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CHINA'S CHALLENGE

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The People's Republic of China (PRC) under President Xi Jinping has begun to flex its muscles as a major power. Setting aside Deng Xiaoping's mantra of "hide our light and nurture our strength" and Jiang Zemin's policy of "increase trust, reduce trouble, develop cooperation, and do not seek confrontation," Beijing today actively challenges its neighbors. It also confronts U.S. interests in the South and East China Seas, builds up its navy and missile forces to oppose a U.S. intervention should an armed clash erupt over Taiwan, and promotes the creation of alternative global institutions such as the "BRICS bank" and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank that are designed to exclude U.S. and European influence. There is growing worry among Western analysts about the extent to which China, as its power grows, will seek to remake the world in its authoritarian image.

China expert Michael Pillsbury, for example, argues that if the country's economy continues to grow at its current pace and hard-liners retain control over Chinese policy, by midcentury China will oppose democratization around the world, control information about China available globally through censorship of the Internet and influence over mass media, and intimidate critics by means of cyberattacks and the withholding of economic favors.¹ Retired U.S. general Wesley Clark points out that China "has rejected both the move toward democracy and the acceptance of human and civil rights that Americans had hoped would emerge from China's astonishing economic rise. . . . China's foreign policy relies on keenly calculated self-interest, at the expense of the

international institutions, standards and obligations the United States has sought to champion.”²

For the time being, however, China’s strategic situation does not permit an all-out challenge to democracy beyond its shores, and whether it will ever undertake such a challenge is uncertain. China’s foreign policy remains essentially defensive. First, the country’s policy makers are concerned about the fragile security situation at home, caused by dissatisfaction among ethnic minorities, displaced peasants and property owners, disgruntled workers, liberal intellectuals, and others—opponents who, Beijing believes, are incited and supported by hostile foreign forces.³ Second, policy makers have to worry about relations with the two-dozen countries around China’s borders, including powerful states with territorial disputes and other tensions with China, like Japan, Vietnam, and India, as well as countries with a dangerous potential for instability such as North Korea, Pakistan, and Tajikistan. Third, China has to worry about regional crises that could break out at any moment in places such as the Korean Peninsula and the Taiwan Strait. And fourth, it has to worry about access to resources and markets around the world.⁴

Facing this array of challenges, the Chinese leadership seeks to maintain good relations with whatever regime is in power in any country where China has diplomatic and security interests or does business, regardless of the character of that regime. To be sure, it is often easier for Beijing to do business with narrow authoritarian elites than to navigate within complex democratic systems. But attempting to undermine a foreign democratic regime would, in business terms, cost more than it would be worth. And even if it wanted to, China does not have the economic, military, or soft-power resources to exert substantial influence over the domestic political systems of faraway countries. It has not been able even to prevent a democratic transition in its close neighbor Burma or to persuade its only formal ally, North Korea, to adopt liberalizing economic reforms.

This “regime-type-neutral” approach has not been a permanent feature of Chinese foreign policy. The situation was different in the later years of Mao Zedong’s rule, when China was economically self-sufficient (though poor) and placed priority on undermining Soviet influence wherever it could. Mao declared, “With great turmoil under heaven, the situation is excellent.” Beijing gave material, diplomatic, and propaganda support to pro-China, avowedly Maoist movements in Burma, Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, Angola, Rhodesia, and South-West Africa, among other places. A famous poster showed Mao surrounded by smiling revolutionaries of every race, from every continent, inscribed “We Have Friends All Over the World!”

