

The Democratisation of China

Baogang He



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‘...this book may well stand out as one of very few works on modern China which actually contributed to the history of the country.’

John Fitzgerald—La Trobe University, Australia

The events of 1989, culminating in the massacre in Beijing, highlight the extent to which democratic ideals have taken root in China. The future of democracy in a country undergoing great economic and social change is unclear and many argue that established Western democratic systems will simply bring about instability in China.

In *The Democratization of China*, Baogang He traces and evaluates the political discourse of democracy in contemporary China, identifying the three main competing models of democratization that dominate current Chinese intellectual trends: populist, paternalistic and liberal. Analysing the political implications of these models, the author considers how the theories may be put into practice in order to develop an appropriately Chinese, liberal conception of democracy.

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Preface

In the late 1970s, as China's reform era opened, the Communist Party of China committed itself to first doubling and then redoubling the aggregate size of the economy of the People's Republic of China by the end of the millennium. At the time and into the early and mid-1980s, it was a prospect greeted as a desirable aspiration by most academic observers of China, but as little more. Many economists in particular pointed out the difficulties in the project and the near impossibility of its achievements. In the event, the target was attained with almost five years to spare, some time in 1995.

The rapid growth of China's economy is a useful starting-point for this series, *China in Transition*, intellectually as well as chronologically. It is not only that China has developed so spectacularly so quickly, nor that in the process its experience has proved some economists to be too cautious. Rather, its importance is to demonstrate the need for explanatory theories of social and economic change to themselves adapt and change as they encompass the processes underway in China. There is some possibility that the reform era in China will significantly alter the boundaries of the rest of the world's understanding not only of change in China, but also of the processes of modernization more generally.

China in Transition aims to participate in these intellectual developments through its focus on social, political, economic and cultural change in the China of the 1990s and beyond. Its aim is to draw on new, often cross disciplinary research from scholars in East Asia, Australasia, North America and Europe, as well as that based in the more traditional disciplines. In the process the series will not only interpret the consequences of reform in China, but also monitor and reflect the changes of the future.

Baogang He's study of democratic ideas and intellectual trends in contemporary China—*The Democratization of China*—is the first volume to appear in the series. Unlike many commentators on contemporary China, Baogang He takes the democratic project seriously, and in the process makes a case for the relevance of liberal-democratic ideas and values. He examines recent mainstream conceptualizations of democracy in China in order to develop an appropriate, and appropriately Chinese, liberal conception of democracy.

Where other accounts of China's politicians and democratic activists have tended to take their intellectual credentials and political ideas as read, Baogang He critically examines their views. In the process he not only provides a sophisticated analysis of and considerable information about the political discourse on democracy in China but also reveals an interesting relationship between universal values and Chinese practice, which is itself completely in keeping with the aims of this series. Baogang He's analysis of democratic thought in its current Chinese context leads easily to two conclusions. One is that it is its own recent experiences rather than Western influence that have made the struggle for democracy a political issue in contemporary China. The second is that, as Chinese intellectuals approach the debate on the application of democratic theories in China, they will create new syntheses that will contribute to the wider discourse of liberal democracy.

David S.G. Goodman
Institute for International Studies, UTS
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I am also greatly indebted to Hu Ping, Yan Jiaqi, Yang Xiaokai and Li Zhengtian, whom I interviewed in New York on 13 October 1992 and 10 January 1993; in Paris on 18 December 1992; in Canberra on 15 June 1991 and Guangzhou on 24 April 1991 respectively; in particular to Hu Ping and Yang Xiaokai for their comments on my work. I am grateful to C.Treadwell and L.Sims for their formatting of the book, to J.Fox for her careful proof-reading of the early version of the book, to Robert White for his occasional assistance, to the anonymous reviewer at Routledge for his encouraging and useful comments on my manuscript, to the Department of Political Science at the Australian National University where I finished my Ph.D. thesis, to the Department of Political Science at the University of Tasmania where I have been supported by the Head, Professor James Cotton and other colleagues in my research work, and to the Australian Research Council for the grants both large and small which enable me to gain new information on current developments in China. Finally, I would like to thank my wife, Suxing, and my daughter, Mao Mao, for their daily support.

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Chapter 1 was given at the conference on the Cultural Revolution in Retrospect: 25 Years On, 16–17 May, 1991, Australian National University.

