



Georgina Higuera

Journalist specialized in Asian International Affairs.

E-mail: g.higuera@hotmail.com

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DISSENT AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN CHINA

The Chinese government still considers the massacre that occurred on the 4th of June 1989 a taboo subject and rejects the petitions of the victims' families, especially the petition presented by the NGO 'Mothers of Tiananmen', to investigate the military intervention in Beijing's central square that aimed to bring nearly two months of student protests to an end. The crisis, in which several hundred people lost their lives – the exact number may never be known – marked a turning point in relations between the Communist Party of China (CPC) and the people. Chinese dissent is nourished by Tiananmen. This is the case both inside the country – because the dissidents are still fighting against the same evils that the students denounced at the time; and outside the country – because many dissidents were involved in the protests and took refuge in Western countries.

China, dissent, human rights, corruption, Tiananmen, Communist Party of China (CPC), Liu Xiaobo, Ai Weiwei, USA, Nobel Prize, Sakharov Prize

DISSENT AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN CHINA

THE BEIJING SPRING

The People's Republic of China, established by Mao Zedong in 1949, remained closed off to the world until December 1978 when Deng Xiaoping imposed his policy of the 'Four Modernisations' (agriculture, industry, defence, and science and technology) and the 'Open Door Policy' on the Communist Party of China (CPC). These policies lifted his country out of autarky and poverty and converted it, in the second trimester of 2010, into the second global economic power. But while the government was busy debating the type of market system that would be able to adapt to national circumstances, this process of opening up to the outside world allowed for the infiltration of western ideas and values that had remained unknown up until that point to almost all Chinese nationals – values such as the defence of human rights. It was during this period that the Democracy Wall emerged. So-called by international journalists, it was a fence that ran through the centre of Beijing and that began to be covered daily by *dazibao* (big-character posters) that expressed, anonymously, the demands of the people and criticisms of the CPC.

“The freedom of expression that had been so terribly repressed up until that point found its specific escape valve in the Democracy Wall”¹. However, the tolerance the party showed towards the multiplicity of ideas that were appearing on the wall started to wear off after Wei Jingsheng, a former Red Guard, dared to sign a *dazibao* in which he called for the Fifth Modernisation – individual freedoms. The bravery he showed in emerging from anonymity led him straight to prison in March 1979. Wei was sentenced to 15 years imprisonment. His imprisonment dampened the blossoming of freedoms, which led to that winter being christened the Beijing Spring. The Democracy Wall was definitively closed down in November 1979.

Wei Jingsheng could be considered to be the first dissident in the new China. He was released from prison in 1993 but was imprisoned again in 1995 due to his defence of the rights of the Tibetan people. Eventually, in 1997, he was deported to the United States where he currently lives. The European Parliament awarded him the Sakharov

1 HIGUERAS, Georgina, *China La venganza del dragón*, Barcelona: Península, 2003, p. 35

Prize in 1996 as a “symbol of the struggle for democracy in China and of the dialogue with the Tibetans”².

Over and above the CPC’s slogan “to get rich is glorious”, many Chinese launched their own personal search during the 1980s. And from this point, personal freedoms, emancipation of the mind, and human rights were placed in the spotlight of the battle between conservatives and liberals at the head of the CPC. Millions of urban youth who, during the previous decade had been sent to the countryside and had embraced the radical spirit of the Maoist communes, returned to their cities of origin to find themselves lost and disorientated in this new reality. “Many began to express their bewilderment through narratives, theatre plays, rock songs, poems, paintings, stories and films; some of which were censured by party officials, although most of them circulated more freely than at any other point since 1949”³.

