

# Democratizing a Post-Totalitarian Regime in a Globalized Context: A Normative Perspective

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## Abstract

The twentieth century witnessed the emergence, development and decline of several totalitarian regimes; nevertheless, for the past decades, it is under the constant influence of totalitarian or post-totalitarian powers that a vast amount of individuals, for whom domestic democracy may appear significantly crucial, still lead their lives without even fundamental human rights. And the globalization, as an indispensable context for current political theorizing and practical politics, makes domestic democracy more desirable for those who live under post-totalitarian domination.

With post-totalitarianism and globalization as a descriptive background, this paper discusses the democratization issue mainly from a normative political philosophy perspective.

**Keywords :** Post-totalitarian, Democratization, Globalization, Human Rights, Domestic Democracy

## Introduction

This article will argue that as a consequence of globalization, it is more desirable than ever to democratize a post-totalitarian regime. The argument will be supported both by political theorists' insights regarding the characteristics of totalitarianism and by the post-totalitarian reality in those countries such as contemporary mainland China.

In part I, I will attempt to define some key terms. It is difficult to provide a good definition or characterization of the concept post-totalitarian/post-totalitarianism and I will begin with the essentials of the social and political nature of totalitarianism – an ism pursued and practiced by regimes or political parties, powers or movements that aims at and as well achieves TOTAL control over all aspects of everything, both public and private, both political and nonpolitical, within their states or societies. Then accordingly, I will use the term “post-totalitarian” in a political sense that emphasizes that a post-totalitarian regime is not or not just a historical category describing a regime of a state after its totalitarian phase; more precisely, it is a political category representing a particular type of political regime still seeking total control over its citizens even after it has in a sense collapsed from losing some of the indispensable foundations and features of totalitarianism, such as the attraction of its official ideology, legitimacy of power, and charisma of its leader.

In Part II, I will argue for the desirability of democratizing a post-totalitarian system by demonstrating that even a rough consideration of the impacts of a globalized world on individual citizens under a post-totalitarian regime will cause us to become aware that both the positive and negative consequences of globalization virtually decrease those citizens' rights and welfare on an individual level. This decrease is either absolute or relative deprivation. What I mean here by "decrease" is that post-totalitarian domination has made citizens enjoy much fewer rights and benefits than they would otherwise have had under the same or similar social and economic conditions. On the one hand, the regime either becomes the actual beneficiary of goods (both material and immaterial) from outside and thus strengthens itself and weakens its people, which compels outside powers to act as accomplices assisting the post-totalitarian regime in imposing its illegitimate order on its citizens; or hinders its citizens from benefiting adequately from the advantages of globalization in the name of absolute "sovereignty" which it advocates. On the other hand, a post-totalitarian regime burdens its citizens with all the risks and negative consequences associated with globalization.

In part III, I will respond to some counter-arguments. In response to the argument that the establishment of global justice can be used to promote human rights for every individual without democratizing every state, I will argue that the regime itself rather than outside powers should be more responsible for the well-being of its citizens and also that an improved domestic political system is necessary for ordinary citizens in order to actually benefit from globalization or even global justice. In response to the counter-argument that democratization is not the only or the best approach to political reform, I will argue that civil and political rights are more fundamental than social and economic rights.

I will conclude the paper by reexamining my assumptions and inclinations on the issue under discussion.

## I. From Totalitarianism to Post-Totalitarianism

Literally, the term "post-totalitarian" itself indicates that this is a type of regime which has evolved from totalitarianism rather than a generic type initially created. Thus, no one would or could understand what a post-totalitarian regime is unless he or she has a prior understanding of a totalitarian regime.

Unlike tyranny, despotism, dictatorship and authoritarianism, totalitarianism is a twentieth-century word, which was "derived from the Italian *totalitario*, meaning complete, absolute", and was linked initially "with Italian fascism and Mussolini's rise to power"<sup>1)</sup>. Tagged with this label, a totalitarian regime is regarded as a new form of government, which aims at and also achieves complete, absolute and TOTAL control over all aspects of everything that is either, public or private, political or nonpolitical, within a given society.

Political theorists disagree on whether totalitarianism is new. On the one hand, many argue

that totalitarianism is a new phenomenon. For example, Hannah Arendt describes it as a novel form of government in her first major book *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. On the other hand, some others, such as Karl Popper, insist that totalitarianism is not new and it has its roots in the philosophical tradition tracing back to Plato and Aristotle. However, typical totalitarian regimes emerged and fully developed in the twentieth century.

