

The Rise of Communism and the Women's Liberation Movement in China

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Abstract: The early communist history of China was founded on the principles of modernization and cultural revitalization. The intellectuals of the time believed that in order to achieve modernization, the imperial rule must be overthrown, and China as a country must adopt new ideologies. Communism rapidly became popular as it presented an ambitious way forward after China's devastating defeat to Japan during the Sino-Japanese War. Communism was a vital pathway to providing women with increased social power. This paper examines the causes and spread of the women's rights movement in China during the early 1900s by examining the progression and expansion of communism, considering key figures and organizations. Specifically, the relationships between communism and feminism in order to evaluate the effectiveness of this "women's emancipation" in combating gender oppression. Although increasing gender equality was not one of the Chinese Communist Party's primary goals, the rise of communism still created increased opportunities for the spread of feminism in China with notable female figures like Xiang Jingyu taking the helm, then later martyred for her communist beliefs and the women's liberation movement of China.

Keywords: Communism, materialism, feminism, feminist movement in China.

I. INTRODUCTION

In the early 1900s, the fight for the emancipation of women in China was based on a basic communist ideal: economic independence for all. Communists believed that women's independence could only be attained through education and women joining the workforce. Modernization was at the focus of the national agenda, which the Chinese elite believed could only be achieved by liberating women from illiteracy, foot-binding, and beliefs about their inferiority. The male intellectuals of the time led the charge to raise the consciousness of women through journalistic writings about *funü wenti*, the "women problem." Uprisings after uprisings led to the end of imperial rule, and in effect, China's search for a new identity began. Critical readings of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels' works greatly influenced the Chinese educated elite, whose writings on Marxism eventually paved the way for the rise of communism in China. Behind the women's liberation movement were socialist thinkers who propagated that socialism was the answer for the liberation of all women. As the "new woman" rose in numbers, women began to voice their opinions and engage in political affairs. Despite women's progress during the formative years of communism in China, their new position in society was met with challenges, which foreshadowed the continued struggle of women's rights in China throughout the century.

II. THE DEVELOPMENT OF MATERIALISM

In ancient times, around the 5th century BCE, Greek and Roman materialist schools of thought sought to answer questions concerned with being — what is reality and how are the conditions of reality produced?¹ Materialism argued that literal, concrete matters answer these questions first, rather than more abstract matters like concepts of spirit and ethics.¹ Centuries later, in the *Critique of Political Economy* (1859), Karl Marx applied philosophical materialism to a concept of historical materialism, which he defined as how "the structure of society and its historical development are determined by 'the material conditions of life' or 'the mode of production of the material means of existence.'" The term materialism is derived from the word "material" in order to communicate that history will be analyzed based on its physical circumstances, rather than "what is obviously or implicitly supernatural, metaphysical, or speculative."² Economy, industry, and commerce are considered material factors because they reflect the structures within the physical world.

In 1884, Karl Marx's colleague and socialist thinker Friedrich Engels argued that the oppression of women comes from the capitalist family in the second chapter of *Origins of the Family, Private Property, and the State*, a book on historical materialism. In capitalist societies, men are considered more productively valuable than women with work, resources, and economies outside the home, while women remained domestically static: "the husband is obliged to earn a living and support his family, and that in itself gives him a position of supremacy, without any need for special legal titles and privileges...within the family, he is the bourgeois and the wife represents the proletariat."³ Thus, the monogamous family formed as a result of the capitalistic goal of wealth accumulation by allowing men to pass down their wealth to heirs.³ Engels argues that in a communist society, men would no longer have the upper hand because gaining wealth would have no more value than "managing the household."³ Thus, according to Engels, the oppression of women was caused by material circumstances (the division of labor between the sexes, the spread of capitalism), as opposed to an inherent cultural belief that men are superior to women.

Materialism, in the context of China, can be noted in Confucius's principles, which also described the sexual division of labor that Engels outlined. Confucius stated that women should remain inside the home as a mark of "virtuous femininity."⁴ To be feminine, a woman must fulfill her household duties since women were viewed as incapable of formal education or an occupation like their male counterparts. Their key role is to support the man as a mother, as a sister, or as a wife to create harmony within the collective. Men, as the head of the household, are instructed to lead with care and affection to achieve unity in the social hierarchy.⁴ This social order, however, was based on a feudal system that kept peasants and women, in particular, at the bottom of the totem pole. It wasn't until traditional Chinese society was challenged by a more powerful and modernized Japan during the Qing dynasty that the people sought new ways of thinking. The First Sino-Japanese War of 1894 revealed imminent flaws within Confucianism, which reflected a caste system of land ownership and peasant serfdom.⁴ This made many people view China's traditional ways as antiquated and ineffective in creating a robust and modern society characterized by industrialization.

