

Prologue



Changing China: Three Decades of Social Transformation

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Abstract

China is a country in great transformation. Over the last three decades the highly remarkable economic performance of the once low-income and inward-looking state of China has attracted increasing interest from academics and policymakers. China's astounding transformation is reflected not only in her economy, but also in her social changes in the past few decades, and this inevitably is also going to have implications for the country's domestic sociopolitical development. For instance, the country's breakneck economic transformation and the accompanying income and wealth disparities could be engendering increasingly volatile intergroup relations that would result in intensified resource contest which in turn may see groups coalesce along socioracial and ascriptive lines and thus further polarized by such divides, aggravated by transnational influences brought about by the selfsame globalization that has ironically contributed to her very economic "miracle" in the first place. Adapting Green's change process model (2008) and Reeler's threefold theory of social change (2007) to the China context, this paper investigates how various dimensions of social change have been engendered by the three decades of Chinese economic reform and how these various facets of social change are impacting on the coming direction and trajectory of the country's socioeconomic and political transformation, how the interplay of State policy and societal response within the context of the exigencies engendered by the country's continued odyssey of development, modernization and reform is shaping the future of the civil society, and how from both the theoretical and empirical perspectives the complex polity-economy-society nexus involved in the transformation of modern China are having wider ramifications for the country's future.

Keywords: *China, social change, anomie, dictablanda, critical junctures*

1. Introduction

Since the launching of the *gaige kaifang* (open and reform) policy¹ in the late 1970s, China has been experiencing a tumultuous process of social change in a short span of just three decades. Among other aspects, socioeconomic, sociopolitical, sociobehavioural and sociopsychological transformations have grasped the nation in a frenzy. While the world looks upon China's "peaceful rise" with much fascination and probably a certain level of trepidation, and the wide Chinese diaspora takes pride in the reborn greatness of the Middle Kingdom, what has often been overlooked in the popular imagination is the equally amazing transformation in the mainland Chinese society – whether it be psychological, behavioural, political or economic.

Marxism, which has provided the *raison d'être* of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP)² in its continued political monopoly under the new conceptual politico-economic framework of "socialism with Chinese characteristics", considers conflict, in particular class conflict, as a fundamental characteristic of society and that continued class struggles would result in more and more fundamental changes in society, and while it is not certain that all social changes actually result from conflicts, both Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's philosophy of history and Karl Marx's social theory as well as many of their derivative theoretical frameworks essentially assert or insinuate that they do (Bottomore, 1975: 174-175). Intergroup and intragroup conflicts may evidently lead to social changes or create a predisposition to change by disconcerting the conventional and prevailing ways of life, and such conflicts include competition whose effects could be beneficial or harmful for social relations, the former through its socializing and civilizing function as Émile Durkheim and Georg Simmel saw as the creation of a network of mutual obligations and dependencies, and the latter through the generation of social ills such as mental illness and crime (*ibid.*). What may be disconcerting especially for a culture or ideology that places great value on peace, harmony and stability is that social conflicts have also been seen as universally necessary, as Ralf Dahrendorf, in his argument of the existence of crisscrossing lines of conflict in place of Marx's single fundamental cleavage in society, posited that conflict is a necessary element in all imperatively coordinated associations which in turn are a universally necessary feature of the human society (Dahrendorf, 1959: 172, 268; Bottomore, 1975: 171), or as Eisenstadt saw it:

[...] different coalitions of elites construct the boundaries of social systems, collectivities, and organizations. Yet no such construction can be continuously stable. The crystallization and reproduction of any social order, of any collectivity, organization, political system, or civilizational framework is shaped by the different forces and factors [...] and generates processes of conflict, change, and possible transformation.

(Eisenstadt, 1992: 416)

Furthermore, as Newman posited, “[the] greater the degree of reward disparity and social segregation between a dominant and a subordinate group, the greater the likelihood that conflicts between them will be relatively intense” or even violent (see Newman, 1973: 158-9) – a case where each social conflict situation produces exactly the same pattern of domination and subordination, a phenomenon Dahrendorf (1959) called the “superimposition of conflict”. In this regard, Lijphart’s remark on religious cleavage is equally applicable to other socioracial³ ones, with grave implications for ethnoregionalism and peripheral nationalism to which this special issue will later return:

If, for example, the religious cleavage and the social class cleavage crosscut to a high degree, the different religious groups will tend to feel equal. If, on the other hand, the two cleavages tend to coincide, one of the groups is bound to feel resentment over its inferior status and unjustly meager share of material rewards.

(Lijphart, 1977: 75)

2. Currents and Undercurrents of Social Change

In the subsequent sections, this paper will examine various crucial aspects of social change since China’s ruling regime launched its “Reform and Open” policy in the late 1970s – in particular the very different pace of socioeconomic and sociopolitical changes that could be an important contributing factor to the pronounced features of contradictions that unmistakably characterize the contemporary Chinese society. Every society is different and, as Eisenstadt noted, there is no grand theory that could faithfully explain the development of such contradictions everywhere:

Although these potentialities of conflict and change are inherent in all human societies, their concrete development, their intensity, and the concrete directions of change and transformation they engender differ greatly among different societies and civilizations. Societies vary in their specific constellation of the specific forces [...] that is, different constellations of cultural orientations, elites, patterns of the social division of labor, and political-ecological settings and processes.

(Eisenstadt, 1992: 418)

In full recognition of this, nevertheless, this paper would still attempt to delve further into the complex nexus of the agent-institution-event-context interface (Section 4, Figure 19) that could be playing a crucial role in engendering such social contradictions shaped inevitably by the currents and undercurrents of social change that will be scrutinized here within the theoretical framework adapted from Reeler’s threefold theory of social change (2007).

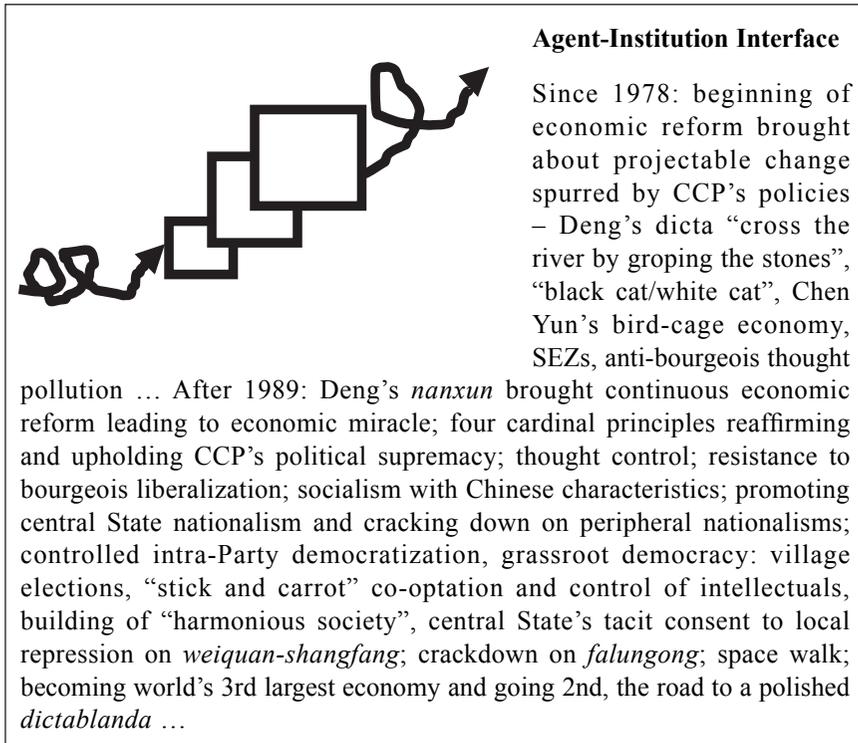
2.1. Projectable Change

Atado, y bien atado. [Tied-up, well tied-up.]

Generalísimo Francisco Franco (*El Caudillo*),
prior to his death on 20th November 1975

Reeler’s (2007) threefold theory of social change, while originally applying to a rather different context and usage, could be adapted here to throw light on the three decades of intricately interrelated socioeconomic, sociopolitical and sociocultural changes in contemporary China. Early years of reform underlain by Deng’s well-known gradualist dictum “Cross the river by groping the stones”⁴ signifies the problem-based approach that characterizes projectable change. However, the other characteristic of projectable change that entails creativity – “imagining or visioning desired results, not as a direct solution but as a new situation in which old problems are less or no longer relevant – a leap of imagination into the future” (*ibid.*: 13) made the results

Figure 1 Reeler’s Projectable Change: The Chinese Context



Source: Based on Reeler (2007: 13).

of such change less certain for post-1989 China as they are highly dependent on such prerequisites:

Projectable approaches, through projects, tend to succeed where problems, needs and possibilities are more visible, under relatively stable conditions and relationships, which are not fraught with crisis or stuckness. Where the internal and external environments, especially the relationships, of a system are coherent, stable and predictable enough, and where unpredictable outcomes do not threaten desired results, then the conditions for projectable change arise and well-planned projects become possible.

(*ibid.*)

2.2. Emergent Change

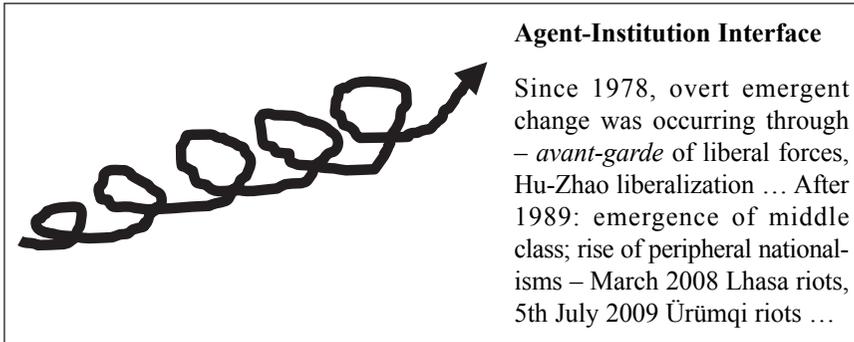
The air does not cease to have weight, although we no longer feel that weight.

Émile Durkheim (1858-1917)⁵

Citing an African proverb “We make our path by walking it”, Reeler (2007) defined “emergent change” – probably the most prevalent and enduring form of change – as a description of “the day-to-day unfolding of life, adaptive and uneven processes of unconscious and conscious learning from experience and the change that results from that”, which “applies to individuals, families, communities, organisations and societies adjusting to shifting realities, of trying to improve and enhance what they know and do, of building on what is there, step-by-step, uncertainly, but still learning and adapting, however well or badly” (*ibid.*: 9). He differentiated between two kinds of emergent change – the less conscious and the more conscious varieties, which this paper termed respectively the subliminal or latent emergent change and the overt emergent change.

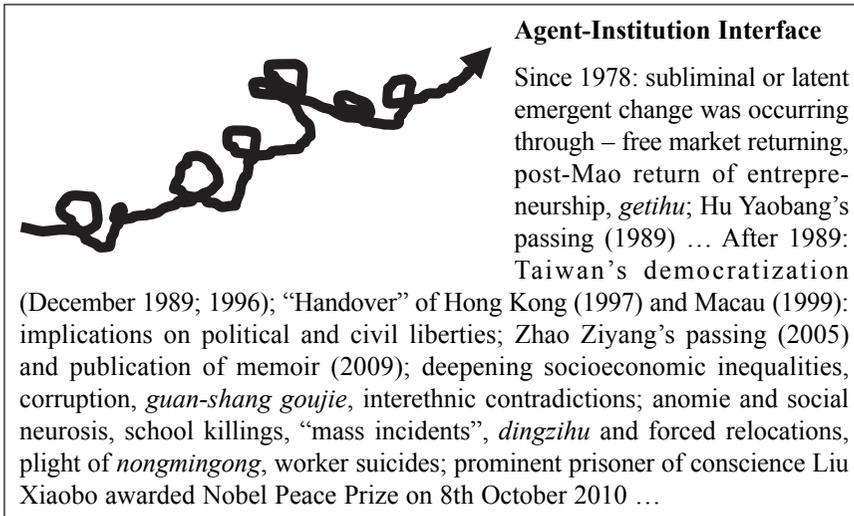
The overt emergent change – Reeler’s more conscious variety – usually occurs within a relatively stable and less openly contradictory environment “where identity, relationships, structures and leadership are more formed”, and conditions for such change can materialize after the resolution of a crisis or after a period of projectable change as a result of change fatigue or a preference for gains consolidation and more gradual and stable growth (*ibid.*: 10). On the other hand, the subliminal or latent emergent change – Reeler’s less conscious variety – usually occurs within a shifting and uncertain environment “where there are unformed and unclear identities, relationships, structures or leadership”, and without evident crises or stucknesses, and being less conscious it is characteristically still in formation, less predictable and more chaotic or haphazard, and also “therefore most difficult to grasp, requires a reading of enormous respect and subtlety” (*ibid.*).

Figure 2 Overt (Reeler’s More Conscious) Emergent Change:
The Chinese Context



Source: Based on Reeler (2007: 10).

Figure 3 Subliminal (Reeler’s Less Conscious) Emergent Change:
The Chinese Context



Source: Based on Reeler (2007: 10).

2.3. Transformative Change

Truth is on the march; nothing can stop it now.

Émile Zola (1840-1902)

Another type of social change in Reeler’s threefold taxonomy is one stemmed from a crisis or stuckness which could take many forms and manifestations – may they be “hot” surfaced experiences of visible conflict or ‘cold’ hidden

stucknesses which cannot be seen or talked about” (*ibid.*: 12). What a ruling regime that survived on imposed harmony and stability may fail to recognize or be wary to recognize is that such crisis-induced change is perfectly natural for the human society:

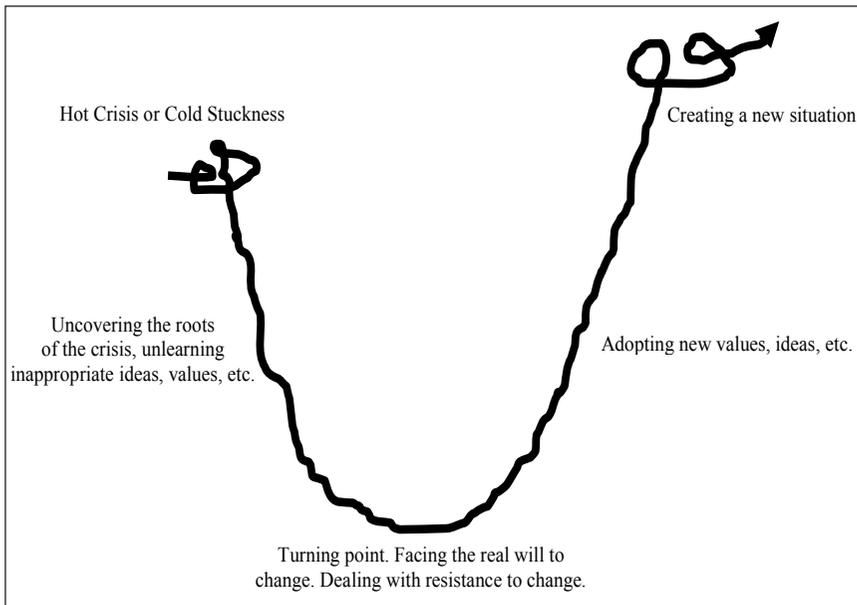
The possibility of the failure of integrative and regulative mechanisms is inherent in any society. Every civilization and every type of political and economic system constructs some specific systematic boundaries within which it operates. But the very construction of such civilizations and social systems also generates within them various conflicts and contradictions that *may* lead to change, transformation, or decline, that is, to different modes of restructuring their boundaries.

(Eisenstadt, 1992: 418)

And to make things worse, policy decisions based on such inadequate recognition tend to beget even more inadequate decisions given the difficulty of admitting public policy errors, or as Rousseau once said, “When one starts covering the truth with a veil, they no longer make the effort to lift it.” (Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1762), *Émile, ou De l'éducation*, Book II, Para. 341⁶)

One does not need to look too far back in contemporary Chinese history to see how a crisis of mammoth proportions could bring a nation to a bifurcation into wholesale transformative change – which, unlike emergent change that is characterized as a learning process, involves instead unlearning, a liberation “from those relationships and identities, inner and outer, which underpin the crisis and hold back resolution and further healthy development” – and a cold stuckness which under a façade of economic prosperity and social harmony could continue to hide the real need for change which in turn when revealed could provoke even stronger resistance to change as it requires the unlearning of entrenched ideas and values in making way for the acceptance of new ones; it is a difficult choice as a crisis and stuckness of this nature tend to involve deep and complex histories and dynamics and represent the product of “tense or contradictory relationships [...] prompted by shifts in external political, economic, cultural or environmental contexts” (*ibid.*: 11-12). A particular choice at the moment of crisis could thus lead to protracted cold stuckness, instead of a U-process of transformative change⁷, thus heightening internal social contradictions leading to deteriorating sociopolitical and sociocultural anomie⁸ and neurosis resulted from the contradictions engendered by the interplay of projected change and the suppressed but unstoppable overt and subliminal emergent changes – contradictions whose impacts are particularly manifest in the presence of ethnic diversity, ethnoterritoriality, ethnoregional inequality and peripheral nationalism, dimensions to which this special issue will later return.

Figure 4 Reeler's U-Process of Transformative Change



Source: Reeler (2007: 12).

3. Sociobehavioural Change and Socioeconomic Transformation

Social problems are multi-dimensional. Nevertheless, mental illness and crime as mentioned above usually stand out as indicators in the public imagination.

3.1. Sociobehavioural Transition

Mental illness, mental breakdown and suicides are among the most outstanding of indicators of the negative impact of social change. Shocking the nation was the recent spate of suicides and attempted suicides⁹ at the Foxconn 富士康 conglomerate's factory in Shenzhen 深圳, Guangdong province, that resulted in the death or injury of more than a dozen workers within the short span of about 4 months (from the first suicide on 23 January 2010 to end of May), which continued with the fatal thirteenth and fourteenth "jumps" at its factories in Foshan 佛山, Guangdong, and Kunshan 昆山, Jiangsu, respectively on 20th July and 4th August¹⁰. Currently the number of suicides in China is huge. Suicide is now the fifth main cause of death in China where there are over 250 thousand people killing themselves every year, with a rate of a suicide every two minutes (Wang, 2008: 755). On average every day there are about 750 people in China committing suicide, and there

are an additional number of 2 million people attempting suicide (non-fatal) in China every year (*ibid.*; Tang, 2007). In terms of age distribution, suicide rate in China is highest among the elderly and within the 25-34 year-old cohort; in terms of gender, China's female suicide rate is apparently higher than male, particularly for rural female and especially high for the 25-34 year-old cohort and women above age 65 (Wang, 2008: 755; Xiao, Wang and Xu, 2003).

