



Has the Cultural Revolution Become “History” in China? — Underlying political climate over decades in China

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This year marks the 50th anniversary of the Cultural Revolution, which began in China in 1966. The Communist Party of China adopted the “Resolution on certain questions in the history of our party since the founding of the People’s Republic of China” at its Sixth Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee in 1981, reviewing the results of the Cultural Revolution as a whole. It may well be said, however, that the evaluation made in the resolution was used by the Chinese leadership as a tool to justify their attempt of putting an end to any further debate regarding the Cultural Revolution. Will the tragedy of the Cultural Revolution repeat itself? In search of answers to this question, in the following article I will discuss the history of the Chinese revolutionary struggle in terms of the country’s underlying political climate.

The Cultural Revolution revealed China in its entirety

Throughout my career, I have addressed a number of gatherings and conferences on the subject of the Cultural Revolution, which began fifty years ago and ended ten years later in China. I would like to address this audience today in order to communicate my views of the Chinese Cultural Revolution. The decade-long revolutionary struggle in China provided us with an opportunity to see not only some unmasked aspects of China but more of the nation’s social reality as a whole. The Cultural Revolution unleashed a decade of conflicts between high-ranking party officials and their lavish private lives, helping researchers to understand China as it stands and the Chinese people. Accordingly, I often use the term “peep hole” to characterize the significance of the Cultural Revolution.



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In my opinion, there are two different approaches regarding empirical studies of the Cultural Revolution in China. The first approach focuses on explaining a range of historical events more clearly. Quite a few historical events that occurred during the Cultural Revolution are still to be investigated more comprehensively, including the role of Premier Zhou Enlai and the real cause of the Lin Biao Incident. This attracts the interest of researchers around the world. The other approach is more focused on attempts to understand China more deeply through studies of the Cultural Revolution in an attempt to define the significance of the revolutionary struggle in the context of the whole history of

China. These two approaches are certainly interconnected.

In view of the formidable body of literature published over the years on the subject of the Cultural Revolution in China, it does not seem realistic to review and analyze all of them by myself today. Instead, I have relied on some of the selected literature for research purposes. Surprisingly enough, the literature that I have researched suggests that a range of facts related to the unprecedented turmoil or turbulent social conditions during the Cultural Revolution were not necessarily peculiar to this particular period, but were rather underlying characteristics that can also be found in China's sociopolitical arena before and after the decade of the revolutionary struggle. In other words, the decade of the Cultural Revolution was in no way a peculiar period in the history of China, but revealed the nation's sociopolitical characteristics as they actually were. In order to substantiate my observation regarding the underlying sociopolitical characteristics of China, I will talk about a wide range of abuses, including massacres, which are often seen as incidents that were peculiar to the period of the Cultural Revolution. In fact, these violent incidents that occurred during the Cultural Revolution were in no way characteristic of this period alone, but rather they represented the "political climate" that had long been structured in the society and political dynamics of China.

Similarly, it will be possible for us to understand China more deeply by analyzing incidents and social movements that happened during the Cultural Revolution, related to the imperial cult and the personality cult, as well as mass agitation and the role of intellectuals. In this article, I would like to reevaluate the history of modern China from the viewpoint of violence. When it comes to reevaluating the history of China, intentional exaggeration related to the dark side of the country's history would be out of the question. That being said, any attempt to ignore it would also lead to a significantly inaccurate approach. I heard a rumor about a Japanese translation company deleting massacre-related descriptions for some reason when they translated a Chinese literary work into Japanese. Such an attempt to turn a blind eye to the darkness represented by the massacres seems to make it even more difficult to put China in perspective.