The conservative wing couldn’t stand this level of “licentiousness” and, in the interests of ensuring that there would be no backtracking in the market economy system that the liberals considered a priority for their strategy of modernisation of the country, the liberals accepted the implementation of two significant repressive campaigns: one against “‘spiritual contamination’ and the other against ‘ideological pollution’”. Through these campaigns, they aimed to place limitations on any deviation that tried to integrate capitalist middle-class concepts into Chinese life. In the areas of culture, ideology, morals, and politics, the Chinese socialist guidelines were to be strictly followed; and for economics and trade, the successful Western way of doing things could be used.

Despite these campaigns, Chinese youth became more and more critical and independent with each passing day. University students, conscious of the fact that they were the elite of the future China, looked ever more insistently towards the West, searching for alternative thought systems. Hu Yaobang, General Secretary of the CPC, supported the student demonstrations that took place at the end of 1986 – demonstrations that demanded greater transparency in the selection process of provincial leaders. Hu’s “swing to the right” unleashed the wrath of the conservatives, who demanded that Deng Xiaoping bring an immediate end to his protégé. In January 1987, Hu was forced to resign and to self-criticise. The fear of a revolt that would bring an end to the CPC’s leadership was very clear at the time.

“Seeing how the political environment was becoming increasingly repressive, the young generations of Chinese lost hope. More and more of them were leaving, mainly as post

² See <http://www.radicalparty.org/es/content/el-parlamento-europeo-concede-el-premio-sakharov-al-mas-celebre-disidente-chino-wei-jingshen> Consulted: 17/05/2014

³ SPENCE, Jonathan D., *The Search for Modern China*, Barcelona: Tusquets Editores, 2011, p. 897

graduate students, for the United States"⁴. It was in this climate that the diatribes of astro-physicist Fang Lizhi (1936-2012) on human rights abuses, the lack of democracy in China and the importance of values of education, free thinking and creativity turned into the breeding ground for the new wave of student protests that started in April 1989 in Tiananmen central square (Gate of Heavenly Peace).

TIANANMEN

Tiananmen became a melting pot for the malaise of the university elite and that of many other citizens who were unhappy with the increased corruption, nepotism, inequalities, unemployment, and inflation – which led to basic products increasing in price to such an extent as to place them out of the reach of many families. The protests started on the 15 April when thousands of students gathered in Beijing's central square to defend the removed Hu Yaobang, who had died of natural causes, and to hold to account his political rival and prime minister, Li Peng – the principal representative of the Maoist orthodoxy. Li Peng refused to receive the students and so they decided to camp out at Tiananmen until he agreed.

One month later, with tens of thousands of people camped out, the capital almost paralysed by the demonstrations and the radical left seizing power at the highest level, the Secretary General of the CPC went down to the square with the impossible aim of reaching an agreement and avoiding martial law from being decreed. "Beijing residents were particularly aggrieved by the decision to call troops to Beijing to execute martial law [20 May 1989]...Groups of old ladies and children slept on the roads. Troops were stopped in the suburbs of Beijing, unable to enter the city. The standoff lasted more than 10 days"⁵.

4 WEI LIANG, Diane, *Lake With No Name: A True Story Of Love And Conflict In Modern China*, Madrid: Maeva Ediciones, 2004, p. 91

5 ZHAO Ziyang, *Prisoner of the State: The Secret Journal of Premier Zhao Ziyang*, Granada: Algón Editores, 2011, p. 77



A man tries to halt a column of tanks that is advancing towards Tiananmen Square on the morning of the 4 June 1989.

On the morning of the 4 June, the largest violation of Chinese human rights was committed when tanks fired at unarmed civilians. The Tiananmen massacre, which remains uninvestigated, marked a before and an after in the relations between the only party and the population that “has been present in the evolution of China”⁶ and became a huge taboo from the side of the national police force that increasingly needed the catharsis it would have got from a real investigation of the events.