Regarding crime, Wang (2008: 753-754) listed the following seven characteristics of criminal activities in contemporary China:

- 1) Abruptness and scale. This refers both to large-scale organized crime that emerged in recent years as well as the sudden outbreak of violent crimes like the fatal free-floating aggression against young children in primary schools or kindergartens across China that broke out recently from March to May 2010 killing a total of 17 people, including 15 children, and injuring more than 80, in a string of five major attacks and four other cases that occurred from 23rd March to 12th May¹¹, and another attack on 3rd August that killed 4 and injured more than 20 at a kindergarten in Shandong¹².
- 2) Tendency towards higher social strata. This refers to on-the-job crimes committed by high-level officials and hi-tech skilled personnel.
- 3) Abuse of public office power getting severe. Such high-level corruption is increasingly becoming a cancer in socioeconomic and political life and damaging social justice. The Appendix table at the end of this article shows government data released in 2006 on 40 corrupt officials who fled the country. Other than the first five, most of those in the list were leaders of State-owned enterprises. The number of corrupt officials who fled the country was said to total about 500 by 2006, according to Shang (2007: 11), while according to Wang (2008: 758), based on data released for the first time by the Commerce Department, the number was as high as over 4000 by 2006, with total amount of embezzlement as high as US\$50 billion. Just to take the provincial road and transport department alone, government statistics show that from 1997 to 2006 a total of 18 provincial road and transport department heads all over the country had been arrested for corruption, and there were even more officials arrested for corruption below the provincial department level (Shang, 2007: 6). Among the overseas sanctuaries of Chinese corrupt officials, Canada was reported to be a paradise with an alleged number of over 2000 Chinese corrupt officials with total amount of embezzlement of at least over a hundred billion yuan (¥).¹³ Canada is also, for the past decade, the refuge of Lai Changxing 赖昌星, the famed founder and head of Xiamen's Yuanhua 远华 Group, who tops the list of fleeing billionaires wanted by the Chinese government in terms of amount of alleged embezzlement with 25 billion yuan.¹⁴ He fled in 1999.

- 4) Resurgence and rapid spreading of large number of crimes of the traditional society. Crimes that had literally disappeared in post-1949 China – for instance, through policy measures against illicit drug abuse in 1950, against brothels in 1951, against secret societies in 1953 – have resurfaced and spread like wildfire, including drug abuse and narcotrafficking, smuggling, prostitution, activities of the criminal underworld and gambling. Secret societies of the underworld were said to total tens of thousands, with members total over a million, rampantly committing violent, cold-blooded and unspeakable crimes (Shang, 2007: 106). Besides, the rise in youth crimes has been alarming, with government statistics (for 2005, see *ibid.*: 114-116) showing 70 per cent of people committing crimes being youths below 25 years of age, and over 70 per cent of youth crimes were committed by those of age 15-16 years. The number of youths committing crimes grew by 5.8 per cent during the period 2003-2005, with apparent increase in crimes by those below 18 years of age, involving also an increase in the types and methods of crime, as well as in vileness of the nature of crime. Among the country's 220 million young students, there was an average of one criminal case committed per minute (*ibid.*: 114). Government statistics show that the country's population involved in drug abuse reached a cumulative 1.16 million by end of 2005, among whom youths constituted 75 per cent of the total, 80 per cent of male drug addicts were involved in other crimes and 80 per cent of female drug addicts were engaged in prostitution (*ibid.*: 116). The total number of drug addicts in China is increasing by 15-20 per cent per annum (Wang, 2008: 756). The main illicit drug consumed in China is heroin, and there are currently about 700 thousand heroin addicts in China, constituting 78.3 per cent of the total number of drug addicts, and among these heroin addicts 69.3 per cent are youths below 35 years of age (*ibid.*). On the other hand, the organized criminal underworld, after having its heyday during the 1930s-1940s, virtually disappeared from the mainland after 1949 when it moves abroad (including Hong Kong 香港, Macau 澳門 and Taiwan 台灣) to escape the draconian measures of the new regime, but has been penetrating back with a vengeance since the beginning of economic reform (Wang, 2008: 757).
- 5) New forms of crime emerge in an endless stream. With economic globalization, various new forms of crime exhibit apparent tendencies of internationalization, formal organization and intelligence, including illicit drug crimes, production and selling of fake and inferior goods, as well as environmental crimes.
- 6) Distinctive geographical distribution of crimes. While there are more transnational/ transregional organized crimes in the southeastern regions like the provinces of Guangdong and Fujian which are adjacent to Hong

Kong, Macau and Taiwan, transnational illicit drug cases are relatively more numerous in the southwestern regions like the provinces of Yunnan and Guizhou and the three northeastern provinces (see Figures 5 and 6 for the regional demarcations), and economic crimes are relatively more rampant in the cities of the Pearl River Delta and the Yangzi River Delta. Such coastal and river plate cities and areas with relatively higher economic openness have crime types that are apparently different from those of the country's northwestern regions. Besides the concentration of drug addicts (25.9 per cent) in the three provinces of Yunnan, Guizhou and Sichuan, these economically or commercially advanced coastal regions have equally serious problem with the provinces of Guangdong and Guangxi together contributing 25.7 per cent of drug addicts to the national total and Guangdong alone contributing 15.6 per cent (Wang, 2008: 756).

- 7) Increasing proportion of crimes committed by population on the move in total crime rate. This refers to the rural-to-urban migrants whose feeling of relative deprivation *vis-à-vis* the urban residents is leading to increasingly acute intergroup contradictions and tendency of crime.

3.2. Socioeconomic Transformation and Social Order

Regarding the issue of corruption, in recent years, the “neo-corporatism” hypothesis emerged to claim that while the traditional Leviathan hypothesis from the school of public choice reappeared in Russia in the form of the “grapping hand” hypothesis, China is instead characterized by a “helping hand” (Krug and Zhu, 2004; Frye and Shleifer, 1997; Shleifer and Vishny, 1994, 1998; Oi, 1992, 1995, Unger and Chan, 1995, Nee, 2000; summarized in Krug, Zhu and Hendrischke, 2004).¹⁵ Gu and Chen (2002) concluded on the results of their multiregional analysis: “[...] in the case of China, the corruption of the helping hand when taxes are decentralized can be socially preferable to the corruption of the grabbing hand when taxes are centralized.” Ahlin (2000), based on a conceptual model, argued that though deconcentration has the potential to increase corruption, political decentralization has the potential to contain it due to interjurisdictional competition, while empirical evidence from Crook and Manor (2000) shows that political decentralization reduces large-scale corruption but increases the petty one in the short run, but both may decline in the long run, and Olowu (1993) considered political centralization a root cause of endemic corruption in Africa.¹⁶ Huther and Shah (1998) also found that increased fiscal decentralization was associated with enhanced quality of governance, political and bureaucratic accountability, social justice, improved economic management and reduced corruption. In this regard, China's high degree of economic decentralization should be noted.¹⁷

Figure 5 China: Three Economic Regions



Notes: Province/Zizhiqu/Zhixiashi in the officially designated Western Region in bold italics.

— Regional Boundary

Figure 6 China: Six Economic Regions



Notes: Province/Zizhiqu/Zhixiashi in the officially designated Western Region under the three-region scheme in bold italics.

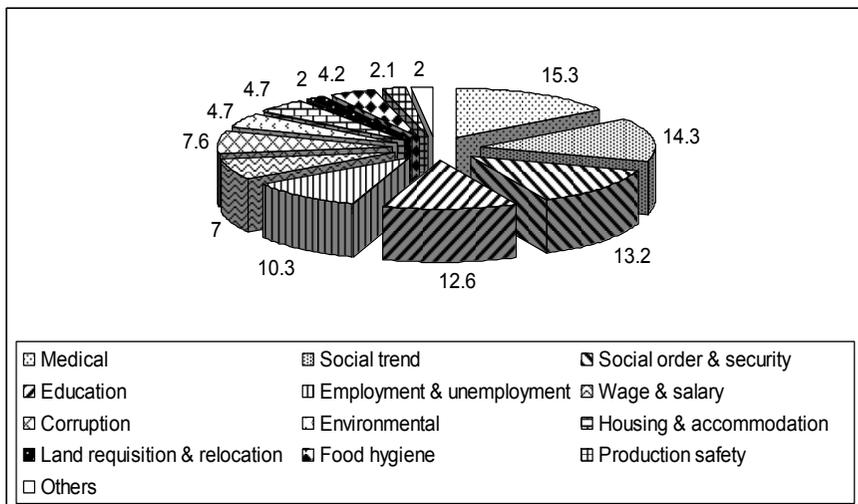
— Regional Boundary

Figure 7 shows the results of a sample survey by the National Statistical Bureau conducted in early November 2007 in all 31 provinces (*sheng* 省) / *zizhiqu* 自治区 (“autonomous region”) / *zhixiashi* 直辖市 (municipality with province status, directly ruled by the central government)¹⁸ covering 101,029 families regarding social problems the respondents were most concerned with. Out of the 13 types of social problems, the medical, those regarding social trend (social situation), social order and security, education and employment/unemployment are the top five, constituting 15.3 per cent, 14.3 per cent, 13.2 per cent, 12.6 per cent and 10.3 per cent respectively. Urban residents were most concerned with employment/unemployment, social trend, social order and security and wage and salary, while rural residents were most concerned with the medical issue, social trend, education and social order and security. This shows that social trend and social order and security are the common concerns of both urban and rural residents, while the concern with employment/unemployment and wage and salary issues are more urban than rural and the medical issues and children’s education are more the concerns of rural than urban residents.

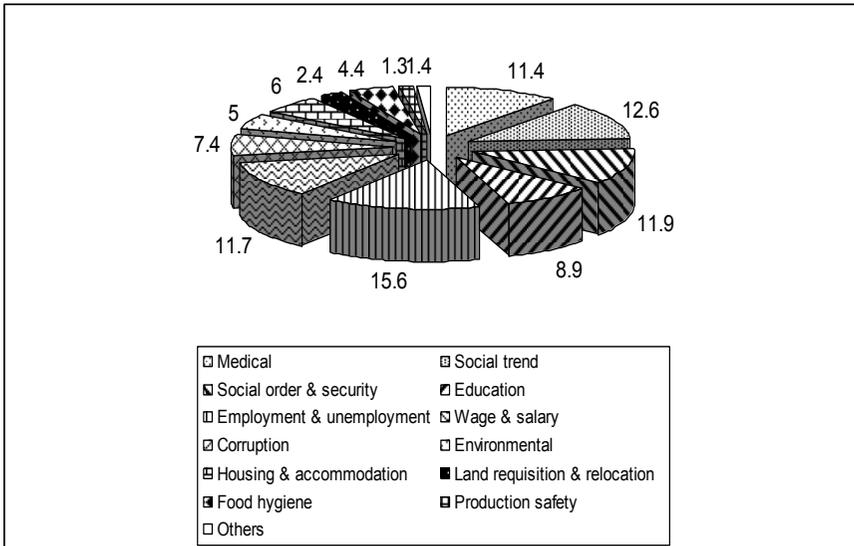
It should be noted that many of these such as land requisition and relocation¹⁹ (which has particularly attracted attention in various *dingzihu* 钉子户²⁰ cases), wage, employment, housing and accommodation, environment and food hygiene and safety are closely linked in this country to the issue of corruption and government-business collusion (*guan-shang goujie* 官

Figure 7 China: Most Concerned Social Problems (%), 2007

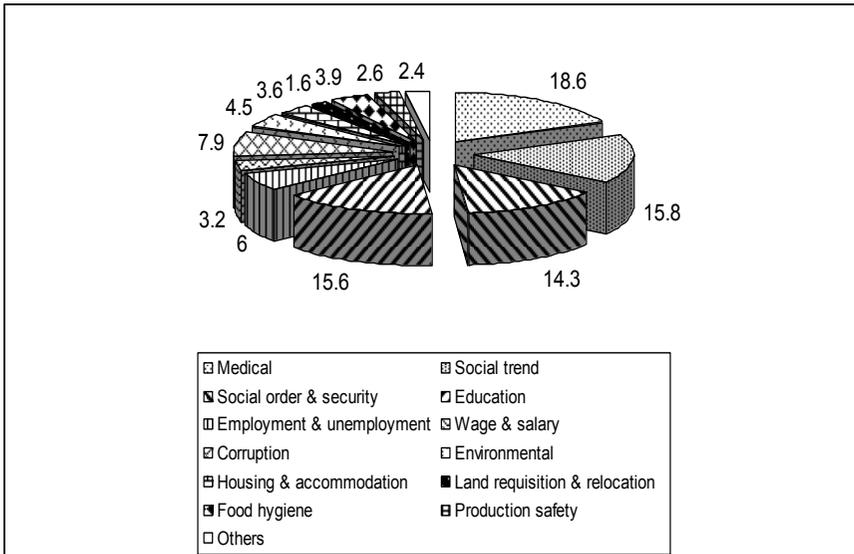
(a) All China



(b) Urban China



(c) Rural China



Source: *Zhongguo Shehui Tongji Nianjian 2008*, p. 412, Table 6.

商勾结, here referring to the collusion between local government officials and businessmen or entrepreneurs in return for favours) and contribute to widespread popular resentment and constitute the source of most public protests – officially labeled *quntixing shijian* 群体性事件 or *qunti shijian* 群体事件, literally “mass incidents” which take various forms “from peaceful small-group petitions and sit-ins to marches and rallies, labor strikes, merchant strikes, student demonstrations, ethnic unrest, and even armed fighting and riots” (Tanner, 2004: 138) – often against the police and the local governments.

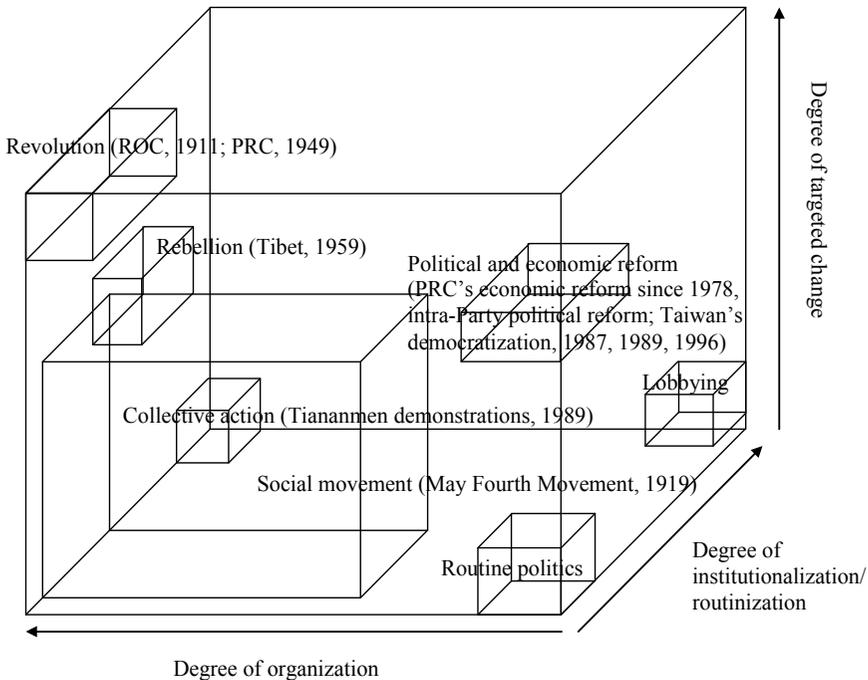
After the crackdown on the massive 1989 demonstrations which actually began with smaller-scale anti-corruption protests, this root cause of the protests has gone worse, not better. Citing Sun Yan in *Current History* (2005), Hutton (2006: 127) reminded us that “large-scale corruption is mounting. The average ‘take’ in the 1980s was \$5000; now it is over \$250,000. The number of arrests of senior cadre members above the county level quadrupled between 1992 and 2001 [...]. In 2005 it was disclosed that a cool \$1 billion had been misappropriated or embezzled in Gansu, one of China’s poorest provinces, by a ring of forty or more officials.” Hutton cited Hu’s (2006) estimate that the annual economic loss due to corruption over the late 1990s alone amounted to between 13.3 and 16.9 per cent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), while evidence provided by government departments revealed that the annual economic loss between 1999 and 2001 due to corruption averaged 14.5 to 14.9 per cent of GDP.²¹ As Hutton (2006: 127) noted, “Every incident of corruption – smuggling, embezzlement, theft, swindling, bribery – arises in the first place from the unchallengeable power of communist officials and the lack of any reliable, independent system of accountability and scrutiny [...] the evidence of the depth of corruption at the apex of government, business and finance, mean that any paradoxical usefulness [of corruption in the early years of reform in providing flexibility to an otherwise highly bureaucratic system] has long since been surpassed. Corruption to this extent is chronically dysfunctional and even threatens the integrity of the state.” This threat to the integrity of the State is most evident in the worrying frequency of incidents of social unrest which mostly stem from protests against local official corruption and abuse of power, including the local governments’ suppression of *weiquan-shangfang* 维权上访²². For instance, in 2005 alone, such public order disturbances amounted to 87,000 cases, or an average of almost 240 a day, involving about 4 million people²³. While social unrest among farmers and workers has long been observed since the early 1990s, as Lum (2006: “Summary”) described, “recent protest activities have been broader in scope, larger in average size, greater in frequency, and more brash than those of a decade ago”:

According to Chinese Communist Party sources, social unrest has grown by nearly 50% in the past two years, culminating in a particularly violent episode in December 2005. China's Public Security Ministry declared that there were 87,000 cases of "public order disturbance" – including protests, demonstrations, picketing, and group petitioning – in 2005 compared to 74,000 reported cases in 2004. In 2003, the PRC government reported more than 58,000 "major incidents of social unrest" involving an estimated 3 million to 10 million persons, of which 700, or less than 2%, involved clashes with police, while a Hong Kong-based labor rights group estimated that the number of labor demonstrations reached 300,000 that year. The December 2005 clash between villagers and People's Armed Police (PAP) in Dongzhou village (Shanwei city), southeastern Guangdong province, in which 3-20 villagers were killed, became a symbol of the depth of anger of those with grievances and the unpredictability of the outcomes of social disputes.

(Lum, 2006: 1-2)

Figure 8 is a stylized presentation based on Zhao (2008) which shows different forms and levels of political action as a function of the degree of

Figure 8 China: Typology of Political Actions



Source: Based on Zhao (2008: 767), Figure 26-1.

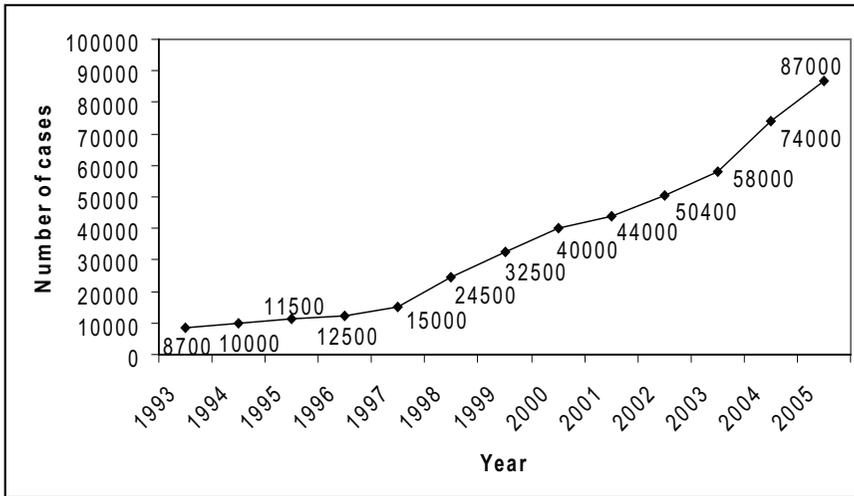
organization, of institutionalization/routinization and of targeted changes. The forms and manifestations might be different – from large-scale demonstrations of 1989 to the sporadic but frequent eruption of, often violent, public protests nowadays, including ethnoregional riots – but they all share a basic underlying element that the power that be might not be willing to recognize:

In any social order [...] there is always a strong element of dissension about the distribution of power and values. Hence [...] any institutional system is never fully homogeneous in the sense of being fully accepted or accepted to the same degree by all those participating in it [...] Thus “antisystems” may develop within any society. Although the antisystems often remain latent for long periods of time, they may also constitute, under propitious conditions, important foci of systematic change. The existence of such potential antisystems is evident in the existence in all societies of themes and orientations of protest.

