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Human security, prosperity and the Chinese Dream

Abstract: This paper surveys the China Dream in the domestic setting. While the China Dream is largely viewed as relating to the economic and political goals of the Chinese state, China's President Xi Jinping has indicated in speeches that the China Dream has far wider aims. He has stated that the China Dream involves the 'great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation' and that within this rejuvenation it is hoped the Chinese state will become prosperous and powerful. However, the China Dream is a concept that has begun to evolve within the domestic setting and its focus on national dignity is also becoming enmeshed with notions of human dignity and even human rights in the broadest sense. In addition, it is also linked to continued economic growth, which has become an expectation of the Chinese population and part of the social contract they have with the Chinese Communist Party. Therefore, the current attention on the China Dream provides glimpses into both human security and prosperity in China, as well as the longevity of the Chinese Communist Party.

Keywords: China Dream, Xi Jinping, Two Centennials, human security, Chinese Communist Party

人类安全、繁荣和中国梦

摘要: 本文研究了在中国国内环境中“中国梦”的含义。尽管中国梦在很大程度上被认为与中国的经济政治目标有关，但中国国家主席习近平在发言中指出，中国梦有着更远大的目标。他表示“中国梦”包含“中华民族的伟大复兴”，希望中国能实现繁荣富强。但是，“中国梦”的含义在中国国内的环境中是不断发展变化的，“中国梦”强调民族尊严的核心与人的尊严甚至是人权紧密相关。此外，“中国梦”也与经济持续增长息息相关，这已经成为中国人民的期望，以及中国人民与中国共产党社会契约的一部分。因此，当前“中国梦”引起的关注，使我们有机会一探中国国内安全和繁荣，以及中国共产党的长久统治的情况...

关键词: 中国梦，习近平，两个一百年，人类安全，中国共产党

HUMAN SECURITY, PROSPERITY AND THE CHINESE DREAM

A dream is an ideal and a pursuit – a goal for the Party to mobilize the people, organize teams and lead the people to realise the ideal step by step. It is the fruit of the Party’s important experience in leading revolution, development and reform.¹

The most recent articulation of the Chinese Communist Party’s goal for the Chinese state is encapsulated in Xi Jinping’s “China Dream”. In its most simplistic form, the China Dream is a concept that seeks to increase China’s economic and political might to ensure it reaches great power status. This is not a new ideological position but rather one that builds on the goals and aspirations of previous leaders including Mao Zedong, Deng Xiaoping and Hu Jintao. However, Xi Jinping’s emphasis on the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation is an interesting element in the China Dream concept. This rejuvenation refers to a restoration of dignity to the Chinese following their experiences with foreign powers from the mid-1800s to the mid-1900s. While rejuvenation is also not a new sentiment in Chinese political discourse, it is Xi’s significant emphasis on this dynamic within his China Dream concept that is of interest in this paper. In seeking to analyse the current trajectory of the China Dream, this paper examines Party membership, and the linking of human rights with restoration of human dignity, and provides a general overview of China’s domestic economic circumstances. It explores how the China Dream concept is evolving domestically, and argues that while the China Dream draws on a long tradition of goals and aspirations for the Chinese state and its people, the linking of human dignity with the economic goals of the China Dream could make the concept unwieldy.

The ‘China Dream’

In its broadest sense the ‘China Dream’ (*zhongguo meng*) is Chinese President Xi Jinping’s ideological articulation of the ongoing economic and political development of the Chinese state, in both a domestic and a global sense. Put simply, in the domestic setting it refers to what Lai has identified as the ascertainment of ‘a fair, corruption-free, safe, secure, orderly and rich society’.² In the global setting, it signals the continuation of the desire for the Chinese state to reach great power status, finally becoming a ‘a rich and powerful country’,³ perhaps even surpassing the United States of America (US) as the world’s leading power.⁴ However, in speeches and official documents outlining the China Dream, President Xi has indicated it also incorporates the ‘rejuvenation of China’, or the Chinese ‘renaissance’.⁵ This rejuvenation provides scope for a restoration of dignity for the Chinese state following

¹ Li, Junru, *The Chinese Path and the Chinese Dream*, (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 2013), and Huang, Huaguang and Luan, Jianzhang, *The Roadmap of the 18th CPC National Congress and the Chinese Dream*, (Beijing, Foreign Languages Press, 2013), 197.

² Lai, Hongyi, *China’s Governance Model: Flexibility and durability of pragmatic authoritarianism*, (Oxon: Routledge, 2016), 60.

³ Ibid.

⁴ William Callahan, “History, Tradition and the China Dream: socialist modernisation in the World of Great Harmony”, *Journal of Contemporary China* 24, no. 96, (2015), 1–19, doi:10.1080/10670564.2015.1030915 and Lai, *China’s Governance*, 60.

⁵ Various speeches cited in Xi, Jinping, *The Chinese Dream of the Great Rejuvenation of the Chinese Nation*, compiled by the Party Literature Research Office of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, (Beijing, Foreign Languages Press, 2014), and Li, *The Chinese Path*, and Huang and Luan, *The Roadmap*.

China's century of humiliation⁶ at the hands of outside forces and is a highly nationalistic element of the concept. Therefore, the China Dream provides a unifying ideology for both the Party and the Chinese population, one that, as identified in the quote from Li in the epigraph, incorporates nationalism with further development, reform and revolution.

It is also worth noting that the essence of the China Dream is not a phenomenon unique to Xi Jinping. According to Brown, making China a 'rich, strong country' existing in competition with Western powers was an important part of the political discourse of the late Qing state.⁷ In January 1901, following the Boxer Rebellion, the Empress Dowager issued a decree. It identified a new path for Qing rule, one that was centred on 'learning from the West...all the fundamentals that have made the foreign countries rich and strong'.⁸ This was a policy that received wide support among the Chinese population and provincial Viceroyals alike.⁹ Similarly, in 1956 Mao Zedong articulated his desire for China to become a 'rich, strong, socialist country'.¹⁰ Indeed, the Great Leap Forward was intended to launch China into 'greatness', as articulated in Mao's 'Strengthen Party Unity and Carry Forward Party Traditions' speech, which has experienced a revival since the 2000s.¹¹ In this speech, which in part identifies key moments throughout world and Chinese history, Mao argues that not only is catching up with the US possible, but it is obligatory, and that not doing so would be 'letting down' the nations of the world.¹² In 2008, Hu Jintao also declared his goal of seeing the People's Republic of China (PRC) become 'a rich, strong country' and he identified this goal as being part of the PRC's 'historic mission'.¹³ Therefore, President Xi's China Dream draws on a long tradition, connecting history, development, modernisation and nationalism in a unifying and potent mix.