The following day, the US embassy in Beijing took in Fang Lizhi and his family, making the dissident, according to Henry Kissinger, the “symbol of the division between the United States and China”⁷. Fang, who hadn’t been present at Tiananmen although his principals were indeed represented there – such as the freedom of expression being “a right, not a gift from the authorities” – was accused of “crimes of counterrevolutionary propaganda and incitement, before and after recent disturbances”. He took refuge in the embassy for one year until he was allowed to go into exile in the United Kingdom, although he actually moved to the USA. Years later, he criticised the government that received him for being concerned only with doing business with China, without

6 FANJUL, Enrique, *Memoria de Tiananmen Una primavera de Pekín*, Iberglobal Ebooks, 2014

7 KISSINGER, Henry, *China*, Barcelona: Debate, 2011, p. 443

taking into account the human rights situation in the most-populated country in the world.

The main activist group made up of the victims' relatives was the Tiananmen Mothers group – formed to demand an investigation of the events of the 4 June 1989. The group was led by Ding Zilin until, in 2014 aged 79, she passed the baton on to You Weijie, 61, whose husband died from a gunshot wound on that tragic morning. “I’m guessing that I will become a target for the authorities. But it was totally wrong of the government to suppress the democratic movement with violence... I want everyone, [the Tiananmen Mothers], the [local] police, the state security police, and myself, to sit down and discuss the human rights situation in China”⁸, she declared on the 18 April 2014 to the American propaganda station Radio Free Asia.

The Chinese government, in response to international sanctions and the intense pressure from states and NGOs, published its first White Paper on Human Rights in China in 1991. The text interpreted Chinese legislation from a governmental point of view, which gives priority to subsistence and economic development as a precondition to be able to fully enjoy human rights. According to the Carnegie Council for Ethics in International Affairs, Chinese policy in this field is reactive and not proactive; but despite the fact that the publication of the White Paper came more as a response to external pressures, its importance can be seen in the fact that “for the first time human rights was viewed as something all human beings share in common”⁹. This innovative idea was a significant step forward in normalising dialogue between China and her Western partners on human rights.

Today, 25 years after Tiananmen, a large number of Chinese dissidents in exile are those who were involved in the protests that ended in such a bloody manner – including student leaders such as Wang Dan Chai Ling or Wu’erkaixi. “They have joined older dissidents from previous mutinies in one of the largest political diasporas in history, comparable to that of the French Huguenots in the seventeenth century, Russians after 1919, Germans after 1933, or Hungarians and Czechs in the 1950s and 1960s”¹⁰.

Also living in the USA are Yu Dongyue, who was imprisoned for 17 years for throwing red paint on the portrait of Mao that presides over the entrance to the Forbidden City from the largest square in the world, and Yang Jianli, who returned to China in 2002 on a friend’s passport and was detained when trying to board a

8 <http://www.rfa.org/english/women/tiananmen-04182014105018.html> Consulted: 17/05/2014

9 See https://www.carnegiecouncil.org/publications/archive/dialogue/1_03/articles/515.html
Consulted: 17/05/2014

10 BURUMA, Ian, *Bad Elements: Chinese Rebels from Los Angeles to Beijing*, Barcelona, Península, 2001, p. 31

domestic flight. Yang, sentenced in 2004 to five years imprisonment for espionage and illegal entry into China, was released in 2007 and returned to the USA.

The pain and the disillusionment that the events of Tiananmen caused the Chinese youth to feel led to thousands of university students starting their professional lives in the USA, Canada, Europe, Australia and Taiwan. Many of them participated, more or less actively, in fora, foundations, NGOs and internet sites that advocated for the defence of human rights, governance and the rule of law in China.