(Eisenstadt, 1992: 417)

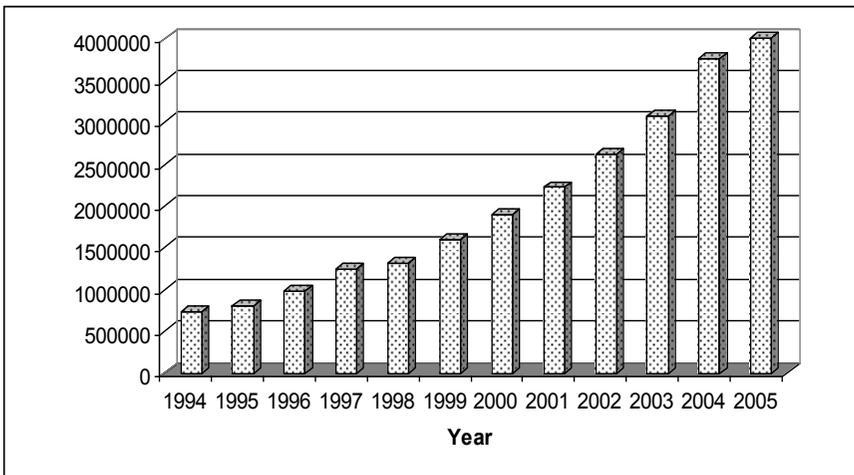
According to official statistics, “illegal” *qunti shijian* nationwide increased from 10,000 to 74,000 cases over the decade of 1994-2004, with an average annual growth rate of 22.2 per cent, while the number of people involved in the *qunti shijian* went up from 730,000 to 3,760,000, with an average annual growth rate of 17.8 per cent (Hu, Hu and Wang, 2006). The figures continued to climb to 87,000 cases and about 4 million people by 2005 (Figures 9 and 10). In general, the number of *qunti shijian* had been rising at an alarmingly increasing rate. From a growth of about 10 per cent from 1995 to 1996, *qunti shijian* was growing at an average annual rate of as high as 25.5 per cent from 1997 to 2004, i.e. higher than the average growth rate of 22.2 per cent during the decade of 1994-2004, with annual growth in certain years reaching as high as above 40 per cent; or with 1994 figure indexed 100, a steep increase of the index from 100 to 740 in terms of the number of cases during the decade of 1994-2004 (an increase of 6.4 times) and from 100 to 515 in terms of the number of people involved (an increase of 4.2 times) (*ibid.*). In terms of participants’ profiles, while at the beginning the people involved in these “mass incidents” were mainly *xiagang* 下岗 workers²⁴ and peasants (reflecting land loss and corruption issues) but later on the list of participants expanded to include, besides *xiagang* workers and peasants who lost their lands, also workers, urban residents, private individual enterprise owners (*getihu* 个体户), teachers, students and a small number of ex-servicemen and cadres, etc. (Hu, Hu, He and Guo, 2009: 143), thus reflecting expanding and deepening popular interest conflicts and contradictions.

Figure 9 China: Incidents of Public Protest (*Qunti Shijian*)



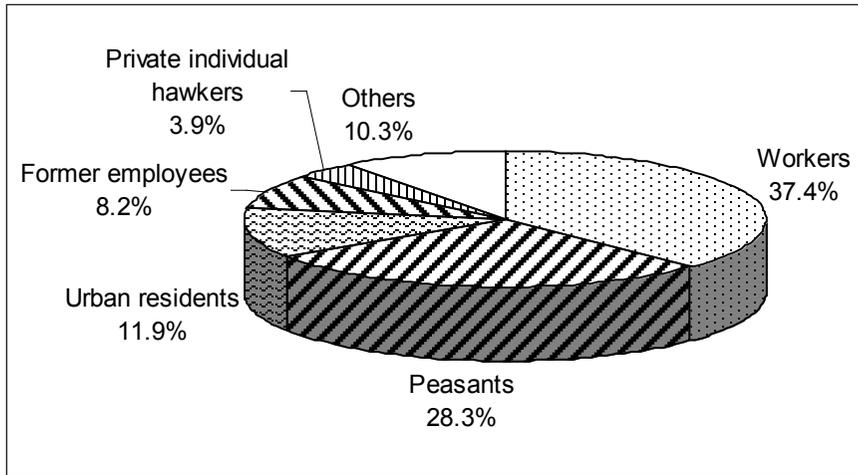
Source: Lum, 2006: 1-2; Tanner (2005), cited in Keidel (2005: 1), Table 1, data from *Liaowang* 瞭望 magazine and China Ministry of Public Security; Hu, Hu and Wang (2006).

Figure 10 China: Numbers of People Involved in Public Protests (*Qunti Shijian*)



Source: Hu, Hu and Wang (2006); 东方日报, 18th March 2009.

Figure 11 China: Participants of “Mass Incidents” (*Qunti Shijian*)



Note: Among “Workers”, one-third are workers of SOEs. “Others” includes a small number of ex-servicemen, teachers, students, cadres etc.

Source: Hu, Hu, He and Guo (2009: 143), Figure 3.2 (with data of 2001).

More recent cases of such public order disturbance were alarmingly on the rise in a series of serious incidents including year 2008’s high-profile conflicts of 28th June (in Guizhou), 5th July (Shaanxi), 10th July (Zhejiang), 17th July (Guangdong) and 19th July (Yunnan). Yet these constitute but just a small sample of the overall rise in social unrest across China in recent years, some of which involved ethnic conflicts²⁵. Adding to these are the long-running Tibet conflicts including the March 2008 Lhasa riots and the March 2009 conflict in Qinghai’s Guoluo 果洛 Tibetan *zizhizhou* 自治州 (“autonomous prefecture”)²⁶, as well as the July 2009 Ürümqi riots. With the memory of the 1989 tragedy constantly hanging like the sword of Damocles, the ruling regime is again facing a dire dilemma, as described by Tanner (2004):

[...] the struggle to control unrest will force Beijing’s leaders to face riskier dilemmas than at any time since the 1989 Tiananmen Square demonstrations. Experiments with less violent police tactics, economic concessions to demonstrators, and more fundamental institutional reforms all risk further encouraging protest in an increasingly restive society. Nevertheless, these challenges must be navigated if the party wants to avoid the ultimate dilemma of once again resorting to 1989-style violence or reluctantly engaging in a more fundamental renegotiation of power relations between the state and society.

(Tanner, 2004: 138)

The ruling CCP has not been oblivious to this deteriorating situation. Anti-corruption measures have continued to constitute a main prong in the Party's political reform since the Jiang Zemin 江泽民 administration, as Jiang himself declared in 2002 in his last political report to the National Congress, "If we do not crack down on corruption, the flesh-and-blood ties between the party and the people will suffer a lot and the party will be in danger of losing its ruling position, or possibly heading for self-destruction."²⁷ Having averted such a dire scenario for the Party in 1989 via a bloody crackdown, CCP was in full awareness of the root cause of the Tiananmen 天安门 protests. The predominantly Chinese squeaky clean, efficient tiny state of Singapore – and her long-ruling People's Action Party (PAP) – has quite incongruently become a role model for the CCP to emulate.²⁸ To the Western accusation that China's so-called "political reform" is nothing but a ruse since political reform in an authoritarian state should mean democratization and that China is copying a bad Singaporean model to develop its own version of neo-authoritarianism, combining free market economy with dissent-muzzling one-party rule, China's answer usually goes along the line like the West should recognize China's specific national conditions and give due respect before China could reach the Western standards in human rights and democracy. Whether the neo-authoritarian experience of the corruption-free tiny city state of Singapore could effectively be emulated by a huge country with one-fifth of humanity where corruption is endemic²⁹ has always been a centre of debate, given the fact that China's growing social unrest indeed reflects deep institutional problems of the evolving local State corporatism after 1989, as Minzner (2006: 9) observed:

Particularly at local levels of government, control over all formal political and legal institutions is centralized in the hands of the local Party secretary and a few deputies. These individuals exercise extensive control over institutions such as local legislatures, courts, Party disciplinary committees, and the media. This concentrated power in the hands of a few individuals breeds numerous problems. First, it allows corruption to thrive. Second, it allows local leaders to choke off the flow of information to higher-level leaders regarding policy failures that might reflect poorly on local officials' performance. Third, it deprives citizens of effective redress of their rights through local legal and political institutions, particularly when the source of the violation is a local Party official. Chinese citizens appear to be increasingly resorting to mass protests and petitions directed at higher-level authorities as a means of circumventing the controls of local officials over legal and political institutions, and triggering the intervention of higher level officials in resolving their grievances.

While the CCP regime has in the post-1989 era led the country to economic miracle and hence, in the eyes of many, has successfully reasserted its

legitimacy,³⁰ this reassertion of legitimacy and unassailability has in reality not been immune to series of challenges, some rather severe and unexpected, since 1989. Underlying these are various thorny issues that emerged both in spite of and due to the astounding economic success, one of which being socioeconomic stratification as well as ethnoregional disparity that have gone from bad to worse over these years.

3.3. Inequality, Poverty and Socioeconomic Stratification

Building upon the foundation set by the Hu-Zhao administration's audacious reformist programmes, Deng Xiaoping moved forward from where his purged former protégés have left by reinvigorating the post-Tiananmen chilling politico-economic milieu through his *nanxun* (南巡 / "southern tour") in 1992, culminating lately in China superseding Germany to become the world's third largest economy in early 2008, ranked only after the United States of America and Japan, and probably superseding Japan in mid-2010.³¹ Also impressive was the country's poverty reduction achievements (see Table 1), with GDP per capita reaching today's US\$2,000. In fact, China's poor has dropped to about 14 million in 2007, compared to 250 million thirty years ago, according to the National Statistical Bureau of China, while average rural income has reached about 4100 yuan³² in 2007 compared to just 136 yuan³³ at the beginning of economic reform.³⁴ While there has been underestimation³⁵ of the poor population, China's achievement in poverty reduction during the past three decades is still remarkable, even if the real poverty figure at present reaches a hundred million. Nevertheless, according

Table 1 China: Rural Poverty

	Year	1978	2006
Rural absolute poverty		250 million	21.48 million
Incidence of poverty		30.7%	2.3%
	Year	2000	2006
Low-income population ⁺		62.13 million	35.5 million
Proportion of low-income population in rural population [‡]		6.7%	3.7%

⁺ In 2006, the rural net income per capita of nationally designated focal poverty assistant counties reached 1,928 yuan.

[‡] In 2006, the rural absolute poor plus rural low-income population reached 13.7% of total rural population in the Western Region.

Source: Data from Fan (2008: 14-19).

to a report released in March 2009 by Beijing's Ministry of Finance, the country's Gini coefficient which had leapt from 0.282 in 1991 to 0.456 in 1998 had further increased to 0.457 in 1999 and 0.458 in 2000, with more than 50 per cent of the national income in the hands of the richest 20 per cent of the population and only 2 to 4 per cent of the national income in the hands of the poorest 20 per cent.³⁶ Table 2 shows that China's provinces/zizhiqu/zhixiashi whose Gini coefficients (G_i) are higher than the national figure (G) of 0.45 totaled 11, i.e. about 35.5 per cent of all provinces/zizhiqu/zhixiashi.

Table 2 China: Comparison of Provincial Gini (G_i) and National Gini (G)*

$G_i < G$	$G_i \geq G$ (higher by)
<i>Eastern Region</i>	
Beijing 北京 zhixiashi	Fujian 福建 (1%-10%)
Hebei 河北	Guangdong 广东 (1%-10%)
Shandong 山东	Hainan 海南 (1%-10%)
Shanghai 上海 zhixiashi	Jiangsu 江苏 (10%-15%)
Tianjin 天津 zhixiashi	Liaoning 辽宁 (1%-10%)
	Zhejiang 浙江 (15%-29%)
<i>Central Region</i>	
Heilongjiang 黑龙江	Anhui 安徽 (1%-10%)
Henan 河南	Jilin 吉林 (1%-10%)
Hubei 湖北	
Hunan 湖南	
Jiangxi 江西	
Shanxi 山西	
<i>Western Region</i>	
Chongqing 重庆 zhixiashi	Ningxia 宁夏 Hui zizhiqu (10%-15%)
Gansu 甘肃	Qinghai 青海 (1%-10%)
Guangxi 广西 Zhuang zizhiqu	Sichuan 四川 (1%-10%)
Guizhou 贵州	
Inner Mongolia / Nei Monggol 内蒙古 Mongol zizhiqu	
Shaanxi 陕西	
Tibet / Xizang 西藏 Tibetan zizhiqu	
Xinjiang 新疆 Uygur zizhiqu	
Yunnan 云南	

* $G = 0.45$

Source: Huang and Niu (2007: 161-162), Table 5-3(2), with data of 2003.

The poor zizhiqu of Tibet was rather egalitarian, with Gini lower than 0.3. Other provinces/zhixiashi with reasonable levels of 0.3-0.4 were Shandong, Jiangxi, Hubei, Guizhou and Chongqing. The majority of provinces/zizhiqu/zhixiashi, totaled 23, had Gini levels between 0.4 and 0.5, showing the inclination towards widening gap between rich and poor. Two provinces, the economically advanced Jiangsu and Zhejiang, had Gini greater than 0.5 (Huang and Niu, 2007: 162).

The following account in a sense captures the essence of the problem:

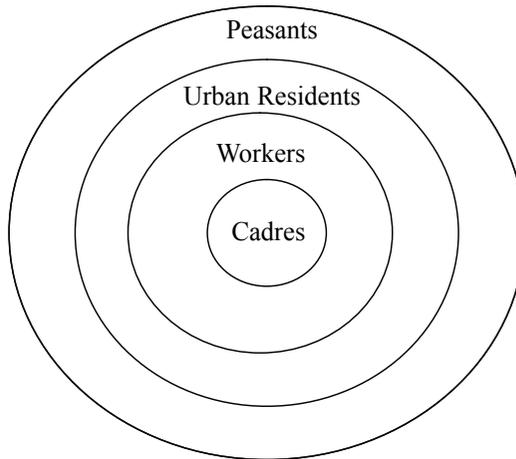
China is a profoundly polarised society, with hundreds of millions of impoverished workers and peasants at one pole, and a tiny capitalist elite at the other. According to a Boston Consulting Group study, China had 250,000 millionaire households in 2005, ranking the country sixth in the world. These households accounted for only 0.4 percent of the total, but controlled 70 percent of national wealth.

Chan (2007)

In addition, it was also alleged that almost 60 per cent of public revenue was used for the benefit of the 70 million-strong community of CCP cadres and apparatchiks who enjoyed a level of welfare – including healthcare, education and career opportunities – greatly higher than the ordinary citizens, and among the rich with wealth worth a hundred million yuan and above, 91 per cent or 2932 were the children of high-ranking CCP cadres and apparatchiks, possessing assets above 2.045 trillion yuan.³⁷

The fact that 70 per cent of China's wealth was in the hand of 0.4 per cent of the people was confirmed by Cai Jiming 蔡继明, a Chinese People's Political Consultative Committee member, on the 6th Meeting of the 11th Standing Committee of the CPPCC, referring to an authoritative government department report.³⁸ Cai emphasized that with 0.4 per cent of the people in control of 70 per cent of wealth, China's wealth concentration was higher than that of the US. Proposing income tax and inheritance tax reforms, Cai emphasized that such wealth concentration in the hands of a minority of people has led to inadequate consumption and even distorted consumption. In fact, a recent report revealed that with luxury goods consumption reaching US\$8.6 billion, i.e. 25 per cent of the world market, China superseded US to become the world's second largest luxury goods market by January 2009, ranked only after Japan.³⁹ Other data show that the degree of wealth concentration towards the rich in China is presently growing on average at an annual rate of 12.3 per cent which is double the world average growth rate. Such tendency is also reflected in sad state of the small and medium enterprises, with data showing the disappearance of 7,700,000 private businesses over the decade of 1994-2004 and the collapse of the middle class leading to an M-shape society.⁴⁰

Figure 12 China: Identity Circles



Source: Zhu (2007: 6), Figure 1-1.

Regarding social stratification, Zhu (2007: 6-7) observed the existence in China of an enormous set of “identity circles” encompassing the whole society (Figure 12) – “agricultural population” circle, “urban residents” circle, “workers” circle, “cadres” circle⁴¹:

- 1) Agricultural population: Those born into peasant families who have by informal procedure moved into other circles, even if having entered other classes or strata by work change or even having left the village the whole life, are still only considered peasants.
- 2) Urban residents: Broadly speaking, all non-peasants belong to this group of “urban residents”. Formerly, “urban residents” narrowly defined refer to unemployed personnel – those without a fixed job. As “urban people”, they had a status higher than peasants, but as people without work units, their status was below “workers”. If they were formally employed by the labour department, even if they did work, they were just “temporary workers”. This community of “temporary workers” no longer exists since the 1990s, but the concept is still alive in people’s subconsciousness.
- 3) Workers: All workers in accordance with whether they are managed by the government’s labour department or personnel department are divided into the “workers” and “cadres” sub-circles.
- 4) Cadres: From this sub-circle a further division can be made into “general cadres” and “leadership cadres”. Civil organizations in China, schools, and even public enterprises and their personnel are all subject to the so-called “administrative stratification”⁴².

Table 3 China: Official Social Stratification, 1880s

Class	Number of households	%
Literati and officialdom (<i>Shi</i> 士)	1,500,000	2
Agriculture (<i>Nong</i> 農)	56,000,000	80
Industry and commerce (<i>Gong shang</i> 工商)	12,500,000	18
Total	70,000,000*	100

* Total population around 350-400 million.

Source: Li (2008b: 33), Table 2-2 (original source: Marsh, 1980: 15).

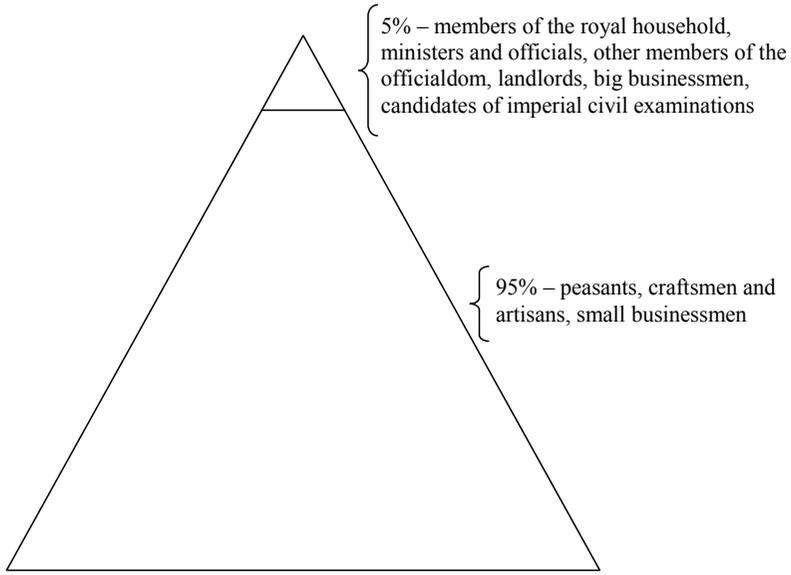
Members of the society are unable to completely follow their own will in moving across these four circles between which exist different economic and political conditions. Hence, between these four circles there exists a high-low relationship – in other words, this is not a multidimensional but a centripetal structure; moving towards the centre implies the raising of one’s social status.