III. THE BEGINNING OF CHINESE FEMINISM

The material circumstances in China were largely unstable after the attack on the Qing dynasty by the Empire of Japan. A declaration of war over the occupation of Joseon Korea, the Qing dynasty failed to fend off the modern and industrialized military of Japan, a development that can be credited to the Meiji Restoration in Japan.⁵ As Japan began to dominate East Asia, traditional Chinese society began to falter as political upheavals defined the years following the war until the Qing dynasty was overthrown. The 1911 Revolution was established by a series of uprisings which signified the end of imperial rule and foreshadowed the rise of communism in China.⁵

The Chinese intellectual elite imagined a utopian society where the poor could become landowners, and classism would cease to exist. Radical modernization was the answer to the vulnerable position that China found itself in after the war. China was not only militarily unstable but economically, socially, and politically unstable as well. Therefore, Chinese thinkers believed that the country needed the assistance of every citizen, including women. Many historians mark the year 1898 as the beginning of the women's movement, led by Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao, the latter becoming the leading reformer for the cause of women's liberation.⁵ They felt that women should no longer be confined to the home but also contribute to the workforce, a key factor in the modernization of China. The "women problem" was frequently brought to light in an effort to mobilize Chinese females to adopt the new order of nationalism in China.⁵ According to Engels, if the oppression of women were caused by material circumstances, meaning only men could contribute an income in a household, the material circumstances of China demanded a new framework where the division of labor no longer meant that women simply worked within the home. Many Chinese intellectuals believed that women must join the workforce and be involved in politics to ring in a new era of China.

In 1903, Jin Songcen wrote *Women's Bell*, the first book on feminism in China.⁵ He was a radical activist who believed women should have the same rights as men which would mean women would have the right to receive an education, choose their own relationships, join the workforce, own land, and engage in public discourse. In 1904, male intellectuals Ding Chu-wo and Chem Yiyi started a women's newspaper to address female readers, but in essence, this paper became an outlet for men to discuss how they can "save" women from enslavement.⁵ Other similar columns tried to address the "women problem" from the perspective of men who often concealed their gender by writing in a female voice. For instance, Zhang Zhanyun wrote under his mother's name for the *Peking Women's Daily*.⁵

While male intellectuals used their clout to introduce the topic of women's liberation into the public sphere, a few upper-class females initiated their own journals, especially in Shanghai. Early as 1898, Kang Tongbi founded the *Journal of Women's Studies* (Nüxuebao) along with other women academics, and the next year, Chen Xiefen established the *Women's Journal* (Nübao).⁵ These actions motivated many other women to take similar actions, causing a proliferation of women's papers during the next twenty years. In the early years, since it was still improper for women to tangle themselves in political matters, the women established the journals under the name of a prominent male family member.⁵ Some of them had family ties in radical publications, and would later go on to establish their own careers as journalists by using the connections of their male family members. As the women journalists became more independent they would use their full names and the term "woman scholar" to pen articles. Some female journalists like Chen Xiefen would use identifying names like Chuan Nuzi (Woman of Chunan) and Qiu Jin would refer to herself as Jing Xiong (Challenger of Men).⁵ Many of these women were educated in all girls' schools led by Western missionaries who introduced to them progressive ideas that would later shape their feminist worldviews.⁵ The girls also learned English, some of whom helped translate Western works into Chinese for the masses.