When analysing Beijing's approach to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, proclaimed in 1948 by the United Nations General Assembly, we should bear in mind the fact that the Confucian principals, upon which social philosophy stands in China, value the individual as a harmonious part of society to a greater extent than as an individual. Susan Trevaskes, Adjunct Director with the Australian Centre for China in the World, states that both internally and externally, Chinese official line on human rights is based on three pillars¹¹.

a) "Non-interference", a concept that calls for the international community to respect the domestic jurisdiction of each country, especially in relation to sensitive matters such as human rights and ethnic minorities.

b) "Mutuality of rights and duties" as established by Article 33 of China's 1982 Constitution. This article makes rights inseparable from the duties prescribed by the Constitution and other laws. In 2004, the article was revised and the statement that "the state respects and protects human rights" was added, although no further explanations were given.

c) "Citizens' economic and social rights take precedence over their political and civil rights", in accordance with what was established by the Human Rights White Paper in 1991.

This restrictive interpretation of individual freedoms – specifically the freedom of expression and associations – means that in China there is a minority movement in support of human rights constantly at boiling point. The main representatives of this movement are frequently harassed by the authorities and are vulnerable to arbitrary detentions for the mere fact of expressing their opinion in a peaceful manner. In addition, the spectacular economic progress pushed by the government, with the aim of removing "more than 600 million people" ¹² from poverty, has opened a chasm between the rich and the poor, infinitely multiplying corruption and tolerating abuses against the most vulnerable groups in society by cold-blooded businessmen, civil

¹¹ See <http://www.thechinastory.org/agenda2013/human-rights-and-politics/> Consulted: 17/05/2014

¹² LIN, Yifu, China's potential for sustained dynamic growth, in LEONARD, Mark, *CHINA* 3.0, European Council on Foreign Relations, p, 53

servants and local authorities. This situation has fed the appearance of thousands of activists and trade unionists, standing up in protest at illegal working conditions.

During the first decade of the 21st century, while the government was trying to improve China's image abroad with the 2008 Olympic Games and the World Expo in Shanghai in 2010, shows of discontent and protest demonstrations were increasing exponentially inside the country. According to the Academy of Social Sciences of China, the protests were spread across the whole of the country and there were an average of 180,000 demonstrations per year; some with hundreds of participants, others with up to 50,000 demonstrators.

Many of those who took to the streets were peasants who had lost their land in the name of the 'common good', but whose fields in reality served to fill the pockets of businessmen and civil servants. "From the beginning of the 80s, between 30 and 40 million Chinese peasants suffered land expropriations. For more than half of them, these expropriations led to a drop in their standard of living"¹³. The activist Yang Chulin, author of numerous articles defending land rights, was detained in 2007 after launching the campaign 'We want human rights and not Olympics', and was sentenced to five years imprisonment the following year for "inciting subversion against State power".

LIU XIAOBO AND THE 'CHARTER 08'

The best-known Chinese dissident is the winner of the 2010 Nobel Peace Prize, Liu Xiaobo, an uncompromising defender of freedoms and democracy. He was sentenced to 11 years imprisonment in 2009 as the driving force behind the drafting of *Charter 08*, a declaration signed by 300 Chinese intellectuals that was published in December 2008. The document demanded the government implement democratic reforms, such as bringing an end to the single party regime, an independent judicial system, and freedom of expression, association, religion and press. It was inspired by the *Charter 77*, written by Václav Havel together with a group of Czechoslovak dissidents, that remained influential right up until the Velvet Revolution that brought down the communist regime.

The Norwegian committee that awarded the Nobel Prize to the Chinese activist stated that they were awarding it for "his long and peaceful fight for fundamental

13 POCH DE FELIU, Rafael, *La actualidad de China: Un mundo en crisis, una sociedad en gestación*, Barcelona: Crítica, 2009, p. 317

human rights in China”¹⁴. For Beijing, however, the prize was an “obscenity”. The government rejected the petitions for clemency sent in by numerous international NGOs and heads of state, such as US president Barack Obama, and prevented Liu Xiaobo, his wife Liu Xia, or any other relative or friend of the political prisoner from travelling to Oslo to receive the prize – which, for the first time in 75 years, was placed on an empty chair. Amnesty International (AI) continues to push for Liu Xiaobo’s release, and has also set up a wide-reaching campaign in support of poet Liu Xia who has been under “illegal house arrest”¹⁵ since her husband was imprisoned.