There is one other important element to the China Dream. President Xi has indicated that the full realisation of the Dream will incorporate the 'Two Centennials'.¹⁴ Put simply, the Two Centennials refers to: the 100th anniversary of the establishment of the Communist Party of China (CCP/CPC) in 2021; and one hundred years since the founding of the PRC in 2049.¹⁵ In his 2012 speech at "The Road to Rejuvenation" exhibition at the National Museum, Xi stated:

I firmly believe that the goal of finishing building a moderately prosperous society in all respects can be achieved by 2021 when the CPC celebrates its centenary; the goal of building China into a modern socialist country that is prosperous, strong, democratic, culturally advanced, and harmonious can be achieved by 2049 when the

⁶ For a detailed discussion of the century of humiliation, see Zheng Wang, *Never Forget National Humiliation: Historical memory in Chinese politics and foreign relations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012).

⁷ Brown, Kerry, *Contemporary China*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 72.

⁸ Chang, Jung, *Empress Dowager Cixi: The concubine who launched modern China*, (London: Vintage, 2013), 300.

⁹ Brown, *Contemporary China*, 72.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Callahan, "History, Tradition", 4.

¹² Mao, Zedong, "Strengthen Party Unity and Carry Forward Party Traditions", *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung*, (30 August 1956), accessed 26 September 2016,

https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-5/mswv5_53.htm.

¹³ Callahan, "History, Tradition", 4.

¹⁴ Chinese publications sometimes translate this term as the 'Two One-Hundreds'.

¹⁵ Various speeches cited in Xi, *The Chinese Dream* and Li, *The Chinese Path*, and Huang & Luan, *The Roadmap*. Also see Bin He, "Xi Jinping's 'China Dream'", *Chinascope*, issue 62, (2013), 6-7, accessed 4 June 2015, www.chinascope.org; Presenter, East Asia Security Symposium and Conference, China Foreign Affairs University, (2016, Beijing).

People's Republic of China marks its centenary; and the dream of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation will be realised.¹⁶

As a result of this speech, and subsequent speeches, these anniversaries have become important deadlines by which the progress of CCP policies can be assessed. This is a point we will return to later in the paper.

Xi Jinping is not the first President to identify these anniversaries in such a way. During Deng's earlier 'modernisation' program, he too placed significant importance on the 2049 date, hoping by the time that important deadline arrived, China would have reached full modernisation and rejuvenation.¹⁷ Similarly, Hu Jintao included these important dates in his 'Harmonious Society' and 'Harmonious World' concepts.¹⁸ So the Two Centennials have long held significance as milestones for Chinese development. Firstly, the CCP anniversary serves to reinforce the continuing importance and legitimacy of the CCP in state affairs as by this anniversary China should be a "moderately prosperous society", guided to such prosperity by the policies and directions of the CCP. By the anniversary of the foundation of the People's Republic of China in 2049, there should be a full realisation of the China Dream for the Chinese people. According to Huang and Luan, this means that China will have become 'a prosperous, democratic, harmonious and modernised socialist country'.¹⁹ However, in order for the CCP to meet both of these important anniversaries it is vital that the Party retains power and control in the Chinese political setting. Furthermore, by linking these goals and the China Dream to a restoration of human dignity, this also incorporates human rights and human security as key national goals, something that could prove problematic for the Chinese state.²⁰ This paper now examines the CCP and human insecurity among the Chinese population.

The CCP, human insecurity and the people

Since its victory in the Chinese Civil War, the CCP has been an integral part of the Chinese state and its class struggles, development and modernisation goals. Brown argued that prior to 1978, class struggle and social improvement were the key goals of the Party and that post-1978 it has been modernisation and economic growth that have been the key drivers of the Party.²¹ However, over recent decades the Party has come under some strain, largely due to domestic economic and social concerns largely pertaining to the unequal wealth distribution that has resulted since the dismantling of state socialism, but also in response to the earlier collapse of the Soviet Union and the seeming demise of Communism globally. In response to these global events, the post-Cold War and post-Tiananmen eras have gradually seen nationalism and patriotism replace communism as the guiding ideological framework for the CCP and the people. According to Wang,²² since 1991 the CCP has 'put aside the banner of communism and wholeheartedly embrace[d] nationalism'. He argued that as a result of the changing international landscape, under the presidency of Jiang Zemin the CCP deliberately redefined its central ideologies away from communism and socialism towards nationalism

¹⁶ Xi, *The Chinese Dream*, 4.

¹⁷ Callahan, "History, Tradition", 4.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Huang & Luan, *The Roadmap*, III.

²⁰ This dynamic is discussed in a later section of this paper.

²¹ Brown, *Contemporary China*, 61.

²² Wang, *Never Forget*, 119.

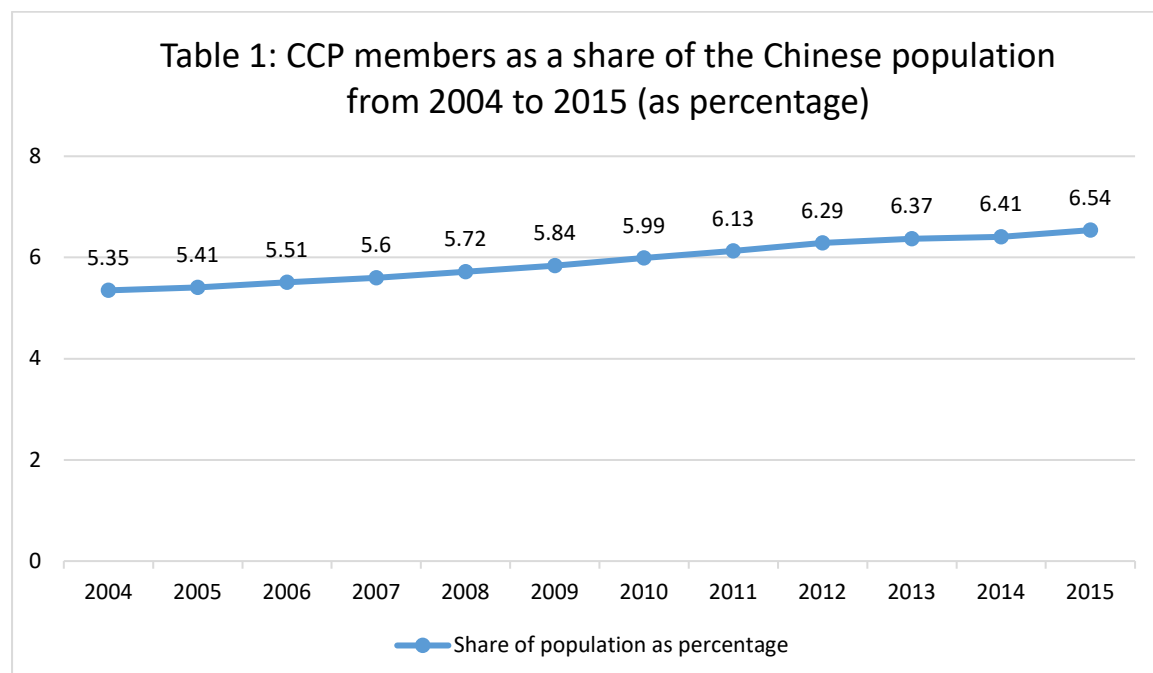
and patriotism. This resulted in the transformation of the CCP into a nationalist party, rather than a communist party,²³ a process that remains ongoing.

