

JÓSEAN GARRUÉS-IRURZUN y  
JUAN ANTONIO RUBIO-MONDÉJAR  
(coords.)

HACIENDO HISTORIA ECONÓMICA:  
NUEVAS INVESTIGACIONES, NUEVOS  
INVESTIGADORES

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Y EMPRESARIALES

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## PRESENTACIÓN

“Some harsh employers and politicians, defending exclusive class privileges early in last century, found it convenient to claim the authority of political economy on their side; and they often spoke of themselves as “economists.” And even in our own time, that title has been assumed by opponents of generous expenditure on the education of the masses of the people, in spite of the fact that living economists with one consent maintain that such expenditure is a true economy, and that to refuse it is both wrong and bad business from a national point of view”.

Alfred Marshall,  
*Principles of Economics* (8th ed 1920 [1890], p. 34).

LA introducción a este libro no puede ser otra que la que realicé en su día como consecuencia de la apertura del *I Foro de doctorandos e investigadores noveles en Historia Económica*, celebrado en Granada, los días 13 y 14 de febrero de 2013.

En primer lugar, hay que agradecer a la Universidad de Granada, y en particular al Grupo de investigación *Historia Económica, Instituciones y Desarrollo* (SEJ476), al Departamento de Teoría e Historia Económica y a la Fundación Euroárabe de Altos Estudios su colaboración en la organización de este encuentro. También estamos en deuda con el Editor de *Investigaciones de Historia Económica* (revista de la Asociación española de Historia Económica), Iñaki Iriarte, que clausuró las jornadas tratando un capítulo tan importante para todo estudioso como “La divulgación científica en Historia Económica”<sup>1</sup>. No quiero

1. <http://www.aehe.net/aehe/i-foro-doctorandos2013.html>. Este libro ha contado con financiación procedente del Grupo de Investigación de la Junta de Andalucía (SEJ-476):

olvidar, tampoco, la amable y generosa colaboración de Salvador Hernández que, con sus siempre acertados juicios en las sesiones y jugosos comentarios en las visitas al Albaicín y el Sacromonte, consiguió hacer más relajada y amena la agenda de trabajo.

En segundo lugar, debo subrayar que el objetivo del Foro, tal y como señalaba el programa, era:

*“crear un punto de encuentro para los investigadores que están realizando tesis doctorales sobre temas afines a la Historia Económica”.*

Hay que advertir que la idea partió de Juan Antonio Rubio, que reconoció las ventajas que este tipo de encuentros podía tener para quienes, como él, se encontraban embarcados en la ardua tarea de realizar la tesis doctoral. La iniciativa la acogí con entusiasmo, de manera egoísta, porque uno de los más beneficiados iba a ser mi doctorando (y todo es poco cuando se trata de apoyar a los jóvenes investigadores) y, de manera algo más altruista, porque siempre he creído que en el actual panorama universitario no existe un seminario/*workshop/fresh-meeting* en el que los protagonistas sean de verdad los doctorandos; donde el debate e intercambio de ideas esté planteado por y para ellos.

Evidentemente, existen otras experiencias donde los doctorandos pueden exponer sus obras, pero normalmente estas actividades ocupan un lugar secundario y, desde mi punto de vista, su excesivo “academicismo” (en buena medida por organizarse en escenarios muy formales —Congresos nacionales e internacionales—, con un tiempo muy constreñido y bajo el paraguas de distinguidos profesores) resulta poco atractivo para el diálogo relajado de proyectos e ideas.

En este contexto de punto de encuentro, por y para los doctorandos, el éxito del seminario iba a residir en la capacidad de interacción de los investigadores. Además se esperaba que fueran ellos mismos, los participantes, quienes con el paso del tiempo valoraran si la experiencia había cubierto sus expectativas y, por ello, les había resultado útil. Probablemente la publicación de los trabajos casi dos años y pico después de la celebración del Foro genere en los autores cierta desazón, pero

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*Historia Económica, Instituciones y Desarrollo*, así como del proyecto de investigación *El sustento de la Humanidad y la sostenibilidad de su entorno: cambios y permanencias en los procesos productivos, 1930-2010* del Ministerio de Economía y Competitividad (HAR2013-40760-R).

visto desde una perspectiva positiva ello se deberá a que sus análisis hoy superan con creces lo que inicialmente se plantearon en sus proyectos.