Another well-known dissident is writer Harry Wu, author of several books including *Bitter Winds*¹⁶, an autobiography in which he describes the more than 20 years he spent in confinement in various ‘reform-through-labour’ camps (*laogai*) and ‘re-education-through-labour’ camps (*laojiao*). A relentless campaigner against the abuses, torture and violations of human rights that the Chinese system of camps and prisons supposed, Wu created the Laogai Research Foundation in the USA, the country to which he was exiled. The foundation, of which Wu is still the executive director, publishes cases of abuses of human rights on its website.

On 28 December 2013, the National People’s Congress (NPC), that doubles as the Parliament in China, formally approved the decision proposed by the CPC’s new leaders – Xi Jinping, General Secretary and Head of State, and Li Keqiang, member of the Politburo Standing Committee and prime minister – to abolish the reform-and re-education-through-labour camps, in which citizens could be detained for up to four years without trial. Human Rights Watch (HRW) and other NGOs always denounced the fact that these camps and other “secret and illegal detention centres, known as ‘black jails’”¹⁷ violated international human rights law and that torture and other abuses are “endemic” in these places. According to figures published by the Ministry of Justice, in 2008 there were 310 re-education camps with a total of 160,000 prisoners; the state television channel CCTV, however, placed the number of inmates at 310,000.

Abolishing the *laogai* is certainly a step in the right direction, but Amnesty International and Human Rights in China – an NGO based in the USA – both maintain that there is still a long way to go as regards independence of the legal system. They criticise the arbitrary detentions and arrests of critics of the state and/or of the

¹⁴ http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/ Consulted: 17/05/2014

¹⁵ <https://www.es.amnesty.org/actua/acciones/china-liberen-liu-xia/> Consulted: 17/05/2014

Wu, Harry, *Bitter Winds*, Barcelona: Libros del Asteroide, 2008

¹⁶ <http://www.hrw.org/es/news/2011/01/11/china-human-rights-action-plan-fails-deliverchina-decepciona-plan-de-acci-n-de-derec>

¹⁷ <http://www.hrw.org/es/news/2011/01/11/china-human-rights-action-plan-fails-deliverchina-decepciona-plan-de-acci-n-de-derec> Consulted: 16/05/2014

CPC; these people are faced with the danger of being sentenced to lengthy prison terms for exercising their right to freedom of expression and belief, for writing their opinions on a blog or talking to foreign journalists about sensitive issues for China.

This is what happened with activist Hu Jia, sentenced to a three and a half year prison term for “subversion”, due to comments made in various online fora and due to interviews with foreign media channels where he criticised the human rights situation in China, the functioning of the health system, and abuses against construction workers – while the state was concerned merely with making an impact on the international stage with the Olympic Games. Supported by ‘Reporters Without Borders Spain’ following his detention, the European Parliament awarded Hu Jia the Sakharov Prize in 2008 and thus “firmly and resolutely acknowledged the daily struggle for freedom of all Chinese human rights defenders”¹⁸. The dissident was released in June 2011. Before this last sentence, Hu Jia had suffered shorter periods of detention and house arrests, along with his wife Zeng Jinyan.

The Chinese government, while considering the internet an essential tool for the economic, technological, scientific and defence development of the country, tries to stop the web from being used by the dissident movement to discredit the CPC and to bring the political system into question. In their effort to ‘stem the tide’, they have the highest number of cyber police in the world and large internet companies accept the filters and conditions that China imposes on them in order not to lose out on a market of 600 million internet users. Getting past these filters and outsmarting the censors has become a national sport, with millions of internet users dedicated to creating a cryptic language that will allow them to communicate with one another. And so, the 4 June – the anniversary of the Tiananmen Square massacre – is known as the 35 May. They also adopt turns of phrase for important CPC slogans that the censors can’t delete and that then circulate among activists and their sympathisers with different meanings, such as in the case of “build a harmonious society”, one of the main government slogans. Internet users say “non-harmonious” to warn against a detention or any other type of danger.