A decade of violence

Let me begin my discussion by talking about radical youth groups, known as the "Red Guards," who triggered a series of revolutionary movements followed by numerous acts of violence and murders during the Cultural Revolution. It is possible to find a number of photos of the Red Guards crucifying party officials and dragging them around town at the time, which symbolically represents the violent phase of the Cultural Revolution. These photos give the impression that the Red Guards were the chief culprits behind the violence, and in fact, they did commit violent crimes and murders in those days. However, a comprehensive analysis of historical documents and materials has revealed that mass murders on a significant scale and even cannibalism were actually committed by anti-establishment militia groups among the general public and Revolutionary Committees, which were growing to seize power as a new authoritative organization subsequent to the emergence of the Red Guards. In other words, incidents related to violence and murders during the Cultural Revolution could be grouped

into four categories: (1) Attacks by the Red Guards against the Party elite and intellectual population; (2) Violent acts by the Red Guards and anti-establishment militia groups; (3) Power struggles among the Revolutionary Committees for leadership; and (4) Outbursts of ethnic conflicts in turmoil and the emergence of irrationalities in society. I assume that the attacks and radical incidents spiraled out of control without regard to the above categories in China at the time. Even militants and other radical activists with direct involvement in the incidents probably did not know what was really going on.

By the way, acts of mass murder or genocide are not at all rare in the long history of China. These brutal incidents spread throughout the country during the Cultural Revolution for a sociopolitical reason: the Chinese Communist Party had established extensive networks of its party organs, even in small workplaces and villages. The Emperor of China used to be extremely powerful during dynasty periods, but the imperial control was viewed as effective only at a limited level in the strong bureaucratic structure, including prefectural administrative governments controlled by officials from the central bureaucracy. Even in the prefectural and other regional governments, however, local petty officials used to control essentially everything, which left the local communities out of tune with the central authorities in terms of policies. This power structure began experiencing a series of significant changes when the People's Republic of China was established. The new government's authority permeated almost every corner of society directly on the strength of a network consisting of numerous party organs. Given this situation, news relating to political turmoil in Beijing spread very quickly, even to small villages in regional areas, involving many village dwellers who were totally unfamiliar with such terms as revisionism or faction in power related to the Cultural Revolution. Let me give you some specific examples of brutal acts of mass murders that took place during the Cultural Revolution, all of which are depressing.

- (1) 831 Daxing Incident – This refers to a massacre that took place in a village in southern Beijing at the end of August 1966, shortly after the Cultural Revolution began. A total of 325 people were killed during the massacre. Among the victims were landowners, wealthy farmers, reactionaries, “evil activists” as they were called, right-wing groups, and peasants, including an 80-year-old man and even infant boys. Red Guards from Beijing were allegedly held responsible for the massacre, but local sources attribute the cause of the brutal incident to conflicts between native inhabitants and immigrants living in the region. During this period, a total of 1,772 people, including schoolteachers, were allegedly killed in Beijing.
- (2) Qinghai 2.23 Incident – This refers to the conflicts among groups with different political ideologies in the military as well as in administrative organizations, resulting in brutal acts involving attacking newspaper companies and others, killing as many as 169 people. A high-ranking senior military official was allegedly acting behind the scenes, seeking to prevent any further chaos from happening.

