Political and Social Trends in the Post-Deng Urban China: Crisis or Stability?*

Wenfang Tang

This study examines popular attitudes in urban China towards market reform and political systems, and compares the change in public opinion between Deng and the post-Deng eras. It further depicts the general political and social trends in urban China and the probable forces of change. Empirical evidence is used from 1999 and earlier urban public opinion surveys.

Crisis or Stability?

China in the post-Deng era faced a number of problems as well as positive changes. Depending on which set of facts one believes, China either was going through a crisis or achieved further stability.

On the crisis side, China suffered from economic slowdown during the Asian financial crisis in 1997 and losses incurred by flooding in 1998.[1] The shutting down of inefficient state enterprises as part of the post-Deng reform programmes resulted in huge numbers of workers being laid off,[2] which further contributed to a growing income gap between the beneficiaries of reform and its losers.[3] Social welfare was reduced at the workplace and increasingly relied on market forces and family self-support,[4] resulting in a decline of living standards, particularly among the disadvantaged groups and regions.[5]

Politically, the post-Deng regime suffered some setbacks in confidence. Most remarkable was a large-scale protest in spring 1999 by the *Falun gong* sect, which surrounded the Communist Party headquarters to protest for official recognition. It was the largest anti-government action since

1. World Bank, *China: Weathering the Storm and Learning the Lessons* (Washington D.C.: The World Bank, 1999).
2. Rong Muo, "Employment still troubling," in Xing Ru, Xueyi Lu and Tianlun Shan (eds.), *Chinese Social Trends in 2000: Analysis and Forecast* (Beijing: Social Sciences Documentation Publishing House 2000), pp. 182–195.
3. *Beijing Youth Daily*, 17 April 2000, p. 16.
4. Elisabeth Croll, "Social welfare reform: trends and tensions," *The China Quarterly* (*CQ*), No. 159 (1999), pp. 684–699.
5. Dorothy J. Solinger, "Despite decentralization: disadvantages, dependence and ongoing central power in the inland – the case of Wuhan," *CQ*, No. 145 (1996), pp. 1–34; A.R. Khan and C. Riskin. "Income and inequality in China: composition, distribution and growth of household income," *CQ*, No. 154 (1998), pp. 221–253; B.N. Gustafsson and W. Zhong. "How and why has poverty in China changed? A study based on microdata for 1988 and 1995," *CQ*, No. 164 (2000), pp. 983–1006; Shaoguang Wang and Angang Hu, *The Political Economy of Uneven Development: The Case of China* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2000).

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the student-led urban protests of a decade earlier, and brought home the point that the perceived failures of China's reform policy can result in public disobedience.[6] Unemployment and the rising income gap added to growing labour protests nation-wide[7] and constituted the economic hall-marks of the post-Deng era.[8] These examples led observers to believe that the post-Deng leadership suffered from a regime legitimacy crisis.

On the stability side, the post-Deng leaders seemed to have success-fully consolidated political power since the 15th Party Congress in 1997 and the Ninth National People's Congress in 1998. In addition to resuming a high growth rate of 9.1 per cent by the fourth quarter of 1998 after the Asian financial crisis,[9] it was Jiang Zemin's political fortune to benefit from a particular array of international and domestic events.[10] China regained both Hong Kong and Macau from their former colonial rulers – a rare victory of territorial consolidation in an era of other communist powers falling apart. Jiang led China's celebration of the 50th anniversary of the People's Republic of China, an event that firmly placed him on the international stage and underlined his holding power for sceptics who thought he would only be a transitional leader after taking the reins of China's Communist Party in 1989. On the domestic front, the 1999 bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade and the 2001 U.S. spy plane stand-off in Hainan put Jiang on the crest of a wave of anti-Western patriotism which bore the double edge of allowing him to justify his harsh handling of political dissidents.[11]

6. Danny Schechter (ed.), *Falun Gong's Challenge to China* (New York: Akashic Books, 2000).

7. John Pomfret, "As change tests China, labor disputes spread," *International Herald Tribune*, 24 April 2000.

8. For a more recent and comprehensive discussion of the political consequences of economic dislocation and social tensions, see Zhonggong Zhongyang Ketizhu, *Zhongguo diaocha baogao (2000–2001): xin xingshi xia renmin neibu maodun yanjiu* (Zhongyang bianyi chubanshe, 2001).

9. World Bank, *China: Weathering the Storm and Learning the Lessons*, figure 1.7, p. 20.

10. For a slightly different list, see Richard Baum, "The Fifteenth National Party Congress: Jiang takes command?" *CQ*, No. 153 (1998), pp. 141–156.

11. While Jiang and other post-Deng leaders kept tight watch over certain key political issues (e.g. alternative political parties and autonomous labour unions) and allowed the economy considerably more leeway, political development was seen in some other areas. These included expanding village and township elections (Carter Center, *The Carter Center Report on Chinese Elections* (Atlanta, 1999), Melanie Manion, "Report from the field. Chinese democratization in perspective: electorates and selectorates at the township level," *CQ*, No. 163 (2000), pp. 764–782; Kevin O'Brien and Lianjiang Li, "Accommodating 'democracy' in a one-party state: introducing village elections in China," *CQ*, No. 162 (2000), pp. 465–489); increasing intellectual freedom (Merle Goldman, "Politically-engaged intellectuals in the Deng–Jiang era: a changing relationship with the Party-State," *CQ*, No. 145 (1996), pp. 35–52); improving the rule of law and reducing bureaucratic inefficiency (John Burns, "The People's Republic of China at 50: national political reform," *CQ*, No. 159 (1999), pp. 580–594); declining significance of personal ties in firms that do business with foreign firms (D. Guthrie, "The declining significance of guanxi in China's economic transition," *CQ*, No. 154 (1998), pp. 254–282); growing autonomy of social organizations (Tony Saich, "Negotiating the state: the development of social organizations in China," *CQ*, No. 161 (2000), pp. 124–141); increasing supervising role of the provincial legislature (Robert MacFarquhar, "Report from the field. Provincial People's Congresses," *CQ*, No. 155 (1998), pp. 656–667); and reducing the interference in residents' lives by the urban residential

It is with these competing sets of facts between crisis and stability that the question of crisis versus legitimacy is examined through survey data. Before proceeding it is necessary to describe the surveys from which the data were drawn.

