

The Chinese Political Environment and Public Opinion

This book is about public opinion and political behavior in China. One of its goals is to examine China's cultural and political tradition and its role in shaping public values and behavior. Another goal is to discuss the impact of market reform and economic growth on public opinion and political behavior. The final goal is to show the role of China's political system in shaping democratic values and mass political participation. This chapter will describe the cultural, ideological, economic, and political environments in which the case studies in the following chapters are embedded.

Political Tradition

As one of the world's oldest continuous political systems, China created an extremely advanced political culture, one that has guaranteed political

Confucianism

Confucius (551–479 B.C.) was one of the most influential philosophers in the Chinese political tradition. Although few Chinese today would claim to be Confucian, his thinking, recorded in the *Analects*, serves as a guide to Chinese political culture.

Confucius believed in the importance of a well-structured society and in standardizing relationships within that society. Forming the social structure are five types of relationships: between rulers and subjects, between parents and children, between husband and wife, between elder and younger brothers, and between friends. Each individual, regardless of rank, must fulfill his or her responsibilities within these relationships. The Confucian code of conduct includes loyalty (*zhong*), filial piety (*xiao*), benevolence (*ren*), righteousness and sacrifice (*yi*), ritual (*li*), and virtue (*de*). Loyalty assures the people will support the ruler even during difficult times and provides the ruler with political stability and legitimacy. Filial piety means that taking care of elderly parents is everyone's inescapable social responsibility. The Communist party promoted different versions of this concept in order to assure social welfare for the elderly. Benevolence encourages sympathy for each other and, more important, the ruler's awareness of the needs of the people. Righteous sacrifice entails a sense of justice and self-sacrifice. It encourages helping one's friends by self-sacrifice, protecting the interest of the larger group by sacrificing one's family interest, and risking one's life in order to overthrow unjust rulers. Ritual is to be used as a means to preserve and spread established values and moral principles. Finally, virtue is important in restoring the natural order linking people with the rest of the universe that operates on moral principles. Confucius believed that humans are endowed with virtues (a view diametrically opposed to the Judeo-Christian concept of original sin), and that only selfish desires and passions place people in conflict with those innate virtues. The ruler is responsible for restoring the moral order and therefore should be the most virtuous person of all. For further readings on Confucianism and Chinese political culture, see De Bary, Chan, and Watson 1960; Nathan 1973; Pye 1981; Walder 1986; Pye and Pye 1989.

control and continuity for centuries. At the center of this tradition is Confucianism (see text box). Centuries later, Mao Zedong's Communist Revolution intended to destroy the Confucian social hierarchy. Although few Chinese would claim to believe in Confucianism today, political relations between the ruler and the ruled under the Communist Party ironically often reflect Confucian values (Pye and Pye 1989; Perry 1994).

Confucian values can play a dual role in political change. On one hand, Confucianism can create several potential barriers to the development of civil society and democratic politics. The first likely barrier is group orientation. By emphasizing one's social responsibilities, individual interests become less important. Thus, the Confucian ideal of group interest can be used to justify overriding individual interest, an ideal that differs from the Western concept of the preservation of the individual's interest.

The second potential barrier to civil society is paternalistic politics (Waldner 1986). The state under the virtuous ruler acts on behalf of the people; individual rights are neither guaranteed nor protected. Also, government decision making is not generally supervised until a problem becomes a crisis. This authoritarian tradition is a barrier to democratic supervision of government.

The third barrier is the tendency to look for virtuous leaders while neglecting to build political institutions. The Maoist cult of personality in the 1960s and 1970s and Mao Zedong's efforts to destroy the party and government institutions are good examples of this tendency.

But not all political traditions are top down. Indeed, other characteristics of Confucianism seem to balance the relationship between state and society. Although Confucianism is a conservative ideology, owing to its emphasis on established social and political order and on parental and male authorities, it also has a rebellious side. This tendency is rooted in the bilateral moral contract between the ruler and his subjects (Wasserstrom and Perry 1994), in which the ruled offer their loyalty only if the ruler is morally upright (Hui 2004). This moral contract therefore assures the ruler's responsiveness to public need. One example of the ruler's fear of this rebellious aspect of Confucianism is the execution of Confucian scholars and the burning of their books by China's first emperor, Qin Shi Huang Di. The other example is Mao's attempts to purge intellectuals during the 1957 anti-rightist campaign, and again during the Cultural Revolution. Others have demonstrated

the similarities between Confucian ideas and the 1989 student demonstrations in Tiananmen Square (Esherick and Wasserstrom 1994).

Furthermore, the Confucian emphasis on one's social responsibilities reduces the need for the state to provide many types of social services, such as pensions, unemployment benefits, elder care, and so on. This is a great help for a communist government that is based on the idea of social equality but does not have enough resources to provide the population with necessary services. This is the reason behind the consistent government policy of encouraging one's family responsibilities in China.

Despite China's particular political history, Confucianism per se does not seem to be a barrier to democracy. After all, democracy seems to work well in other societies with Confucian influences, such as Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan. One goal of this volume is to examine whether tradition hinders or promotes democratic values and political change in China.

Official Ideologies

Confucianism explains only part of the Chinese political culture. Indeed, the Chinese Communist Party has never explicitly claimed to be a Confucian party. Rather, the party constitution states that Marxism, Leninism, and Mao Zedong Thought are the official party ideologies.

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels are probably the most familiar Western writers in China. They argued that human history is driven by class struggle between the working class and the ruling class (historic materialism). The former represents advanced knowledge and the desire to share political power, while the latter resists any change that may threaten the status quo. Under capitalism, the working class is exploited by property owners through unjust distribution of wealth. Property owners gain huge profits through the cheap labor of the working class (surplus value), while workers are only paid barely enough to sustain themselves. Marx and Engels called for a working-class revolution to overthrow the capitalist system and establish a communist society where the means of production are publicly owned and equality replaces social polarization (Marx and Engels 1998).

One obvious problem is the fact that such a revolution never took place in European industrial capitalist societies, as Marx had predicted it would. Instead, governments in these societies have proven capable of making com-

promises between labor and capital. But, according to Lenin, this gray area does not mean Marx's analysis of capitalism is wrong. Lenin argued that social revolution did not take place in industrial Europe because domestic capitalists instead expanded overseas and colonized the developing world. Corporations paid off the domestic working class through exploiting colonized peoples. For Lenin, economic imperialism was the last stage of capitalism. It was the responsibility of the working people in colonies to launch an international socialist revolution and overthrow imperialism (Lenin 1987).