CCP Membership

This transformation of the CCP to a nationalist party is evident in many of Xi's speeches. He regularly calls on the patriotism of the Chinese population and evokes a nationalist spirit in his descriptions of the Chinese state.²⁴ In a speech delivered at the First Session of the Twelfth National Party Congress, President Xi stated that:

...Patriotism has always been the inner force that binds the Chinese nation, and reform and innovation have always been the inner force that spurs us to keep up with the times in reform and opening up.²⁵

This shift in ideological underpinnings of the Party has been an important one and is likely a key reason as to why Party membership in China is still strong and continues to grow incrementally (see Table 1), even against a global backdrop whereby communism and socialism has been greatly weakened and there have been domestic problems with the transformation of the Chinese economy. Figures on CCP membership demonstrate that over the eleven year period of 2004–2015, Party membership, as a percentage of overall population, grew from 5.35% to 6.54%, with CCP members in 2015 totalling 88.76 million (see Tables 1 and 2).²⁶ These figures show that Party membership is still appealing and the CCP has a consistent membership with incremental growth.



Source: Statista, “Chinese Communist Party (CCP) members as a share of the Chinese population from 2004 to 2015”, *The Statistics Portal*, (2016), accessed 5 September 2016, <http://www.statista.com/statistics/250090/share-of-chinese-communist-party-ccp-members-in-chinese-population/>.

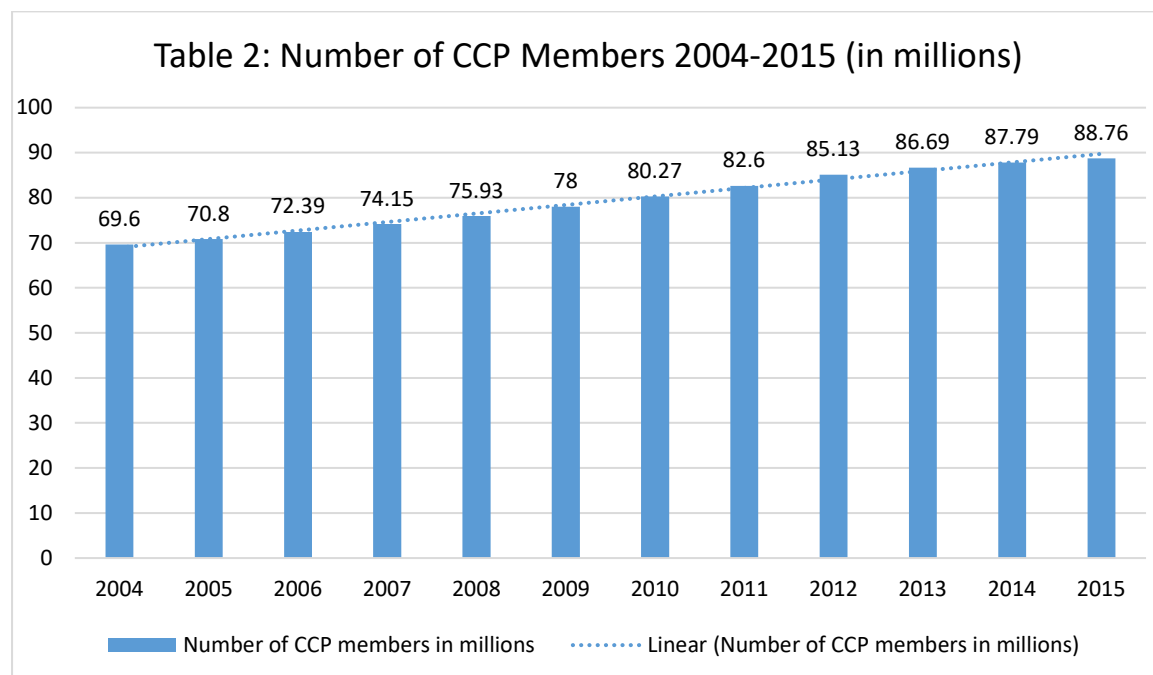
²³ Ibid., 120-121.

²⁴ Various speeches cited in Xi, *The Chinese Dream*.

²⁵ Xi, *The Chinese Dream*, 38.

²⁶ Statista, “Chinese Communist Party (CCP) members as a share of the Chinese population from 2004 to 2015”, *The Statistics Portal*, (2016), accessed 5 September 2016, <http://www.statista.com/statistics/250090/share-of-chinese-communist-party-ccp-members-in-chinese-population/>.

However, figures on the employment background of CCP members reveal there have been some significant changes to the Party (see Table 3) over previous decades. At the time of the 1949 CCP victory in the Chinese civil war, China was an agricultural state with a sizeable rural population. As a result, the rural population were long considered the traditional heartland of the CCP. While the rural population remains the largest cohort among Party members, there has been an overall decline in their membership. According to Dickson, there has been a serious decline in peasant-worker membership of the Party over the past 60 years, which he argued had transformed the Party away from the rural population towards the



