



10-1-2012

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Recommended Citation

Jie, Yu (2012) "Not a Clash of Civilizations, But a Clash Between the Civilized and the Uncivilized," *Comparative Civilizations Review*: Vol. 67 : No. 67 , Article 10.

Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/ccr/vol67/iss67/10>

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Not a Clash of Civilizations, But a Clash Between the Civilized and the Uncivilized

Yu Jie

Since the late Harvard University political science professor Samuel Huntington published the theory of a "clash of civilizations", the Chinese Communist Party has been using it to explain China's relationship with the West. This theory has become the Chinese Communist Party's best shield.

The Chinese Communist Party has skillfully transformed the difference of two systems, Chinese autocracy as opposed to Western democracy, into to a clash of civilizations -- the conflict between the Chinese civilization and Western civilization. But as a matter of fact, the Chinese Communists cannot represent the Chinese civilization. Communist China's ideology and way of ruling are learned from the West, especially from the radical tradition rooted in the French Revolution and the Marxist - Leninist - Stalinist system.

Unfortunately, many scholars outside China have mistakenly believed that China has a unique cultural tradition which inevitably corresponds to autocracy. The fact is that South Korea and Taiwan both belong to the so-called "Confucian cultural circle" Yet, both have successfully transplanted the western democratic system into their countries.

Through public relations and publicity, the Chinese Communist authorities have camouflaged themselves so that they look entirely different from the former Soviet Union. This causes the democratic world to relax its vigilance and defense.

The Chinese Communist regime's penetration of the West far exceeds that conducted by the former Soviet Union. In the Cold War era, the Soviet Union was blocked behind the Iron Curtain; there were few links between the Soviet and Western economies. An average American family would not be using products "made in the USSR." Today, China is deeply embedded within the globalized system. A book by an American journalist published recently detailed a year of the author's refusal to buy products that were "made in China" and the many difficulties she encountered as a result of this decision.

On the surface, the West has profited from its trade with China. Western consumers can buy vast quantities of cheap Chinese products. However, fundamental values of the West are quietly being eroded: Who knows if the American flag flying outside your home was manufactured by inmates in Chinese prisons or by child labor?

In January of this year, I was forced to leave China. When I arrived in the United States, I thought I had escaped the reach of Beijing. However, I soon came to realize that the

Chinese government's shadow continues to be omnipresent. Several U.S. universities that I have contacted dare not invite me for a lecture, as they cooperate with China on many projects. Thus, if you are a scholar of Chinese studies who has criticized the Communist Party, it would be impossible for you to be involved in research projects with the Chinese-funded Confucius Institute, and you may even be denied a Chinese visa. On the contrary, if you praise the Communist Party, not only would you receive ample research funding but you might also be invited to visit China and even received by high-level officials. In this way, western academic freedom has been distorted by invisible hands.

I believe that China is a far greater threat than the former Soviet Union ever was; unfortunately, now the West lacks visionary politicians like Ronald Reagan to stand up to this threat. President Obama might perceive the Chinese Communist Party as a tiger that does not bite. As a winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, will Obama openly request that China release Liu Xiaobo, a Nobel Peace laureate imprisoned by the Communist Party? Why did Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton have the courage to meet with Burma's Aung San Suu Kyi but not to meet with Liu? Is it because Burma is weak, while China is strong?

The Chinese Communist Party remains a tiger that will bite. My life was endangered in the last few years for publishing a book critical of Chinese Premier Wen Jiabo – titled “China's Best Actor - Wen Jiabo” and for drafting “Charter 08” with Liu Xiaobo, especially after he was awarded the Nobel Prize. I was hooded and captured by the secret police, and I was nearly tortured to death. I would have died if I had been sent to the hospital ten minutes later.

Since then, dozens of lawyers and writers have been subjected to brutal tortures; some have contracted severe pneumonia after being held in front of fans blowing cold air and then being baked by an electric furnace. The secret police threatened me, saying that they had a list of 200 anticommunist party intellectuals whom they were ready to arrest and bury alive. This means that I could have been buried alive simply for pursuing freedom of speech and religion.

Over the past year, the number of political prisoners in China has increased, and the jail sentences have become longer, yet Western voices of protest have become weaker. Not only is Liu Xiaobo still being held in prison -- After Aung San Suu Kyi's release, Liu Xiaobo is the world's only Nobel peace prize winner who is held in prison; and Liu's wife, Liu Xia, has been held under illegal house arrest for more than a year. And the world simply stands and watches as this is happening.

Internal harsh repression and external rapid expansion are two sides of a coin. Communist China vetoed the UN resolution on Syria recently because a massacre similar to the Damascus massacre is happening in Tibet. Since the beginning of this

year, more than 40 Tibetans have immolated themselves due to despair. In the past, the self-immolation of several Vietnamese monks caused the anti-Vietnam War movement to spread across the globe. Today, the self-immolation of the Tibetan monks did not seem to arouse much sympathy or support in the world.

Between the civilized and the uncivilized -- between democracy and autocracy -- conflict, even war, is unavoidable. Therefore, promoting the democratization of China not only is in line with the spirit of the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights, it is also in the national interests of democratic countries. More than a century ago, Westerners described China as a "sleeping tiger;" today, it is the West that has fallen asleep. As an independent writer and as a Christian member of a "house church," I have the responsibility to tell the truth and to try to wake up the West: The Chinese Communist is still a man-eating tiger.