Lenin's theories of imperialism and socialist revolution were realized in the 1917 Russian Revolution. It also inspired the Chinese Communist leader Mao Zedong, who was at that time searching for a viable path to China's modernization. Although Mao accepted basic Marxist and Leninist ideas about capitalism, imperialism, and social revolution, the Chinese Revolution differed from Marxism and Leninism in several ways. First, because of China's weak industrial base, the Chinese Revolution was mostly a rural revolution fought by peasants rather than a working-class revolution. Second, the Chinese Revolution was a populist movement in which Mao and his comrades directly appealed to the vast majority of the poor. This aspect of the Chinese Revolution was later reflected in Mao's anti-intellectual and anti-establishment tendencies in the 1957 anti-rightist campaign and in the 1958 Great Leap Forward. Populism discourages the role played by civil servants, technology, and intermediate institutions, such as elections and rule of law, necessary elements for a civil society. The third difference between Maoism and Marxism-Leninism was the concept of "continuing revolution under the proletarian dictatorship." Mao reminded China to continue its revolution even after the Communist victory. Without continuing revolution, he warned, socialism would be eroded by capitalist and feudal ideas. The Cultural Revolution (1966–76) was therefore Mao's last effort to keep China on the socialist track by fighting against bureaucratic control (see text box on the Cultural Revolution).

Today, Mao is officially described as having been 70% a great leader and only 30% wrong in his approach, as measured by the social, economic, and political costs of his radical campaigns. The post-Mao leaders have, by contrast, adapted a pragmatic approach to ideology. While still claiming Marxism, Leninism, and Maoism as its official ideologies, the party has quietly shifted its focus from ideological campaigns to encouraging economic development and implementing market mechanisms. This pragmatism is

The Cultural Revolution

The Great Proletariat Cultural Revolution took place in China between 1966 and 1976. People all over the country, in response to the call by Mao and other radical leaders, participated in overthrowing party and state bureaucratic organizations at all levels. Workers, peasants, soldiers, and radical college students (Red Guards) with working-class family backgrounds took control over political power. Intellectuals, managers, administrators, and professionals were criticized and sent to re-education camps. Radical egalitarian reforms were implemented in industrial management, agricultural production, wage distribution, education, medical care, family relations, and marriage. The Cultural Revolution ended in 1976 when Mao died and the radical leaders (the Gang of Four) were arrested. Few other events in human history involved so many people and affected so many aspects of their lives.

For Mao and his radical followers, the purpose of the Cultural Revolution was to resist interference and keep China on the right track of socialist revolution. Mao saw that his socialist regime was threatened by at least three sources. The first was feudalism (traditional forces), including beliefs in social hierarchy and obedience. The second was capitalism (a threat from the West), which included individualism, a money culture, exploitation, and so on. The third source was revisionism (the Soviet threat), which included Soviet-trained technocrats and their pro-Soviet and elitist attitude. Some argue that the purpose of the Cultural Revolution was not to achieve ideological purity, but instead to fulfill Mao's ambition of gaining personal power. Ideological concerns and individual power, however, cannot be easily separated.

The Cultural Revolution did not just happen due to Mao's political maneuvering. Indeed, such a large event could never have unfolded without the active and sincere support of ordinary Chinese people.

Many have described the Cultural Revolution as the "dark age" in modern Chinese history. The period was an economic disaster: Mao focused on political struggle and ignored economic growth. The re-education of professionals and administrators was also seen as a waste of talent. The Cultural Revolution was also a political disaster. It encouraged the worship of Mao and the development of a cult of personality. It

also bequeathed to China a mob mentality and a deep distrust of political order and political institutions. This would threaten not only China's future political stability, but also the transition from an authoritarian system based on personal rule to a democratic system in which institutions are more important than individual leaders. The Cultural Revolution left an ideological vacuum. It not only banned traditional Chinese values, Western liberal democratic ideas, and Soviet-style socialism, but also created disillusionment with socialism itself. Subsequent generations of Chinese were left with little to believe in. The Cultural Revolution was a cultural disaster as well. The Red Guards destroyed many historic landmarks, while many works of traditional art and literature were banned. Finally, the Cultural Revolution was a social disaster. Families were scattered around the country, as parents were sent to re-education camps and children were sent to factories, villages, or the military. Marriage and divorce were based on political considerations.

The official Chinese government view of the Cultural Revolution focuses on the negative results. Yet others remind us of some positive changes (Meisner 1986). One result of the Cultural Revolution, as expected, is that it did succeed in reducing the gap between the elite and the masses. The current leaders who experienced working in the fields do have a better understanding of what China is really like for the majority of people. Those workers, peasants, and soldiers who participated in management during the Cultural Revolution did gain political skills and develop a sense of political efficacy. Also, the status of women and overall levels of education and health care improved significantly in China during the Cultural Revolution. One has to realize that most of those who condemn the Cultural Revolution come from a small group of intellectual and political elites. Many ordinary people actually benefited from the Cultural Revolution.

For further reading on the Cultural Revolution, see Lee 1978; Meisner 1986; Wang 1995.

summarized in the “three representatives” of advanced productivity, advanced culture, and the common interests of the majority of people (*People's Daily*, Feb. 26, 2000). Advanced productivity requires economic growth, a market economy, and Western technology. In addition, Chinese tradition and culture, together with the advanced elements of foreign cultures, are ad-

vocated to fill the post-Mao ideological vacuum and to combat the social problems of capitalism. Presenting the “common interest” of the people is a way to maintain political legitimacy. In essence, the three representatives are similar to the reforms made by the emperor Guang Xu in 1898, when reformers advocated borrowing Western technology and management to promote economic development (*yong*) while keeping the traditional value system as a guide in life (*ti*). What is new about post-Mao pragmatism compared to the 1898 reforms is “representing the common interest of the people.” This slogan has its roots in the Maoist populism. Another goal of this book is to examine the role of official ideologies in shaping public opinion.

Central Planning and Market Reform

In the early 1950s, China introduced the Stalinist centrally planned system from the Soviet Union (Stalin 1961). This system dominated China’s economic life for three decades. Under it, the goal of production is to satisfy the needs of society, not to make a profit. Means of production are owned by the state. Production is administratively carried out according to need-based central plans, rather than according to profit-driven market price signals. Accordingly, prices are set by the state based on need, not on supply and demand. Income is also distributed based on need, not on meritocracy. Job security is guaranteed. Finally, the Stalinist model of economic development also emphasized a high investment rate and less consumer spending, the priority of the development of heavy industry (power, steel, infrastructure, etc.) over that of consumer industry, and the subsidizing of urban life in order to promote industrial growth, at the expense of farmers (see Lindblom 1977; Nove 1983, 1991).

As intended, central planning brought some benefits for China and other centrally planned economies (table 1.1). Partly due to the investment bias, planned economies sustained a higher rate of economic growth than market economies at parallel income levels. Planned economies also had a higher rate of labor force participation and labor productivity, particularly in the early years of socialism (Riskin 1987; Kornai 1992).