Historically, paradigmatic examples of totalitarian regimes include the fascist Italian, the Nazi German, the communist Soviet Union under Stalin, the People's Republic of China under Mao Zedong (Mao Tse-Tung), etc. Different studies in totalitarianism characterize and define totalitarian regimes in slightly different way. The term "totalitarian" is used by political philosophers to describe some type of closed society (Karl Popper) or regimes characterized by ideology and terror as well as movements aiming at and succeeding in organizing "masses" (not "classes", not "citizens") and giving them a feeling of "superfluosity"<sup>2)</sup> in a classless society (Hannah Arendt). Meanwhile, political scientists deal with totalitarianism in a more explicit way. According to Carl J. Friedrich in his "The Unique Character in Totalitarian Society" published in 1954 and *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy* published with Zbigniew K. Brzezinski in 1956, the factors that characterize and define those totalitarian regimes were "intended to be taken as a mutually supportive organic entity composed of the following":<sup>3)</sup>

1. An elaborating official guiding ideology focused on a perfect final state of humankind, to which everyone is supposed to adhere;
2. A single mass party typically led by one person, hierarchically organized and superior to or intertwined with the state bureaucracy;
3. A system of terror, physical or psychic, effected by party or secret policy;
4. A technologically conditioned, near complete control of all means of effective mass communication;
5. A similar control of all weapons of armed combat;
6. A central control and direction of the entire economy through state planning.

Among the factors above, the sixth factor is regarded as a characteristic of the communist version of totalitarianism rather than the fascist and the Nazi regimes. And this six-point syndrome has been a dominant paradigm in the research on totalitarianism for a long time.

In an overview, most relevant scholars agree that a totalitarian state is "a single-minded" structure or system which "mobilizes all its resources", including mass media, weapons and armed forces, and economic resources, "under one authority", i.e. a party or a leader, "to achieve one goal" set by its singular ideology.<sup>4)</sup>

Then with reference to totalitarianism, post-totalitarianism can be conceived as "continuum"<sup>5)</sup>. Literally, "post-"totalitarianism refers to the situation after the end of totalitarian rule. However, the term post-totalitarian and post-totalitarianism are generally used in at least two different senses: historical and political. In the first sense, a post-totalitarian regime is the regime of a post-totalitarian society, i.e., the regime of any nation that was totalitarian in the past, no matter what

form of government the nation would adopt after that. Even if it became democratic, its regime type could still be described as a post-totalitarian democracy.

On the contrary, a post-totalitarian regime in the second sense is not or not just a historical category describing the regime of a nation after its totalitarian phase; more precisely, it is a political category representing a particular type of political regime which still seeks after total control over its citizens even after having collapsed from losing some indispensable foundations and features of totalitarianism, such as the attraction of its official ideology, legitimacy of its power, and charisma of its leader. In some political scientists' argument, a "post-totalitarian regime" is implied never to be a historical category: "[t]here are, of course, other paths out of totalitarianism. Totalitarianism can be ended by conquest and occupation by democratic polities, as happened to Germany and Japan after World War II. In these cases there never was a post-totalitarian, but rather a sequence of totalitarianism followed by occupation and liberalization followed by democratization."<sup>6)</sup>

In the following discussion, what I deal with is post-totalitarianism in the second sense above. In order to analyze democratic transition paths and consolidation tasks, political scientists Juan J. Linz and Alfred C. Stepan propose a revised typology of modern political regimes, consisting of democratic, authoritarian, totalitarian, post-totalitarian, and sultanistic regimes. They use four dimensions of regime type – pluralism, ideology, leadership, and mobilization – to list the defining characteristics of each regime type, out of which I quote and adapt from those of totalitarianism and post-totalitarianism as follows:<sup>7)</sup>

	<b>Totalitarianism</b>	<b>Post-totalitarianism</b>
Pluralism	<p>No significant economic, social, cultural or political pluralism.</p> <p>A single mass party has <i>de jure</i> and <i>de facto</i> monopoly of power.</p> <p>Party in power has eliminated almost all pre-totalitarian pluralism. No space for second economy or parallel society.</p>	<p>Limited, but not responsible social, economic, and even institutional pluralism; almost no political pluralism.</p> <p>Official party still formally has monopoly of power.</p> <p>May have second economy, but state control still overwhelming. Most manifestations of pluralism grew out of tolerated state structures or dissident groups consciously formed in opposition to totalitarian regime. In mature post-totalitarianism opposition often creates second culture or parallel society.</p>
Ideology	<p>Elaborate official guiding ideology that articulates a reachable utopia.</p> <p>Leaders, individuals, and group derive most of their sense of mission, legitimation, and often specific policies from their commitment to some holistic conception of humanity and society.</p>	<p>Guiding ideology still officially exists and is still part of the social reality, but weakened commitment to utopia and weakened faith in the ideology itself.</p> <p>Shift of emphasis from ideology to programmatic consensus that is presumably based on rational decision-making and limited debate without too much reference to official ideology.</p>