En tercer lugar, y de acuerdo a los objetivos señalados, la dinámica del Foro consistió en: a) la exposición por parte de cada investigador (durante 10 minutos) de las fortalezas y de las debilidades encontradas en el trabajo de otro colega asignado por la organización. Se recomendó que los ponentes realizaran un crítica ponderada (equilibrando puntos fuertes y débiles) y constructiva (ofreciendo posibles alternativas a estos últimos); b) una respuesta (de otros 10 minutos) por parte del interpelado para replicar —defender, justificar, aclarar o contradecir— la versión ofrecida de su trabajo; y c) un turno cerrado de intervenciones (10 minutos) para el resto de doctorandos que quisieran expresar su opinión.

Como coordinador de la parte científica del Foro, y después de haberme leído todos los proyectos de tesis, señalé algunas cuestiones que sirvieron como preámbulo y marco de referencia al debate general.

La primera impresión es que las diecisiete tesis realizadas y/o en proyecto, como no podía ser de otro modo, abordaban temas muy variados; que afectaban a espacios y a períodos cronológicos bien diferenciados. De hecho, se hablaba en ellas de desarrollo, economía política, políticas industriales, población, concertación social, gasto militar, sistema fiscal y crediticio, reaseguros, mutuas, gremios, socorros mutuos, electricidad, ganadería, estatura, transporte urgente o redes empresariales. Las tesis se situaban en diferentes países: China, México, Portugal y España; y varias regiones: Cataluña, Andalucía, Extremadura y Castilla-La Mancha. Y salvo tres trabajos, que se iniciaban en la Historia Económica Moderna, el resto se referían a la Historia Contemporánea.

¿Qué requisitos se deben exigir a un buen trabajo de investigación en Historia Económica?

Señalé que eran muchos los criterios que se podían y debían tener en cuenta, así como que sería muy pretencioso resumirlos en una breve presentación. No obstante, quise destacar que casi todos estaríamos de acuerdo en responder, al menos, a cuatro cuestiones:

1. ¿Existe una hipótesis o una pregunta que demostrar o responder?
2. ¿Qué interés tiene esa pregunta para la Historia Económica? Si se deseaba poner en valor el trabajo, habría que introducir lo que hasta el momento había señalado la literatura con relación al tema, o si se quiere, el estado de la cuestión.
3. ¿Qué tipo de metodología, herramientas analíticas y fuentes se deben y pueden utilizar? y ¿son suficientes y adecuadas para contrastar nuestras hipótesis?

#### 4. ¿Las conclusiones responden a la pregunta formulada?

Pues bien, siguiendo estas pautas, realicé algunas observaciones generales con la única pretensión de animar el debate o, como mucho, servir de punto de referencia.

- 1) En mi opinión, todas las investigaciones presentaban unos objetivos claros y explícitos.
- 2) La calidad o el interés de las preguntas formuladas en los ensayos era, como no podía ser de otro modo, desigual. En este sentido, un tercio resultaban muy pretenciosos o sanamente ambiciosos; otro tercio se enmarcaban dentro del nivel medio exigido en estos casos; y el resto, aunque tenían un valor indudable, podían adscribirse a otras áreas de conocimiento o tenían en el muy corto plazo su marco de análisis. En cualquier caso, la mayoría demostraban un buen conocimiento de la literatura relacionada con el tema objeto de estudio.
- 3) La metodología aplicada era muy rica y variada.
  - Teníamos varios (3) análisis cuyo objetivo era contrastar una teoría ya desarrollada previamente, que coincidían en recurrir a la reconstrucción de series y al análisis econométrico. Alguno de ellos con resultados provisionales inciertos, por la fase inicial en la que se encontraba la tesis.
  - Había (3) proyectos de tesis, por el contrario, que aplicaban una nueva teoría a un viejo problema, que podrían entenderse como revisiones o reinterpretaciones históricas a partir de los avances teóricos del Nuevo Institucionalismo.
  - Otros (2) trabajos pretendían, mediante nuevos instrumentos o sugerentes ejercicios analíticos, testar o formular nuevas hipótesis.
  - El resto de los proyectos utilizaban una metodología más tradicional, generalmente descriptiva; bien buscando cubrir lagunas que presentaba la historiografía (3), bien descubriendo vacíos temáticos de la Historia económica (3).
- 4) Los resultados, salvo aquellos que tenían fresca la lectura de la tesis, carecían lógicamente de conclusiones; y debían entenderse como primeras aproximaciones.
- 5) Y por último, la mayoría de los estudios estaban bien redactados y estructurados, salvo aquellos que se encontraban en su fase preliminar.