Yet in the later years of central planning, growth rates among more affluent planned economies were lower than those in market economies at comparable income levels, although China continued to grow rapidly. Labor

TABLE I. I
Economic performance: planned vs. market

	Planned	Market
Gross Domestic Investment (1978)		
Low income	36	21
Middle income	37 ^a	25
Industrialized	28	22
% employed as total population, 1985	47.1	35.7 (ind = 41.3 dev = 30.1)
Annual growth rate in GDP, mean (range)		
1970-78		
Low income	6.0	3.6 (-10/7.8)
Middle income	6.9 (0.4/10.6)	5.7 (-0.8/9.7)
Industrialized	5.4 (4.7/7.0)	3.2 (0.1/5.0)
1980-87		
Low income	10.0 (China)	2.0 (-2.6/6.6)
Middle income	1.6 ^a (1.5/1.7)	2.7 (-6.1/13.0)
Industrialized	2.4 ^b (1.4/3.8)	2.6 (0.9/5.8)
Labor productivity		
50-62	8.7 (China)	2.4 (USA)
74-78	1.8 (China)	1.4 (USA)
Capital productivity		
74-78	-4.5 (USSR)	- .7 (USA)

SOURCES: *Investment*: Excluding OPEC countries. Low-income market countries include much of Africa and South Asia (India, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh). Middle-income market countries include much of Latin America, Southeast Asia, and the Middle East. Industrialized countries include most of Western Europe, North America, Australia, and Japan. Low-income socialist data are for China alone. The middle-income socialist figure is based on Hungary alone. This is an unusual year in Hungary—other years were close to 30%. Industrialized socialist countries are Poland, the USSR, E. Germany, and Czechoslovakia. Source: World Bank, *World Development Report* 1980, 1989. China: *Zhongguo Guding Zhiban Touzi Tongji Ziliao* 1950-85.

Employment: Planned countries include the USSR (1984), E. Germany, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria, and China. Industrial markets are based on the U.S., W. Germany, the United Kingdom, France (1984), Italy, Canada, and Australia. Developing markets are Indonesia (1982), the Philippines, India (1981), Egypt (1983), Brazil, and Argentina. Source: International Labor Office, *Labor Statistics Yearbook*, 1986.

GDP growth: Weighted averages, excluding OPEC countries. For countries in each income group, see notes for "investment." Middle-income planned are Hungary and Yugoslavia. Industrial planned are estimates of the 1989 GNP growth rate in Romania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, and E. Germany. Sources: World Bank, *World Development Report*, 1980, 1989.

Productivity: (a) 1950-62 series from Bergson as cited in Ellman, *Socialist Planning*, 1979, 247-48; (b) 1960-78 series from Lane, *Soviet Economy and Society*, 1985, 53; (c) China from *Chinese Economic Yearbook*, 1982, VIII-20, for the time periods 1952-57, 1957-65, and 1965-81.

NOTE: Growth and productivity figures are from Parish 1989.

productivity in China dropped sharply from the golden age of socialism to the post-Mao disillusion. Capital productivity in the Soviet Union was significantly worse than in the United States in the second half of the 1970s.

Therefore, as seen in table 1.1, although central planning worked reasonably well in an early stage and at lower levels of economic development, further economic development revealed a number of problems inherent in

central planning, such as difficulty in determining need and in collecting adequate information to coordinate a complex modern economy. As industrialization took place, unavoidable mistakes in the rigid planning system created constant shortages in both production materials and consumer goods. Egalitarian income distribution provided no success indicator—a deficit that, as time passed by, amounted to little labor incentive. Finally, the inability to plan, decreased incentives for labor, and low consumption led to economic inefficiency (Friedman 1962; Lindblom 1977; Nove 1983, 1991; Riskin 1987; Kornai 1980, 1992).

Market reforms were designed to solve these problems. After an initial success in rural reform in the late 1970s and early 1980s, China launched a series of urban reforms beginning in the mid-1980s in order to further address economic inefficiency. These reform programs included the retreat of the state from planning and liberalizing economic activities such as the labor market. Performance-based labor contracts replaced life tenure. Property rights were diversified, which allowed private, joint stock, and foreign joint venture and public firms to coexist. The state also terminated subsidies for many firms that were taking losses, resulting in numerous bankruptcies. Companies were no longer required to provide welfare programs, so they could focus more efficiently on making profit.

Albeit with some momentary speedups and slowdowns, market reform in China has for the most part been an incremental process, compared with that in Russia and Central and Eastern Europe. One frequently asked question is to what extent the Chinese economy operates in a market environment. This is a multifaceted question and can be measured in many different ways. One way to measure a market environment is the percentage of companies that are public, private, or joint venture entities. Another measurement is the percentage of total industrial output by firms with these different types of ownership. Yet another indicator of marketization is the percentage of workers in different ownerships.

The degree of marketization depends on which of the above three measurements we use (fig. 1.1). In terms of number of firms, although the percentage of private firms dropped from three-quarters in 1997 to half in 2001, mostly owing to consolidation, it was still higher than the percentage of public and joint venture firms. Total output by the private sector increased from 18% in 1997 to almost 50% in 2001, while by contrast the share by public firms decreased from 64% in 1997 to only 34% in 2001. Therefore, a small

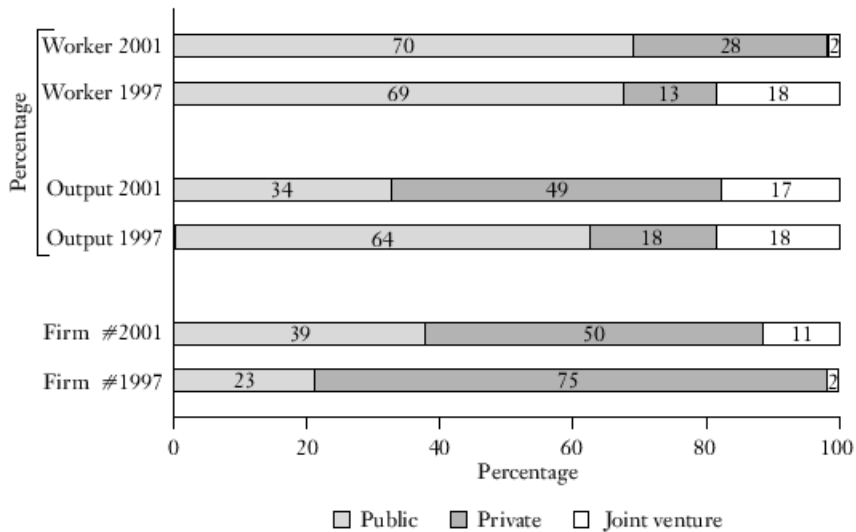


Figure 1.1 Ownership types in the Chinese economy, 1997 and 2001

SOURCES: *China Statistical Yearbook 1998*; *China Statistical Yearbook 2001*.

NOTE: For firm # and % output public = state firms + collective firms + state companies; private = (all companies - state companies) + private firms + other firms + Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Macau firms + other foreign firms; joint venture = stock firms + jointly run firms + stock companies. For # workers: public = state units + collective units + town/township firms; private = urban non-state jointly owned companies + urban private firms + private households + Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Macau firms + other foreign firms + town/township private firms + rural private households; joint venture = stock firms + jointly run firms + joint stock companies.

number of private firms, made larger by consolidation, were the biggest contributors to the Chinese economy. However, if the focus is on the percentage of workers in different types of ownership, the public sector obviously outweighs the rest. The public sector stayed at the same high level from 1997 to 2001, and at least two out of every three wage earners still worked in the public sector. So the overall picture is a mixed one, in which the oversized public sector and the market-driven private sector are equally important.