- (3) Wuhan 720 Incident – This was an armed conflict that took place between two hostile groups at the height of the Cultural Revolution in the summer of 1967, involving several navy gunboats and an airborne unit to rescue Mao Zedong, who had been kidnapped in Wuhan, Hubei. The two opposing forces were the Million Heroes in support of the province’s local party committee and the Wuhan Workers’ General Headquarters, which was against the party committee. The sides engaged in an extensive battle. Mao Zedong announced his endorsement of the workers’ headquarters in Wuhan and ordered the Left to be armed. It is estimated that more than 20,000 people were killed in Wuhan during the incident.
- (4) Daoxian Massacre – This massacre took place in Daoxian County, Hunan during the period from August to October 1967. Led by the administrators of the county’s “leading group for grasping revolution and promoting production,” the “anti-revolutionaries” (who were allegedly in support of Liu Shaoqi) rose in rebellion and killed 4,193 people in attacks against class enemies. It is estimated that 365 people committed suicide.
- (5) The Purge of the Inner Mongolian People’s Party – Amid conflicts for the campaign leadership in the Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region, an anti-revolutionary organization called the “Inner Mongolian People’s Party” was persecuted under the command of Teng Haiqing, who became the chairman of the Inner Mongolian Revolutionary Committee in 1967. It is estimated that more than 20,000 people were killed, including senior Mongolian officials.
- (6) Guangxi 422 Incident – Wei Guoqing, formerly the Party’s First Secretary in the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, became the chairman of the region’s Revolutionary Committee at the height of the Cultural Revolution. He came into conflict with the Guangxi 422 Revolutionary Action Headquarters, a claimed anti-revolutionary group. In 1968, Wei persecuted the Chiang Kai-shek People’s Republic of China Anti-Communist Corps, a phony organization that he had fabricated, killing tens of thousands of people during the bloody purge. Prior to the 422 Incident, Guangxi Province saw another mass murder case, killing more than 6,000 people in Liuzhou.
- (7) Spread of cannibalism – Most of the details regarding a series of brutal incidents that spread throughout the country during the Cultural Revolution remain unclear even today. In the province of Guangxi, many of the counter-revolutionaries were actually eaten. There are some historical records that tell of students killing their school principal and boiling his flesh in a caldron to eat, human flesh being sold in a marketplace in town, and brains and liver being favored, among other organs.

Needless to say, the massacres during the Cultural Revolution were not limited to the murders that have just been described. In areas around the country such as Chongqing and Dalian, battles involving

heavy weapons took place. The Beijing government made an announcement in later years that 400,000 people had died during the Cultural Revolution. However, this number only refers to the confirmed deaths of party officials and intellectuals. The exact number of deaths is not known even today in terms of the Red Guards and counter-revolutionaries who were killed during these tumultuous years, but a figure of one million or more is most commonly cited.

According to my analysis with regard to the mass murders that I have mentioned thus far, including many other incidents of a similar nature, the brutal violence in China began to spread and become even more serious in 1967, in parallel with the historical process of the Revolutionary Committee being established as a new authoritative body, along with a gradual recovery of power for the Party elite who were previously seen as the target of attacks during the Cultural Revolution. Next, I would like to summarize the historical developments during the decade of the revolutionary struggle.

Victory for the Party elite

The Red Guards mobilized at the outset of the Cultural Revolution were called Initial Red Guards (or Old Red Guards). They were largely the sons and daughters of high-ranking officials of the Communist Party, mobilized by Kang Sheng, Jiang Qing, and Chen Boda, who later seized powerful leadership during the Revolution. The Red Guards fought a battle with Liu Shaoqi and his allies, and received Mao Zedong's endorsement. As the target of assault shifted toward high-ranking party officials along with the growth of the revolutionary movement, the initial groups of Red Guards began to be persecuted because their parents were mostly party officials. Given this situation, China's youth, totaling as many as 20 million, responded to Mao's appeal by forming new Red Guard groups around the country, rallying directly under the slogan chanted by him: "There are no rebels without reasons." Mao's slogan also induced tens of millions of people, irrespective of class, to rise up in rebellion against the Party elite. Young people battled Mao's perceived enemies and also one another as Red Guards, without knowing whether or not they were on the same side, while attempting to defeat the Party elite with the Little Red Book constantly in their hands. They were expelled to the countryside under Mao's direction in the later stages of the Revolution, fading out of the mainstream radical activities.