IV. THE NEW CULTURE MOVEMENT TO THE MAY FOURTH PROTESTS

In the aftermath of the First Sino-Japanese War, the uprisings led to the 1911 Revolution which ended in chaos and spurred on warlordism in China.⁶ Chinese intellectuals felt discontented and sought ways to revitalize the culture. The years following marked the beginning of the New Culture Movement, China's search for a new identity. This movement rejected classical Chinese ideals, like Confucianism, and instead looked to Western culture and thought.⁶ As feminism rapidly spread among Chinese reformers, prominent anarcho-feminist He-yin Zhen was supported by her husband, Liu Shipai of *National Heritage*, in her efforts.⁷ Other promoters of women's rights included Minister of Education Fu Zengxiang and Shanxi warlord Xishan, who championed women's education and ending foot binding.⁷ Furthermore, Mao Zedong, a growing thought leader during this time, described the New Culture Movement as a necessary step towards China's socialist government and the divide between "old democracy" and the "new democracy."⁶

Soon, the New Culture Movement would be defined by the May Fourth protests that began on May 4, 1919. Approximately 3,000 students across 13 Beijing colleges held a mass protest against the Chinese government approving of the decision of the Versailles Peace Conference to give Japan rights to the Shandong province instead of China.⁶ This is known as one of the most pivotal moments of the May Fourth Movement because it caused a surge of nationalism as Chinese citizens organized together to defend their country's international power and dignity. The Chinese saw the government that approved the Versailles Peace Conference's conclusion as ineffective, compromising their ideals. The result was the May Fourth Movement, both a student and enlightenment movement, which continued to usher in a wave of new thoughts, ideas, and ideologies: a "new culture" that would serve as a "national salvation" from the old, flawed government.⁶

Following the May Fourth protests, the style of journal publications dramatically shifted and became more often written in *baihua*, or written vernacular language.⁷ Journals depicted the New Culture Movement as the catalyst for the upsurge of feminism — as Se Lu asserted that the movement compelled "average women" to re-examine society's traditions.⁷ After late 1919, feminism was promoted under the New Culture Movement. The *Ladies' Magazine* pushed for women's rights and endeavored to associate with the New Culture's "cult heroes" by printing and citing a speech by Hu Shi about the women's question.⁷ Notably, the *Ladies' Magazine* named the *New Woman* magazine as a "sharp weapon of New Culture" and argued that its authors were "catering towards this age of the New Culture Movement."⁷

V. THE NEW WOMAN

Marxism continued to influence communist ideals leading up to the May Fourth Movement. In particular, Engels' writing drew concerns about women's rights, which began to gain notoriety during this era.⁸ More and more men began to discuss the "woman problem" in Western terms apparent in their shifting vocabulary referring to words that resembled feminism: these terms ranged from *nüzhuyi* (female-ism) to *funüzhuyi* (womanism) to *nüquanzhuyi* (women's rights-ism) to *fuminieshimu* (feminism). Eventually, *nüquanzhuyi* became widely accepted as a more concrete, immediate term.⁸

The wave of new culturalists continued to mock the inhumaneness of Confucianism further denouncing foot binding, concubinage, sexual segregation, and gender hierarchy on a whole. With the women's suffrage movement moving strong in the United States, the Western example was a strong motivating factor for many new culturalists to fight for the

liberation of women.⁸ The May Fourth Era was unique in that the fight for women's emancipation was met with resounding support from the men who believed that to serve the national interest, women must be acknowledged as a legitimate group in the public sphere.

The "new woman" would be a working woman who would be free to marry whomever she chooses, educated in current affairs, and engage in public discourse.⁹ Also known as May Fourth women, the liberated woman will help other women rise above their oppressed positions and become a symbol of modernity and social progress in China.⁹ Soon, women's organizations in various cities would come to prominence, in particular, the Hunan Women's Association which came up with the "five-proposal movement" to demand voting rights, hold office, inherit property, attain an education, work, and have free marriage.⁹ The growing advocacy for the "new woman", however, was a sign of mutiny in the eyes of traditional men practically in every household. The right-wing Kuomintang demonized progressive women using provocative language in the press as stories of the "wild women" were often sensationalized. Article titles like "Women Going to Pieces under the Nationalists" and "Old Standards of Morality Breaking Down" signaled the growing resentment of Chinese traditionalists.⁹ Nevertheless, the growing movement for women's liberation could not be denied as May Fourth women took greater strides in government and politics.