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Chapter 3 was given at the Australian Political Studies Association Conference, 23–26 September 1990, the University of Tasmania, Hobart and published in *China Information*, Vol. 6, No. 2, 1991, 24–43, Leiden.

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Chapter 8 was published in *Australian Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 27, March, 1992, 120–36.

Chapter 9 was given as a guest lecture at the Institute of Sinology, the University of Leiden, the Netherlands, 11 December 1992 and was published in the *Australian Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 29, No. 1, 154–71, March 1994 which was awarded the Mayer prize by APSA, in honour of the late Henry Mayer (founding editor), for the best article published in the *Australian Journal of Political Science*. A different version of Chapter 9 was published as a Discussion Paper by the Institute of Development Studies, the University of Sussex, Brighton, 1993, 1–27.

Chapter 10 was given as a conference paper at the China: 40 Years after the Revolution Conference, Sydney University, Australia, 27–8 September 1989. Part of Chapter 10 was also given as a June 4th Memorial Seminar, the Australian National University, 2 June 1992.

Introduction

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY¹

Various Western democratic seeds have been ‘planted’ in modern Chinese political institutions and culture. At the beginning of this century, China adopted Western democratic institutions such as the first formally democratic institution of the gentry—the city council (1905–14)—and representative institutions (1909–13) at local and national levels. However, these institutions failed in the end. After that, both the Nationalist Party in the 1930s and 1940s and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) after 1949 established autocratic or totalitarian systems in the name of either Sun Yat-sen’s idea of democracy or of the Chinese Marxist view of democracy. Since the 1970s, a demand for true democracy has been a major theme in Chinese communities: two major democratic movements (1978–89) have emerged in mainland China; there was a democratic breakthrough in Taiwan in the late 1980s; and the success of a democratic party in the 1991 election in Hong Kong.

In particular, the tragedy of the Cultural Revolution (1966–76) resulted in, or more precisely was a prelude to, the democratic movements in contemporary China. Just as the religious wars of Europe helped give birth to toleration, the bloody vigilante violence of Mao’s Cultural Revolution did encourage the development of a tolerant culture (Chapter 8) and may have given birth to new and creative democratization.

The Cultural Revolution revealed the weaknesses and shortcomings of the Chinese Communist system, and discredited Mao Zedong’s ideal of ‘proletarian democracy’. In direct reaction to it, populist, paternalistic and liberal ideas of democracy have been proposed; these are the three contestants in Chinese ideological in-fighting today, and are likely to remain so.

First there emerged the populist model of democracy of Yang Xiguang (*Whither China?* in 1968), Li Yizhe’s group (*On Socialist Democracy and the Chinese Legal System* in 1974) and Chen Erjin (1984) (*On Proletarian-Democratic Revolution* in 1976), which inspired the young generation of that time, and influenced China’s Democracy Movement in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Writers in this model advocated a direct

mass democracy which is the antithesis of a bureaucratic apparatus, and in which the working class or proletarian class has final control over state affairs.

Second, since the end of the Cultural Revolution, Deng Xiaoping has developed a paternalistic model of 'people's democracy' characterized by collectivism, limitations on political freedom and a mixture of formalistic democracy and paternalistic authority. This model of democracy also used the state-civil society schema as a new method of ruling, albeit one limited in the economic area. It was designed by Deng to give a measure of legitimacy to the Chinese Communist regime whilst leaving the realities of party rule and power untouched by popular intrusion. As well as legitimizing the established set-up, the model also modified elements of Mao Zedong's perspective on politics and popular participation, criticized radical populist and liberal models of democracy, and even posed a challenge to Western 'bourgeois' democratic theory.

Third, since the end of the Cultural Revolution, Chinese liberals such as Wei Jingsheng, Hu Ping and Yan Jiaqi have established a liberal model of democracy which advocates human rights to fight tyranny, upholds moral scepticism to undermine official dogma and to check hierarchies of status, and believes in political competition to disrupt monopolies of political power. The rise of liberal ideas of democracy was the major intellectual challenge to paternalistic democracy and was the response to the Chinese totalitarian system. Liberalism is attractive to some Chinese intellectuals not because it is being forced on them by an aggressive and hostile world but because it appears to offer potential solutions to pressing problems.²

I have been greatly influenced by both populist and liberal ideas of democracy. As a high school student in 1974, I was excited to read a handwritten copy of the writings of Li Yizhe's group. Chen Erjin's radically populist idea of democracy impressed me deeply when I was an undergraduate in the University of Hangzhou in 1979. There, as well as later in the People's University of China, I was exposed to various Western liberal theories of democracy and Chinese liberal writings; for example, to John Rawls' *A Theory of Justice* which I and two colleagues translated into Chinese in 1988. I have oscillated between the liberal and populist ideas of democracy as a personal belief. This book has been in part a self-criticism over the legacy of the populist idea of democracy; in other words, the book is an attempt to work out what are the positive and negative elements of the populist and liberal ideas of democracy in a Chinese context.