China's economy benefited from the above reforms. Growth rates were high (table 1.1), and per capita GDP grew from \$167 in 1980 to \$942 in 2002 (constant 1995 US\$). Adjusted for purchasing power parity, the real growth of per capita gross domestic product was more than tenfold, from \$440 in 1980 to \$4475 in 2002 (World Bank Group 2003). For many people, living standards, economic freedoms, and opportunities have greatly increased. Staying with a state-assigned job for life was no longer the only option for personal economic prosperity (Tang and Parish 2000).

Yet reform has created a number of problems, such as massive unemployment, income inequality, poverty, and a social safety net that had been torn apart by central planning. The third purpose of this book is to examine how the benefits and costs of market reforms shape public opinion and how the state is responding to public demands. Furthermore, two decades of urban reform have also provided researchers with an opportunity to examine how public opinion and state response have changed over time.

The Chinese Political System

According to the 1982 Constitution of the People's Republic of China (last amended in 1999), the current Chinese state was founded by the Communist Party of China, which is the leader of the Chinese people.¹ The implications of this statement are that the Communist Party is the sole party in power, and that no legitimate political opposition is allowed to challenge its leadership. Therefore, the political structure in China is a single-party state.

According to the party's 1982 constitution, last amended in 1999,² the party's National Congress usually meets every five years. Its delegates are indirectly elected from lower-level party committees. Normally, party committees at the work unit level and above employ full-time party officials. The party's National Congress elects the party's Central Discipline Inspection Commission and the Central Committee. The Central Committee has several hundred members, and its function is to elect the Political Bureau (Politburo), the Standing Committee of the Politburo, and the party's General Secretary. The Standing Committee nominates the members of the Secretariat (the operating body of the Politburo) and the party's Central Military Commission. The nominations are then endorsed by the Central Committee. The members of the Standing Committee represent the highest decision-making level in the party (fig. 1.2).

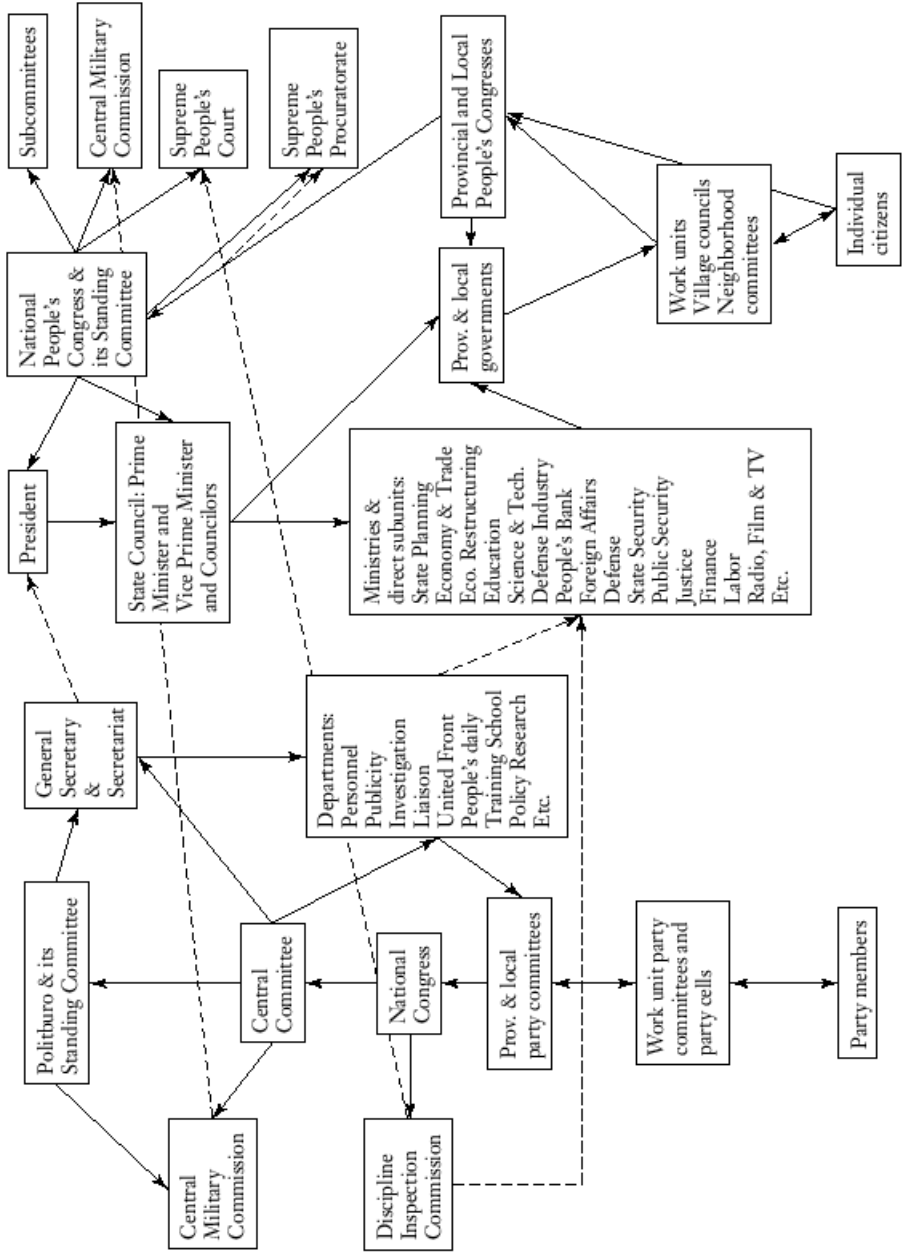
There were more than 66 million party members in 2002, making the Chinese Communist Party one of the largest political parties in the world

Figure 1.2 (opposite) The Chinese party-state, 2004

NOTE: Partially from the party and state constitutions (<http://www.china.org.cn/english/features/49109.htm>, accessed March 28, 2005; <http://www.china.org.cn/english/Political/25060.htm>, accessed March 28, 2005).

THE CHINESE COMMUNIST PARTY

THE CHINESE STATE



in terms of membership. But because of China's vast population, this also means that only about 5% of Chinese are party members, thus making it perhaps the smallest ruling political party in the world. Joining the party is not an easy task. One has to show political loyalty to the party over a test period that can last from several months to several years. Party membership is prestigious both in terms of material benefit and career development. However, with recent reforms providing opportunities for greater income and career advancement outside the state sector, party membership has in fact become less important as a means of career advancement.

Turning now to the state apparatus, the National People's Congress (NPC)—China's legislature—also meets every five years. As with the party's National Congress, its delegates are also indirectly elected by members of the local people's congresses. Unlike the United States, but like Great Britain prior to Tony Blair, the courts, including the Supreme Court, the middle-level courts, and the local courts, are subordinate to the legislature. The National People's Congress elects a Standing Committee which represents the NPC when it is not in session. There are nine legislative subcommittees under the NPC's Standing Committee, including the ethnic groups committee; the law committee; the finance and economics committee; the education, science, culture, and health committee; the foreign affairs committee; the overseas Chinese committee; the civil and judicial affairs committee; the environment and resources protection committee; and the agriculture and rural areas committee. According to the 1982 constitution, the president of the country is elected by the NPC for no more than two five-year terms. The NPC also elects the executive branch: the state council and the prime minister, who also cannot hold the post for more than two five-year terms. The prime minister and the state council control one of the world's largest bureaucratic machines, which employs over 11 million cadres.