¿Cómo se podían mejorar los proyectos de tesis presentados? Mi modesta recomendación, aunque alguien pueda recordármelo en el futuro, es “exprimiendo” el talento de los directores de tesis y, por lo que al presente seminario se refiere, aprovechando al máximo este tipo de encuentros, por lo que en sí mismo ofrecen, así como por las posibilidades de entablar relaciones futuras con otros colegas (*networking*).

Desgraciadamente, lo que este libro no puede ofrecer son las exposiciones de los ponentes, las réplicas de los autores y los debates que surgieron con los mismos. La pretensión de los coordinadores con su publicación ha sido, por ello, simplemente dejar evidencia de las investigaciones presentadas. Por un lado, era un compromiso que habíamos adquirido verbalmente con los participantes antes de celebrar el evento; y, por otro lado, nunca está de más todo esfuerzo realizado dando voz a lo que ha ocupado y preocupado en un momento determinado a una nueva generación de doctorandos en Historia Económica. Lo que podemos leer a continuación es, así pues, su testimonio.

Granada a 12 de marzo de 2015

*Jósean Garrués-Irurzun*

## Capítulo 1

### CHINA: STATE AND FAMINES. A CASE STUDY OF HENAN PROVINCE IN THE LONG RUN (1978-2010)\*

ROSER A. KLEE\*\*

#### INTRODUCTION

THERE is substantial evidence in Chinese history showing famine as a recurrent economic and social episode permanently concerning the Chinese state. Historical records show that 1,828 famines took place in China during Imperial times, from 108 BCE until 1911 (Mallory, 1926). Also the Republican era (1912-1949) was a period of subsistence crisis registering five major famines (1920-21, 1928-30, 1931, 1938, 1942-43), mainly in the North China plain (Edgerton-Tarpley, 2012). Devereux (2000) also identifies 1924 and 1927 as famine years. One of the most devastating famines in world history took place in China during the Great Leap Forward (1958-1961). However, since the economic reforms in 1978, no official records show evidence of famine in the country. Even though food security remains an essential concern for Chinese government, the apparent famine eradication in China in the past decades deserves to be analyzed as an economic, political, and social phenomenon.

\* This research is in its preliminary stage and it is subject to change. Please do not cite.

\*\* PhD candidate at Univesitat de Barcelona, Faculty of Business and Economics, Economic History and Institutions Department. ADR scholarship at Universitat de Barcelona. PhD thesis director: Nikola Koepke, Universitat de Barcelona.



The purpose of this research is to analyze the political responses to famine and food crisis in China in the long run. The main study period will cover the time from 1978 to 2010. In general, this has been a period of increasing economic success in China leading to environmental issues and social inequality. These aspects presumably have a negative impact on food access and food availability among the Chinese population, making food security a top subject on China's political agenda<sup>1</sup>. In addition, endemic hunger and malnutrition remains an issue that deserves particular attention. However, the objective of this dissertation is to analyze the mechanisms that Chinese government has applied in recent decades in order to alleviate massive starvation and high mortality due to related diseases.