Today, however, China accuses the United States and the European Union of contaminating their foreign policies with “ideology.” When revolutionaries in Nepal wanted to emulate Mao, they had to do so with-

out any help from Beijing, which continued to deal with the conservative monarchy in Kathmandu until the king was overthrown and the Maoists became part of the governing coalition, at which point Beijing was willing to deal with them.⁵ China views democracy promotion, human-rights diplomacy, humanitarian interventions, and the rise of international criminal law through the lens of strategic gain and loss—as efforts by Western powers to weaken rivals and expand their own influence. To blunt these efforts, Beijing advocates the principles of sovereignty, noninterference, cultural pluralism, and mutual respect. China denounces the idea of “universal values” as a form of Western subversion of states that try to protect their autonomy from Western influence. Speaking at UNESCO headquarters in Paris in March 2014, Xi Jinping declared, “All human civilizations are equal in terms of value.”⁶ In May 2014, China joined Russia in blocking a UN Security Council referral of the Syrian civil war to the International Criminal Court on the grounds that nations’ internal conflicts should be settled internally.

Today’s policy of neutrality toward other countries’ regime types is as much a product of China’s strategic interests as was yesterday’s policy of promoting Maoist revolution. If China’s strategic situation changes, its policy of regime-type neutrality may change as well. For now, at least, China displays no missionary impulse to promote authoritarianism. But this does not mean that its policies are inconsequential for the fate of democracy. Beijing’s pragmatic efforts to protect the regime from challenges at home and to pursue its economic and security interests abroad have a negative impact on the fate of democracy in six ways.

1) Encouraging authoritarian regimes by the power of its example.

The enterprise of democracy promotion has long benefited from the belief that democracy is the only form of regime compatible with modern society. By demonstrating that advanced modernization can be combined with authoritarian rule, the Chinese regime has given new hope to authoritarian rulers elsewhere in the world.

Some lessons of the Chinese model are as old as Machiavelli. The decisive use of force to suppress resistance intimidates most potential opponents. Repression should be paired with a show of pious fealty to traditional values in order to help citizens rationalize their faith in the benevolence of their leaders. But the post-Mao Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has updated the authoritarian model in several ways. Among other accomplishments, Beijing created a large middle class and then succeeded in coopting it politically; established a rule-of-law framework and then used those institutions to outlaw authentic civil society, political dissent, and independent religious activity; developed a diversified professional media and then maintained effective political censorship over it; and accepted aid from international foundations, governments, and civil society organizations while delegitimizing and making illegal

international support for domestic civil society actors and organizations that the regime regards as dangerous.

Many countries facing problems of ethnic diversity are closely observing Beijing's handling of its ethnic minorities. China's ethnic-minorities policies include a combination of economic modernization, linguistic assimilation, and demographic mixing. This approach has succeeded among populations like the ethnic Mongols and the Hui (a Muslim minority population that is interspersed with Han populations around the country). Although there is visible resistance in Tibet and Xinjiang, these policies may also be working there, as majorities of the indigenous populations adapt to urban life, learn the Chinese language, and find ways to make a living in the modern sectors of the economy.

For authoritarian regimes seeking to build modern infrastructures, Beijing's success in using technocrats and experts is encouraging. China has sent more than two-million students abroad to study science, engineering, economics, finance, public administration, and the like.⁷ It has created employment conditions sufficient to attract many of these students back home to work in universities, institutes, and government bureaus. It has given the experts enough freedom to work productively in their areas of specialization without allowing them to violate the ban on criticizing the regime. And perhaps most remarkably, the people with real power have learned to listen respectfully to the experts and to take their advice on technical subjects. This helps to create a strong incentive for technocrats to continue serving the regime.

Other authoritarian regimes have looked to China's management of the Internet as a model. Beijing so far has reaped the benefits of rapidly employing information technology without suffering the political consequences that many commentators predicted were inevitable. China has created a panoply of measures that work together to achieve Internet control, including the configuration of the Internet pathways (which allows the authorities to surveil traffic in real time and turn off and on access to specific websites), the legal regulations that require both Internet providers and customers to take responsibility for what is posted, and the deployment of vast numbers of Internet police who inspect what is posted and intervene directly to add and delete material. China has used this system to scrub the Chinese Web clean of references to sensitive topics such as June Fourth (the date of the 1989 Tiananmen Square crackdown), Falun Gong, and troubles in Tibet and Xinjiang. The Great Firewall prevents most Chinese citizens from accessing international news media and foreign websites that the government views as unfriendly or critical. The government has also extended this model of control to other social media like cellphone messaging and chat services.