The dissident who has best exploited the inventiveness and plays on words to which the Chinese language lends itself so well is the plastics artist Ai Weiwei. Ai Weiwei, son of one of the most prestigious Chinese poets of the 20th century – Ai Qing, was favoured by the regime which entrusted him with the design of the Olympic

¹⁸ http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+IM-PRESS+20090925_FCS61218+0+DOC+XML+Vo//ES&language=ES#title3 Consulted: 16/05/2014

Stadium. Transformed into an *enfant terrible*, Ai Weiwei has taken his harsh criticisms of Chinese censorship to all four corners of the planet; and even uploaded photos of himself naked, as well as a video in which he is dancing with friends in his garden to *Gangnam Style* by South Korean rapper Psy. In the video he altered the lyrics of the song to *Caonima style*¹⁹, a controversial term that literally means “grass, mud, horse” or llama (the Andean animal), but in Mandarin sounds like an insult: “f*ck your mother”; and he supposedly uses this to criticise the government for having detained him and kept him in solitary confinement for three months, after having accused him of tax fraud.

ONE CHILD POLICY

In the name of the one child policy, introduced by China in 1979 to limit population growth, serious atrocities have been committed against the intimacy and rights of Chinese women for decades, including against their right to unrestricted reproduction. Many activists have denounced forced abortions, as well as the existence of thousands of ‘clandestine’ girls who have not been registered so as to give their parents the opportunity of having a son through a second pregnancy. One of these activists is Mao Hengfeng who went up against the authorities in 1988 when she refused to abort her third child. Since then, she has been imprisoned several times, detained in re-education camps and psychiatric hospitals, and been placed under house arrest. She was released on the 8 February 2013 from the detention centre in which she had been imprisoned two years previously.

Chen Guangcheng is the Chinese activist who has put forward the greatest criticisms of forced abortions; a “barefoot lawyer” and blind, he self-taught himself Chinese law so as to be able to defend women and society’s most vulnerable from corrupt officials. In 2005, he reported that 7000 women in the Eastern province of Shandong had been sterilised against their will or suffered forced abortions – both illegal activities – in a local government campaign to achieve their birth control objectives. This lawsuit took him straight to prison for “disturbing traffic”. In 2010, he was released but placed under house arrest.

On 22 April 2012, Chen outsmarted his surveillance. He escaped and fled to the

¹⁹ See the video under: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DNN5oVY4rz4> Consulted: 15/05/2014

U.S. Embassy that almost “unleashed a diplomatic conflict”²⁰ as, when Washington obtained permission to allow for the departure of Fang Lizhi, it was agreed with Beijing that they would not provide asylum in their embassies again. Upon agreement between both parties, Chen left the embassy and was admitted to hospital. Days later he was given permission to travel to the United States with his wife and two children to study law.

During the first two decades following its introduction, the one child policy was also blamed for numerous death sentences imposed on doctors and sonographers who, in contradiction of the law, informed pregnant mothers of the gender of their foetus and helped them obtain an abortion if it was a girl. China strictly forbade doctors from informing parents of the gender of their child during pregnancy to avoid a gender imbalance, because, particularly in rural areas, female foeticide was common.

The death penalty is one of the main concerns for the European Union, Amnesty International and many other international NGOs when considering the human rights situation in China – a country in which more people are executed each year than in the rest of the world. Beijing has agreed to reform the Criminal Procedure Code so as to strengthen legal aid and controls in trials that could end with the death penalty. The new authorities are inclined to abolish the death penalty for economic crimes. In 2013, China also decided to stop using the organs of those executed for transplants.