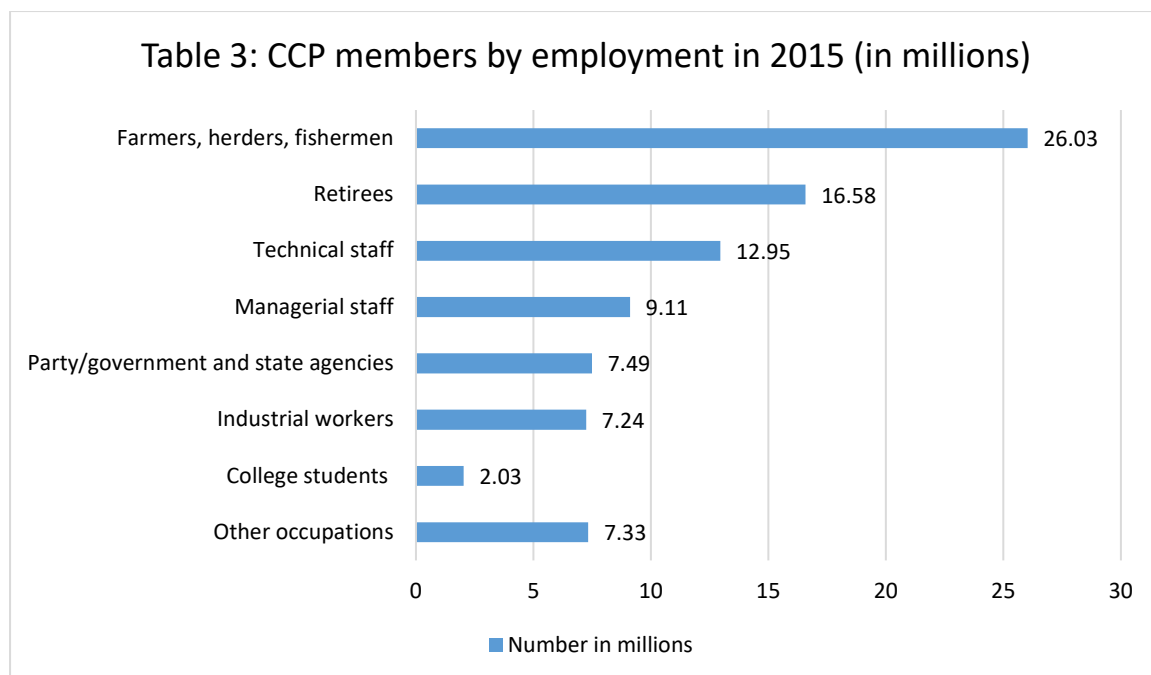
Source: Statista, "Number of Chinese Communist Party (CCP) members in China from 2004-2015 (in millions)", *The Statistics Portal*, (2016), accessed 5 September 2016, <http://www.statista.com/statistics/281378/number-of-chinese-communist-party-cdp-members-in-china/>.

professional, technological and entrepreneurial elites (see Table 3).²⁷ He stated that in 1956, the rural population and worker members accounted for 83% of Party members.²⁸ Since this time however, that figure had reduced to 63% by 1994, and to just 42% in 2007.²⁹ However, this transformation is not the result of the rural population disengaging from the Party. Rather, changes in the Chinese labour market and the significant rural-to-urban migration China has experienced go some way in explaining these figures.

²⁷ Bruce Dickson, "Dilemmas of party adaptation. The CCP's strategies for survival", in *Chinese Politics. State, society and the market*, ed. Peter Hays and Stanley Rosen (Oxon: Routledge, 2010), 27.

²⁸ Dickson, "Dilemmas of party adaptation", 27.

²⁹ Ibid.



Source: Statista, "Number of Chinese Communist Party (CCP) members in China in 2015, by employment (in millions)", *The Statistics Portal*, (2016), accessed 5 September 2016, <http://www.statista.com/statistics/249968/number-of-chinese-communist-party-ccp-members-in-china-by-employment/>.

Urbanisation

Over recent decades there has been an extensive urbanisation of the Chinese population, with 50% of the Chinese population permanently residing in urban areas in 2010, compared to just 21% in 1982.³⁰ In 2011, this figure rose to 51.27% and it is expected that by 2020 China will have an urbanisation rate of 60%.³¹ Therefore, the urbanisation of segments of the rural population is a key reason for the changes in the employment backgrounds of Party members identified by Dickson. This urbanisation is also a key element in achieving the goals of the China Dream concept.

In the *Report to the 17th CPC National Congress*, urbanisation with Chinese characteristics was identified as an important element of China's modernisation and development goals. This form of urbanisation requires 'the balanced development of large, medium-sized and small cities and towns' so that rural populations follow a 'rational distribution' when it comes to urbanisation.³² Clearly, the intention is not for all of China's rural population to move directly to large urban centres. Instead, a combination of different sized towns are being developed so that the rural population are (in theory) eased into this process. This tiered approach firstly includes small towns relying on rural-based industries that require workers with lower-level skills and educational backgrounds, while the medium and large cities will have more modern industries so they will require workers with higher level skill bases and educational backgrounds.³³ As a result, China's urbanisation has altered the employment backgrounds of Party members and this will continue as China's urbanisation program progresses.

³⁰ Lai, Hongyi, *China's Governance Model: flexibility and durability of pragmatic authoritarianism*, (Oxon: Routledge, 2016), 15.

³¹ Li, *The Chinese Path*, 140.

³² Cited in Li, *The Chinese Path*, 143-144.

³³ Ibid.

China's urbanisation policy has been successful in lifting people out of poverty. In 1980, 40% of China's population lived below the poverty line. As of 2009, this figure had dropped to just 11.8% of the population,³⁴ dropping to 6.5% in 2012.³⁵ However, the urbanisation policy has not been a totally smooth process. In 2010, Wright found there had been a marked decline in support for localised CCP rule among the rural population, when compared to other socioeconomic groups. Her research concluded that this decline in support had resulted from increasing human insecurity among the rural population resulting from economic insecurity caused by the post-Mao economic reforms.³⁶ Therefore, it is feasible that segments of the rural population have become disengaged from the Party in their localities. Wright identified excessive taxation and land seizures as the primary reasons behind incidents of turmoil (*dongluan*) among the rural population, arguing that these incidents demonstrate the tenuous nature of the CCP's support in rural China.³⁷ However, what is most interesting about her findings is that while these populations expressed discontent for local authorities, they remained highly committed to, and trusting of, the central government.³⁸

Inequalities within the system

One problematic finding by Wright is that among the rural population, those who are not politically connected are worse off than those who have political connections. For those without connections, they have to rely on farming; those with mid-level connections engage in a combination of farming, and those family members who are able to migrate for work and remit money home. However, those with solid political connections were found to have higher paying jobs in their locale, without the need to migrate for work or to rely on farm work.³⁹ Wright's research demonstrates that the right political connections remain increasingly important in contemporary China, a point we will return to shortly. However, her research also identifies the problematic nature of work and work opportunities in rural areas. Within the 800 million strong rural population, there is now an estimated surplus rural labour force of around 170-200 million people.⁴⁰ In addition, of those residing in rural areas who are not surplus labour, much of their equipment still consists of hand tools reflecting a pre-industrial form of farming that requires heavy labour. When combined with low profit margins for agricultural products and their low disposable incomes, this segment of the rural population have a long way to go in securing their position within a prosperous and modern China.⁴¹ In addition, this demographic could prove an especially vulnerable population if they are left outside of the China Dream, with no real opportunities for work in rural areas and if they have problems finding work in the urban towns and cities. As a result, their insecurity is a timely and pressing issue that both the central government and local CCP authorities must handle effectively if they are to quell localised unrest.