Leadership	<p>Often charismatic. Totalitarian leadership rules with undefined limits and great unpredictability for members and nonmembers.</p> <p>Party hierarchically organized and superior to or intertwined with the state bureaucracy.</p>	<p>Top leaders are seldom charismatic. Checks on top leadership via party structures, procedures, and/or “internal democracy”.</p> <p>Party still hierarchically organized and superior to or intertwined with the state bureaucracy.</p>
Mobilization	<p>Extensive and intensive mobilization into a vast array of regime-created obligatory organizations.</p> <p>Effort at mobilization of enthusiasm. Private life is decried.</p>	<p>Progressive loss of interest by leaders and nonleaders involved in organizing mobilization. Routine mobilization of population within state-sponsored organization to achieve a minimum degree of conformity and compliance.</p> <p>Boredom, withdrawal, and ultimately privatization of population’s values become an accepted fact.</p>

According to the description above, in a post-totalitarian regime former totalitarian characteristics are “almost survivals”<sup>8)</sup>, although some restricted non-totalitarian elements, such as limited nonpolitical pluralism, weakened commitment to or faith in the official ideology, checks on top leadership via internal-party institutions, and loss of interest in organizing mobilization begin to emerge. In other words, a post-totalitarian regime is still formally a “single-minded structure which mobilizes all its resources under one authority to achieve one goal”<sup>9)</sup>. It still aims at total control over all aspects of everything within its state or society, although it cannot achieve that level of control for some reasons.

We can also use the long time dominant six-point syndrome put forward by Friedrich and Brzezinski – an official ideology, a single mass party, a system of terror, monopoly control of the mass communication, monopoly of arms, and central control of the economy – to redescribe the defining characteristics of post-totalitarianism listed by Linz and Stepan. However, I will take the four-dimension paradigm rather than that six-point syndrome for the following discussion, since the former both simplifies the description of regime type and includes more contents.

By virtue of the characterization of post-totalitarianism in this part, I will argue for the desirability of democratization of such a regime in a globalized context. For Linz and Stepan themselves, the desirability of democratization (democratic transition) seems self-evident and democracy as a regime type seems to them to be “of sufficient value to be retained”<sup>10)</sup>; however, intellectuals in post-totalitarian China lack consensus on this desirability issue.

## II. The Role of Globalization and the Desirability of Democratization

All analyses of post-totalitarianism remind us that it is incompatible with human rights, especially with civil and political rights. And democracy, as the “least bad” political system, “provides the natural environment for the protection and effective realization of human rights”<sup>11)</sup>. – If this rough statement cannot persuade individuals under a post-totalitarian regime to recognize the desirability

of democratization, then I will, in the following part, try to clarify in terms of human rights discourse that for those who suffer from post-totalitarianism domestic democracy is desirable and that globalization makes this democracy more desirable than ever.

Regarding the reason why I take a human rights approach to the argument. On the one hand, it is far from sufficient to just describe post-totalitarianism in a holistic conception of the nation. If we take into account every individual citizen, the human rights of each (other than pluralism, ideology, leadership and mobilization in a macro sense) should be considered. On the other hand, democratization of a post-totalitarian regime can be justified in human rights discourse, on consequentialist grounds or as entitlement to citizenship. Since human rights are considered to be political norms that deal mainly with “how people should be treated by their governments and institutions”,<sup>12)</sup> this term is then suitable for analyzing the relationship between a regime and its citizens.

## **2.1 Re-characterize Post-totalitarianism in Human Rights Discourse**

In a post-totalitarian regime, the government or political system not only neglects, denies and violates its citizens' human rights with its anti-pluralism, political mobilization and continuum total domination; it also justifies these neglects, denials and violations with ideology-based reasons. Using the four-dimension paradigm, I re-characterize post-totalitarianism in human rights discourse as follows:

### *Ideology*

Because of the officially-existing ideology in a post-totalitarian regime, the population as a whole is treated merely as a means to a national end. What is emphasized by a post-totalitarian regime is never anything about human rights, but something such as alleged sovereignty, national strength, state interests, national prestige or dignity, or national image; individuals are subject to and should always be ready to sacrifice themselves for the latter.

### *Pluralism*

Because of one-party monopoly of power (and almost everything else politically significant) and the lack of pluralism (especially political pluralism), citizens under a post-totalitarian regime cannot assert or make use of their human rights – neither civil and political rights nor economic, social and cultural rights can be institutionally guaranteed. Limited rights assertion, if there is any, must be made within the one-party monopoly system, which has the ultimate authority over rights issues.

### *Leadership*

Because of leadership, especially because the party is superior to or intertwined with state bureaucracy, officials in the hierarchically organized bureaucracy are responsible to their top leaders rather than the people who should be regarded as the public, the citizens, the voters, the taxpayers.