During the battles with party officials and class enemies in society at large, the conventional administrative systems run by the Party were destroyed. As a result, the Revolutionary Committee was established as an authoritative body nationwide during the period from January 1967 through September 1968. However, disputes continued with respect to the structure of the Committee. The power of the Red Guards and the rebels gradually faded away. Meanwhile, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) intervened in the committee leadership, which was followed by some of the ex-Party elite participating in the Committee. The revolutionary committees were formed across all levels of society ranging from provinces to workplaces and small villages, and it was operated as a party-run authoritative body, or essentially as an organization equipped with dictatorial power. The PLA launched its intervention with the committee leadership in March 1967 and seized the majority of the leadership to protect the facilities used for broadcasting services, food stocking and military purposes

from being destroyed during the tumultuous years that followed. Later, the PLA's intervention allowed them to take complete control of one of the opposing groups of rebels who were left extremely confused about their position between the left and the right on the political spectrum. The Qinghai 2.23 Incident that I mentioned earlier served as a trigger for a series of movements during this period. To make matters worse, the military intervention with the committee leadership in later years resulted in major conflicts and massacres, as I have already mentioned.

The level of confusion became even greater in those years as fanaticized youths fought among themselves with a common Red Flag and Mao's Little Red Book. According to some historical sources, requests were made by the revolutionary committees and the rebel groups nationwide, asking the central leadership to determine which side truly represented the leftist ideology. A judgment made by the committee triggered another violent incident. The historical data tell us that it was common for such judgments to be overturned during those years, which resulted in bloody violence every time. The Wuhan 720 Incident is an example of the violence that occurred as a result of Mao's decision. When it came to the Daoxian Massacre, the Purge of the Inner Mongolian People's Party, and the Guangxi 422 Incident, the leaders of factions and groups fought battles over the leadership of the Revolutionary Committee with no regard whatsoever for their political positions, and a certain leading figure mobilized a group of rebels to conduct bloody attacks against the opposition faction. These mass murders were justified under the proletarian dictatorship embracing the merciless purge of class enemies, but they came to be publicly recognized as a civil war by the Party's 1981 Resolution, which officially denounced the Cultural Revolution.

Mao Zedong launched the Cultural Revolution by calling on the Red Guards and rebel groups who rallied against the Party elite in response to his assertion that the Communist leaders in those days were taking the party and China itself in the wrong direction of capitalistic nature with revisionism. His theory of a "permanent revolution" was denied in the later years. Its theoretical significance aside, the historical data allow us to draw the conclusion that Mao failed to establish a new authoritative body run by the people in place of the existing system run by the limited Party elite. Through the years of struggle for the leadership regarding the Revolutionary Committee, some leading figures in the ex-elite group, senior military officials and leaders from certain rebel factions came to seize authoritative power in the Committee. After the end of the Cultural Revolution, there was a significant surge in presence shown by the ex-Party officials, and people belonging to rebel factions were either expelled or purged. As a result, administrative systems run by the Party in the prior years made a significant comeback and the PLA lost its strong authoritative presence, allowing the ancient regime before the Cultural Revolution to come back into power at almost all levels of society. If we take an approach of understanding that the Cultural Revolution was the decade of conflicts between the Party elite and the people in the rebel groups, we may well conclude that the Party elite achieved a victory over the rebel factions despite their ferocious attacks.

"Political climate" in China

The Cultural Revolution in China was a tumultuous decade of brutal violence including massacres and cannibalism, but it did not lead to any changes whatsoever in the country's robust Unitary State Structure (Dayitong/大一统), which is based on the inherent nature of its political climate. Next, I will discuss my views on what I call "Chinese political climate" in its history. The origin of the traditional unitary state system in China can be further traced back to the first Qin Emperor. It features a pyramid-like hierarchical structure, with the almighty emperor at the top being served by bureaucrats, soldiers, tutors, and merchants. Common people serving the Emperor as slaves were seen as the lowest in the hierarchical structure at the time. According to historical studies, this structure remained unchanged through the long history of dynasty changes and dominance by different ethnic groups. I must say that this view has been derived from a theoretical stereotype based on the pyramid-like hierarchical structure. In fact, China has undergone hierarchical changes in society that were actually more complicated than they looked. The Revolution in modern China was originally launched in an attempt to destroy its traditional unitary state structure and establish a new republic state. It is indeed true that the Cultural Revolution in China created a new political system without imperial rule, changing its fundamental economic structure significantly amid the global movements toward industrialization to adapt to the so-called socialist market economy in the end. However, it appears that China's political climate, namely the most fundamental structure of its political and economic system, has remained unchanged to date. Essentially the same hierarchical structure appears to have existed for a long time in China, with six social categories including the supreme authority, officials, scholars, soldiers, merchants, and the general public, although the system has undergone some minor changes in terms of the titles and functions of these social categories. Next, I will discuss these changes in comparison.