VI. THE CHINESE COMMUNIST PARTY AND THE LEGACY OF XIANG JINGYU

The May Fourth Movement also paved the way for the emergence of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). A year prior to the party's founding, the first full version of *The Communist Manifesto* was translated into Chinese.⁹ After the CCP's inception, male communists began recruiting women to their organization in 1921. During the First National Congress, delegates discussed modeling the CCP after the Marxism-Leninism principles, which was adopted by Russia's Communist Party.⁹ Many of the party members began to read the Soviet socialist literature which described socialism as a way to emancipate women. Therefore, the CCP set up a special committee to educate women, making it a party policy to teach them about their rights. The First Manifesto, written in 1922, emphasized equal opportunity for men and women.⁹ A year later, a Women's Section of the CCP was established to encourage women to partake in the movement to advance women's rights.

Xiang Jingyu was one of the first female members of the Chinese Communist Party and became the Director of the women's program in 1923. Like many May Fourth women, Xiang rejected arranged marriages, opting for informal affairs. Eventually, Xiang chose to marry Cai Hasen, which nearly immediately resulted in her belief in Marxism. She often read *The Communist Manifesto* and *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State*. By the summer of 1920, in an essay entitled "A Discussion of Women's Emancipation and Transformation" which was published in the journal *Young China*, Xiang expressed her communist views for the first time, writing that the fundamental social change that needed to occur in China would most successfully be brought about through an event like the Bolshevik Revolution.¹⁰ Xiang's view was that the complete emancipation of women was only possible with the abolition of the family which reflected the blending of her May Fourth ideals and newfound communist beliefs (in this case, from Engels' *Origins of the Family, Private Property, and the State*).¹⁰

Xiang's chief goal was to make a strong presence in the feminist press, as her resolution highlighted the necessity of having a publication to "guide" and "criticize" the women's movement (*Zhongguo funü yundong lishi ziliao*).¹¹ The first publication of *Women's Weekly* was on August 22, 1923 replacing the *Women's Critic*, which over two years had been a principal way for male Communists like Mao Dun and Chen Wangdao to express their opinions of the women's movement.¹¹ Thus, by shutting down *Women's Critic*, the most likely way Xiang's actions would be criticized, she demonstrated her leadership of the Chinese Communist women's program.

In *Women's Weekly*, Xiang blended "the struggles of feminist groups with those of workers" in order "to develop a truly 'mass' women's movement."⁵¹ She wrote about the silk workers who went on a major strike in 1922, demanding that their union, the Women's Industrial Society, be recognized, along with their demands for better working conditions.¹¹ There were over forty strikes, which was remarkable considering how these women strongly depended on these jobs to support their families. Unfortunately, no major accomplishments were achieved, but the leaders of the union were released from jail and workers gained the right to leave work a half hour early on extremely hot days.¹¹ Xiang's articles about the silk workers helped draw literate women to the cause — she wrote about the significance of women developing and relying on their own networks but also about the necessity of separate women's social action groups that could support women during strikes by providing financial and political services.

The majority of her actions, however, were on establishing the Nationalist women's program, instead of the Communist's program.¹⁰ She felt that the women's program was pushed to the side by many CCP male leaders, which slowed down her efforts. It can also be assumed that Xiang wanted to be a part of the inner circle within the CCP, which often did not include the women's program.¹⁰ With the Nationalist Party, on the other hand, she had more legitimacy. She could organize public meetings due to their legal status and they had the financial means to support her ideas. Eventually, when the United Front policy passed in 1924, Xiang decided to re-enter the women's rights movement and take position as director of the Chinese Communist party's women's program because she realized that the Communist party now advocated for a national revolution, instead of simply a proletariat revolution.¹¹

As the Communist women's program's director, Xiang outlined a resolution on the congress' work concerning women, and that a central task would be to hold sway over the *yiban funü yun-dong* ("general women's movement"), which included "women's rights, suffrage, and social reform groups."¹¹ In her resolution, Xiang also calls back on May Fourth ideals concerning gender equality when proposing slogans for the women's movement. In 1927, when Xiang returned to China from Moscow, after studying at the Toilers of the East University.¹⁰ Xiang decided to go to Wuhan where Communists would eventually get expelled by the city.¹⁰ At this time, Xiang went underground. Unfortunately, she was betrayed by the members of her own group who turned her over to the authorities at the Hankou's French Concession.¹⁰ Doomed for execution, she faced the French court proclaiming,

"Didn't you French call for liberty, equality, and fraternity?"

Didn't you call for freedom of belief?

Then why do you interfere with our freedom of belief?

I am Xiang Jingyu, a member of the Chinese Communist Party.

You can kill me and cut me to pieces.