An early version of this book, my Ph.D. thesis, was written whilst suffering from psychological strain and feelings of guilt as I should have returned to China in the middle of 1989 when I had finished a term as a visiting scholar at the Department of Sociology in the Australian National University. However, the events of 4 June 1989 led to an extension of my stay in Australia and to a decision to take a Ph.D. degree in the Australian

National University. The thesis has now been substantially revised into the current version of this book.

GENERAL AIMS AND FOCUS OF THE BOOK

A growing body of literature is focusing on Chinese democratic ideas and practices in the historical, political and intellectual contexts.³ These studies have made a great contribution to the understanding of Chinese democratic ideas and democratization. In particular, the detailed studies of the historical, political and cultural backgrounds of Chinese ideas of democracy have enriched our sociological knowledge of Chinese democracy; for example, Barrett McCormick's (1993) study of the people's congress system in China. These studies have also examined strategies of Chinese writings such as their use of the words of Mao and of others, the political atmosphere where a certain degree of freedom was allowed, access to alternative ideas, and finally survival considerations, which are very important in understanding Chinese democratic ideas.⁴ However, little has been said about different conceptions of democracy, and, in particular, about their implications for different types of political developments. This book attempts to overcome some of these problems.

To understand Chinese democratization more fully, we need a better grasp of the competing models of democracy, their political implications, and their different democratization programmes. The sophisticated Chinese liberal theory of democracy especially requires attention. This book is intended as both a map of the main democratic ideas and arguments and as a series of critical reflections upon them. There are three overriding objectives. The first is to provide an introduction to, and discussion of, three competing models of democracy, namely, populist, official and liberal, in contemporary China. Second, the book offers a critical review of liberal ideas of human rights, evil and proceduralism, and provides a liberal constructive critique of the intellectual foundation of the Chinese liberal theory of democracy. The third objective is to analyse carefully the issue of the practical feasibility of liberal democracy, as well as basic problems associated with Chinese demoralization, from the viewpoints of political culture, civil society and legitimacy.

Of the three models of democracy, the liberal one is a central focus of my book. This is because it is the strongest in China and, according to most estimates, has gained in strength throughout the 1980s and 1990s. Political liberalism, which is an echo of the Chinese liberalism of the period between the 1890s and the 1940s, is undoubtedly the dominant current of thought in China.⁵ It will have an important role in defining the future of China.

I attempt to undertake a reconstruction, criticism and tentative extension of some particular theoretical positions that need to be developed by more stringent theoretical investigation into Chinese liberal theory of democracy. My overriding aim has been to examine some theories of democracy both in

the West and in China, and to develop them into a conception of liberal democracy appropriate to the contemporary Chinese enterprise of democratization. In particular, I attempt to develop the work of Wei Jingsheng, Hu Ping and Yan Jiaqi by providing a more coherent theoretical foundation for Chinese liberal theory of democracy.

I should say immediately that by use of the term ‘foundation’, I do not mean to take up a position here in methodological and foundationalist debates. Rather, I believe that it is possible to develop a practical social dimension of political philosophy independent of certain controversial philosophical questions; that is, I present a set of practical arguments for choosing political principles which are upheld on a rational basis by liberal-minded Chinese. An intellectual foundation, in my opinion, has the following three features.

- 1 Priority: when there are conflicts between values, certain basic values have priority over other values.
- 2 Reductionism: Chinese liberal theory of democracy and of institutional design is reducible to certain starting-points. In other words, we can derive the plan of political institutional design from certain starting-points and premises.
- 3 Coherence: there must be consistency among certain values and startingpoints, as well as between premises and arguments based on those premises.