Several characteristics of China's party-state system should be noted. First, although there have been experiments with local level elections, the highest-level leaders in both the party and the state are not directly elected by popular vote. The lack of free elections at the highest level is arguably the most important distinction between China's political system and a democratic one.

Second, the party exercises organizational and personnel control over the state apparatus. For example, the party's Central Military Commission also

carries the same title under the NPC. The president, the prime minister, and the chairman of the NPC's Standing Committee are all members of the Standing Committee of the Politburo—key state positions with party oversight. Although the party has in recent years retreated from certain state sectors, it still has direct control over key areas such as the nomination of the highest state leaders, the legislature, the military, the courts, and the media. Although it is true that in democratic societies political parties also influence the state apparatus, the unchallenged position of the Chinese Communist Party makes such a system authoritarian by nature.

A third feature of China's party-state system is that the party has firm control over the military, upholding Mao's belief that military strength is the foundation of political power. The importance of controlling the military is illustrated by the example of Deng Xiaoping, China's powerful leader who, following Mao's death, ensured that he became the chairman of the party's Central Military Commission even though he never held the highest position in the party or the state. He was only a vice premier and a member of the Politburo Standing Committee. Following in Deng's footsteps, Jiang Zemin let Hu Jintao take over the title of the party's general secretary during the party's Sixteenth National Congress in 2002, while Jiang himself remained as the chairman of the party's Central Military Commission. In 2004, after making sure that the military continued to show its loyalty to the party and its new leadership, Jiang finally resigned and passed party control over the military to Hu Jintao.

Finally, as illustrated by the organizational chart, delegates of local People's Congresses are elected through both work units and residential committees. Traditionally, the majority of people living in urban areas participated in elections through their work units. The socialist work units in China were quite different from workplaces in a country such as the United States. The Chinese workplace not only provided a work environment, but also carried out a number of other social and political functions, such as issuing marriage permits and organizing political study meetings and elections. There are roughly four types of work units in China: state owned, collectively owned (both urban and rural), private, and joint venture. The state and collective firms, which once dominated China's economy and controlled a significant part of the lives of workers, have become less important in recent years. In contrast, private and joint venture firms are now playing an

Election Laws

The 1979 election law, further revised in 1982 and 1986, amended the original 1953 legislation to extend the direct election of deputies upward to include the 2,757 People's Congresses at the county and urban district levels (see "Election Law" in Zhang 1992, 280). Currently, urban electoral districts are subdivided by work unit for those in large work units, and by neighborhood for the nonworking and those in small work units. Each electoral district is assigned a quota of deputies to be elected. The quota system explicitly favors the urban population, because per deputy the rural population must be four times larger than the urban population. Voters, then, elect deputies from their own work unit or neighborhood. This emphasis on work units and neighborhoods increases the chances that an urban voter would know his or her potential deputy.

Before the 1979 revision of the election law, people's deputies were elected with a fixed number of candidates and an open ballot. The people's deputies would then in turn elect higher-level officials and deputies under the same rule.

The 1979 revised election law replaced the policy of one candidate for one seat by a policy allowing up to twice as many candidates as seats in a direct election. Above the local level, there can be up to 50% more candidates than seats. In practice, this leads to the nomination of up to 50% more candidates who are not officially endorsed, while the government still controls the nomination of other candidates. If there are still too many candidates, pre-elections must be held. Candidates who win more than 50% of the total votes get elected. Candidates can be nominated by any organization of ten or more individuals. The secret ballot, optional under the 1953 law, is now mandatory, and campaigning on behalf of a candidate is legal. The regulation on the length of a term is not specified in the election law, but in a separate Organizational Law of Local People's Congress and Local Government, which was passed at the same National People's Congress meeting in 1986 where the election law was passed (Zhang 1992, 292). The term for the elected deputies is five years in large cities and three years in small cities without

districts. No limit is set for the total number of terms a deputy can serve. These elected local deputies in turn elect provincial and national People's Congress deputies according to similar rules. Government officials and judges at each level are also elected indirectly by the elected people's deputies at that level.

Several Web sites provide further readings on elections in China, such as China Elections and Governance (www.electionworld.org/election/china.htm [accessed March 23, 2005]); Elections around the World (www.electionworld.org/election/china.htm [accessed March 23, 2005]); and the Carter Center's China Village Election Project (www.cartercenter.org/peaceprograms/china.asp [accessed March 23, 2005]).

increasingly significant role in the economy, albeit generally without the same political and social control over the livelihoods of workers (see chap. 7).

Although China's political system lacks legitimacy in many ways, there have been some important changes in recent years. To begin with, perhaps the most meaningful and significant development in the post-Mao era has been the increasing importance of elections. Although the nomination process is still controlled from above, multi-candidacy and secret ballots now play a role, as witnessed in the elections of both the Central Committee and the Politburo since the Fourteenth National Congress in 1992. In some areas, local People's Congress elections and village council elections even permit free nominations (see text box on election laws).

Second, although decision making in the National People's Congress is still influenced by the party, the legislature has gained some degree of independence and autonomy. One example is the Legal Committee under the NPC, which has played a significant role in legislating and in limiting arbitrary interventions by the party.

Third, political and social diversity have been growing. At the highest level, since the death of Mao decision making is no longer in the hands of a single individual. Instead, members of the Politburo Standing Committee make decisions collectively. Furthermore, market reforms have been associated with a diversification of economic activities, so the state-controlled workplace has less influence over people's lives. A growing number of people are abandoning the traditional state-dependent socialist lifestyle, and the state can no longer ignore those voices that speak from outside the party-

state system. Consequently, there has been greater freedom of expression than there was under Mao.

Finally, leadership succession is another area where changes have taken place. In the history of the People's Republic since 1949, political power transition has been anything but predictable and transparent. Leaders either died on the job or were expelled from their posts. The Sixteenth Party Congress in 2002 was the first time that an incumbent leader retired alive in a smooth transition and that the successor (Hu Jintao) was reasonably predictable. After becoming the Secretary General of the Communist Party in 2002, Hu Jintao also replaced Jiang Zemin and became the President of the People's Republic of China in 2003, the Chairman of the Party's Central Military Commission in 2004, and the Chairman of the Central Military Commission under the National People's Congress in 2005. These steps symbolized the completion of a relatively smooth power transition from Jiang Zemin to Hu Jintao (fig. 1.3).

