
中国政治の意思決定における社会的勢力の含意 (2002-2012): 制度改革、行動変容、政策調整を中心に

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January, 2016
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Abstract

[Key Words]: China, societal forces, institutional transformation, behavioral change, policy adjustment

Ever since the Reform and the Opening-up, China has undergone fundamental transformations with its decision-making discourse, structure and process. One of the major changes is the increasing involvement of societal forces. Three-layer development has made societal involvement and participation in decision-making possible: at global level, internationalization of domestic politics has kept China’s political decision-making under intensive international scrutiny, the CCP is reluctant to use repressive means to settle challenges from the society; at party-state level, CCP’s identity has evolved from a proletarian party through the three representatives to rejuvenator of the Chinese nation; economic growth, better governance and social participation have become new sources of legitimacy. Generation change and factional politics not only created sort of check and balance among top leadership but also brought greater social autonomy; at society level, the burgeoning middle class and their growing political consciousness have created a “critical realm” for strong societal forces as well as a limited “public sphere” typical for Western civil society.

Institution, government behavior and policy are three criterions to evaluate a political process. This research examines how societal forces interact with the government during six major public incidents and evaluate in what form and under what conditions they can bring institutional, behavioral or policy changes. The study is based on the author’s close documentary studies, participatory observations, and in-depth interviews on six public incidents between 2002 and 2012: the Sun Zhigang case where rational and decentralized involvement of mass media, professionals, social activists and scholars forced the government to abolish the Custody and Repatriation system (2003); the Bobai County family planning protests where limited societal involvement, in a centralized yet irrational manner, failed to lead to institutional changes to the family planning policy (2007); the Xiamen PX protest where concerned middle-class dwellers, supported by new media scholars, professionals and social activists interacted with the Xiamen government in a centralized and rational and even constructive manner, and changed the behavior of Xiamen
government from irresponsible to more responsive, from repressive to democratic, and from block-box to democratic decision-making. Societal engagement also forced the PX program out of Xiamen (2007); the Qian Yunhui case where intensive involvement of rural villagers (stakeholders), new media, professionals, scholars, and social activists, in a rational yet decentralized manner, failed to figure out the truth of the suspicious death of a village headman who had organized villagers to protest against the local government’s land seizure while the government’s behavior remained repressive, arbitrary and uncooperative (2010); the Wukan land protest where protracted and resolute protest for Wukan villagers, supported by new media and international media, NGOs and social activists, and in a centralized and rational manner with controllable confrontation, successfully forced local and provincial government to change their policy on social organizations, village autonomy, and market-oriented land policy, and ensured and supervised election (2011); and the Dalian PX protest of middle-class dwellers, supported by traditional, new and international media, social activist and scholars, in a rational and centralized manner, urged the government to undertake to suspend production and relocate the PX program, while the government failed to fulfill its commitment four years after the decision of relocation (2011).

The six cases presented the general picture of China’s ubiquitous social conflicts and features of China’s societal involvement. They took place in China’s under-developed inland countryside of Bobai in Guangxi province, middle-class city of Xiamen and Dalian, rural village of Wukan and Zhaiqiao (Qian Yunhui) in coastal Zhejiang and Guangdong provinces, as well as Guangzhou metropolis. The cases partially identified the relationship between economical development and active political participation. In terms of policy issues, the six cases respectively covered social injustice, environmental crisis and economical-political rights repression, which are exactly the three major sources of China’s social conflicts. Societal involvement was successful in three of the six cases (Sun Zhigang case, Xiamen PX protest and Wukan land protest), while in three other cases unsuccessful. The six cases, in a linear order of social, environmental, economical and political aspects, revealed the ever-deepening involvement and expanding role of China’s societal forces.

This research examines the components of societal forces that are potentially reshaping the decision-making process. Findings are that mass media and public opinion, social activists, professionals, and scholars had emerged as the most influential societal forces. NGOs have a minor and insignificant role. Among these societal forces, media and public opinion proved to be vital: before the news was released via media, early
involvement by stallholders was hardly fruitful. In the three successful cases (the Sun Zhigang’s case, the Xiamen PX protest and Wukan land protest), media involved intensively. Dalian PX protest was successful at first because of media disclosure. Bobai family planning protest failed partially because of lack of media exposure, including new media. Reports and comments by central media is a major benchmark for the solvation of incidents, positive exposure by central media can bring good (Sun Zhigang case) or bad effect (Qian Yunhui case). New Media, such as blogs, BBS, Internet-based communities, messages played very important role in the Xiamen PX plant incident and the Wukan Incident, while in early case of Sun Zhigang, traditional media played a key role because China’s Internet industry was still underdeveloped during the early 2000s.

The role of professionals is important since many cases resulted from or involve loss of human life. Expertise in law and Legal-medical autopsy often constitute major evidence to define who should be responsible. In Sun Zhigang’s case, the autopsy result served as the initial evidence for societal involvement; in Wukan protest, the death of a protest leader in the police station worsened the tension, however the family member of the social activist gave up the autopsy for some reason. Autopsy report of Qian Yunhui’s death and technical report of the truck failed to provide major evidence, partially because the agency was designated by police and therefore the reports may have not been convincing. In environmental issues, professional review, test and report, Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for instance, proved important as in the case of Xiamen and Dalian PX protest. Given that the mistrust between the government and society have been very strong, professionals may have provided reliable evidence based on which the society and the government could negotiate for a compromise.

The role of social activists was clear and indispensible for their organizational and coordination role. However, their role was insignificant compared with other societal forces. The role of scholars was very special. Scholars played a leading role in the Sun Zhigang’s case and Xiamen PX incident. Scholars were deeply involved in the Qian Yunhui case but failed to bring positive result because of the very sensitive nature of the issue; role of scholars was basically absent in the Bobai case and Wukan land protest, though they pushed for the adjustment or abolishment of the family planning policy and land policy. Scholars’ participation may not lead to immediate results of settlement of incidents, but often lead to long term and significant institutional changes, as in the Sun Zhigang case. The case of Xiamen PX incident also indicated that within-regime or official scholars might bring better
result for societal involvement.

Different from western societies where civil society organizations serve as major agent between state government and individuals, NGOs were almost absent in four of the cases while visible yet insignificant role were discerned in the Wukan land protest and the Qian Yunhui case. In the Wukan land protest, the Temporary Representatives’ Council, decision-making body of the protest was once announced as illegal; women’s organizations and advocacy NGO (the New Enlightenment Institute) were active instead. In the Qian Yunhui case, scholars, lawyers and social activists formed investigation teams that were actually NGOs, but failed to make a difference.

All three cases are large-scale group incident, the research did not find direct relationship between the scale and effect of the societal involvement, though one can assume that the larger the scale, the greater the pressure upon government and the more will be achieved. The writer also assumes that societal involvement would be more effective in low politics areas such as economic right maintenance or environmental protection, but the study does not show a consistent relationship between the effect of societal involvement and issue area.

In terms of rationality, societal involvement in the Sun Zhigang case, the Xiamen and Dalian PX protests, and the Qian Yunhui case were rational, with two of them successful and two others unsuccessful. Societal involvement in Bobai family planning protest was violent and irrational while rational with antagonism in the Wukan land protest as analyzed before, indicating that there was no lineal relationship between rationality of the engagement. However, the Xiamen PX incident proved that rational and constructive engagement was most effective. The Wukan land protest revealed that controllable confrontation and even violence was sometimes tolerated under condition of protracted, large-scale resistance of societal forces.

The pattern of interaction also matters. Exception can be seen in the Qian Yunhui case and Sun Zhigang where societal forces involved the government in a fragmented (Sun Zhigang case) and divided manner (Qian Yunhui case). Societal forces in other four cases seemed quite coordinated and well organized. General analysis seemed to support centralized involvement of societal forces which may have brought better result, since they created stronger pressure for the government.

The study proved the importance of the level of leadership intervention for the success or failure of societal involvement. In all three successful cases (Sun Zhigang case,
Xiamen PX incident, and Wukan protest), the intervention of leadership from higher-level government proved to be vital for settlement and success of societal involvement. Unlike in two out of three of unsuccessful cases, namely, the Bobai County family planning and Qian Yunhui case, decision-making was mainly made by county level government without real intervention of higher-level government.

As one of the major findings, the emerging interest groups are potentially the greatest barriers for societal involvement which include, the police station and civil service workers at the C&R stations in the Sun Zhigang case, family planning department in the Bobai County protest, the Taiwanese investor of the PX program, the Yueqing Power Plant in Qian Yunhui case, several Hong Kong and private investors in Wukan village and the Fujia Dahua company in Dalian PX protest. Societal involvement, on the otherhand, was more fruitful when the interest groups were less powerful (the Wukan case, Sun Zhigang case), and less fruitful or unsuccessful when interest groups were more powerful (the Yueqing Power Plant in Qian Yunhui Case and the Fujia Dahua Group in Dalian PX Protest). Societal involvement was more successful when the interest groups were related to foreign (Xiamen PX, Wukan) or private investments (Wukan) meanwhile societal involvement was less successful or unsuccessful when the interest groups involved large state-owned cooperation (Yue Qing Power Plant in Qian Yunhui Case) or larger cooperation with strong governmental or official background (Fujia Dahua PX program in Dalian PX protest).
Introduction

1. China Politics: All roads lead to democratization?

For decades, scholars studying China have been entangled in discussion of whether or not sustained economic development will lead to political liberalization and democratization.¹ China’s protracted delay in political reform after the violence in Tiananmen Square in 1989 has invited wide international skepticism about China’s democratic prospects, while China’s surging social problems in recent decades have led to increasing scholarly pessimism. Many scholars now assert that China will collapse following a trajectory similar to that of the former Soviet Union and other Leninist states in Eastern Europe in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

There are competing or even contesting ideas about China’s political prospects. A large proportion of the scholars just mentioned are overseas Chinese, especially from Taiwan or Hong Kong.² The “China’s collapse” approach has gained an international audience late in the last century and at the beginning of this one. Even one of the leading China scholars, David Shambaugh, has converted to this school.³ The evidence for the “China collapse” school are clearly visible: stalemated political reform, economic slow-

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down, rampant corruption, wide-spread dissent, environmental degradation, a faulty social welfare system, systemic financial problems, and various other factors. In a quite influential article published in the *Wall Street Journal* in early 2015, Shambaugh listed five facts that led to his prediction of the Chinese Communist Party’s collapse: disappointment and flight of China’s economic elite and elite party officials; the deep anxiety and insecurity felt by the party’s leadership as evidence by the party’s intensified repression of media freedom, the internet, intellectuals, dissenters’ movement and ethnic minorities; ineffective ideological appeals; the limitations on Xi’s anti-corruption campaign; and systemic traps inherent in China’s economy. However, the adaptability and resilience of Chinese Communist Party (hereafter the CCP) has been demonstrated by China’s sustained economic growth and structural reform. And the party’s power to motivate the people and control China’s economy, political process and society has been used stringently and effectively. The CCP’s adaptability is well displayed by its evolving decision-making. It is increasingly decentralized, professional, and even democratic.

Meanwhile, a greater number of scholars in political science and international relations believe in the democratic prospects of the world’s largest autocracy. Based on their academic interests and propensities, supporters of China’s democratization can be divided into three streams: the first emphasizes the traditional political economy approach; the second, the congressional democracy approach; and the third, the consultative democracy approach.

The largest body of the pro-democratization scholars favor the first approach. Traditional political economical thinking tends to believe that economic growth will help cultivate a powerful middle class who will eventually pursue their liberal political rights and push the entire country towards democratization. Among these scholars, Andrew Nathan (1976) stands out by contributing more than most. His studies range from cultural to institutional, empirical to theoretical, and from modern to contemporary China. In 1976 when China was still in extreme turmoil, Nathan investigated the aftermath of the 1911 revolution against the monarchy, asking whether Chinese culture formed under a kind of nepotistic factionalism must ruin democratic breakthroughs. In the early reform period when political reform seemed to be on the “right” track, Nathan evaluated the positivist

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4 See note n. 2 and the following references of the introduction.
nature of the late imperial China’s constitutionalism (after 1898) applying textual analysis and gathering interview data. He concluded that, “China's obsession with political order and national strength” blocked democratic mobilization after the constitutional reforms that began in 1898. Nathan’s belief in China’s democratic future (1990) remained quite consistent even after the repression occurred of June fourth 1989. At that time many Western scholars turned somewhat pessimistic, but Nathan continued to propose the possibility of a Chinese style of “democracy” driven by political reform among the elite and a resurgence of pressure from increasingly self-organized grassroots society.

Understandably, a cultural instead of purely political science approach should also help explain political structure and processes, especially for old civilizations such as China’s. Nathan’s cultural review of China did not alter the consistency of his findings. By exploring insightful abstract concepts such as "cultural relativism," "conservative modernization," and "hermeneutic versus positivistic approaches to distinctiveness" in explaining China’s past and present political practices, Nathan found nothing inherent in Chinese culture that renders it incapable of evolving into a democracy.

The congressional democracy approach, on the other hand, focuses on China’s existing People’s Congresses and the People’s Political Consultative Conference, usually with the conviction that the evolving (if not just increasing) roles of these political organs will finally develop into a Chinese version of the congresses of other nations. Western democratic practice, however, is usually based on the separation of powers, with the legislature, the judiciary and the executive each independent of the others and restrained from encroaching on their domains. Based on their own experience, Western scholars have been keeping an eye on the role of the National People’s Congress (People’s Congress or NPC) as the key to evaluating China’s power structure and the decision-making process. Generally speaking, scholars are somewhat disappointed by the progress so far, since China’s prospects as a major power and the severe challenges it faces call for a reinforced role for the People’s Congresses to make them more representative and more responsive to people’s requests (congressional democracy).

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10 Zheng, Yongnian; Li, Jinshan. The National People’s Congress and Its Electoral System, in John
As a major legal and institutional channel for social participation, the People’s Congresses have shown transformed decision-making with respect to some major events such as their bill in favor of the Three Georges dam. The dam was a major project originally proposed by China’s modern revolutionary pioneer Sun Yat-sen and later by Mao Zedong, but both failed to get it going financial and technological reasons. It has been controversial projects due to its massive environmental, economic, and social impacts.\footnote{The most authoritative research on the effects of the Three Gorges Dam was done by China Academy of Social Sciences, Chinese Academy of Sciences; members of the research team include experts on water recourses, geography, earthquake, hydropower, biology environmental protection, etc. A similar research was conducted by Tsinghua University. China Academy of Social Sciences of 1988. Environmental Impact Statement for the Three Gorges Project. Chinese Academy of Sciences, Nanjing Geography Institute. Chinese Academy of Sciences. 1995. Environmental Impact Statement for the Yangtze Three Gorges Project, (A Brief Edition). Environmental Impact Assessment Department, Chinese Academy of Sciences and the Research Institute for Protection of Yangtze Water Resources. Beijing, China: Science Press. See also Peter H. Gleick, Three Gorges Dam Project, Yangtze River, China, Water Brief, The World’s Water, 2008-2009. Among the two researches report by the China Academy of Social Sciences, the first (1988) concluded that the negative effects weigh over the benefit. The Academy was required to do another research to serve the political will that favor the construction of the Dam, and most members who objected the project were excluded from the team. The China Academy of Social Sciences processed technically by stating the negative effects and the benefits respectively without concluding whether benefits or risks weigh more. Political propensity in pushing the dam was apparent.} Therefore, research organizations (China’s Academy of Social Sciences and Tsinghua University, among others), experts and professionals, were intensively involved in feasibility studies which were later submitted to political leaders and to the National People’s Congress, which finally approved the project. Yet 177 delegates opposed it in the final vote, and 644 abstained from voting. It was approved by 1,767 delegates only after heated discussion. So more than a third of the delegates did not support the project. There have subsequently been a few cases of provincial government’s budgets being voted by the provincial congresses, but the development of those too has been far from satisfactory. People either criticize them for dysfunction, calling them “rubber stamps” since they often just go through the due procedures just to confirm a decision pre-decided by the party.\footnote{Zhang, Qianfang, Introduction: Supremacy by Rubber Stamp, Democracy with Chinese Characteristics: The Role of the People’s Congress, in Zhang. (ed.) The Constitution of China: a Contextual Analysis, Oxford and Portland: Hart Publishing, 2012. BBC: How China is Ruled: the National People’s Congress. Available at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/shared/spl/hi/in_depth/china_politics/government/html/7.stm, 2015-06-16; and CNN, “China's rubber-stamp parliament: 3 things you need to know”, which is available at: http://money.cnn.com/2015/03/04/news/economy/china-national-peoples-congress/, 2015-06-16; Kawase, Kenji. “China to rubber-stamp its 'new normal', Nikkei Asian Review”. Available at:}
Wu Bangguo, then NPC chairman, stated in March 2009 that, “Western models of democracy, which emphasize multi-party competition for power, the separation of three branches of government, and bicameralism, are not suitable for China.” Wu’s perception of Western democracy represents that of the majority of China’s political elite. China’s President Xi Jinping has said on many occasions that multiparty democracy and the development models of other countries do not suit China and would lead to catastrophic consequences if once adopted.

The consultative democracy approach also focuses on the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), another institutional channel for participation which has been regarded as relevant to revising China’s decision-making and its democratic future. Instead of the representativeness of the NPC, the CPPCC works through “consultation”. In fact, the CPPCC was the predecessor of the People’s Congresses between 1949 and 1954. Chairman Mao was fully aware of the importance of united front work during the revolutionary period and early years of socialist construction, so he kept a platform for the participation of non-party elites in the hope they would be encouraged to contribute to the socialist construction cause.

The CPPCC consists of representatives of the CCP and 8 other democratic parties (min zhu dang pai), along with non-party cadres (dang wai gan bu), intellectuals, important figures from the non-public business sector (fei gong you zhi jing ji jing ying), and representatives of people's organizations (ren min tuan_ti), ethnic minorities and various social strata. The representatives meet regularly to discuss important issues and submit policy suggestions to the CPPCC’s Standing Committee, in theory helping to reshape policy. Because of the representatives and the quasi-democratic nature of the conference, participation via the CPPCC is called “consultative democracy” by the CCP and some scholars. At a recent conference, President Xi Jinping stated that “through consultation with the people, various voices can be heard and consensus reached on decisions and work, and demands of different interest groups can be incorporated into decisions smoothly.”


scholars have also studies intensively about “consultative democracy”.16

Used in this way, however, the meaning for “consultative democracy” is rather limited. First, unlike the People’s Congresses whose representatives are supposedly elected, the members of CPPCC are appointed by the CCP (whose members constitute a major proportion of the delegates). Those proposed by other parties, people’s societies or civil groups (such as the All China Federation of Industries & Commerce) need CCP approval. They all tend to be political, economical and intellectual elites, so the CPPCC’s representativeness is not as wide as that of the People’s Congresses. Many public figures are or used to be member of the CPPCC. Congress membership is appointed by the CCP’s United Front Work Department. The delegates tend to be active professional people, but their lack of independence would be expected to drastically reduce the effectiveness of their participation. Though nominally a major channel for expression, influence and participation, all of the CPPCC’s advice and suggestions go to the People’s Congresses and the top leadership. Still, many ordinary citizens, scholars, and social activist convey their ideas to a member of the CPPCC who might submit them to the conference. Social activist Xiong Wei, for instance, has been submitting bills via CPPCC members condemning illegal trafficking of children and woman, as well as to limit smoking in public places.17 But in general the regime is promoting limited participation by certain elites instead of the grassroots. And in the end the CPPCC is an advisory body. Consulting it is not a compulsory for anyone. It has no power to make decisions, but just raises approaches for participation in the Chinese system.

China scholars favoring the congressional and consultative democracy approaches, have clearly been influenced by institutionalism and its later version, neo-institutionalism popular in the last three decades. Their analyses have mostly been based on Western experience of democratic practices. But more importantly, all three approaches overwhelmingly concentrate on the elite level of China’s political process, and therefore fail to track the latest changes in Chinese society. Emerging societal forces have been actively

17 Xiong Wei is head of a civil organization New Enlightenment Research Institute (Xin Qi Meng Yan Jiu Suo). He has also been very active in grassroots level elections. He had been engaged in the Wukan Land Protests in Guangzhou.
involved in decision-making and have made tremendous differences.

This research was therefore designed to analyze the role of emerging societal forces in China’s political liberalization and democratization. It aimed to evaluate the implications of societal involvement in China’s political decision-making in terms of institutions, government behavior, and policy output. The research was based on analysis of the interaction between societal forces and China’s political decision-making bodies over major public incidents to see what kind of interactions were displayed and what they mean for decision-making and China’s overall political development.

2. Research Framework

2.1. Overview: Reasons for Adopting this Research

This was an empirical study aiming to elucidate the evolving relationship between the Chinese state and its society. China is geographically large, populous, diverse, and fragmented. Therefore any study of its society is inherently quite ambitious. And of course, Chinese society is quite different from that of the U.S., Western societies or even those of China’s close neighbors such as Japan and Korea. This research set out to delineate the patterns of interaction linking societal forces with their implications. In particular, the effectiveness of involvement was assessed along with its implications for China’s decision-making institutions, government behavior, and policy output.

As has been explained, Western approaches of Chinese democratization via political-economic (such as market liberalism and middle class-driven), congressional (via People’s Congress), consultative (via Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference, CPPCC), and intra-party approaches have all proved to be of limited value and the future chances of progress are slim. At the same time, the collapse of China or the CCP through a bottom-up revolution is most unlikely in the foreseeable future. This has left China scholars rather disappointed and has somewhat exhausted their enthusiasm for exploring new approaches to explaining China’s latest political and social changes. But perhaps they have been concentrating unduly on the elite level of China politics while neglecting major societal transformation that have taken place over the past decade or more. The rise of societal forces is apparent, discernable, and increasingly predictable. Failing to see these significant changes in Chinese society may lead to overlooking the larger picture of China’s political
future.

This research was based on the writer’s keen interests in and field experience with institutions in China such as religious groups (through a program on state-religion relations commissioned by the state government), local elections, lower level government consultation practices (especially in Wenling county, in Zhejiang province), domestic NGOs (including ones heavily involved in protecting human rights, promoting democracy, citizenship education, and environmental protection), and the media. Those institutions have had an important role in many major public incidents over the past decade, and familiarity with them generates awareness of what they might mean for China’s decision-making and political development. This study set out to study their behavior, what constitutes societal participation in China, how much progress such institutions have made through their involvement, and the limitations on their involvement and participation today.

2.2. Incidents and Crises

The CCP is of course highly sensitive to any social tensions, conflicts, or unrest. The frequent social protests have drawn intensive scholarly and journalistic attention. The CCP’s focus is on maintaining its power, and it interprets protest as a portent of future popular uprising. This study represents one of the few academic\textsuperscript{18} attempts to review in-depth China’s ongoing evolution from a political science perspective and to establish a theoretical framework that can properly explain China’s present relationship between the party-state and society and its future trends. Its focus on the societal-government interactions in decision-making thus requires treating times of public incidents and social crisis when that interaction is at its most intense. But can this approach reveal the real interaction patterns of the political decision-making process? Will the decision-making thus analyzed be more a matter of crisis management than of regular decision-making?

As public and group incidents have become more frequent, meeting their challenges has become a routine task for the political system. Quick response and decision-making

constitutes a severe test for the decision-making system.\(^{19}\) Governments’ decision-making during such incidents is intense and concentrated within a relatively short period of time, unlike their usual prolonged bureaucratic procedures. Meanwhile, group or public incidents often attract media coverage that arouses public concern by exposing society’s involvement and government decision-making to the public in a way that is relatively easy to track and observe. This is especially notable given China’s usual strict media censorship. Incidents often force a kind of temporary transparency. More importantly, they present opportunities for institutional and political innovation which can lead to conceptual, behavioral changes and policy changes. At its most extreme, this was evident in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Syria in the Arab spring. In Chinese history too bold reforms and policy shifts have often occurred after a major incident.

Along with its fast economic growth and its social transformation, China has entered in a phase of frequent social crisis. Such incidents are very sensitive, and they were originally described in official statistics as “mass contingency events”. This later become “group incidents” in official discourse. Land and other legal disputes, environmental issues, corruption, and forced unemployment caused by restructuring constitute the main reasons for urban group incidents. The “Sun Zhigang Case” in Guangzhou, the PX plant incident in Xiamen as well as the Wukan land protest in Guangdong are well-known examples, but in fact most large scale and violent group incidents take place in rural areas. The Weng’an protest in Guizhou,\(^{20}\) the Bobai protest against the family planning policy in Guangxi, and the Shishou protest in Hubei. But they can also arise in less developed rural areas of generally developed coastal provinces, as exemplified by the Wu Kan group incident in Guangdong as well as the Qian Yunhui case in Zhejiang province.