Thus, the book will undertake a constructive critique of three basic concepts—human rights, evil and proceduralism—which serve as the intellectual foundation of a liberal theory of democracy in contemporary China. I will identify possible or existing tensions and inconsistencies associated with these three concepts in Chinese liberal thinking of democracy, and suggest ways of dissolving or resolving these tensions.

While I am in sympathy with the fundamental tenets of Chinese liberal views of democracy, I have certain misgivings about some theoretical problems and the neglect of certain elementary tensions in them. My critique of the internal limits and the problems of Chinese liberal theory of democracy is also undertaken for the sake of actually realizing political liberalism in China.

In exploring democratic ideas, we cannot move too far from the aspect of preconditions for, and their restrictions on, liberal democracy at a practical level. Thus, the book will also focus on the issue of the feasibility of liberal democracy. It will examine the preconditions of political culture, social structure and leadership, on the one hand, and investigate the problems associated with Chinese democratization on the other hand. Here the book has three tasks. The first is to examine anti-democratic arguments concerning the current cultural, political, social and demographic conditions in China. The second task is to demonstrate the existing

practical bases of these for Chinese democracy. The third task is to examine a set of serious problems for Chinese democracy associated with the existing cultural, political, demographic and social conditions, and to analyse critically the solutions adopted by Chinese liberals to resolve these problems. The Conclusion will provide more detailed reflections on Chinese democratization.

FILLING THE GAP

There has been a gap between Western normative theories of democracy and empirical studies of China's political developments and democratization. Consider Rawls' political liberalism. Rawls provides us with sophisticated philosophical justifications of the priority of basic equal liberties, but his theory says little about how the priority of freedom can be established, and how the priority of freedom can be justified in another political community such as China. On the other hand, most works on Chinese politics adopt an empiricist, scientific, objective position, or what I might call an outside observing perspective. For example, some works (see Burns, 1988; Saich, 1989; Unger, 1991a) are not interested in, even to the extent of overlooking, significant theoretical issues of Chinese democratic ideas. Some (see Jenner, 1992) deny the relevance of the normative approach in examining democratic ideas in China; one reason being that Chinese culture teaches us that no natural rights exist. Further, although Pye's studies of the problems in the process of Chinese political development have made a great contribution, he never justifies the basic value of liberty and its role in political development, and seldom analyses the process of realizing the ideal of democracy. As a result, these scholars tend to make no value judgements, so that the basic value of equal liberty is ignored in the context of Chinese political studies. This is the major gap between Rawlsian political philosophy and Pyesian theory of political development. Of course, for both Rawls and Pye there is no need to raise the question of the gap. It is only for this author who has received an education in both the West and in China, who has studied both Western normative theories of democracy and sinologists' work, and who seriously desires democracy in China, that the issue of the gap becomes extremely important.

Why is this so? Three reasons may be put forward. First, normative theories of democracy can help us to establish a relatively autonomous ideal world, where people can protect themselves against tyranny. These theories also provide clear analytical tools. Thus the works of Western normative theorists of democracy such as Locke, Hume, Rawls, Dahl, Sartori and Held are potentially relevant to the enterprise of Chinese democratization. But their relevance would not be brought out if we did not employ them in analysing the problems of Chinese democratization, or link them creatively to sinologists' studies of democratization and democratic ideas.

Second, Western theories of democracy have to be linked to the empirical studies of Chinese democratization, for normative thinking risks falling apart if it ignores practical problems. Further, if a normative theory of democracy does not incorporate the empirical approach, it will be solely concerned with what is desirable; this way of thinking will lead to little more than Utopian solutions to existing problems. The actual meaning of normative thinking must be fully understood only in the context of an analysis of the crucial problems pertaining to the process of realizing a normative ideal such as political liberalism in the transitional period. Thus a combination of the normative and empirical approaches is needed, and we need to become realistic idealists, or idealistic realists. In short, practical considerations should be incorporated as an explicit element of normative political theory.