Social stratification can indeed be traced back to the dawn of the Chinese civilization. From the Qin (Ch’in 秦) Dynasty to the Qing (Ch’ing 清) Dynasty (221 BC – AD 1911), the imperial courts had always divided the Chinese populace into four strata – literati and officialdom (*shi* 士), agriculture (*nong* 農), labour/craftsmen (*gong* 工) and merchants/businessmen (*shang* 商), with both landlords and peasants included in the category of “nong” as the two major strata, followed by the two secondary strata of “gong” and “shang” (Table 3) – between which did exist a certain level of vertical mobility (Li, 2008b: 32-33).

Nevertheless, the traditional official categorization contains its own contradictions by grouping together landlords and peasants under “nong” and the upper-class big businessmen/merchants and the lower-class petty businessmen together under “shang”, and separating officials and literati from the landlord class where they actually belong to (ibid.: 33). A clearer treatment of stratification is shown in Figure 13.

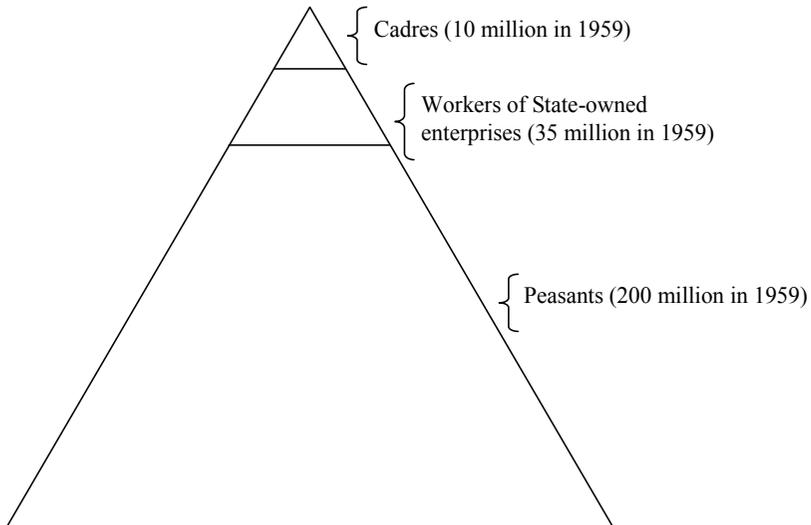
Tremendous transformation came with the Communist revolution, and by 1958 emerged a new structure of social stratification with the disappearance of the landlord class and the national bourgeoisie, and replacing them was the new upper class: the cadres – and as in the past, the huge peasant masses remained the country’s lower class (Li, 2008b: 50, see Figure 14). Moving into the 2000s Chinese social stratification has witnessed three major transformations – a third of the peasants are now the *nongmingong* 农民工 (rural-to-urban migrant labour)⁴³ whose total number is almost equal to that of the urban workers; urban non-SOE workers have greatly surpassed the

Figure 13 China: Social Stratification in Late Qing (Ch'ing) Dynasty



Source: Li (2008b: 33), Figure 2-1 (original source: *The Cambridge History of China*, Vol. 13, p. 30).

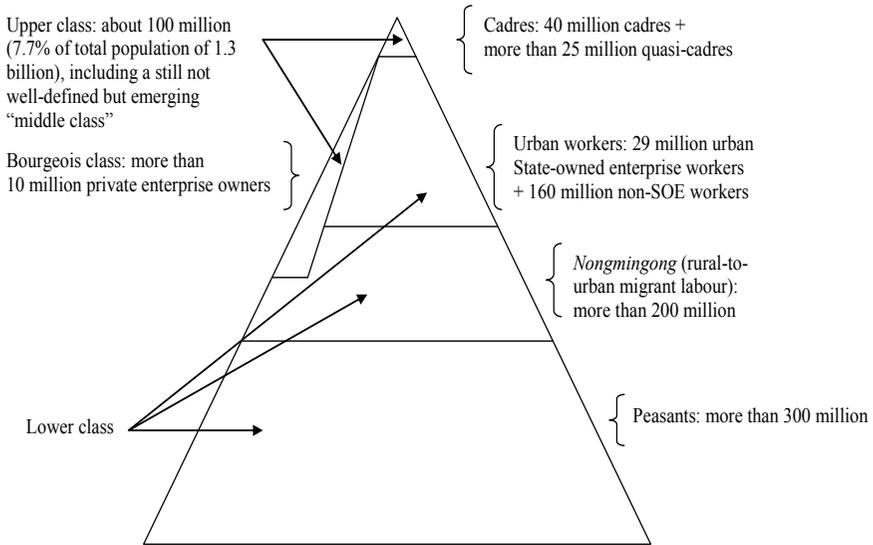
Figure 14 China: Social Stratification, 1959-1979



Source: Li (2008b: 51), Figure 3-1.

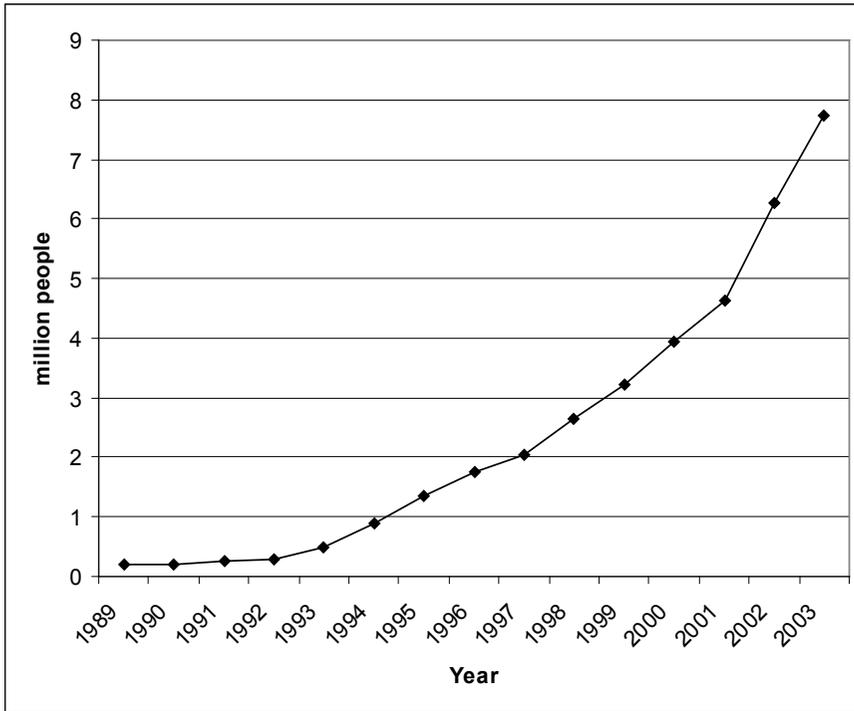
SOE workers in number as the number of SOE workers has declined rapidly after 1997; rapid increase in the number of China's reborn bourgeoisie (*ibid.*: 176, see Figure 15). Disagreeing with the underestimated official 2003 figure of 7.73 million who were owners of private enterprises (see Figure 16), Li (2008b: 188) estimated the total number constituting the Chinese bourgeoisie class (though still represented a small segment between cadres and SOE workers) to be from 10 to 15 million, including four categories missed out in the official statistics: the large number of managerial personnel and local cadres who virtually turned into enterprise owners due to privatization of almost all village and township enterprises within two to three years after 1998; the many cadres of the large number of small- and medium-scale SOEs and even a certain number of large SOEs which were privatized after 1997 who became the new owners of these enterprises; with the majority of large SOEs turning into joint-stock companies in the last decade, the large number of administrative personnel in these enterprises and some civil servants who were involved in regulating and administering the process of these SOEs turning into joint-stock companies had acquired huge volume of shares; unknown number of government officials who, having legally or illegally accumulated substantial volumes of wealth, invested the money in the share markets or saved it in local and overseas banks. Summing up the savings and interests, gains in stocks and shares and other non-salary incomes of these

Figure 15 China: Social Stratification, Present



Source: Li (2008b: 176), Figure 8-1 and pp. 177-194.

Figure 16 China: Resurgence of Bourgeois Class since 1989

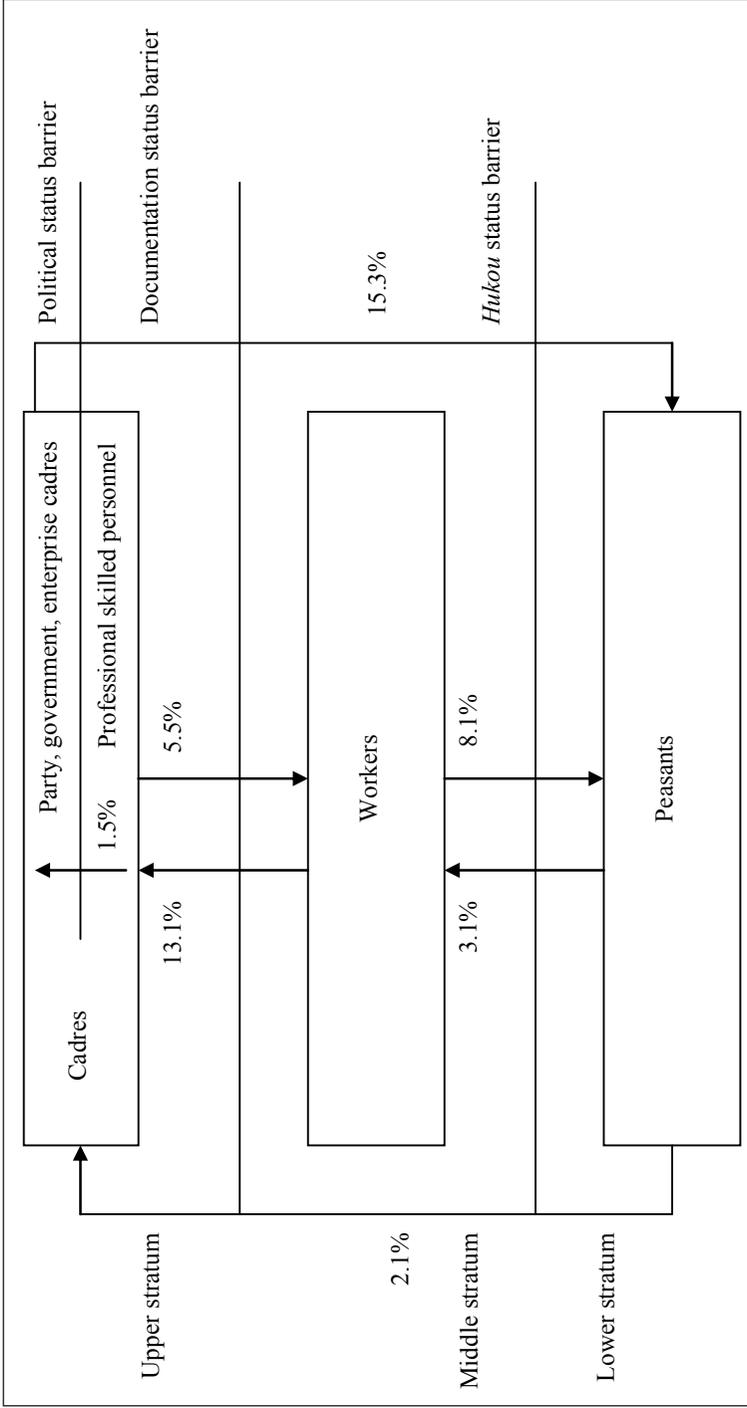


Source: Li (2008b: 187), Figure 8-3.

four categories of people would give amounts apparently higher than their wages and salaries (*ibid.*).

An interesting question is that regarding China's illusive "middle class". The approach in Li's model as shown in Figure 15 is, citing Gilbert (2003: 17), not to identify the Chinese "middle class" before China enters the stage of late industrialization or post-industrialization, as the majority of the Chinese white-collar service-sector professionals are part of the upper classes of the cadres and the reborn bourgeoisie. The speed with which this presently illusive class is going to emerge unequivocally in the changing class pyramid depends of course on the dynamics of social mobility in the long process of modern Chinese industrialization. The impacts of China's economic reform in the post-Mao period especially since the critical juncture of 1989 (a catalyst that led to Deng Xiaoping's reaffirmation of the path of reform in his *nanxun* in 1992) on social mobility have been tremendous, and their significance is outstanding especially in view of the barriers that existed just before the reforms began (Figure 17) – the *hukou* 户口/*huji* 户籍 system, administrative

Figure 17 China: Channels of Social Mobility and Barriers before Economic Reform (Intragenerational Mobility)



Notes: Arrows represent the directions of mobility, percentages are rates of mobility.
Source: Li (2008a: 497), Figure 17-1.

documentation system and political status (ideological) barrier. The *hukou* barrier is the most insurmountable, and only a slim 5.2 per cent of peasants managed to cross this barrier during the 1940-1979 period (compared to the 13.1 per cent of workers who managed to move up into the cadre stratum), with 3.1 per cent becoming workers and 2.1 per cent becoming cadres (Li, 2008a: 497). Within the cadre stratum, political (ideological loyalty) barrier had blocked professional skilled personnel (who were thus marginalized and unstable within the cadre community) from moving upward into the organizational/enterprise cadre community, with only a slim 1.5 per cent passed the severe political scrutiny to advance into the latter (*ibid.*: 498). On the other hand, during this pre-reform period there also existed downward mobility which could be explained by the temporary changing of status due to university enrolment and military service etc. as well as specific political policy changes and various political campaigns (*ibid.*: 498-499). Table 4 shows in general an apparent increase in social mobility coming along with economic reform and increased openness of the Chinese society, while the probably rather unique existence of increased downward mobility alongside the usual increased upward mobility resulted from industrialization could in a way reflect the simultaneous “dual transformation” consisting of industrialization and institutional change (drastic reforms in the economic institution) (*ibid.*: 501-502). All these manifestations of social mobility since economic reform began have resulted in the present overall structure of social stratification whose details could be illustrated as in Figure 18.

4. Sociopolitical Change and Its Impact on Chinese Social Dilemmas: Contexts, Institutions, Agents and Events

Figure 19, based on Green (2008), shows that the process of social change typically involves a combination of four different components: context (the environment within which changes take place, thus crucial in determining the nature and direction of change), institutions (the organizations and rules, both formal and informal, that establish the “rules of the game” governing the behaviour of agents – including culture, family structure, civil service, private sector, governmental system, patron-client network, etc.), agents (organizations and individuals actively involved in promoting or blocking change, e.g. ruling party, social movements, political and business élite, military and police, inspirational leaders, social entrepreneurs) and events (one-off events triggering wider change and being key catalysts to social and political changes, e.g. wars, pandemics like AIDS, SARS, A(H1N1), civil conflicts such as “mass incidents”, ethnic or ethnoregional riots, demonstrations and crackdowns, natural disasters, economic crisis) and, as Eisenstadt noted:

Table 4 China: Intergenerational and Intragenerational Mobility Rate (%)

Intergenerational Mobility			
	Total	Pre-1980 Employee	Post-1980 Employee
Immobility	51.7	58.6	46.0
Total Mobility	48.3	41.4	54.0
Upward Mobility	37.0	32.4	40.9
Downward Mobility	11.3	9.1	13.1

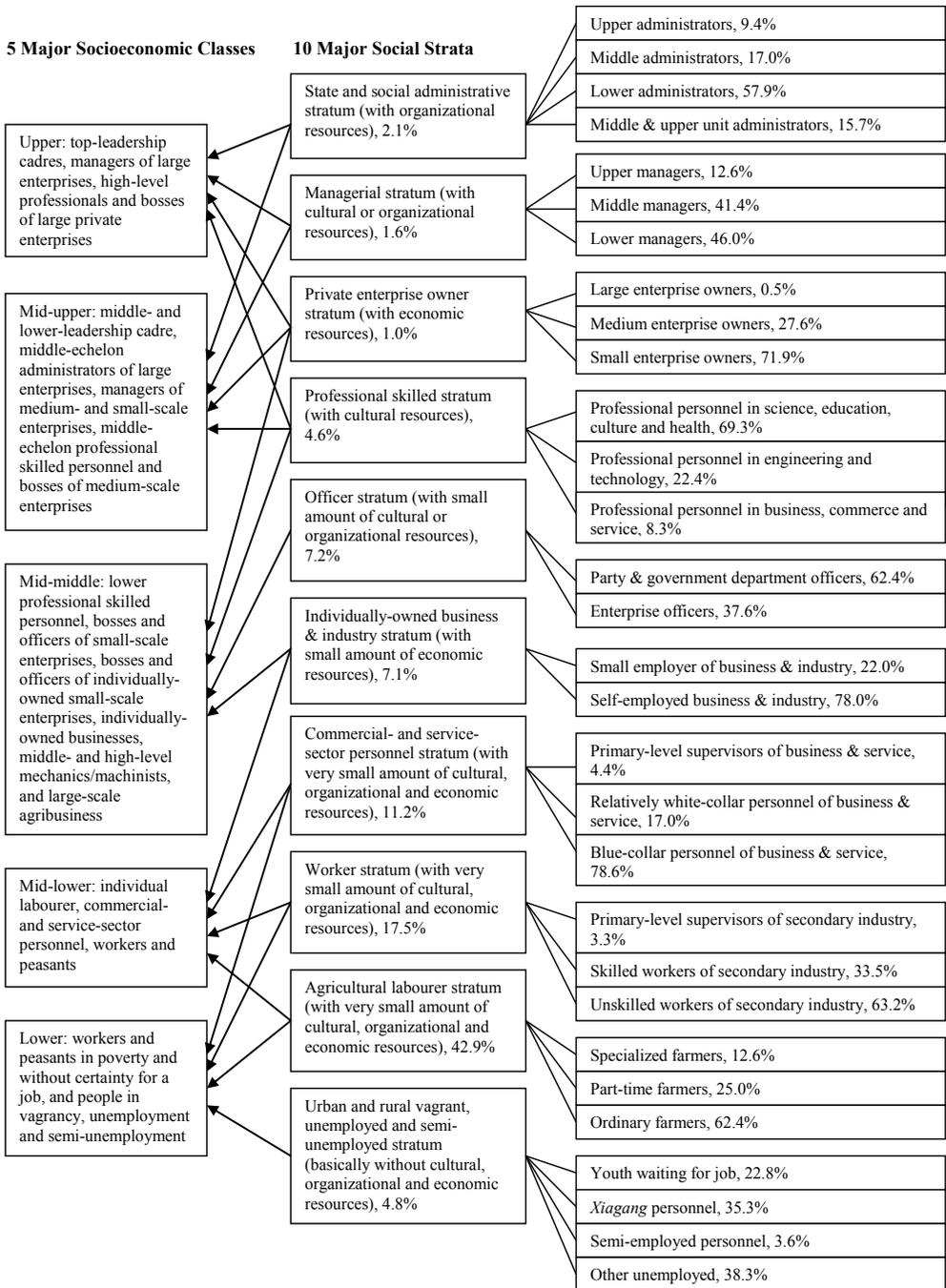
Intragenerational Mobility (first employment – present employment)			
	Total	Pre-1980 Employee	Post-1980 Employee
Immobility	63.2	64.7	61.8
Total Mobility	36.8	35.3	38.2
Upward Mobility	23.2	23.8	22.6
Downward Mobility	13.6	11.5	15.6

Intragenerational Mobility (previous employment – present employment)				
	Total	Change of job 1949-1979	Change of job 1980-1989	Change of job 1999-2001
Immobility	63.7	86.7	69.8	45.8
Total Mobility	36.3	13.3	30.2	54.2
Upward Mobility	20.9	7.4	18.7	30.5
Downward Mobility	15.5	5.9	11.5	23.6

Note: Intergenerational mobility refers to status change from father’s employment (or stratum) to son/daughter’s employment (or stratum); intragenerational mobility refers to status change of an individual’s employment (or stratum). Total mobility rate refers to the percentage of intergenerational or intragenerational change in stratum or employment status, while immobility rate refers to percentage where such change never occurs. Upward mobility rate refers to percentage where such change is from a lower stratum to a higher stratum, while downward mobility rate refers to percentage where such change is from a higher stratum to a lower stratum. Total mobility is the sum of upward mobility rate and downward mobility rate, and total mobility rate plus immobility rate equals 100%. “First employment” refers to the earliest job, “present employment” refers to the current job, and “previous employment” refers to the job immediately precedes the current job.