Yu Jianrong, a leading rural studies expert, holds that large-scale conflict is more likely to erupt in rural area rather than urban areas (Yu, 2007). This is primarily due to the central government’s inability to control the vast remote areas of China combined with the


\(^{20}\) A riot occurred on June 28, 2008, which involved tens of thousands in Weng’an, a rural town in remote Guizhou Province of Southwest China, to protest against police conclusion of “suicide” of 15 year-old schoolgirl, Li Shufei, since rumors came that she was murdered and that the conclusion of “suicide” was drawn because of corruption. The protests displayed the lost credibility of government and grassroots’ lack of trust in government officials. This kind of protests is quite common in underdeveloped inland rural west. A similar case also happened in Shishou of Hubei province in June 2009 when the death of a male cook led to a major riot attended by several score thousand of people.
lack of a clear set of common interests among the highly diverse rural population.\textsuperscript{21} In the recent decades, China has reported a growing number of group incidents and social protests. According to government statistics, the number of group incidents increased from 8,700 in 1993 to 58,000 in 2003, and the numbers of participants increased from 0.73 million to 3.07 million.\textsuperscript{22} The number of “mass contingency events” (incidents involving 100 or more people) rose to 7,400 in 2004, an annual increase of at least 9%. The figure further increased to 8,700 in 2005, a 6.6% increase from the previous year.\textsuperscript{23} According to the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, from 2000 to the late 2013 China witnessed 871 group incidents that involved 100 people or more.\textsuperscript{24} Among them were 10 incidents (1.1%) which involved more than 10,000 people, 271 (31.1%) involving between 1,000 and 10,000, and 590 cases (67.7%) involving between 100 to 1,000 people. The most frequent were in the period between 2010 and 2012, when 163 cases in 2010, 172 cases in 2011, and 209 cases 2012 arose.\textsuperscript{25}

The largest number of incidents which attracted media attention took place in South China, with Guangdong province alone accounting for 30.1% of all the publicized incidents that involved more than 100 people.\textsuperscript{26} This is not hard to understand. Guangdong has been in the forefront of reform and development in China and was its most developed region. People in Guangdong have better sense of citizenry and liberal rights owing to the province’s history as a revolutionary capital since the Republic era and the early workers’ movements. Guangdong’s geographical proximity to Hong Kong and its television news in the local language make concealing events much more difficult, so the CCP leaders in Guangdong perforce tend to be more open-minded and rights-conscious, and they feel under greater pressure to address incidents via engagement rather than repressive means. This may encourage incidents as a tactic for the disgruntled.

According to Li and He (2015), incidents incited by tension between individuals and social organizations, or between organizations and government officials account for about 40% of the total, indicating the tension between the state government and society despite

\textsuperscript{22} Blue Book of China’s Society: Analysis and Forecast on China’s Social Development, Social Sciences Academic Press, China, 2005.
\textsuperscript{23} A speech by Zhou Yongkang, disgraced former head of China Ministry of Public Security who later became member of the Politburo Standing Committee.
\textsuperscript{25} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{26} Ibid.
rapid economic growth. Environmental issues constitute a major reason for large-scale incidents (those involving 10,000 people or more), accounting for 50% of all such cases. Labor disputes are at the root of about 36.5% of the incidents that involve between 1,000 and 10,000 people.  

Undoubtedly, environmental degradation has become a grave concern for all Chinese. Air pollution, water pollution, and even illegal industrial discharge into drinking water sources has affected the life and health of everyone. The air pollution in Beijing has aroused general dissent and hurt China’s international image as an emerging power. Compared with conventional air, water and soil pollution, or with deforestation, the potential danger of industrial chemicals tends to arouse greater concern. Local governments operate under strong incentives to promote growth. Attracting huge investment, including investment in petrochemical production, is a way to grow quickly. The incentives pay less attention to the consequences, creating tension between governmental officials’ pursuit of their bonuses and promotion and the people’s need for a safe and healthy environment. This is often intensified by disorderly pursuit of urban expansion.

The coastal cities of Dalian and Xiamen both planned major PX programs within the city. After organized and concerted protests, the Xiamen PX program was relocated to a town on the Gulei Peninsula in another part of Fujian province, while the program in Dalian has kept a low profile via governmental maneuvering. The government deems the Dalian program a major step towards its ambition to build the country’s largest petrochemical base, and it further serves to help revitalize the old industrial base of Northeastern China, a national plan initiated by former Premier Wen Jiabao. The Dalian facility suffered a severe explosion and leakage later, but it remains in operation revealing how the government’s will can prevail in China, even under societal pressure.

2.3. Overview: Public and Group Incidents

Much antagonism and many social protests result domestic tension, clan politics, land disputes, legal injustice and corruption in the lower levels of government. But a certain number reflect a xenophobia which may indicate government encouragement. Examples are anti-American demonstrations in 1999 after NATO bombed the Chinese Embassy in

Belgrade; protests in 1985 against the Japanese Prime Minister’s visit to the Yasukuni Shrine, and in 2005 and 2012 against Japanese control of the Diaoyu (or Senkaku) Islands. If so, the government seems to be playing with fire, as such protests commonly show some dissent against Chinese government policies as well.

Political scientists classify protests as pressure politics where the grassroots hope to influence and reshape government policies. In China, what role have grassroots protests played in decision-making or foreign policy formation? Do they really lead to policy change? Weiss (2014) has traced China’s management of dozens of nationalist protests and their consequences between 1985 and 2012, and he concludes that the diplomatic objectives China’s leaders were pursuing were often a decisive factor, as protests can be tolerated to signal resolve, or blocked to signal reassurance. Weiss (2014) cites China’s active anti-Japan movements in recent decades. In addition to those in 1985, 2005 and 2012, protests against Japan also took place in 1990 and 1996. Those, however, were banned. Weiss (2014) reveals how concerted popular protests, media distortion, and emotional public opinion impeded diplomatic negotiations between the two governments and interrupted economic cooperation. Reill (2011) has similarly depicted how the Chinese authorities responded to popular demands for political participation with a sophisticated strategy of tolerance, responsiveness, persuasion, and repression.

Contentious politics is not new for China. China’s civil war and the Cultural Revolution are two momentous examples in the twentieth century, but popular upheaval dates back to the third century B.C., and it flourished during the Imperial and Republican, as well as the Communist eras. The term contentious politics refers to all kinds of “collective political struggle” involving government and parties that are not officially institutionalized as political actors. The term can be applied to some industrial conflicts, ethnic mobilization, religious conflicts, worker-capitalist struggles, and even in some cases extreme nationalism. According to the McAdam and Tarrow and Tilly, “by contentious politics we mean: episodic, public, collective interaction among makers of claim and their objects when (a) at least one government is a claimant, an object of claim, or a party to the

claim and (b) the claims would, if realized, affect the interests of at least one of the claimants. Social movements and collective actions both qualify.

Leading China scholar Elizabeth J. Perry (2002) has studied the role of working-class militias in the Chinese Revolution. Her historical review shows the origins of urban militias in the late nineteenth century and how they can serve as a vehicle for analyzing the changing yet enduring impact of China's revolutionary heritage on subsequent state-society relations. Edward Friedman, on the other hand, is a leading expert on rural China. He has pursued decades of long-term field studies in rural Wudong village, in Hebei province, and shown how the village evolved during the civil war (before 1949), during the political campaigns between 1949 and 1978, and now during the reform era (post-1978) (Friedman 1991, 2005). His depiction of the four clear-ups campaign (si qing yun dong), the Cultural Revolution, the “Four Goods”, the campaign to criticize Lin Biao and Confucius, as well as the campaign to learn from Dazhai, gives a good general picture of contentious politics in rural China. That is, after all, where all the political activity of the vast majority of China’s population takes place. The campaigns provide insight into the nature and logic of contentious politics in rural China. It is a great pity that China’s antagonist movements have emerged only in the recent decades, and Friedman will not be able to cover the many more recent incidents whose dynamism and logic are diametrically different from the “resistance” he portrays.

The group incidents and social protests in China in the past few years can certainly be included within the framework of contentious politics. O’Brien for instance, has done detailed work on popular protest in contemporary China. Hurst has studied mass frames and worker protest in urban China and shown that due to the differences in regional political economy, different mass frames can be found in areas such as Shanghai, Liaoning, and in

32 Ibid, p. 5.
34 Edward Friedman is one of the few Western scholars to do field studies in China’s rural villages in early reform era. The authors spent decades interviewing villagers and rural officials, exploring archives, and investigating villagers with diverse resources and cultural, traditions with an aim of figuring out how the world of the Chinese peasant evolved during an era of war and revolution and how it in turn shaped the revolutionary process. See Edward Friedman, et al. Chinese Village, Socialist State, New Haven: Yale University Press. 1991; Edward Friedman, Paul G. Pickowicz and Mark Selden, Revolution, Resistance and Reform in Village China, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005.
North-central China. Hurst’s mass frames take in three categories: “market hegemony”, “Maoist moral economy” and “keep your head down and muddle through”. 37 Another insightful article is the outline of environmental campaigns and environmental NGOs by Yanfei Sun and Dingxin Zhao. They attest that environmental bodies have become an important type of protest group in China. 38 O’Brien and Li (2006) offer a study of collective action not untypical of participation in democratic societies and large-scale social movement and protests in the Chinese countryside which fit into the framework of contentious politics developed by McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly (2001). O’Brien and Li also argue that the regularity of rightful resistance can lead to a political change and have implications for the national regime’s durability. 39

Another volume that offers an excellent perspective on different levels of Chinese society, approaching from a bottom-up view, is edited by Perry and Merle Goldman (2007). Perry and Goldman identify different patterns of behavior according for each social group that can be distinguished by spatial division (rural and urban), economic activities or institutional or organizational considerations. The diversity of cases approached in that compendium suggests the complexity of small-scale mobilization within a dynamic context. It starts from the grassroots level, but may induce significant changes among the elite in the upper-level. 40

Yongshun Cai’s work (2010), however, focuses on why some collective actions is more effective than others and more likely to result in political change. He analyzes popular protests in rural and urban areas of China between 1994 and 2007 and describes some which succeeded when they gathered enough participants in a forceful protest. He shows that they tended to be guided by those with better networks. Cai’s study focuses on small collective actions which mostly targeted local businesses an ord local government. 41 According to Zhao, during the 1990s “…the lives of most Chinese were less determined by central state policies and more shaped by the performance of local government and business”. 42 Cai’s

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main argument is that, “the resister’s chance of success lies in their ability to exploit the constraints facing the government or to (re)shape the latter’s cost-benefit calculations in a way that suppressing or ignoring an act of resistance is not a feasible or desirable option”.\textsuperscript{43} Cai applies the cost-benefit analysis to demonstrate the response from central and local governments by interacting with their citizens. He also identifies seeking intervention from upper-level official so as to gain information and support as well as media exposure as the resister’s primary strategy. Yet is not clear whether a good personal network can make a collective action more or less likely to succeed.\textsuperscript{44}

This research examined the role of the media, opinion leaders, social activists, professionals, NGOs, and public opinion in general in the interaction between governments and social movements. It did not touch on military forces, the police, the court and other coercive institutions. However, that does not mean that force was absent in all the incidents. It certainly plays an important role in most of the protests that come to public attention. And as in many protests in Asian societies, forces are often decisive.\textsuperscript{45}

2.4. Hypothesis and Research Questions

Societal forces have strengthened in China in the recent decades, and they have induced increased participation in the decision-making process, whether institutional or non-institutional. This research was therefore based on the following hypothesis: China’s political decision-making may have been affected by society forces arising from public opinion and expressed through the media as well as through statements from professionals and intellectuals. Further, engaging with the government in a constructive manner may lead to institutional, behavioral and policy changes, even in China. This hypothesis suggests the following research questions.

1) What constitute societal forces that may potentially reshape the decision-making process (What)?
2) How do those societal forces interact with each other and with the government (How)?

\textsuperscript{43} Cai, Yongshun. 2010, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{44} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{45} Terence Lee, Defect or Defend: Military Responses to Popular Protests in Authoritarian Asia, Washington D.C: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2015.
3) What are the implications of societal involvement for China’s decision-making institutions (especially the CCP), government behavior and policy output (What would be the next)?

2.5. Objectives

Exploring these questions was adopted as a means of examining the effects and the effectiveness\(^{46}\) of societal forces in influencing political decision-making. The aim was to establish cause-and-effect relationships between the involvement of societal forces and institutional transformation, behavioral change or policy output.

Moreover, this dissertation can raise specific objectives that complement and bring susceptible answers to this research:

1) Presents the theoretical aspect of the societal forces so as to better understand the topic in its entirety.
2) Analyzes the historical events and their relationship with the current Chinese political environment.
3) Describes the main successful cases as well as approaches cases with ineffective results.
4) Compares successful and unsuccessful cases in an effort to elucidate under what conditions, in what circumstances, with respect to what issues and with what kinds of forces and processes societal forces are most likely to influence government decision-making in the desired direction.

2.6. Methodology

This qualitative research involved a comparative analysis of a few cases in which societal forces tried to influence government decision-making process in China between 2002 and 2012.

Why did the writer choose the period between 2002 and 2012?

That period was chosen because it saw many transitional conflicts, group incidents, overall.

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\(^{46}\) Effectiveness means the degree in which the involvement of societal forces leads to institutional changes, behavioral change and policy adaptations. It is measured against the common goals of the involvement as well as other unexpected achievements.
and social movements, almost none research of which have previously received scholarly attention. It was a period of rapid industrialization and urbanization, and the two trends brought serious problems. Reforms restructured the economic landscape, leaving not all of the people happy. This was especially true for what China terms its “peasants”, for the jobless and migrant people as well as for others whose interests were harmed during the many waves of reform.

At the same time, China’s continuing opening-up changed its relationship with the outside world, and that too brought far-reaching domestic consequences during the same period. Greater international exchange, diplomatic engagement, increasing international pressure, as well as a growing number of students returning from studying overseas brought knowledge about international norms, conventions, values, and visions to both the leadership and some ordinary citizens. Cell phones, the internet, and new media all developed quickly during that decade. Societal involvement in the period was very distinctive compared with previous years.

Under China’s particular regime, the education, experience and personalities of the leaders may lead to very different approaches of governance. The supreme leaders between 2002 and 2012 were Hu Jintao and Wen Jiabao. If there is to be any interaction, the attitude, behavior, policies, and priorities of the government are important factors determining the degree and scope of societal involvement. The governance approaches of each “generation” of leaders will, in principle, be different so the ten-year tenure of the Hu-Wen regime was chosen as a stable time frame for this research.

Why did this research choose six cases among others?

This study is based on analysis and comparison of six cases: the Sun Zhigang case that forced the abolishment of the Custody and Repatriation system (2003); the Bobai family planning protests that stopped a violent government campaign to strictly enforce family planning but which failed to lead to further discussion or any revision of the family planning policies (2007); the Xiamen PX protest that successfully pressured the Xiamen government to relocate the program to coastal Gulei Peninsula (2007); the suspicious death of Qian Yunhui, who had been leading protests against local government’s land seizures without positive results; the Wukan land protest in 2011 which forced the local (and by implication of provincial) government to change its policy on social organizations, village autonomy, and land seizures; and the 2011 Dalian PX protest that urged the government to undertake to suspend production and relocate the Dalian PX program, which failed to force relocation of
a chemical plant.

All six of these cases involved tens of thousands of people. They were joined by NGOs, intellectuals, and social activists, and had intensive domestic and international media exposure. This gives them national significance even today. The six cases involved legal injustice (Sun Zhigang and Bobai), environmental concerns (Xiamen and Dalian PX), and land disputes (in Wukan and Zhejiang). These same three areas have been the three major causes of social conflicts in the past ten years, so these cases can help to portray a general picture of China’s societal protests in the recent decades.

The six cases are geographically representative. Bobai family plan protest took place in China’s rural area of inland Guangxi province, where the economy is somehow less developed, and agricultural production as well as livelihood of the elderly highly rely on male labor force. Also, popular conflict just reflected the people’s needs for more children and the hardness of the state family plan policy. Xiamen and Dalian are both relatively developed coastal cities, and the protests displayed urban middle class’s pursuit for health, good environment and better quality of life. The way the Xiamen and Dalian societal forces (middle class-led) involving the government prove to be special. The Wukan land protest and Qian Yunhui case all took place in the less developed rural areas of the developed coastal provinces.

More importantly, the six cases led to disparate societal involvement, so comparing them promoted drawing meaningful conclusions. In three of the six cases (Sun Zhigang, Xiamen PX, and Wukan) societal involvement led to a positive result from the protesters’ point of view, while in the other three cases societal forces had no positive effect. Comparing the successful and failed cases again facilitates concluding under what conditions and in what way positive or negative results emerge. This too may shed useful light on the reasons behind contentious politics in China.

Institutions, government behavior and polices are three important facets of any political system, and also three major criteria for evaluating the system’s structure and processes. By evaluating the institutional, behavioral, and policy changes brought by societal engagement, the dissertation was designed to provide a general picture of the degree and scope of China’s political development, and also to clarify the implications of societal involvement for China’s political future.

How are the cases technically studied?

China’s political system explicitly requires a lack of transparency in decision-making
and strict information control. So, Chinese decision-making remains deliberately mysterious, even to the citizens. Scholars are certainly no exception, so a lack of previous academic studies should not be surprising. Accordingly, field studies, on-site observation and interviews with those involved were an essential part of this study. Because the study is based on selected cases of public incidents, the intensive news coverage, official news via TV programs, newspapers, internet, and broadcasting are analyzed. Foreign reports, commentaries, editorials, and interviews were also consulted. Since it has been years or even a decade or more since these events took place, there are academic research reports, memoirs, speeches, conference presentations, official statistics, and policy documents available. They are important literatures for this study.

Because of the interpretive nature of the study, questionnaires, interviews and observations were conducted accordingly. Data about each case were collected from newspapers through internet, reports by authorities, and previous researches. Material from internet was one of the important resources especially online polls results. Personal visits to the localities studied and interviews with organizations, government officials, and scholars were another important resource. Questionnaires were used to collect data for statistical analysis. In order protect the respondents, their identities cannot be disclosed.

2.7. Analyzing Framework

Although the societal forces studied in this research were basically the mass media, well-known intellectuals, professionals, social activists, NGOs (in some way, local governments) and other shapers of public opinion, the dissertation did not examine respectively how each force worked in different situations or in each of the cases. Also, the analysis was not centered on the forces, but rather on the cases. The decision-making government (central, provincial, municipal or township, though all are deemed part of a unitary system) and societal forces were regarded as the two key players. The analysis treated the relationship of those two players without probing their inner structure. However, the respective roles and functions of each individual societal force were treated in the analysis of each case.

The dimensions used to analyze the interaction patterns between two players (the decision-making body and societal forces in this study) are very important, since they decide the effects of the societal engagement. The effects of societal participation vary from area to
area. Whether the incident is economic, political, or social in nature determines the result of the involvement. The pattern of interactions between the government and societal forces may be decentralized, centralized or centralized in a limited manner. Generally, societal involvement tends to be more fruitful if it is better coordinated than if it is separated or fragmented. Whether the interaction is rational or violent is also important. Though the government will have to be more responsive to highly contentious incidents, violence can be used to justify government repression, which can have unexpected results. And is the incident sensitive? The government may feel it easier to compromise if it is not. The degree of sensitivity (high/middle/low) matters to the result of the interaction. Scale matters too. A tentative finding is that the government will invest more resources in settling an incident if its scale is large (the scale is marked as large/middle/small). Not all societal forces were involved in all 6 cases, so the grouping of the participants sometimes also contributed to the effectiveness of the interaction.

2.8. Intended Contributions

Unlike either the usual top-down decision-making in China studies or the bottom-up approach that assumes China is close to welcoming another revolution, this study assumed that China’s party-state will basically remain stable while societal transformation continues to take place. Technically, the research combined unit-level analysis of civil forces with strata on the system level to formulate a political-sociological interpretation which takes into account both the structure and the process. It focused on the interaction between political decision-making and societal forces and tried to establish an analytical model that portrays their interactions. Any such interaction allows Chinese society to communicate with, be more engaged in and have some influence over the authoritarian decision-making process which lacks sufficient legal and institutional channels. The results may be applicable beyond China’s particular situation, and may reveal how societal forces can interact with any authoritarian government without a fully-fledged civil society and an emerging middle class, and still make a difference. The findings may also shed some light on political decision-making and the broader topics of governance and democratization from a political-sociological perspective. The research evaluated the depth and limits of China’s political development which may have implications for further democratization in the decades to come. In practices, this dissertation may serve as guidance for future societal participation,
yielding better results.

2.9. Limitations

Governance is a broad topic. Civil forces in China still remain weak and loosely organized. This research derived its generalizations about interaction patterns through tracking weak social hints and studying a very limited number of cases. The mass media, think tanks, NGOs, enterprises, and interest groups all have different ways of interacting in the decision-making process. And each civil force studied is not a unitary actor working in isolation. Even the same player may function in different ways in different policy areas or on a case-by-case basis, making generalization (and standardization) very difficult.

Beyond that, it is usually difficult to tell which civil actor played the most important role in any observed result. Societal forces tend to work jointly to apply stronger social pressure which can lead to changed institutions, procedures and policy output, but their influence is intertwined. Unravelling this remains as a topic for future endeavors.

3. Concepts and Terminologies

Institutions, government behavior, and policies are three major facets of a political structure and its processes. Though the goal of societal involvement tends to be material in preference to institutional or behavioral, achievements in the latter two aspects are often far-reaching and more telling in their implications for the regime.

3.1. Political Decision-making

In China, political decision-making is the process by which the CCP selects a policy or set of policies over the alternatives. It usually implies an allocation of resources or, put simply, “who gets what, when and where” (Easton, 1953). It of course implies costs as well. In the general case, decisions are made by players who follow conventions or legal or negotiated procedures. Different participants, power structures or procedures lead to

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different decisions. Therefore, “who decides” and “how to decide” matter. Since interests and attitudes in society vary, interests must often be balanced, compromised or suppressed, which involves varying degrees of “pulling and hauling process” (Graham, 1971).

In China multiple stakeholders do try to involve themselves in decision-making. Though social pressure not be regarded as “participation”, their role in decision-making has become more conventional and regular, and sometimes decision-makers can no longer neglect their voice. This research studied decision-making during major public incidents, which aroused national media coverage and national public attention, so the decision-making was often at the national level instead local level. It is often the case that when a situation deteriorates to a certain point the national government, believes they it must settle matters directly or at least provide the settlement guidelines. The incidents studied here were therefore local incidents which grew into a national incidents in a chain reaction involving the whole political system.

There was no attempt to analyze the decision-making structure and process at each level of government. Instead, the whole decision-making system was treated as a unit. Each of the incident studied involved more than one level of government, but the policy output tended to be consistent and the product of collaboration among the different government levels. In most cases, final decisions were made by one level of government, and often one government agency, assumed the major responsibility.

3.2. Institutions and Institutional Transformation

Huntington (1965) describes institutions as "stable, valued, recurring patterns of

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48 In his most cited book, Graham has developed three decision-making models respectively: politics use is the rational actor model (Allison's "Model I"), which conceives of states as unitary and purposive, making consistent, value-maximizing choices within specified constraints (ED, p. 30); the organizational process model (or Model II), where he empathizes how governmental behavior is constrained by the routines of the organizations, and behavior of large number of individuals need to be coordinated through “pulling and hauling” (pp68-69, 79); and the governmental (or bureaucratic) politics model (Model III), where a leaders topped the organization is a player who bargain along regularized circuits among players positioned hierarchically within the government." Players "make governmental decisions not by a single rational choice but by the pulling and hauling that is politics" (ED, p. 144) (deviations from ideal rationality by political gamesmanship behind them). See Graham T. Allison, Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis (Boston: Little, Brown, 1971); Graham T. Allison, "Conceptual Models and the Cuban Missile Crisis," American Political Science Review, Vol. 63, No. 3 (September 1969), pp. 689-718; see also Lawrence Martin, The Presidents and the Prime Ministers (Toronto: Doubleday, 1982), pp.196- 197; Graham T. Allison and Morton H. Halperin, "Bureaucratic Politics: A Paradigm and Some Policy Implications," in Tanter and Ullman, Theory and Policy in International Relations, p. 43.
behavior”.\(^{49}\) Because of the normative nature of the term, it could also be regarded as “a system of rules defining a possible form of social organization, such as capitalist versus Communist principles of economic exchange”.\(^{50}\) Turner (1997) makes a well-quoted and common definition of “institution” as

[a] complex of positions, roles, norms and values lodged in particular types of social structures and organizing relatively stable patterns of human activity with respect to fundamental problems in producing life-sustaining resources, in reproducing individuals, and in sustaining viable societal structures within a given environment.\(^{51}\)

Thus, broadly speaking, the term institution covers structures or mechanisms of social order governing the behavior of a set of the individuals within a community. Institutions can be classified in terms of layers. The core layer is the fundamental structure of a political and social regime. Institutions there are often described as repressive, authoritarian or democratic. Any institutional change on this level usually requires a fundamental change of regime. China’s present ideology does not allow an opposition party and mandates that the CCP control any social movement as well as economic development. Regime changes are of course fundamentally unthinkabl.