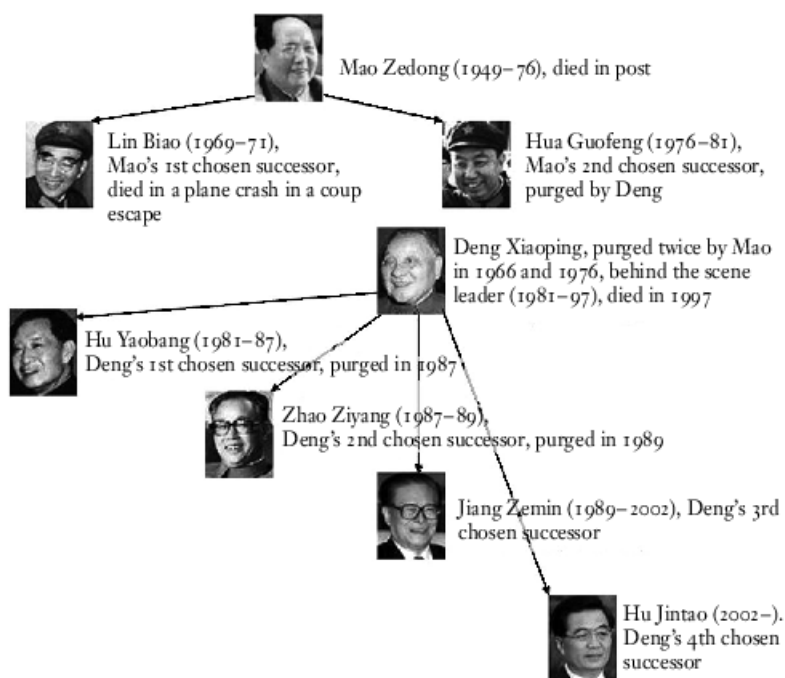


Figure 1.3 Leadership transition in China, 1949–2002

Theories of Communist Politics

Although during the height of the cold war totalitarianism was the model most frequently used to describe communist politics, scholars have since developed several more realistic and practical theories to describe a communist political system. Similarly, in China, the party is not so much a top-down monolith as it is a main player in a political field that does challenge it. One view describes such a system as bureaucratic politics. In this view, the party's absolute authority is challenged by specialized bureaucratic organizations in a modern society. The technocrats can effectively bargain with the party by withholding crucial information for decision making. As a result of bureaucratic bargaining, the party becomes a mediator between competing bureaucratic interests (Hough 1969, 1976, 1977; Lieberthal and Oksenberg 1988; Lieberthal 1995).

Bureaucratic politics is a useful theory for predicting policy change under central planning. Its emphasis on bureaucratic organizations and their functions and interactions made important contributions to understanding the internal process of Chinese politics. As market reform continues, many bureaucratic functions have been marketized or socialized, such as medical care, pension funds, and housing. There is an additional need to look at how these new social and economic interests outside the bureaucratic system are transformed into political interests.

Corporatism is another useful concept in comparative politics for describing various top-down societies, including China. Generally speaking, there are three kinds of corporatism: societal corporatism, which is common in European democracies; plural corporatism, which is represented by the United States; and state corporatism, which is often used to describe single-party systems. According to the societal corporatist model, the state serves as the leader or mediator in a hierarchically organized and functionally differentiated society. Domestic decision making is an outcome of behind-closed-doors negotiations between the government and the "peak associations," such as those representing labor and capital. In return, the peak associations and their members offer political compliance with the government. This form of corporatism differs from American-style plural corporatism, where a diverse range of self-initiated interest groups also compete to influence policy making. Societal corporatism also differs from state corporatism with

monolithic party control, such as is found in China. Under state corporatism, the lack of multiparty competition prevents the peak associations from gaining influence by supporting different political parties. Interest articulation can take place only within the narrow range recognized by the ruling party.³

The corporatist model has the advantage of including a broader range of political systems. Its use of peak associations goes beyond bureaucratic organizations and includes other types of social groups. One reason to expand the model is to study how interests are articulated under state corporatism by describing the interaction between the state and newly emerging social interests. Another reason to develop the corporatist theory is to study the mechanisms and conditions of the transition from state corporatism to societal and plural corporatism. Thus, the fourth goal of this book is to depict how public opinion is shaped in China's political institutions and how it affects further institutional change.

Articulation of Public Opinion

Before we address the interaction between public opinion and the political system in China, we need to briefly review the existing studies in the English-language literature on the role of public opinion in policy making and on the remaining tasks in public opinion research.

Every citizen has his or her private opinion. But until private opinions can influence policy making, they are of little interest for social science research (Stimson 1998). Much research has been devoted to show through survey data what private citizens think about various policy issues in post-socialist societies (i.e., Wyman 1997; Miller, White, and Heywood 1998) and whether there is a correlation between private opinion and policy outcome. For example, studies of public opinion in democratic countries have found a strong relationship between mass public policy preferences and policy outcome (Burnstein 1985; Eichenberg 1989; Jasper 1990; Risse-Kappen 1991; Jacobs 1993). Knowing what people think, however, provides few clues to whether they can influence policy making. The correlation between private opinion and policy outcome does not show causality between the two, nor does such correlation describe the exact mechanisms through which private

opinion can influence policy making. Given these problems, researchers have called for studying the degree of responsiveness to popular opinion in a political system and the specific institutions and processes through which private opinion influences policy making (Jacobs and Shapiro 1994; Page 1994; Stimson, MacKuen, and Erikson 1994). Studying responsiveness to popular opinion is also helpful in bridging the gap between public opinion research and institutional studies and emphasizes the importance of the political elite and institutions (March and Olsen 1989, 1994; Crawford and Lijphart 1997).

Researchers have also been interested in whether public opinion can be manipulated. Page and Shapiro (1992) found that private citizens in the United States were rational actors who thought independently when choosing their policy preferences—preferences that have remained fairly stable and played an important role in American foreign and domestic policy making. In contrast to Page and Shapiro, Mayer (1992), using the General Social Survey data from 1960 to 1988, found that American public opinion in fact changed significantly, responding partly to external events (i.e., the Vietnam War), partly to the media portrayal of such events, and partly to education and generational change.

Others also found that political elites in liberal democracies can manipulate public opinion (Iyengar and Kinder 1987; Margolis and Mauser 1989; Iyengar 1991; Bartels 1993; McChesney and Nichols 2002; Goldberg 2002, 2003). According to this view, although opinion and policy are strongly linked in a democratic system, the causality is not always limited to policy that affects opinion. Public opinion can itself be manipulated and even manufactured. Therefore, there seem to be different schools of thought about whether public opinion can influence policy making unilaterally or is also itself influenced by the process of political mobilization.

The reality appears to be more multidirectional, so perhaps an interactive relationship makes more sense. Mass opinion is formulated by political socialization—itself a filter of agents such as the government, media, political parties, and interest groups of the society's dominant political and economic forces. All of these variously condition citizens in the political system. Because of the institutional arrangement of a democratic society, citizens, in turn, have the opportunity to voice their specific policy preferences through elections and other institutional and non-institutional channels. Just as political mobilization can be internalized and then transformed into auton-

mous political participation (Huntington and Nelson 1976), mobilized opinions can also become more individualized and hence transform into autonomous public policy choices. This is true even in a democratic system. What is important for public opinion research, however, is to state clearly the causal relationship between opinion and policy in a given study, at a given time, and on a specific policy issue, while considering the interaction between the two. It is also important to note that if private opinion in a democratic society could be partly the result of internalized political socialization, it is equally possible that private opinion could be developed in a non-democratic society sustained by political mobilization.