Source: Li (2008a: 501), Table 17-1.

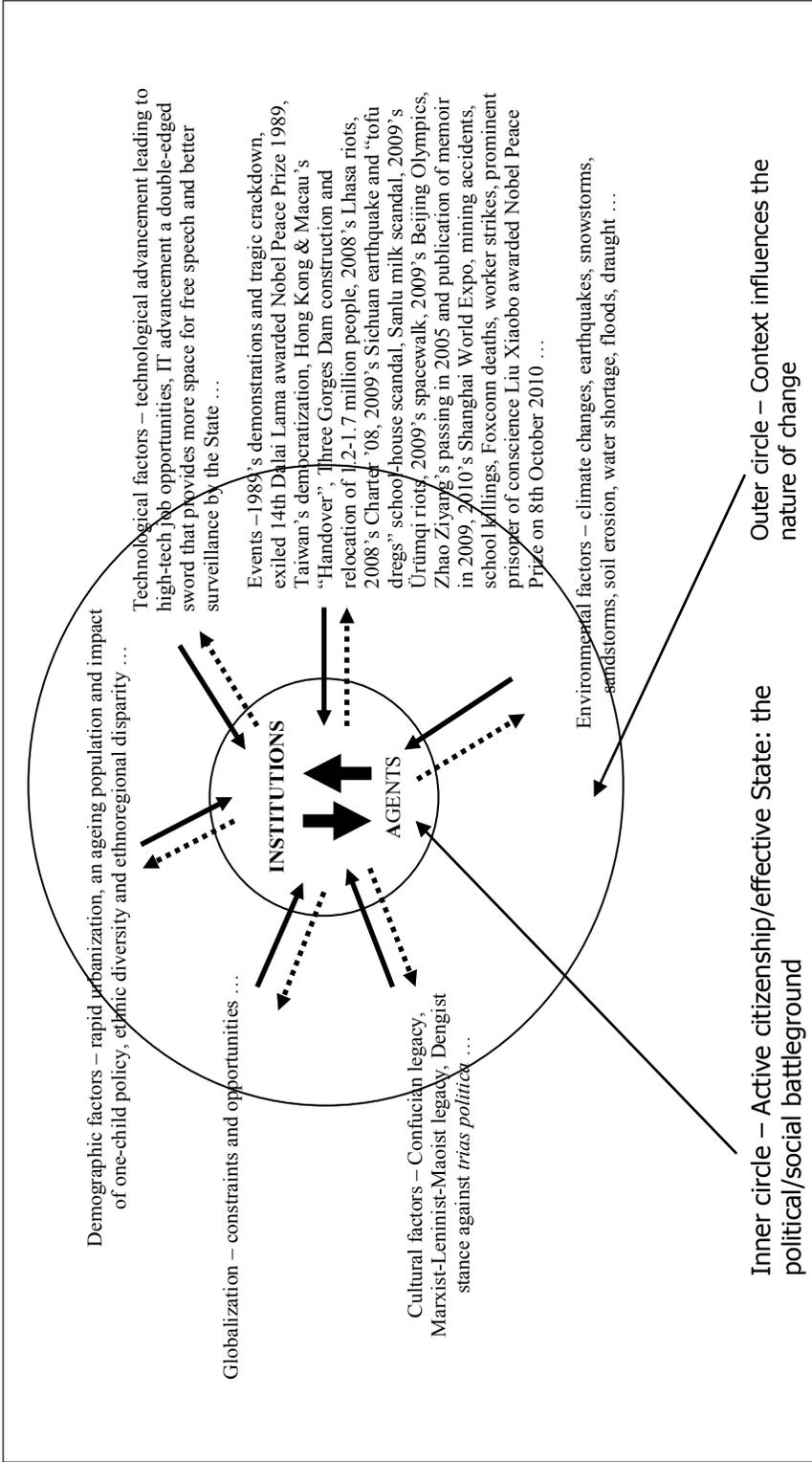
Figure 18 China: Present Structure of Social Stratification



Note: Arrow indicates that the whole or a part of a social stratum concerned can be included in one of the five major social classes.

Sources: Han (2009: 127), Figure 9.1; Li and Chen (2004: 13), Figure 1-3.

Figure 19 Chinese Social Change: Green's Institution-Agent-Event-Context Interface



Source: Based on Green (2008).

[... any] setting of social interaction, but particularly the macrosocietal order, involves a plurality of actors – elites, movements, and groups – with different levels of control over natural and social resources. These elites continuously struggle over the control, ownership, and the possibility of using such resources, generating ubiquitous conflicts on all levels of social interaction.

(Eisenstadt, 1992: 416)

The categories listed in Figure 19 may, however, overlap, e.g. the CCP is both an institution and agent in blocking or promoting different kinds of changes. The inner circle of the diagram consists of active citizens as agents and the effective State – the CCP’s Party-State – as the most important institution, in terms of change components. This inner circle is surrounded by an outer circle of context consisting of wider components of change which in a way are less susceptible to political or public action, such as events. While the contextual factors (outer circle) are having an immediate and crucial impact – as shown in the diagram by the inter-circle solid arrows – on the institutions and agents of change, these institutions and agents are also having certain, though limited, control – shown by the dotted arrows – over these contextual factors. Originally constructed to understand the constraints and possibilities for building active citizenship and an effective, accountable State (ACES), this model would need to accommodate additional complexities of the unique environment of China’s combination of economic liberalization and one-party political authoritarianism.

4.1. Critical Junctures

[...] while I recognize the dangers to truth of relating scholarship to life, I also believe that we who live by the pen bear some measure of obligation, however tenuous, to those who die by the sword.

Alan Wood (1995: xiii)

Hage, Hanneman and Gargan (1989: 89-91) remarked that theories of the determinants of public spending should not only be problem specific but also period specific. The historical dimension – the timing of State⁴⁴ involvement – is a crucial factor.⁴⁵ Levi-Strauss (1967: 281-3) perceived time not solely in mechanical, cumulative or statistical terms, but also in social terms – deriving its properties from concrete social phenomena. Complementing his view of ethnicity as a special case of stratification, an analytical perspective concerned with conflict and power (the Weberian approach), Katznelson (1971: 69-70) emphasized the importance of the notion of “critical structural periods” – historical periods when “critical structural decisions” are made. Citing Schattschneider’s remark that “organization is the mobilization of bias” (1961: 71), Katznelson noted that critical structural decisions are those that define the

“structured relationships” which not only limit but also shape the direction of behavioural choice. In other words, *social time* rather than *historical time*, which can be misleading, is the crucial variable.⁴⁶

Traditional Chinese mystical beliefs see great natural calamities as omens of tumultuous dynastic changes. Probably one of the deadliest wraths of nature in modern times – the official death toll stood at around 242,000, one third of some unofficial estimates – the Tangshan 唐山 earthquake on 28th July, in an ominous turn of events during the “Curse of 1976”, was preceded by the death of Zhou Enlai (Chou En-lai 周恩来)⁴⁷ on 8th January and that of Zhu De (Chu Teh 朱德) on 6th July, and followed by Mao Zedong (Mao Tse-tung 毛泽东)’s passing on 9th September that brought his ten-year Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (*wuchan jieji wenhua da geming* 无产阶级文化大革命) to a close. The so-called Gang of Four (*si ren bang* 四人帮), led by Mao’s widow Jiang Qing (Chiang Ch’ing 江青), were arrested on 6th October in what amounted to a palace coup, paving the way for the return of the twice-purged pragmatist and reformist Deng Xiaoping (Teng Hsiao-p’ing 邓小平) to the government and party in the following year, who was to deal the *coup de grâce* to Mao’s failed autarkic collectivist utopia.

Deng Xiaoping’s return to power signalled China’s entry into a new age, with his pragmatism paving the way for the rise of Hu Yaobang 胡耀邦 and Zhao Ziyang 赵紫阳 whom Deng entrusted to plan and implement China’s market-oriented economic reforms from 1980 to 1989. These reforms were nothing less than revolutionary, whose origin could be traced to Zhao’s successful experimental reforms – during which Zhao laid the foundation of his key reform framework of the coming years⁴⁸ – from 1978 in Sichuan, where Zhao was the Party’s First Secretary, before Hu and Zhao entered the politburo respectively in 1978 and 1979 and the Standing Committee in 1980 when Hu was appointed the Secretary General and Zhao later the Deputy Premier and then Premier (Bao, 2009: 28-29). In terms of political culture and atmosphere, this was also a period of limited political liberalization, an aspect of reform where the tug-of-war between the reformist and conservative forces was particularly acute, which eventually led to the downfall of, in turn, first Hu in January 1987, then Zhao in June 1989, when they overstepped the mark into the minefield of “bourgeois liberalization” where Deng who sanctioned full-scale economic reform was not prepared to bring China into.

Exiled dissidents estimated the number of civilians, workers and students killed in the crackdown during the night of 3rd-4th June 1989 to be from 2000 to 3000⁴⁹, while the official death toll stood at four hundred and forty-three, 223 of whom were soldiers and police officers, plus 5000 soldiers and police officers and 2000 civilians wounded in the crackdown (Hutton, 2006: 27)⁵⁰. The Tiananmen demonstrations had ended in a tragic crackdown and arrested the maturing of the political system with the purge of Zhao Ziyang

and the arrest and exile of many chief reformists and intellectuals. Aspects of political reform have since either been rolled back or stalled. In view of the close link between political decentralization and democratization,⁵¹ the tragic end of the Tiananmen protests and democracy movement of June 1989 has left an ineffaceable shadow over democratic pluralist development and ethnoregional accommodation. The post-1989 robust, even miraculous, economic growth has been used time and again rather successfully by the CCP for the *ex post* justification of the Tiananmen crackdown of 1989, that the brutal crackdown had been necessary to preserve China's stability and economic progress, but the continuing, even recently escalating, social unrest – including those more alarming incidents with ethnic or ethnoregional flavour – that culminated in Xinjiang's July Fifth deadly riots of 2009, just a month past the 20th anniversary of the 1989 tragedy, points to the need to objectively and critically examine the underlying contradictions amidst the euphoria of economic success.⁵²

4.2. Path Dependency of Political Change

The 1989 crackdown could be seen as a wake-up call for the CCP to embark rigorously on a path of continuing economic reform while rolling back the Hu-Zhao era of limited politico-cultural liberalization and the subsequent collapse of Communist Party-rule in USSR and Eastern Europe from the end of 1989 to early 1990⁵³ had seemed to reaffirm the correctness of such decision to crack down on the part of the CCP to ensure the survival of its one-party rule. The 1989 tragedy could also be seen as a catalyst for the single-minded determination to deliver on the economic front after Deng Xiaoping's *nanxun* later in 1992 to reaffirm the Party's policy of moving forward with economic reform and liberalization, coupled with more determined approach in dealing with political dissent.

There is indeed little unique for a politically authoritarian country to achieve economic miracles. Many authoritarian and neo-authoritarian countries have done it before, such as Chiang Kai-shek 蔣介石's Taiwan and Park Chung-hee 박정희 / 朴正熙's South Korea, or in a way even Augusto Pinochet's Chile and Soeharto's Indonesia. In fact, many such countries are among the models CCP's China, in its search for a way forward after 1989, found attractive to consider for emulation. Like May Fourth of 1919 which, while inclusive of the liberal tradition, eventually turned Chinese intellectuals away from Western liberalism to Bolshevism, planted the seeds of Mao's ascending the Tiananmen on 1st October 1949⁵⁴ and of the contradictions between national rejuvenation, modernization and radicalism, the 1989 events and tragedy in a way also sowed the seeds of escalating internal contradictions and tension in subsequent policy orientation which was

reflected in the determined effort in economic reform while resisting the tide of political “bourgeois liberalization” and ruling out the adoption of multi-party democracy. Even not seen in ethnic and ethnoterritorial terms, such social contradictions have manifested themselves in the alarmingly widening income gap, deteriorating socioeconomic inequalities and proliferating social unrest, as discussed in the previous section.

CCP’s China has been adamant that each country has the right to choose her own path to development and the sanctity of national sovereignty must at all costs be protected from foreign intervention⁵⁵ – a position largely supported by most developing countries including most ASEAN members. While steering the country towards the status of an economic superpower, with the inevitable concomitant expansion in political and military might and prowess, the CCP, building on the foundations set by the former Hu-Zhao administration⁵⁶ under Deng’s auspices, also embarked on a remarkable process of internal reform and rejuvenation. Many of these internal reforms have involved power succession or leadership transition which has been remarkably successful over the years and has definitely played a crucial role in maintaining intra-Party political stability and smoothing the path of economic reform and transition. These basically involve ideology restructuring, recruitment of new breed of élite into the leadership, construction of “political exit” channel for ageing leaders and grooming of the core of future generation of leadership (see, e.g. Zheng and Lye, 2004), which is of course part and parcel of the “stick and carrot” approach in the co-optation and control of intellectuals. Besides, Beijing has also been emphasizing the democratization of rural governance since the National People’s Congress passed the “Village Committee Organic Law of the PRC (Experimental)” in 1987 that introduced the direct election of the directors, deputy directors and members of the villagers’ committees. At least theoretically, these grassroots government officials, being elected by the local people, could be more independent in their dealings with the higher authorities since their political legitimacy depends on popular votes rather than appointment by higher authorities (Zheng and Lye, 2004). The recent years saw the geographical expansion of such villagers’ committee elections, with 929 counties across China covering Tianjin, Hebei, Shanxi, Inner Mongolia, Fujian, Jiangxi and Shaanxi holding such elections in the year 2003 (*ibid.*).⁵⁷ Nevertheless, such village committee elections should not be taken as a sign that China is taking the first step in political reform moving towards multiparty liberal democracy. In fact, the country’s leadership has never made any pretension that this is so. In the sixfold typology of regime classification of Diamond (2002), China is classified as “politically closed authoritarian”. When describing the Franquist regime as “authoritarian”, Gunther (1980: 2) elaborated, “It was based upon the explicit rejection of mass suffrage as a means of elite recruitment and a

basis of legitimacy [...] The concept of political conflict among social groups was formally regarded as illegitimate, and mass organizations which engaged in what the state regarded as conflictual political activities were vigorously suppressed.” It is interesting to compare this with the case of post-1989 China. While many authors inside and outside China have been lauding the country’s “grassroots democratization” and intra-Party reforms as pointing to a promising path of de-authoritarian evolution, the perception that China is moving out from this “politically closed authoritarian” category of regime type could prove to be as misleadingly whimsical as it is empirical unfounded. Furthermore, past record of mismanagement and repressive, often violent, response to dissent, including the excesses during the Cultural Revolution both in China proper and in ethnic regions like Tibet and Xinjiang, and the 1989 tragedy, may not be encouraging for many, including the ethnoregional minority nationalities.

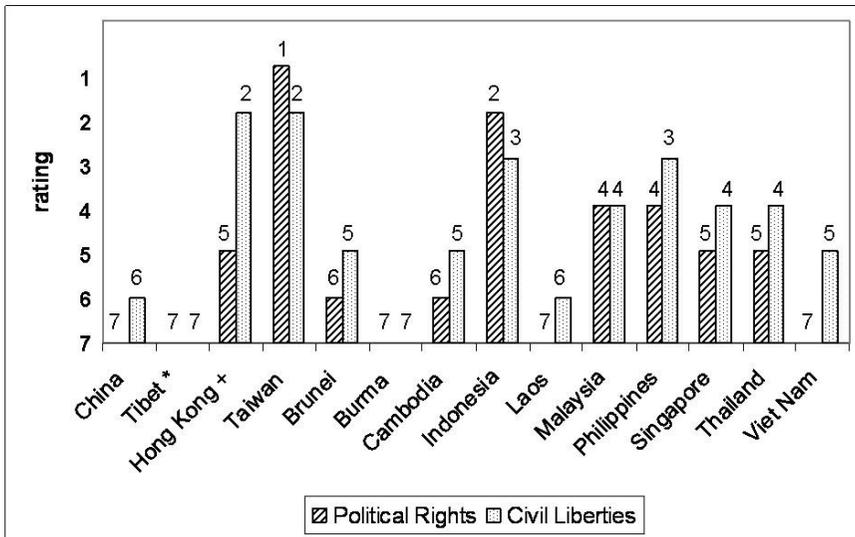
Indeed, while promoting the rural elections in 1987, Peng Zhen 彭真 had argued that such elections could be used to help the Chinese Communist Party govern the country’s rural areas and perpetuate the Party’s rule (Zheng and Lye, 2004). Any perception that such electoral initiatives are implying that the Party is loosening its stranglehold over China’s politics could be illusory as the signals conveyed by the ruling regime regarding the tolerance threshold for dissent remain unmistakable, not least highlighted in recent years by the arrest and jailing of various civil rights lawyers, researchers, journalists, activists and other dissidents which represent another reference point for reading civil rights development in China. Besides these high-profile cases, there are also many other little observed arrests and imprisonments that rarely raise an eyebrow beyond the border. According to the advocacy group Reporters Sans Frontiers (Reporters without Borders), there are more journalists in prison in China than anywhere else in the world.⁵⁸ A report of the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) at the end of January 2009 accused China of renegeing on her promise of press freedom during her bid for hosting the Olympics and called for the country to immediately release imprisoned journalists and halt the repression of journalists with the current national security and other laws – and this came amidst reports that a new series of rules and regulations would be launched in 2009 to strengthen the control on journalists and news reporting ostensibly for maintaining quality and authenticity in news reporting.⁵⁹ Reporters Sans Frontiers ranked China number 167 out of a total of 173 countries in its 2008 Worldwide Press Freedom Index and considered the number of arrests and cases of news surveillance and control by China’s political police and Department of Propaganda to be still very high, while Human Rights Watch asserted that China’s extensive police and State security apparatus continued to impose upon civil society activists, critics and protestors multiple layers of controls

(Lye, 2009: 215, 237) and the crackdown on dissent – whether the targets be civil rights activists, campaigners for multi-party political reform or *falungong* 法轮功 followers – has remained relentless. In terms of international perception of civil and political rights, in the 2010 Freedom House’s Annual Global Survey of Political Rights and Civil Liberties (ratings reflect events from 1st January 2009, through 31st December 2009), China was rated 7 on political rights and 6 on civil liberties (Figure 20).⁶⁰

Despite the much touted intra-Party and grassroots democratization, it is undeniable that at the moment China remains an authoritarian state, with party regulations on cadre selection still charging “local Party committees with nominating key officials in local governments, legislatures, and courts” (Minzner, 2006: 10):

Local Party committee control extends over the electoral systems that permit citizen participation in the selection of delegates to local people’s congresses and village/residents committees. Selection of who may serve as a candidate is under the control of local election committees dominated, and sometimes chaired, by county and township Party secretaries. Election committees use

Figure 20 International Perception of Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Mainland China, Taiwan and ASEAN, 2009



Notes: 1 is the best rating, 7 the worst. Ratings reflect events from 1st January 2009, through 31st December 2009.