### *Mobilization*

Because of mobilization, limited and scarce resources are used in ways that maximize national

image level and international status of the state instead of ways that maximize human rights level for citizens.

As a result of its leadership, mobilization, anti-pluralism, and ideology, a totalitarian or post-totalitarian regime is capable to pursue whatever aim it wants and to justify whatever it does as well, although the latter might be limited or conditioned by a certain level of nonpolitical pluralism or some “internal democracy” elements.

Even if a post-totalitarian regime does not entirely neglect human rights, it tends to give priority to economic, social and cultural rights (“livelihood (民生)” in Chinese government discourse these days) such as the right to social security, to work, to rest and leisure, to an adequate standard of living, to education, and to benefits of science and culture; nevertheless, it fails to secure its citizens’ civil and political rights such as the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, to freedom of opinion and expression, to freedom of peaceful assembly and association, and to take part in the government of their country directly or through freely chosen representatives.<sup>13)</sup> This priority has led to paradoxes and evil consequences:

- A. Without civil and political rights, individuals under a post-totalitarian regime even have no right to think about or to express the demand for human rights; i.e., they have no right to assert rights.
- B. Furthermore, it is the post-totalitarian government, but not the individuals who actually need those human rights, that ultimately determines which type of rights the citizens could or should have.
- C. As a result of B, human rights become subject to some national end.
- D. As a consequence of C, what sometimes appears to be human rights achievement might just be the implementation of totalitarian controls. For instance, the achievement of the right to education could be just the implementation of totalitarian propaganda, since the post-totalitarian regime determines how an individual under it should be educated.
- E. Overall, the priority of economic, social and cultural rights is consistent with the tendency that politics is overwhelmed by the economic aspects of the post-totalitarian state. But without political reform, any rights remains without foundation, since the term “rights” itself is a concept that cannot be depoliticized.
- F. From a civic republican viewpoint, even if the post-totalitarian government provides sufficient protection for its citizens’ personal economic and social life and seldom directly interferes with each individual’s “negative” economic and social liberties, those individual citizens still do not truly enjoy human rights – since even when they happen to be free from interference of the government, the government still has an institutionally-protected power to treat its subject-citizens as it pleases, for example, to determine which rights they could have, and when and where they should be “rightless”. The situation under this type of arbitrary power, or namely “total domination” (rather than some sort of “interference”), is the exactly opposite to the concept of political rights and liberty.

Human rights violation, as a factor that re-characterizes a post-totalitarian regime, is a type of institutional violation. In a word, individuals under such a regime never have the “right to have rights”,<sup>14)</sup> which means that they can no longer be thought of as Aristotelian “political animals” living in a community and leading a form of political life. It is desirable to democratize a post-totalitarian regime not only because of its disastrous human rights situation, but also because of the impossibility to solve institutional problems within current institution. Again, the “right to have rights” is a political right that cannot be depoliticized.

## 2.2 Impacts of Globalization on Individuals under Post-totalitarianism

When the impacts of globalization are superimposed to the limits of a post-totalitarian system, individual citizens will experience unprecedented institutional human rights violations. This is what has been happening in totalitarian and post-totalitarian states.

By identifying some of the essential qualities of globalization, we can define this concept as “a multidimensional set of social processes that create, multiply, stretch, and intensify worldwide social interdependencies and exchanges while at the same time fostering in people a growing awareness of deepening connections between the local and the distant.”<sup>15)</sup> More concretely, it can be described as a set of processes by which “regional economies, societies, and cultures have become integrated through a global network of political ideas through communication, transportation, and trade.”<sup>16)</sup>

The process of globalization has both its supporters and critics, and has both positive and negative effects. But under a post-totalitarian regime, both the positive and negative consequences of globalization decrease the rights and welfare of citizens on an individual level. The “decrease” here does not only mean that post-totalitarian domination has made their citizens enjoy fewer rights and benefits than they would have had under the same or similar social and economic conditions; it also means that citizens have even less rights (both civil and political rights and economic, social and cultural rights) under a post-totalitarian regime that makes the best of globalization than under one that is not in a globalized context.

There are four possibilities here; and before turning to the following discussion, it is of the utmost importance to bear in mind that a totalitarian or post-totalitarian regime, whose slogan is “who controls the past controls the future; who controls the present controls the past”,<sup>17)</sup> is capable to aim at whatever it wants and justify whatever it does as well, as a result of its leadership, mobilization, anti-pluralism, and ideology.

- A. If the impact of globalization is positive and a post-totalitarian regime can benefit from it, the regime will become the actual beneficiary of goods (both material and immaterial) from outside and thus strengthens itself and weakens its people, which compels outside powers unintentionally to be accomplices assisting the post-totalitarian regime in imposing its illegitimate order on its citizens.