The second level of institutions accommodates, for example, an economy’s legal institutions. In China, governmental branches and functional working units often issue regulations and biding guidelines with only party acquiescence.

Level three of institutions is rather technological. It refers to managerial arrangements made by bureaucrats but aimed at promoting civil participation, bureaucratic professionalism and “scientific” decision-making. For example, China’s entry into the World Trade Organization (WTO) involved amending more than 140 laws, and repealing another more than 570 laws and regulations.\(^{52}\) Level three laws and regulations deal in detail with customs clearance, intellectual property rights protection, environmental protection, labor rights, etc. Apparently, these legal changes are part of China’s instructional changes in the


\(^{52}\) Zeng Jianmin, speech at the Fourth Plennum sessions of the Ninth People’s Congress, March 4, 2001; see also: China’s Foreign Trade Policy after WTO. Available at: http://ias.cass.cn/en/show_project_ls.asp?id=642 ; Accessed on 2015-08-01.
reform era.

Table 1 – Examples of Institutional Transformation

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Institutional Transformation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Definition</td>
<td>Any structure or mechanism of social order and cooperation governing the behavior of a set of individuals within a community.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Facets (of changes)</td>
<td>1. Regime: Repressive/authoritative/democratic</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2. Legal (enacting, revision or abolition of laws, regulations and rules/administrative regulations/guidelines)</td>
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<td>3. Launching, reforming or banning organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examples</td>
<td>The Abolition of Compulsory Custody and Repatriation System (adopted);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bobai County Portest agianst Family Planning Policies (adopted)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Letter Visits System;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Public Hearing System;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grassroots level institutional innovation in Wenling</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: based on studies developed by Huntington (1965), Turner (1997), and also by the observation of the writer. The table was elaborated by the writer.

China has been constantly reforming its institutions for more than three decades, but the basic CCP one-party and communist regime have not changed much along the years. This is especially true in the legal system with the myriad regulations adopted since economic liberalization. China even revised its constitution in 1982, considered remarkable since the CCP plays such an eminent role in the political process. The constitution and its supporting legislation hardly matter when the party’s interests are at stake, so any changes could be regarded as such legal and administrative changes.

3.3. Behavior Changes

The important changes in government behavior usually relate to government actions...
and mannerisms in dealing with other systems or individuals. Recent research has demonstrated how government behavior should change normatively. Scholars suggested that the Chinese government should adjust its overemphasis on GDP growth and attach more importance to social security provision. It should move from pre-approval to real time inspection (exemplified by the State Council’s cancelling 87 items approved measures in August 2014). And it should move from management-centeredness to service-centeredness, from leadership to negotiation, and from a quantity to a quality-orientation.

Government behavior is most clearly indicated by whether it responds to social stimuli in a repressive, coercive or persuasive manner. In reality, governmental response tends to vary from case to case. It is quite context-specific. In addressing to some crisis, officials tend to apply multiple means in its different stages and in dealing with different groups.

Table 2 – Examples of Government: Behavior Changes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Governmental actions and mannerisms in dealing with other systems or individuals, as well as the physical environment. It is the government’s response to various stimuli or inputs, whether internal or external, conscious or subconscious, overt or covert, voluntary or involuntary.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facets (of changes)</td>
<td>Instrument: Repressive/coercive/persuasive; Responsiveness; Interaction Pattern: centralized or democratic; elitist or populist; Motivation: people-centered or party-centered; Transparency: Open/transparent or otherwise; Decision-making Mobilization: Institutional/other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examples</td>
<td>Xiamen PX Protest (adopted) Qian Yunhui case in Zhejiang (adopted)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: based on studies developed by Minton and Khale (2014), Zhu (2015), and also

by the observation of the writer. The table was elaborated by the writer.

Secondly, responsiveness. It means how a government responds to the incident constitutes one major criterion to judge a government’s behavior. There are sub-criterions that may help us to understand what constitute government behaviors and what do not: Firstly, one can see whether there is a response? Since this research addresses major social incidents or crisis where the governments are supposed to take their respective responsibilities. Unable to do this shows lack of accountability of the government; Secondly, the timeliness of governmental response, namely, how fast do the governments respond to the incidents? Thirdly, if the manner of the governmental response is performed in a centralized or democratic manner? Does it follow an elitist or populist approach? And fourth, in a regime where the party-state relationship matters, sometimes the government need to take into consideration both guidelines from party leaders and the need to address the emergency based on bureaucratic logic which are not always consistent.

3.4. Policy Adjustment

A policy is typically described as a principle or rule to guide action and achieve a desired outcome. The term does not normally denote what is actually done, which is normally referred to as a procedure or protocol.\(^55\) In this study, a policy is made by a responsible government branch in settling a major group incident by addressing societal appeals, leading and dominating crisis response, and conducting follow-ups, often under domestic and international pressure. It is often a principled guide based on which the administrative or executive branches of the state take relevant action.\(^56\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy Adjustment</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


which is normally referred to as procedure or protocol.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facets (of changes)</th>
<th>Concrete policy output</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Examples</td>
<td>Multiple diplomatic cases such as the Chinese fighter plane’s collision with a U.S. surveillance plane in 2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>South-North Water Transfer plan during 1958-1968 compared with that during 2008-2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wenzhou train wreck</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wukan land protest and democratic movement (adopted)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dalian PX protest (adopted)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: based on studies developed by Andersen (2005), Wolf and Mark (2007), and also by the observation of the writer. The table was elaborated by the writer.

A policy is different from an emergency response measure adopted at a particular time for a particular purpose. A policy attempts a one-fits-all pattern that is often adopted repeatedly and consistently, but indiscriminately. A policy often takes the forms of a comprehensive statement made in the form of a declaration, report, news release, or authoritative announcements (often by a responsible official) about the general goals and interests of a government branch. It can also involve very specific operating guidelines for a specific incident, such as for rescuing people, relocating people in a disaster, making compensation, or disclosing necessary information to the public. A policy is intended to have a result, which can have positive or negative effect on different citizens.

4. Structure of Dissertation

The dissertation will be developed into 4 major parts that are logically combined but analytically independent, complemented by introduction and conclusion.

The introduction provides basic background of the motivation of the research and what the writer intends to develop. Based on logically review of existing spectrum on China’s decision-making and governance (more broadly, Chinese democratization) and their absence of more conclusive position to account for the rise of societal forces and their increasingly active engagement with the political process. A basic review and evaluation will be made concerning the rise of social forces and the domestic and international drives.
of their rise. The writer will also introduce the concept of contentious politics and how they correlate to the China’s public incidents at the moment. The writer will also make clarifications about definitions, research methods, and analyzing framework of this dissertation.

Part One is made up of five chapters. The writer will respectively review existing literatures (Chapter 1), outline China’s evolving discourse, changes and continuities of China’s political decision-making so as to indicate why global and domestic political development and the CCP’s identity and task changes favored social participation (Chapters 2 and 3). The author will also review the development of China’s societal forces and their initial role in decision-making (Chapter 4). As a background, the author will also introduce the definition of group incident and societal forces and the analytical framework of this societal role in decision-making (Chapter 5).

Part Two comprises two cases that respectively illustrate the institutional implications of societal engagement. To be concrete, the writer will based on the intuitional implications of societal involvement on the cases of the Compulsory Custody and Repatriation System as example of successful case (Chapter 6), and Bobai County’s protest against the Family Planning Policy as a failed case (Chapter 7). Discription and analysis of the two cases will be followed by comparisons between them so as to see what makes societal involvement successful and what makes it unsuccessful.

Part Three comprises two cases that indicate the implications of societal involvement in reshaping government behavior. Xiamen PX protest is illustrated as a successful case (Chapter 8), and; the Qian Yunhui’s suspicious death is illustrated as a failed case (Chapter 9). The writer will compare the two cases so as to see what form of engagement and under what conditions can societal forces change government behavior.

Part Four is also made up of two cases which show the involvement of societal forces in the decision-making. But these two cases show different results. To be concrete, the writer respectively chooses Wukan land protest as a successful case which societal engagement led to positive policy changes (Chapter 10), and Dalian PX protest which government policy actually remains unchanged (Chapter 11). In-depth comparison of the two cases indicates that there may be other factors that affect the result of societal involvement.

Concluding part evaluates the role of social activists, professionals, mass media and public opinion, scholars and intellectuals, NGOs and other societal forces in China’s
decision-making during public incidents. The writer makes tentative assessment of the institutional, behavioral and policy implications of societal involvement in decision-making and by close comparison, figured out under what conditions societal involvement may be successful and what form of involvement under what conditions may not.
Part I –
Evolving Context, Structure, Process of Chinese Political Decision-making
& Emerging Societal Forces
Chapter 1: Literature Review

Along with the rise and fall of the above-mentioned three approaches, namely the congressional, consultative and intraparty approach, to China’s democratization, there is another academic spectrum of scholars who believe in other possibility. In “What If China Does Not Democratize?: Implications for War and Peace (Asia and the Pacific)”, (2000), scholars from the U.S. and China discussed the implications for peace and war under the condition of China as a sustained autocracy. Views vary and the book seems to be attaching greater importance to the international effect of China’s slow or reluctant democratization. However, consistency of the book lies in that it reveals that scholars no longer deem democratization as the destiny for China and its China Communist Party’s monopoly. This was an important academic turn in China studies, since then, scholars of China studies have began to move towards two schools of thoughts The first is called “collapse group” which is based on the assumption that China’s economic growth and political stability will not be sustained without democratization. This group believes that China’s prolonged delay and failure to democratize will finally lead the largest autocracy into collapse. The second school of thoughts believes that the CCP regime and the authoritarian system will remain stable and resilient.

Among those supporters of China’s “collapse”, Gordon Chang (2001), a Chinese American, is the most cited scholar, who believes the collapse of China is inevitable due to the mismanagement of the CCP. The list of reasons includes: deflation, in efficiency of state-owned enterprises, banks with bad debts, Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) decline, and party corruption, all leading China on the “road to ruin”. Other reasons include conflict across the Taiwan Strait and accession to the world Trade Organization (WTO). However, this seems not to have happened. Corruption continued to worsen over the past decade, and the number of corrupted leaders arrested skyrocketed. The most recent case is the imprisonment of Chongqing Party’s head, and China’s once political rising star Bo Xilai, and Zhou Yongkang, formerly a standing member of China’s Politburo, China’s nuclear power concern. Following both of them are top military leaders, which reveals how serious it is, but also displayed the resolution of the present leadership in countering corruption.

When Gordon Chang gradually loses his audience due to his mistaken prediction, he provides further evidence of why China’s collapse is delayed rather than impossible. In an article Chang published in 2011, the year he predicted China’s collapse would come, while admitting he was wrong in averring that China’s WTO entry will contribute to its collapse, against the reality that China experienced an unprecedented rise after the WTO entry, he proposed another three reasons in support of his judgment:

1) China’s growth is based on Deng’s reform 30 years ago while the present Chinese present leadership is reverting this process;
2) China’s growth in the past was based on its integration with the world economy which stopped after the 2008 financial meltdown;
3) China grew because its population was young while it is now faced with and aging population.

As far as the research is concerned, Chang also regards the 280,000 "mass incidents", and the recent wave of uprisings, insurrections, rampages and bombings as the source of China’s restlessness, as the Riot in Wukan indicated.59

Compared with Chang’s approach that mixes up all political, economic and social problems and claims that each of them would lead to unexpected result that would head inevitably to collapse, some scholars focus on the economic record and present trend of China. They believe that China’s structural economic problems are epochal and China’s rapid economic growth “is over”. Their evidence is the mounting debt and rising internal distortions. The urgent task of shifting toward greater domestic consumption will come with political costs, but Beijing must increase household income and reduce its reliance on investment to avoid a fall.60

James R. Gorrie (2013) focuses on the potential risks behind the seemingly perfect figures. For him, China is on the path to a complete economic and social meltdown, which will have a devastating impact on the entire global economy. This despite China's average 10% annual growth in gross domestic product (GDP) over the past decade; its position as the dominant consumer of raw commodities and number-one exporter of manufactured

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goods; and the trillions of dollars worth of foreign reserves, and despite the widespread assumption that China is poised to surpass the United States and rise to global supremacy.\textsuperscript{61} Timothy Beardson (2013), on the other hand, delineates the daunting challenges to China’s continued progress ranging from an aging population to a predominantly low-tech economy resulting from a lack of technological innovation, income disparity and insufficient governmental responses.\textsuperscript{62}

Besides the economic approach, leading scholars also see a crisis with China’s political system, the odd nexus between surging economy and slowed political reform, economic liberalism and political authoritarianism, the inconsistencies and tensions between them all means uncertainty and something unusual. Not like Chang who based his disillusion of China’s collapse on a compilation of problems, or those political economists or neo-Marxists that see the political consequences of economic causes, Susan Shirk (2007) saw the structural source of vulnerability of the CCP regimes: China is a fragile superpower who looks increasingly powerful from the outside but on the interior increasingly fragile.\textsuperscript{63} The key to its fragility, Susan believes, lies in the non-democracy nature of its regime. The fragility also lies in China’s deeply felt insecurity, “China’s leaders face a troubling paradox: the more developed and prosperous the country becomes, the more insecure and threatened they feel”.\textsuperscript{64} Susan also realized the economic risks for China, since such an economic crash will throw millions of workers out of their jobs or sends millions of depositors to withdraw their savings from the shaky banking system.\textsuperscript{65}

Another leading China scholar holds a similar view about the CCP’s future. Pei (2006) questioned the three central explanations academia adopts to explain the tricks for China’s continuous reform and extraordinary development: sustained economic development will lead to political liberalization and democratization; gradualist economic transition is a strategy superior to the "shock therapy" prescribed for the former Soviet Union; and a neo-authoritarian developmental state is essential to economic takeoff. Like Shirk, Pei sees the CCP’s reluctant political reform and the overconcentration of power has led to pervasive corruption and a breakdown in political accountability, he has also detected the risks of local

\textsuperscript{64} Shirk, S. Fragile Superpower, p. 5.
\textsuperscript{65} Shirk, S. Fragile Superpower, p. 69.
party heads to privatize state authority. Therefore, China will be trapped in partial economic and political reforms, instead of evolving toward a full market economy or democracy.\textsuperscript{66}

In general, most scholars who cast doubt about China’s continuous rise and the sustainability of the CCP regime have their evidence centered on the CCP. Indeed, few issues affect the future of China more than the nature and evolution of the CCP and the state government it leads. International pressure and interference may lead to the CCP’s policy changes, but will not bring structural consequences. At least, no one would expect the CCP to compromise its status as ruling power for any reason, as Korea did in the late 1980s, or Central Asia, Middle East or North Africa in the new century. The “self-decay” (outmoded party doctrine, corruption and slowed reform) of the party, the undermined legitimacy, erosion of the party’s organization, malfunction of party orders from top level [“orders do not often come from Zhongnanhai” (zheng ling bu chu zhong nan hai)], weakened party control over its local branches and the latter’s dysfunction, and declined organizational penetration power, remain the core reason for its future of collapse. The CCP has seen its own legitimacy crisis, its reluctance in taking political reform (any such reform, e.g. free speech and association, or open for multi-party competition will lead to loss of power), and its reckless investment in “stability maintenance” (wei wen) indicated somewhat its fear for communist disintegration and regime collapse, making it very similar to the Kuomintang (KMT) in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

However, the prospect of China’s collapse is not yet likely to happen, especially when China still grows and reforms are still being carried out. This is an enormous difference from the USSR before its collapse. Since political reform of the USSR in the 1980s almost went into a stalemate for decades until Mikhail Gorbachev assumed power in1985. Its economy had been slowed by its military build-up and its society had become very rigid with the disappearance of its flexibility. Widespread disappointment about the party was accompanied by a sense of hopelessness for individuals. The case is quite different for present day China, whose economy continues to grow at a relatively high rate, highest among all major powers. The society is rigid, however basically well-ordered: the higher education system and public servant recruiting system still functions, the fast urbanization and economic development nurtures various chances for the grassroots. Political reform still goes on and the top leadership is committed to addressing the existing

problems of corruption, environmental degradation, nationwide injustice, e.g. those people that are depressed about skyrocketing housing prices, high deflation rates, the financial burden for medical care, social disparity and injustice, they still rely on the government to address those issues. In one word, the CCP regime has resilience.

China’s economic record is even more exceptional. 15 years after its accession into the WTO, China has overtaken the major western powers of Italy, France, Britain, Germany (2007), and Japan (2010) to become the world’s second largest economy, only after the United States and in 2015, China’s economy reached 60% of the latter, a percentage the USSR never achieved during the Cold War. It has overtaken Germany and the U.S. to become the world’s largest exporter of merchandise and trading nation. It is the largest trading partner for over 130 out of the world’s 230 economies. It has the largest trade surplus and foreign currency reserves. Though the Chinese economy has slowed down in the past two years and it has been faced with severe structural problems with its financial system, a huge industrial capacity surplus, environmental deterioration, and widening income disparity, it is fairly hard to foresee a major economic crisis, let alone the “collapse”.

Given this, then, would a bottom-up social revolution be possible? Studies have revealed that revolutions took place when living standards of bourgeois were improving instead of deteriorating, as was the case of French revolution. As Chinese political liberalism is growing, the possibility for bottom-up democratization remains widely open. Supporters of this possibility are, but not necessarily confined to Arthur Waldron, Jeffrey Wasserstrom, Wang Shaoguang, Chen’an, He Qinglian, the Hong Kong’s observer Wu Hongda and the political scientist Wu Guoguang.

Though, there are widespread dissenters movements all over the country, such a revolution will hardly happen. Firstly, such a revolution lacks social support. Though the disparity is notorious, and the Gini coefficient is relatively high (around 0.5, on a scale from zero to one, which zero means complete equality and one is complete inequality), most individuals have their living standards have improved as the economy grows, the grassroots are fairly clear that any revolution and social unrest would be disastrous for the country and for individuals. As long as the economy still grows, and each individual gains, Chinese people would not risk their hard won social stability and improved livelihood for an unknown future.

Social stability is regarded as a top priority by the Chinese government. Though sometimes the concept was misused by some local governments for repressive purposes, it
was basically accepted by the general public and therefore has become a kind of social consensus. Historical memory of China’s turbulent past remains deep in the minds of the Chinese people. They are quite wary of the prospect of a violent revolution, which is too destructive while its future remains uncertain. China has experience of pursuing democracy in an “unusual” manner; the most recent is undoubtedly Tiananmen Square in 1989, suppression of which, for most Chinese, was more a reminder of endemic political chaos and prolonged national setbacks than an inspiration for future democratic movements. Intellectuals nowadays deem similar sort of mass movements, as ideals doomed to failure and sacrifice unworthy.

International experiences revealed the same, unfortunately. The collapse of the USSR and its decline as a secondary power are regarded as a very negative case of hasty democratization leading to disastrous results for a once proud super power. Lessons from former USSR members in the late 1990s and the early 2000s, and the cases of Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Syria revealed that any hasty transition and revolution would be too destructive with an uncertain future. The cases are often referred to by political intellectual elites as evidence of a “Western conspiracy” that the Chinese must be vigilant against. Some political scholars believe democracy is an effective tool for the west to “contain, Westernize, and split China.”67 Other scholars, such as Pan Wei from Beijing University, believe the CCP will lose power and China may disintegrate if it adopts democracy now.68 The above-mentioned cases are often cited to testify how democracy may lead to chaos.69

Last but not the least, as China develops, its people are expecting a scenario of national rejuvenation as “corroboree” (Les formes elementaires de la vie religieuse, Émile Durkheim, 1912) embedded in the “China Dream” proposed by President Xi Jinping. By calling for the whole nation to work for the national rejuvenation, the CCP as a party has smartly and closely bonded itself with the future of the state, as well as the nation. For a people from a great civilization but who had also suffered from century long humiliation, the catchphrase of Chinese dream and national rejuvenation was very appealing to the whole

population, especially “at a time when we have never been closer to national rejuvenation”. Chinese people may choose to abide by this proposal and allow time for that possibility. Therefore, most Chinese people believe they have a stake in ruling out any possibility of turbulence or hasty democratization. Therefore, the regime has shown incredible resilience as was proposed by Andrew Nathan in 2003.

1. Authoritarian Resilience, Party Adaptability, Factional Politics and Intraparty Democracy

Scholars began to be aware of the fact that the CCP had withstood the tide of democratization that wiped out the entire Soviet Union block and against the assertion of the triumph of the democratic world and the coming of the “end of history”, Chinese economy experienced the most rapid growth after strongman Deng Xiaoping finished his 1992 South Patrol (nan xun) and decided to fully embrace the market economy on the 14th Party Congress. China’s hard line military gesture during the 1995 Taiwan Strait Crisis and the 1996 missile test also displayed the CCP’s firm control of power, as without strong social support, the CCP would not have been able to take such high risk actions. Scholars of China studies started to probe into the tricks for the CCP’s lasting dynamism. Through intensive review of literature on Communist and Leninist parties, especially though comparison between the CCP and KMT, Columbia University scholar Bruce Dickson found the sustainability of China’s communist regime lies in the “adaptability” of the CCP. For him, the present CCP is very best regarded as being in the adaptation phase, of the three phase of development of Leninist Parties, namely “transition, solidification, adaptation”, a concept originally proposed by Samuel Huntington, though he denied the possibility for a similar transition as the KMT.

By absorbing private entrepreneurs into the party and the raise of the “three representatives”, the CCP hopes to extend and enlarge itself from an alliance of peasants and workers to a union that covers a wide range of “advanced” social and economic foundations. David Shambaugh (2009) assesses the strengths and weaknesses, durability, adaptability, and potential longevity of China's Communist Party (hereafter Communist Party or CCP). He argues that although the CCP has been in a protracted state of atrophy, it has undertaken

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72 Ibid.
a number of adaptive measures to revitalize and strengthen the party’s rule. Shambaugh’s investigation draws on a unique set of inner-Party documents and interviews, and he finds that the Communist Party is resilient and will continue to retain its grip on power.73

2. China’s Factional Politics and Decision-making

Though most outsiders believed that the Communist Party remained a monolithic, united entity, some studies attached importance to the effect of disputes among the Chinese leadership upon the Chinese decision-making process.74 In particular, the intra-party disputes that emerged before and after the June 4 students’ movement that brought to the surface the different factions among the top leadership. Some even foresaw from the struggle among the factions the prospect for major changes in the leadership structure, decision-making and democratization. Scholars believe that the disputes and factional competition within the CCP will finally result in the split of the party, and finally evolve into a multi-party system under the support of an open-minded leader who would take top-down reforms to face arising challenges, as the KMT did in the late 1980s and the early 1990s that ultimately led to democratization of Taiwan. Factional struggles, for distinctive ideals, “routes” and leadership, date back to the early years of the CCP’s creation. However, open disputes after the June 4 students’ movement has attracted intensive scholarly interest because of the reformist context within China and the tide of democratization internationally.

Because of Deng Xiaoping’s indisputable dominance among the Eight Elders,75 factional struggles from 1989 through 1992 ended up with the success of Deng that allowed the country to warmly embrace the market economy, a major decision confirmed by the 14th party congress. Deng’s success is

“not just because his followers outnumbered those of Chen Yun (the relatively conservative factional leader), but because, like Mao, Deng was the only one in leadership who had control of the mountaintops in both the Party and military systems”.76

75 The members were represented by Deng Xiaoping, Chen Yun, Li Xiannian, Peng Zhen, Yang Shangkun, Bo Yibo, Wang Zhen, and Song Renqiong.
76 Huang Jing, Factionalism in Chinese Communist Politics. Cambridge, United Kingdom:
As the Elders gradually faded away in China’s political decision-making process, following the ending of the Central Advisory Commission in 1992, factional competition based on ideology and “struggle of routes” among the elders gave way to the overwhelming task of economic development in the 1990s, which nurtured diversified interest groups and a plural society, which in return, has had major implications for the intriguing process of decision-making.