* Xizang (Tibet) Zizhiqu (“autonomous region”), China.

+ Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR), China.

Source: Data from Freedom House (2010).

non-transparent practices to narrow the list of acceptable candidates [...] Citizens who attempt to challenge Party-nominated candidates can find themselves unable to even get on the ballot. Chinese officials do permit a degree of citizen political participation, but only within channels that local Party institutions can control and monitor. Some non-Party members do win seats on local village committees. “Consultative” channels, such as the Chinese People’s Consultative Conference, allow non-Party members to offer nonbinding input into policy formulation. Chinese authorities have also recently experimented with allowing citizen participation in the selection of local Party officials. These experiments, however, grant citizens only a limited voice in the nomination of potential candidates, allow Party committees to eliminate names from the nominee lists, and retain Party control over the final approval of the results.

(*ibid.*: 10-11)

O’Donnell and Schmitter (1986: 9) opined that a transition from authoritarian rule could produce a democracy, but it could also terminate with a liberalized authoritarian regime (*dictablanda*) or a restrictive, illiberal democracy (*democradura*).⁶¹ As the above discussion shows, while shadows of the remnants of her ghostly past still linger to haunt the one-party State, there are already telling signs that the continuing transformation from a *dictadura* (dictatorship) into a *dictablanda* leading further to a highly restrictive *democradura* in the near future is the most possible direction the CCP regime is heading to and indeed planning to head to, given the fact that the Western, “bourgeois liberal” democracy (*democracia*) has already been ruled out of the cards, or at least not until mid-2000s. In fact, following Professor Zhou Tianyong from the Central Party School, China’s authoritarian one-party political system will and should remain unchanged until at least 2037 (Zhou, Wang and Wang (eds), 2007: 2, 6, 45-46, see Bo, 2009: 10-11). This is in line with what Deng Xiaoping stated in 1987, that direct general elections could only be held after half a century had passed in the 2000s, and at the moment the country had to make do with indirect elections above the county level and direct elections only at county and below county level, given the colossal population and inadequate level of cultural quality of the people (Hu, Hu, He and Guo, 2009: 19-20⁶²).

4.3. Political Reform: Pax Sinica sine Trias Politica?

Government, even in its best state, is but a necessary evil; in its worst state, an intolerable one.

Thomas Paine (1776), *Common Sense*, Ch. 1

While the establishment of village committees in rural areas through direct elections began in 1988, a year before the 1989 tragedy, the “Organic Law on

Village Committees” – according to which, the director, deputy director, and members of the village committee are directly elected by villagers for a term of three years, and villagers who are at least 18 years old have the right to vote and to stand for election – was only officially promulgated in November 1998 (Bo, 2009: 7), some years after the post-Tiananmen uncertainties, and grassroots elections were expanded to the township level in the same year and the county level in 2002 (*ibid.*: 7-8).

After the 13th Party Congress in October 1987, at which Zhao Ziyang – who became the Party’s general secretary and first vice-chairman of the Central Military Commission – proposed the one and only political reform package in the history of the Chinese Communist Party which attempted to introduce reforms such as the separation of power between Party and State (Zhao, 2009: 286)⁶³, and the successful experiment on the “permanent party congress system” in the Jiaojiang 椒江 district⁶⁴ of the prefecture-level city of Taizhou 台州, Zhejiang Province, in 1988-1989, such voting system on the appointment and removal of cadres was only promoted again by the Central Organization Department in 2001 (Bo, 2009: 13-14), years after the post-Tiananmen uncertainties. Further intra-party democratization ensued, including the Plenum Voting System whereby the party’s leading cadres are selected by the plenum of the party committee through secret ballot:

In April 2004, the CCP Central Committee promulgated a regulation on “methods of selecting and recommending candidates for chief leaders of the party committee and the government of the next lower level by voting in the party’s local committee plenary sessions.” The regulation provides that candidates for chief positions of the party and the government of the city, prefecture, league, county, district, flag, township, and neighborhood should in general be presented to the plenum of the party committee of the next higher level where the appointment will be decided through secret ballot. For chief positions of the party and the government at the prefecture and county levels, the standing committees of the provincial party committee and the municipal party committee should nominate candidates, respectively and the respective plenums will review them and make a decision by secret ballot.

(Bo, 2009: 14-15)

In short, we are witnessing intra-party democratization picking up speed again after the historic political reform package introduced by Zhao Ziyang at the 13th Party Congress in October 1987 was temporarily halted after the 1989 tragedy. With 1989 as the watershed, CCP’s elite political thinking has markedly progressed from Deng Xiaoping’s complete dismissal of the North Atlantic democracy, especially the *trias politica* (tripartite separation of powers) for checks and balances⁶⁵, to affirmation at least in theory by the Hu-Wen administration⁶⁶ the notions of democracy, the rule of law, freedom,

and human rights as universal common values of the humankind, which, as we have seen, has been accompanied by the remarkable pace of intra-party democratization.⁶⁷ However, as Minzner (2006: 21) noted, all the institutional reforms so far “share a common thread: firm commitment to the principle of centralized Party control”:

Officials have curtailed social and political reforms when they appear to challenge this core principle of centralized Party control. Since the late 1980s, Chinese officials have allowed citizens to take part in local elections for village committees. But they have quashed local experiments aimed at expanding these initiatives to higher levels in the Chinese bureaucracy, and have maintained tight control of the nomination and selection of candidates to screen out individuals who might challenge Party control. Similarly, in the late 1990s, Chinese officials created a regulatory structure to govern the registration of civil society organizations with more attenuated ties to the state. But when a group of social activists attempted to use these channels in 1998 to openly register branches of the Democracy Party, Chinese officials rapidly suppressed the group and sentenced the leaders to lengthy prison terms. This unwillingness to alter core principles of centralized Party control appears to make it unlikely that officials will be able to address the institutional factors that drive social unrest.

(*ibid.*)⁶⁸

This is made absolutely clear in the State Council’s October 2005 White Paper on “Building Political Democracy in China” which stated that “Party committees serve as the leadership core over all [government and mass] organizations at the same level [...] and through Party committees and cadres in these organizations, ensure that the Party’s policies are carried out [...] Party committees ensure that Party proposals become the will of the state, and that candidates recommended by Party organizations become leaders in the institutions of state power.”⁶⁹ That this remains the overriding cardinal principle of political logic is evident in the unusual political discourse emerged recently related to the 30th anniversary of the establishment of Shenzhen Special Economic Zone (SEZ). During Premier Wen Jiabao’s visit to Shenzhen on 20th August 2010, he openly called for the SEZ to implement political reform “lest we are moving into a blind alley”, leading to calls from many academics for launching a Shenzhen “special political zone” at the anniversary.⁷⁰ This, however, has led to a backlash from the State media denouncing the interpretation of political reform as adopting Western capitalist or bourgeois democracy and *trias politica* separation of powers, and President Hu Jintao while lauding the “Shenzhen spirit” in his speech at the 30th anniversary celebration ceremony on 6th September has stuck to the realms of economic reform, industrialization, urbanization and modernization, apparently ignoring Wen’s call for political reform two weeks earlier.⁷¹

4.4. State/Leninist Corporatism?

Infidelity does not consist in believing, or in disbelieving, it consists in professing to believe what one does not believe.

Thomas Paine (1794), *The Age of Reason*, Part I

In the process of maintaining a tight grip on political power in maintaining the Party-State monopoly while delivering on the economic front and bringing prosperity and wellbeing to the long-suffering people of this giant country, the neo-authoritarian developmentalism followed by the CCP since 1989 could be leading the country on a path threaded before by various East Asian countries – a model sometimes termed “State corporatism”. The post-1989 State corporatism, or referred to by some observers as “Leninist corporatism”⁷², bears a close resemblance to Franco’s *Nuevo Estado* (New State), and the “harmonious society” vision declared in recent years recalls Franco’s vision of social cohesion and harmonious relationship between employers and workers via corporatism that would promote a close collaboration between them under the direction of the State and his corporatist policies to regulate the economy by controlling the conditions of work, wages, prices, production and exchange, though Gunther (1980: 3) somehow described Franquist Spain as “halfheartedly” corporatist:

Labor unions were outlawed, and in their place were created 27 vertical syndicates, to which nearly all workers, technicians and employers belonged. “Representative” institutions (e.g. the Cortes and local government bodies) were organized along corporatist lines. Nevertheless, hundreds of economic and social organizations (which either were considered to be non-political by nature or were formed by groups supportive of the regime) remained completely independent of the state-dominated corporative structure.

While it is interesting to discern both similarities and contrasts between this and the case of post-1989 China, and corporatism, or State corporatism, might not be a grand theory that could adequately explain the new, emerging developmental paradigm in China’s astounding transition, it may yet prove to be helpful in understanding the inevitable transforming political landscape which, as Unger and Chan (2001) argued, could be moving in a “societal corporatist” direction in incremental shifts instead of the introduction of any form of political democracy, and as Unger and Chan further observed, the exclusion from these corporatist structures of the peasants and most of the non-State-sector workers whose grievances would thus be devoid of such mechanisms for articulation does not auger well for social and political stability. Some aspects of State corporatism may indeed recall the classic analysis of Bonapartism as a basis of State autonomy. Being propelled into a leading position by a balance of class forces, combined with the inability of

the subordinate classes to exercise control over their supposed representatives in the State apparatus, the government – or here the Party-State – uses the leverage gained to preserve both the status quo and the interests of the dominant class. The dominant class (or the bourgeoisie, as in Marx’s (1852) original description of the Bonapartist regime in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon*), in turn, is willing to abdicate to a certain extent its opportunity to rule in exchange for other kinds of protection by the ensuing strong State (Stepan, 1985).⁷³ Therefore it is important to recognize that the State, or a Party-State, is neither necessarily a neutral nor a passive actor. It may be perceived as an autonomous body that possesses its own interests and objectives independent from the rest of the populace. It can be a potentially disinterested party that engages in mediation and crisis management. However, it can also negotiate to achieve goals based on narrower interests. The State can use its influence to establish, entrench or expand its power (Enloe, 1980). In a way, while the 1989 events and tragedy can be seen as a culmination of the unstable development of an early stage of State corporatism since reform began partly due to the liberalism of the Hu-Zhao administration, the tragedy can also be observed to be the catalyst of the subsequent authoritarian corporatist evolution and reaffirmation of the path of economic reform (after Deng’s *nansun*) and economic success as realization of the root causes of the tragedy had served to spur the CCP into attempting to reinvent itself as a strong, benevolent and enlightened ruler (i.e. a *dictablanda*), or as Thomas Hobbes referred to in his 1651 treatise, “the generation of that great Leviathan”.⁷⁴

5. Concluding Remarks

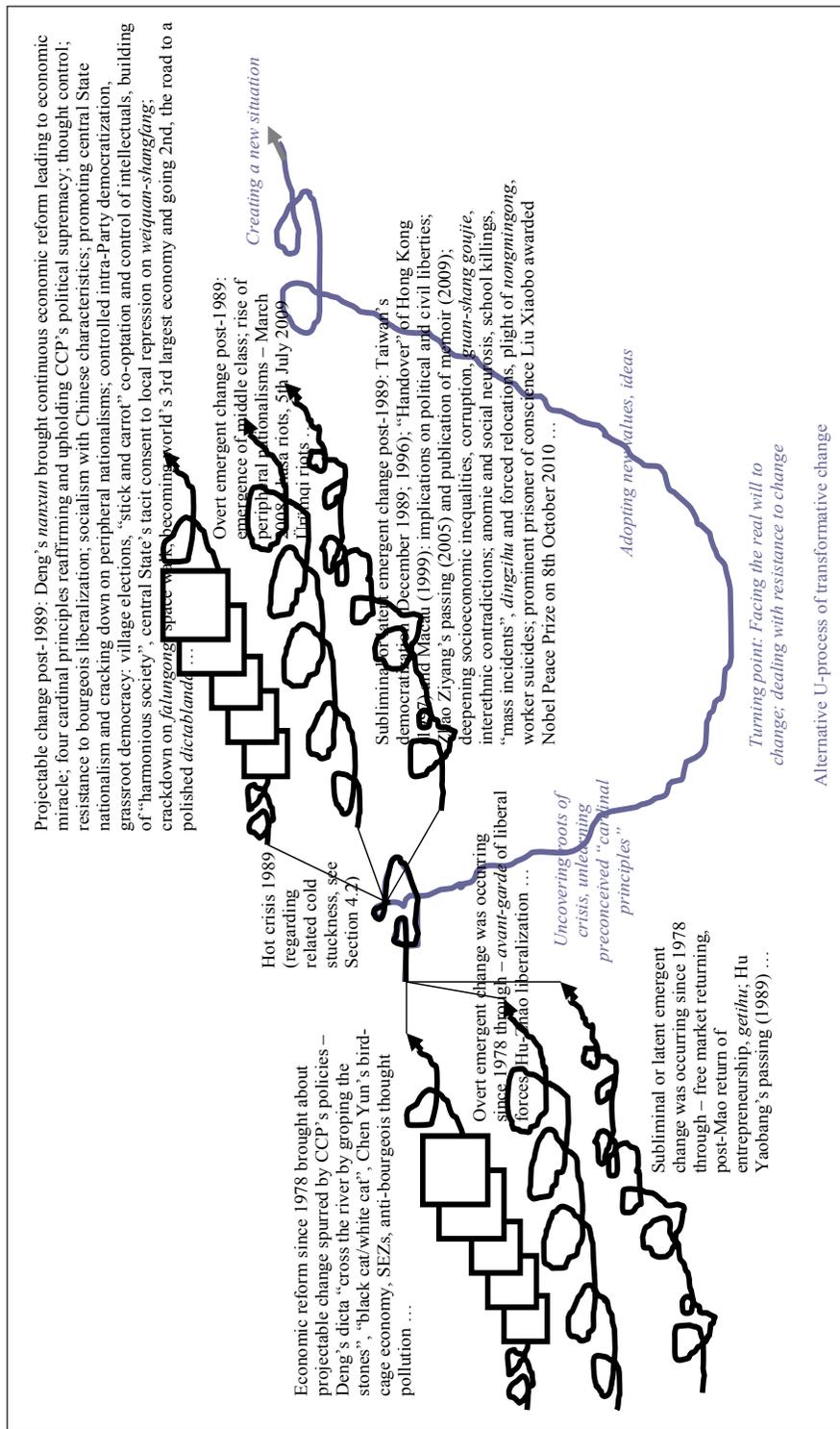
Winston Churchill, in 1939, called Russia “a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma”⁷⁵. This prologue, in conjunction with the special issue’s later discourse on ethnoterritoriality, examines a no less enigmatic country whose geographical size is as massive, whose population is as complex, and whose modern blood-stained epic of a history is both momentous and torturous, harrowing yet monumental. In a sense, China as a self-contained East Asian land mass is comparable to Russia as a self-contained Eurasian land mass. Both countries are more a continent than a country, both enjoying a sense of geographical isolation that feeds much the national psyche and popular subconsciousness of aloofness and conceit. This paper, together with the issue’s later tract on ethnoregionalism and peripheral nationalism, looks at the modern timeline of sociopolitical and socioeconomic development and transformation of China, focusing on a number of critical junctures where different critical decisions were made that have determined the subsequent course of socioeconomic and political development of the country. Also

examined are the State responses at times of crisis – how Mao’s passing was followed by two-step forward, three-step back political liberalization and “selective centralization”⁷⁶ in a system that could be perplexingly described as “regionally decentralized authoritarian”⁷⁷. In his iconoclastic 1985 study, Charles Tilly questioned the idea of a social contract in state making, where a society whose shared norms and expectations call forth a certain kind of government, and defined “those peculiar forms of governments we call national states” as “relatively centralized, differentiated organizations the officials of which more or less successfully claim control over the chief concentrated means of violence within a population inhabiting a large, contiguous territory” (Tilly, 1985: 170). Without going so far with Tilly in seeing nation-states as “quintessential protection rackets with the advantage of legitimacy”, it is still impossible not to question the long taken-for-granted notion of the inviolable sovereignty of the nation-state and even the very essence of the nation-state itself. Benedict Anderson, too, defined a nation as a community socially constructed and ultimately *imagined* by the people who perceive themselves as part of that group and “regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. Ultimately it is this fraternity that makes it possible [...] for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly to die for such limited imaginings” (Anderson, 1991: 6-7). The sovereignty of a nation-state is imagined, according to Anderson, because the concept was born in an age in which Enlightenment and Revolution were destroying the legitimacy of the divinely-ordained, hierarchical dynastic realm, giving rise to the national dreams of freedom whose gage and emblem were the sovereign state. Similarly, other historicists (in contrast to the primordialists) like Ernest Gellner and Eric Hobsbawm also posited that nations and nationalism are products of modernity and have been created as means to political and economic ends, and the nation, assuming the nineteenth-century conceptual entity of a nation-state, is the product of nationalism – but not *vice versa* – through the unification of various peoples into a common society or community (Gellner, 1983; Hobsbawm, 1990). It is in this context of nation-state as imagined community that the issue’s later disquisition on ethnoregionalism and peripheral nationalism will pick up where the present paper has left, to proceed to examine and analyze the causes and implications of the July Fifth Xinjiang riots against the backdrop of economic and political reforms and the intriguing question of China’s centralism *v.* decentralization.