Since imperial times, some regions have been more likely to suffer from famine than others. China's mixed geography and climate has led to a variation of agricultural productivity and economic development among provinces. The North China Plain, which includes Henan, Hebei, Shandong, Jiangsu, and Anhui, has been the most affected area. Also Shanxi, Shaanxi, and Sichuan have a history of severe food crises. This research focuses mainly on Henan province, an area in which the population has been confronted with food shortages in recurrent occasions leading to high mortality rates. Two of the most extreme famines in world history, the Incredible Famine (1876-79) and the Great Famine (1958-62), took place in Henan, among other regions. In recent years, both its biological living standards and GDP per capita have increased. Even though malnutrition is still a concern, the latest famine registered in this region is in 1975 (Xie Ying, 2012). Today, with over 94 million people, Henan province remains one of the most populated provinces in China, after Guangdong and Shandong province. The objectives of this research are to detect whether and to what extent famine eradication really took place in the province, analyze the potential mechanisms used by the central and local governments in order to achieve this supposed alleged for the past three decades, and identify the province's vulnerability to suffer from future famines.

This paper is divided into four sections. Section 1 defines the concept of famine. Section 2 points out the main questions and objectives of this

1. Report on the Work of the Government (2011, 2012) delivered by Premier Wen Jiabao at the Fourth and Fifth Session of the Eleventh National People's Congress on March 2011 and March 2012, respectively <http://english.gov.cn/official/workreports.htm> .

dissertation. Section 3 introduces the methodology and variables that will be used. Section 4 focuses on the general observations of this study.

## 1. WHAT IS FAMINE?

### 1.1. How to identify famine

Famine is most commonly defined as “greater than usual mortality that is caused by insufficient availability of or access to food, whether directly due to starvation or far more commonly, indirectly, due to disease or injury associated with severe under-nutrition”<sup>2</sup>.

Nevertheless, the definition of famine has been under consideration by different disciplines, causing controversy in several humanitarian emergencies, including Sudan (1998), Ethiopia (1999-2000, 2002-2003), and Malawi (2002) (Devereux and Howe, 2004). For this reason, different scholars have proposed new approaches to define famine based on intensity and magnitude scales, as well as type of famine. Howe and Devereux (2004) define *intensity* as the severity of the crisis at a given location and point in time, while *magnitude* describes the aggregate impact of a crisis. Based on crude mortality rates (CMR), wasting indicator, and presence of edema, intensity scale includes levels 0 to 5, classified as *food security conditions*, *food insecurity conditions*, *food crisis conditions*, *famine conditions*, *severe famine conditions*, and *extreme famine conditions* respectively. Also, World Hunger Organization (WHO) defines severe acute malnutrition or severe under-nutrition as “a very low weight for height (below -3 z scores of the median WHO growth standards), visible severe wasting, or presence of nutritional edema”<sup>3</sup>. Magnitude scale, based on mortality range, includes *minor famine*, *moderate famine*, *major famine*, *great famine*, and *catastrophic famine*. De Waal (2000) also identifies three different degrees of famine severity: *hunger and impoverishment*, *elevated rates of mortality*, and *spectacularly high death rates alongside severe social dislocation and collapse*. Another way to detect famine, introduced by Watts (1983) and

2. Quotation to Christopher Barrett, food aid expert and professor at Cornell University, at IRINnews (2010), <http://www.irinnews.org/Report/89121/Analysis-What-is-a-famine>.

3. World Hunger Organization (WHO) <http://www.who.int/nutrition/topics/malnutrition/en/index.html>.

Davies (1996), is documenting the behavioral responses of populations affected by food crisis (coping strategies). This is a relevant approach to identify possible famines in the future.

### Why does famine happen?

In 1798, Thomas Malthus categorized population as unable to keep growing indefinitely in a world of fixed natural resources and referred to famine as a natural check of population growth, equilibrating the demand for food with food supplies. However, in his study he did not anticipate the fertility transition to smaller families, the growth of living standards, nor the exponential increment in agriculture productivity of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Neo-Malthusianism rose once again in the decades of the 1960s and 1970s, falling again the forecast of biotechnology research and population stability.