Along with factions within the top leadership, bureaucratic factions also emerged following the political reform in the 1980s. However, because of the limited openness of China politics and the consequent inaccessibility of information and data, estern scholars of China studies saw China’s foreign policy decision-making as a window to open China’s decision-making black box. Arthur Doak Barnett (1985), in “The Making of Foreign Policy in China: Structure and Process”, systematically examined the roles different institutions play and the patterns of interaction among them. This is an important pioneering account in that his research relied heavily on interviews with Chinese officials and scholars that are necessary and effective especially given China’s regime. The findings are also inspiring. The study revealed China’s policy making is becoming increasingly systematic and professionalized; policies are made taking into account the concerns of various institutions. He also depicted the increasing role of the younger generation and the tension between the young negation leaders who could carry out bold actions in reform and opening-up and the elders who deemed regime security as their top priority and therefore were relatively “conservative”.

3. From Faction Politics to Intraparty Democracy

Factional politics in the two decades following the 1989 incident have become full-fledged and have drawn intensive scholarly attention. For the many, without a paramount leaders like Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping, the 80 million members would have varying perspectives on social, economic, political, military and foreign affairs based on their very diverse backgrounds, education, occupations, and more importantly interests. For some, the collective leadership of the nine members of the Politburo Standing Committee is evidence of factionalism.


Reorganization of China’s political biology finally resulted in the competition and tensions between two different camps. One of the camps (or factions), according to Li Cheng, is the elitist princelings who come from families of veteran revolutionaries or of high-ranking officials who began their careers in the economically well-developed coastal cities; and the other is the populist Youth League who come from less-privileged families and developed their careers based on accumulated leadership experience in less-developed western or inland provinces. The elitist faction favors the interest of entrepreneurs while the populist coalition usually represents the interest of the farmers, migrant workers and the urban poor. After the revolutionary elders faded away, no leader from either camp has indisputable authority over both. Both camps even have their domestic disputes. Generally speaking, the above-mentioned two factions do exist; though the party has always promoted a unified voice, and the boundary tends to be unclear and ambiguous. The two camps have no difference in safeguarding ideological and territorial independence of China and maintenance of the party-state regime. However, they have distinct interests, priorities and plans for China’s reform and opening-up, as well as foreign policy. This bifurcation has created within China's one-party polity something approximating a mechanism of checks and balances in the decision-making process and to some extent undermines the autocratic rule of the CCP.

Regularization of competition between the two factions for power, influence, and control over policy initiatives and their compromise, coordination and cooperation differentiate the present decision-making approach from the strongman era before the early 1990s and the “patronage approach” throughout the two decades that followed. International scholars in recent years are particularly interested in the intra-party democracy prospect. Most recently, the Fourth Plenary Session of the Seventeenth Central Committee of the CCP, in September 2009, called for promoting democracy within the Party. The CCP even regard intra-party democracy as “the lifeblood” (dang de sheng ming).

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The intra-party approach is rather pragmatic in that it does not seek multi-party competition nor does it seek the routine democratic procedures of voting, and a general election, it even does not even desire for the immediate release of free press and association and other liberal rights. Instead, it does not hurt the ideological and regime security of China. The intra-party democracy not only reflects the need for institutionalizing the new rules and norms of elite politics in the People’s Republic of China (PRC), but might also provide for an incremental and manageable experiment of Chinese-style democracy. In times of an ever-growing party role and the absence of an opposition party, a multi-party system can hardly be acceptable. Intra-party competition and “puling and hauling” based on distinct interest groups may still render some positive results for the party and the country’s possible transition. Chinese elites and the grassroots may accept this approach since they may feel at ease with transitions incremental over time and manageable in scale.

4. Limitation of Previous Studies

Generally speaking, Western scholars and Chinese scholars have different approaches in their research concerning the CCP. Though most insightful and inspiring, the limitations are apparent.

Firstly, in comparison with academic endeavors on societal involvement, on-track or off-track, existing researches has focused exclusively on the elites level as attested to in the introduction. Those articles on China’s civil society tend to draw from Western experience that focuses on the tension between economic and intellectual elites and the political elites which is true in China. Other studies who do keep a keen eye on civil societies tend to be conducted in a separate and fragmented manner, or generally fall into the revolution approach. Therefore, they basically failed to take into account how the societal forces interact with the regime, and therefore neglected another major possibility conducive for Chinese political decision-making. Generally speaking, former civil society studies tend to rely on studies of non-governmental organizaitons (NGOs) whose activities have been under overall scrutiny and strictly limited. Admittedly, they do play a key role in the many cases of state-society interaction, and in most of the cases their participation is vital (if we take a

84 See footnote n. 1 and 2 in the introduction, for instance.
broader means), as they function in a way very different from those in democracies, making it very difficult to examine Chinese societal forces/civil society.85

Secondly, while late cases have been studied, these are conducted in an isolated manner, and the particularities of one single case does not reveal the whole picture and can seldom tell the whole picture of China’s social movement, participation and contention.86 A cluster of cases allows the author to find something consistent and regular. For example, what societal forces are there? How do they interact with the government and among themselves? What implications and limitations their involvement has institutionally, behaviorally or even conceptually? The writer intends to adopt a holistic view with the aim of answering these intriguing questions.

Thirdly, Chinese social stratification has experienced drastic changes over the past ten years, which has had greater implications for decision-making than ever.87 Generally, stratification is the result of the power structure of a society and further illustrates the structure class it determines the pattern of decision-making, participation and inter-reactions between decision-making and social participation.

Sociologists have studied the new stratification in depth.88 However, scholars of political science and decision-making have not responded sufficiently and rarely have there been recent evaluations.89 This study tries to evaluate how societal forces involve the government whereas the regime basically remains authoritarian and less responsive, with very limited channels of participation. While the CCP as the largest vested interest group, it is reluctant to push forward any reform that threatens its one-party regime, on the other hand, it is fully aware of the risks of expected scenarios and contingencies if it does not

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85 Ma Qiusha (2005); Sutter, Robert (1998); see also: The economist. Chinese civil society: Beneath the glacier. April 12, 2014.
86 For references and details see discussion on Chapter: the Emerging Societal Forces and Political Decision-making.
screen out social dissents.

5. Party State-Societal Interaction: the New Possibility

Following a consistent logic of scholarly academic interest, one can find that scholars of Chinese politics tend to rely exclusively on the elitist top-down approach. For instance, they first saw possibility of democratization from factional groups within the CCP both during the Cultural Revolution and after Tiananmen Square. Since the late 1990s, the growing autonomy of provincial governments was keenly studied, with most people regarding economic growth and the emerging middle class as the greatest potential. In the past ten years after 2000, academic attempts were made for reform with parliamentary democracy (National People’s Congress) and negotiating democracy centered on the reinforcement of the National People’s Political Consultative Conference, inter-party democracy, etc. Seldom have scholars regarded the grassroots-led bottle up approach as possible.

It is understandable that scholars would believe that Chinese political regimes have basically remained unchanged over the past three decades, if their analyses were exclusively made on political, economic, and even intellectual elites. Conventional evidence supporting this perspective normally concentrates on the one-party monopoly of the CCP, political authoritarianism, the state government’s dominance in people’s economic and social life, etc. A most recent heated discussion in China Studies academia is focused on the buzzword of “Beijing Consensus”, a term proposed by Joshua Cooper Ramo as compared to the “Washington Consensus”. According to him and the most common generalization is that the China model could be best characterized by “market economy and one party regime

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94 Some of the exceptions can be found in: Perry, Elizabeth J.; Goldman, Merle. (ed.) Grassroots Political Reform in Contemporary China. Harvard University Press, 2009.
It shows the widespread disappointment and lost confidence of the Western society in the democratization of China as well as that in their own long believed democratic political models.

However, a few prominent scholars began to take into consideration the influence of various social factors, namely public opinions, media, think tanks and the business sector. David Lampton (2001), for example, examined how China’s foreign and security policies have been shaped by an altered domestic agenda, dynamics of bureaucratic politics, changing structures and roles of institutions and localities, changing views of the elites, increasingly diverse social forces and public opinions, and the growing influences of globalization and multilateral regimes during the era of reform.96

6. Economic Priority of the CCP and Growth of Societal Space

However, if we move from the structure of the party-state system to the economical and social sector, people’s confidence may grow. As was always the case in most of the revolutions, fundamental changes often appear first in the social sector in an imperceptible way, but is nurtured, accumulates and develops until a full-fledged event that eventually transforms the human community comprehensively and fundamentally.97 One major such social development different from Mao’s times is the emergence and growth of societal forces (NGOs for example) and their increasingly active involvement in the policy-making process, both in domestic and foreign affairs. This is, on the one hand, because the CCP is engaged in the overwhelming task of economic development and therefore has loosened its control over the society. Compared with the economic and political sectors, the CCP and governmental role in the social sector is relatively weak. This is better displayed by government inefficiency in the welfare system that lagged behind economic expansion. Another explanation is that economic growth strengthened the legitimacy of the CCP’s regime and therefore the CCP and the state government no longer needed to exert strong control over the society.98 Whatever the reason, governmental weakness nurtured civil forces

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and allowed opportunities for their fast growth, while conceptual changes with the CCP leadership and institutional changes with the political regimes provided access to participation of civil forces in the policy-making process.

On the other hand, various factors have jointly stimulated the increasing demand for political participation among the grassroots, and the Chinese decision-making bodies are faced with increasingly powerful domestic pressure. In the nexus between economic elements and political change, economic foundation constitutes the root for political change (upper architecture). This is especially true in an ostensibly socialist country.\textsuperscript{99} In terms of industrial output, there was a huge decline in the share of state-owned enterprises (SOEs) from 78\% in 1978 to 41\% in 2002 and further to 27\% in 2012 while private sector (foreign investment included) rose from 0.4\% in 1978 to 41\% in 2002 and further to 73\% in 2012.\textsuperscript{100} According to the Third National Economic Census carried out in 2014, China has 5,604 million private enterprises, accounting for 70\% of the 8,006 million businesses.\textsuperscript{101} This trend can also be proved by the employment data. By the end of 2013, 143.85 million of Chinese were working with private companies or self-employed, accounting for roughly 40\% of urban employment and 90\% of job creation.\textsuperscript{102} According to Chinese data, the new non-public sector accounted for 80\% urban employment, 60\% of China’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and contributed 50\% of China’s taxes.\textsuperscript{103} In urban cities like Beijing, non-public organizations accounted for up to 80\% of the city’s social organizations and 85\% of employment by September 2014.\textsuperscript{104}

In the wave of surging new interests, businesses, and classes, five changes deserve academic attention:

1) corporate pluralization nourished by a market economy and the consequent changes with the social stratification;
2) the emerging of professional groups and the middle class;
3) the growing democratic consciousness among the masses;

\textsuperscript{99} Nelson, Joan M.; Tilly, Charles; Walker, Lee (eds), 1999.
\textsuperscript{100} China Statistics Year Book (Zhong guo tong ji chu ban she), 2000, 2003, 2013.
\textsuperscript{102} China Industrial and Business Newspaper, (zhong guo gong shang bao): Number of International Organizations reached 60 million and Total Capital reached a hundred billion, February 27, 2014.
\textsuperscript{103} Huang Mengfu. Available at: http://www.acfic.org.cn/Web/c_00000001000100030011/d_0840.htm., 2015-03-25.
\textsuperscript{104} Niu Youcheng, Speech made at Beijing Federation of Industry & Commerce, the 13th Congress of Beijing Federation of Industry & Commerce. Available at: http://test.bjgsl.org.cn/index.php?m=special&c=index&a=show&id=11, 2015-03-05.
4) the explosive increase in the number of people’s groups and societies (gongmin shehui tuanti); and

5) the development of democracy at lower level governments as discussed in the Chapter of the Emerging Societal Forces and Political Decision-making.

7. Domestic-International Interaction and Societal Participation

Owing to China’s particular political system, international pressure has always been an important source for domestic reform. In an increasingly globalized world, there is a general tendency towards internationalization of a country’s domestic affairs. Namely, domestic affairs always bring “international” consequences and how a state government deals with its domestic affairs is now under intensive scrutiny by foreign governments and civil societies. Whenever there is a major case of environmental degradation, local corruption, violation of people’s liberal right (or more commonly, interest, either collective or individual), international media coverage, official statement from an government, report from an professional NGO combined will create a powerful international community that the Chinese government cannot just simply ignore.\(^\text{105}\)

International pressure can also exert direct influence over domestic politics (Katzenstein, 1978; Keohane and Milner, 1996; Garret and Lange, 1991). Not surprisingly, the air pollution in Mongolia and China has sometimes affected Korea and Japan and the latter is concerned about China’s domestic environmental policies. Because of the mutual economic dependence, for instance, the China-U.S. Strategic & Economic Dialogue has discussed each time the two countries’ respective financial and fiscal policies, besides global issues of illicit nuclear and radioactive materials trafficking, transnational crime, non-proliferation and other issues. China is often urged to lever the playing field for its domestic market, spend more on social welfare and improve human rights, which are typically domestic issues.\(^\text{106}\)

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\(^{105}\) See especially the statement of Robert Zoellick (2005) who called China as a “responsible great power”.

\(^{106}\) The U.S.-China Strategic and Economic Dialogue (S&ED) is a high tank (often led by US state secretary and Chinese vice premier) cooperation framework where the two sides held in-depth discussions on major bilateral, regional, and global issues. The 7th dialogue was held on June 22-24, 2015, in Washington, D.C., Secretary of State John Kerry, special representative of President Barack Obama, and State Councilor Yang Jiechi, special representative of President Xi Jinping, chaired the Strategic Track, which included participation from senior officials from across the two governments.
While economic globalization may lead to the unification of domestic social forces and changes in one nation’s policy or even political institutions (Garrett and Lange, 1991), globalization of values, norms and international regimes greatly affects the behavior patterns of national leaders and the policies of nation states, since many of the values, norms and regimes gradually get internalized (Krasner, 1983). Though the CCP has been emphasizing its uniqueness and particularities, it is true that the CCP has realized that China does benefit from globalization and that many of the norms, such as democracy, welfare, and government accountability are universal values. While China has a different understanding of the Western concept of human rights, China deems the collective right for development as one of the most important human rights for developing countries, China finds the “Western” values are compatible to its own concept of “people centeredness” and is connected to the Chinese philosopher Mencius’ thought that “the people is most valuable, the state is less, the emperor least”. As China is increasingly integrated into the world system, more international norms will be internalized through the process of socialization. This is significant since without conceptual improvement any further institutional breakthrough would be either impossible or ungrounded.

Amongst all the complexity and ostensible rigidness of Chinese politics, regular interactions between domestic and foreign affairs are discerned. Distinguished Chinese scholar Zhang Baijia (2002), after examining the history of twentieth century China and the world, found that the three major shifts of world structure typically coincide with that of China, he further arrives at the conclusion that self-change is China’s major source of national power and that China influences the world mainly by changing itself.107 Until after the 1990s, an increasing number of scholars began to pay attention to the international implication of domestic factors, with their research covering various fields and in diversified approaches.108 This is partly because with the expansion of its economic, political capacity, China is exerting a growing impact on the world politics. This is partially because the third-

generation Chinese political leaders are becoming more confident, more open, willing to allow more active involvement of societal forces in the decision-making process, which may nurture fundamental structural transformation in the Chinese decision-making regime.

8. Technological Innovation and Its Impact on Societal Participation

Technological progress also contributes to the emergence of societal forces in that it provided the latter with an effective means for their involvement in the decision-making process. For instance, the development of the Internet and other modern communication network, social media, and information-transmitting methods provides the general public with valuable access to various sources of information and essential channels to get their forces united and well-organized (Chase and Mulvenon, 2004). Compared with traditional paper-base newspapers and magazine, television, the Internet, Smartphones, and cameras have played an increasing role in people’s lives. Social media such as Facebook, Twitter, the Chinese version of the Facebook Renren, as well as WeChat, has proved to be vital in some of the cases.  

Technological innovation and the spread of modern transmission methods have contributed a lot to the participation of these societal forces in that they helps to go beyond governmental censorship and control over social reorganization, as it has been indicated in many cases in this study. In one of the major cases, the blind lawyer Cheng Guangcheng, and his supporters known as the four-member group (composed of He Peirong, Guo Yushan, Hu Jia and Miss. Zeng Jinyan, who are all social activists) planned and coordinated with Chen via telecommunication and internet which successfully circumvented government censorship and rescued him out of his remote village surrounded by scores of “guards” sent by local governments. When Chen successfully obtained refuge in the U.S. Embassy in Beijing, this resulted in severe U.S.-China political disputes. The plan succeeded once Miss. Zeng had sent Chen’s real intension of leaving China for U.S. to the press outside of China through Twitter which proved to be very important for the latter settlement of the issue. Miss. Z was able to do so at that time as Twitter and Facebook were still accessible via mobile and Internet or proxy service. Chen’s story revealed how technical developments helped social involvement.

The most recent case that tells the importance of technological developments in

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social involvement is the Tianjin explosion of the chemical stock that claimed the lives of 114 people (by August 20, 2015) in the Tianjin Binghai district in August 12, 2015. The Chinese public does not trust much traditional media, which is under government information control (they receive guidelines from the party propaganda department and release number of casualties provided by government); the Chinese public seldom believes the information released. In this case, the number of casualties, reporting leaders’ guidance and on-site presence, overwhelming coverage on praising heroic deeds of firefighters, condolences to the dead and their relatives without anyone claiming responsibility. The once efficient and relatively safe internet is currently under severe censorship. The government has developed a powerful firewall called “Green Dam”\(^{110}\) which controls information flow from outside by the nine interfaces. Therefore, domestically people rely on the mobile-based WeChat to communicate with other users, calling for help and sending news and pictures from the site of explosion. Via this platform, for instance, timely and original news, instead of government-processed news was released in terms of the harm of chemicals, the severity of the explosion and air pollution, assuring the audience’s access to the truth.

The development of modern media also has a role in promoting international exposure, transparency and publicity as the case of the Wukan village incident. International pressure for democratization and inspections from multiple NGOs and states, making repressive means of settling unrest or social movement no longer applicable, as in the latest case of Tunisia, Egypt, and the various color revolutions in Central Asia and North Africa.

9. Societal Participation

Societal participation in decision-making is not something new. In the pre-reform era (1949-1978), there was already social participation by non-party members and “democrats” (min zhu ren shi). One good example is the Hundred Flowers Campaign (da ming da fang) in 1957, when non-party intellectuals were encouraged to criticize the party boldly in order to improve the democracy and efficiency of the party.\(^{111}\) Another wave of social participation by the grassroots was the Cultural Revolution whose anecdotes were already well known to all. Both social participations turned out to be disastrous. The former led to


\(^{111}\) For details, see: MacFarquhar, Roderick. The Hundred Flowers Campaign and the Chinese Intellectuals. Frederick A. Praeger (1960).
the Anti-Rightist movement when up to 550,000 intellectuals were arrested and repressed and marked the beginning of roughly two decades of persecution of intellectuals, the peak time of which was exactly “the Great Cultural Revolution” where participation was made by the “Red Guards” who created the most notorious and absurd chapter in history of Communist movement, if not for modern history. In this sense, regular, ordered and legal participation in modern meaning took place after the Reform and Opening-up period.

After the Reform and Opening-up period (starting form 1978), especially during the 1980s, China experienced a period of unprecedented social freedom and active political participation of the masses which contributed to a handsome increase in the studies of the interplay between domestic and foreign affairs as well as to the honeymoon of the Sino-U.S. relations. Intellectuals in academia have been active and involved in the various issues in economic and political reform as this research has shown. Because economic Reform and Opening-up is a new cause with so many things unknown for the reformers themselves, there is no model to learn from, neither had any Marxist canons taught them what to do. Therefore, political leaders in the 1980s had been open for intellectual discussion for they were keen to learn practical suggestions about pricing reform, land policy, and investment incentives. The most influential case is the Mo Gan Shan (莫干山) Meeting held in September, 1984, attended by 124 young economist scholars selected from authors of more than 1,300 articles, secretaries of national economic leaders, workers from major academic and governmental branches, Zhejiang provincial government, and media. The result of the discussions were reported to top leadership and contributed to the two-track pricing reform in the 1980s.112 Motivated by the second global wave of democratization, colleague students waged another tide of participation and this led to major incident at Tiananmen Square in

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112 The conference was also attended by Mr. Li Luxiang (李鲁湘), then secretary to Premier Zhao Ziyang; Kong Dan (孔丹), secretary to State Councilor and Director of National Economic Committee Zhang Jinfu (张劲夫); Wang Qishan (王岐山), then research fellow from Agricultural Policy Research Section of the Secretariat of CCP Central Committee, now member of the Politburo Standing Committee, Zhang Weiyin (张维迎), Zhou Qiren (周其仁), Zhou Xiaochuan (周小川) and other young scholars who later became very influential for China’s economic reform; the conference were also attended by young workers from CCP Organizational Department, Propaganda Department, CCP Central Committee Economic Leaders Group, Secretariat of the CCP Central Committee, the National Plan Committee, the National Institutional Reform Commission, Ministry of Commerce, Beijing Municipal Government, Xicheng District; Zhejiang Provincial Governor and leaders of its government, universities and academic institutes had supported the conference, Media also played a significant role. The conference was hosted by Economics Weekly (经济学周报), Economic Daily (经济日报), World Economic Herald (世界经济导报) which was forced to stop in 1989, China Broadcasting (中国人民广播电台) and other 10 media organizations.
1989 that called into a halt to student participation. China was met with a setback of political development and intellectuals experienced general depression in the early 1990s. The success of Mo Gan Shan conference and the failure of the 1989 movement also revealed how the effects of societal involvement vary from economic and political sectors.

Entering into the new century, Chinese society has witnessed an ever-growing role of societal forces in the political and social decision-making process. A few examples are merely the tip of the iceberg:

The Custody and Repatriation system, which was adopted in early 1980s, was finally abolished when Chinese media revealed the death of a college student in Guangzhou and incited a heated discussion over the country;

The complicated interplay between provincial government and ministry-level government based on consideration of interest and responsibility in the Shaanxi Huanan Tiger incident, when a Chinese farmer, in support of the local government, claimed that he had managed to take photos of the disappeared Huanan Tiger and therefore proved its existence;

The PX (paraxylene) chemical plant incident in Xiamen, Fujian province, where local residents forced the government to move a major chemical project (which was ranked in the “Eleventh National Five-year Plan”) to a small town in Zhangzhou through the silent protests of “walk”.

Public opinion affected China’s foreign relations as well and a best example is the way the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs negotiated with the U.S. after the U.S. EP-3 surveillance plane collided with a Chinese J-8 fighter and this developed into a major diplomatic crisis.

The particularity in China’s societal participation, generally speaking, is related to the authoritarian nature of its regime, most social participation before the Reform and Opening-up was non-institutional. Even today, “participation” was made in the form of “antagonist politics” and after a decade and a half of intensive interaction, a relatively fixed interaction pattern between societal forces and the decision-making organs is gradually taking shape and becoming predictable. This made researches on the relatively loose social forces technically available. More importantly, the involvement of societal forces in political decision-making stands as a major step towards better governance and further bears some significance for the intriguing issue of Chinese democratization, since it represents a different possibility from the normally top down approach which most scholars favor.
Therefore it is of academic and practical importance.

The most recent societal involvement raises a number of crucial questions regarding the CCP and China’s political development. For instance, could new dynamics of societal participation change the elitist nature of Chinese politics and eventually trigger a more fundamental transformation of the Chinese political system? Or could the societal involvement in China escalate to a fundamental demand for democracy in terms of a contentious politics?

This research is an interpretive study from a sociological perspective, which was to examine how active involvement of societal factors (public opinion, mass media, think tanks, NGOs, enterprises, interest groups, etc.) leads to a change in agenda, different behavior patterns and alters domestic policy in the political decision-making process. This study tries to establish a systemic model of interactions between social factors and political decision-making in foreign and domestic affairs, which the former is considered as the independent variable and the latter as the dependent variable, and also the international pressure is regarded as the exterior environment. Apart from the analytical level of societal forces as units, the writer will also try to take into consideration the structure/pattern as well as their latest evolution and development of these factors. The study will also examine the general social structure and the possible implications of it for the Chinese decision-making agenda.
Chapter 2: The Evolving Context for China’s Political Decision-making

Here the writer would like to historically contextualize China’s political decision-making from different levels’ of perspective so as to better understand the cases in the main idea of this dissertation that is to examine how the institutional, behavioral and policy implications of societal involvement in decision-making gained momentum since the past few decades. This chapter briefly introduces how international community, such as governments, politicians and activists, has influenced and persuaded Chinese government in its decision-making, and also how the CCP has answered and adapted along the past years. Equally important to approach here is to show how the CCP’s identity has evolved since the Party’s inception. This certainly has not happened without certain critical situation within the CCP as it will be briefly addressed in the last session of this chapter. This content here is important as a background for the following chapters as well as for accommodating a longer spectrum of the transformation of the Party over time.