Data

This study relies heavily on a 1999 survey on Chinese urban residents in six cities, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Wuhan, Chongqing, Xi'an and Shenyang. The two-wave survey was conducted in co-operation with the Research Centre for Contemporary China at Peking University. The first wave was in late August in Shanghai, Guangzhou and Wuhan. The second wave was in late October and early November in Chongqing. Xian and Shenyang. The survey sample was based on a three-stage random process. First, 15 residential councils (*juweihui*) were randomly selected from a complete list of residential councils in each city. Then 30 households were randomly selected from a list of all households in each residential council. Finally, an adult person (16 or older) was randomly selected from each household. Local college students who could speak the local dialect were hired to conduct the interviews. Each face-to-face interview lasted about one hour. The respondents were told that this was an academic research project on Chinese urban residents' social and political values. Each was given a small gift. The final sample contained 1,820 respondents, about 300 from each city. The survey included more than 200 questions on each respondent's biographic information, family, work, income, reform satisfaction, and many items on political issues, including support for the current political system, political participation and efficacy. Many questions repeated the urban social surveys conducted in the late 1980s and early 1990s by the Economic System Reform Institute of China. These repeated questions will provide a valuable opportunity to study the political and social trends in urban China in the past ten to 15 years.

One obvious problem of the sample is the exclusion of the rural migrant workers in Chinese cities who are mostly less educated and working in blue collar and service jobs. This makes the sample's education level higher than that of the actual urban population. To solve this problem, the sample is weighted by education of the urban residents in the 1990 population census. This technique makes the results from univariate analyses more similar to that of the actual population. Weighting is not used in multivariate analyses, since education is used as an independent variable.

One other potential problem is that the timing of the 1999 survey (the suppression of the *Falun gong* religious movement and the heavy-handed way of tightening up security around the 50th anniversary of China)

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footnote continued

committees (Ben Read, "Research note. Revitalizing the state's urban 'nerve tips'," *CQ*, No. 163 (2000), pp. 806–820).

might have affected people's response to politically sensitive questions. Some may say that this survey was simply a snapshot of the social and political situation of the immediate events, but not representative of the overall political picture and long-term trends. While the survey was likely to have captured the momentary response to the particular political events, these events were also quite representative of Jiang's leadership style over time.

Several other surveys are used to compare with the results of the 1999 survey. These are the 1987–91 semi-annual surveys on reform satisfaction and the 1992 urban social survey, all conducted by the Economic System Reform Institute of China in 44 cities. The seven semi-annual surveys have a combined sample of 16,450 and the 1992 survey has a sample of 2,370. The samples were drawn in similar ways as the 1999 survey and will be weighted by the 1990 urban census in univariate analyses.[12]

Issues

In order to examine the question of crisis and stability, two directly related issues are considered: satisfaction with economic reform, and support for China's political system and ideology. In addition, sense of political efficacy is examined to show the likelihood of challenging the regime under dissatisfaction through institutional channels such as the workplace.

Reform satisfaction. According to the crisis hypothesis, the growing economic and social problems would lead to increasing dissatisfaction and decreasing support for reform. The stability hypothesis, however, would focus on the increasing legitimacy of the post-Deng leaders by carrying on Deng's market reform policy and the fact that China's economy resumed a high growth rate by the end of 1998 and in early 1999.

Reform satisfaction was measured by the following items in the 1999 six-city survey: current income, savings and other wealth; housing; personal health; job opportunity; and freedom of speech. For each item, the response scale of 0 (strongly dissatisfied), 1 (dissatisfied), 2 (don't care), 3 (satisfied) and 4 (strongly satisfied) was converted into a percentage by dividing the response by 4. The resulting percentage scale measured satisfaction with each item. One hundred per cent indicated total satisfaction and zero meant no satisfaction at all. The respondents were also asked about the speed of reform – too fast, just right or too

12. For further discussion of public opinion and survey work in China, see Stanley Rosen, "The rise (and fall) of public opinion in Post-Mao China," in Richard Baum (ed.), *Reform and Reaction in Post-Mao China: The Road to Tiananmen* (New York: Routledge, 1991); Andrew Nathan and Tianjian Shi, "Cultural requisites for democracy in China: some findings from nation-wide survey," *Daedalus*, Vol. 122, No. 2 (1993), pp. 95–123; Melanie Manion, "Survey research in the study of contemporary China: learning from local samples," *CQ*, No. 139 (1994), pp. 741–765.

slow. An answer of "too fast" meant dissatisfaction with reform and the desire for it to slow down. The 1987–91 semi-annual urban surveys had the same satisfaction questions and the question about reform speed. These earlier data allowed the comparison of change over time in reform satisfaction and support.

To examine the impact of other factors on reform satisfaction, the survey used Party membership (0–1), family income category (0–10), gender (female = 1 and male = 0) and education (years). Age was divided into five groups based on the year the respondent turned 20: pre-1949 (pre-PRC generation), 1949–65 (socialist generation), 1966–76 (Cultural Revolution generation), 1977–84 (reform generation), post-1984 (post-reform generation). These categories corresponded to the difference in political socialization between different generations. Occupation included professional, administrator and manager, clerk, sales and services, private sector,[13] manual workers, unemployed, retired, and none/other. Finally, cities were included in the analysis to examine the impact of the central government's preferential policies and other differential factors in each city.[14]

Political support. Political support could be strong or weak depending on whether one believes in the stability or the crisis hypothesis. Support for the current regime can be measured by a number of questions in the 1999 six-city survey, such as "what do you think about the current political system of multi-party co-operation under the leadership of the Communist Party?" The respondent was asked to pick one of the following answers: "should reform," "no better option so keep the status quo," "very good and should continue," "do not care as long as life can improve under the current system." Another question that was used to measure political support was to ask respondents to strongly disagree, disagree, agree or strongly agree with the statement "democratization is premature and will lead to political chaos." A "strongly agree" answer indicates more support for the post-Deng regime. To discover opinions on the best political and economic models for China, respondents were asked to choose from a list of countries and areas, including the United States, Japan, Hong Kong, China, Singapore, Russia, Taiwan, Germany, Britain, South Korea, Northern Europe, France and India. A choice of China as the best model for political or economic development indicated more support for the current system and policy in China.

The 1999 six-city survey also had a question on the most important ideology for China's economic development, including Dengism, Mao-

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13. One may want to disaggregate the private sector because it included the rich and well-educated high-tech company owners and those selling popcorn and baked sweet potatoes in the street corner without much education. However, what they shared in common was the market mentality outside the traditional state-controlled channels. In a multivariate analysis, what the private sector represented was precisely this different mentality from the public sector workers when income and education were held constant.

14. For Wuhan's slow development due to the lack of preferential policy from the centre, see Solinger "Despite decentralization."

ism, Marxism-Leninism, Chinese culture and Western culture. Support for Dengism indicated backing the current government, based on Deng Xiaoping's pragmatic policy. Support for Western culture was probably in contrast with feelings for Maosim, Marxism-Leninism and Chinese culture.

Finally, the survey asked respondents to rank their criteria in evaluating the government, including promoting economic growth, efficiency, ethics, rule of law, China's image in the world, transparency, democratic elections, personal freedom and coherent ideology.