- (1) Supreme authority – This has shifted from the Emperor to the Communist Party (applicable regardless of individual or group status), with no fundamental change in policy adopted by the Party to see itself as the supreme authority in the political system. The Party also aims to grasp, manage and control a range of matters related to the country's military, economy, ideologies and culture.
- (2) Officials – Bureaucracy has led to the large-scale ruling by the Party that usually designate its officials as administrators.
- (3) Scholars – They have been renamed "Intellectuals," but they remain subject to the influence of the supreme authority or the Party, in principle. Those with heretic views must be persecuted.
- (4) Soldiers – They have been renamed the "People's Liberation Army." The PLA is recognized as the Party's army, not as the army for the state.
- (5) Merchants – The fundamental part of the business in manufacturing, commerce and finance is operated by state-owned enterprises that are subject to the influence of the Party.

- (6) General public – This has been renamed “People,” and they have no rights, as before. According to socialist principles, they are not allowed to own land privately. Their lands are controlled more as property owned by the Party than they were by the ancient dynasties.

There is no doubt that these social classes and individuals in the country’s power structure change continually in response to the requirements of the times and policies adopted by the Party. But I believe that a certain political climate or sentiment still prevails in China today, even after the end of the Cultural Revolution, which constantly attempts to reestablish the unitary state structure with the supreme authority at the top involving the people who agree to support the system.

Conflicts between Supreme Authority and Bureaucrats

Based on my historical analysis of the Cultural Revolution, I believe that Mao mobilized the People or students serving as Red Guards to attack the Bureaucrats, while involving soldiers rallied by Lin Biao. Many of the common citizens were frustrated by the fact that bureaucrats enjoyed privileges at the time. Mao took advantage of the youthful passion of the young students in the Red Guard groups. When the Revolution was launched, people believed that Mao was at the top of the authoritative hierarchy, but this general perception was not based on reality. In fact, Mao understood the situation more realistically, recognizing the general perception of him as an ideal view (or illusion), which strongly convinced him that it was necessary to seize power back from the bureaucrats. His attempt led to turmoil and put the survival of the entire nation at risk because the country’s bureaucracy had largely relied on the supreme authority to undertake the administrative work of running the country. The Revolutionary Committee was incapable of functioning properly, which later led to the resurgence of the bureaucracy in the political system. In this historical process, I believe that the young rebels in the Red Guard groups were used by the authoritative body for interfactional battles between different authoritative groups. They caused a succession of bloody, violent episodes and were persecuted by the authority in the end.

The common citizens in China played a significant role in the Cultural Revolution. Their status has been raised by the supreme authority as indicated by such terms as People’s Republic of China, People’s diplomacy, or People’s square, but they have been denied the ability to exercise private property rights. They even appear to have submitted to their status without private property rights. This situation is completely inconsistent with socialism or democratic principles, but common citizens in China remained the “silent public” (Shu-jing/书经) as they were before the Revolution. This raises a question for us.