Before the 1980s, famines were explained as a decline of crop supply due to natural disasters, which would deprive people of sufficient food intake provoking mortal diseases and starvation. This is known as the Food Availability Decline (FAD) approach. By the end of the 1970s, Amartya Sen (1976, 1981) introduced a new economic theory to explain famine<sup>4</sup>: Food Entitlement Decline (FED). Sen considers that there is enough food in the world in order to prevent famine and explains such a crisis as the drop of food demand due to bad economic and governance performance. This would explain why famines sometimes affect specific areas or particular groups of people, while neighboring states or inhabitants are enjoying an adequate intake of food. FED identifies four types of entitlements that should be legitimate to every citizen in order to avoid the occurrence of famine: production-based entitlement (growing food), trade-base entitlement (buying food), own-labor entitlement (working for food), and interchange and transfer entitlement (given food by others). Sen (2000) identifies democracy as the best political system with the ability to provide citizens the right to food and, therefore, as remedy against famine.

After Sen's publication, the entitlement approach has been subject to criticism. Scholars such as Ravallion (1996) consider food availability

4. Rangasami (1985) does not consider this a new finding to analyze famine, showing evidence that this kind of approach is implicit in 19<sup>th</sup> century Indian literature including government records on famine, codes, and manuals of relief administration.

decline missing in Sen's entitlement theory. However, as Devereux (2001) and Rubin (2009) point out, Sen does not refute FAD as a causation of famine, but incorporates its analysis in the entitlement approach in the production-based entitlement. Also, political scientists believe FAD and FED should not be the only mechanism to have in consideration in explaining famine. Academics such as de Waal (1990, 2000) and Rubin (2008) identify political crisis (war and conflict, political instability, failure of state intervention, lack of anti-famine contract, and political interests) as an explanatory variable of famine. Also, de Waal (1990, 2000), Keen (1994), Devereux (2000, 2001, 2002, 2009), and Rubin (2008) introduce the concept of political famines, which do not operate by the shifts of supply and demand, but in terms of local power struggle, state repression towards population groups, and the fundamental right of food.

Academics of this school advocate that there is more to democracy in order to prevent such food crisis. There is evidence in famine literature that free elections, political party pluralism, and press-freedom are not necessarily an antidote against famine and identify anti-famine contract as an important mechanism to prevent such crisis Devereux (2000, 2002, 2009), (Rubin, 2008), de Waal (1989, 1990, 2000), Ó Gráda (2007, 2011). Keen (1994) claims that 'the real roots of famines may lie less in a lack of purchase parity with in the market (even though it is a mechanism of famine) than in a lack of lobbying power within national or international institutions'. The political contract, he says, enforces obligations on rules to provide for certain basic needs and human rights of their citizens. This would complement Devereux's critic towards the FED approach when he assures that FED may show *how* people might face starvation, but not *why*, excluding politics and its intervention as a causal factor. In recent years, also de Waal (2003) has pointed out HIV/AIDS as a new variable of famine. This does not change the significance of economic, climatic, and political factors to study this phenomenon, but it does change the pattern of vulnerability to such a crisis<sup>5</sup>.

5. An array of small-scale studies indicates that HIV/AIDS causes serious losses at household level, including lower incomes, decreased food cultivation, and depletion of assets. Henan province is the most affected region in China by HIV/AIDS after a great number of people got infected from blood transaction conducted by the government in the 1990s, encouraging citizens to participate in order to gain additional income.

## 2. MAIN QUESTIONS AND OBJECTIVES

This research focuses on two main questions: *Has Henan province been free of famine since the Chinese economic reforms in the late 1970s? And, what mechanisms have the central and local governments used in the past decades in order to fight famine in the region?*

The first objective is to verify famine eradication in Henan province from 1978 to 2010. Official data shows 1975 as the last year for famine registration in the region. In order to avoid uncertainty of data reliability, the study includes biological living standards indices, based on anthropometric measures, and crude mortality rate fluctuations as indicators to identify unreported famines in the region. The second objective is to identify and analyze the state's mechanisms to tackle famine since the country's economic reforms in 1978.

## 3. METHODOLOGY

This dissertation is divided into six chapters, including the final conclusions. Each of the chapters has an objective and responds to a question related to the general topic. In this section every chapter is summarized as successive methodological sections for this study.