For example, China’s rise in globalization and “China development model” have received

widespread attention and provoked extensive discussion; however, its development, especially economic growth represented by GDP, can be partly attributed to post-totalitarian mobilization and denials of human rights. In China, economic growth is also a “political task” – just like in the past the totalitarian regime mobilized all the resources in China for political movements (such as the Cultural Revolution), today the post-totalitarian regime is mobilizing all those resources for economic growth that in the Communist Party’s opinion can justify its legitimacy and prolong its rule. As a result, the post-totalitarian regime economically benefits from globalization, but its citizens’ economic welfare is not proportionally improved. China has become one of the most powerful global economic forces in the globalized world, but the living standard of the average Chinese citizen has lagged far behind.

- B. If some effects of globalization can enhance the rights or welfare of individuals under such a regime, and at the same time the individual rights and welfare is inconsistent or even conflicts with the interests of the post-totalitarian regime (so-called “national interests”), it will, in the name of the absolute “sovereignty” it advocates, hinder its citizens from benefiting from those advantages; i.e., it will deny the self-determination of individual citizens in the name of the self-determination of the “nation” (actually the domestic government). Note that under such a regime, the rights of majority citizens and the interests of the government frequently conflict with each other.

For example, in this era of information globalization, citizens in a non-democratic state could learn more from mature and stable democratic societies concerning what type of regime is desirable and feasible as well as what they can do to promote political reform and advance their human rights situation. However, that process would conflict with the interests of the post-totalitarian government and even undermine the domination of those in power. Therefore the Chinese government established the “Great Firewall” (GFW) as part of political censorship to block and filter out all “inappropriate” content from the internet. The information in Chinese language is under the most strict monitoring and control, so those inside the GFW have to read in English and other foreign language to understand what is really happening in China – a Chinese joke says that in the past, we worked hard to learn foreign languages in order to know more about the outside world; but now, we work hard to learn foreign languages mainly in order to know more about China. The GFW issue is just the “tip of the iceberg”. Furthermore, the post-totalitarian regimes reject criticism from inside and outside. Its citizens who criticize the government or the party commit thought and speech crimes and so called “crimes against national security”; while the government always takes an uncompromising stance and condemns the criticism from outside as violation of “sovereignty” and interference in “internal affairs”.

- C. The post-totalitarian regime burdens its citizens with all the risks and negative consequences associated with globalization. To some extent, it even benefits from the

suffering of its citizens.

For example, frequently mentioned negative consequences of globalization include increasing economic inequality and exploitation, homogenization of cultures, environmental degradation, etc. A democratic government would regard the fundamental interests of the people as the starting point and attempt to eliminate these adverse impacts; however, as long as those impacts do not pose a direct threat to the post-totalitarian rule, post-totalitarian Chinese government tends to let it be and leave its citizens to bear the burden. Moreover, China's competitiveness in a globalized world economy, especially within the international labor division system, has improved at the expense of working class citizens (especially those who work in "sweatshops"). It is said that a Chinese research fellow named Zi Zhongjun once met a German scholar at an academic conference, and the latter said that China would become the economic engine of the world – the logic of his argument was: "you can even refuse to pay wages owed to employees, how can we defeat you in the competition"<sup>18)</sup>

D. A post-totalitarian regime sometimes makes globalization a "scapegoat" for what has been undermined before their encounter with globalized world.

For example, some official rhetoric and unofficial arguments in China today suggest that Chinese traditional culture, traditional ethics and virtues have been completely destroyed and are fading away as a result of market economy and cultural globalization as well as through the erosion by the so-called "decadent capitalist culture" from the globalized outside world; and in the post-totalitarian propaganda only the Communist Party of China (CPC) can "always represent the orientation of the development of China's advanced culture". Historically in fact, it is just those totalitarian movements (represented by the Cultural Revolution) during 1949-1976, rather than participation in globalization later on, that contributed and led to the collapse of the Chinese tradition.

In more detail, the defining consequences (also named as "transformative powers"<sup>19)</sup>) of globalization, which I list in the following table, can be described in three main dimensions, i.e. economic, political and cultural dimensions of contemporary social life.<sup>20)</sup> Perhaps the following descriptions confuse causes and consequences within the globalization process, but what we focus on here is what has happened to a post-totalitarian regime and to its citizens as a consequence of globalization.