Efficacy. It is helpful to examine the sense of political efficacy among Chinese urban residents. A sense of dissatisfaction is less likely to lead to action if political efficacy is weak. In contrast, a strong sense of efficacy may lead to constant challenge to the government. One may certainly argue that people would demonstrate and protest even with a weak sense of political efficacy. However, it should also be true that people would demonstrate more if they feel politically more efficacious. More importantly, a sense of political efficacy would lead to political participation through institutional channels.

Sense of political efficacy was measured by several questions in the 1999 six-city survey: "the public can affect government decision-making"; "individuals can affect social development"; "one should not let the government decide everything for our country"; "one should complain about life dissatisfaction to the government." Agreement with these statements indicated more efficacy. Another question that showed the sense of efficacy was the probable action when facing an unsatisfactory supervisor at work. One could "tell the supervisor or other leaders," "say nothing but disobey the supervisor," or "say nothing but obey the supervisor." The first answer indicated more efficacy than the second and third. This question indicated people's willingness to engage in political participation through institutional channels.

All these efficacy-related questions were also included in the 1992 urban survey. The comparison between 1992 and 1999 provides insight into the trends in political efficacy during this period.

Findings

Reform satisfaction. In 1999, least satisfactory areas were job and income, reflecting the urban unemployment problem and decreasing income opportunities as a result of streamlining the state enterprises. Compared with 1987, overall satisfaction with reform declined in 1999. While satisfaction with housing and personal health remained at the same levels, satisfaction with freedom of speech, income and wealth, and job opportunity decreased significantly (Figure 1).

Increased dissatisfaction with reform was also reflected in people's attitude towards the speed of reform. Some 12 per cent of the respondents in the 1999 six-city survey thought reform was going too slow, the
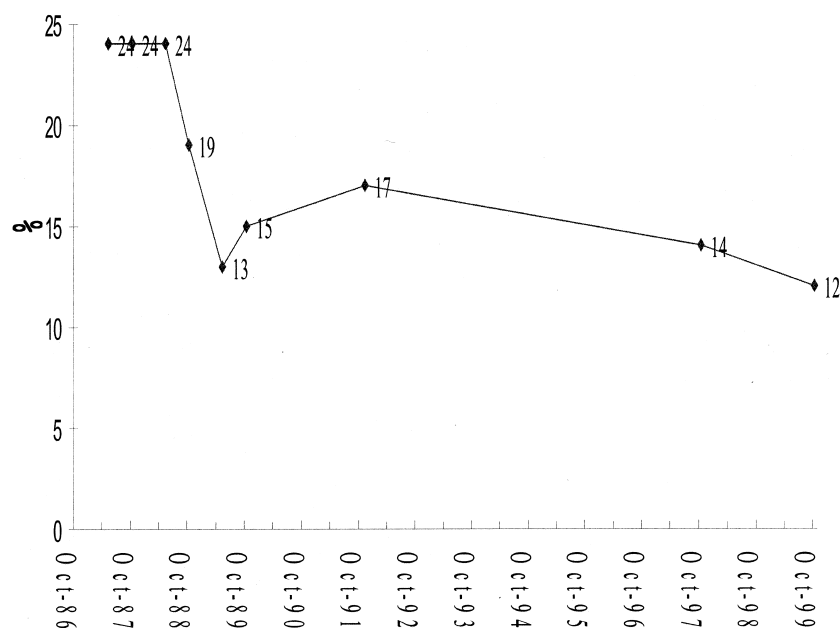
Figure 1: **Reform Satisfaction Over Time (weighted %)**
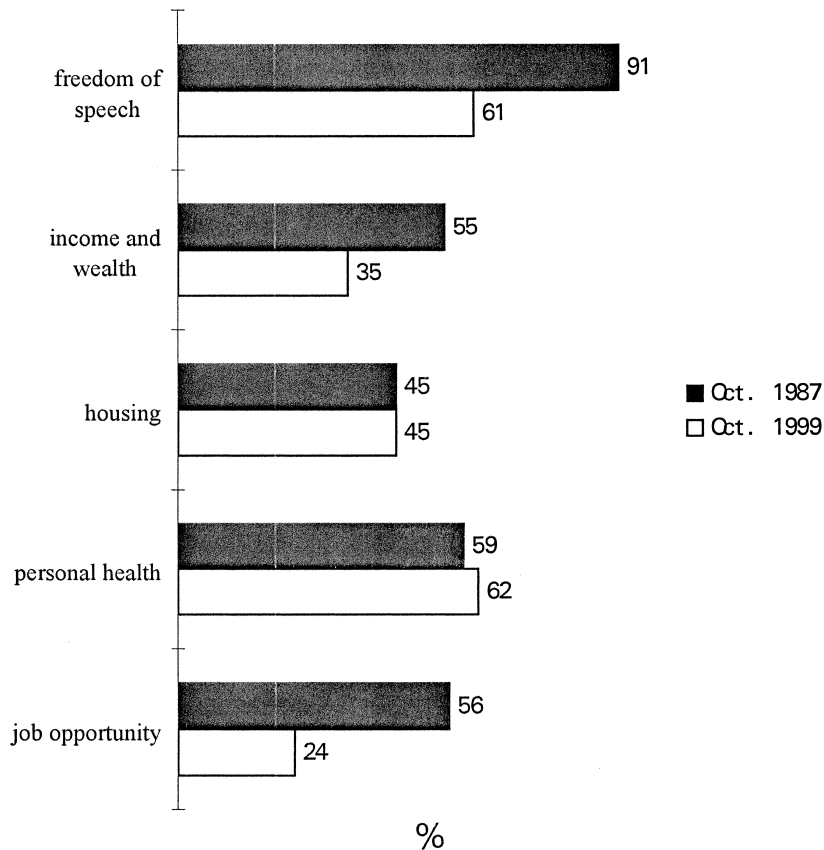
Sources:
  1987 ESRIC China Urban Surveys and 1999 six-city survey.

lowest since 1987 and the same level as during the 1989 urban protests (Figure 2).

Reform satisfaction and support were further examined in a multivariate analysis (Figure 3; see appendix for a list of the independent variables and their characteristics). For reform support, "reform is too slow" was used. Party members were more satisfied with reform but showed an ambiguous attitude towards reform speed. High income earners were more satisfied and less likely to think reform was too fast. Education slightly decreased reform satisfaction, but increased reform support (reform was not going too fast). In other words, the more educated might be less satisfied with reform because they thought that reform was not going fast enough.

Figure 2: **"Reform is Too Slow" (weighted % agreed)**

   The pre-Cultural Revolution generations (pre-1949 and 1949–65) were more satisfied than the Cultural Revolution generation, which suffered the biggest loss in labour market competition and political status in the post-Cultural Revolution era. The pre-1949 generation, the Cultural Revolution generation and the post-Cultural Revolution generation (1977–84) were more likely to say reform was too fast than the 1949–65 and the post–1984 generations. The latter two groups were either the current power holders and beneficiaries of reform or had great hope for future benefit of China's market reform and modernization.