In a single-party authoritarian system, the lack of legitimate political competition guarantees the continued rule by the incumbent party and does not require any meaningful responsiveness to popular opinion. In China during the Mao era, the Communist Party monopolized the channels of communication and political mobilization and made decisions based on its claim of representing the interest of the vast majority of society. No difference of opinion was tolerated. In this way China was similar to the Soviet Union under Stalin, when the Communist Party laid exclusive claim to the truth and private citizens were ignorant and fearful. According to this view, public opinion simply made no impact on decision making (Crespi 1997; Wyman 1997).

In the post-Mao era, some evidence showed that the leadership continued to silence and manipulate mass opinion. Nearly a decade after the violent crackdown on the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests (see text box), the post-Deng leaders banned the religious movement known as Falun Gong (see text box), jailed unregistered Catholic priests, and put down any attempt to establish independent labor unions and opposition parties. All these were movements that arose to fill a vacuum left by the decline of the official Marxist and Leninist ideology. To counter these competing belief systems, nationalism was cultivated to provide a common foundation for public consent (Ching 1996).

Other evidence, however, showed that the post-Mao and post-Deng leaders pursued public opinion with consistency, even if policy implementation appeared authoritarian. They systematically collected popular opinion and feedback on previous policies through government policy research offices at all levels (Ketizu 2001). The National People's Congress (the lower house)

The 1989 Tiananmen Square Protests

The most serious open conflict between the Chinese government and the people since the 1949 revolution took place in the spring of 1989. On April 15, the death of the former party general secretary Hu Yaobang, a liberal leader who had been dismissed because he refused to take tough measures against student unrest a couple of years earlier, triggered memorial demonstrations by college students in Beijing, Tianjin, and other cities. Students demanding democracy, freedom, and faster political reform were soon joined by urban residents who were deeply unhappy with the consequences of rapid marketization and the resulting inflation, job insecurity, and corruption. Urban residents, ironically, demanded slower economic reform. The protesters ignored the government's demand on April 20 to end the demonstrations and instead called for the resignations of then-premier Li Peng and other leaders. On May 4, in memory of the May 4 movement seventy years earlier, a new wave of demonstrations took place and continued during Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev's visit later that month. The Chinese government was acutely embarrassed that these student protests went on during a state visit, and on May 20, the government declared martial law. Troops were mobilized to surround the capital and to prepare to enter the city. Finally, on June 3 and 4, soldiers of the People's Liberation Army, on the orders of Deng Xiaoping, opened fire on demonstrators and took over Tiananmen Square, where students and labor protesters had their headquarters and where they had organized hunger strikes. Following the suppression, the government conducted numerous arrests and trials and strictly controlled foreign and Chinese media. Although similar protests had been quelled by governments elsewhere (for instance, in London in 1972, where a dozen protesters were shot to death; and at Kent State University in 1970, where four student demonstrators were shot to death; and in Kwangju, South Korea, in 1980, where there was a massacre), the number of fatalities involved (reportedly in the hundreds) caused widespread international condemnation of the Chinese government.

. . .

Cama Hinton's documentary *Gate of Heavenly Peace* is a good visual display of the event (<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/gate> [accessed March 23, 2005]). More information can also be found at the Tiananmen Web site, <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB16> (accessed March 23, 2005; *Tiananmen Square, 1989: The Declassified History*, National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book no. 16).

and the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (the upper house) played more important roles in representing different interests in legislation (O'Brien 1990). The Chinese media openly discussed their own role in reflecting mass opinion and supervising government policy and how it should be implemented. The government used public opinion polls to assist policy making in the area of economic reform (Rosen 1989, 1991). It also responded to rising nationalism in its foreign policy making (Fewsmith and Rosen 2001; Gries 2004a, 2004b). For some groups, a greater freedom of expression is allowed, such as in environment and consumer affairs (Lo and Leung 2000). In 1997 and 1998, China signed the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. These steps symbolized China's willingness to engage in the discussion of human rights with the international community (see text box on the human rights debate).

There are several possible reasons post-Mao leaders cared about public opinion even though democratic institutions were seriously underdeveloped. One is that the party's very legitimacy was challenged by the increasing number of protests by rural and urban residents owing to tax increases, unemployment, worsening work conditions, delays in salary payment, and so on. This implicit challenge existed regardless of the fact that there was no viable political opposition. It was therefore a matter of survival instinct for the party to pay attention to popular opinion.

Second, public opinion was a useful weapon in policy debate. Following a political tradition that was recorded in the late Qing dynasty in the nineteenth century (Judge 1994), politicians in contemporary China explored public opinion to formulate their own policy agenda. For example, during the 1989 urban protests, reform-minded leaders frequently cited public opinion in top-level political meetings (L. Zhang 2001). After the bombing of the

Falun Gong

In 1992 Li Hongzhi, a forty-year-old former government official now living in New York, established a sect known as the Falun Gong. It teaches a type of *qi gong* (cultivation of vital energy) based on a set of Taoist and Buddhist principles and meditations to cultivate the *falun* (wheel of law), located in the lower abdomen. The *falun* rotates constantly according to the energy in the universe and represents truth, compassion, and forbearance. The sect believes that the more energy the *falun* draws from the universe, the more unhealthy elements it draws out of the body.

By 1999 Falun Gong had attracted millions of followers in China. In April 1999 Falun Gong practitioners protested a derogatory article about the sect that had been published by a magazine for teenagers in Tianjin. Several thousand protestors surrounded the magazine's editorial building. Riot police dispersed the protesters and arrested forty-five demonstrators. Two days later, on April 24, more than 10,000 Falun Gong practitioners responded to the earlier crackdown by surrounding Zhongnanhai, the central government's compound in Beijing. On July 22 the Chinese government officially banned Falun Gong and arrested some of its leaders. For months following the ban, the government waged a campaign to eradicate Falun Gong, but its popularity continued to grow outside of China. The official media criticized its teaching, categorized it as a cult, and reported that individuals cut open their stomachs to find the wheel of law or committed suicide to find happiness. It also blocked Internet access from China to all Falun Gong-related Web sites.

Falun Gong initially gained popularity due to the side effects of market reforms, a process that had created both winners and losers. While much of the media spotlight focused on the winners in these reforms, dissatisfaction was rapidly growing among those who benefited from the old system but were now falling behind. These included state workers, party functionaries, low- and mid-level cadres, middle-aged people who lacked competitive skills, and a vast number of retirees living on pensions. These people were looking for hope, peace, and a spiritual outlet

. . .

in the vacuum left when Deng Xiaoping downplayed ideology in order to consolidate the party's leadership during market reform. This left communism a hollow shell, and the Falun Gong was the perfect substitute. Its theory of the universe, society, and the individual, coupled with a well-developed organization, provided a sense of community and comradeship that appealed to many in uncertain times.

