibles, sending two million Uighurs and ethnic minorities to concentration camps in Xinjiang, are just a few of the examples of the deteriorating human rights situation behind the gorgeous appearance of the “China miracle.”

When students and citizens were killed in 1989, I was only a brainwashed high school student, but after I got my PhD in 2002, I became a scholar with the ideal of liberal democracy, and also a rights lawyer promoting human rights and rule of law in China. Because of my work, I was disbarred, banned from teaching, and eventually fired by the university I worked at. I was kidnapped twice by secret police and severely tortured during my detention. My home was ransacked, my passport was confiscated, and my NGO was shut down.

China’s “High-tech totalitarianism” has begun to take shape: CCP utilizes its leading technology of artificial intelligence to tighten its total control of the Chinese society. Great Firewall, social media, big data, E-commerce and modern telecommunication make it easier for CCP to keep people under surveillance.

Internet has been used by CCP as an effective tool for censorship, propaganda, and brainwashing. Facial recognition, voiceprint recognition, gait recognition, DNA collection, and so on, all have strengthened the existing systematic control. People have been jailed for posting a picture on social media, or criticizing leaders in private online conversations. In Shandong province, virtual reality(VR)was used to test Party members' level of loyalty to the Party. Market research firm IDC recently predicted that China's public surveillance camera network will keep growing, with a total of 2.76 billion units installed by 2022. Every Chinese Will "Own" Two Surveillance Cameras. Thinking about the networked stability maintenance, the social credit system, the secret police, stoking nationalist sentiment, expanded control of the media and Internet, mass arrests of rights activists, and cult of personality around the leader, what we have seen in China is an unprecedented "High-tech totalitarianism", an advanced version of 1984.

### 【China's Long Arm】

Moreover, China has become more and more aggressive on the international stage. Its long arm stretches in many different ways, for example, AIIB, One belt one road, Confucius Institutes, South China Sea Aggression, Cyber Attacks, Espionage, "Thousand Talents Program", and so on. China has broken its "one country, two systems" promise for Hong Kong, which means it undermined the commitment made in the *Sino-British Joint Declaration* registered at the United Nations. China has repeatedly threatened to launch a military invasion of Taiwan. Moreover, considering the concentration camps, burning bibles and destroying churches, detaining intellectuals and activists, abducting overseas booksellers and activists, CCP's Fascism 101 is looming on the horizon.

Huawei and ZTE and other Chinese companies have always been a threat to network security and privacy. Only until recently, the West began to change its attitude. The world is still unclear about the real relationship between the Chinese enterprises and Chinese government. As a quick reprisal against Canada's arrest of Huawei's CFO Meng Wanzhou, Chinese authorities detained two Canadian citizens, and suddenly changed a verdict of a Canadian from 15 years to death penalty, with a deeply flawed procedure.

When my enforced disappearance and torture were raised before UN human rights council, Chinese government responded that "Teng Biao was never detained and China is a country with rule of law." This shows the denial strategy that the Chinese government uses to manipulate UN human rights mechanism. Cao Shunli was one of my clients. When she was on her way to Geneva to participate in China's universal periodic review (UPR) in 2013, She was stopped at the Beijing airport, then detained, severely tortured, and died in custody.

When I came to Harvard for a one-year research in 2014, my wife and my child were prevented from leaving

China. I had no other choice but to smuggle them out of China through a dangerous channel. Also as a part of collective punishment, the company that my wife had worked at for 17 years terminated her employment.

I was invited by the American Bar Association to write a book on my experience as a human rights lawyer in China, but after I signed the agreement, ABA rescinded the proposal, telling me that “publishing your book would upset the Chinese government.”

I had an experience that my scheduled talk was cancelled by an Ivy-league university, the reason was its president was meeting Xi Jinping in Beijing. Self-censorship is rampant among China scholars, institutions, and enterprises around the world. Richard Gere has been rejected by all mainstream Hollywood movies because of his support of Tibetan freedom. Some prominent professors, journalists and writers have been banned from entering China because of their critical writings.

Activists and dissidents living in the U.S and other countries cannot stay out of CCP’s control. Their family members back in China are intimidated, arrested or detained. Dozens of family members of at least six Uyghur journalists of RFA have been detained in China, as retaliation against their work in media. At least 20 activists, including me, have been harassed with frivolous lawsuits by a billionaire who worked for China’s Ministry of State Security. I received death threats from twitter users. In Mexico, Argentina, India, Canada, Paris, New York, Atlanta, and San Francisco, Tibetans, Falun Gong practitioners and Chinese dissidents have been harassed and physically attacked by people hired by Chinese embassy. Professor Brady in New Zealand, after writing a prominent report on China’s political interference, encountered one trouble after another. In February last year, her office and house were broken in and her laptop was taken away. In November, she found both left front tires of her car were half flat and valve caps both missing.

Gui Minhai, a publisher with a Swedish passport, was kidnapped in Thailand by Chinese secret police. He was disappeared for 3 months and then suddenly appeared in China’s official media, being forced to confess. After being detained for two years, he was released, but a few months later he was taken away again in front of Swedish diplomats. A few weeks ago, in Stockholm, two mysterious Chinese businessmen threatened his daughter Angela with the words “you have to trust me, or you will never see your father again.”

There are too many this kind of stories to be all listed here. Perhaps what we should be more concerned about is not whether a power is soft or hard, but good or bad.

**【Why Didn’t China Go towards Democracy? 】**

Embracing market economy, rapid growth, developing internet, entering WTO, ratifying international human rights treaties, all these things are in favor of an open society and democracy, but why is China going towards 1984, instead of liberal democracy?

When talking about the current China's politics, we should keep this in mind: the CCP does not represent the interests of China or the Chinese people. Its first priority is to perpetuate its one-party rule and the interest of the privileged.