Since the reform era began in the late 1970s, a new and ever-changing mix of forces has been reshaping China’s domestic and foreign policy-making institutions and processes. Some of the forces that helps shaping the process can be classified as bureaucratic politics and evolving organizations, changing elite attitudes, changed domestic agenda, diverse social groups and public opinion, which generally fall into the category of “societal forces” of this research. All of these societal forces certainly influence decision-makers and beyond China’s domestic process the external environment serves as the greater backdrop of the narratives. Leaders at all levels in China have to make decision considering regional architecture, arising human trends and ubiquitous global challenges.

As an illustration, China’s reputation has been greatly marred and tarnished due to air pollution throughout the country, but especially in Beijing area, which pollution has already has been affecting Korea and Japan. Thus, China has been placed in an unfavorable situation in the global climate negotiation, since the industrialized countries have pressured her to take more responsibilities in reducing carbon emission. As a result, Central government has assured Korean and Japanese government that pollution will be relieved through collaboration and mutual support with neighboring provinces such as Shanxi (which is one of the main responsible for coal mining pollution) and Hebei (which is the primary source of industrial pollution). Yet, at the same time, Beijing municipal government has to honor orders from central government to increase the growth rate of GDP as well as
consider harsh criticism from her dwellers. Thus more flexible negotiation strategy has been adopted because of a significant worsening of the pollution that has affected the global climate change and, as a consequence, instigated the international and domestic public opinion.

In this sense, Beijing municipal government needed to consider socially and environmentally responsible policies that guarantee restructuring process of urban and industrial development of the city. The government has also encouraged farmers to quit the massive agricultural production that compromise the environment balance. Farmers in inner Mongolia, for instance, have been asked by local government to turn their farmland into forestry so as to stop the deteriorating eco-system. Internationally, China has agreed with Japan and Korea to create a Tripartite Environment Ministers’ Meetings since 1999 as a joint effort for environmental protection. China has also sought cooperation in global climate negotiation with India and Brazil, among other developing countries, to meet the pressure from U.S. and E.U.

China, but especially Beijing, has faced a dilemma by choosing between competing and conflicting interests. But under strong societal and international scrutiny in an increasingly globalized world, Beijing may not have better choices. Based on these examples, this chapter describes how in the changing international context and CCP’s identity, source of legitimacy and tasks have affected China’s political decision-making. Further analysis will be made on why the CCP needs to encourage societal participation in its decision-making.

1. Growing International Scrutiny

International pressure has been one of the reasons for China’s political domestic changes as many historical cases can reveal. Robert Keohane and Helen Milner (1996) analyzed the interaction between domestic implications of “internationalization”. According to them, the domestic effect is a result of the preference change of the political systems when they realize the benefit of internationalization, which in turn, remolds domestic policies.113 The generalization was precise, since it was only after the early 1990s that China restarts to be involved in world affairs. China’s Tiananmen incident marked a starting

113 Robert Keohane and Helen Milner, eds., Internationalization and Domestic Politics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).
point of intensive international criticism and scrutiny of its human rights issues, among others criticisms such as ballistic missiles as well as weapons proliferation policies.\textsuperscript{114} The following events such as the Yinhe incident in 1993,\textsuperscript{115} the Most Favorable Nations (the MFN) disputes, Taiwan crisis in 1995 and missile test in 1996, and U.S. bombing of Chinese Embassy in Belgrade in 1999 as well as China-U.S. fighter-surveillance plane clash in 2001, all revealed China’s shock in immediate exposure to the international society whose mainstream systems, values and discourse were so different. Some of the events such as the MFN disputes, increased concerns in the international community, especially in U.S., regarding China’s human rights as it was discussed in several newspapers at that moment (Boundreau, 1993). Despite having international impact China did not expect such repercussion. Most of the above-mentioned events, such as the Tiananmen Square, the Taiwan issue, the Embassy bombing, and air clash, just to name a few, were cases involving U.S. challenging China’s domestic political and value system as well as challenging the integrity of its sovereignty. The Yinhe case reflected the seeming distrust between the two countries. Wang Jisi, a leading Chinese scholar and diplomatic advisor, pointed out in a very recently article that the major source of distrust between the two Titans is that the U.S. fears China to challenge the international order dominated by U.S., while China fears U.S. is challenging China’s domestic order.\textsuperscript{116} This is fairly insightful for the case of Sino-U.S. relationship during the late 1990s.

Internationalization of domestic affairs of a country means that the formerly regarded as purely domestic affairs now have been kept under intensive international scrutiny. The U.S. in the 1990s, under the Clinton Administration, adopted Chinese policy of


\textsuperscript{115} The Yinhe Incident is a diplomatic confrontation between China and US in 1993 when the United States Navy forced China-based regular container ship Yinhe (银河, "Milky Way") to stop in the international waters of the Indian Ocean, alleging the ship was carrying materials for chemical weapons to Iran. After three weeks of complete inspection of all the containers aboard, the U.S. government representative concluded that “the Yinhe showed conclusively [that the chemicals] were not among the ship's cargo” but the U.S. refused to apologize or compensate for the losses it rendered. The Yinhe case showed the lack of strategic trust between the two countries.

“Containment and Engagement”. If the containment was a cliché with ideological essence, the policy “engagement” proves to be vital for China’s success since it internationally reshaped the Chinese foreign affairs and internally the Chinese domestic political landscape. China intended to engage with and integrated itself into the world system in order to benefit from it, and if chances permit, reform the world system according to her leadership. One of the major steps China has taken was to join the WTO with major compromises. This decision was made by reformist Premier Zhu Rongji, who pushed China into the wave of globalization that transformed the country to what it is today. Looking back, even the most bold minds will not imagine couldn't have imagined how much China has changed over the past years. The CCP itself, without doubt, is one of the major driving forces for those changes, and part of the changes.

International scrutiny is overall comprehensive, and international pressure is continuous. The U.S. government since the late 1990s, has been urging the Chinese government to release the dissenters by claiming through the Chinese agreement to the two UN international covenants on human rights or by accessing the Red Cross and other international monitors into the Chinese prisons as well as by accounting for Chinese prisoners. Societal forces that defy government often risk their basic human rights. Social activists, for example, are often detained, arrested or unfairly treated or even physically oppressed. Journalists, another key player in almost all group incidents, are not treated any better. In some cases of covered by this dissertation some important journalists and commentators were fired by their institutions due to pressure from ‘unknown’ sources because of their political involvement in an incident. Some newspapers and journals were even forced to stop operation under “required reform” (zheng dun) label or suspended permanently. Therefore, international scrutiny is centered on human rights issues. Since 2000, the U.S. government has annually released reports on China’s human rights, called Country Reports on Human Rights Practices and also known as the Human Rights Reports.

Imaginably, all Reports basically express criticism of China’s human rights records. The Report of the year of 2000 stated that, “China is an authoritarian country, citizens lack both the freedom peacefully to express opposition to the Party-led political system and the right to change their national leaders or form of government”\textsuperscript{120} and in its review’s part, it was concluded that:

The Government infringed on citizens' privacy rights. The Government tightened restrictions on freedom of speech and of the press, and increased controls on the Internet; self-censorship by journalists also increased. The Government severely restricted freedom of assembly, and continued to restrict freedom of association. The Government continued to restrict freedom of religion, and intensified controls on some unregistered churches. The Government continued to restrict freedom of movement. The Government does not permit independent domestic nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to monitor publicly human rights conditions \[
\ldots\ldots\] Particularly serious human rights abuses persisted in some minority areas, especially in Tibet and Xinjiang, where restrictions on religion and other fundamental freedoms intensified.\textsuperscript{121}

In recent years, the annual Reports on Human Rights of China began to cover the country’s progress in human rights protection. The Reports then brought great pressure on the Chinese government, especially to those divisions concerning ideological work (a conventional work of the party propaganda department is to deal with the report by “fighting back”).\textsuperscript{122} In response, China began to issue Human Rights Report of the U.S. foreign assistance activities in the PRC, which aims to promote human rights, democracy, rule of law, and environmental conservation in Chinese domain.\textsuperscript{123} In studies developed by Robert Sutter (2013), many of the think-tanks and NGOs had been very active working on human rights protection and political participation; on the list of his research are the Brookings Institute, Ford Foundation, Asian Foundation, Amnesty International, Transparency

\textsuperscript{121} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{122} Interview with L. a worker from the CCP Propaganda Department, April 2011, Beijing.
\textsuperscript{123} Thomas Lum, CRS Report for Congress: U.S.-Funded Assistance Programs in China, January 28, 2008, pp. 1-6.
International, and Human Rights Watch, among others. Organizations in Europe are also very active, in a research on international role of Chinese human rights protection; the writer specially studied three renowned NGOs: Norwegian Center for Human Rights (NCHR), Raoul Wallenberg Institute for Human Rights and Humanitarian Law (RWI) and the Danish Institute for Human Rights (DIHR).

International conventions and law also constitute major source of international pressure directly and indirectly. The regulations and operational procedures of, for example, WTO and its multilateral organizations and its subsidiary bodies, the spaghetti bowl effect of Free-Trade Agreements, such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), for instance, and international conventions such as United Nations Global Compact on corporate social responsibilities, which include environmental, legal conduct and labor rights, all contain provisions on human rights. As China is increasingly growing into a world power, it has to act comply with universally accepted norms and practices. One of the major steps marking China’s changed gesture was its decision in October 1998 to sign the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), a multilateral treaty adopted by the United Nations General Assembly that ensures the protection of the right of self-determination for all people, prohibits torture, cruel or degrading punishment, and provides for democratic elections and freedom of movement, thought, religion and expression.

The basic mechanism for China’s positive response to international scrutiny in terms of both human rights and social welfare protections and, say, fast governmental response to natural or human disasters, is that as China continues to grow into a influential power centered into the world stage, audience, applause and international recognition may be indicators of acceptance. China does not want to be a lonely power. It does not seek to disengage the world to seek security and overcome marginalization as Stephen Krasner (1985) had proposed and as North Korea and Russia probably had practiced. That is why China has been engaging the world comprehensively. The effect of international pressure is not just confined to Chinese domestic politics. It is also conducive

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for China’s international behaviors. In the case of Darfur humanitarian crisis (2003), the international pressure has altered China’s non-interference policy which it has been adhered to for half a century and sent its special envoy for African Affairs to mediate between the Western society who were concerned about the Sudanese government’s domestic repression and the Sudanese government who sought to address the rebellious military forces based on its understanding of sovereignty.\(^{128}\) China was asked to step in and send an envoy for African Affairs, because China is one of the biggest investors in Africa, so they may have been pressured to take responsibility beyond the world for economics. The Darfur experience is a typical case where international scrutiny helped adjustment of China’s long cherished principle and reshape its foreign policy, which would not be possible without significant change with its self-identity through long-term socialization. International scrutiny is a parcel of the whole process that regards China’s political decision-making. The CCP itself is also making considerable internal transformation along the years. We shall turn to the internal changes and challenges faced by the CCP since its foundation.

2. Identity Change of the CCP

Any party, as a political organization and an institution, has its own identity. While party identity and interest is formed and formatted within a particular cultural and institutional environment, they tend to “reproduce” the cultural and institutional environment by directing and influencing policy-making and implication.\(^{129}\) And as civilization with long tradition, Chinese political elites have drawn on the traditional culture to justify and legitimate its rationale.\(^{130}\) Here the writer would like to examine how China Communist Party’s identity has internally evolved over the decades and how these changes have reshaped the decision-making agenda.\(^{131}\) Let us start by briefly talking about the CCP as a revolutionary proletarian party, following for the next topic on the CCP’s failed

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\(^{130}\) Zheng, Yongnian, Chinese Communist Party as Organizational Emperor, p. 20.

endeavor for a joint government and its identity change and then finalize this topic with new identity change in reform era.

2.1. CCP as a revolutionary proletarian party

   The China Communist Party rose in revolution against the three oppressions of feudalism, bourgeois and imperialism in the first half of the twentieth century. Most revolutionary leaders were actually intellectuals, however, they deemed the party as a Proletarian Party representing the interest of labor workers, since they relied on industrial workers to conduct armed struggle against the above-mentioned “reactionary” forces. For the CCP, the proletariat class was the most resolute and thoroughgoing class for revolutionary struggle and most politically conscious because of the leadership of its own party of the CCP.132 Because the enemies were, according to Mao Zedong, “extremely strong and cruel, (the China Communist Party), develop and consolidate the united frontier to the utmost […]”.133 The party aimed to assume national leadership and revitalize the semi-colony of China, it has to resort to peasants and nationalist bourgeoisie among other social classes so as to seek their cooperation and represent their interest as well. However, its major doctrine of being a Proletarian Party remained unchanged. After betrayal of Jiang Kai-shek in 1927, 134 the Chinese Communist Party turned underground and moved geographically to rural China, where China Communist Party could still rely on few workers. However, the proletarian nature of the party had been emphasized instead of diluted because farmers more than workers joined into the party. Sixth Party Congress especially attached the background of the leadership, among all 36 members of Central Party Committee, 21 were former workers, Liu Shaoqi and Yun Daiying who were eminent leaders in early communist workers’ movement were excluded from the committee for their

133 Ibid.
134 Between 1924-1927, China Communist Party and KMT had been revolutionary coalition against feudalist warlords and imperialism, which is called “the First National Revolution” or “The Great Revolution” (da ge ming). Worried about that the CCP’s expansion of influence within the KMT may hurt change the Sun Yat-sen doctrine, Jiang Kai-shek immediately started on April 12 1927 to arrest and “cleared” thousand of CCP members, which marked the breach of the coalition, and was regarded as a betrayal of Jiang Kai-shek.
intellectual background; Xiang Zhongfa, a former worker, was elected as the Party Secretary, the top position in the CCP. The CCP then embraced its identity as a Proletarian Party by showing how ideology matters within China’s top leadership.\textsuperscript{135} As a revolutionary party, it has to stick to the classic Marxism while adapting to China’s changed revolutionary environment.

The CCP’s identity as the “pioneer of proletarian class” has not changed. However, the role of the CCP has evolved along with progress of the revolution, which in turn was “reproduced”. During the anti-Japanese war, the CCP claimed for a nation-wide united front that along with all gathered forces could possibly engage driving the Japanese out of Chinese domain. After Zhang Xueliang arrested Jiang Kai-shek in 1936, and the consequent formation of National United Front against Japan, the CCP became a legitimate party for the first time, the CCP and its armed forces joined the Kuomintang (KMT) “as a whole”. It no longer deemed itself as rebellious/revolutionary party against the nationalist KMT government, but instead, part of the nationalist regime against imperial Japan’s invasion.

2.2. CCP’s failed endeavor for a joint government and its identity change after take-over

In 1946, the CCP endeavored to establish a new government together with KMT and other democratic parties. Apparently, it sought legitimate political participation within the existing nationalist regime (after reformed). This failed attempt lead to a 3-year civil war that ended with KMT’s retreat to Taiwan and CCP’s take-over of China in 1949. In March 1949, right before the revolutionary victory, Mao pointed out in his report delivered on the Second Plenum of the CCP’s Seventh Congress, that the CCP should move its activities from rural to urban China, by moving from revolution to economic construction.\textsuperscript{136} The conference was very important for the CCP and China since it represented a major shift of the CCP’s identity as a revolutionary party to a party of construction, or from an image of armed opposition party (rebellious party) to a ruling party. Ideally, the party moved its gravity from class struggle to social integration and based on which it may build a new nation state under the Chinese version of the Marxist doctrine, namely the Mao Zedong’s Thought (Maoism). Compared to power transfer, institutional and identity building are a far

\textsuperscript{136} Mao Zedong, Report on the 2nd Plenum of the China’s Communist Party’s 7th Congress, Xibopo, March 5-13, 1949.
more difficult job.

The communist survival and thrive was founded on the fundamentalist Marxist doctrine of class struggle. By defining and categorizing the population into different classes, it led the party to be represented ostensibly by working class and peasants who made up the majority of the revolutionary forces and who fought against the landowners, which were considered as the most reactionary force in the feudalist society, as well as the upper bourgeois and imperialists. In places under communist control, they conducted land revolution, which were to deprive the wealth of landowners and distribute among the grassroots peasants. For the upper and national bourgeoisie, the CCP organized workers protests, which are no different from the labor protests today, and once the CCP took over China, it deprived and nationalized the wealth of upper bourgeoisie. Generally speaking, it was a matter of taking and redistribution. Ruling Communist China is different. The first thing was how to build an essential social order for an economic reconstruction. Repression worked, but it was only for those most dangerous and violent armed landowners and veterans, not for bourgeois and intellectuals; the more difficult stage would be the integration among different social classes which faced tension among each others but were somewhat split by the CCP. The most important thing to address was: What identity should the CCP adopt under the new context?

What would be the relationship between classes? What would be the major tasks? And what policy would be appropriate for both intellectuals and bourgeoisie classes? Also, what would be for China’s other 8 democratic parties? Thus how the party answered these questions was based on its perceived identity. The CCP’s relationship with intellectuals and the bourgeois could better reveal something. In 1956, the Eighth CCP Congress concluded that,

The principal contradiction within the country was no longer the contradiction between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie but the one resulted from the need of the people for rapid economic and cultural development, which fell short of their requirements. The chief task confronting the entire nation was to concentrate all

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137 This said, the CCP and the Red Arm also work to be self-sufficient. Especially during the 14 years in Yan’an, Shaanxi Province, the Red Arm was engaged in agricultural production and other business activities. The CCP’s experiences of economic incentives in Yan’an and other Revolutionary Bases under its control had been very conducive for construction and economic development after the establishment of the Communist Regime.
efforts on developing the productive forces, industrializing the country and gradually meeting the people's growing economic and cultural needs.\textsuperscript{138}

The Party compressed the class struggle and called on all other parties as well as the people to work jointly for reconstruction, industrialization and better life of the new China. This can be considered as a significant progress and it revealed the party's identity shift and self-consciousness of its changing role. However, not long after the Eighth Party Congress, especially after the anti-rightist movement, Mao changed his judgment by arguing that “Undoubtedly, the contradiction between the proletariat and the bourgeois and the contradiction between socialist and capitalist road, are the main contradiction in our society at the moment”. \textsuperscript{139} Chinese leadership’s ambition to realize industrialization and communism was hammered by the Soviet Union’s peaceful coexistence between the socialist and capitalist camps. Harsh criticism of the CCP by intellectuals had also invited Mao’s vigilance of return of the bourgeois (\textit{zi ben zhu yi fu bi}) and the consequent harsh repression of the intellectuals. “The rightist opportunism in the society reveals the anti-socialism of bourgeois within the party”. \textsuperscript{140} Some researches indicate that the coming ideological disputes between CCP and Soviet Union also had a role.\textsuperscript{141} Mao Zedong had long deemed himself of vanguard, orthodox heir and loyal practitioner of fundamentalist Marxism who would never allow \textit{and} domestic and international revisionism to hurt the pureness of the CCP as the pioneer of the proletarian classes. It was the reverse of identity of the CCP under the dominance of Mao Zedong that finally led to more than ten years’ turmoil that brought his party and the country to the brink of collapse.

2.3. New identity change in reform era

The CCP’s identity after the 1949 take-over remains an unfinished task. This identity evolution lasts until the present day. It is a delayed process where the CCP should remake its

\textsuperscript{139} Mao Zedong’s speech on the 3rd Plenum Meeting of the 8th Party Congress, October 9, 1957.
\textsuperscript{140} One Revision of the Decision made by the First Plenum Meeting of the 8th Party Congress by Mao Zedong, August, 1959. The Literatures of Mao Zedong after the Establishment of The People’s Republic of China (jian guo yi lai mao ze dong wen gao), the Eighth Session, p. 406.
\textsuperscript{141} Li Jie, China-U.S.S.R. Debate and the Sino-U.S.S.R. Relations, East European and Central Asian Studies, 1999(5).
identity and respond to the new context, fulfill new tasks and in new ways. Concretely, it has to transform itself from a revolutionary party to a constructive party. However, it seems to be fair to admit that the Communist Party had already changed their policy from fundamentalist proletarian ones to a policy that accommodates economic development with the new bourgeois, namely the entrepreneurs, and small business owners. Especially in the 1980s and the 1990s, many private entrepreneurs had been elected as members of the Congress and the National People's Political Consultative Conference (NPPCC) system, or even granted leadership role at lower level government, say duty head of township.

The major theoretical breakthrough that marked the CCP’s identity changes was “the important thought of three representatives” credited to former President Jiang Zemin and ratified by the Sixteenth Party Congress held in 2002.

This experience and the historical experiences gained by the Party since its founding can be summarized as follows: Our Party must always represent the requirements for developing China's advanced productive forces, the orientation of China's advanced culture and the fundamental interests of the overwhelming majority of the Chinese people. These are the inexorable requirements for maintaining and developing socialism, and the logical conclusion our Party has reached through hard exploration and great praxis.\(^{142}\)

Jiang Zemin, Report on the Sixteenth CCP Congress

The CCP’s representing “advanced productive forces, advanced culture and fundamental interests of the majority” means that the Party had abandoned the traditional approach of overemphasis on the background and origin of the social grouping (the proletariat), and adopted a new criterion which can also serve as guiding principles for the CCP. The new interpretation has revealed that the CCP now stands for the interest of the whole nation instead of the interest of a designated group. Later, former President Jiang Zemin further pointed out that, “China Communist Party is not just pioneer of the working class, but also pioneer of the Chinese nation”.\(^{143}\) The “three representatives” constitute a

\(^{143}\) This statement was originally made by Liu Shaoqi when he addressed the 7th CCP National Congress as saying, “The Communist Party is not just pioneer of the proletariat, but also loyally stands for the Chinese nation and the interest of Chinese people”. However, the statement wasn’t continuously used since Mao favor class struggle and the pureness of CCP as Proletarian
major shift of the CCP’s identity and it presents the party’s adaptability to the new domestic and international environment. The Party’s embrace of the new identity and new guiding principle while abandoning the old identity based on the traditional origin (chu shen) also symbolizes that the CCP has become a mature and modern party instead of traditional revolutionary party.

Various facts may prove such an evolution and development. Firstly, party ideology and class struggle mentality have both been in steady decline. The ideological erosion dates back to the Third Plenum of the Eleventh Central Committee held in 1978, which represents a major departure from Maoist class struggle’s doctrine and constitutes a rupture with the revolutionary past. After the collapse of the socialist bloc in the early 1990s, Deng Xiaoping raised the 24-word strategy. One of his core reminders was to “keep a low profile” (it has been translated as “hide the capabilities and bid for the time” instead of debating with the “West” over ideological issues – he warned the party to concentrate on forging the economic development and let facts tell which system is superior.

The new generation leaders of former President Hu Jintao and the very present leader Xi Jinping had further initiative concerning reforming the CCP’s identity. Chinese growth in the past 15 years (starting from 2000, especially, a longer spectrum dates back to 1978 or 1992) has been extraordinary which has exposed China to the center stage of international powers from which Chinese new leadership has seen the prospect of China’s return to its traditional primary in the world system as it happened centuries ago. The CCP, the ruling party and the pioneer of the Chinese nation, gradually deems itself as the rejuvenator of the old civilization. Not long after Xi’s election as a Party Secretary, he vowed to realize the Chinese dream: “The Chinese dream, I believe, is the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation”, and “we are closer to the great Chinese rejuvenation than any time in history”.

The CCP’s new identity as the rejuvenator of Chinese nation could be revealed by its attempt to revitalize Chinese traditional culture and to build a cultural great power. In the past decade and a half, the CCP has increasingly been engaged in the cultural building. In an

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144 The complete version is "Observe calmly; secure our position; cope with affairs calmly; hide our capacities and bide our time; be good at maintaining a low profile; and never claim leadership."

145 Edward Friedman, in a letter discussion with the author, 2012.

146 Speech at the Exhibition “Road to Revival”, December 29, 2012.
important official report, it states that, “Since the CCP was established, it has faithfully
drawn upon and carried forward China’s outstanding traditional culture as well as actively
advocated and developed the country’s advanced culture”.\textsuperscript{147} And it has been promoting the
influence of Chinese culture overseas. China had run cultural exchanges activities in the
form of “Year of Culture” hosted by other countries and year of “China-France Cultural
Exchange”. Most recently, it has been investing heavily to establish and run the Confucius
Institute, a kind of an international Chinese language-training program. By the end of 2014,
over 15,500 Chinese language teachers have been teaching Chinese at 1326 Confucius
Institutes from 126 countries all over the world.\textsuperscript{148} Besides its endeavors in promoting
Chinese soft power internationally, China also proposed its own world order of “harmonious
society” based on its Confucian tradition.\textsuperscript{149}

For the CCP, Confucianism helps reshaping a sort of national identity at a time of
decaying Marxist appeals, which the former can help filling the ideological vacuum left by
the Marxism. It also serves as shields that help the CCP to defend against the so-called threat
of Westernization. The CCP, on the other hand, projects itself as both a rejuvenator of
traditional culture and a nationalist defender of such a culture, therefore, have its legitimacy
strengthened. Yet the major challenge for the CCP may be how to reshape the Party without
losing its essence since the reform era began in the late 1970s.