Bo Yang, a Chinese critic who died in Taiwan, made some interesting comments in an interview with a Hong Kong magazine in 1985 regarding this question. According to him, it was not common among the people in China to unite against the emperor or bureaucrats due to violent abuses and mass murders. They were generally apt to fight one another within the same group by pointing the

finger. This was represented by Mao's directions and the resulting repercussions from the public during the Cultural Revolution. According to Bo Yang, a winner in a never-ending conflict within a group will be forever remembered as a tyrant or a dictatorial bureaucrat. A typical example of the relationship between the authority and the bureaucracy in China can be found in the Boxer Rebellion that occurred towards the end of the Qing dynasty. This uprising took place as instinctive resistance against the background of the disruption caused by the growth of foreign spheres of influence with imperialist expansion. The Qing dynasty initially fought with the Boxers against the British under the slogan "Support the Qing government and exterminate the foreigners." Faced with the overwhelming military capability of the foreign troops that jeopardized the Chinese army, the Qing dynasty turned to start attacking the Boxers as their enemy.

Bo Yang's comment with respect to the eternal nature of the Chinese people's national character is debatable anyway. But I believe that the abovementioned relationship between the supreme authority and the bureaucracy in China developed under the unitary state system through the two thousand years of its history, in which the common citizens were always left powerless while accepting the status quo.

Political violence in China

Violent incidents in the history of China's politics and social movements are not limited to the period of the Cultural Revolution. The central authority caused bloody conflicts even after the end of the Revolution, aside from those incidents involving a number of victims killed in a string of political movements since the foundation of the country or other victims who died of hunger in the Great Natural Disasters.

Toward the end of my stay in Beijing in 1983, the Chinese government began rolling out a comprehensive campaign regarding criminal punishment. While I was there, I was advised not to go out at night because it was too dangerous. I was aware that numerous criminal incidents were occurring around the country at the time. Embarrassingly enough, however, I did not understand the brutal nature of the government campaign that was underway, although I worked in Beijing in those days. It gradually became clear in later months that a total of 24,000 criminals and "impurities" had been executed all over the country, involving those who merely looked suspicious, without appropriate investigations or trials. Here is one example that illustrates the brutal nature of the campaign. One day, a young girl told the police that her boyfriend had assaulted her after a lovers' quarrel. When he was arrested, she confessed that she had fabricated the story. By the time she did so, her boyfriend had already been executed. The news about her boyfriend caused her to become mentally ill.

The Tiananmen Square Incident of 1989 was an event that shocked the world. I will not go into the details of this event here. According to the official announcement made by the government, there were only three hundred civilian deaths in this incident. But informed sources say that the number of citizens killed during this event was, in fact, ten times higher than what was officially announced by

the government. Some of the victims' families claimed that their children were away on holiday for fear of the consequences. Others secretly buried the victims. Many observers around the world deplored the bloody incident in Tiananmen Square. They asked, "Was it really necessary?" Sources say that the protesters planned to leave the square before the troops arrived. As the Chinese proverb says, the government sought to "kill the chicken to scare the monkey" by terrifying the Chinese population gathering in Tiananmen Square. In other words, the super authority apparently succeeded in oppressing the common citizens. It was probably no big deal for the Chinese government to kill as many as three hundred civilians as long as they were seen as "violent citizens." I assume that the international denunciation directed against the brutal act stunned the leadership in Beijing. The supreme authority is allegedly engaged in brutal acts of violence even today, including attacks on Falun Gong believers and Christians, or police or military oppression in relation to frequent conflicts in society. It is difficult to confirm these stories because the information is strictly controlled as state secrets by the government.

Bureaucracy targeted again

Lastly, I would like to discuss China's current situation under the leadership of Xi Jinping from the viewpoint of the political climate based on the findings related to the Cultural Revolution. When the Revolution ended forty years ago, many of the Party elite must have celebrated their successful return to their workplaces after surviving the unprecedented hardships. Three million or more party executives and intellectuals who had been purged since the foundation of the country restored honor and received economic compensation. In the wake of the rapid economic expansion following the Cultural Revolution, many economic restrictions have been removed. Party executives have acquired significant discretion and have become capable of seeking income by engaging in "rent seeking" activities. In my personal view, though, it is debatable whether many of the party officials were able to embrace the slogan "Serve the people" after they made their comeback.