	<b>Positive Consequences</b>	<b>Negative Consequences</b>
Economic	A more efficient allocation of resources; Increased economic opportunity and prosperity; Higher output, more employment, more occupational choices, and a higher standard of living; A virtuous economic cycle associated with faster economic growth	The use of "sweatshops": foreign businesses utilizing workers in a poor or/and rightless country to take advantage of the lower wage rates; A growing gap between the incomes of the rich and poor; Interconnectedness of international financial markets and the potential for economic crisis

Political	Enhanced civil liberties; Democratizing effect of communications (e.g. internet); A phase of establishing global political institutions that represent the will of world citizens and can provide solutions to important problems following market-oriented phase of globalization	Subverted ability of a nation-state for self-determination; Damaged democratic rights and ultimate legitimate authority over their resources of citizens in a democratic state; A national government's damaged sovereignty to determine labor rights and other economic and social rights
Cultural	Globalization as beneficial diffusion of liberty and capitalism (by libertarians); Diffusion of "thin" universal values such as the importance of universal equal concern and respect for humanity and human rights; Diffusion of different cultural values	Cultural homogenization, or loss of cultural diversity: stronger or more developed countries overrunning other countries' cultures, leading to those customs and values fading away; Opportunities in more developed countries driving talent away from less developed countries, leading to "brain drains"

Without the consideration of the post-totalitarian system's total domination and everlasting violations of its citizens' rights, individuals could theoretically benefit from globalization, change their life and, further, reform the regime under which they can seldom benefit from anything domestic or external. That sounds like a paradox based on a false presumption, but we might have to take into account the situation under the regime characterized by total domination, but at the same time without the implementation of the domination, i.e., a situation that can be described as "domination without interference"<sup>21)</sup>, in order to understand exactly the unprecedented institutional human rights violations. Additionally, what makes it possible in reality to live in such a state without the "total" control might be globalization overwhelming domestic politics, something which seldom happens to a totalitarian or post-totalitarian government.

Effects of globalization on *individuals* under post-totalitarianism with and without post-totalitarian domination can be described as follows:

Without Post-totalitarian Domination (Theoretically)		
	Positive Effects	Negative Effects
Economic	Increased economic opportunity; More employment, more occupational choices, and a higher standard of living	"Sweatshops"; A growing gap between the incomes of the rich and poor; The potential for economic crisis

Political	<p><b>E</b>nhanced civil liberties and human rights;  <b>D</b>emocratizing effect of communications (e.g. internet);  <b>A</b> phase of establishing global political institutions that can provide solutions to problems;  <b>S</b>ubverted capability of a post-totalitarian government for self-determination;</p>	<p><b>A</b> national government's damaged sovereignty to determine labor rights and other economic and social rights, but sometimes the sovereignty destruction is good for civil society and political rights</p>
Cultural	<p><b>G</b>lobalization as a beneficial diffusion of liberty and capitalism (by libertarians);  <b>D</b>iffusion of "thin" universal values such as the importance of universal equal concern and respect for humanity and human rights;  <b>D</b>iffusion of different cultural values</p>	<p><b>C</b>ultural homogenization, leading to a loss of cultural diversity and some customs and values fading away, but totalitarianism/ post-totalitarianism cannot be regarded as some type of values;  <b>"B</b>rain drains"</p>

With Post-totalitarian Domination

	Positive Effects	Negative Effects
Economic	<p><b>I</b>ncreased economic opportunity;  <b>M</b>ore employment and more occupational choices</p>	<p><b>O</b>pportunity and choices not followed by a higher standard of living; <b>"S</b>weatshops", and the government supporting them in ways that maximize production levels or GDP  <b>G</b>rowing inequality between the incomes of the rich and poor;  <b>W</b>ith market economy as just a "second economy", a growing gap between the benefits of the powerful and the rightless;  <b>T</b>he potential for economic crisis</p>
Political	<p><b>A</b>fter all, there being a limited democratizing effect of communications (e.g. internet)</p>	<p><b>P</b>otential positive consequences of globalization leading to a further intensified rights violation by the regime, by means of stupefying education, propaganda, and censorship which creates an information blockade, in order not to enhance civil liberties and human rights, and not to cause democratizing effect of communications (e.g. internet);  <b>P</b>ost-totalitarian regimes would participate in building global political institutions that can provide solutions to problems, but at the same time, they can sign international covenants but not ratify them in practice in order not to have their ability for self-determination subverted as well as not to have their sovereignty damaged</p>

Cultural	<p><b>A</b> limited diffusion of “thin” universal values (limited because of post-totalitarian stupefying education, propaganda, and censorship which creates an information blockade);</p> <p><b>L</b>imited diffusion of different cultural values</p>	<p><b>M</b>aking individuals under such a regime aware that they are living in a cultural desert where almost all pre-totalitarian cultural values and customs have been marginalized and excluded before their encounter with globalization, as well as rendering them incapable of evaluating their traditional culture soberly;</p> <p><b>T</b>he regime misappropriating the nation’s traditional cultural expressions to block the diffusion of “thin” universal values;</p> <p><b>A</b>s a result of the two above, those individuals being excessively alert to culture spread and cultural homogenization, and incapable to take advantage of the remaining cultural diversity;</p> <p><b>G</b>lobalization becoming a scapegoat for undermined cultural diversity by post-totalitarian</p>
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In general, a post-totalitarian regime mainly benefits from economic globalization, and hinders its citizens from benefiting from political and cultural globalization.