I myself have no hope, but tens of thousands of Xiang Jingyus will rise up in my place."¹⁰

Some historians say that Xiang had a greater impact on her death than when she was alive. She never renounced her beliefs and became a martyr for communism and the liberation of women in China. Although her efforts may have been destroyed with the end of the United Front, in her final years with the CCP, Xiang's left a strong impression on the party and kept the woman question alive for years to come.

VII. THE INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY IN CHINA AND COMPETING PARTIES

Chinese feminism (women's emancipation) was intended to be an international movement — liberation of all women, rather than just those living in China.¹² In fact, Chinese writings such as "The Contemporary History of Western Women" emphasized that gender inequality exists worldwide by commending rapidly occurring foreign achievements, like American women winning the right to inherit and will property.¹² Thus, in this Chinese text, the celebration of these foreign achievements was presented as international progress in an international movement, that included China. This essay further predicted that similar successes would occur in China as they joined the global movement against sexual discrimination.¹²

Communists, however, saw the global movement as an opportunity to promote the cause of socialism. Therefore, the International Women's Day (IWD) was introduced to China in 1924 to restructure the Chinese Nationalist Party towards Leninism and the United Front, an effort to unite leftist parties, namely the CCP.¹³ The Nationalist Party had a predominant hold on IWD activities, which aimed to promote socialism, feminism, and party propaganda. Women would drive around handing out leaflets while proclaiming that the party aims to liberate the women of China.¹³ The IWD manifesto showed that the women would be joining an international movement by stating, "the day commemorates the start of women's international unity... and we know that the success of the women's liberation movement can only come when all the women of the world unite together."¹³ However, the principle that the IWD promoted was that capitalism must be overthrown because the women's cause relied on the tenets of socialism.¹³ Since then, the United Front worked together to push the agenda of the IWD for nearly three years.

In the years following, a rift between the two parties meant that the IWD became a vehicle for each party to recruit women masses to support their cause. The growing animosity between the two parties became clear when China came under Nationalist rule.¹³ In response, the CCP organized celebrations in conjunction with the USSR to expand their reach

and gain global recognition in the fight for women's rights. Over time, the international spirit of the IWD lost its central message after the invasion of Japan in Northeast China in 1932.¹³ Women were asked to join the war efforts to help wounded soldiers and struggling families during this sensitive time. From there, well into the 1940s, the IWD continued to be weaponized for party-building and to engage women in war efforts.

VIII. WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE ASSOCIATION AND WOMEN'S RIGHTS LEAGUE

Between 1917 to 1922, during the rise of the CCP, many women's rights activists saw the reconvening of the Constitutional Conference¹¹ by the Wu Peifu's warlord regime (an effort to restore the old parliament of 1913) as an opportunity for women to further their legal rights in China.¹¹ This quickly led to an increase in women's rights groups: women from Beijing University, the Beijing Law Institute, and the Beijing Normal Women's College decided to meet on July 15, 1922 in order to create a statement of principles for a women's rights organization.¹¹ However, there were irreconcilable differences among members, leading to the formation of two separate groups: the Women's Rights League (*Nüzi canzheng xiejinhui*) and the Women's Suffrage Association (*Nüquan yundong tongmenghui*). Yet, Zhou Min, a founding member of the Women's Rights League, later revealed that the split between the Women's Rights League and Women's Suffrage Association was caused more by personal issues than ideological ones.¹¹

The Women's Suffrage Association advocated for three central objectives: women's suffrage, inheritance rights, and termination of traditional curriculums in girls' schools.¹¹ In contrast, the Women's Rights League had wider ambitions — the Women's Rights League wanted to eliminate all laws that oppressed women. For instance, the Women's Rights League supported laws outlawing prostitution, foot-binding, girl slavery, wage discrimination, and concubinage; ensuring equality between men and women in marriage; guaranteeing women paid maternity leave; and safeguarding women's access to all educational institutions.¹¹