³⁴ Lai, *China's Governance Model*, 14. Note: this percentage was based on the World Bank's former \$1.25 per day poverty threshold. From 2015, this figure was raised to \$1.90 per day.

³⁵ This figure is calculated using the \$1.90 per day poverty threshold. World Bank Group, "China. Overview", *World Bank*, (2016), accessed 30 September 2016, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/china/overview#3>.

³⁶ Teresa Wright, "Tenuous tolerance in China's countryside", in *Chinese Politics: State, society and the market*, ed. Peter Hays Gries and Stanley Rosen (eds) (Oxon: Routledge, 2010), 118. It should be noted however that Wright cautioned that the rural population is a vast population with differing views based on both location and circumstance.

³⁷ Wright, "Tenuous tolerance", 118.

³⁸ *Ibid*, 110.

³⁹ *Ibid*, 116.

⁴⁰ Li, *The Chinese Path*, 107, 140.

⁴¹ *Ibid*. 107, 142.

Wang also identified income disparity, unemployment and corruption as key sources of unrest in contemporary rural China, with 87,000 protests about such issues recorded in 2005 alone.⁴² According to Lai, the number of protests recorded in 2006 numbered 90,000, but more recent statistics have not been provided by authorities.⁴³ Many of these incidents have been blamed on the harsh financial burdens caused by excessive taxation in agricultural China, and more recently, it has been land seizures that have been an important cause of mass protests and petitioning by the rural population.⁴⁴ Both Wright⁴⁵ and Chen⁴⁶ identify land seizures in rural areas to be a significant cause of mass protest among rural populations. Wang has warned that if this unrest is left unchecked, it could result in the overthrow of the Party and the possible disintegration of the Chinese state.⁴⁷ While these conclusions may be a little extreme, they are underpinned by the nature and size of these incidents of unrest, and expressions by the rural population for greater rights and freedoms during such periods of unrest.

Perhaps in response to their increased human insecurity due to the post-Mao reforms, Wright has argued that rural populations are increasingly motivated towards 'core democratic values such as free and fair elections, and freedom of speech and expression' when compared with other socio-economic groups.⁴⁸ This demonstrates their current circumstances, particularly their precarious situation in the face of local corruption, burdensome taxes and land seizures, may be motivating the rural population to become more politically aware and politically active. They are also becoming more aware of their legal rights. Lai states that over 38% of rural Chinese understood that the Constitution protected their legal private property and that over 60% of the rural population understood the Constitution not only protected their rights but that it was also in place to 'regulate state power'.⁴⁹ In addition, Lai also found that the people were more likely to assert their legal rights as groups, rather than individually, so they could enhance their negotiation power and they could be better protected in the process.⁵⁰ Therefore, those remaining members of the CCP's traditional heartland, the rural population, appear to be developing a tenuous relationship with the Party in the post-Mao reform era, and this must be a worrying trend for Beijing. One of the key reasons for concern here is that one of the fundamental pillars of the CCP is the success of the 1978 reforms.⁵¹ This pillar requires economic growth and returns for the people. This is why the rural population is such a key demographic in the CCP retaining their legitimacy.⁵²

⁴² To-far Wang, "China's economic development and its challenges", in *Rise of China: Beijing's strategies and implications for the Asia-Pacific*, ed. Hsin-Huang Michael Hsiao and Cheng-yi Lin, (Oxon: Routledge, 2009), 124.

⁴³ Lai, *China's Governance*, 99.

⁴⁴ Wright, "Tenuous tolerance"; Chen, Chih-jou Jay, "Growing social unrest and emergent protest groups in China", in *Rise of China: Beijing's strategies and implications for the Asia-Pacific*, ed. Hsin-Huang Michael Hsiao and Cheng-yi Lin, (Oxon: Routledge, 2009), 87-106.

⁴⁵ Wright, "Tenuous tolerance".

⁴⁶ Chen, "Growing social unrest", 87-106.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Wright, "Tenuous tolerance", 120.

⁴⁹ Lai, *China's Governance Model*, 87.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ According to Lai the other pillars include the unification of China following the Republican and warlord era and victory against the Japanese and other foreign states, repelling them from China making it a sovereign territory free from outside encroachment.

⁵² Brown, *Contemporary China*, 61.

Statistics on the employment background of Party members shows that CCP membership among both the professional and entrepreneurial classes has increased over the same period. This is understandable given the above discussion on urbanisation. However, there is a growing concern that CCP membership has become more about the privileges it offers, rather than it being a bastion of state ideology.⁵³ Indeed, Link has argued that people now join the CCP ‘to make connections and get ahead rather than for any kind of socialist ideals’ and that as a result of this ‘the party’s ideological foundation is really very hollow’.⁵⁴ Hence, the expected privileges must continue in order for membership to stay strong. However, these privileges often fall under the guise of official corruption and this is a problem that has long tarnished the reputation of the Party.

Teets, Gries and Rosen argued that the post-Mao reforms provided an increased opportunity for corruption, a position that is also supported by Wedeman.⁵⁵ Identifying that corruption takes many and varied forms in China, Teets, Gries and Rosen argued that ‘corruption stems from poor institutional design as well as economic and cultural reasons’.⁵⁶ In addition, like Wright and Chen, Teets, Gries and Rosen identified corrupt local practices such as the imposition of illicit fees and land seizures as being a key source of most protests across China.⁵⁷ In his analysis of China’s rising levels of corruption, as well as continued economic growth in the face of rising corruption, Wedeman identified the situation in China to be a paradox.⁵⁸ He characterised corruption in China as predatory corruption, whereby individuals or groups of individuals use skimming methods in order to increase their personal wealth. He argued that prior to reforms, this type of corruption was smaller in scale and usually involved petty bribery or seeking out entitlements or privileges. However, following the reform period corruption in China was fuelled by shortages, commodification along with large public works projects aimed at stimulating economic growth. In 1989, Beijing launched its ‘war on corruption’ in order to tackle the rising incidents of corruption across the state. Wedeman acknowledged that this campaign did prevent corruption from spiralling out of control. Nonetheless, this campaign has largely focused on tackling low-level corruption, allowing high-level corruption to continue to grow. High-level corruption provides long-term income streams for corrupt senior officials who weed out corrupt practices among lower-level officials in order to protect their income streams.⁵⁹ Therefore, according to Wedeman rising corruption in China was to be expected as China transformed from a command to a market economy.

Therefore, corruption is not an easy problem to solve as it has become a key problem within the Party, and one which is facilitated by the Party structure itself.⁶⁰ For Shue, Party corruption is particularly unpalatable to the Chinese population because an essential platform of the Party, which is used to reinforce its legitimacy, is that the Party is both selfless and

⁵³ Dickson, “Dilemmas of party adaptation”, 26.