Third, the study of China cannot be treated as detached from the great issues. There is a need to incorporate value issues in Chinese studies (Nathan, 1990b, 314). A study of Chinese ideas of democracy has to take account of the normative dimension, to deal with the fundamental issues of politics, and to focus on the development of a democratic political culture. This is because a new democratic political culture has the task of breaking the Communist political cultural value system in the transitional period. It also must make justice, rather than power, the primary virtue of social institutions (Apter, 1987, 3). The traditional and Communist political cultures must be evaluated according to democratic values, and be reconstructed and adapted to meet the needs of democratic institutions.⁶

My work has attempted to fill the above gap in the way that it has applied Rawls' theory in a constructive critique of Chinese liberal ideas of democracy and in the way it has applied the theories of sinologists such as Pye to a deeper understanding of the difficulties associated with Chinese democratization. Not only as an outside observer, but as an inside participant as well, I have joined in debates on different theoretical issues, brought some theoretical concepts in the West to life, and made them relevant to Chinese political development. I have attempted throughout the whole book to bridge the gap, or reduce the tension, between the desirable and the feasible by seeking a combination of the normative and empirical approaches.

In some 30 per cent of the book I have engaged in normative thinking. Encouraged by the works of Nathan and Apter,⁷ I defend the importance of the intellectual constructs of natural rights, evil and proceduralism. The other 70 per cent of the book is devoted to empirical study of the intellectual development of the ideas of democracy in China and of preconditions for liberal democracy. Thus I have empirically studied what, how and why certain intellectual inventions are rejected and defended. Chapters 1, 2 and 3 of the book will show the decline of the official idea of Communist society and of the radical idea of populist democracy, and the rise of the liberal intellectual invention of the ideas of natural rights, evil and proceduralism.

Chapters 4, 5 and 6 will explain why Chinese liberals choose the notions of natural rights, evil and proceduralism as normative premises for democratic institutional design and how these intellectual conceptions serve as a normative basis for democratic institutional design.

The above methodological principle has guided my writing. I have been deeply concerned about the prospects for democracy in China. Much of my reading has been directed towards looking for ideas, clues, and theories that would help predict probable developments and would give hope to those who seriously desire democracy in China. At the same time, as a scholar I have sought to be as disciplined in my analyses as I can be, and not to slip into the practice of praising what pleases my hopes and condemning what dampens my hopes. Thus I have tried to evaluate the relative strengths of conflicting tendencies and to judge which are likely to be the strongest and decide what can be done to strengthen some and impede the others (Chapters 7, 8 and 9). I have done my best to constrain or give up my wishful thinking about how things might be changed in China, and to develop instead a 'thoughtful wishing'.

KEY CONCEPTS DEFINED

Models of democracy

Democracy refers to a form of government in which, in contrast to monarchies and aristocracies, the people rule. Here we have problems of different understandings and interpretations of the notion of 'people' and 'people's rule'. These different understandings give rise to various forms, or models, of democracy.

The idea of a model of democracy, borrowed from David Held (1987), refers to a theoretical construction designed to reveal and explain the chief elements of a democratic form and its underlying structure or relations. Models of democracy also necessarily involve shifting balances between descriptive, explanatory and normative statements.

Held has identified three basic variants or models of democracy in the West. First, Greek democracy exemplifies direct or participatory democracy, a system of decision-making about public affairs in which citizens are directly involved. Second, liberal democracy is a form of representative democracy which means that decisions affecting a community are not taken by its members as a whole but by a group of people whom 'the people' have elected for this purpose. Third, there is a variant of democracy based on the Marxist one-party model, a form of democracy without liberalism, and in particular without a capitalist economy (Held, 1993, 15–22).

In contemporary China there have been three competing models of democracy which correspond to the three models discussed by Held. Chinese 'populist democracy' is similar to direct and participatory democracy in the West even if, drawing on the democratic element of Marxism, its theoretical

sources are rather different. The Chinese terms, *dazhong minzhu*, *pingminminzhu*, or *daminzhu*, mean direct mass democracy with direct elections following the model of the Paris Commune. Chinese populist democracy is the antithesis of the bureaucratic apparatus and allows the working class or proletariat to have the power of final control of state affairs. This populist model of democracy has three distinctive features: first, the 'new class' poses a serious problem with which it needs to deal; second, direct control of state affairs by the working class is an ideal objective of that model of democracy; and finally, a radical strategy of a new revolution, political violence, and mass movements is the only way to achieve such democracy.⁸

Deng Xiaoping's official paternalistic model of democracy, a combination of democracy without liberalism with Chinese traditional paternalism, is a variant of the one-party state democracy discussed by Held. It is characterized by collectivism, limitations on political freedom and a mixture of formalistic democracy and paternalistic authority.