The Women's Rights League, led by Zhou Min, Zhang Renrui, and Miao Boying, was nearly immediately favored by Communists because of its broader focus on women's rights as opposed to only suffrage, the focus of the Women's Suffrage Association.¹¹ Once the original chapter of the Women's Rights League was established in Beijing with over 300 members, founder Miao Boying helped to start chapters in Shanghai and Nanjing in 1922.¹¹ The Shanghai chapter was officially established on October 22, 1922, with Wang Huiwu and Wang Yizhi as founding members.⁸⁰ Wang Yizhi and Wang Huiwu also often expressed that men were the central reason for the oppression of women. In an essay for *Women's Critic*, Wang Yizhi wrote: "In this male-oriented society, the laws guarantee the interests of men."¹¹ Joining forces with other female activists like Cheng Wanzhen, who taught at the Pingmin Girls' School, the Shanghai chapter started a petition that called on members of the Beijing constitution committee to include women's rights as civil rights in the draft constitution.¹¹

However, men who were a part of the Shanghai Communist organization often criticized the Women's Rights League because the League's primary goal was gender equality, instead of class equality and socialist reform. Chen Wangdao, the editor of *Women's Critic*, wrote that the Women's Rights League's actions were a part of an "unrevolutionary political movement" that did not help "the disinherited," despite having the redeeming quality of advocating for women's rights.¹¹ By placing gender equality above communist ideals, Chen argued that the Women's Rights League members aimed to create equality with capitalists, rather than the common person or coolie.

On the other hand, Li Dazhao, the head of the Beijing Communist organization disagreed with claims that these women's rights organizations contradicted the interests of proletariat women. Li argued that any and all civil rights groups like the Women's Rights League were beneficial when China was "under warlord control."¹¹ In fact, Li even advocated for chapters of the Women's Rights League or Women's Suffrage Association to be established all throughout China. Although this goal was never fully realized and the warlord regime mostly ignored the actions of these groups, the spread of these organizations constituted one of the largest women's rights movements in China since the empire fell a decade prior.

IX. CONCLUSION

Mao Tse-tung, a founding member of the CCP, was strongly influenced by both the Xinhai Revolution of 1911 and the 1919 May Fourth Movement. Under Mao's direction, the CCP briefly allied with the Kuomintang Party (KMT) to create the United Front during the Second Sino-Japanese War which lasted from 1937 to 1945.¹⁴ After Japan surrendered, however, the CCP defeated the KMT in 1949, and Mao established the People's Republic of China, controlled by the CCP, the only party.¹⁴

Mao adopted an extreme leftist view on gender that minimized a woman's femininity to create the Iron Girl.¹⁵ The issue of class comes to play as the Iron Girl targeted working-class women unlike the 1920s' "new woman" which targeted middle-class girls. These lower-class women were able to handle machinery with bodies that were idealised to be very similar to the male physique.¹⁶ The CCP created this state-sponsored feminism because they recognized that gender oppression directly contradicted socialist political ideals of complete emancipation. As a result, the party actively worked to emancipate women, by supporting women in pursuing traditionally unfeminine jobs, such as working various machines and doing manual labor, thus explaining why female bodies, in CCP propaganda, were made to be similar to typical male bodies. This leads scholars to believe women were masculinised, even becoming androgynous ideals.¹⁶ However, the PRC still emphasized that these people were women, eventually overturning the idea that the typical person was male by minimizing the difference between men and women.

The urban upper class criticized Mao's policies on gender uniformity. Instead, they sought to appreciate the biological differences between men and women and began to emphasize the femininity of women.¹⁶ Decades later, the question of women will later morph to form a more sexualized view of women in China to signal the country's growing dominance in the global market beginning the 1980s.¹⁶ The conversation of the "new woman" will replace the Iron Girl, and as a result, feminism will be referred back to nuxing " zhuyi (female or feminine-ism), a historically charged phrase in the women's fight for equality throughout the century.¹⁶

The history of communist rule in China has revealed the development and changes of China's various "feminisms" with the shifting visions and ambitions of the CCP. This so-called "feminism" to some is anti-feminist at heart, led by generation after generation of male leaders ambivalent to the women's cause.¹⁷ In fact, feminists have repeatedly criticized the CCP, even at its peak of fighting "bourgeois individualism." Whether intentional or unintentionally, in the eyes of historians and Chinese citizens, the CCP has allowed for the growth of contemporary scholarly and political communities where feminism has been explored, debated, and developed. Furthermore, currently, many of the most prominent Chinese feminists opt to work within the communist system, arguing that it is the most effective way to expand their platform for women's rights.¹⁷ Despite an increasingly oppressive Communist system, feminism is still able to survive in China, engaging with issues such as domestic violence and labor rights.

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