   Other things being equal, professionals, the private sector, manual workers and the unemployed were more dissatisfied than the other groups. The latter two groups (manual and unemployed) voiced a much stronger concern about the fast speed of reform than the first two groups (professionals and the private sector). Therefore, manual workers and the unemployed were dissatisfied because reform was going too fast, while professionals and the private sector workers were dissatisfied because reform was not going fast enough.

   Residents in Wuhan and Guangzhou were more dissatisfied than others. One reason may be that these cities did not enjoy the central

Figure 3: **Reform Satisfaction and Support (OLS regression for reform satisfaction and probit regression for "reform is too fast")**
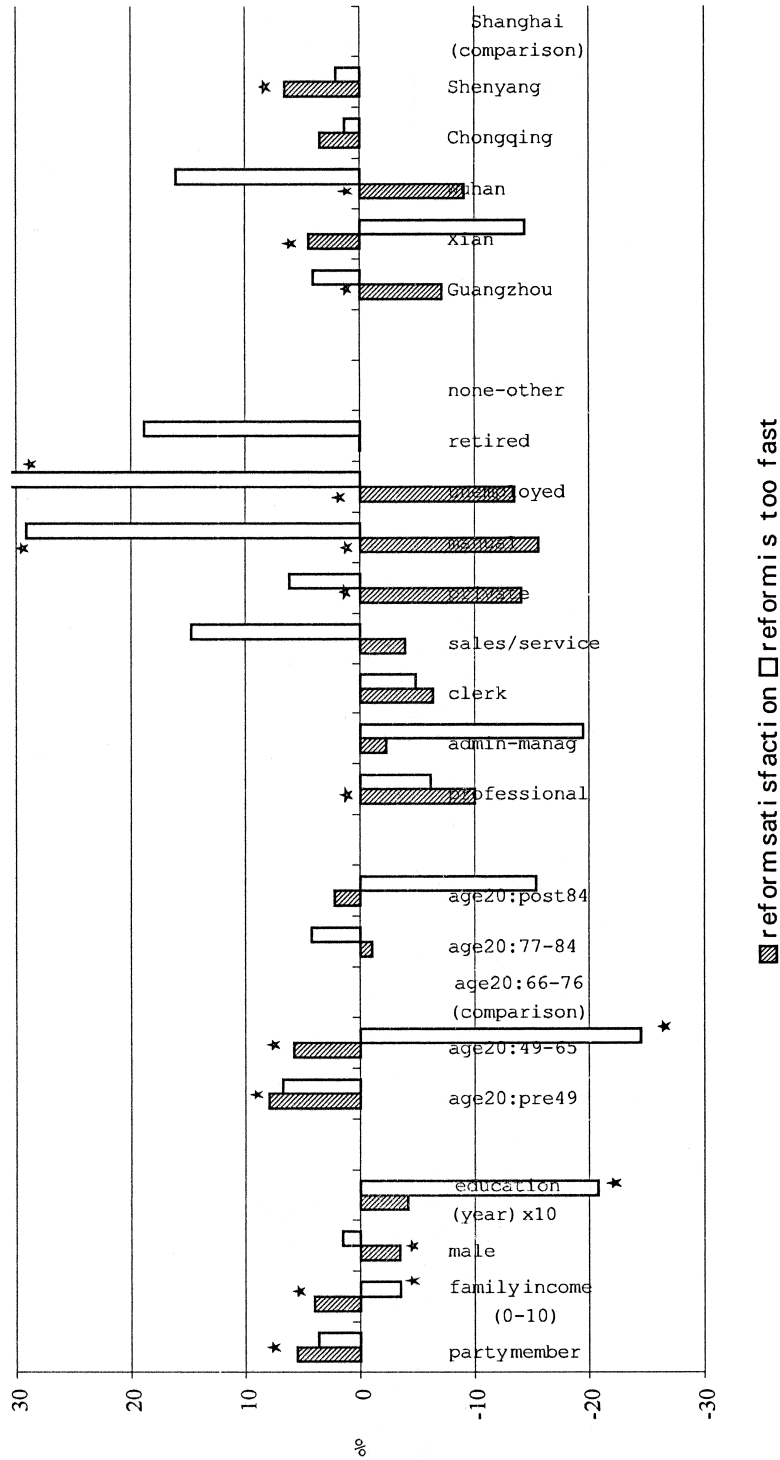
Notes:

For reform satisfaction, Party members were about 6% more satisfied than non-members. As income moved up to the next level, satisfaction increased by 4%. The gap between the poorest and the richest income groups was about 40%. Male respondents were 3.5% less satisfied than female respondents. For each ten years of education, reform satisfaction decreased by more than 4% (p = .12). Comparing with the Cultural Revolution generation (age20:66–76), the pre-1949 (age20:pre49) and the socialist generations (age20:49–65) were about 8% and 6% more satisfied and the post-Cultural Revolution generations did not show significant difference with the Cultural Revolution generation. Similarly, all occupation groups should be compared with the "none_other" group. For example, the unemployed were 14% less satisfied than the "none_other" group. All cities should be compared with Shanghai. For example, Wuhan residents were 9% less satisfied and Shenyang residents were 7% more satisfied than Shanghai residents. The same methods of interpretation also apply to "reform is too fast." The percentage for reform satisfaction was converted from a factor index of the five items in Figure 1 (freedom of speech, income, housing, personal health and job opportunity). The original index had a minimum value of − 1.59 and a maximum value of 2.30 (see appendix). The OLS regression coefficient for each independent variable was divided by 1.59 if negative and by 2.30 if positive and then multiplied by 100. "Reform too fast" ranged from zero (disagree) to 1 (agree) (also see appendix). The probit regression coefficient for each independent variable with "reform too fast" was also multiplied by 100. The unemployed were 47% more likely to say reform was going too fast than the "none_other" group. p< = .10.

Source:

1999 six-city survey.

government's preferential policies, as did other cities such as Shanghai, which received major attention from the centre in the 1990s.

In short, the crisis hypothesis seemed to be supported in social reaction to economic reform. Satisfaction declined and reform opposition was on the rise. The hardest hit groups were manual workers, the unemployed and those in cities that did not receive preferential treatment from the central government.

Political support. In the 1999 six-city survey, when asked whether the communist-led multi-party system should be changed, 18 per cent of the respondents thought it should be changed, 6 per cent wanted only minor change, 31 per cent did not care so long as life could be improved, and 44 per cent did not want any change (question E6). Thus, the majority of people either did not care or did not want any change. When asked if political stability was more important than democratization, the majority of the respondents (58 per cent) agreed, 26 per cent disagreed and the rest (16 per cent) did not know.

The above two items were combined with six others in the survey by a factor analysis to form an index of political conservatism. These additional items were "good government does not need elections," "the state should constrain political dissidents," "the government should decide what ideas are permitted," "the government should decide public affairs," "lack of social uniform leads to chaos," and "not supporting the government is not patriotic."