⁵⁴ Cited in Anderlini, “How long can”.

⁵⁵ Wedeman, Andrew, *Double Paradox: Rapid Growth and Rising Corruption in China*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012).

⁵⁶ Teets, Jessica, Rosen, Stanley and Hays Griers, Peter, “Political change, contestation, and pluralization in China today”, in *Chinese Politics: State, society and the market*, ed. Peter Hays Gries and Stanley Rosen, (Oxon: Routledge, 2010), 52.

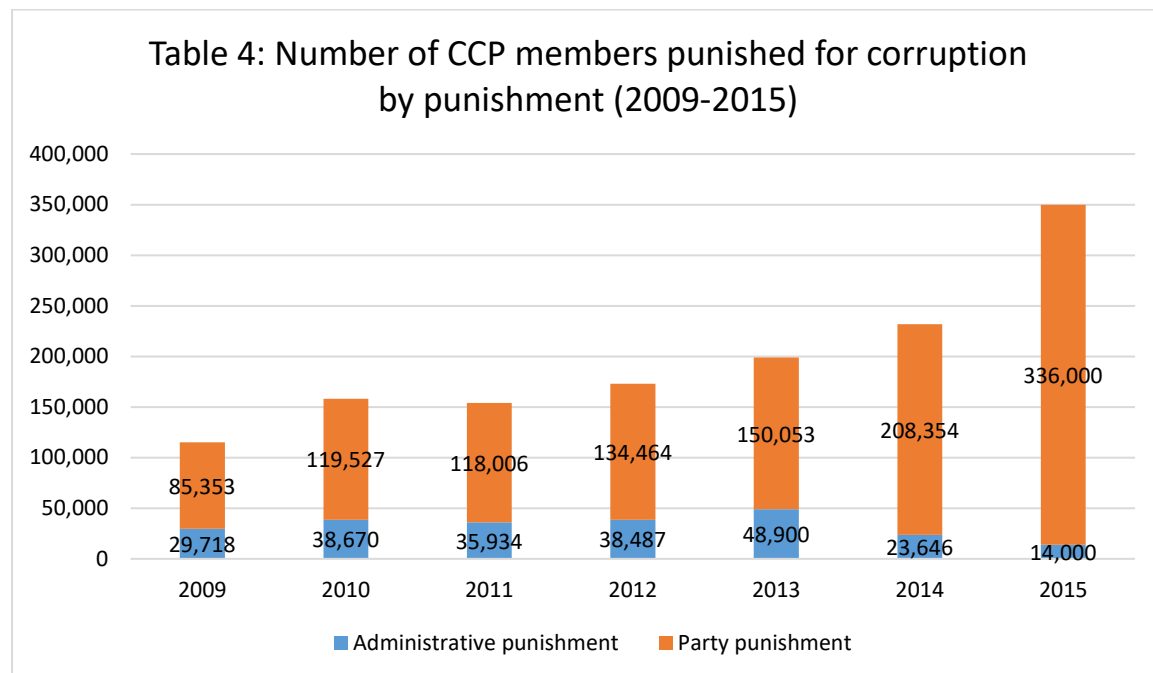
⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Wedeman, *Double Paradox*.

⁵⁹ Wedeman, *Double Paradox*, 12-13.

⁶⁰ Brown, *Contemporary China*, 65.

benevolent. Official corruption runs counter to this, reducing the legitimacy of the Party in the eyes of the people, providing a strong motivator for popular protest.⁶¹



Source: Statista, “Number of Chinese Communist Party (CCP) members punished for corruption in China from 2009 to 2015, by punishment”, *The Statistics Portal*, (2016), accessed 5 September 2016, <http://www.statista.com/statistics/250149/number-of-chinese-communist-party-ccp-officials-punished-for-corruption-in-china/>.

In response to the endemic nature of corruption in all levels of governance, one of Xi Jinping’s first campaigns was to begin that task of tackling corruption. This campaign has been unprecedented in scope and size and it has included not only government officials but also large corporations in China.⁶² In just two years (2013-2015), the number of CCP members punished for corruption had almost doubled (see Table 4), and the 2015 figure was three times higher than those punished for corruption in 2009.⁶³ Clearly, Xi recognises the danger corruption poses for the continued legitimacy of the Party. This is something other leaders have also recognised. Brown attributed former Premier Wen Jiabao as identifying corruption as one of the ‘greatest threats to the Party’s legitimacy’.⁶⁴ Lin Zhe, a Professor at the Central Party School in Beijing, also believes official corruption poses the biggest threat to the Party. She warned that official corruption ‘could lead to the demise of the party and the demise of the nation’.⁶⁵ However, Lai argues that Xi’s anti-corruption campaign is also aimed at bolstering his support among the people and that it has also been ‘a selective purge of political clients and allies of the former top leader Jiang Zemin’.⁶⁶ Whatever his motivations, the anti-corruption campaign is unlikely to stamp out corruption if it does not

⁶¹ Shue, Vivienne, “Legitimacy crisis in China?”, in *Chinese Politics: State, society and the market*, ed. Peter Hays Gries and Stanley Rosen, (Oxon: Routledge, 2010), 2.

⁶² Lai, *China’s Governance Model*, 294.

⁶³ Statista, “Number of Chinese Communist Party (CCP) members punished for corruption in China from 2009 to 2015, by punishment”, *The Statistics Portal*, (2016), accessed 5 September 2016, <http://www.statista.com/statistics/250149/number-of-chinese-communist-party-ccp-officials-punished-for-corruption-in-china/>.

⁶⁴ Brown, *Contemporary China*, 65.

⁶⁵ Cited in Anderlini, “How long can”.

⁶⁶ Lai, *China’s Governance Model*, 315.

include some degree of political reform as it is the current political structure that has allowed it to become endemic across China at all levels of governance.⁶⁷

Therefore, corruption, unrest and income inequality are serious sources of human insecurity that need to be effectively tackled. This is not something that has been overlooked by President Xi. In a speech delivered in 2012 he warned that the state needed ‘to ensure that all the people receive more of the fruits of reform and development and share in them more equitably’.⁶⁸ I would argue this is particularly salient for both the rural and urban poor in China, and overcoming inequality and tackling official corruption are also vital to securing the longevity of both the CCP and the Chinese state.