Further readings can be found at <http://www.apologeticsindex.org/fo2.html> (accessed March 23, 2005); Schechter 2000; Chan 2004.

Chinese embassy in Belgrade, Chinese leaders exploited nationalistic popular sentiment in its campaign against "American aggression." Perhaps leaders recognized that only by appealing to public sentiment could they ensure that the direction of protests remained within a controllable sphere of common interests.⁴

Furthermore, even in a single-party bureaucratic system, managing a modern economy requires specialized knowledge and extensive coordination and compromise between different bureaucratic and social interests (Hough 1976, 1977; Lieberthal 1995). Popular opinion therefore had to be taken into consideration in policy making because some of those with different opinions also possessed the specialized knowledge decision makers needed.

The final reason Chinese leaders cared about public opinion was that local elections had become a more meaningful channel for voicing public opinion (see text box on election laws). After electoral reforms, officials could only serve a fixed term and then had to face reelection. Reforms included multicandidacy (more candidates were required than the actual number of people to be elected) and secret ballot (the voter's identity could no longer be revealed by the ballot). These limited but significant freedoms in voters' choices made politicians pay more attention to voters' preferences.

This book will focus on the formation of public opinion and the articulation of interest in China's single-party system, which has inherited a paternalistic political tradition and a Marxist ideology. This system differs from totalitarianism in its intensified bureaucratic competition and marketization. In a totalitarian society, the extent to which social interests can be tolerated is dictated by the supreme leader and coordinated by a small group of sub-leaders at the top. As a result, the range of tolerated interests and the channels for expressing public opinion are both narrow. Such a structure of

The Human Rights Debate

There are two commonly accepted concepts of what constitutes human rights. The first is socioeconomic rights, such as food, shelter, clothing, safety, education, medical care, and so on. The second includes civil rights, such as the right to vote and to change jobs, and the freedom of speech, assembly, and religion. There is international pressure, led by the United States, on China to treat both concepts of human rights as equally important. The Chinese government argues that socioeconomic rights are the foundation of civil rights. In a country where per capita GDP is less than 5% of that in the United States, China maintains that the most important human right is for everyone to have enough to eat. Economic growth, goes the argument, will improve socioeconomic conditions. Therefore, any attempt to impede economic development should be limited, including any effort to challenge the leadership of the current regime. In recent years, China has shown some willingness to accept discussion of its civil human rights conditions in international affairs, although it traditionally maintains that human rights is a domestic affair and that no other country should interfere.

The human rights debate is best illustrated by the ongoing efforts on the part of both the United States and the Chinese governments to criticize each other's human rights violations. For example, the annual U.S. Country Reports on Human Rights Practices criticizes China for a long list of human rights violations, such as the death penalty, disappearances, torture, arbitrary arrests, the denial of fair trial, and interference with privacy. The report routinely condemns China for its lack of civil liberties, including freedom of speech, assembly, religion, and movement, and the right to select the government. It also criticizes China for its lack of government concern for human rights and its discrimination based on race, sex, disability, language, and social status. The report also cites other examples of human rights violations in China, such as forced labor, child labor, and unacceptable working conditions.

China responds each year by issuing its own white paper on human rights, which focuses on violations in the United States, such as the lack of safeguards for life and personal safety, serious rights violations by law

. . .

enforcement departments, the plight of the poor, difficult conditions for women and children, deep-rooted racial discrimination, and wanton infringement of the rights of other countries.

A final note: the issue of human rights is often used as a political weapon by different interest groups in the United States. For example, labor organizations condemn China's lack of human rights so that fewer factories will be moved to China and fewer American jobs will be lost. The business community, on the other hand, downplays the human rights problem in China so that greater profits can be made by using cheaper workers.

The U.S. State Department's Human Rights Reports on China from 1999 to 2004 can be found at www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt (accessed April 1, 2005). The Chinese White Papers on the Human Rights Violations in the United States can be found at the following Web sites (accessed April 1, 2005): http://english.people.com.cn/200203/11/eng20020311_91880.shtml (2001), http://english.people.com.cn/200304/03/eng20030403_114520.shtml (2002), http://english.people.com.cn/200403/01/eng20040301_136190.shtml (2003), http://english.people.com.cn/200503/03/eng20050303_175406.html (2004).

interest articulation looks something like a pencil, with the sharpened tip as the supreme leader, the small sloped portion as the top aids, and the long and narrow body as the channel for expressing opinions and the range of permitted social interests. On the contrary, in a pluralistic society, the range of interests and the channels for expressing self-interest are both wide at the societal level. The top of such a system has multiple centers of power. At least in theory, most opinions can be heard through multiple channels that narrow only slightly as they reach the top. This system roughly resembles a lampshade, with a wide bottom and a slightly narrowed top. In an authoritarian market society, the top of the power center is slightly flattened due to the replacement of the supreme leader by the small group of top leaders, while the channel of interest articulation at the top remains narrow. Yet the range of societal interests at the bottom is much broader than in totalitarianism, making such a system look roughly like an upside-down funnel. This study will examine how the increased diversity of social interests affects

public opinion and how public opinion in turn interacts with the political system.

This study is more about mass political attitude and behavior and less about institutional change. Although attitude and behavior are the direct results of political institutions, they are also important in interacting with and changing political institutions. Studies of democracy emphasize the importance not only of building democratic institutions, but also of creating a civil society where citizens not only possess the right to vote, as well as a sense of efficacy and the ability to influence political decision making from below (Almond and Verba 1963). Democratic values and individual political participation are thus the soil for planting democratic institutions.

Chapter Outline

The remaining chapters are case studies of public opinion and its impact on individual political behavior. Chapter 2 is on collecting public opinion. Since most of the information in this book will be drawn from eleven Chinese public opinion surveys and the World Values Survey (see appendix A), this chapter discusses the process of conducting public opinion surveys in China, including political barriers, sampling, questionnaire design, and data analysis. Chapter 3 examines regime support and approval rating and their sources by using public opinion polls covering the changes that occurred from the late 1980s to the late 1990s. Chapter 4 discusses media control and its role in shaping public opinion. The focus of this chapter is on whether the media enhance political control. Chapter 5 addresses the intriguing evidence that interpersonal trust is significantly higher in China than in democratic societies. It defines the scope of that trust and explains why it does not lead to democracy in China by comparing it with survey data from other countries. Chapter 6 describes the channels for voicing opinion and government responsiveness to public opinion in urban China. Changes from the early 1990s to the late 1990s are also examined. Chapter 7 discusses workplace politics, including the changing Chinese work environment, labor market development, changing labor-management relations, the evolving role of official labor unions, and the impact of this changing work environment on individual political behavior and attitude. Chapter 8 assesses the role of intel-

lectuals in political reform by comparing party intellectuals and non-party intellectuals with the public. Chapter 9 returns to the questions developed in chapter 1, summarizing the findings in the previous chapters, reevaluating the impact of culture, ideology, and economic and political institutions on the formation of public opinion, and assessing the role of public opinion in policy making in an authoritarian state.