### *3.1. Chapter I: Biological living standards in Henan province (1978-2010)*

The main objective of this chapter is to corroborate official data on no famine registration for the period between 1978 and 2010. Following famine definition and famine intensity scale introduced by Devereux and Howe (2004), there are three main indicators to consider: CMR, wasting, and edema. By utilizing the CMR we will depict periods with excessive mortality rates from 1978 to 2010. Because higher than normal mortality rates may be caused by different factors, the other two indicators must show in the same direction in order to reasonably link the three proxies to famine causation. Wasting will be calculated for both children and adults. As for children, weight for height rate must be lower than 80 per cent in order to identify acute hunger. For adults, body mass index (BMI) must be lower than 18.5. Notice that BMI equal or higher to 30 shows obesity, which is another indicator of malnutrition.

Findings in Kopelman (2000), Li *et al.* (2011), and Ravelli *et al.* (1976) show that fetal exposure to famine in the first six months of pregnancy may contribute to obesity in adulthood. The last indicator to identify famine, edema, is more difficult to analyze in the long run due to data availability. Previous findings indicate a significant improvement in the biological living standards both in China and Henan province since the economic reforms, but also determine substantial differences between urban and rural population (Bredenkamp, 2006), (FAO, 2010), (Guo *et al.*, 1999), (Liu *et al.*, 2012), (Morgan, 1997), (Wang and Ye, 2005). In addition, the increment of obesity cases and related diseases among Chinese population in recent years shows the existence of malnutrition in the country (Li *et al.*, 2011), (FAO, 2010), (Popkin, 1997 and 2008), (Popkin and Du, 2003).

Unlike acute malnutrition, chronic malnutrition or stunting occurs over time turning into a form of growth failure. A child who is stunted or chronically malnourished often appears to be normally proportioned but is actually shorter than normal for his/her age. Stunting starts before birth and it is caused by poor maternal nutrition, poor feeding practices, poor food quality, and frequent infections which can slow down growth<sup>6</sup>. Based on the World Food Summit in 1996, 10 to 20 percent of population in China suffers from chronic under nutrition. Based on 2010 China's Nutrition Profile published by FAO, the prevalence of stunting for children less than five years-old ranged between 7 percent in Beijing to 56 percent in Guizhou<sup>7</sup>. This is a topic that deserves both government and academic attention. Nevertheless, the objective of this chapter is to identify massive starvation and excess of deaths due to related diseases.

### *3.2. Chapter II: The state's mechanisms to fight famine in Henan province (1978-2010)*

The objective of this chapter is to identify and analyze the political and economic measures that the government has taken since the beginning of the 1960s up until the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century to fight famine in Henan province. This entails the analysis of both central and local

6. Unicef <http://www.unicef.org/nutrition/training/2.3/20.html>.

7. (FAO, 2010) [http://www.fao.org/ag/agn/nutrition/chn\\_en.stm](http://www.fao.org/ag/agn/nutrition/chn_en.stm) .

government's policies to assure food availability and food entitlement for Henan's population. There are two steps to this study. The first one will investigate potential mechanisms applied under *normal* situations, means in case the area is not exposed to a disaster alert. In this context, the aim is to identify food policies and agricultural policies that have been applied in the three decades under study, including issues related to the granary system, land tax, infrastructure, research and technology, international food trade, resources access, and irrigation system. Planned is also to identify as to whether there is famine contract and/or Early Warning System (EWS).

The second step of this chapter is to identify specific cases between 1978 and 2010 in which the region has been hit by a natural disaster (most likely severe drought or flood), causing economic losses to the province such as land damage and, consequently, affecting food availability and food access. This will allow a deep understanding of government's responses in difficult situations in order to prevent famine.

### *3.3. Chapter III: Fighting famine in the 18th century. A comparison with today's responses*

The aim of this chapter is to identify the state's mechanisms to fight famine for the period of the Qianlong Empire (1735-1799), based on secondary sources. This particular period of the Qing dynasty (1644-1911) is recorded as an era of economic progress and political stability. 18th century state is known to have effective mechanisms to fight famine (Perdue and Wong, 1983) (Will, 1990). The system entailed preventive methods and responding procedures before subsistence crisis. The second part of this chapter is a comparative study between the Qianlong Empire and the post economic reform era in order to distinguish differences and resemblance between the two periods in famine prevention and alleviation. This will allow identifying changes in the long run.