China has pioneered flexible, tailored police practices for controlling political dissidents. While blunt force applied by the paramilitary People's Armed Police, the regular police, and hired thugs remains useful

for dealing with civil unrest and the unruliness of ordinary citizens, the Ministry of Public Security has also created a shadowy bureau referred to as the *guobao* (*Guonei anquan baoweiju* or “Bureau to Guard Domestic Security”) that specializes in dealing with high-value targets, such as intellectuals or journalists, whom the regime would like to dissuade or deter. The *guobao* form special work teams to spy on their targets, “invite” them “for tea” in order to interrogate and threaten them, “host” them away from Beijing during sensitive meetings or anniversaries, and sometimes detain them for indefinite periods of time in order to drive home the message that the dissident individual is helpless against the state.⁸

It would not be easy for other countries to emulate all of what China has done. The Chinese model requires large fiscal resources, technological sophistication, a well-trained and loyal security apparatus, and sufficient political discipline within the regime not to take power struggles public. Nonetheless, as the prestige of the Chinese model grows, even without Chinese efforts to propagate it, other authoritarian governments are encouraged by the idea that authoritarianism is compatible with modernization, and they try to adapt, to varying degrees, Chinese methods of control. As Azar Gat put it in 2007, “Authoritarian capitalist states, today exemplified by China and Russia, may represent a viable alternative path to modernity, which in turn suggests that there is nothing inevitable about liberal democracy’s ultimate victory—or future dominance.”⁹

2) Attempting to burnish its national prestige abroad, partly through international promotion of authoritarian values. In recent years China has mounted a large soft-power offensive around the world.¹⁰ This has included the global expansion of the official Xinhua News Agency, increased world broadcasts by China Central Television (CCTV), Xinhua TV, and China Radio International, and the establishment of nearly five-hundred Confucius Institutes in foreign universities and other institutions.¹¹ In regions such as Africa, where local media are underfinanced, free content supplied by Xinhua has become an important source of material. Much of this material is straight news, but with a good deal of pro-China content; none of it, of course, is anti-China. Where local media are better financed, organs like the *China Daily* are able to purchase multipage sections to tell China’s story. Beijing’s themes have also achieved dominance in Chinese-language media in diaspora communities around the world.¹²

The primary theme of Chinese international propaganda is not regime type but China’s benevolence—as a civilization, as a culture, and as an international partner. An important secondary theme running through such propaganda, however, is the upholding of the Chinese style of rule, via polemics touting the benefits of Chinese-style socialism, identifying

CCP rule with traditional Confucian values like social harmony, and explaining the suitability of China's political system to China's "national conditions" (*guoqing*). In addition, Chinese organs respond to Western attacks on Chinese human-rights violations by pointing out flaws in Western human-rights practices. For example, the Chinese government issues a report on human-rights problems in the United States in response to criticisms of China in the U.S. State Department's annual reports on human-rights practices around the world. Xinhua carries reports on events like the protests against police abuse in Ferguson, Missouri, in an attempt to show international audiences that U.S. human-rights diplomacy is hypocritical, and even to persuade U.S. audiences that the West should stop bashing China.

Chinese propaganda does not, however, cross the boundary of suggesting that democratic countries should adopt authoritarian institutions. That argument would contradict the themes of respect for sovereignty and cultural pluralism that dominate Chinese diplomacy. Indeed, Chinese propaganda does not explicitly characterize China's system as undemocratic, instead describing it as "socialist democracy," "Chinese-style democracy," and "people's democratic dictatorship," among other locutions. Nor is the idea of "Asian values," floated by officials in Singapore and Malaysia and endorsed by Chinese officials, meant to imply that there is any single political model suitable for all of Asia, but only that liberal democracy is not suited to all Asians. It is rare to find an argument, even by proregime independent intellectuals, that portrays the Chinese experience as a universal model that should be adopted everywhere. Yet despite these self-imposed limits, Beijing's polemics, transmitted over its growing international media network, contribute to the weakening of democracy's international prestige. And since everyone knows that the Chinese system is authoritarian (even if Chinese propaganda does not label it as such), the polemics enhance the prestige of nondemocratic rule.