3. Changed Source of Legitimacy

Over a long period of time, and even before 1978, CCP had not regarded social
participation as a source of legitimacy. Instead, it relied on its traditional legitimacy in the
revolution and in establishing a socialist state and order. Namely, the legitimacy of the CCP
mainly came from its success in its struggle against the Japanese aggression in alliance with
the nationalist Kuomintang (KMT) and its victory over the latter in the civil war. The
communist victory successfully ended the so-called “a hundred year of humiliation” when

\textsuperscript{147} Decision on the CCP Central Committee on Major Issues Pertaining to Deepening Reform of
the Cultural System and Promoting Reforming the Great Development and Flourishing of
Socialist Culture, Passed at the Sixth Plenary Session of the Seventeenth CPC Central
Committee on October 18, 2011.
\textsuperscript{148} Li Changchun requires developing Internet-based Confucius Institute to Promoting Chinese
04/25/content_6025148.htm, 2015-06-01.
\textsuperscript{149} From the Confucius Annual Report (2006-2014), and the homepage of the institute. See
http://www.hanban.edu.cn.
Imperialist Powers constantly bullied the old civilization, it established a brand new social order, and developed the war-worn economy, communist blue print of a prosperous, affluent and equal society appeal to the vast majority of Chinese people. These are some of the reasons of the CCP propaganda organs constantly attached importance to historical education and indoctrination of communist ideology to its people since their primary schooling.

The vast majority of currently alive Chinese is born after the establishment of People’s Republic of China; they do not have any memory about what China was like before the year of 1949. For them the relatively recent memory was much bitter – the notorious disasters during the two decades before the period of Reform and Opening-up with an estimated over 36 million people starved to death during the “Great Leap Forward” (1958-1961), and even the harsher disasters during the 10 years of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), which is considered to be even bitter for the CCP itself. The failure of the CCP in realizing the blueprint of a prosperous socialist state and the more recent memory of various class struggles greatly hurt the party’s legitimacy as a ruling party. Chinese historical memory of the CCP’s struggles and sacrifice during the revolution has gradually faded away and no longer has provided a compelling basis for legitimizing the party-State nor offers a definite set of normative values for organizing society.

After the Reform and Opening-up, China witnessed increasing people-to-people exchanges with other countries, knowledge about the affluent lives in the developed world have created a wave of going abroad in the late 1980s and early 1990s. With ideological decline in international politics and the rise of economic issues, the world had seen a new wave of globalization. The CCP had to find new sources of regime legitimacy in the changed discourse. The answer seems to be relatively easy. In times when communism has seen its most powerful political entity, the Soviet Union collapse out of the expectation of the boldest thinkers and that Francis Fukuyama (1992) even claimed the world has welcomed the “end of history” when democracy remain the last form of human practices, the CCP would be successful if it were to revitalize its communist ideals to make it more appealing to the vast population.

Public opinion manipulation and tightened control, as the CCP has adopted in the early 1990s, momentarily worked but did not last long. In times of growing social diversification, pluralization and openness, this revolutionary approach will further reduce

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the CCP’s appeals to the people. Therefore, the choices seemed limited. The CCP needed to found its rule on steady economic growth and lasting improvement of people’s living standard. Economic upswing during the period between 1992 and 1995 encouraged the CCP while the State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) restructuring and overall marketization of education, housing, medical care in the late 1990s laid the foundation for sustained rapid growth after China entered into the new century, especially after its WTO entry in 2001. However, economic patronage will not render lasting result. The CCP has realized that it is in legitimacy crisis when economy continued to grow.

Possibly, economic growth, improved living standard, and skyscrapers strengthened the legitimacy of the CCP’s regime and therefore the CCP and the state government no longer need to exert strong control over the society as before. In this sense, the CCP is getting confident in its regime stability and would allow more social freedom and political participation. Legitimacy of top leaders no longer relies on their loyalty to communist ideology or to the CCP, but on the performance and achievements in fulfilling their responsibilities, i.e., the economic development. Accordingly, more adaptation endeavors encouraged it to promote social participation, being it to increase its legitimacy, or for more rational, professional, and scientific decision-making. This is the innate drive for the CCP to promote social participation.

4. Changed Tasks for CCP in the New Era

Identity and environment change had formulated CCP’s tasks. The CCP had three inter-related tasks: faster economic development, better, social governance and greater international prestige. While economic development remain the core task, improving social governance and expanding China’s international influence is gaining salience in the recent decade.

4.1. Economic Growth

Economic development is one of the major tasks for any government. Though Mao Zedong had announced right at the dawn of the Communist take-over of the Chinese mainland, the primary tasks of the CCP changed from “revolution” to “construction” which was to modernize its far-backward industry and improve the living standard of the vast
population. The party managed to add to the list of its early performance the recovery of the war-worn economy to the country’s peak time of 1936 within 3 years, and further established the initial foundation for Chinese industry via the first five-year plan carried out during 1953-1956 (successfully finished in advance).

However this did not last before the top leadership gradually deviated from the “construction” track in favor of “class struggle” and “continued revolution”. Under that doctrine, the CCP waged one political movement after another which spoiled the earliest plan for economic revitalization, and alienated itself farther and farther from the former prospect based on the motto “strong socialist country”.

Real “economic construction” did not begin until the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh CCP Central Committee in 1978, which determined that the country’s major task was to transfer from class struggle to economic construction. The Session marked the beginning of the “Reform and Opening up” policy. For the second-generation CCP leaders, economic construction remain the No.1 task ever since its takeover of the country, though the party used to deviate from the task. The Chinese leadership had a conviction that it had to make the cake greater before distributing it properly. It is under this doctrine that its economy began to take off and maintained a double-digit growth in the following three decades.

4.2. Social Governance

Besides economic growth, the communist party endeavors to fulfill its role in social governance. Needless to say that fast economic growth and the great social transformation have brought serious social challenges.\textsuperscript{151} It is clear that the CCP still has to address effectively the serious income disparity between the eastern coastal areas and the remote western provinces as well as between urban cities and rural areas.\textsuperscript{152} It is also worth remembering that it must take gradual yet effective reforms in medical, education and social welfare system, and it must contain the skyrocketing housing prices while at the same time


maintain a good GDP growth record. Also, it should be reminded about the serious environmental pollution and reform its problematic financial system,\textsuperscript{153} as well as the unemployment of an enormous number of college graduates,\textsuperscript{154} plus the moral decline of the society.

4.3. International Prestige

Over 30 years’ vigorous economic development has helped China to expand its international prestige and influence enormously. It is both a natural development and a party strategy. The adaptation of this strategy is based on the fact that China has been a leading civilization over the long history. The Party successfully hosted the Twenty-eighth Summer Olympic Games in 2008, the World 2010 Expo in Shanghai, and the Sixteenth Asian Games in Guangzhou, 2010. Under the leadership of the CCP, China has played an epochal role in the international scene such as took part in the six-party talks by addressing the North Korea nuclear issues, holds the largest member of military officials and soldiers in the UN peacekeeping programs, and shares within the IMF and the World Bank financial aid since the U.S. is reluctant giving up its financial hegemony and to give China due share of voting. However, China’s financial influence and leverage is growing since it hosts the largest foreign currency reserves and a fiscal capacity that grow at an annual rate of 30% or above.\textsuperscript{155}

Though China has not yet dominated a single international agenda in addressing global issues such as climate change, free trade negotiation, environmental issues, and non-proliferation so far; she has been an active participant and constructive player, willing to provide support for any regimes that it deems conducive to peace, stability, prosperity and international justice either for a region or the world at large. “Without China, international issues won’t be addressed easily” is a cliché hung over the lips of politicians and scholars all over the world. For this reason, U.S. Secretary of State Robert Zoellick (2005) called on

\textsuperscript{153} Qian, Yingyi, How Reform Worked in China (June 2002). William Davidson Institute Working Paper Number 473. Available at SSRN: http://ssrn.com/abstract=317460 or http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.317460
\textsuperscript{154} Li, Shi; Whalley, John; Xing, Chunbing. China’s higher education expansion and unemployment of college graduates. China Economic Review. Volume 30, September 2014, Pages 567–582.
China to be a “responsible stakeholder” in 2005\textsuperscript{156} and “a responsible great power” and the academia and policy sectors even raised the “G2” mirage.\textsuperscript{157}

China still remains a bit “reluctant” to assume the responsibilities as the Western powers expected, according to Zoellick.\textsuperscript{158} Chinese leaderships do have realized its newly achieved international influence. As a director of a nation that has long been marginalized by the West-dominated modern system despite its long history as a superpower, Chinese new leaderships see their due task to revitalize and “rejuvenate” the country into world leadership and regain its centralism (Zhongguo, or the Central Kingdom). China’s new President Xi Jinping, when watching an exhibition in 2012, raised the concept of “the nation’s rejuvenation being the greatest Chinese dream”. Obviously, international prestige is an integral part of the Chinese dream. Compared with the domestic aspect of the Chinese dream, namely realizing the welfare society and the four modernizations, international prestige weighs more in the top leadership’s mind.

This said, the domestic and international part of the Chinese dream couldn’t be separated. If China were to gain global recognition, it has to embrace instead of rejecting universal values. Anyway, an open, confident, accountable China would be more popular and appealing to the international community. Domestic accountability sometimes is more important than international accountability. Therefore, protection of human rights, democratic participation and transparency in decision-making is an integral part of government accountability. The Chinese leadership had a strategy to improve its international prestige via improved social governance.\textsuperscript{159}


\textsuperscript{157} Elizabeth C. Economy and Adam Segal, The G-2 Mirage: Why the United States and China Are Not Ready to Upgrade Ties, Foreign Affairs, and also the website of Council of Foreign Relations, http://www.cfr.org/china/g-2-mirage/p19209, 2015-06-08.


\textsuperscript{159} Though scholars have also revealed that China hope to improve its international prestige by emphasizing its Chinese characteristics, Chinese model and its own ideal world order based on its traditional culture. It is also true that China is adapting itself to the existing system to win international recognition. See Satoshi Amako, “China’s Diplomatic Philosophy and View of the International Order in the 21st Century,” Journal of Contemporary China Studies, Vol. 3, No. 2 (2015).
It is believed that the Chinese Communist Party will continue to have strict control over the army, media, legal and judicial system. While recognizing all these continuities, the CCP and Chinese government had never denied democracy and social participation. Mao Zedong attested by answering the question from Huang Yanpei, a famous proponent of democracy, that “How could ensure the communist party wouldn’t repeat the cycle of rise, decline and collapse of previous dynasties in Chinese history”, he affirmed that the only way is through ‘democracy'.\(^\text{160}\) For Mao, the meaning of democracy relied on truly representation of the government by the popular will by having the support of the broad masses throughout the country. This means that people must be free to support and have the opportunity of influencing its policies.\(^\text{161}\) Societal participation of political life in Mao’s times was ensured regular and institutional. The Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) was, in part, a radical attempt to achieve Mao's "Great Democracy". Since Mao realized that the concentration of power within the Party had created a new privileged class called bureaucracy, which had became the biggest obstacle to attaining his ideal of democracy.\(^\text{162}\)

Deng Xiaoping had initiated “structural political reform” in order to address indiscriminate concentration of political power that “ruined intraparty democracy and distorted the principle of collective leadership and individual responsibilities”.\(^\text{163}\) However, Deng’s understanding of democracy was confined within the four cardinal principles (si xiang ji ben yuan ze), namely upholding the socialist path, upholding the people’s democratic dictatorship, upholding the leadership of the CCP, and upholding the Mao Zedong’s Thought and Marxism-Leninism doctrine.\(^\text{164}\) As a reformist leader, Deng was very pragmatic in balancing between the democratic ideals and the expedient need to keep the CCP in power. He was successfully in introducing the market economy and every positive


\(^{162}\) Ibid.

\(^{163}\) Selected Writings of Deng Xiao Ping (deng xiao ping wen xuan), the 3rd Juan, Beijing: People’s Press, 1993, p. 311.

element from human practices from democracies while maintaining the dominant role of communism ideologically. In terms of decision-making, under his “supervision”, the open-minded leaders of Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang had left the society with considerable freedom in speech, gathering and social participation as mentioned in the introduction.

Not surprisingly, as the CCP is increasingly modernized, its emphasis on democracy grew. Jiang Zemin, a leader from the most open metropolitan of Shanghai, was also a supporter of democracy. In one of his major speech, he used the word “democracy” or “democratic” 31 times during his report on the Fifteenth Party Congress, in a session entitled “Reforming Political Structure, Strengthening Democracy and the Legal System”, in which occasion he stated that, “It is our party’s consistent goal to develop socialist democracy. Without democracy, there would be no socialism or socialist modernization.”

During President Hu Jintao’s tenure, the term “democracy” had been fully adopted in official context, the frequency and intensity was unprecedented compared with his predecessor and his successor, President Xi Jinping. In Hu’s Report of the year 2007, he stated:

We must continue to expand orderly participation of our citizens, perfect the democratic system, enrich the form of democracy, and broaden the democratic channel; we must press on with our efforts to make decision-making more scientific and democratic, perfect decision-making information, and intellectual support system; we must develop grassroots democracy and ensure that the people can exercise their democratic rights directly and in accordance with the law.

General Secretary HU Jintao, 2007

In this context, democracy seems not to remain merely as a slogan or as a blueprint for the future but an intrinsic part of the Party’s thoughts. The report had also put forward very concrete measures to expand democracy and societal participation. Several important factors are now changing the behaviors and policies of the CCP. Changes of the party’s identity have been most fundamental, either factual or perceived. Yet this implies a period of crisis and restructuring of the party itself.

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6. Is the CCP in Crisis?

The introductory part of this dissertation has reviewed in-depth and width the suspicion about the CCP’s sustainability by international scholarship. For the writer, the tricky point is not any single challenge but a bunch of challenges that the CCP were not capable or willing enough to address. But because of the interrelated, intertwined and complex “multiple paradox” of these problems, the would explain the CCP’s crisis under the framework of “multiple paradox”. However, it would be partially approached instead of in-depth analysis due to the complexity of the subject.

For many Chinese and foreign scholars, rampant corruption topped the list of China’s crisis list. The top leadership of the CCP is fully aware of the severe challenge of corruption, and the resolution of the present leadership, for instance, is unprecedented. Starting from the Sichuan Deputy Party Secretary Li Chunchen shortly after President Xi’s Administration entered into office, Xi waged his campaign against the “Sichuan cabal”, the most corrupted “petroleum cabal”, and the “Political and Legal cabal” (Police, court, the procuratorate system) topped by Zhou Yongkang, a former member of the Politburo Standing Committee. President Xi has sent 3 waves of inspection teams to all level of governmental organs and other organizations of public ownership: the SOEs, Ministries, and cities (director-general level), each wave of inspection resulted in removal of a number of officials from all provincial, municipal and division levels. Shanxi alone had 9 out of 13 provincial top leaders removed from their posts. In 2013 alone, 26 director-general level and 336 county-division-level officials from the province were “disciplined” with another 17 county-level party chiefs arrested in 2014. The lasted progress is the collapse of the high rank generals from the army, which proved President Xi’s belief that anti-corruption campaign has no “boundaries”. By March 2015, 26 of China’s 31 provinces have at least one of their provincial party chief, governor or their deputies arrested (exceptions are Beijing, Shanghai, Jilin, Ningxia and Tibet/Xizang) and over 100,000 division-level officials

\[167\] The most recent case is Zhou Benshun, the Party secretary of Hebei province and former secretary and follower of Zhou Yongkang, has been arrestment for corruption on July 28, 2015. By far all secretaries of Zhou had been arrested.

\[168\] Collected from the news by central government disciplines committee and news release, see also http://china.dwnews.com/news/2015-03-06/59639492.html, 2015-03-11.
were disciplined.\footnote{Duowei. *Shanxi zao ta fangshi fubai wangrulin tanyan hen tongxin.* March 6, 2015. Available at: http://china.dwnews.com/news/2015-03-06/59639492.html}

Despite national populist vowing of President Xi’s campaign against its own corrupted party, many in the society has been questioning the sustainability of the anti-corruption campaign since it is more like the up-down movement which the princelings are fond of and good at.\footnote{Party Chief of Yangquan Investigated, 5 party chiefs and 2 majors of out the 11 direct-general level cities had been investigated and arrested. Available at: http://news.ifeng.com/a/20150703/44098842_0.shtml, 2015-06-14.} However, without reliable institutions and legal framework, the campaign will not go any further, as was the anti-corruption practices of former administrations. President Xi has stated on many occasions the importance of anti-corruption campaign, citing historical and international cases where corruption resulted in the collapse of the regime. Apparently the major motivation for his anti-corruption campaign was to maintain the CCP regime longer. However, the campaign itself may risk the regime. Penetration of corruption into the top leadership hurt the CCP’s legitimacy, while it may also create endemic fear among top leadership and even potentially fracturing the elites.

Corruption in China seems to be systematic and ubiquitous, while President Xi must rely on the existing system, the organizational network to tackle the problems. The dilemma is as if the anti-corruption is carried “on a level playing field” it will hurt his allies and will have his own team questioned (such as the case of Zhou Yongkang, who manipulated the political and legal system, a kind of corruption of the anti-corruption); or if the campaign is conducted in selected way, then the credibility will be questioned.\footnote{There are already questions about the motivation of xi’s anti-corruption, at least by far, no princelings have been arrested. See Kerry Brown, *Will Xi’s Anti-Corruption Campaign Become an Outright Purge?* The diplomat, April 07, 2015. Available at: http://thediplomat.com/2015/04/will-xis-anti-corruption-campaign-become-an-outright-purge/, 2015-04-08.} President Xi has been very wise to select Wang Qishan, an intimate ally and another princeling with strong background and network among the princeling community, to lead the campaign. He was assigned such a task also because of his intensive experience in the financial sector where corruption abounds. What, if a corruption case was dragged from Wang’s allies? The recent collapse with the China stock exchange, in June 2015, has revealed the severe problems with the financial sector, the above-mentioned possibilities cannot be ruled out. Then where does it stop? A halfway stop would invite societal dissents while the continuous anti-corruption may hurt the economy, and many Chinese scholars are already discussing the exit of the
campaign.\textsuperscript{172}

The most dangerous part of the story is that as an unprecedented campaign, President Xi lacks a theoretical doctrine to justify and legitimize the pro-longed movement. Within the CCP’s system, it is conventional and usual practice for new leaders to explicate their planned policies and vision for the country as an extension of the Marxist canons. The “theory” serves as leader’s mandate to rule, and defends them against inner party criticism. Some China observers even look to the “four comprehensives” as a possible contribution of President Xi that may enshrine Xi’s anti-corruption campaign as part of the ideological legitimacy and legacy for his rule.\textsuperscript{173} Both former Presidents Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao succeeded when concluding their tenure, while current President Xi’s campaign began without such a theoretical framework.

On the long lists of China’s challenges, sluggish GDP growth, widening social disparity, and environmental degradation have also proved to be vital. Even the lower-politics environmental issues had become pressing. It is not because of the improving of China’s awareness in environmental protection or the rising apatite for better living quality of the Chinese people. Rather, because environmental concern has become a major source of social dissents and poses a huge question about the responsiveness and capacity of the CCP. In fact, many of China’s protests (incidents) arise from environmental problem. Updating the economy for environment’s sake (for further and better economic growth of course) may further slow down the already sluggish economy, either for the economic growth circle, unfavorable external influence (the world financial meltdown) or structural financial risks, and often fueled by reluctant political reform that far lagged behind economic reform and further hindered the second largest economy from further development.

Problems with both the economy and the political regime are true. Not only so. Dynamic economy and society have already luring away from the rigid, outdated systems of governance and political control. The foundation of Leninist philosophy has been undermined and no longer acknowledged by people after 25 years’ market-oriented economic reform. The party can no longer propose encouraging prospect for China and more and more people regard it as irrelevant and wicked. This was evident in the huge and


increasing number of immigration of economical and intellectual elites to U.S., Canada, Australia and Europe. The CCP’s approaches in addressing the problems often are problematic themselves. It has been pouring huge financial, policy and human resources in the stability maintenance (wei wen). However, it probably has realized the tightened control of internet, using of Google, a very useful tool for academic studies, social media such as Facebook and Twitter; even Renren, the Chinese version of the Facebook, and Wechat have been under strict censorship. Therefore create new tensions between the party-state government and general public, especially intellectuals. The situation was worsened by deflation and skyrocketing housing price which had embossed the academia economically. Though the Communist Party had made some adjustment to absorb capitalist elites into the Party, and had put forward party rules and regulation to contain the rampant corruption, the CCP legitimacy seems to be in decline together with its organizational penetration power, its questioned party authority, accountability, attraction, and Party disciplines.

Chapter 3: The Structure and Process of China’s Political Decision-making: Continuities and Changes with the CCP

For several decades, studies in Chinese decision-making generally fell into three major schools: namely historical, Maoist and realist approaches, whose common analytical basis lies in the assumption to treat China as a rational and highly unitary actor, either influenced by its own tradition and communist ideology or by some rational calculation. All these three approaches assume that China is a single individual who is able to assess the environment, make decisions, and react according to the outside stimuli.175 And for some of the scholars, it would be logically consistent, epistemologically pragmatic, technically convenient, and safe in values to regard China as a rational-autocracy with its China’s decision-making centered on the CCP whose elitist leaders calculates based on its national interest, perceived and factual.

Researches on Chinese decision-making, however, have mainly based on their analysis at foreign policy level. Little attention has been made to China’s domestic politics and its interaction with foreign affairs. This had not changed until the Great Triangle prevailed in the 1970s, which was, to a large extent, derived from the realist school.176 Since the mid 1960s, the highly unitary political elites began to experience a kind of split which was accompanied by and exerted great influence on the collapse of China’s alliance with the Soviet Union. This led to studies on the possible effects of inner disputes among Chinese political elites on the strategic choice and policy orientation.177 Thus scholars became more interested in Chinese domestic politics by observing the interplay between Chinese foreign


policy and its international position. These also led to other important studies about the relationship between intellectuals and Chinese political decision-making and reform in this period. David Shambaugh (2008), for instance, probed into how bureaucrats and scholars perceive international affairs and the U.S., and how they have influenced the decision-making process. For the outsiders, China’s political decision-making still remains a mysterious black box. However, because of the diametrically different discourse and environment, scholars can no longer apply the rational-autocracy approach to explain the current Chinese politics. Instead, the players and factors that affect the decision-making process vary from time to time and from case to case.

We have seen in the former chapter the evolving context in which the Chinese political decision-making. In this chapter, the author would like to valuate and briefly introduce internal changes the CCP has experienced in the past decades and analyze how it has affected the society and the way the decision-making is performed. Evaluations will be made on the changes and continuities in discourses, its tasks, and sources of legitimacy. For this reason, this chapter approaches the interaction among Party, central government and society; how the education background and experience changes among generations influences the Party’s organization; and how different generation leaderships counterbalance their influences within the Party, and further elaborate what does it means for decision-making and societal role in decision-making.

1. The Party, the State and the Society

The China Communist Party (CCP) remains the key to understanding China politics. Its structure and process, consistence and changes have major influence on the state behavior and people’s daily life. The communist culture has developed all along the revolutionary and construction era and has been indoctrinated into the huge political-economic entity. Needless to say, it will continue to shape the future China politics in that any changes are what germinate major reforms and transformations of the huge political system.

Therefore, intensive academic endeavors were made to reveal the evolution of the


party in terms of its component, its nature and its missions over the past six decades after its take-over of the Chinese mainland, especially after its adoption of Reform and Opening-up program since three decades ago by starting in the late 1970s. Shambaugh (2008) stresses, “the strengths and weakness, durability and adaptability and potential longevity of the CCP as the ruling party in China” by carefully examining the latest changes of the communist system. He pointed out that “It is evident from a wide variety of indicators that the CCP, as an institution, has been in a progressive state of decline in terms of its control over the intellectual, social, economical, and political life of the nation”.