Chinese liberal ideas of democracy follow and borrow from the Western liberal model. The Chinese liberal model of democracy is characterized by: elected government; free and fair elections; universal suffrage; freedom of conscience, information and expression on all public matters; the right of all adults to oppose their government and stand for office; and the right to form independent associations, including social movements, interest groups and political parties. Chinese liberal democracy is elitist rather than participatory and is hostile to the model of the Paris Commune.

I should acknowledge at the beginning that the Chinese liberal model of democracy will be discussed at the abstract level with a focus on the principles of preventing evil, of human rights, and of proceduralism. As far as the particular form of the Chinese liberal democracy is concerned, Chinese democratization will involve a Chinese revised version of liberal democracy with its characteristics. I also acknowledge that liberal democracies take a wide variety of institutional and substantive forms in the West. The 'liberal' component of liberal democracy cannot be treated simply as a unity; it is different in the United States, Britain, France and Japan. There are also tensions, or even perhaps contradictions, between the 'liberal' and 'democratic' components of liberal democracy in the West. So are the Chinese liberal ideas of democracy which the book will examine.

Populist democracy is analytically different from liberal democracy. First, the three assumptions and features of populist democracy—the 'new class' issue, direct control of state affairs and a radical strategy mentioned above—are special properties of populist democracy; while Chinese liberal ideas of democracy share none of them. Chinese liberal ideas of democracy are also silent on the issues of the 'new class' and of the rights of workers and peasants in participating in a democratic polity, and are hostile to the violent strategy of populist democracy. Second, the concept of human rights is not central to the populist thinking on democracy; while human

rights play a key role in Chinese liberal ideas. Third, the populist theoretical framework belongs to the Marxist and Maoist traditions; while Chinese liberals draw on the traditions of John Locke and J.S.Mill in their political thinking. Fourth, Chinese populists appeal to a mass audience and urge direct democracy. This contrasts with Chinese liberals such as today's Yang Xiaokai and Yan Jiaqi who appeal to elitist rather than participatory democracy and have no interest in the model of the Paris Commune. Thus, populist democracy is opposed to elitist democracy while liberal democracy involves elitist elements. Fifth, populists represent a politically romantic position in the sense that they have idealized politics both as an object of perfection to be attained, and as the revolutionary means whereby democracy can be reached. This contrasts with the ideas of Chinese liberals, who take a pessimistic view of human nature, regarding democratic institutions as necessary but incomplete and limited, and adopt a moderate non-violent strategy for democracy.

I should say that, clearly the above Chinese models of democracy are ideal types and distinguished as independent solely for analytical purpose. In the complex real life of political activities, these ideas are so overlapping that they are not clear-cut as the book suggests. However, these models are useful for understanding the distinctive features and the developments of democratic ideas, and for analysing their political implications in contemporary China.

I should perhaps emphasize that I have selected only these three models of democracy, which I consider to be of central importance to political development in China. As David Held (1987) does, I take the view that an extensive, in-depth coverage of a number of the most central ideas and themes is preferable to a superficial review of all. Thus, the book does not include an introduction and analysis of, for example, Chinese Marxist humanists' ideas of democracy,⁹ because humanists' ideas of democracy neither provide a distinctive model of democracy at a theoretical level, nor have great importance to future political development in China (for discussion see Chapters 5 and 10) and, finally, Brugger and Kelly (1990) have already studied them in detail.

Liberalism and its key issues

Although it is difficult to give a simple definition to cover the variations and richness of liberalism in the West, the essential elements of liberalism could be identified as follows. Liberalism first of all insists that the well-being of the individual must be a central criterion in evaluating social arrangements. Liberalism is centrally concerned with defining and delimiting the legitimate scope of governmental authority. According to different versions, the state should not interfere in the 'private sphere' of religion or economic activity, the 'self-regulating' actions of individuals (J.S.Mill), the sphere defined by 'natural rights' (John Locke and Robert Nozick) or otherwise entrenched

constitutional rights (John Rawls). Liberalism is also concerned with the form of the state, the method of creating the social order. Liberalism looks to keep diversity, conflicts, and competition within society in check by a stable system of law. Liberalism respects ‘procedures’ of democracy (Kukathas 1989; Sartori 1987, 384).