China's soft-power efforts bleed over into what is in effect subversion of other countries' democratic institutions when China tries to censor the way that it is presented by journalists and academics abroad.¹³ Prominent examples include the denial of visas to journalists for Bloomberg and the *New York Times* who wrote reports that the regime did not like; denial of visas to academics who offended the Chinese government; pressure on the Frankfurt Book Fair, the Melbourne Film Festival, and other venues not to invite cultural figures disapproved of by the regime; and Confucius Institute efforts to veto programs on China held by other units at U.S. universities.¹⁴ Such measures have promoted self-censorship by media and academic figures abroad.¹⁵ Meanwhile, with its growing economic influence, China has been able to encourage the rise of influential lobbies in democratic countries that favor eliminating issues related to human rights and democracy from their countries'

diplomacy with China.¹⁶ Except for Google, foreign Internet providers working in China have been forced to varying degrees to cooperate with Chinese censorship practices in ways that are inconsistent with these companies' principles of operation elsewhere.¹⁷ In these diverse ways, Beijing's efforts to promote a favorable image abroad have, as collateral damage, undermined the vitality of free institutions in some democratic countries.

3) *Playing a key role in a circle of authoritarian states that pick up techniques of rule from one another.* Public information about these exchanges is thin. We know that China offers training in its schools of law, journalism, public administration, and police work to professionals and officials from other countries, especially from Africa. China also trains foreign students in a variety of academic disciplines. It conducts joint counterterrorism exercises with the militaries of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan—its fellow member-states of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). Little information is available about these programs and their effects. But it is reasonable to expect that students trained in Chinese professional schools learn techniques that China uses at home to manage its authoritarian system, and those learning science or liberal arts absorb some attitudes favorable to authoritarian institutions.

Other states have emulated the rhetorical strategy developed by China and some other authoritarian states of labeling their own regimes not as authoritarian but as a new type of democracy. For example, in July 2014 Hungarian prime minister Viktor Orbán expressed his support for “illiberal democracy” as a form of rule, explicitly modeled on that of China, as “a way of organizing communities, a state that is most capable of making a nation competitive.”¹⁸

Perhaps the most important technique that authoritarian states have learned from one another is how to use the forms of law to support repression. China's criminal-procedure code allows the police to detain people repeatedly for thirty-day investigation periods; its criminal code allows dissidents to be sentenced for “picking quarrels and provoking troubles”; its law on lawyers requires defense attorneys to demonstrate loyalty to the state rather than to the interests of the defendant; and its trial procedures do not require a presumption of innocence and can be legally conducted in a single day and without hearing from defense witnesses.

China has pioneered the imposition of regulations punishing those who use the Internet to criticize the regime, and these have been copied by authoritarian regimes elsewhere.¹⁹ China and its Eurasian partners in the SCO concluded secret treaties that allow for the *refoulement* (coerced return despite the well-founded fear of political persecution) from one SCO member-state to another of any of its own citizens whom

the receiving state designates as a terrorist.²⁰ Outside the SCO, China has gotten Cambodia, Malaysia, and Nepal, among others, to cooperate with this new norm, allowing Chinese citizens of Uyghur ethnicity to be returned to China on the grounds that China has designated these individuals as terrorists. China and Russia have spearheaded the use of registration laws and banking controls to prevent their civil society organizations from receiving financial support from overseas. These methods have also been emulated by authoritarian rulers elsewhere.