National dignity, human dignity and human rights

Complicating the domestic situation further however, is the increasingly interwoven nature of the China Dream and wider discussions of human dignity and human rights. Svennson has argued that although China has a rich history of discussion and debate on human rights stemming back to the Qing dynasty, this is often overlooked both inside and outside of China, or disregarded as being imposed by foreigners.⁶⁹ During the Maoist period, human rights was castigated as a ‘bourgeois slogan’ and the 1989 crackdown in Tiananmen further sensitised human rights in China, problematising its relations with other states. Svennson argued that since 1991, when Beijing released a White Paper endorsing human rights, there has been a recognition that human rights is part of a global language and that China must engage with that discussion, leading to the emergence of ‘human rights with Chinese characteristics’, essentially referring to an acceptance of greater rights within the ‘realities’ of the Chinese system, that is a one-Party authoritarian state.⁷⁰ In addition, discussions of human rights in China build on earlier Confucianist discussions of human dignity.⁷¹ Therefore, notions of human dignity and human rights do have a long tradition within China.

As a result of the China Dream concept extending beyond state-based conceptualisations linked to the rise of China to incorporate the notion of ‘rejuvenation’ in official discourse, there is an opportunity within the concept to engage more deeply with notions of human dignity and human rights, even to push an agenda within these aspects of the concept. While there are examples of Chinese citizens regarding the China Dream and talk of a Chinese renaissance as hollow official propaganda,⁷² the concept has inspired other individuals and

⁶⁷ Wang, “China’s economic development”, 123.

⁶⁸ Xi, *The Chinese Dream*, 51.

⁶⁹ Svennson, Marina, *Debating Human Rights in China: A Conceptual and Political History*, (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002).

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² There are many examples of online discussions of the China Dream concept where Chinese netizens (citizens of the Internet) discuss the China Dream and relevant policies. In one such discussion forum on sinablog, a netizen (Hantian) described the concept as ‘nonsense...a colourful bubble which could be broken anytime’. This netizen also stated that the CCTV reports on the China Dream were something that only ‘Laowai [foreigners] and those childlike naïve people believe’. Another netizen (lynnewrm) took a more positive approach stating ‘I understand that everyone has different dreams; when each of the Chinese people achieves their smaller dreams, the larger Chinese dream is not far away...’. These comments were made in response to a blog by littlesnowy who described her own views on the China Dream. One netizen, Hanya, stated that ‘Xi’s so-called China Dream is [an] emperor’s dream, no [C]hinese people’s dream. [It] will be a nightmare’ while Hantian stated he/she does not believe in dreams, only ‘...money, money, money!’. For the full blog discussion see littlesnowy, “What is your China Dream?”, *Sina*, (18 March 2013), accessed 30 September 2016, http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_729e13d60101i0d9.html

organisations to embrace these elements and to gently push for greater rights. According to the China Society for Human Rights Study, Xi's China Dream speech has influenced the domestic conversation on human rights. They stated:

It [China Dream concept] not only represents a dream of national rejuvenation and prosperity and the people's wellbeing that has been pursued from generation to generation in China, but also a dream of human rights for which Chinese people has [sic] long strived.⁷³

They then go on to state:

...Chinese President Xi Jinping has pointed out that the China Dream belongs to the state, the nation, and every Chinese. That is to say, we are pursuing not only the dignity of the state and nation, but also the dignity of every Chinese. Dignity is a matter of human rights. Human rights are categorized into collective and individual rights. We advocate the integration of collective and individual human rights, and oppose to using either of them to deny the other. Therefore, we not only advocate the dignity of the state and nation, but also the dignity of every person. History has proven that without the dignity of the state and nation, any individual cannot gain personal dignity, and that a country or nation won't win dignity from the outside world if it doesn't respect and protect personal dignity of its citizens.⁷⁴

The linking of the China Dream to both state and individual aspirational goals is interesting here because this could put the Party in a problematic position. Aspirational goals are only motivational when there is a belief they truly will come to pass. Therefore, since the original articulation of the China Dream concept, the 100-year anniversary of the foundation of the PRC has become even more important to how this concept has evolved domestically. 2049 has fast become the deadline for the realisation of the China Dream. In addition, through the linking of the China Dream to human dignity, development and human rights, a further layer has been added to the concept, one that may not necessarily have been intended in its original articulation. Notions of dignity, increasing wealth and human rights are particularly attractive concepts to China's ever-burgeoning middle class who Fukuyama has stated are increasingly motivated by desires for 'clean air, clean water, safe food and other issues that can't just be solved by fast economic growth'.⁷⁵ Indeed, one of the netizens in the aforementioned blog discussion identified his/her China Dream as 'a clean world with no avian influenza and [swine flu]'.⁷⁶ Therefore, by extending the China Dream beyond just increasing the economic and political power of the Chinese state, to include explicit statements related to national rejuvenation, dignity, and the achievement of personal fulfilment,⁷⁷ the China Dream concept appears to be evolving to include these rather sensitive domestic matters. Therefore, given much of this concept relies on continued economic growth to fuel both state and individual prosperity, China's economic health is an important consideration.

⁷³ Li, Junru, "The China Dream: A dream of human rights of Chinese People", *Chinese Society for Human Rights Studies*, (November 2 2014), accessed 22 June 2015, http://www.chinahumanrights.org/html/2014/PAPERS_1102/1062.html

⁷⁴ Ibid.

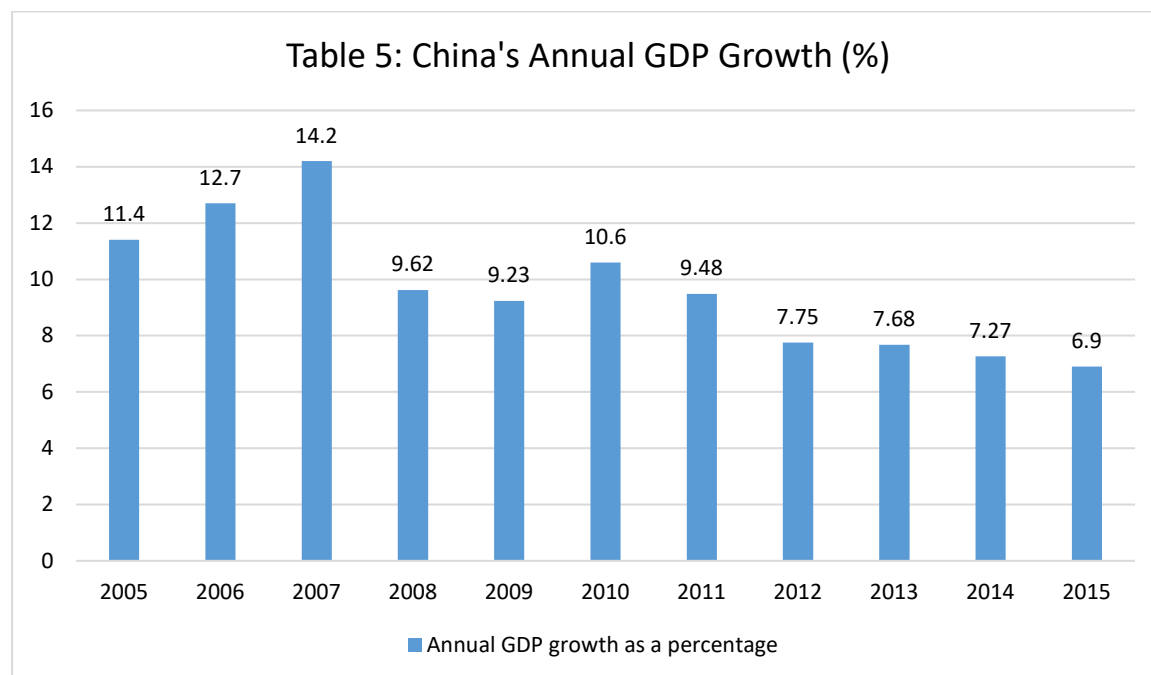
⁷⁵ Cited in Anderlini, "How long can".