Since the 1980s, economic growth, global market, legal professions, internet and social media, modern telecommunications, have provided space for activism groups and empowered the civil society. But, the Chinese government has never loosened its censorship, surveillance, and dominance. If there is any lesson that the CCP has learned from 1989, it is that they can do anything but lose power. When the CCP sensed that the civil society has gained more and more resource and influence, it elevated its crackdown and control. In addition, for the past decades, the so-called "China model" ("Kleptocracy plus high-tech totalitarianism") has created comprehensive crisis - official corruption, conflicts between officials and citizens, ecological crisis, moral and ideological crisis, ethnic hatred and extreme tension in Tibet and Xinjiang, and so on. Most importantly, the economic dividends that China has been able to harvest from favorable demographics, cheap labor, and globalization have almost been exhausted. GDP growth is slowing down. The only solution for the crisis is rule of law and democracy, but the only reaction that the CCP was willing to choose is the opposite: to strengthen centralized power and increase the forces of repression to prolong its one-party rule.

The goal of the CCP is to maintain its rule inside China, and so it needs to make the world safe for the CCP. When it was weak, it adopted the strategy of "hiding the power and biding the time;" and when it becomes strong enough, it flexes its muscles. The CCP fears the influences of western ideology. So, besides the information control in China, it also tries to control the overseas Chinese communities. The Chinese Students and Scholar Associations (CSSA), Confucius Institutes, alumni associations, Townsman associations, chamber of commerce, and other such kind of organizations, are all controlled or directed by the Chinese Embassy, Consulates or United Front Work Department. A recent report by Hoover Institution found that Chinese government has eliminated almost all independent Chinese-language media outlets in the U.S. It is more so in Europe, Asia, Africa, Oceania, and elsewhere. Chinese government tried hard to peddle its narratives. Their effort to block criticism of human rights issues on UN forums is quite effective. CCP has always been an important and sincere supporter of every dictatorial regime, including North Korea, Venezuela, Syria, Cuba, Saudi Arab, Zimbabwe, Sudan, among many others. CCP has been exporting its repression technology, experience and control model to autocrats in the world. All these policies serve for the CCP's refusal of democracy in China domestically.

### **【It's high time for the West to change its China policy】**

This High-tech Orwellian state has become an increasingly urgent threat to universal values and the world as a whole. The policy toward China—policy of appeasement in the name of engagement—adopted by the democratic countries has offered it a helping hand. The western companies have also gone much further in ignoring China's human rights. Here are some examples.

- Cisco provided equipment and training to help set up and strengthen China's Great Firewall. Nortel Networks, Microsoft, Intel, Websense, and some other technology companies also played a role in facilitating GFW.
- Upon the request of China's state security, Yahoo provided its clients' information that confirmed the identity of at least 4 Chinese writers, and became an important evidence to convict them .
- In order to move back into the Chinese market, Google designed a search engine, called Project Dragonfly, that censors everything that the CCP doesn't like.
- McKinsey deeply participated in China's "One Belt One Road" and "Made in China 2025", and recently chose its retreat location in Kashgar, which is 4 miles from a concentration camp.
- Thermo Fisher sold DNA technology to Chinese government, and it was used to trace Uighurs in Xinjiang.

(Under the pressure from human rights groups and the Congress, Google dropped its Project Dragonfly and Thermo Fisher stopped its business in Xinjiang.)

The above is the story how China has come from 1989 to "1984". With the help of western appeasement policy, money and technology, the CCP not only has survived the global isolation and sanction after 1989 Tiananmen Massacre, but also has established a powerful and brutal totalitarianism. Now, China is demanding a re-writing of the international norms, attempting to create a new international order in which rule of law is manipulated, human dignity is debased, democracy is abused, and justice is denied. In this international order, corruption and persecution are ignored, perpetrators are immune, and dictatorial regimes are united and smugly complacent.

The West should have learned a lesson - human rights are not to be sacrificed for economic or political gains. Over the years, the CCP has violated human rights and suppressed freedom beyond its borders. The free world needs to re-examine their policy towards China before it is too late.

### **【Policy Suggestions】**

- Tear Down the Great Firewall(GFW)!
- Link personal freedom, religious freedom, information freedom, and other basic human rights issues to trade with China.
- Ban Huawei, ZTE and other Chinese companies that threatens U.S. national security.
- Scrutinize the Confucius Institute (including Confucius classrooms), CSSA, and other Chinese government related or sponsored organizations. Punish or shut down these influence operations if they are involved political interference or endangering freedom of speech.
- Block the products and services from China that were involved in human rights violation.
- Demand all Chinese state-run media outlets to register as foreign agents.
- Enforce the Global Magnitsky Act more effectively and widely. Encourage U.S. allies to pass the similar act.
- Boycott Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics, or initiate to strip Beijing off hosting rights, if China continues its concentration camps in Xinjiang, and continues its persecution of Tibetans, Christians and Falun gong practitioners.
- Strictly enforce the law of Anti Money Laundering. Do not provide a safe haven to corrupt Chinese officials and business people who are working for the CCP..
- Disapprove the permanent residence/citizenship application of those who were involved in political interference. Reject their entry into this country when necessary.
- Scrutinize the donation to U.S. universities, think tanks, and non-profit organizations. Make sure the donation does not influence the independence of research and academic freedom.
- Sanction the U.S. companies which were involved in human rights violation and repression of freedom in China.
- Support the human rights defenders and prisoners of conscience in China.

- Lead a fundamental reform of UN system, especially the Human Rights Council. Defending against China's manipulation of international human rights mechanisms.
- Unite the democratic allies to take coordinated actions against the CCP's interference and infiltration.