In a multivariate regression analysis of political conservatism, high income earners, male and more educated respondents were less conservative. The reform and post-reform generations were significantly less conservative than the older generations. Those in sales and service, manual workers, unemployed and retirees were more conservative than professionals,

administrators, managers, white-collar workers, and the private sector. Residents in the rustbelt city Shenyang seemed more conservative than residents in other cities. Among other things, these findings seem to indicate that political conservatism was related to one's socio-economic status. Those who were low on the income, education, and occupational scales were more conservative (Figure 4).

The attitude towards supporting China's political system was further examined by questions related to perceptions of other countries. When asked which country provided the best model for China's political reform, the highest percentage was China's own system (Figure 5). Similar to the growing number of people in the U.S. who saw China as a threat,[15] the United States was seen as the greatest threat to China's international status, although its economic system was ranked as the best model for China to learn from.

In a probit regression analysis (not shown) with Party member, family income, gender, education, age, occupation and city included, Party members with more education and in the pre-reform generations showed significantly more support for China's political system than non-Party members, the less educated and the reform and post-reform generations. None of the occupational groups showed any difference when the administrator/manager group was the comparison group. In evaluating the U.S. economic system (results not shown), the more educated and those in the private sector and in sales and service (administrator/manager as comparison) were more in favour than others. Residents in Wuhan and Shenyang showed less preference for the U.S. economic model than those in Shanghai, Guangzhou, Xi'an and Chongqing.

Attitudes towards the current system were further examined by questions related to ideology. Each respondent was given a list of ideologies (Marxism-Leninism, Maoism, Dengism, Chinese culture and Western culture) and asked to evaluate the importance of each for China's future social stability. The respondent could choose all or none of the five ideologies as important. Among those who thought each ideology was "very important," 58 per cent chose the pragmatic Dengism, 55 per cent mentioned Maoism, and 42 and 37 per cent selected Marxism-Leninism and Chinese culture. Only 8 per cent thought Western culture would be very important.

In a multiple regression analysis, two questions regarding the role of ideology (the relative importance of each ideology for China's economic development and social stability) were combined into an index for each ideology. Background factors were examined against each ideology index (Figure 6).[16]

Party members were firm in upholding Marxism-Leninism and Maoism, though they also liked Chinese culture. To a lesser degree, they also supported Dengism but had little interest in Western culture. The high

15. See, for example, Chicago Council on Foreign Relations, *Chicago Council on Foreign Relations Report, 1999*, based on surveys from 1978 to 1998 by CCFR (1999).
16. Occupational groups made little difference and were excluded in the analysis. The anecdotal accounts of occupational difference in ideological orientation may have been explained by other factors, such as age, gender, education and income.
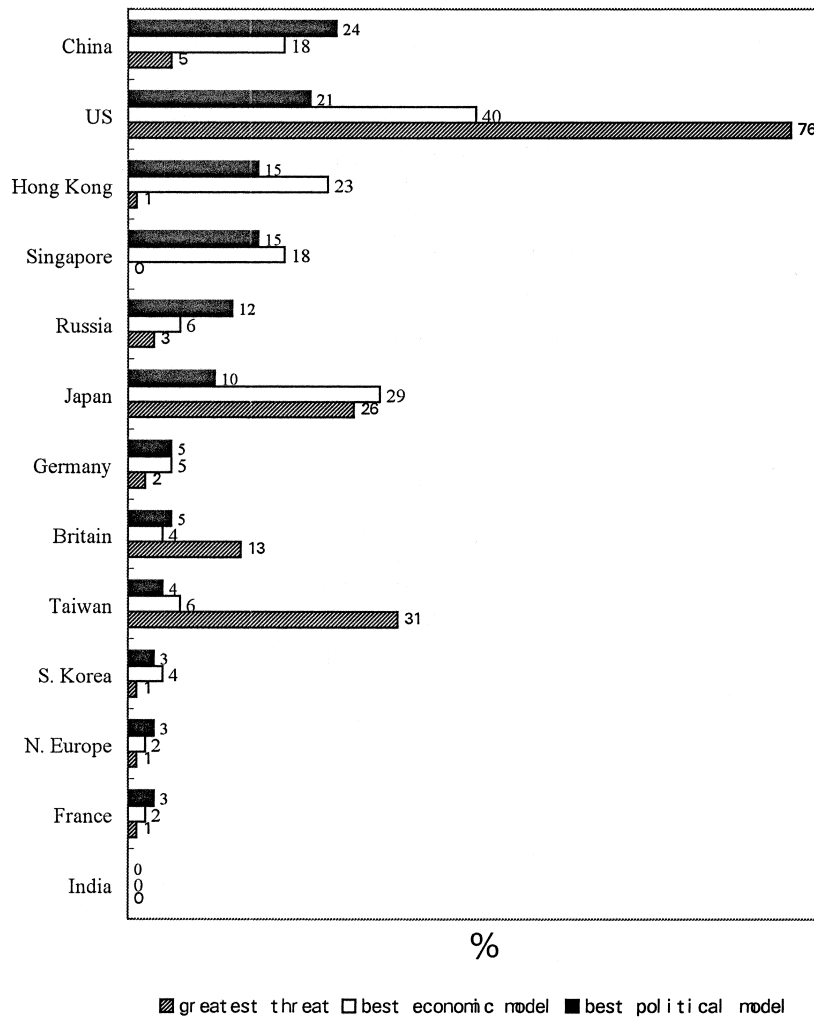
Figure 4: **Political Conservatism (OLS)**
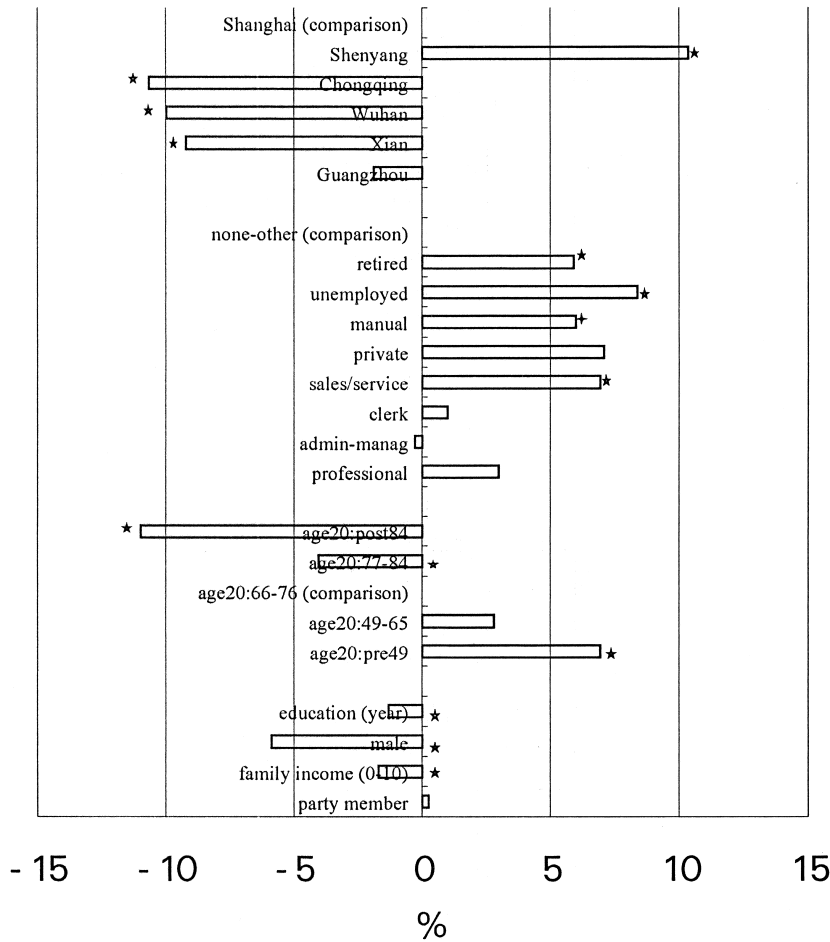
Note:
  Percentage change of political conservatism was converted from the factor index (see appendix) using similar method for reform satisfaction in Figure 3. ☆ p < = .10
Source:
  1999 six-city survey.