### 2.3 Democratization as a First Step to Solution

Democratization is not a once-and-for-all solution, but it is the necessary first step to the solution to the problem of human rights violations under post-totalitarian regimes. Note that “human rights violations” here are institutional violations that can only be prevented and eliminated by institutional reforms. It is difficult or even impossible to solve institutional problems within the current problematic institution. Moreover, there are better political institutions that are available to choose from. In other words, different human rights situation has made domestic democracy desirable and necessary, since democracy, as almost the only stable system in which citizen participation is fully promoted and political rights are adequately protected, is the best form of government for implementing human rights.

To this extent, we can also regard democratization of a post-totalitarian regime as the most feasible first step to the improvement of individual rights, for without political reform and the safeguard of political rights, economic, cultural or other benefits cannot be distributed fairly and equally. Besides, without political democratization, reforms in other dimensions would encounter plenty of obstacles and dilemmas, and would appear to be unfeasible, just like what has happened to China’s economic reforms. However, regarding the feasibility issue, abstract discussion about the “first step” is far from sufficient, since as a complicated process this “step” should be divided into several sub-steps. This article, as a research from a normative political philosophy perspective, will not continue with developing feasible sub-steps of democratization.

So far, I have argued, in several steps, for the desirability of democratization of a post-totalitarian regime in a globalized context:

1. It tends to be self-evident that human rights are desirable.

If it needs to be proven, generally speaking, we can invoke deontological or teleological ethical theories, or mid-level principles in applied ethics; we can also trace back to descriptive and normative concepts of human nature. We can regard fundamental human rights as either intrinsically valuable or inalienable for some instrumental reasons.

2. A post-totalitarian regime is not only incompatible with human rights, but also characterized by the institutional violations of its citizens' human rights. (*See Part I & Section 2.1*)
3. Democratization is the necessary first step to the solution to human rights violations. (*See Section 2.1 esp. the last two paragraphs & Section 2.3*)
4. Then it is desirable to democratize a post-totalitarian regime.
5. As a consequence of globalization, individuals under post-totalitarianism experience unprecedented institutional human rights violations. The ways a post-totalitarian regime “deals with” the effects of globalization and makes use of the latter to consolidate its total domination, together with the globalization process itself, have made those individual citizens under it more and more vulnerable and disadvantaged relative to their government. (*See Section 2.2*)
6. Then it is more desirable than ever to democratize a post-totalitarian regime as a consequence of globalization.

### III. Counter-arguments and Responses

#### 3.1 Domestic Democracy vs. Global Justice

One possible counter-argument to the point of view of this article could be whether or not the domestic political institution must be reformed. This counter-argument focuses on the relationship between domestic democracy and global justice. Some outstanding political theorists address the establishment of global justice to promote human rights for every individual in the world without or before democratizing every state. The term “global justice” has become a buzzword these years.

The logical starting point for my response here is pursuing the answer to whether the regime itself or the outside powers should be more responsible for its citizens and for the unsatisfactory domestic situation. Other poor and vulnerable countries may have sufficient reasons to attribute the current living standard of their people to outside powers, to “western” exploration and colonization in the past or/and the globalization and the globalized world market at present; but a post-totalitarian nation cannot. Throughout history, none of the post-totalitarian regimes is free of responsibility, even if the living conditions of the vulnerable under their domination are also impacted by outside influences.

Moreover, my previous demonstration has, to some extent, indicated that global justice is less desirable as well as less feasible for citizens in a post-totalitarian state than an improved domestic political system, without which no ordinary citizens can actually benefit from globalization or global justice.

### 3.2 Democratization vs. other Approaches

Another possible counter-argument is whether or not democratization is the only or the best approach out of post-totalitarianism. Some scholars argue for enlightened or benevolent despotism, Singapore-style authoritarian rule, or meritocracy. These anti-democratization (not necessarily anti-democracy) scholars sometimes disagree with one another, as their justifications for some non-democratic regime type are based on different reasons. For example, among those who argue that post-totalitarian China should not be democratized, some believe that democracy itself is not so desirable, since a democratic regime still require modifications and institutional supplements; others assert that although democracy is desirable enough, based on a multicultural and pluralist approach we should recognize that Chinese traditional culture provides us with a better and more appropriate way to political reforms; and still others consider it desirable to democratize post-totalitarian China, but think that in the foreseeable future there is no feasible way to implement democracy and that we have to make some compromises; etc.

The logical starting point for my response here is pursuing the answer to whether civil and political rights or social and economic rights are more fundamental. Just like what I have elaborated in Section 2.1 of this article, without political rights, the citizens even have no right to assert rights and to determine what rights they could have, and therefore social and economic rights become foundationless. And none of the alternatives other than democracy is designed for ensuring political rights and participation.