### *3.4. Chapter IV: Devastating famines in Henan's history*

The purpose of this chapter is to describe four famines in Henan province since the 19<sup>th</sup> century: The Incredible Famine (1876-79), The Yellow River Flood (1938-47), the Great Famine (1958-62), and the

Famine of 1975. This description entails famine location, dead toll, causes, and state responses based on historical archives and secondary sources. As mentioned before, famine may be caused by natural disasters or men-kind due to political reasons. The description of these four famines gives a clear picture of what kind of factors may lead to starvation, as well as the elements which had a direct and indirect impact on state's failure to fight famine through Henan's history.

### *3.5. Chapter V: Success of a non-democratic state to eradicate famine?*

In the early 1980s, Amartya Sen introduced the importance of democracy as a political tool to eradicate famine. He highlighted multi-party system, freedom of press, and citizen's participation as essential factors to assure food entitlements to the general population. In order to support this statement, Sen makes a comparison between India and China. He refers to India as a country that has been able to eradicate famine since his democratization in 1947 due to the presence of political criticism from the press, the parties, and the public. On the other hand, he refers to the Great Famine (1958-62) in China as a fatal crisis that took place due to the lack of flow of information, political competition, and freedom of expression (Sen, 1987).

Critics rose from this statement. In the first place, despite being a democratic country and considering that there have been more successful responses from government to food crisis rather than failures, India has suffered from two famines since 1947: the Bihar famine in 1966-67 and the Maharashtra famine in 1972 (Devereux, 2000), (Dyson and Maharatna, 1992), (Rubin, 2009), (Waal, 2000). Second, in recent years, Devereux (2002), Plümper and Neumayer (2009), and Rubin (2008, 2009), among others, have identified famine in democratic countries such as Malawi (2002) and Niger (2005). In cases such as these, popular elections, multi-party system, and media have not been enough to alleviate starvation and related diseases. Some of these failures however, should not be taken as a miscarriage of democracy, but a lack of accuracy in defining these states' political system. Anocracy is a political term that defines more accurately some of these states, despite its rare terminological use in famine analysis. Finally, Burchi's findings on famine empirical analysis support Sen's statement on the significance of democracy to eradicate famine. Nevertheless, he also highlights that autocratic states "with adequate political institutions can still avoid the occurrence of famines



even in the face of a dramatic crisis caused by natural or manmade disaster”, even though its vulnerability is higher than in democratic states (Burchi, 2011).

The objective of this chapter is to identify the features of the political system in China that have contributed to tackle famine since 1978 in Henan province. For this, *voice and accountability, control of corruption, political stability, and government effectiveness* will be analyzed in order to respond to the following question: *How adequate are political institutions in China in order to avoid famine?*

### 3.6. Chapter VI: Conclusions

This chapter includes the final observations of this PhD dissertation based on the findings of the previous chapters. In order to contribute to famine literature, the conclusions will focus on the role of Chinese political institutions to tackle famine, in order to identify political system as a determinant factor to alleviate subsistence crisis.

## 4. FINAL OBSERVATIONS

Famine is a historical reality that has not yet ceased in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, especially in the horn of Africa. China, historically known as *land of famines*, may have succeeded in preventing such crisis in the past three decades. In order to test whether the current assumption actually can be affirmed or not, the study will provide an investigation of reliable data focusing on potential short time starvation events rather than endemic conditions. To investigate this phenomenon is of extreme importance not only at an academic level, but also at a policy level. If this achievement is reliable on time, China may have been able to successfully fight famine, independently from its political system (democracy, autocracy, or anocracy). The frame of this study, however, constrains us to focus on Henan’s mechanisms to fight famine. Because significant differences exist among provinces at political, economic, and social levels, this study is not representative for China as a whole and future analysis should be done in order to have a full picture of famine phenomenon in the nation. But the study provides an essential starting point. It is important to conduct various long-run comparative studies in order to identify similarities and variations of factors such

as economic fluctuations, government policies, and state intervention, and, correspondingly, pinpoint helpful mechanisms. If China's economic and political accomplishments in famine prevention were consistent, a positive contribution to famine literature would be made.