If the review of the structure and process of the CCP were hard to handle, a relatively easier approach is to evaluate the players within this grand game. In terms of decision-making, governance and the much broader topic of democratization tend to attach great importance to the economic sector. The assumption of the major discussion is the approach of the “economic growth leads to democratization”, as a number of scholars have indicated in previous studies. This approach supports the assumption that economic growth will lead to the emergence of middle class who will later press for liberal rights, votes and in a larger process of the decision-making. Therefore, previous studies on China, which have been approached on Chinese democratization, tend to focus on the industries immediately after China’s opening-up, especially during the 1980s when many private enterprises emerged as economic power accounting for almost one third of the China’s total enterprises. Scholars, the majority of whom tend to be Westerners, focus on the emerging new classes, such as legal service group, layers, accounting, auditing and other professional working groups, the commercial groups, new media (internet-based and self-media), civil and society organizations. They usually focus on how this new emerging class constitutes challenges to the communist monopoly of power.

Since the Chinese middle class seems not to have been developed to the extent

expected, some other China scholars remain skeptical about this assumption.\textsuperscript{185} Their evidences are that the CCP no longer need to push for political reform, since the economic development has become a new source of regime legitimacy.\textsuperscript{186} It is true that the communist party has been reluctant to continue political reform especially after the June Fourth Tiananmen Square Incident. Under increased international pressure and constrained by domestic politics, the CCP foresaw great danger of the whole communist regime. However, it is equally well founded that the party is fully aware about the potential dangers of keeping the newly emerging classes out of the regime.

The United Frontier Work (UFW), for instance, played a large role in addressing the above-mentioned concern. Developed since the very beginning of the establishment of the CCP, the UFW is regarded as one of the three trumps (San da fa bao) of the CCP’s success in revolutionary era and remained an important part of the party work until the present day. From the central committee to the township level, there is a party organ of the UFW whose aim is to “motivate all useful social resources to serve the cause of socialist construction”.\textsuperscript{187}

The philosophy of the United Front is to mobilize the societal forces by engaging them instead of alienating them. Owning to limitations of resources (limited access, uneven distribution, etc.), institutions (organizational, financial) and ever-shifting priorities of leadership, the effectiveness of UFW tends to decline. Especially after the 1992 reform, Chinese economy began to gain momentum, and new classes nurtured by economic growth had become a new concern. And the CCP has to adjust to those new changes. A bold approach is to integrate those new economical and societal forces into the party system, simply put, to make them party members. Bruce Dickson (2007, 2008) is one of the earliest scholars who has studied the relations between the CCP and entrepreneurs. The communist party has been vigilant against the capitalist erosion of its fundamentalist doctrine. However, when the private business grew up in the 1980s and the early 1990s, and had displayed their eminent role in job creation and economic development, especially when reconstruction of State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) had led to numerous laid-off workers who had become serious social problem. Then the CCP began to embrace private sector and regarded them as a positive factor for economic growth and social management. Therefore they began to

\textsuperscript{185} Pei Minxin, China’s trapped Transition.
\textsuperscript{186} Ibid.
absorb entrepreneurs into the Party, simply put, to induct wealth into power.\textsuperscript{188} Not hard to understand, many other scholars as well as Party members tend to regard the induction of the business sector into the Party as a severe challenge to the purity and legitimacy of the institution, since fundamentally speaking, the Party was deemed as the pioneers of the working class and represented the interest of the working class — the Proletariat.\textsuperscript{189}

The CCP had heated debate on their policies towards business sector. After over ninety years’ development, sixty years’ governance of the world’s most populous country and near forth years of Reform and Opening-up program, the CCP needs to reorient and adapt itself to the new environment and new tasks. Especially, people’s dissents with the June Fourth Incident in 1989, the redundancy tide of the SOEs in late 1990s, China’s embrace of market economy after 1992, and the impending entry into the WTO in 2001 have called into question the legitimacy of the CCP, who can no longer rely on its revolutionary past, instead it has to “keep pace with the time”. One major step is the new definition of the CCP as Three Represents, which claims that the CCP “forever represents the advanced productivity, forever represents the direction of advanced culture and forever represents the interest of the vast majority of the people”. The CCP is the pioneer of not only the proletariats, but the whole Chinese nation (\textit{zhong hua min zu}).

The Three Represents is the greatest theoretical innovation in terms of party ideology in the new reform era. It shows that the CCP has given up the fundamentalist Marxism that deemed bourgeoisie as a target for revolution. It is under the theoretical framework of the Three Represents that the CCP has its absorption of the private entrepreneurs justified. The Policy of incorporating those business representatives into the party to address the potential challenges is still on operation till the very present day. It enlarged the CCP’s representativeness and showed the adaptability of the Party.\textsuperscript{190}

Of course, not all China experts rate the CCP’s evolution in an optimistic manner.

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Another school, headed by Pei Minxin (2006), believes that China is likely to be trapped in transition because of the “self-destructive logic of predatory authoritarianism”.191 Following the pessimist evaluation, the most extreme prediction comes from Gordon Chang (2001), who believes the collapse of China is inevitable and China’s inevitable collapse is due to the mismanagement of the CCP. For him, China’s “road to ruin” include conflict across the Taiwan Strait, corruption, and accession to the World Trade Organization”.192 However, even Pei Minxin does not agree with this extreme pessimism. He further qualifies this conclusion by saying that “deteriorating governance and economic performance may be the necessary – but not sufficient—condition for the emergence of a fatal crisis”.193 The CCP may still survive for decades if it can use the “same mix of repression, cooptation, and adaptation to maintain an elite-based ruling coalition”.194

Generally speaking, a great majority of the academia follows the elitist approach for the eminent role of the CCP in Chinese political life and the very centralized nature of the Party’s structure.195 They tend to favor the top-down approach that characterizes China politics along the decades. However, those assessments failed to take into account the equally important approach and “tradition” of bottom-up approach, as if it will never be possible. Anyway, time has changed. China is different from the revolutionary past, even much different from the early reform eras in the 1980s or immediately after the collapse of the Soviet Union when a major event happened within China that revealed its revolutionary tradition and represent a major setback of China’s Reform and Opening-up program, which was even called into stop the political reform if the strong man Deng Xiaoping had not been successful in its “southward cruise” that restarted the market-oriented reform.

China alienated in the late 1980s and the early 1990s, has learned in the 1990s the lessons from the collapse of the Soviet Union and began to warmly embrace the market economy and capitalism which it deemed as a effective means to develop its economy and further to safeguard the communist regime with accumulated national capacity. The result of further marketization is the emerging of more township level companies and millions of small and medium-sized businesses. Restructuring of State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) in

193 Ibid. p. 212.
194 Ibid. p. 212.
the late 1990s created a number private business owner transferred from former heads of factories and companies of public ownership, laid-off workers most of whom later became small business owners and freelance professionals. The unified state owned sector has been split which cultivate new social classes.

David Lampton (2001) from Johns Hopkins University, for instance, concluded that China’s foreign and national security policy making as well as China’s performance abroad, are largely shaped by the forces of globalization, decentralization, pluralization, and professionalization. In the same masterpiece, Lampton also revealed how the enduring power of Chinese decision makers and their national interest focus also molded China’s behavior, notably in crises and in major strategic decisions.196

Lampton’s observation is insightful. Decentralization is the main theme and basic doctrine for the Reform and Opening-up. China’s political reform in the later half of the 1980s headed by former Premier Zhao Ziyang was the Party’s earlier practice in limited decentralization (to functional ministries and provincial government), freedom of speech for intellectuals, democratic consultation and “dialogue with the society”. The wave of decentralization is wide in scope but limited in depth. China’s reform in the late 1990s and the early 2000s gave to the former SOEs autonomy in operation, mergers, bankruptcy and partial privatization. Provincial governments became especially powerful since they were granted fiscal rights via Taxation Reform in 1994. Actually it would be safe to say that decentralization has resulted in pluralization of Chinese society, while professionalization is exactly the CCP’s goals to modernize the political system.197 Professionalism is also one of the values for the CCP either in their selection of cadres, social governances and political process. The CCP has also developed an organizational culture of favoring the “technocrats” especially during the Third and Fourth generation leadership.

Each political or social change has its economic roots. Chinese decision-making evolved as a result early interaction among political elites and economic elites. Therefore, social participation starts from economic groups in economic sector. The extraordinary development of township and village enterprises (TVEs) in the 1980s, the fast emerging merchants in early 1990s and the restructuring of the SOEs in the late 1990s, as well as the


197 For example, the 2012 version of Party Charter of the CCP stated that the party should cultivate “revolutionary, young, professional and knowledgeable” (gan bu ge ming hua, nian qing hua, zhuang ye hua, zhi shi hua) cadres.
flourishing of internet-based business in the past decades, and ever-growing foreign direct investment have created a huge number of entrepreneurs, managers, and IT professionals. Economically well-off, educated and open-minded, this group are exactly the so-called middle class who are supposed to be interested in participation.

Jie Chen and Bruce J. Dickson (2010) draw on extensive fieldwork as they explore the extent to which China’s private sector supports democracy, surveyed more than 2,000 entrepreneurs in five coastal provinces (Shandong, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Fujian, and Guangdong) which host over 70 percent of China’s private enterprises. The authors examined who the private entrepreneurs are, how the party-state shapes this group, and their relationship with the state. Findings are that China’s entrepreneurs are closely tied to the state through political and financial relationships, and these ties help shape their views towards the political system and its process. While most entrepreneurs favor multi-candidate elections under the current one-party system, they do not support a system characterized by multi-party competition and political liberties, including the right to demonstrate. The attitude could be attributed to the capitalists’ political beliefs and their assessment of the government’s policy performance. In a word, China’s capitalists tend to be conservative and status-quo oriented, quite different from other societies where a same group expect greater political freedom, representativeness and rights in times of rapid economic growth; and in times of crisis, the same group will become revolutionary forces for political transition. In both cases, economic elites in societies other than China serve as agents of democratization. This is a valuable contribution to the debates over China’s political process and the roles of this integral social group.

2. Generation Changes of Leadership

Generation changes of leadership are also a major precursor for improved political decision-making. Before the Reform and Opening-up, Chinese leadership was made up of overwhelmingly revolutionary cadres and organizers of contentious social movement. Among all 25 members of the Twelfth politburo for example, only one member held a college degree from a university of the Soviet Union. For them, loyalty to the party, knowledge of Marxist theory, and revolutionary background were the major criterions for

199 Ibid.
200 Ibid.
selecting and promoting cadres. In decision-making, orders followed the up-down approach, where lower level cadres receive orders from their superordinate and do what their bosses told them to. The approaches worked well since China then was a highly unified and organized society. National adornment of the Charismatic Chairman Mao Zedong seemed to have simplified the decision-making process since whatever Mao’s directives would be carried out faithfully by the bureaucratic system and the people as well. Farmers and workers have regular channels of participation in politics because of the egalitarian ideal of top leadership (especially Mao Zedong) and the overwhelming support from the society. Farmers and workers’ representatives seldom challenged party decisions; neither did they have the vision and expertise to do so. Intellectuals were repressed after the Anti-rightist movement in 1958 and faded away from political decision-making process. Therefore, the society was branches under strong leadership of the party, or to some extent, organs of the party regime.

The reform ended the class struggle that brought China into around 20 years’ turmoil, and economic development had topped the CCP’s priority list. China unveiled its rapid industrialization and modernization. Instead of loyalty and political correctness, the new task called for engineers, technicians, scientists and various experts. Knowledge, technology, courage and vision gained importance. Not surprising, China’s top leadership after Deng Xiaoping, President Jiang Zemin (1989-2002) and Premier Li Peng (1989-1997) and his successor Zhu Rongji (1997-2002), the third generation leader, President Hu Jintao (2002-2012) and Premier Wen Jiabao (2002-2012) were all technocrats. In 1997, out of the 25 members of politburo, 14 were technocrats; the number rose to 18 in 2002. 15 out of the 20 politburo members hold a university degree (the other 5 had no university degree), and 8 out of the 9 standing members of the politburo major in engineering, the only one exception is former Premier Wen who major in geology at college. Actually this phenomenon began to change during the second tenure of the fourth generation leadership. In the central party committee, the proportion of technocrats rose from merely 2% in 1982 to 51% in 1997, but declined to 36% in 2007.201 This can best prove the professionalism pursuit of the third and fourth generation and also revealed the new trends with the present leadership.

201 The changing characteristics of party elites are drawn from Dickson, Democratization in China and Taiwan, pp. 135 and 147; Cheng Li, China’s Leaders: The New Generation (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Bruce J. Dickson 51 Littlefield, 2001), p. 41; and biographical data taken from China Vitae (www.chinavitae.com); also see Andrew J. Nathan, Bruce Gilley (eds.) China's New Rulers: The Secret Files, 2004.
Undoubtedly, the education background has major effects on the decision-making. Priority on industrialization and economic development had given favorability to professionals, technicians and scientists. In each level of governments, public service organizations, the SOEs, people’s associations (ren min tuan ti), professionals prevail and have greater say. Financial, policy, and human resources were poured to production sector. Instead, environmental protection, social welfare such as medical care, education and housing, social and cultural development were left behind without sufficient investment. Efficiency goes first and equality is a secondary concern. The top leadership had a basic idea of making the cake first before they could divide it evenly and properly. Without background in political science or law, they have different understanding of free press and association; based on their own experience as technological elites, they may not realize the extreme importance of democratic procedures and social participation. For them, the party legitimacy comes from its performance in reduction of poverty, GDP growth, and improved living standard instead of election with due procedure.

Top former leadership Jiang Zemin’s experience with the June Fourth Incident, at the Tiananmen Square (he was major of Shanghai where his way of processing students’ protest and national ideological debate may have determined his attitude towards social participation) and his successor Hu Jintao’s experience in Tibet may have also contributed (he might be well aware about the importance of stability and order of the region). Admittedly, though both Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao fall into the same category in terms of their approach in addressing social pressure, the former was more pro-democracy and liberty, probably related to his experience as governor of China’s most developed and open city of Shanghai, while most of Hu’s profile is within the Youth League where “ideological work” values more heavily than economic performance. China in the late 1990s and the early 2000s witnessed more independent and influential media, which helped to cancel the “Compulsory Custody and Repatriation System” that led to the death of college student Sun Zhigang.

However, immediately after going into office, the Hu Jintao administration put out new regulations that tightened control over the media. The notorious “stability maintenance” under former Security Chief Zhou Yongkang is another proof for President Hu’s tightened social control. Even though there are speculations about Hu’s weak control of the Politburo in shadow of his predecessor President Jiang Zemin, it cannot simply explain why Zhou’s repression of media freedom, dissenters’ movements and liberal intellectuals intensified in
Hu’s second tenure when Jiang’s influence weakened for his health problems. The technocratic decision-making approach would be proper to explain why both third and fourth generation leadership did not favor social participation and rendered repressive gestures for any contentious attempts from the society.\textsuperscript{202}

Following the same approach, the education profile of the new generation of Chinese leadership is very impressive in that all the 25 members of the politburo received college education. 5 out of the 25 members, including President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Keqiang, hold a doctorate degree. More impressively, 18 out of the 25 standing members of politburo major are in law, economics, management and other majors of humanities and social sciences, accounting for 68\% of the politburo, indicating there would be great change with the decision-making approach. President Xi Jinping, Premier Li Keqiang and Vice President Li Yuanchao all have a degree in law. In addition, both Zhou Qiang, the President of the Supreme People’s Court and Cao Jianming, president of the Supreme People’s Procuratorate have also a degree in law. Governance of lawyers seems to be a common practice in developed world, a large proportion of whose top leaders have background in law. This seems to be especially true with their legal architecture. However, it is a huge progress for China, especially compared with former leadership in the first and second generation who grew up and won nuclear power via violence, cruel struggle among “comrades” for “routes”, and realist power competition. Hopefully, the legal background of top leadership would be conducive to rule of law, human rights protection and better governance. Especially in times of surging disparity, intensified social conflicts, wide-spread dissenters’ movements, increasing human rights activists, and growing awareness in political participation, governmental practice in rule of law remain as the core of governance.

3. Power Structure among Elites

Power structure of China’s government has also undergone far-reaching and in-depth changes. Among top leadership, regular, peaceful and procedurally legitimate transition of top leadership has been gradually realized. By comparing the leadership transition respectively in 1989-1992, 2002 and 2012, one can find that the CCP has made huge progress in institutionalization, and has transited from a revolutionary party to a modern political party. Both power transition at the down of the Reform and Opening-up program,

the crackdown of “Gang of Four” by Hua Guofeng, Mao’s designated successor in 1976, and the Hua’s outmaneuver in December 1978 by Deng Xiaoping, a senior revolutionary who later became pragmatic reformist leader, were unusual. The former transition was realized by violence, the latter was by forced resign and early retirement. Following Hua were reformist leaders of Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang, who were removed from the posts by party seniors of Deng Xiaoping and Chen Yun in the 1980s. Power transition in 1989 and until 1992 highly resembles the case between 1976 and 1978. Understandably, decisions were made by senior revolutionaries based on factional struggles among top leadership. The struggle is partially individual power struggle but more competition among different roads of national development (more reformism or more conservatism, in a comparative sense. However, we must admit that both Deng and Chen were pro-reform more generally).

The leadership transition from the third (headed by former President Jiang Zemin) to the fourth (headed by former President Hu Jintao) was widely regarded by then as the most predictable and peaceful transfer of power in the history of the People’s Republic.203 But still, former President Jiang delayed to quit from his post as the Chair of CCP’s Central Military Committee, which, many believed is to retain influence for the next generation. One of the fruits of political reform by Hu Yaobang in the late 1980s is to ensure the senior officials, especially the old revolutionaries to retire regularly so that they will not intervene the economic and political reform under new domestic and international context. However, by retain the military position for another two years, as well as keeping the majority seat of his followers in the Politburo Standing Committee, former President Jiang was able to keep influence in the following five years or more. Maintaining of influence on civilian government by military is against the common practice of modern state, Jiang’s endeavors revealed the party ideology and power structure of the CCP in the early twentieth-first century. The situation completely changed when in 2012, institutional and regular transition of top power was realized under full-fledged Xi Jinping-Li Keqiang regime.

4. Check of Balance among Top Leaders of Generations and Factions

Jiang’s retaining power as chairman of the Party Military Committee also revealed the power competition between generations. Power competition and struggle between generations is not new. The competition between Deng Xiaoping and Hua Guofeng was

such a case. Though both Hua and Deng had rich experiences during the revolution and socialist construction period, they belong to different “generations”. Deng Xiaoping, born in 1904, had been an eminent member and close ally of Mao Zedong during the early revolution, anti-Japanese war and Liberation War. In 1956, he was nominated as party-secretary and member of the Politburo Standing Committee. In 1975, when the then Premier Zhou Enlai’s health condition worsened, Deng became the vice Chairman of the Party, Vice Premier and vice chair of the Military Committee, the actual leader of the State Council. On the other hand, Hua Guofeng, born in 1921, used to be Guerrila leaders in Shanxi and local leaders in Hunan until 1971. He skyrocketed to nuclear power because of Mao Zedong. Deng’s experience, competence and prestige within the party was far beyond Hua. In early 1976, Hua denied the return of Deng in political life and this later became one of his “mistakes”. But it revealed the struggle of power between Hua and Deng as leaders of different “generations”.

In another occasion in the late 1980s, when political reform under then Party Secretary Hu Yaobang deepened, Hu himself proposed to reform the personnel system of leadership (ling dao ti zhi), one of the major initiatives was to abolish the life tenure leadership system (ling dao zhong shen zhi) that targeted against the party elders since the latter had intervened the political reform with their outmoded doctrines. Hu undertook to abolish the life tenure leadership system by the Thirteenth party congress in 1987. His attacks against the corruption of the princelings had also invited strong resents from the revolutionary elders (senbai). In the intraparty life meeting attended by top leadership (especially the elders from the Central Advisory Committee) held in January 10-15 that actually decided his “resign” from top leadership, Song Renqiong and Deng Liqun harshly criticized Hu for not “respecting” Deng Xiaoping and Deng’s ideas in major decisions concerning personnel reform.

Between the third generation leader of former President Jiang Zemin Administration

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204 This is quite controversial and many former party leaders and scholars of CCP history studies believe Hua delayed bring Deng back in to power was a pragmatic tactic for as a successor and loyal follower of Mao, he had to sticks to the Maoist doctrines while making adjustment steadily. Hua’s decision of not allowing Deng to return to power can partially be attributed his personality of prudence.

205 Yang Jisheng, China’s Political Factional Struggles in the Reform Era (zhong guo gai ge nian dai de men zheng), Excellent Culture Press. 2004, p.135.

206 Yang Jisheng, China’s Political Factional Struggles in the Reform Era, p. 317.

and the fourth generation of former President Hu Jintao Administration, can be also seen
tension in personnel arrangement and “roads” concerning national governance. For instance,
Jiang Administration defined himself and his administration as “the Third Generation
Leadership centered around Jiang Zemin”, after Mao Zedong and Jiang Zemin, while the
former President Hu Jintao Administration is defined as “Central party with Hu Jintao as the
General Secretary”, without defining him as “Fourth Generation Leadership centered
around Hu Jintao”. The present leadership of President Xi Jinping has inherited the term.

Apparently, Hu and Xi do not deem themselves as a generation, which is actually a term not
appropriate to name the leaders of a modern polity. Therefore, the power and “routes”
competition between generations seems to be also one major benchmark to understand the
decision-making of the CCP.

Intra-party check of balance exists among the factions as well. As analyzed in the
introductory part, Jiang’s rise to top power was based on the compromise between the
reformist elder of Deng Xiaoping and the conservative Chen Yun on a relative basis. However,
Jiang was supported basically by the princelings and represents largely the interest
of entrepreneurs. The princelings have strong influence in and intensive involvement in the
SOEs in power, energy, resources and financial sector, especially in center cities and wealthy
east provinces. Former Premier Li Peng was also a typical princeling whose siblings are also
very influential in the energy sector (his daughter Li Xiaolin is nicknamed Miss. No 1 of
Electrical power, and his son now serves as vice governor of the resource-rich of Shanxi
province).

While the next generation leadership, both former President Hu Jintao and Premier
Wen Jiabao rose though the Youth League. Within his administration, Zhou Qiang, Ling
Jihua, Wang Yang, and Liu Yandong who later become very influential state leaders. For
instance, 4 provincial party secretaries (including Li Keqiang and Li Yuanchao), 6 provincial
governors, and 4 leaders of both Provincial People’s Congress and People’s Political
Consultative Conference had been leaders of central or provincial Youth League.

Current President top leader Xi Jinping is no doubt a typical princeling, whose father
Xi Zhongxun, was an early revolutionary and close ally of Deng during the reform era. He

208 Actually, it was Deng Xiaoping who defined Jiang Zemin Administration the 3rd generation
leadership “centered around Jiang Zemin” Mao Zedong and himself as the first and second
generation “core” of leadership.
209 Xi Jinping, Xi Jinping’s statement concerning Deng Xiaoping Theory”, Available at:
used to be Party Head of Guangdong to lead the Reform and Opening-up in the 1980s. He had also been one of the 8 elders from the Central Advisory Committee administration. Like other princelings, Xi Jinping rose from Mayor of coastal Xiamen, a special economic zone as well as a pilot city of Reform and Opening-up, and later became Governor of Fujian, followed by Zhejiang province, and also Party head of Shanghai. Meanwhile, he also had been village head of least developed Shaanxi and county Party head of Hebei province, an experience typical for those who came from Youth League. Xi has full profile with his footprint covering township, county, municipal (Xiamen) and Provincial government. In his Administration, only Premier Li Keqiang grew into top leader from the League. In the Politburo, Wang Qishan, and Yu Zhengsheng are typical princelings. Liu Yunshan and Zhang Dejiang are both descendants of early revolutionaries. Two other competitive candidates from the League, Li Yuanchao and Wang Yang failed to squeeze themselves into the top leadership.

However, if we look to the prospect of future leadership, the competitive candidates such as the former Youth League head and Guangdong Party head Hu Chunhua, the president of the Supreme Court Zhou Qiang, and the governor of Heilongjiang Lu Hao are/were all top leaders of the League. Given that Hu Yaobang had intensive experience with the League there seems to have an alternation between the two factions of princelings and the Youth League in China’s top leadership such as follows: League (1982-1989), Princelings (1989-2002), League (2002-2012), Princelings (2012-2022), League (2022-, possibly).