China has come a long way, difficult and laudable, culminating in the country claiming to have superseded Japan to become the world’s second largest economy in 2010⁷⁸. Going back to the critical juncture of 1989, that year’s student movement which snowballed into social protests of

unprecedented scale is in many ways a return of May Fourth. While May Fourth of 1919 had eventually led to the triumph of Maoism-Leninism which in a way hijacked the early socialism of Ch'en Tu-hsiu (Chen Duxiu 陳獨秀)⁷⁹, the 1989 tragedy represented a prelude to the subsequent hijacking of the Hu-Zhao administration's initiative for politico-economic liberalization by the strengthening one-party authoritarian State corporatism preferred by Deng Xiaoping who once and again felt wary of and threatened by his protégés' "bourgeois liberalization". The conservative backlash has since complicated the uneasy coexistence of a highly decentralized economic structure brought through the no-holds-barred market economic reform with a highly centralized illiberal political regime or a proto-*dictablanda* which might have, among other ramifications, limited the possible extent of accommodation of ethnic and ethnoregional aspirations and precipitated the tragic events of 14th March 2008 and 5th July 2009. "Left alone, crises do get unconsciously resolved over time, tragically or happily or somewhere in-between", observed Reeler (2007: 12), "But they can also be more consciously and proactively resolved through well led or facilitated transformative change processes." The resolution of the 1989 crisis in a tragedy and the purge of the political reformists in a way shut down the transformative change wing⁸⁰ of the bifurcation facing the CCP at that time and led to the protracted cold stuckness in sociopolitical modernization and its uneasy coexistence with accelerated market reform that brought national economic prosperity. Theo Lefevre, prime minister of the Belgian coalition government which drafted and passed the 1961-63 language laws, was said to have called Belgium "a happy country composed of three oppressed minorities" (Covell, 1985: 230) – referring to the country's forever squabbling Flemings (*Vlamingen*) and Walloons (*Wallons*) and probably less so, the Germans.⁸¹ Taking a cue from that, while hymns are being sung, justifiably, to short-term economic miracle and national glory, much care should probably be taken in the officially sanctioned building of a "people first" (*yi min wei ben* 以民为本) "harmonious society" (*hexie shehui* 和谐社会) that such eulogizing would not be at the expense of the golden opportunities for more holistic transformative reforms during this period of economic success, that central State nationalism bordering on dominant-group ethnocentrism would not be tacitly promoted at the expense of more accommodation of peripheral ethnoregional nationalisms, and that in full recognition of the overt and subliminal emergent changes that have not ceased to exist as undercurrents in a nexus of contradictions beneath the officially sanctioned projectable changes, these projectable changes would not be looked upon as policy guidance simply to maintain and justify the cult of a *dictablanda* at the expense of the long-term greater good (Figure 21).

Figure 21 China's Economic Reform and Socioeconomic Changes since 1978: Institutions, Agents and Events



6. Structure of the Volume

Following the prologue, the other thirteen papers in this special issue are divided into three sections. The first section *Social Change, State and the Civil Society* consists of four papers, beginning with Gregor Benton's article, "Dissent and the Chinese Communists before and since the Post-Mao Reforms", that looks at extra-party dissent under CCP before and since 1949, from during the Mao era to the post-Mao decades. Distinguishing between opposition and dissent under Communist regimes, Benton argues that at least until the 1980s Chinese communism and the democracy movement never wholly excluded one another. Focusing on the advent of the information age, Chin-fu Hung, in the second article under this section, "The Politics of China's *Wei-Quan* Movement in the Internet Age", argues that empowerment by the modern information technology could be making some public protests ("mass incidents") a threat to China's sociopolitical stability and the rule of the CCP regime, in contrast to the many that are spontaneous, loosely organized, and eventually short-lived. While traditionally the practices and governing logic in China have been lacking in accommodating the needs of civic engagement in public affairs, Hung observes that the Chinese public is awakening to begin defending their protected civil and legal rights especially with onset of the age of the Internet. The prospects of political change, both positive and negative, constitute the focus of the subsequent paper by Shigeto Sonoda, "Emergence of Middle Classes in Today's Urban China: Will They Contribute to Democratization in China?", which examines whether or how urban middle classes will bring about political change, or democratization, in the Chinese society. Using two different datasets, Sonoda's analysis points to the ambivalence of the Chinese urban middle classes' political orientations and behaviours. Leaving sociopolitical change to move into social connections and social network, this section continues with Lucia Leung-Sea Siu's paper, "Gangs in the Markets: Network-Based Cognition in China's Futures Markets", which looks at social connectivity within the investor community of China's commodity futures markets which she found somewhat analogous to the traditional Chinese *bang* 幫 or gang. Based on empirical ethnographic fieldwork and documentary research, Siu argues that the markets consist of flexible socioeconomic aggregates in continuous interaction with each other, whose characteristics are shaped by social connectivity and background affiliation, while capital factions display properties of distributed cognition and network-based rationality.

Beginning the subsequent section of the volume, *Social Change, Social Classes and Stratification*, Kate Hannan's paper, "Chinese Migrant Workers: From Labour Surplus to Labour Shortage", charts the action taken by migrant workers in China's low-end/labour-intensive manufacturing hubs when the global financial crisis led to a reduction in their employment opportunities,

wages and conditions, and proceeds to discuss the migrant worker situation as it stands today. Focusing on three aspects of the migrant labour situation in China – how the migrant labour surplus that came in the wake of Chinese export orders declining following the global financial crisis had eventually turned into a shortage; the present situation where the migrant workers’ relatively more active strategy is bringing about changes in wages as well as State response; the very fact that the migrant workers have been paying all along a disproportionate price for their country’s industrial and urban development – Hannan argues for a more pro-active approach to promote the interests of migrant workers instead of for Chinese government leaders and officials and a range of other Chinese commentators to be merely paying lip service to publicly recognize the considerable contribution made by these workers who have been “left out of the wealth”. Also looking at the labour issue, Qi Dongtao’s paper, “Chinese Working Class and Trade Unions in the Post-Mao Era: Progress and Predicament”, in turn examines the changes and predicaments of the Chinese working class as a whole and the role of the trade unions in contemporary China. Observing the Chinese working class today to be highly heterogeneous and stratified, Qi’s study points to the significant decline in the working class’ political and economic privileges since the early 1980s and the failure of the Chinese trade unions, as State apparatuses, in protecting workers’ interests due to their institutional over-dependence on the government. Also looking at the transformation of the class structure, Yang Jing on the other hand analyzes the pertinent issues related to the rise of the middle class in China, including its sociopolitical outlooks, and the future prospects in her paper, “Stumbling on the Rocky Road: Understanding China’s Middle Class”. While recognizing that China is still far away from being a middle-class society, Yang nevertheless calls for government action to help overcome pressing challenges that are contributing to the vulnerability of the nation’s nascent, diverse middle class.

The final section of this volume, *Social Change, Collective Action and Nationalism*, comprises six papers that deal with a range of critical social issues of contemporary importance in China today – “mass incidents”, central State and peripheral nationalism, protection of environmental and cultural heritage in the face of the onslaught of economic development and industrialization, and the State’s media initiatives to shape the country and the regime’s international image. In the first paper of this section, “Three Waves of Nationalism in Contemporary China: Sources, Themes, Presentations and Consequences”, Yang Lijun and Lim Chee Kia explore the development of Chinese nationalism in the contemporary era by placing it in the context of State-society relations, its significance and implications being dependent on State-society interaction. While recognizing that today’s China is a multifaceted society in terms of ideology where different discourses are contesting for influence, Yang and Lim

have kept their sharp focus on the country's nationalism to reveal the dynamics of ideational changes in contemporary China in the context of the evolvement of State-society relations as well as the implications for international relations. Looking at the large-scale social protests or "mass incidents" since the turn of this century, the next paper by Yanqi Tong and Shaohua Lei, "Large-Scale Mass Incidents and Government Responses in China", presents a systematic analysis of the distribution, frequencies, types, patterns and consequences of such large-scale mass incidents in China in recent years. By focusing their analysis on "large-scale mass incidents" (i.e. involving more than 500 participants), Tong and Lei delve further into the causes of the protests and the impacts of State response and implications for the State itself as well as State-society relations. Also focusing on the issue of public protests, Shan Wei in his paper, "Explaining Ethnic Protests and Ethnic Policy Changes in China", turns our attention to the protest behaviour of China's non-Han ethnic minorities, focusing specifically on the Xinjiang conflict of July 2009 and the Tibet riots of March 2008. Beginning with a discussion of the three theories of political contention and collective conflict – greed, grievance and opportunity – as applied to the China context, Shan argues that these ethnic riots have stemmed from various key factors, including economic inequalities, the lack of religious freedom and the incompetence of local governments, and that Beijing's current economy-centred policy adjustments to promote stability in the ethnic regions in the aftermath of these riots, while might be promising at the moment, would inevitably be facing critical challenges in the long run.

While not completely taking a break from the preceding issues in particular those concerning regional ethnic minorities, Gary Sigley and Lye Liang Fook, in the next two papers, turn our attention to China's problem of environmental and cultural destruction and the State's response to the challenges in terms of the country's and ruling regime's international image. Sigley's paper, "Cultural Heritage Tourism and the Ancient Tea Horse Road of Southwest China", reviews the environmental and cultural destruction brought about by China's modernization and examines the possible role tourism may play in the cultural heritage preservation of the particular case of Chama Gudao 茶馬古道 – the "Ancient Tea Horse Road" which represents a cultural route of enormous significance to the many different ethnic communities in southwest China. Rather than the standard form of mass commercial tourism which itself could be contributing to such environmental and cultural destruction – the latter process often a by-product of modernization which in ethnic minority areas the locals tend to refer to as *hanhua* 漢化 ("becoming Han") – Sigley argues for a model that involves more culturally sensitive forms of community-based sustainable tourism, by targeting the four major participants in the production and consumption of tourism, i.e. the government, tourism operators and developers, local communities and tourists. The issue of cultural heritage is

also a major underlying element when Lye argues in his paper “China’s Media Initiatives and Its International Image Building” that China’s trying to lay the foundations of her soft power, including extending the reach of her Confucius Institutes worldwide, forms the context within which the media initiatives the ruling regime has undertaken in recent years aiming at improving the country’s international image can be best understood. While there has apparently been international recognition of improvement, for instance that the Chinese government had allowed significantly greater foreign media access to Ürümqi following the deadly rioting there in early July 2009 than it had in the case of the Lhasa riots in March 2008, Lye observes that it is still premature and unrealistic to conclude that the media initiatives have succeeded in portraying a positive image of China. Finally, returning to the issues of nationalism, social protests and ethnoregionalism touched upon earlier, the closing paper of this section, “Ethnoregional Disparity, Ethnoterritoriality and Peripheral Nationalism: Socioracial Dilemmas in Contemporary China” by Emile Kok-Kheng Yeoh, analyzes the involuted nexus between the challenges posed by central-peripheral conflicts, ethnoterritorial aspirations, income and wealth inequalities and interregional economic disparity exacerbated by the country’s “retreat from equality” over the recent decades. While proceeding to ponder the pitfalls and prospects of further decentralization and contemplate the feasibility of the road beyond fiscal federalism, Yeoh cautions that ethnoregionalization of poverty may add to decentralization, especially in the absence of a federal *process*, the threat of centrifugal tendencies especially if decentralization leads to a politics of cutthroat competition instead of a decentralized politics of accommodation and the resultant provincial protectionism intensifies local particularism and peripheral nationalism, hence precipitating secessionistic ethnogenesis or reethnicization. This volume ends with two book review articles by Gregor Benton and Sabrina Chong Yee Ching. As this is a special issue, an index is added to facilitate referencing.

This issue represents a collection of selected papers, reviewed and duly revised, among the many that were originally presented at the ICS 2010 International Conference “China in Transition – Economic Reform and Social Change”. I would like to thank Miss Susie Yieng-Ping Ling 林燕萍, editorial manager of the journal, for her impeccable administrative help in making the publication of this issue on time possible. The cover photograph of this issue is one that I took in April 2010 during my stay in Beijing – a street scene that I believe could fully reflect the astounding transformation that the Chinese society has undergone during the recent decades. I am grateful to Mr Lionel Wei-Li Liong 梁偉立, the journal’s editorial assistant, for the technical help in using the photograph for cover design and for his great assistance in proof-reading the final manuscripts. The responsibility for any errors and inadequacies that remain is of course fully mine.

Appendix
Chinese Corrupt Officials who Fled the Country

	Name	Post before Fleeing	Age at Time of Fleeing	Destination of Fleeing	Amount of Embezzlement
1	Lu Wanli	Head, Road and Transport Department, Guizhou Province	–	Fiji	¥55.369 million
2	Yang Xiuzhu	Deputy head, Development Department, Zhejiang Province	–	US	¥200 million
3	Wang Feng	Deputy department head, Foshan, Guangdong Province	–	New Zealand	¥30 million
4	Lan Fu	Vice-Mayor, Xiamen, Fujian Province	–	Australia	¥5.0576 million
5	Zheng Zhixin	Cashier, National Tax Bureau, Yunnan Province	–	Burma	¥0.67 million
6	Yu Zhendong	Branch director, Bank of China	38	US	US\$483 million
7	Yu Zhi'an	Company director general	63	Philippines	¥100 million
8	Ding Lan	Branch department head, Bank of China	36	Thailand	¥195 million
9	Cheng Sanchang	Company director general	61	New Zealand	¥10 million
10	Jiang Jifang	Bureau head, company manager, party secretary	59	US	¥200 million
11	Tong Yanbai	Company director general	53	Australia	n.a.
12	Dong Mingyu	Company general manager	55	US	n.a.

Appendix (continued)

	Name	Post before Fleeing	Age at Time of Fleeing	Destination of Fleeing	Amount of Embezzlement
13	Chen Xin	Branch officer, China Industrial & Commercial Bank	35	Vietnam, Burma	¥40 million
14	Luo Qingchang	Company director general	42	US	¥33.85 million
15	Chen Chuanbo	Factory director	61	US	¥16 million
16	Lu Haiying	Company general manager	49	US	¥80 million
17	Bi Dongchen	Company branch deputy manager	27	n.a.	¥32.632 million
18	Gao Shan	Branch director, Bank of China	43	Canada	¥839 million
19	Xie Bingfeng Mai Ronghui	Branch credit officers, Bank of China	28 28	Thailand	¥52.5 million
20	Xiao Hongbin	Company director general	43	Australia	Cheated US\$760 million
21	Chen Anmin	Factory director	45	Hungary	¥2 million
22	Yin Guoqiang	Company manager	42	Romania	¥7.11 million
23	Qian Hong	Company director general	46	Panama	¥500 million
24	Xu Xiaoxuan	Company manager	40	Australia	¥460 million
25	Huang Qingzhou	Company branch deputy general manager	47	Thailand	HK\$1.3 billion
26	Fu Puzhao	Company general manager	45	Burma	Cheated ¥40.35 million
27	Yu Aiqing	Company manager	34	Russia	Cheated ¥9 million
28	Yang Rong	Company director general	46	US	n.a.

Appendix (continued)

	Name	Post before Fleeing	Age at Time of Fleeing	Destination of Fleeing	Amount of Embezzlement
29	Chen Manxiong	Company manager	40	Thailand	¥420 million
30	Zhou Changqing	Company general manager	44	Ecuador	¥55.15 million
31	Zhong Wujian	Market director	46	Canada	¥500 million
32	Wang Debao	Company department deputy head	30	Russia	¥1.25 million
33	Yang Yanjun	Company branch accountant	32	Mongolia	¥2 million
34	Fang Yong	Bank officer	25	Canada	¥1.41 million
35	Li Huaxue	Company deputy general manager	43	Australia	¥13.33 million
36	Jin Licheng	Bank department deputy head	33	Cambodia	¥1.23 million
37	Ahmed Ibrahim	Xinjiang Agricultural Bank Ürümqi branch officer	31	Russia	¥2.338 million
38	Lin Jincai Chen Guoqiang	Bank vault security officers	30 31	Thailand	¥9.5 million
39	Ma Weihong	Company department head	38	Burma	¥0.39 million
40	Liu Zuoqing	Company general manager	49	US	¥100 million

Note: n.a. – data not available.

Source: Shang (2007: 8-11) (original source: Yu Jintao 于津涛, “Rang Ni Zhenjing de Waitao Tanguan Mingdan: Guojia Gouxiang Fan Fubai Fa 让你震惊的外逃贪官名单: 国家构想反腐败法” [Shocking list of fleeing corrupt officials: nation thinking up anti-corruption law], *Liaowang Dongfang Zhoukan* 瞭望东方周刊 [Look east weekly], 12th July 2006).

Notes

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1. 改革开放政策.
2. Or more officially, the “Communist Party of China” (CPC).
3. An important point to note here is that there are crucial socioeconomic reasons behind the ethnolinguistic and ethnoreligious divides. This is especially the case in Brazil and Spanish speaking America where ethnic markers are relatively fluid, as reflected in the Brazilian proverb: “A rich black man is a white and a poor white man is a black” (Mason, 1970: 122). It is in this light that the attribute “ethnic” may not be as exact as “socioracial”, which reflects the concept of “social race” (*vis-à-vis* “biological race”) expounded by Wagley (1959).
4. “*Mo zhe shitou guo he* 摸着石头过河.”
5. Émile Durkheim (1895; trans. 1938), *The Rules of Sociological Method*, edited with introduction by Steven Lukes, New York: The Free Press, 1982, p. 53.
6. Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1762), *Émile, ou De l'éducation*, translated by Allan Bloom with introduction, New York: Basic Books, 1979.
7. In the case of China, a road not taken two decades ago in 1989.
8. See Émile Durkheim's *Suicide* (1897). A related condition is acedia which Thomas Aquinas identified with “the sorrow of the world” (*Summa Theologica, Secunda Secundae*).
9. Despite rumoured allegation that some cases could be murders linked to the factory security office (大纪元时报 (*The Epoch Times* (Malaysia)), Issue 93, June 2010).
10. 东方日报 (*Oriental Daily News*, Malaysian daily), 21st July 2010 and 6th August 2010.
11. Including those that killed 8 and injured 5 in Fujian province, killed 2 and injured 5 in Guangxi, injured 19 in Guangdong, injured 32 in Jiangsu, injured 5 in Shandong and killed 9 in Shaanxi (东方日报, 1st May 2010).