⁷⁶ LittleSnowy, "What is your China Dream?".

⁷⁷ Several speeches in Xi, *The Chinese Dream*.

Economic dimensions

China's economy has greatly improved since the implementation of the post-Mao reforms. According to the World Bank, the Chinese economy is the world's second largest economy by nominal GDP at US\$10.35 trillion.⁷⁸ In addition, until the Global Financial Crisis, China had been experiencing an annual GDP growth in excess of 10% per annum,⁷⁹ well above the targeted 7% per annum set by earlier growth targets. Furthermore, during this same period of increasing economic growth, there have also been some solid developments in China's Inequality-Adjusted Human Development Index (IHDI) ranking.⁸⁰ In 2014, China was ranked at 90 on the IHDI, signalling solid increases in life expectancy, education, and per capita income across China.⁸¹ However, given the world's largest state economy, the US, was ranked at 8th position globally for the IHDI there is still a considerable gap between the human development markers of the world's two largest economies. Therefore, in order for China to reach or surpass the US when it comes to the IHDI, it still has a long journey ahead of it. A higher IHDI ranking is important when accounting for China's power in a global sense as the higher a state is ranked on the IHDI, the more developed it is. This development is linked to stability. Therefore, China's IHDI ranking needs to improve if it is to truly be on par with the leading economies.



Source: The World Bank Group, "GDP Growth (annual %): China", *The World Bank*, (2016), accessed 5 September 2016, <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG?end=2015&locations=CN&start=2003>.

⁷⁸ The World Bank Group, "China", *The World Bank*, (2016), accessed 22 June 2016, <http://data.worldbank.org/country/china>.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ I have chosen to use the Inequality-Adjusted Human Development Index for this paper. The Human Development Index uses data on per capita income, life expectancy and education to provide a composite statistic on potential human development for states. The Inequality-Adjusted Human Development Index uses similar calculations as the HDI composite statistic, however it also includes current measures of inequality to provide the actual level of human development existing within a state. This choice has little impact on this particular research however as China is currently ranked 90 for both HDI and IHDI.

⁸¹ United Nations Development Program, *Human Development Report 2015: Work for human development*, (2015), accessed 22 June 2016, <http://hdr.undp.org/en/2015-report>.

Moreover, while the early 2000s saw a strong increase in China's annual GDP growth it was stalled by the Global Financial Crisis. While it recovered slightly in 2010/2011, annual GDP growth has been decreasing since 2012 and in 2015 China's annual GDP growth dropped to just 6.9%⁸² (see Table 5). The World Bank has predicted this trend will continue into the foreseeable future, with annual GDP growth in China possibly falling as low as 6.3% in 2018.⁸³ This economic downturn could be the biggest causal factor in the China Dream falling short of its intended goals. In addition, it could also cause serious ruptures across the Chinese population if the economic downturn becomes protracted.

According to Mao, a retired macro-economist, domestic expectations of continued economic success in China are currently very high and the CCP's economic record has now become a key factor in how the Chinese population regard the Party. It would seem that people are prepared to tolerate the restrictions posed by the Party if they continue to receive economic dividends. Brown has identified this as a social contract between the CCP and the people and that '[a]s long as there is good economic growth...the majority of the people will probably live with the status quo rather than seek disruptive change that might threaten their lifestyles'.⁸⁴ In addition, due to the continued economic achievements experienced since the introduction of the Four Modernisations, and China's economic boom in the early 2000s, continued economic growth has become the expected norm among the Chinese population and it has also now become intrinsically tied to the legitimacy of the regime.⁸⁵ Given no state can control their national economy in its entirety, or shelter it from the impacts of global downturns or financial crises, such high expectations based on performance are highly problematic for the CCP and achieving the China Dream.

Conclusion

The China Dream is a concept that appears to have taken on new meanings in China since its original articulation. This concept has evolved beyond more than simply encompassing the economic and political goals of the Chinese state. Furthermore, it is a concept that is as much about the domestic situation in China and the CCP itself, as it is about China's foreign policies and aspirational goals. Clearly, the post-Mao reforms in China have been highly successful and most segments of the Chinese population are enjoying higher standards of living and economic security in the contemporary era. However, there are pockets of dissent among the traditional heartland of the CCP, the rural population and workers, and their membership in the Party has reduced. In their place are members of the professional and entrepreneurial classes, many of whom are joining the Party for its connections, rather than its firm ideological underpinnings. These privileges often go hand-in-hand with corruption, a problem that poses serious challenges to the legitimacy of the Party. In addition, the inclusion of national rejuvenation and human dignity into the official discourse on economic and political goals may have been an attempt at inciting nationalism among the masses. However, this is now leading the Chinese to ponder what their Chinese Dreams are and this is being enmeshed in discussions of human dignity, human rights, and human security. In addition, given the earmarking of 2049 as the date by which the goals of the China Dream should be fully realised, the CCP is now on a timeline to fulfil these dreams of prosperity and national

⁸² The World Bank Group, "GDP Growth (annual %): China", *The World Bank*, (2016), accessed 5 September 2016, <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG?end=2015&locations=CN&start=2003>.

⁸³ United Nations Development Program, *Human Development*.

⁸⁴ Brown, *Contemporary China*, 81.

⁸⁵ Anderlini, "How long can".

strength. These are lofty aspirational goals for a state that still has some way to go in securing human development on par with its nearest economic competitors. Therefore, it is worthwhile debating whether or not the China Dream can be fully realised in this timeframe, especially given China's recent economic downturn. To that end, perhaps the China Dream has been overly ambitious with regards to its stated goals and timelines.