China also exports some of the hard technology of authoritarian rule. Rebecca MacKinnon writes, “Chinese networked authoritarianism serves as a model for other regimes—such as Iran—that seek to maintain power and legitimacy in the Internet age.”²¹ Although it is not easy to trace the exchanges of hard and soft technology among regimes seeking to control the Internet, China is reported to have supplied Internet-control technology to Iran and other countries. Amnesty International published a report in 2014 on “China’s Trade in Tools of Torture and Repression.”²² China is also a source of facial-recognition software. Of course, China is not the only or indeed the main country to export such technologies—that is probably the United States—but it is believed to be a leading low-cost supplier of technologies not produced in the domestic markets of most authoritarian countries, and it has no export controls on such sales.

4) Seeking to roll back existing democratic institutions or to stifle sprouts of democratic change in territories where it enjoys special influence. These are Hong Kong and Macau—two Special Administrative Regions that came under PRC control in 1997 and 1999, respectively, when they were returned to Chinese sovereignty by their former colonial rulers—and Taiwan, a territory over which China claims sovereignty and over which it has growing economic influence. In none of these places has China denounced democracy in principle, but in all three it has undermined it in practice.

Before China regained sovereignty over the British Crown Colony of Hong Kong in 1997, Chris Patten, the last British governor, had introduced new, more democratic procedures for the election of the colony’s Legislative Council (LegCo). Beijing viewed this as a poison pill designed to undermine its future control over the new Special Autonomous Region. It denounced the reforms as illegitimate, and after retrocession of the territory to Chinese rule, it dissolved the sitting LegCo and installed a new LegCo, elected under procedures even less democratic than those that had been in place before Patten’s reform.

At the same time, however, in handing back Hong Kong, Britain had acquired Beijing’s commitment that it would allow Hong Kong to retain its rule-of-law institutions and civil freedoms for fifty years, and that Hong Kong would be ruled by the people of Hong Kong. Accord-

ingly, the Basic Law that Beijing granted to Hong Kong provided that its “residents shall have freedom of speech, of the press and of publication; freedom of association, of assembly, of procession and of demonstration; and the right and freedom to form and join trade unions, and to strike.” Beijing also promised eventually to introduce “universal suffrage” in the elections of both the LegCo and the Special Autonomous Region’s chief executive. These commitments became inconvenient as sentiments critical of Beijing emerged in some sections of the Hong Kong electorate. Instead of launching a frontal attack on democracy as a principle, however, Beijing worked to frustrate democratic impulses in more indirect ways. It postponed its commitment to introduce democratic elections and, in 2014, proposed a nomination method for the 2017 chief-executive election that would have guaranteed Beijing’s control over the slate of candidates—a decision that led to a weeks-long series of massive demonstrations by citizens who wanted more far-reaching democratic reforms. In addition, observers believe that Beijing has acted through local businessmen, officials, and underworld figures to threaten, dismiss, and sometimes physically attack journalists and academics who are perceived as excessively liberal.

Beijing faces a less challenging situation in the former Portuguese colony of Macau. When Macau returned to Chinese sovereignty in 1999, Beijing provided a Basic Law guaranteeing individual rights similar to those in Hong Kong, but the Basic Law’s provisions for electing the Macau chief executive and Legislative Council were less democratic than those promised to Hong Kong. Macau elites have worked closely with Beijing, and Macau’s prodemocracy forces so far remain weak. In August 2014, Macau authorities arrested five prodemocracy activists who called for more democratic procedures.

In Taiwan, Beijing has expressed its distaste for democracy selectively, depending on the policies that democratic institutions produce. In 2000, when pro-Taiwanese independence politician Chen Shui-bian was running for president, Chinese premier Zhu Rongji went on television to threaten Taiwan voters with dire consequences if they elected Chen. He won the election anyway, and subsequently placed referenda before the voters on strengthening Taiwan’s self-defense capabilities and seeking to rejoin the UN. Beijing denounced these votes as illegitimate, claiming that Taiwan had no right to self-determination. The PRC has prevented Taiwan from gaining observer status in the UN and representation in other intergovernmental bodies because such representation would, Beijing believes, be a step toward independent statehood. The PRC has also sought to exert influence over Taiwanese media to get more favorable coverage of Chinese society and Beijing’s policies—the most prominent example being the 2008 purchase of the *China Times* media group by a pro-mainland Taiwanese businessman. By contrast, when Taiwanese voters in 2008 elected current president Ma Ying-jeou, someone whom

Beijing viewed as unlikely to pursue independence, Chinese authorities expressed no objection and rewarded Ma with a free-trade agreement and other policy benefits.