Western political liberalism has influenced Chinese liberals and Chinese liberals have modified the ideas of Western liberalism in the context of China. Chinese liberalism has developed its ideas in a Chinese context with a concern with Chinese democratization. The influence of Western liberalism in China is not simply a case of ‘importation’ or ‘imitation’ or ‘subversion’ but a case in which the tragedies of China’s history of Communist experiments and the real lives of Chinese people have generated problems and issues which have forced Chinese liberals to rediscover, rework, rethink, and reconstruct the following four key issues familiar to Western liberalism

First, Western liberalism is concerned with individual rights—how the state protects individual rights. This discourse of individual rights has been rediscovered in China from the experiences of the Cultural Revolution (Chapter 1). In line with Western liberalism, Chinese liberals defend the idea of human rights; more precisely, the idea of natural rights provides a basis for Chinese liberals to think about re-designing political institutions. However, when Chinese liberals attempt to link rights to law, the very concept of law becomes problematic (Chapter 4 and the Conclusion). Further, Chinese liberals face the boundary problem, the problem of breaking up if China takes a big step towards democratization. Thus, Chinese liberals have to outline a liberal, as opposed to an official, notion of the limits on rights, and have to apply this liberal view in arguing for temporary limits on the right to secede in the process of Chinese democratization (Chapter 4). Here Chinese liberals face the problem of whether various aspects of a liberal philosophy can be applied during the transition period or whether they must be ignored temporarily in order to establish them (Chapters 4 and 6).

Second, liberalism is above all the technique of limiting the state’s power. Here, Chinese liberals developed the assumption that human beings are potentially evil as a starting-point for the rule of the law and procedural systems. Based on the assumption of evil, Chinese liberals argue for democratic institutional design. Interestingly, the concept of evil in human nature has entered Chinese intellectual history because of the Cultural Revolution, while in Western history, this concept developed much earlier, perhaps most influentially with St Augustine. Also, Chinese liberals have argued that an assumption of evil in human nature has to be combined with an assumption of good in human nature if institutions to control evil are to be built (Chapter 5).

Third, liberalism respects procedures and rules in facing the conflicts of rights and interests. However, Chinese liberals face the serious problem of

exceptions in a transition towards democracy, which challenges the coherence of procedural democracy. Thus they have to outline a liberal understanding of exceptions and defend the idea of procedural democracy in the light of them (Chapter 6).

Fourth, the extent to which liberalism is morally unambitious and lacks positive moral guidance in institutional design is contested among Western political theorists (John Zvesper in David Miller, 1987, 288–9). Chinese liberals take this debate in a Chinese context. They have argued that Chinese Marxist, goal-based morality and the traditional sage's conception of morality should be taken out of Chinese politics, while rights-based morality should be infused into it. Unlike some Western writers, Chinese liberals are not concerned with the moralization of individuals, but rather with the question of seeking moral principles that are to guide institutional design for a democratic form of government.

In short, Chinese liberalism shares the main foundations of Western liberalism (John Zvesper in *ibid.*, 286): the priority of liberty over authority (Chapter 4 on natural rights); the promotion of constitutions of government and principles of law that establish the limits of government and the rights of citizens against tyrannical government (Chapter 5 on the problem of evil and Chapter 6 on procedure); the secularization of politics (Chapter 8 on the separation of official ideology from politics); and the absence of positive moral guidance in nature (Chapter 7 on rights-based morality).

Chinese liberals have contributed to the universal liberal discourse on democracy. Chinese liberalism proves that universal discourse is a fact, not a theoretical possibility. Through praxis, it disabuses the notion that universalism means the absolute identity of ideas across contexts. My work demonstrates precisely the opposite. Certain problems discussed by Machiavelli, Hume, the Federalist papers and Rawls, and so forth, have come to be relevant to Chinese thinkers. When viewed in a Chinese context these ideas and problems have some interesting new dimensions (Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7).

ARRANGEMENT OF THE BOOK

The whole book is organized around the idea that the process of democratization in China can be seen in terms of both intellectual and practical activities of planting the democratic 'seed' in Chinese 'soil'. According to this metaphor, the book is divided into three parts to deal with 'seed selection', 'raising seedling' and 'soil amelioration' respectively.

Part One deals with 'seed selection', that is, it will provide political, philosophical and practical justifications for Chinese liberal rejection of both the radical and Chinese official paternalistic models of democracy, and of Chinese liberal selection of the liberal 'seed' democracy in contemporary China. Thus, Part One analyses the variants of democracy and explains why liberal democracy is more attractive than the other models. This is partly a

chronological review of democratic ideas and partly a critical and comparative analysis of them. It provides a very brief historical background of, and a detailed theoretical introduction to, each model of democracy.