income people seemed particularly to like Dengism that had made them rich during reform, and discounted all other ideologies. Female respondents were more ideological than males in each category. Understandably, the more educated were more pro-West and less likely to identify with Marxism-Leninism and Maoism. The pre-Cultural Revolution generations still favoured Marxism-Leninism and Maoism, and showed a strong support for Dengism. The youngest generation also showed support for Dengism, but was noticeably more anti-tradition and pro-West than the older generations. The Cultural Revolution generation showed less interest in Dengism than the older generations and the youngest generation,

Figure 5: **The Greatest Threat to China's Development and the Best Economic and Political Models for China (% agreed with statement, weighted)**

	greatest threat	best economic model	best political model
China	5	18	24
US	76	40	21
Hong Kong	1	23	15
Singapore	0	18	15
Russia	3	6	12
Japan	26	29	10
Germany	2	5	5
Britain	13	4	5
Taiwan	31	6	4
S. Korea	1	4	3
N. Europe	1	2	3
France	1	2	3
India	0	0	0

%

▨ greatest threat ☐ best economic model ■ best political model

Source:
  1999 six-city survey.

indicating that this group could be the direct victim of Deng's market reform policies.

  Guangzhou residents were much less interested in any ideology except Western culture. Xi'an residents thought Maoism was more important than any other ideology. Residents in Wuhan and Shengyang favoured both Marxism-Leninism and Maoism, though the latter showed more support of Dengism. Shanghai residents were divided between Marxism-Leninism and Maoism on the one hand, and Western culture on the other.

Figure 6: **Importance of Ideology (OLS)**

■ Marxist ▨ Maoist □ Dengist ■ Traditionalist ⊞ Westernist
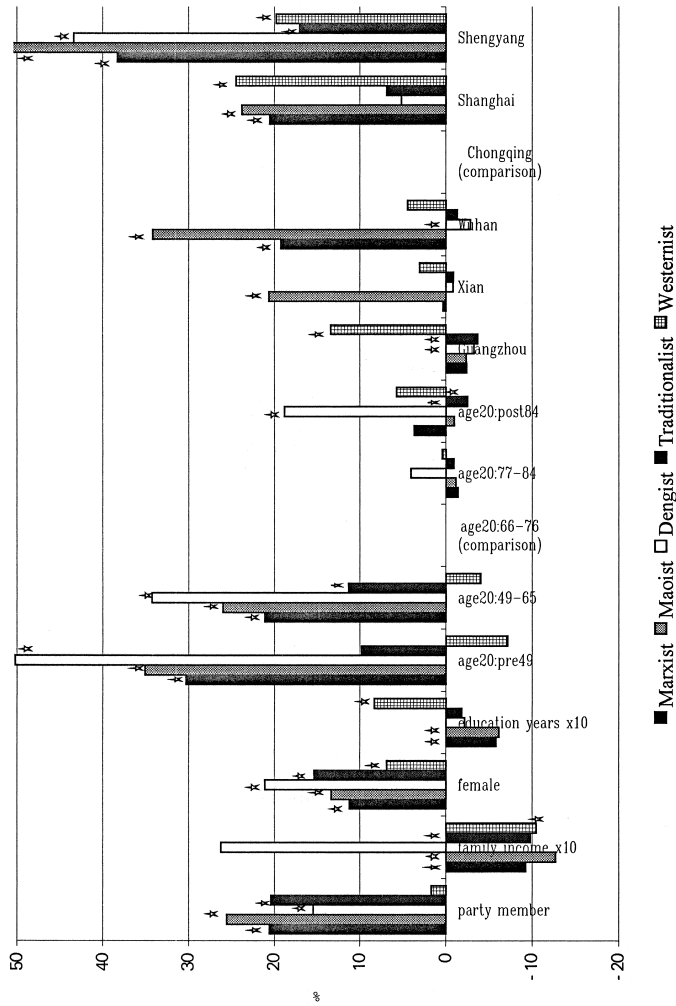
Note:

Percentage change of ideological importance was converted from the factor index (see appendix) using similar method for reform satisfaction in Figure 3. Percentages for family income were from the poorest to the richest categories. All cities compared with Chongqing. ☆ p < = .10

Source:

1999 six-city survey.

Overall, Marxism-Leninism and Maoism were still class-oriented ideologies which seemed to attract attention among Party members, low income groups, females, less educated, older generations, and in regions with longer revolutionary and socialist influence. Dengism was more likely to be accepted by both regime supporters (together with Marxism-Leninism and Maoism) and the current or future beneficiaries of market reform (high income earners and the young). The less popular Western culture was only accepted by residents in coastal cities and the young and more educated people who were often anti-traditional Chinese culture.

The findings in this section do not seem to suggest a political crisis in urban China. Urban residents seemed to have become more politically conservative. Nationalism and anti-West feelings were growing, partly due to the NATO bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade and, more recently, the U.S. spy plane stand-off. The lower social classes and those in the less developed regions were more anti-West than others, while still adhering to revolutionary ideologies.

Political efficacy. Finally, political efficacy was examined by comparing change in attitude from the beginning to the end of the 1990s. Overall, political efficacy declined significantly from 1992 to 1999 (Figure 7). Far fewer urban residents thought they could affect government decision-making or social development. Those who thought government should decide public affairs doubled from 1992 to 1999. Only 15 per cent of respondents said they would complain to the government if they were dissatisfied in life, as compared with 24 per cent in 1992.