Furthermore, even though other approaches might be more easily achieved than democratization, their flaws are evident. On the one hand, they are not stable enough since power tends to corrupt, especially without checks and balances; on the other hand, under such modified regimes the individual citizens still have few rights and opportunities to participate in political activities -- although "political apathy" has become a common problem in mature western democracies as a consequence of the enrichment of private and social life, such apathy of the public is completely different from being silenced under power.

As for the pure feasibility issue, we can integrate it into my view that democratization is the "necessary first step" out of post-totalitarianism and regard this issue as a debate over sub-steps.

## Conclusion

In this article, I argue for the desirability of democratization for a post-totalitarian regime in a globalized context mainly from a normative perspective. To sum up, my main argument is that it is desirable to democratize a post-totalitarian regime because this regime type is characterized by its institutional violations of its citizens' human rights, and because the ways it deals with the effects of globalization and makes use of the latter to consolidate its total domination have made those individual citizens more and more vulnerable relative to their government. What I discuss here is a justification for democratization of post-totalitarian regimes, rather than a defense of democracy for

any state in general. The former is to a large extent closely related to real world politics, i.e. political practices in reality. That's why I take a consequentialist approach, focusing most of the attention on human rights situation under a post-totalitarian regime as well as what burdens such a regime has been imposing on its individual citizens, especially in the globalization process, and what would happen as a consequence of anti-democratization.

Since I do not focus on defenses of democracy in general, I just make some descriptions of, rather than provide necessary justification for, those key terms such as democracy, human rights, and political liberty when I use them. Besides, my stance in this article is mainly liberal (pro-democracy, pro-political rights, etc.), and sometimes with republican elements (such as pro-political participation, as well as acquiescently understanding political liberty and rights as “non-domination” rather than simply non-interference).

## Notes

- 1) Eugene Kamenkain, “Totalitarianism”, in *A Companion to Contemporary Political Philosophy* (2-volume set), 2nd edition edited by Robert E. Goodin, Philip Pettit and Thomas Pogge (Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2007), p. 821
- 2) See Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 2nd edition (London: Allen & Unwin, 1958), pp. 308-311
- 3) See the symposium *Totalitarianism*, edited by Carl J. Friedrich (New York 1954), p.47; Carl J. Friedrich and Zbigniew K. Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, 2nd edition (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1965), pp.21-22; and Eugene Kamenkain, “Totalitarianism”, in *A Companion to Contemporary Political Philosophy* (2-volume set), p. 824
- 4) See Michael Walker, *The National Front* (London: Fontana, 1972), p. 5
- 5) See Juan J. Linz and Alfred C. Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-communist Europe* (Baltimore: JHU Press, 1996), p. 294
- 6) Ibid, p. 293
- 7) Ibid, pp. 44-45
- 8) Ibid, p. 294
- 9) Michael Walker, *The National Front* (London: Fontana, 1972), p. 5
- 10) Juan J. Linz and Alfred C. Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-communist Europe* (Baltimore: JHU Press, 1996), p. 40
- 11) UN Website, “Democracy and Human Rights”, see [http://www.un.org/en/globalissues/democracy/human\\_rights.shtml](http://www.un.org/en/globalissues/democracy/human_rights.shtml)
- 12) James Nickel, the entry “Human Rights” in Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, see <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/rights-human/>
- 13) Refer to *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, adopted and proclaimed by the General Assembly of the United Nations On December 10, 1948. See <http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/>
- 14) A conception proposed by Hannah Arendt in Chapter 9 of her book *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1958), see pp.296-298
- 15) Manfred B. Steger, *Globalization: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 13
- 16) The entry “Globalization” in Wikipedia (2011), see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Globalization>

- 17) George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1st World Publishing, 2004), p. 309
- 18) See [http://www.dooland.com/magazine/article\\_120451.html](http://www.dooland.com/magazine/article_120451.html) (in Chinese)
- 19) Manfred B. Steger, *Globalization: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. i
- 20) Refer to Roland Robertson, *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture* (London: Sage, 1992); Richard Falk, *Predatory Globalization* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999); David Held, Anthony McGrew, David Goldblatt, and Jonathan Perraton, *Global Transformations: Politics, Economics and Culture* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999); Jan Aart Scholte, *Globalization: A Critical Introduction* (New York: St. Martin's, 2000); Jagdish N. Bhagwati, *In defense of Globalization* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); etc.
- 21) A concept extended from the republican view of liberty, i.e., political liberty as non-domination. Regarding non-domination liberty, see Quentin Skinner, *Liberty Before Liberalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), and Philip Pettit, *Republicanism: A Theory of Freedom and Government* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997).