CORRUPTION

Most Chinese citizens believe that corruption is the cancer that is poisoning society. Thousands of activists keep street or web protests alive on a daily basis. Weeks before the 25th anniversary of Tiananmen, the most prominent activists were detained to avoid any public acts in memory of those who died fighting against this same invasive cancer. For David Lampton, director of China Studies at John Hopkins University, “corruption feeds the feelings of injustice, inequality and procedural abuse that fuels people’s anger. The Tiananmen demonstrations of 1989, fostered to a significant extent by the rage fuelled by corruption and inflation, gave an indication of the capacity that these problems have to generate demands that the system has difficulties in satisfying”²¹.

²⁰ HIGUERAS, Georgina, ‘Ni tolerancia, ni injerencia’, *El País*, 4 May 2012

²¹ LAMPTON, David M., *The three faces of Chinese power: Might, money, and minds*, University of California Press, 2008, p. 238

The prestigious Martin Ennals prize, awarded by a jury composed of the 10 main international human rights organisations has chosen Cao Shunli as one of the final nominees for the award, which will be presented on the 7 October 2014. Cao, 52, died on the 14 March, six months after disappearing in Beijing airport from where she was departing for Geneva to participate at the United Nations Human Rights Council. “Cao Shunli was a Chinese activist who lost her life in the struggle to build a more just society”²², states the jury’s communication. It adds that Cao, a civil servant and trained lawyer who lost her job after denouncing corruption in housing allocation, “vigorously advocated for access to information, freedom of speech and freedom of assembly”. The activist spent more than two years in re-education-through-labour camps and was subjected to repeated harassment right up until she was detained for the final time. She died suddenly after not receiving the medical treatment she needed. Cao was admitted to a military hospital in a coma, and doctors were unable to revive her.

Chen Xiaoming, a well-known Shanghai housing activist who fought for fair housing and against forced evictions, died on the 1 July 2007, hours after his family received temporary permission for medical parole for treatment for a serious deterioration in his health. Imprisoned at the beginning of 2006, “there are also indications that ill treatment and beatings in prison were major factors in Chen’s death. Chen’s inhumane treatment in prison and the denial of his personal dignity even in his final hours contradicts the “people-first” approach touted by the current Chinese leadership”, states Human Rights in China²³.

Since taking power in November 2012, Xi Jinping has launched a huge campaign against corruption; the campaign’s credibility, however, was tarnished by the sentence passed in January to four years imprisonment for Xu Zhiyong – an activist fighting for government transparency and a leading advocate of the anticorruption campaign by the dissident group, the New Citizens Movement. Xu was detained after calling upon government officials to publically reveal information on their wealth.

Repression of the rights of Christians, Buddhists, Muslims, and certain other pseudo-religious movements, such as Falun gong; as well as the rights of ethnic minorities, particularly Tibetans and Uighurs – two independentist peoples, are also broadly denounced by international human rights organisations. These subjects

22 http://www.martinennalsaward.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=217:cao-shunli-china-final-nominee-2014&catid=39:winners&lang=es&Itemid=0 Consulted: 15/05/2014

23 <http://www.hrichina.org/en/content/967> Consulted: 15/05/2014

haven't been dealt with in this paper, however, as they didn't influence the Tiananmen Square protests.

CONCLUSIONS

Whatever the political direction president Xi adopts during his mandate, which is set to last until 2023, it is clear that the respect of human rights will continue to be one of the main subjects needing to be addressed, both internally and externally, along with the even more sensitive issue of the dissent movement. The significant improvement in civil liberties over the past decades should continue to advance even more rapidly, or at least that is what is set out in the Chinese Human Rights White Paper, as part of what Xi Jinping has called “the Chinese dream”²⁴. However, the level of economic and intellectual progress that the citizens of the Middle Kingdom have achieved means that, in a globalised world, the government will be unable to shy away from human rights in their universal concept.

24 http://spanish.xinhuanet.com/china/2014-01/10/c_133033118.htm Consulted: 17/05/2014