Further, the respondents were asked what they would do at work if they felt that their supervisor was wrong (Figure 8). Again, the level of efficacy decreased from 1992 to 1999. Some 31 per cent of respondents in 1999 said they would obey the supervisor anyway, while only 12 per cent said so in 1992. In 1992 57 per cent said they would confront their supervisor or other leaders about the wrong decision, but in 1999 only 48 per cent would do so. In 1992 31 per cent said they would not say anything but neither would they obey the supervisor, but only 21 per cent said so in 1999.
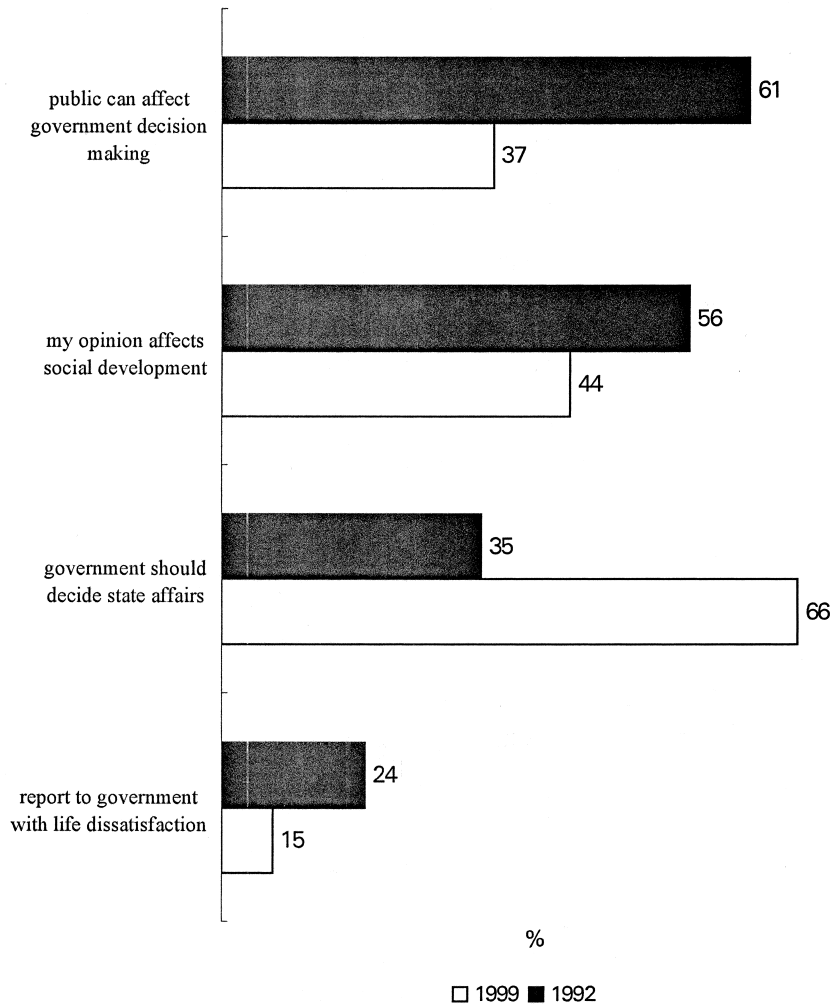
In a multiple regression analysis for 1999 data only, Party members, the post-Cultural Revolution generations, and the upper classes (professionals, administrators, managers), and Shanghai residents felt more efficacy than others (results not shown).

The findings in this section seem further to support the stability hypothesis. With a decreasing sense of political efficacy, urban residents were disillusioned with voicing their dissatisfaction at their workplace or through other institutional channels.

Conclusion

This study does not provide a definitive answer to the crisis versus stability question. Neither extreme fully explains the situation in China. Instead, the data revealed elements of both scenarios and raised the

Figure 7: **Political Efficacy, 1992 and 1999 (weighted %)**

public can affect government decision making	61 / 37
my opinion affects social development	56 / 44
government should decide state affairs	35 / 66
report to government with life dissatisfaction	24 / 15

%

□ 1999 ■ 1992

Sources:
  1992 China urban survey and 1999 six-city survey.

somewhat provocative possibility that the leadership was doing a good job at deepening economic reforms while successfully silencing public dissatisfaction, at least in the urban areas when the survey was conducted. This was particularly striking because the cause of much public alienation originated with dissatisfaction at both the pace and content of market reform policies – the very centrepiece of the post-Deng leadership's legitimacy.

In terms of what the survey data show, the results tell a complex story. Economic satisfaction was mixed, with respondents showing more opti-

Figure 8: **Action if Supervisor is Wrong, 1992 and 1999 (weighted %)**

%

48	57
21	31
31	12

1999   1992

■ obey ▨ silently disobey □ tell supervior or other leaders
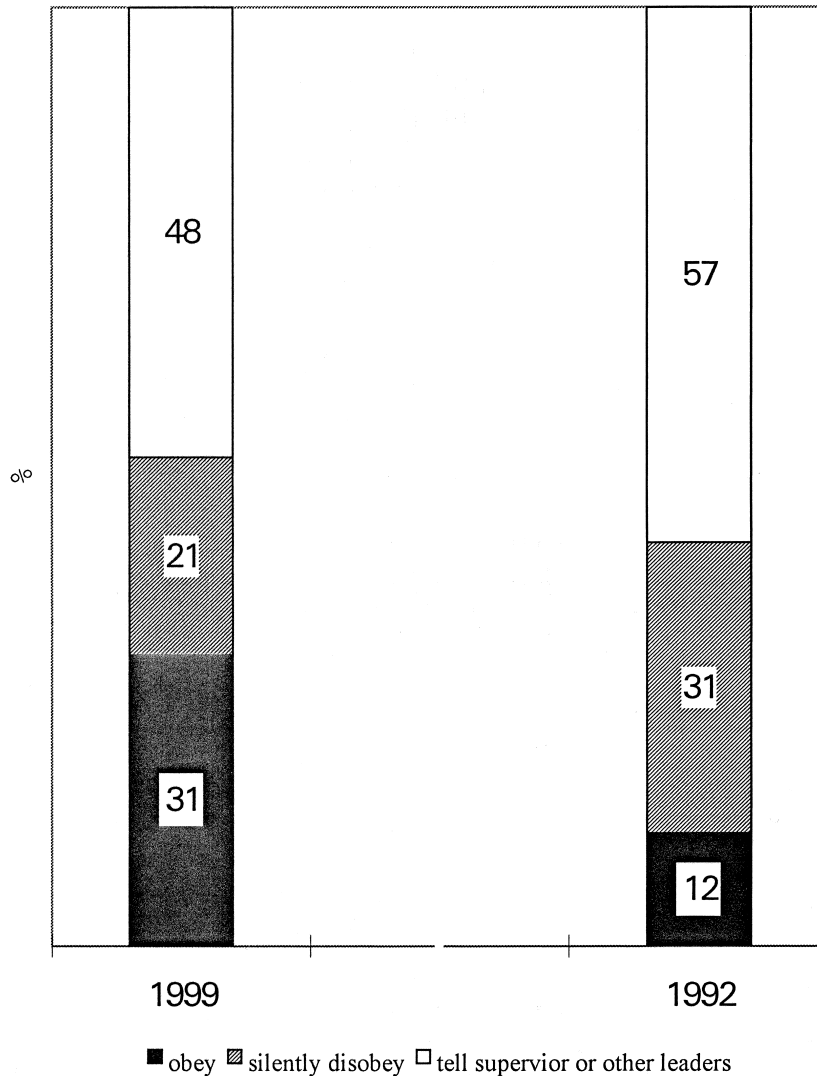
Sources:
  1992 China urban survey and 1999 six-city survey.