Beijing's opposition to democracy in these three territories aims to protect the regime from challenges that might embarrass it, inspire opponents on the mainland, or require suppression by force. Although the damage done to democratic institutions is incidental to Beijing's drive to exercise control over territories where it claims sovereignty, it is damage nonetheless.

5) *Helping to ensure the survival of authoritarian regimes that are key economic and strategic partners.* Beijing's engagements with nearby North Korea, Cambodia, Burma, the SCO states, Pakistan, and Nepal have sought to preserve buffer states; gain favorable economic access; obtain cooperation in extraditing Uyghurs, Tibetans, and democratic activists; and secure cooperation on its diplomatic priorities, such as isolating Taiwan. China has also cooperated with the governments of Russia, Iran, Venezuela, Sudan, and Zimbabwe in order to gain access to economic resources and diplomatic cooperation in checking the spread of Western influence. In cultivating such relationships, China supplies investments, markets, arms, diplomatic backing, and other benefits that help such regimes to survive.

China has not always approved of the authoritarian regimes with which it deals. For example, it has long been dissatisfied with North Korea's regime—not only because it does not defer to China's strategic priority of maintaining stability on the Korean peninsula, but because Chinese leaders believe that the Kim dynasty has missed opportunities to place itself on more stable ground by failing to carry out Chinese-style economic reforms. Similarly, Chinese leaders were disdainful of the crude, superstitious practices of the Burmese junta. For strategic reasons, however, China contributed to the survival of these and other authoritarian and semiauthoritarian regimes.

6) *Working to shape international institutions to make them "regime-type-neutral" instead of weighted in favor of democracy.* In the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC), for example, China has cooperated with like-minded states to promote the principle of "universality," which reduces the degree to which individual countries are singled out for attention. The UNHRC's process of Universal Periodic Review, which China helped to promote, subjects every state—the United States as much as China—to review by the Council, and does so in a way that allows the state under review and its sympathizers heavy influence in shaping the agenda of the review. Similarly, China was a supporter of a UNHRC initiative to have each state submit a Human Rights Action Plan, something China has done. Under this initiative, each state can put

forward its own view of how international human-rights norms should be interpreted for application in that country. China also has worked to restrict the role of NGOs in the Council and in the human-rights treaty bodies (expert committees that oversee the implementation of the ten main human-rights treaties), and to restrict the length and content of mandates given by the Council to the so-called Special Procedures (independent experts who, according to the Council's website, report and advise on human rights). The net effect of these efforts has been to position China in compliance with self-set priorities and to insulate it from serious censure in the UNHRC, thereby reducing the pressure that China had felt from the Council's predecessor, the Human Rights Commission, in the early 1990s.²³

China has sought to establish as a norm that government-to-government complaints about human-rights issues should be delivered in private, and that public airing of such interventions is disruptive of diplomatic courtesy. With respect to state-to-state human-rights dialogues, China has promoted the norms that they should be secret, that they should be bilateral rather than multilateral, that foreign dialogue partners should not coordinate with one another, and that invitees to the nongovernmental-specialist components of these dialogues need to be vetted by both sides (that is, China can veto participants proposed by the other side).²⁴

China is one of the many states that have gone along only partially with the normative shift in favor of humanitarian intervention while emphasizing the need for continued respect for the previously dominant norm of nonintervention. Beijing participated in the negotiations over the emergent norm of "Responsibility to Protect" (R2P), but it placed emphasis on the first pillar (of three), which describes the international community's responsibility to help sovereign states to develop their own capacity to protect their people, rather than the third pillar, which addresses the responsibility of the international community to intervene when a sovereign government has failed in its duty.²⁵

