

## COMMENTARY

# Let China sleep politically for another 100 years

The ramifications of political change could rock the world, and not in a good way

by Bhim Bhurtel

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*Performers dance during a show as part of the celebration of the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party of China, at the Bird's Nest stadium in Beijing on June 28, 2021. Photo: AFP / Noel Celis*

On Thursday, China celebrated the 100th birthday of the Communist Party. The Communist Party of China was founded on July 1, 1921, and now is perhaps the most prominent political organization on Earth.

The Chinese people have reasons to celebrate the Party's birthday. No one could have imagined how China transformed economically, technologically, militarily and strategically over

the last 40 years. Under the leadership of the CPC, China astonished the world as it pulled [600 million](#) out of poverty in 30 years.

Western politicians, media, academia, think-tanks, civil-society organizations and human-rights defenders have been accusing China of not kicking off political reforms in the same way it did on the economic front.

The US accuses China of failing to introduce a so-called Western style of democratic governance that would ensure power transfer through periodic elections as in the United States.

However, China's economic and technological advancement and military and strategic capability give it the wherewithal to retaliate appropriately against the US if it pressures China to establish a Western-style democracy. The American call for China to establish a political system based on periodic elections every four or five years would harm the peace and stability of Asia and the world.

US strategists' demands for democratic reform in China make them look either naive or extremely stupid, because they overlook the fact that China is a different civilization. The Chinese have a different perception of the function of the state than Westerners.

US strategists' central problem is that they think regime change eventually could become an albatross around China's neck. A change in the political system could halt China's economic, technological and military progress and the US could be the uncontested superpower in the world.

However, merely changing the political system cannot stop China from becoming the world's largest economy by 2028 or before. Neither can it stop China's retail market from being twice the size of America's and Europe's combined by 2030, nor the world's largest market for luxury brands.

Similarly, the US cannot stop China from remaining the center of the manufacture and export of state-of-art technology. The US cannot stop China from becoming a world-class military and strategic power by 2040 either.

Today's China is not the Russia of 1991. It is a combo of Russia's strategic capabilities of the 1970s and Japan's manufacturing and technological capabilities of the 1980s. At the same time, China is the world's largest consumer and producer. If China starts embracing an

inward-looking policy, that will mean a lot for the US and the world economy.

Remember, 10 years after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, despite Western intellectual hype of the "end of history," Vladimir Putin came to power in 2000 and has been challenging the West.

Russian has a roughly US\$1.6 trillion economy. Today's China is economically more powerful than Russia. Many American analysts say that the US succeeded in dismantling the USSR and can replicate the same in China. However, today's China is not a 1991 Russia.

Let's imagine, for example, if the Communist Party is overthrown from power in China in favor of a Western-style democracy, will China then become weak? Of course not.

Changing the political system in China would not make much difference in its economic, technological and military power. In Russia, the state controlled the means of production. In contrast, the means of production in China are privately owned.

Many Chinese companies are privately owned, and there are many wealthy Chinese within the country. The Chinese economic system is more Western-style than what Russia had before 1991.

So it is idiocy to think that mere regime change and establishing Western-styled democracy in China would lead it to its nadir economically, militarily and strategically.

If the CPC continues to rule in China, its most significant beneficiaries will be in the West, especially the United States. It also benefits Japan, South Korea, India and other nations. The US can take advantage of most of China's tremendous economic clout. The 2008 financial crisis depicted that very fact.

China is the world's largest retail market. More US companies can take advantage of this.

Last year's higher-level opening up of China's financial market will benefit Wall Street the most.

On the contrary, think seriously about the probable consequences of regime change in China. What would the security of Asia and the world be like if the presidential or prime-ministerial candidate in a Chinese democratic election had to come up with an "[October surprise](#)" to be elected, as in the US presidential election?

If democracy is established and an election is held in China, the first agenda of the campaign will definitely be the forceful reunification of Taiwan. Similarly, what will happen in the world if a Chinese presidential candidate has to behave like India's [Narendra Modi](#) or the US presidential [candidate Donald Trump](#) to influence public opinion?

An attack on Japan, South Korea or India could conceivably be on the electoral agenda.

No one can guarantee that a democratic China would behave more responsibly than now.

If China becomes more mischievous, that will lead to more unintended consequences for the world order. Similarly, no one can ensure that regime change in China would lead to a more favorable policy toward the US. Nobody can rule out the possibility that Chinese regime change could be more detrimental to the US than the [1979 Islamic Revolution](#) in Iran.

The world must be grateful for now that the Chinese leadership has not yet formed any bloc based either ideologically or militarily. President [Xi Jinping has clarified](#) that China has "no intention to fight either a Cold War or a hot one with any country."

That is why any US attempt at regime change and insulting China more will antagonize it unnecessarily. These kinds of attempts will hurt US interests in the long run.

China's economic, technological and strategic development is now unstoppable. It doesn't matter if the regime is under the CPC or it changes to democracy.

However, if the CPC continues its reign and there is no need to hold periodic elections in China, there will be one certainty. No Chinese leader will become more aggressive so as to win election. Thus we can avoid future aggressive Chinese behavior in international politics.

Therefore, any attempts to change China's political system could be counterproductive.

So let China's current political system remain the same. If the Chinese feel the need to change the regime, they will do it themselves.

Before concluding, let me quote the famous French military leader and emperor Napoleon Bonaparte. He was [quoted as saying](#): "**Let China sleep, for when she wakes, she will shake the world.**"

As Napoleon said, let China's political system sleep as it is now for another 100 years. If anyone tries to wake up China, it will shake the world in international politics just as it has been astonishing the world economically, technologically, militarily and strategically.

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