mism in some areas than in others. In two key areas, income and job opportunities, people felt worse off in 1999 than they did more than one decade earlier, reflecting the deepening of market reform in the post-Deng era. The decade with a difference also showed itself in the area of dissatisfaction toward the pace of reform policies, which reached a historic and ultimately volatile high in May 1989. Ten years on, dissatisfaction was higher even though the political situation was apparently far more stable.

The disaffected in 1999 included manual workers, retirees and the unemployed. This trend moreover will be likely to continue as China's entry into the World Trade Organization further polarizes the new "haves" and the state sector losers. With these potential social stresses in mind, certainly a good argument could be made for the crisis view of post-Deng China.

And yet it isn't that simple because political dissatisfaction did not seem to be growing parallel with economic dislocations. The findings show that political conservatism was on the rise, even compared with the period just after the Tiananmen Square crackdown when political repression was more blunt and obvious. By 1999, support for China's single-party structure was relatively high. Neither Western-style democracy nor indeed any kind of coherent ideology seemed to capture the respondents' aspirations. Most people, especially administrators and managers, seemed instead to want a pragmatic government capable of delivering economic results.[17] The rewards of compliance and patriotism, which came with those bottom line results, had apparently persuaded the leadership to stay the course of the reform programme begun by Deng, as long as they could keep public dissatisfaction under control.

In a marked departure from one decade earlier, in 1999 respondents showed they were wary of the West. They recognized American economic achievement but stopped short of applauding its culture. Respondents showed a low level of acceptance of Western culture, and views of America in particular registered as a threat. However, the more educated, the youngest generation and people in more developed regions were still more pro-West.

Finally, a further reassurance of political stability for the post-Deng leaders seemed to be the declining feeling of political efficacy. Chinese urban residents showed not only relatively strong support for the current political system and a rising sense of nationalism, but also an unwillingness to challenge the authorities, at least not through institutional channels such as the workplace.

However, lack of political efficacy did not necessarily mean public satisfaction. Public anger with the negative consequences of the accelerated market reform could be temporarily shifted away by the NATO bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade and by the 50th anniversary celebration. Another possibility was that declining citizen efficacy indicated even more frustration and disillusion with the government's inability to respond to social problems. Disappointed with solving problems through normal institutional channels, demonstration and protest could become their only options.

Therefore, the picture had both a dark side and a bright side. The dark side depicted China in crisis. In this view the crisis was caused by pushing reform too fast for people to adapt, the Communist Party firmly

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17. For example, when asked about the criteria for a good government, the concern was more about economic growth (48%), efficiency (35%), clean government (34%) and rule of law (21%). Political transparency (15%), democratic elections (11%), individual freedom (7%), and a coherent ideology (4%) were less important.

clamped down on free political expression, and bottom-up public participation in the political process was discouraged. This heavy-handed control mixed with negative reactions to economic change would soon backfire and be transformed into serious political challenges to the current regime.

The study's findings, though, also revealed a positive side. The post-Deng leaders had shown their ability to deepen the reforms in some sectors, using nationalism as an appeal as they pushed through unprecedented harsh market reforms while putting on the brakes in certain areas in order to limit the threat of social upheaval. Unlike in 1989 when the leaders were split in their approach to political reform, the post-Deng leaders had been for the most part publicly consistent in emphasizing the importance of maintaining political stability in order to realize further economic growth.[18] The politically conservative urban population with a low sense of their own impact on government and a strong sense of nationalism provided a more favourable environment for the current leadership to continue market reforms.

Appendix: **Variables in Multivariate Analyses**

Variable	Mean	Standard deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Political conservatism	4.78e-11	.8046312	− 2.447379	2.333837
Reform too fast	.3021978	.4593367	0	1
Reform satisfaction	1.44e-09	.6841652	− 1.590335	2.304489
Political efficacy	− 1.34e-09	.691858	− 1.545282	2.068804
U.S. as pol. model	.2324176	.3761397	0	1
China as pol. model	.2582418	.4093792	0	1
U.S. as eco. model	.4265568	.429833	0	1
China as eco. model	.1820513	.3543083	0	1
Best ideology for China's economy:				
Marxism-Leninism	2.49e-09	.8581761	− 2.827796	.9040155
Maoism	− 3.51e-09	.837484	− 3.337588	.7490411
Dengism	− 3.65e-09	.8304926	− 4.298801	.6166684
Chinese culture	− 1.03e-08	.7494627	− 3.214909	.9046693
Western culture	− 6.16e-09	.7725336	− 1.980966	1.46937
Party member	.171978	.3774651	0	1
Family income	5.479592	1.710535	1	11
Female	.5021978	.5001326	0	1
Education (year)	10.23846	3.561947	0	19

18. Bruce Gilley, *Tiger on the Brink: Jiang Zemin and China's New Elite* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

Appendix: *Continued*

Variable	Mean	Standard deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Year turned 20:				
before 1949	.0467033	.2110606	0	1
1949–65	.2115385	.4085115	0	1
1966–76	.2505495	.4334486	0	1
1977–84	.2395604	.4269325	0	1
post-1984	.2516484	.4340795	0	1
Professional	.0373626	.1897009	0	1
Administrator/manager	.039011	.1936743	0	1
Clerk	.089011	.2848379	0	1
Sales/service	.0521978	.2224868	0	1
Private	.0192308	.1373729	0	1
Manual	.2093407	.4069498	0	1
Unemployed	.1296703	.3360327	0	1
Retired	.2774725	.4478747	0	1
None_other	.1505495	.3577074	0	1
Guangzhou	.167033	.3731078	0	1
Xi'an	.1598901	.3666048	0	1
Wuhan	.1681319	.3740861	0	1
Chongqing	.167033	.3731078	0	1
Shenyang	.1675824	.3735977	0	1
Shanghai	.1703297	.3760255	0	1

N = 1820
Source:
  1999 six-city survey.