In other words, the years of economic recovery and rapid growth following the Cultural Revolution meant years of "bureaucratic paradise" to many of the party executives because they were given the chance to earn income privately by engaging in cooperation (corruption scandals) with private enterprises (operated by ex-party executives). Through these years, billionaires have been born. Merchants have made a killing by capitalizing on every opportunity based on the relationships among bureaucrats with discretionary authority in managing huge public funds, approving huge infrastructure projects, and buying up and commercializing farmland. Even bribery transactions have been common among merchants at the time of corporate audits. Party executives with discretionary authority of varying scales have made astronomical profits as reported during the anti-corruption campaign that is currently underway. Even low-ranking officials have earned incomes that are higher than their regular income from work.

The repeated pay raises for the party executives, which were similar in nature to the subsidy system for the Qing officials, were not effective at preventing corruption. On the contrary, this attempt

helped party executives make money, enabling them to become even wealthier than before. In a sense, this could be interpreted as a benefit produced by the strong economic growth, serving as a strong motive for achieving growth during the tumultuous period of transition from the planned economy to the market economy. It is true that the strong economic growth has allowed the party elite to become incredibly wealthy and has provided common citizens with a certain share of the benefits from the growth, making it possible for extremely poor peasants to make money in blue-collar jobs in big cities, aside from matters surrounding inequality or imbalance in terms of incomes. This mechanism has grown to become a comprehensive system encompassing various fields including the economy, politics, society and culture. As a result, China was able to achieve strong economic growth during the period from the 1980s toward the end of the twentieth century.

However, there has been growing concern about the sustainability of China's strong economic growth since the beginning of the 2010s. The abovementioned social mechanism established in expectation of the continued economic growth has begun losing its effectiveness. Instead, a range of problems has started to emerge, including income gaps, hierarchical immobilization, and unemployment in the leading industry. All of these problems will need to be fundamentally addressed. The anti-corruption campaign launched under the Xi Jinping regime in 2013 aimed to address these issues for the first time. This attempt could be interpreted as a measure for gaining strong control over the bureaucracy that has grown significantly in terms of power since the end of the Cultural Revolution. Bureaucrats typically do not show direct resistance to the party leadership. It seems that they are keen on protecting themselves and their interests as much as possible in the face of the anti-corruption campaign conducted by the central leadership. On the other hand, common citizens generally support the anti-corruption campaign, while feeling frustrated with the bureaucrats who usually enjoy huge private interests and special privileges. But the support for the campaign does not bring any direct benefits to the common citizens. In addition, there seems to be growing concern that the economic growth will slow amid the strict controls imposed on the bureaucrats during the campaign. In fact, the central party leadership has issued repeated warnings about the negligence of officials since last year. Some negligent bureaucrats were actually persecuted. It is probably obvious that bureaucrats will find it difficult to remain motivated amid the intensified anti-corruption campaign in view of the reducing special privileges with greater risks of being accused of being corrupt. Having said that, it will be necessary for the central government to leverage bureaucratic involvement for the efforts to eradicate corruption and establish a new model of the economy in place of the conventional mechanism that assumes strong economic growth. In this regard, it will be important for us to monitor the future developments of the anti-corruption campaign that is currently underway.

It appears that the central party leadership has been attempting to promote the reform efforts under the Xi Jinping regime. But they must remember that it would be extremely difficult for the party leadership to realign the bureaucratic system, as the lessons from the Cultural Revolution tell us. Mobilizing common citizens in order to straighten out the bureaucracy would be even more dangerous. The Chinese government is attempting to unite the people on the strength of patriotism in

pursuit of the Chinese Dream for some time to come. Given the ever-changing international environments, China will have to face a lot more new challenges ahead before it is able to achieve its national target, aiming for the establishment of a “stable growth” model.

(This article has been adapted from the regular luncheon speech delivered on April 21, 2016.)

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