In the UN Security Council, China has sometimes allowed interventionist resolutions to be adopted (either by abstaining or by voting in favor of them), but it has often delayed, modified, or blocked such resolutions on the grounds that states should settle their internal problems by themselves. When China has allowed such resolutions to go forward, it has usually done so in order to maintain solidarity with Russia and with states in the affected region (for example, the African Union on Sudan, and the Arab League on Libya), to protect Chinese economic interests (for example, Sudan and Libya), and with the proviso that the intervention should not be used to overthrow a regime.²⁶

On UN peacekeeping, China has moved from opposing such operations to active support and participation. But it emphasizes the principle of host-state consent and the use of development projects as part of the

peacekeeping process. These positions are consistent with China's interest in slowing the erosion of state sovereignty and in positioning itself as a peacefully rising developing country rather than as an assertive great power.²⁷

The U.S. State Department under Hillary Clinton pursued an initiative to codify a broad concept of information freedom in several international venues. China (and other like-minded states) pushed back. In the SCO, China supported Russian efforts to define a concept called information warfare and to call for a norm of cyberdisarmament. In 2011, China, Russia, and other states submitted to the UN General Assembly a proposal for a "Code of Conduct for Information Security" that called for greater state-based regulation of the Internet.

China has not joined and does not cooperate with the International Criminal Court. (The United States also has not joined, although it has sometimes cooperated with the Court.) Beneficiaries of China's stance have included the rulers of Sudan, Syria, North Korea, and Sri Lanka.

China rejects the principle of conditionality in the granting of foreign aid and foreign investment.²⁸ This stance allows authoritarian regimes to shirk pressure on them from the World Bank and Western governments to make human-rights improvements in return for aid. The BRICS bank and proposed new Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank are likely to adopt the same policy.

What of the Future?

If and when China's economy grows to two or three times the size of the U.S. economy, its influence in the world will naturally increase. Yet this does not necessarily mean that China will shift to a proactive, Mao-style effort to promote transitions from democracy to authoritarianism. First, it is not easy to undermine consolidated democracies (to be sure, struggling democracies are another matter). Second, although authoritarian regimes may be easier to do business with, there is no theory of the "authoritarian peace" that says that China would be more secure if more of its neighbors were authoritarian states: Indeed, some of the greatest threats to Chinese security have come from fellow authoritarian regimes, like those of the Soviet Union, North Korea, and Vietnam. Third, China's internal divisions and its geopolitical situation in the middle of Asia are, for the foreseeable future, likely to prevent it from establishing hegemony in its own region, which would be a necessary precondition for it to try to impose on the rest of the world an alternative vision of world order.

But a wealthier China will surely have greater motives and greater capacity to exercise international influence in the six ways analyzed here. Beijing will have greater interests to protect overseas—investments, energy and commodity supplies, citizens, and government per-

sonnel. It is likely to view authoritarian regimes as more responsive to its interests, and as more supportive than democratic regimes of the kinds of international norms and institutions that it wants to promote. China's example, its international propaganda, and its technical, financial, and diplomatic assistance will do even more to help authoritarian regimes to survive; its influence in international institutions will be more effective in slowing or even reversing the momentum of the last forty years toward more democracy-friendly and rights-friendly international norms.

But China's influence on the fate of democracy in the world, and its ability—if it wants to—to promote authoritarian transitions beyond its borders will depend on how the democracies perform. Because China's own trajectory is not fixed, it is of course important for the democracies to continue to support Chinese civil society, human-rights activists, and liberal intellectuals. Yet the key to the global fate of democracy lies chiefly within the democracies themselves. Except for its indirect influence on freedoms of speech and the press, Beijing has done little to undermine the performance of democratic systems. Their problems are self-generated. Because the appeal of authoritarianism grows when the prestige of democracy declines, the most important answer to China's challenge is for the democracies to do a better job of managing themselves than they are doing today.

NOTES

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