12. 光华日报 (*Kwong Wah Yit Poh*, Malaysian Daily), 4th August 2010.
13. 东方日报, 26th June 2010.
14. 东方日报, 9th July 2010.
15. The “helping hand” and the “grabbing hand” were said to be the same “invisible hand on the left” described by Olson (2000). Gu and Chen’s analysis with a multiregional econometric model found that “[w]hen local revenue share rises, the helping hand of local government becomes stronger and further leads to promotion in local economies and subsequently the national economy. When the centre increases its revenue share and adopts other recentralization measures, local governments become losers and switch from helping to grabbing hand.”
16. These studies, including Huther and Shah’s, were cited by Tugrul Gurgur and Anwar Shah of the World Bank (2000). Gurgur and Shah’s study also confirmed that decentralization support greater accountability in the public sector and reduce corruption.
17. Although the scope of China’s economic decentralization goes far beyond decentralization in public finance, but even measured solely by the latter, China has been said to be the world’s most economically decentralized country (Xu, 2008: 187-188) given that China’s local public spending has since the mid- and late 1980s been steady at about 70 per cent of her total national public spending, whereas in federal countries such as the US, Germany and Russia, the proportions of local public spending in total national public spending are only respectively 46 per cent, 40 per cent and 38 per cent. From the angle of central-local economic relations, China is also one of the most, or to some, even *the* most economically decentralized countries in the world, with most parts of resources controlled by the local governments, including the allocation of land, energy and financial resources (*ibid.*: 187). In fact, one of the characteristics of China’s economic decentralization is the relative self-sufficiency of the local economy whether at the provincial level or the county level. The local governments are fully responsible for the launching and coordination of local reform, for local economic development, and for the legislation and law enforcement within their respective jurisdictions. Such a characteristic not only marks China’s economic institution apart from a central planning economic system, but also makes her local governments more powerful in competences than the local governments in most federal countries in the world. (*ibid.*: 188)
18. Referring to the 22 *sheng* (i.e. provinces), 5 *zizhiqu* (i.e. “autonomous regions” – each a first-level administrative subdivision having its own local government, and a minority entity that has a higher population of a particular minority ethnic group – of Guangxi 广西 of the Zhuang, Nei Monggol/Inner Mongolia 内蒙古 of the Mongols, Ningxia 宁夏 of the Hui, Xizang/Tibet 西藏 of the Tibetans and Xinjiang 新疆 of the Uyghurs) and 4 *zhixiashi* (municipalities under the central government) (see Table 2).
19. The tragedies befalling people who are forced to be relocated are vividly recorded in a recent book relating heart-rending tales of people who would not submit to the forced relocation to make way for the Shanghai World Expo of 2010 – a dark side of the glorious event that involved people being beaten to death, tortured and imprisoned (see Du Bin 杜斌 (2010), *Shanghai Kulou Di* 上海骷髏地/Shanghai

- Calvary), Taipei: Ming Pao Ch'upanshe 明報出版社 (Ming Pao Press). Also little reported is the plight of the 1.27 million people relocated to make way for the construction of the Three Gorges Dam, a monstrous project that put under water Hubei and Chongqing's 20 districts and counties, over 270 villages and townships, over 1500 enterprises and over 34 million squared metres of houses. Like the above case of Shanghai, with low compensation, these "Three Gorges migrants" have since been suffering from psychological problems common to uprooted people, facing problems of adaptation, often exploited by the local authorities and feeling discriminated by the locals, and some migrant villages have turned into vice dens. (东方日报, 7th June 2010)
20. Often translated as "nail house", *dingzihu* refers to a household who refuses to be relocated to make way for real estate development.
 21. Hu Angang (2006), *Great Transformations in China: Challenges and Opportunities*, Oxford University Press, cited in Hutton (2006: 127).
 22. *Weiquan* refers to the quest for protecting and defending the civil rights of the citizenry by non-State actors. *Shangfang*, a centuries-old tradition in China, refers to the action of people with grievances who take the last resort of going to Beijing, the capital, to attempt to get their complaints heard against local injustice.
 23. 东方日报, 18th March 2009.
 24. The term "xiagang" refers to redundant workers mainly at State enterprises, without directly describing them as "unemployed". Still officially attached to their work units or enterprises, the *xiagang* workers continue to receive basic minimum subsidies for their living and medical expenses, and are encouraged to change job, probably through State-run job and re-employment centres, or go into small businesses. In line with State enterprise reforms, the number of *xiagang* workers has been on the rise: 4 million in 1995, 8 million in 1996, 12 million in 1997, 16 million in 1998, 20 million in 1999, though dropping to 11 million in 2001. (Zhou, 2006: 289)
 25. Such as the bloody Han-Hui ethnic conflicts in 2004 and 2007.
 26. 东方日报, 23rd March 2009.
 27. Cited in Hutton (2006: 126).
 28. See, for instance, Professor Lü Yuanli 吕元礼's best-selling Chinese tome "Why Can Singapore Do It?" (2007).
 29. Ultimately, as Fang (1991: 254-255) warned, "There is no rational basis for a belief that this kind of dictatorship can overcome the corruption that it itself has bred. Based on this problem alone, we need more effective means of public supervision and a more independent judiciary. This means, in effect, more democracy." ("China's Despair and China's Hope", originally appeared in *The New York Review of Books* on 2nd February 1989, translated by Perry Link.) Describing China as "doubtless a post-totalitarian regime ruled by a ruthless Party", Béja (2009: 14-15) ruminated on the 20th anniversary of the Beijing-Tiananmen massacre: "Twenty years after the 4 June 1989 massacre, the CCP seems to have reinforced its legitimacy. It has not followed the communist regimes of the Soviet bloc into oblivion. Its policies of elite cooptation, subtle response to social contradictions, and instrumental support for the 'rule of law'

have become major complements to its continued control over the press and the political system. It has made concessions to prevent discontent from crystallizing into social movements that might challenge its rule, and it has sent in the police to silence dissidents. Over the course of the same two decades, the opposition has had to wrestle with the trauma of the June 4 Massacre and the huge difficulties that it has raised for anyone who would challenge the CCP's primacy."

30. See, e.g. Bo (2010). In an interesting attempt at refutation of Minxin Pei's (2006) claim of CCP's illegitimacy, Bo has set out to refute point by point Pei's arguments which were based upon a series of international indexes which the former listed in details: "China is one of the most authoritarian political systems in the world according to the Polity IV Project, is almost completely 'unfree' according to the Freedom House; and is one of the most corrupt countries according to Transparency International. China was ranked in the bottom third of the eighty countries surveyed in terms of 'quality of governance ranking' according to one group of the World Bank and was considered a weak state according to another group of the World Bank. China found itself next to the legion of failed states and most repressive countries in terms of 'voice and accountability' and also in the company of weak states such as Nicaragua, Cambodia, Papua New Guinea, Egypt, and Mali in terms of 'regulatory quality'. China was no better than Namibia, Croatia, Kuwait, and Mexico in terms of 'government effectiveness', was comparable to Belarus, Mexico, Tunisia, and Cuba in terms of 'political stability', and was in the company of Mexico, Madagascar, and Lebanon in terms of 'rule of law'." (Bo, 2010: 102-103, citing Pei, 2006: 5-6)
31. According to a report published on China's National Bureau of Statistics website on 14th January 2009, the confirmed 2007 GDP of China at current prices amounted to 25.7306 trillion yuan, an increase of 13 per cent from the previous year (东方日报, 16th January 2009). While observed to be still short of a third of US's GDP, analysts had predicted China's GDP to overtake Japan's in three to four years, just as it overtook the United Kingdom and France in 2005 and Germany in 2008. Nevertheless, according to an announcement by Yi Gang 易纲, the director of the State Administration of Foreign Exchange and the deputy governor of China's central bank, the People's Bank of China, on 30th July 2010, China had already superseded Japan to become the world's second largest economy in 2010. However, in terms of GDP per capita, Japan's (US\$37800) was more than 10 times that of China (US\$3600) in year 2009, and Japan's GDP per capita ranking, while having dropped from world's number 2 in 1993 to number 23 by 2008, was still far ahead of China's which ranked beyond 100 (东方日报, 9th August 2010).
32. Equivalent to about 2130 ringgit. "Yuan 元" is the largest denomination of China's currency "renminbi 人民币" ("people's currency", RMB), equivalent to about US\$0.146.
33. Equivalent to about 70 ringgit.
34. 东方日报, 7th December 2008.
35. China's 2008 definition for absolute poverty is annual net income per capita under US\$785 (about 2860 ringgit), that for low income is US\$786 to US\$1067

- (about 2853 ringgit to 3873 ringgit) – which is lower than that used by the World Bank (*ibid.*).
36. 世界日報 (*World Journal*) (US), editorial on 15th March 2009, reprinted in 東方日報, 17th July 2009.
 37. 東方日報, 17th February 2009 and 29th June 2009. The largest denomination of China's renminbi 人民币 is yuan 元 / 圓 (Latinized symbol ¥ or Y), a term with cognates in the Japanese yen or en 円 (from 圓; Latinized symbol ¥) and Korean wŏn 원 / 圓 (Latinized symbol ₩). Following the US (rather than British) convention, billion = 1000,000,000 and trillion = 1000,000,000,000.
 38. 東方日報, 23rd June 2009.
 39. 東方日報, 29th June 2009.
 40. 東方日報, 29th June 2009.
 41. *Nongye renkou quan* 农业人口圈, *chengzhen jumin quan* 城镇居民圈, *gongren quan* 工人圈, *ganbu quan* 干部圈.
 42. *Xingzheng jibie* 行政级别.
 43. Totalled about 130 million, China's *nongmingong* have today turned into a unique community of breathtaking proportions. With a high degree of mobility, the over a hundred million people shuttling on the railways and roadways of China every year during the Spring Festival (*chunjie* 春节 – Chinese New Year) have become a unique phenomenon in the world (東方日報, 30th March 2009).
 44. The term “State” with a capital “S” is used in this chapter (except in some quotations) to refer to the central body politic of a civil government – in contrast with the private citizenry or a rival authority such as the Church, whereas “state” with a lower-case “s” refers in general to other senses of the term, including a “country” or a political territory forming part of a country. The word “nation” in this sense is generally avoided since it has the alternative connotation of a community of common ethnic identity, but not necessarily constituting a state.
 45. As Beard (1948: 220-2) noted: “[...] many of our neglects, overstresses, and simplifications are due to the divorce of political science from history [...] if political science, economics, law and sociology were cut entirely loose from history, they would become theoretical, superficial, and speculative, or what might be worse, merely ‘practical’, that is, subservient to vested interests and politicians temporarily in power.”
 46. For instance, the “critical structural period”, when definitive State response to exigencies generated by a country's ethnic diversity, came in the year 1970 both in Malaysia (the implementation of NEP) and in Belgium (beginning of the federalization process), and at the end of the 1970s in Spain (the 1978 Constitution that saw the emergence of the Autonomous Communities, and the approval of the Statutes of Autonomy for all of these Communities from 1979 to 1983).
 47. The Wade-Giles transliteration, the scheme commonly used before CCP's popularization of *Hanyu Pinyin*, in brackets. Note Wade-Giles's use of apostrophe – accurate though slightly clumsy – to indicate aspiration.
 48. With the creation of the keywords of reform including “loosen”, “devolve”, “share profit”, “reinvigorate” (*songbang* 鬆綁, *fangquan* 放權, *rangli* 讓利, *gaohuo* 搞活) etc.

49. 东方日报, 3rd June 2009.
50. Hutton's figures, drawn from Zhang, Nathan and Link (2001), were those of the General Office of the State Council reported to the Committee of Elders. Hutton also cited the estimates of Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn, Beijing correspondents of the *New York Times*, that up to 800 unarmed people were killed and several thousands injured (Kristof and WuDunn, 1994, cited in Hutton, 2006: 364).
51. The structure of political party systems and more specifically their level of internal centralization have been argued to be the determinants of the fiscal structure of the State, i.e. the *degree* of decentralization, in the studies on decentralization as a means for democratizing political regimes and enhancing the efficiency of public policy, its implications for service delivery and democracy, and the political determinants of the process of devolving resources and policy responsibilities to subnational governments (Montero, 2001: 43). In her paper on the case of Latin America, Escobar-Lemmon (2001: 28) noted that at least there "the process of decentralization has come about in parallel to the process of democratization" and the "rationale is that strong subnational power centers will check the national government, consequently preventing the re-emergence of a strong, authoritarian leader nationally." Thus, according to Escobar-Lemmon, "decentralization becomes a way to avoid political crises and/or democratic breakdown. Given that political decentralization could increase opportunities for democratic participation, there is reason to believe that there is a systematic relationship between decentralization and democratization." Elaborating on his second fundamental characteristic of a federal system – democratic pluralism both between and within the territorial components – Duchacek (1988: 16-17) drew attention to federalism being a territorial twin of the open democratic society: "Federalism is not compatible with authoritarian socialist and fascist one-party systems and military juntas. If a single party delegates some minor parts of its central power to the territorial components in which single-party rule also prevails, the result is a unitary and centralist system or, at best, an association or league of territorial dictatorships [...] a spatially sectorized unitary system or a confederation of [...] single-party territorial components [...] a territorial dimension of Lenin's "democratic centralism" – inter-territorial and inter-factional consociationalism of a special kind, but not a federal democracy."
52. In his letter to the 15th Party Congress in 1997 during his house arrest, Zhao (2009: 79) lamented the halting of the political reform he initiated, "Because of the impact of the [Tiananmen] incident, the political reform initiated by the 13th Party Congress died young and in midstream, leaving the reform of the political system lagging seriously behind. As a result of this serious situation, while our country's economic reform has made substantial progress, all sorts of social defects have emerged and developed and are rapidly spreading. Social conflicts have worsened, and corruption within and outside of the Party is proliferating and has become unstoppable."
53. The 1989 Tiananmen demonstrations being the first uprising in a whole series of similar events that led to the demise of authoritarian rule in Eastern Europe countries and Mongolia, the fact that most of these countries were Soviet satellite

states with Communist Party rule virtually planted by the USSR rather the result of in the main part homegrown – though foreign inspired – mass revolutionary movement, and that their 1989-1990 protest movements came after the shocking Beijing-Tiananmen massacre all apparently played their roles in the diverse State response between China and these states, perhaps with the exception of Romania which took a popularly supported palace and army coop to overthrow the hated Communist dictator Nicolae Ceauşescu.

54. Spontaneous as the 1989 Tiananmen protests, the “demonstrations that erupted on 4th May 1919 developed into a loose nationalist political movement that was one of the antecedents of the Communist Party’s own official foundation in 1921” (Hutton, 2006: 7).
55. In principle, i.e. irrespective of whether a country’s government is democratic, despotic like Burma, totalitarian like North Korea, or even genocidal like Sudan, the former Democratic Kampuchea or the murderous Serbian militia in a disintegrating Yugoslavia.
56. While still rudimentary, the rehabilitation and other *de facto* de-Mao programmes, or even the liquidation of the research office of the central Secretariat, and the closing down of left-wing magazines such as *Red Flag*, led the way to further internal structural reform of the CCP in coming days (MacFarquhar, 2009: xxi).
57. How effective are such elections as a means for rural governance democratization? Ann Thurston, who has followed such village elections since 1994, drew the following rather mixed conclusions (see Ann Thurston, “Village Democracy in China” <<http://www.chinaelections.org>>, cited in Yu, 2004): “First, the local emperors who came to power with the collapse of the communes still exist in some places. Usually they are able to exert control because they are also very rich, are in control of much a [sic] of a village’s resources, and are able to influence higher levels in the government and party hierarchies. Second, many villages continue to exist in a vacuum of leadership. When, for instances, I have had the opportunity to visit Chinese villages with friends rather than through official sponsorship, it seems I invariably happen upon villages which are suffering crises of leadership, villages where elections, if they have been held at all are only pro forma, and the village leader is generally weak and ineffectual. Third, I have seen cases, too, where they local emperors are actually elected, ostensibly democratically. These are instances, for instance, where the second candidate seems to have been put there only for the sake of complying with election regulations and where the village chief who is running for re-election also controls a major portion of the village resources ... Finally, and most important, I have also seen elections that by any measure anywhere in the world would be recognized as genuinely competitive, fair and democratic ...”
58. “Hong Kong Reporter Being Held By China”, Washington Post Foreign Service, 30th May 2005. <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/05/29/AR2005052900986.html>>
59. 东方日报, 14th February 2009.
60. Seven being the worst rating and 6 next to worst, thus making her one of the 19 “worst of the worst” countries in terms of political rights and civil liberties (Pud-dington, 2010: 5), just marginally better than Burma, North Korea, Sudan, Libya,

Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea and Somalia that were all rated 7 on both political rights and civil liberties (Freedom House, 2010).

61. Cited in Diamond (2002: 24).
62. Cited from 邓小平文选, 1993 ed., Vol. 3, 人民出版社, pp. 220-221.
63. Besides his declaration that China is at the “initial stage of socialism” which served to clear the way for further market transformations. See “A Brief Biography of Zhao Ziyang”, in Zhao (2009: 283-287).
64. The most successful among the 12 counties (cities, districts) in the provinces of Zhejiang, Heilongjiang, Shanxi, Hebei, and Hunan that the Central Organization Department chose to conduct the first round of experiments on the “permanent party congress system” (Bo, 2009: 13).
65. “In developing our democracy, we cannot simply copy bourgeois democracy, or introduce the system of a balance of three powers. I have often criticized people in power in the United States, saying that actually they have three governments [...] when it comes to internal affairs, the three branches often pull in different directions, and that makes trouble. We cannot adopt such a system.” – Deng Xiaoping, “Take a Clear-Cut Stand against Bourgeois Liberalization”, 30th December 1986. <<http://web.peopledaily.com.cn/english/dengxp/vol3/text/c1630.html>>
66. The current administration of President Hu Jintao 胡锦涛 and Premier Wen Jiabao 温家宝.
67. See, for instance, Bo (2009: 16).
68. Dissident Xie Changfa 谢长发 was sentenced to 13-year imprisonment for his involvement in organizing the China Democracy Party since 1998. His conviction followed those of the civil rights activists Huang Qi 黄琦, Tan Zuoren 谭作人 and Guo Quan 郭泉, who voiced out on the alleged school building construction scandal following the 2008 Sichuan earthquake that resulted in huge number of student casualties due to the collapse of school buildings (东方日报, 3rd September 2009). The epitome of the prisoners of conscience at the moment is of course Liu Xiaobo 刘晓波, the key founder of “Charter 08” (*Ling-ba Xianzhang* 零八宪章), who was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize on 8th October 2010, in a year with a large number of the nominees for the prize being persecuted Chinese dissidents and civil rights activists including prominent figures like Wei Jingsheng 魏京生, Gao Zhisheng 高智晟, Chen Guangcheng 陈光诚 and Hu Jia 胡佳.
69. State Council Information Office, “White Paper on Building of Political Democracy in China”, 19th October 2005 <http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/english/doc/2005-10/19/content_486206.htm>, cited in Minzner (2006: 9-10).
70. 东方日报, 27th August 2010, 6th September 2010.
71. 东方日报, 6th September 2010, 7th September 2010. Old ways die hard, anyway – while Wen calls for Shenzhen’s political reform, the city has declared a list of *personae non gratae* consisting of *shangfang* petitioners, political dissidents, released labour camp inmates, troublemakers who frequently “make things difficult” for the government, *dingzihu* in relocation disputes, *falungong* followers, as well as drug addicts (东方日报, 6th September 2010).
72. See, e.g., Hutton (2006: 8, 98, 144-148).
73. In the context of modern multiethnic societies, particularly those with an economy dominated by the minority, members of the demographically/politically

- dominant group are often willing to grant greater autonomy to a State (and its élite managers), which implements preferential policies in their favour.
74. “The only way to erect such a common power, as may be able to defend them from the invasion of foreigners, and the injuries of one another [...] is, to confer all their power and strength upon one man, or upon one assembly of men, that may reduce all their wills, by plurality of voices, unto one will [...] This is the generation of that great Leviathan [...]”, said Thomas Hobbes in *Leviathan* (1651).
 75. Cited in Lin (2009: 351).
 76. For such institutionalized relationship between the central State and the localities, see Zheng (1999).
 77. See Xu (2008).
 78. See note 31.
 79. In a way analogous to the French Revolution being hijacked by Maximilien Robespierre’s Reign of Terror. Ch’en Tu-hsiu’s socialism was but one of the twin manifestations of the May Fourth spirit, the other being liberalism represented by Hu Shih 胡適.
 80. See note 7.
 81. Jules Destrée, the Belgian politician at the turn of the century, once remarked to King Albert: “Let me tell you the truth, the great and horrifying truth: there are no Belgians.” (“Laissez-moi vous dire la vérité, la grande et horrifiante vérité: il n’y a pas de Belges”, Jules Destrée, *Lettre au Roi sur la séparation de la Wallonie et de la Flandre, 15 août 1912*, cited in Quévit, 1982: 71.) Doubts about the existence of a Belgian identity (*belgitude*) above those of the Flemings (*Vlamingen*) and Walloons (*Wallons*) have dominated much of modern Belgian history. The earliest use of the term “belgitude” can be traced to Brugmans (1980), cited in Dumont (1989). Although Brugmans’s article is written in Dutch, he has coined the term in French. “Belgitude”, according to Brugmans, is “a shared sense of belonging as Belgians (*een Belgische samenhorigheid*), a Belgian mentality” (see Dumont, *ibid.*: 16). Can we talk about a *sinitude* for China and what would that mean from the perspective of the country’s non-Han nationalities?

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