Part One consists of three chapters. Chapter 1 examines the radical ideas of populist democracy viewed by Yang Xiguang (1968), Li Yizhe's group (1974) and Chen Erjin (1976), and shows a shift from the radical to the liberal model of democracy in the 1980s. Chapter 2 examines Deng Xiaoping's official paternalistic model of democracy and the liberal critique of that model. It shows the major ideological struggle between the official and liberal ideas of democracy. Chapter 3 undertakes a full-scale review of how three contemporary Chinese liberal thinkers, Wei Jingsheng, Hu Ping, and Yan Jiaqi, view democracy.

Part Two deals with 'raising seedling', that is, the attempt to raise the liberal 'seed' of democracy by eradicating and overcoming internal tensions in Chinese liberal ideas of democracy and providing a more coherent theoretical foundation for the Chinese liberal theory of democracy. Thus Part Two offers a detailed critical review of liberal ideas of human rights, evil and proceduralism or constitutionalism, and discusses a number of the issues associated with the intellectual and moral foundations of Chinese liberal theory of democracy. It further explains the decline of the Chinese Marxist idea of democracy and the rise of the liberal discourse of democracy. More importantly, it focuses on moral and intellectual foundations for Chinese liberal democratic theory and for Chinese political institutional design.

Part Two consists of four chapters. Chapter 4 explores the problem of the coherence of the Chinese liberals' ideas of human rights by examining the roles of, and operation of, their ideas of human rights in the process of realizing those rights. It also attempts to address a set of difficult problems relating to putting their ideal of human rights into practice in China. Chapter 5 attempts to describe, discuss and develop the supposition that human beings are potentially evil (Liao Xun 1987, 7; Yan Jiaqi, 1986c, 1988, 1991a, 54–8) and to provide a reliable theoretical foundation for the Chinese liberal arguments for democratic institutional design. Chapter 6 defends Yan Jiaqi's idea of procedural democracy by dealing with the difficult question of the problem of the exceptions which challenges the coherence of procedural democracy.

Chapter 7 focuses on creating a solid moral foundation for Chinese liberal institutional design by discussing what might be called the project of infusing rights-based morality into political institutions. That is, democratic institutional arrangements require a morality which is characterized by urgent recognition of the following: equal liberties, institutional protection of rights and fair procedures. This chapter also examines and rejects a number of arguments against that project such as the independence of politics from morality, the practical argument concerning the catastrophic consequences of that project and the cultural relativist argument.

Part Three deals with 'soil amelioration', that is, it will demonstrate the existing democratic 'soil' in Chinese political culture, social structure and leadership on the one hand, and investigate the problems associated with 'soil' for Chinese democracy on the other hand. In other words, Part Three addresses the issue of the feasibility of liberal democracy as well as basic problems associated with Chinese democratization.

Part Three consists of three chapters. Chapter 8 examines the emergent democratic cultural conditions under which Chinese liberal ideas of democracy will develop and prove feasible in China. It also examines a number of cultural problems posed for the liberals in China.

Chapter 9 studies emergent civil society as a social base for Chinese democracy. It assesses the positive impact of civil society on the Chinese democratic movement in 1989. It also explores the dual roles of civil society, the self-limitations and the problems civil society poses for Chinese democratization.

Chapter 10 investigates the search for new foundations of legitimacy by Deng's leadership and examines changes in legitimating techniques in relation to the move towards democratization in China after 1978, and particularly since 1989. The central objective is to investigate the relationship between legitimacy (old and new forms of legitimization) and democracy in contemporary China. The purposes of this chapter are threefold: first, to identify changes in the conceptions of legitimacy, particularly the recent adjustment of legitimizing techniques; second, to assess the impact of these changes on the direction of political development by examining the possibility of playing the democratic card by reformer factions within the Chinese Communist Party (CCP); and finally to discuss the limits and the problems associated with the Party's search for new legitimacy.

The Conclusion focuses on Chinese democratization. It reflects on the political implications of the three models of democracy for Chinese democratization, discusses the political roles of a liberal theory of democracy in Chinese democratization, and addresses the issue of the feasibility of liberal democracy, and the practical problems associated with Chinese democratization.