Given the distinctive differences between the two factions in priority, interest representation and doctrines, the competition between the two factions has created a kind of intra-party check and balance with upper political architecture. Following the factional politics between the League and Princelings, inter-regional shift of leadership has also occurred. In the former President Jiang’s Administration, more nationals were elevated from coastal areas, especially from Shanghai. Recently, grassroots-level experience is gaining importance because of China’s serious problems with the peasants, the rural politics and agriculture. The huge migrants fueled by Chinese urbanization calling for those cadres with both rural and urban experience. China’s intension to address the rural-urban and inter-regional disparity also needs expertise of governing rural localities. Most of the League, Hu, Wen, Li and the coming leaders of little Hu (Hu Chunhua) rose from grassroots. Hu Jintao and Wen Jiabao had also worked in rural west of China. Sun Chunlan and Hu Chunhua, as
well as Zhang Chunxian all had worked in China’s west provinces. Understandably, they may have contesting ideas and proposals in major reform and foreign policy as well. Generation and factional competition for power, interest and legitimacy will be a major discourse change for interpreting any policy and decision-making process, and of course, in group incident as well.
Chapter 4: The Emerging Societal Forces and Political Decision-making

The previous two chapters are devoted to assessment of the CCP. Chapter Two introduces the international and domestic environment in which the CCP has evolved along the years; and Chapter Three presents the structure and process in which the Party has adapted throughout different generations and leadership by pointing out its continuities and changes. Within this context, Chapter Four focuses on how societal forces made inroads into Chinese society in the past few decades and how these emerging societal forces are likely to influence the Chinese political decision-making. Thus this chapter begins by describing the differences between societal forces and civil society as well as the composition of these emerging forces. By analyzing the components and features of Chinese societal forces, the writer makes a tentative assessment of the involvement of social groups in Chinese decision-making regarding the multiple incidents.

One can say that the emerging societal forces and their influence in Chinese political decision-making have appeared after the Reform and Opening-up. The complexity of China’s transformation after the program, however, is far-reaching and comprehensive. A general understanding trend of the reform is the retreat and shrinking of state power and expansion of society that had been unduly repressed before the late 1970s. This trend has left social spaces and opportunities for the growth of societal forces and seems to have major implications for China’s decision-making and political development as well.

1. Societal Forces versus Civil Society

Societal forces refer to groups, whose interests, purpose and values differ from government, and to those who collaborate in leading actions that changes governments’ decision-making, as well as to those whose involvement in governmental decision-making is relatively regularized, conventionalized or institutionalized and therefore traceable. Societal forces in this sense involve individuals and organizations such as individuals (public intellectual/opinion leaders, some famous members of the People’s Congress or the CCPCC, “VIP blog owners”, some social activists), NGOs, media, scholars, and public opinion.

The definition of societal forces should be compared and contrasted with the term of “civil society” which is normally adopted by Western scholars, as the arena of uncoerced collective action around shared interests, purposes and values. In theory, its institutional forms are distinct from those of the state, family and market; though in practice, the
boundaries between state, civil society, family and market are often complex, blurred and negotiated. Notably, civil society requires the basic divided, separate and mutually independent sets of systems between the state and the society, without the former manipulating, repressing or replacing the latter.

Civil society commonly embraces a diversity of spaces, actors and institutional forms, varying in their degree of formality, autonomy and power. Civil societies are often populated by organizations such as registered charities, development non-governmental organizations, community groups, women's organizations, faith-based organizations, professional associations, trade unions, self-help groups, social movements, business associations, coalitions and advocacy groups. Therefore, the Western term of civil society may not suit to the Chinese society well. The Chinese government has been vigilant against an opposition party, class, organization or social group. It had even refused the term in recent years. Most importantly, because of the authoritarian nature of Chinese government and its rigid control over the society, civil society in general, is underdeveloped and fragmented. The way it functions is diametrically different from a democratic society. This is the most important reason for the writer to adopt the term “societal forces”. Thus, societal forces and civil society are different in the following ways:

1) Civil society requires those social forces to be organized, conventionally operated, and predictable. While societal forces could be fragmented and more diverse. Often it takes the form of a contemporary loose union in one public incident or social movements, therefore, the term societal forces are China-specific.

2) Civil society has a private and non-governmental nature. While societal forces here refer to those groups whose interest, purpose and values are different from governments. Therefore, semi-governmental or government-affiliated organizations, even governmental organizations, sometimes adopted its individual policy that differentiate themselves from the systemic action or reaction, and therefore are regarded as societal forces, provided that they differentiates themselves from the “government”, and join the masses in public affairs. In such cases, the responses of such a government has distracted themselves from the government tack and become part of society. The phenomenon cannot be simply explained by factional politics or bureaucracy. As in the case of Wenzhou train clash, where the Wenzhou municipal government had displayed very subtle differences from

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210 London School of Economics Centre for Civil Society. Available at: http://www.lse.ac.uk/CCS/home.aspx
211 Ibid.
the statement of the central government and the then Ministry of Railways who tried to avoid due responsibility as an interest group.

3) Non-profit. Non-profit is one of the mayor criteria to identify civil society. Its major purpose is to differentiate civil society from business organizations who seek profit instead of focusing on the public good. Societal forces, on the other hand, contain those profit-seeking enterprises that influence the decision-making. Though in all the cases of this study, there was not any entrepreneur or enterprise involvement in the decision-making in an incident; business organizations are included in the grouping of societal forces. Particularly if taken into account that many of China’s societal organizations have been registered as enterprises since they were not able to register as “social groups” according to legal and technical restrictions set in official guidelines. Legally they are not different from profit-seeking companies. However, most of their activities are non-profitable. The absorb donations from enterprises, individuals, churches, and other social organizations. Some Chinese companies and NGOs also accept foreign investments.

4) Self-governing. Since civil society is made up of various organizations, societies, and associations, they enjoy autonomy in their own realm. This autonomy is a result of their financial independence, and is also protected by the constitution. Behind this is the deeply embedded value of individualism typical of western culture. The community is an entity made up of independent but innately-connected individuals. The community exists because of that of the individuals, while, Oriental culture falls into the opposite category, which we call collectivism, where individuals are part of a system or integral organ. The individuals survive and thrive because the system does. Therefore, the cultural community calls for individuals obeying, serving and sacrificing for the community. This Oriental culture is the root of Oriental totalitarian and autocratic tradition. This culture stream was developed by Chinese feudalist dynasties and has been partially reinforced by communist ideology and revolution that were to build a human society free from individualism and private ownership. After the Communist takeover of mainland China, it reconstructed and reorganized Chinese society with a fundamentalist doctrine, and surpressed society, leaving very little space for social autonomy. Therefore, self-governance is neither legally applicable nor practical because of the underdeveloped civil organizations, public awareness and sufficient expertise. The major benchmark for societal forces defined here is whether they have an independent stance from the government and create pressure for decision-making, most often, in a group incident.
5) Voluntary. The core essence for civil society is that it constitutes an arena where coercion, either from external (state power, especially) or from within an organization or community, is absent, therefore allowing the existence of a discursive public sphere or citizens. Apparently, the Chinese government has been quite vigilant against such an arena. It once appeared under the encouragement of the Party itself in 1957, when democratic scholars were asked to “criticize” the CCP and propose suggestions to improve the party leadership; and a second case start from the “Democratic Wall”, in Xidan district in Beijing, that began another wave of social discussion and participation all across the 1980s. Both ended with tragedy since they have crossed the bottom line set by the communist party. After the two waves of “civil society” discussions, a third wave in the public sphere appeared in the virtual space of the Internet that flourished for a while but shrank soon when the party tightened social controls. Thus, the discursive space is much greater than the pre-reform era. Citizens have the freedom to discuss and criticize the government. However, the present state-societal interaction was more often achieved by pressure or contentious politics. Therefore, the studies in this research also take into account those forces that are motivated by state power.

Societal forces have differentiated stances or propensity from Chinese government. As a group, they have shared interests, purposes and values, though these interests, purposes and values may not be established and vary from time to time, and area to area. These forces may have regular channels to influence the decision-making process alone or in collaboration with other organizations. Scholars of China in general, but especially those who the writer considers as supporters of “democracy” in the introductory,212 are extremely keen on the implications of the increasingly active societal forces and equally in the emerging middle class, as the growth of China’s middle class has further implications beyond China’s domestic policy-making. According to Lieberthal (2010)

“a large number of Chinese citizens who have acquired sufficient personal wealth to turn them into the types of discretionary consumers—of housing, appliances, vehicles, clothing, home-use products, information, and services—

that are the hallmarks of a middle class”.\textsuperscript{213}

The emerging middle class is likely to strengthen consumption in the international and domestic markets by consuming energy and luxury goods, for instance, or through business marketing, as well as economic growth and global climate initiatives. Societal forces and the middle class are different concepts based on different criterions of definition in this dissertation. Basically, societal forces have a much wider range and coverage than the middle class. However, the middle class is by no means part of the former term. Differentiation would be made throughout the analysis in the following section.

2. Middle Class, Civil Society and Societal Forces

Middle calls is a broad term used in sociology and can be also considered as an ambiguous term in political science, especially if the studies refer to the Chinese middle class due to Chinese political rigidity and economic inequality in which the term is involved. The following sections allows the reader to understand what is the Chinese emerging middle class and its political implications.

2.1. The Chinese emerging middle class and their political attitude

China’s emerging middle class is generally made up of the three clusters below on an occupational and socioeconomical basis.\textsuperscript{214} Firstly, economic clusters are made up of entrepreneurs, senior and middle managers from state-owned companies (SOCs), especially in energy, financial and high-tech sectors, as well as foreign investment companies and some large private companies. Middle class in the economic sector also contains some small urban business owners and farmers who have benefited heavily from land transactions fueled by booming real estate in the past 10 years. For example, a large amount of government compensation and resettlement in the form of housing brings a life comparable or even better to a senior managers with a private or SOCs, even though they are not often regarded as middle class according to Western experience.


\textsuperscript{214} I would like to thank Cheng Li from the Brookings Institute for the categorization of the clusters here borrowed from his ideas from his inspiring book China’ Emerging Middle Class: Beyond Economic transformation (Washington D.C: Brookings Institution Press, 2010). Further elaboration and adjustment are made by the author. All citations and references will be clarified.
Secondly, political clusters of middle class contain higher and middle ranking officials, lower ranking officials with relatively “resource-rich” departments, heads of functional department, and local governors. In terms of income, these clusters can by no means be ranked as middle class. However, Chinese bureaucrats and public servants enjoy institutional welfare in housing, medical care, children’s education and other potential benefits that are not necessarily categorized as corrupt or illegal. Crony capitalism characterized by “mutually beneficial ties” between political leaders and business is almost common practice. In order to appease the officials who are paid poorly while relying on them to develop the economy, the CCP seems to have rendered an astonishing tolerance of official-business ties that allow the cadres to benefit handsomely, and more importantly “legally”. The benefit could be legal additional income as a bonus, bribes, entrepreneur subsidy for luxury consumption, and schooling of children and other favor provided to their family members, or even mistress (es). Therefore, middle range officials and local cadres are certainly part of the emerging middle class.

Thirdly, intellectual clusters that contain renowned scholars, within-regime intellectuals, senior media journalists, and especially those bureaucratic intellectuals or intellectual bureaucrats at universities, research institutions, or think tanks. Intellectuals refer to those which work is solely based on intellectual work or “thought”. Not all workers who conduct research within an organization are middle class. Considering that the average income of a university teacher (even including professors) is quite low and not enough to support the usually “middle class” life style. The intellectual middle class refers to those “famous mouths” and renowned scholars who have often been invited by businesses for “guidance”, TV programs, academic, and popular broadcasting companies and therefore benefit economically from the new social engagement in Chinese society. Within-regime intellectuals refer to scholars affiliated to an important party or government division (central party school, for instance), that have good relations with the party or government branches, working for them (either as advisory jobs or ideological work which supports the government), and therefore have gained extra benefits from the regime.

Some senior journalists, freelance writers, frequent commentators especially (for media attached to the financial sector) may also be regarded as part of the middle class. Most bureaucratic intellectuals or intellectual bureaucrats, those professors and researchers with an administrative post as dean from a public university, director of a research institute, can be considered as part of the middle class, because usually they have access to more
academic (research funding) resources that allow them to be economically better off than other average colleagues. For instance the director of a secondary research institute within the China Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) is a director-general level official. He or she can be considered at least part of the middle class and may be also regarded as part of the political elite.

The three clusters essentially outline the basic strata that make up the Chinese emerging middle class. Besides, the upper-level of the professional groups which include lawyers, doctors and those involved in financial and consultancy services (almost all of which are undoubtedly a pillar of the middle class in advanced economies), investors in real estate and stock markets, as well as entrepreneurs and some businessmen may also be deemed as part of the new Chinese middle class. Some farmers can be also raised as examples of being part of the middle class, especially because some of them have been enriched by receiving huge amounts of compensation from the government or real estate investors and also by having close ties with senior officials from who they also benefited through business relationship.

However, how many middle classes have China produced? What is their political attitude? How do they involve themselves in decision-making? What is their role in the incidents and social crisis? If they do have a role, what it would be? We have to admit that it is fairly hard to estimate the proportion of middle class in China. In 2006, Merrill Lynch estimated that China would have a middle class of 350 million people by 2016, accounting for 32% of the adult population. Another joint study conducted by the Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation (HSBC) and MasterCard projected a total of 100 million middle class households by 2016. China’s expanding middle class is in line with the global trend and therefore quite reliable. The World Bank’s Global Economic Prospects of 2007 estimated an expansion of the global middle class from 7.6 percent of the world’s population in 2000 to something between 16.1 and 19.4 percent of the world’s population by 2030. Another report from Goldman Sachs also avers the global middle class will expand from 29 percent of the world’s population in 2008 to approximately 50 percent in 2030. Despite the difference in the estimated figures, the general trends revealed by the studies

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215 Merrill Lynch, China Consumer Brands Participation Certificate (Singapore, April 2008).
216 See: www.singtaonet.com/chinafin/200712/t20071210_688541.html
above show similarities and without doubt, China as the most populous country and the fastest growing economy should be the major contributor to this wave of expansion of the middle class.

Chinese urbanization can also tell us part of this story. Along with the rapid urbanization and industrialization, the number of urban residents grew significantly since the reform. According to official statistics, the share of the urban population rose significantly from 18% in 1978 to 31% in 1999 (with an increase of 222 million of urban population) and further grew to 43% of the total population in 2005, that means 562 million were living in urban cities by the end of 2005. The rate rose continuously to 50.3% in 2012. And by the end of 2014, 54.7% of China’s population lived in urban areas. It has been estimated that by 2020, over 60% of China’s total population will be living in urban cities.²¹⁹

The geographical relocation of Chinese residents to urban areas is also changing the economic and political landscape of China. Once has to also take into account the demographical structure of the population. Among half of the rural population, a large proportion comprises of the elderly, the women and children. Most of the young workers have moved to urban cities to look for better job opportunities and a better life. Not like the rural society, most localities are pouring investment mainly into their urban areas and are working very hard to incorporate migrant workers by providing insurance, medical care and schooling for children of migrant workers. Currently the government is working on making medical care insurance and other social security accounts transferable among regions. In the past migrant workers often lost their social security account and the accumulated money in it if he/she moved to within the country. The government is also working on to reform the household registration system (called hu kou) that limits the free flow of labor and limits the migrants’ rights and access to social welfare, education and medical care. Some places are already providing permission to migrant workers. The permission allows them to live legally as local residents and based on this, there will be an increasing welfare bond to it.

If standardization comes true, relatives of those migrant workers will also move into cities and may push urbanization to a much higher rate. Thus, the implications do not rest at the change of numbers regarding the urbanization rate. But the phenomenon of urbanization would significantly influence the social participation and decision-making related to government matters. Yet what one may consider is that the population in rural areas, are largely apolitical because of the basically dysfunctional local electorate and insufficient

²¹⁹ Li, S. “China’s urbanization rate to reach 60% in 20 years”, People’s Daily, 2001-05-17.
incentives for people to vote, as well as the ubiquitous corruption at grassroots level of government and the lack of benefit, resulting in the absence of representatives for their most interests. Therefore the rural population, though very large in number, has been excluded from the political decision-making process. However, once they merge into big cities and can be daily politicized as well as allured by relevant interest such as in form of unemployment, housing subsidies or schooling policies, their desire to get involved in political life may increase. Even if they are not willing to be politicized in a conspicuous manner, they will be extensively exposed to media as well as to their community, and may unconsciously take part in decision-making factors either as a concern for social stability or an opportunity for practicing good governance. As a result, they will likely integrate themselves into urban life and grow influenced by the middle class whose political attitude has influenced the way of involving decision-making.

2.2. Growing political consciousness of the middle class

Changes not only happened with the number of middle classes, but in the ideology of the classes’ members. The bourgeoning middle class is still expanding in terms of population numbers and with their acquired wealth, and growing social influence, their self-consciousness and pursuit for external recognition will certainly increase. Thus, if their new pursuits such as protection of their wealth, political rights and decision-making rights arise, their consciousness in participation and involvement will become more pro-active.

In fact, a similar situation has been seen among a group of incidents in China of which the writer has been working on. The Xiamen and Dalian PX plant incident and the Wenzhou Train crash are some of the cases to be raised here. The Chinese middle class

220 One can admit that in coastal areas of the Pearl River Delta and the Yangtze Delta, grassroots level election has been quite developed and there are many innovative incentives by lower level governments to encourage populist participation. Most eminently, in places of Wenzhou, local government had invented the form of “Meeting for Consultation of villagers” (恳谈会), which had aroused intensive scholarly interest and had been granted by the Central Bureau of Compilation and Translation. However, in rural areas of China’s inland provinces where most migrant workers come from, political participation generally remains ineffective and unsatisfactory.

221 The Wenzhou Speed Train Clash is a major accident resulted from design flaws, sloppy management and mishandling of a lightning strike that crippled equipment and led to a bullet train crash that killed 40 people, leaving 172 others injured. The relatives of victims (mostly middle class), supported by mass media, social activists, NGOs, intellectuals and other societal forces had ensured the government to investigate the accident, and drew reliable conclusion based on which, 54 officials and railway workers, including Former Minister of Railways, were punished, and the compensation for the victims raised from the originally proposed RMB 172,000 to 915,000. The author believes the “success” of societal involvement could be partially attributed to the skillful
has shown a stronger sense of “rights maintenances” (wei quan), and become more astute in dealing with the media, government and other institutions. They have sufficient basic legal knowledge and because of this, their attitude is pragmatic and rational. Therefore, their critical engagement with the government and their participation in the decision-making process has been shown to be more effective. Compared to the many social uprising and protests by the grassroots, those protests attended or mainly led by middle class showed distinctive features. On the other hand, cases such as the Weng’an protest,222 for instance, were often a release of anger, involving the government was often done via the form of pressure politics or contentious politics. They air their anger and the governments responds to their pressure based on their own judgment. Deeming the events as a trouble or crisis they should have avoided and that should be immediately solved, their responsiveness often rests with appeasement of the anger, instead of finding a solvation to the unrest.

In cases such as the Wukan Land Protest and the Xiamen PX Incident, interaction is a two way process, each side received information and responded according to the other. Communication, coordination and persuasion play an important role besides negotiation and compromise. Both sides are willing to listen since both deem the other side to be rational and negotiable, if not persuadable. Therefore, the interaction is often conducted in a peaceful and rational manner. Chinese society has not yet developed a culture of negotiation between the government and society, sometimes as the last resort, violence is adopted as a choice without choice (those who burn themselves as a protest against the government or some other functional authority in a land dispute) to arouse public awareness.

However, generally speaking, evidence has shown that violence often brings unexpected results and it sometimes justifies government repression, which the government regards as a simple yet effective way to settle a protest. Especially before the event has attracted enough audience or has not been exposed to media, violence often kills the prospect for a better solution. In this sense, the way the Chinese middle class engages the government has shown to have a far-reaching impact. With better legal knowledge, more

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222 A riot occurred on June 28, 2008, which involved tens of thousands in Weng’an, a rural town in remote Guizhou Province of Southwest China, to protest against the police’s verdict of “suicide” of 15 year-old schoolgirl, Li Shufei, since rumors circulated that she was murdered and that the conclusion of “suicide” was drawn because of corruption. The protests displayed the lost credibility of government and grassroots’ lack of trust in government officials. This kind of protest is quite common in the underdeveloped inland rural west. A similar case also happened in Shishou of Hubei province in June 2009 when the death of a male cook led to a major riot attended by several thousand of people.
social resources, either economic, personal ties with government organizations, access to superior political power, the middle class will first resort to institutional/ lawful measures, and in their intensive interaction with the political system, they have gradually learned the expertise and “skills” necessary for bargaining with the political decision-making body.

Compared with domestic expertise, their international vision has also empowered them with better bargaining skills. The Reform and Opening-up program can be considered to some extent the internationalization of China’s politics. Here internationalization does not mean the international exposure of China’s domestic politics, but refers to China’s learning from international practices and adjusting to international standards. Many widely used terms, i.e. democracy, good governance, right to know, public good, citizenship, and accountability just to name a few, were generally borrowed from experiences and statement from “Western” discourses. The Communist Party never denied such universally accepted values. The middle class has used those terms and international practices to negate measures taken by government.

In the most recent case of the Tianjin chemical explosion which had claimed 159 lives (by September 1, 2015), an article circulated at that moment in Beijing’s media regarding the principle of “burn down” has attested that literally, the best strategy in a chemical explosion is to wait until everything were burned down because of the extreme danger and uncertainty, which was considered as “international practice”. This explanation had been circulated intensively around the knowledge circle. The article provided evidence to question or negate the improper directions and orders of the firefighting authority so fight fire knowing or not knowing the materials that led to explosion were chemical which led to the unnecessary death of scores of fire-fighters. The term “burn down” was also adopted to question the unprofessionalism of the firefighting practices in the case of Tianjin.

Since the Opening-up, a large number of young Chinese students have studied overseas, they have been used to the lifestyle of their hosting countries, enjoyed the efficient service of foreign governments, and had watched closely the way democratic countries work, and the various protests organized by locals.

China’s growing body of educated population and its deepened opening-up and intensive international exchange has helped spread global norms, such as democracy, liberal rights,

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223 Here the debate on “burn down” is provided as a short sample to explain the characteristics of middle class in engaging the government. The writer is not responsible for technical correctness of the term “burn down”, nor does he holds any stance concerning the term.
human rights protection, government accountability, which have been generally accepted by even the most ordinary Chinese. New visitors to Beijing may be surprised that a taxi driver should chat with him or her about domestic or international politics with the above-mentioned terms, though their understanding of those terms may be different from professionals or academics. The increasing number of Chinese returning from overseas has also contributed to the ideological change of the Chinese. A recent statistic shows that Chinese students in the U.S. reached 274,439 during academic year 2013-2014, accounting for 31% of all America’s international students. China’s Ministry of Education reported a total of over 459,800 Chinese studying abroad from 1978 to 2014 and a total of 1,809,600 had returned to China.

The values and norms of free gatherings, free speech, human rights protection, and governmental accountability appeal to this large educated population. Sometimes, even short term visits or tours to a foreign country helps reshape the knowledge and value of ordinary people. According to a recent statistic, the number of Chinese travelling overseas grew from 10.5 million in 2000 to more than 107 million in 2014. They are aware of their political and economic rights, eager to be successful in economical and political sectors and remain critical of the many restraints from the political system and bureaucratic organization. Therefore, they keep an eye on the decision-making of the political system and criticize the government via various publications in newspapers, magazines, internet-based communities, blog, and Weibo thus pushing attitudes concerning public affairs.

3. What Are Societal Forces Composed of?

According to the definition above, the groups below could be regarded as Chinese societal forces that are influential in the decision-making process.

3.1. Public Opinion (yu lun)

Public opinion refers to an aggregate of the individual views, attitudes, and beliefs about a particular topic, expressed by a significant proportion of a community. Generally speaking, scholars tend to treat the aggregate as a synthesis of the views of all or a certain segment of society. However, others may regard it as a collection of many differing or opposing views. Public “opinion” may be different, fragmented, but there is always one major opinion prevailing among all others, and attracts the largest audiences. That is the one “public opinion” that matters.

Public opinion is not a statement from an established group of people or professionals. It composes a changing group of people from various backgrounds, in terms of their education, occupation, economic and social status, as well as gender and nationality, etc. Public opinion concerns public affairs, often government affairs. Therefore, it is also defined as “the aggregate of public attitudes or beliefs about government or politics”. They affect major decision-making through wide discussion, airing their voices through public media (writing articles, having interviews, putting up posters, protests), therefore creating great social pressure for governmental decision-making.

Public opinion develops based on background from political socialization, education, life experience, political parties, the media, and the government itself. Public opinion functions in major public affairs, especially through public crisis when government, under pressure of interest groups, adopts policies apparently unfair for the general masses. In Western society, public opinion is very influential. Some prestigious opinion polls are often used by government branches as important references in their decision-making. In the U.S., for instance, the results of opinion polls sometimes even influence the result of the presidential election. In Japan, various opinion polls have also been influential in policy formation.

Public opinion doesn't not only function in the form of opinion poll. In democratic
regimes, public opinion is a “soft” part of the decision-making process adopted to justify and legitimize government policy, and also as an “undue” (non-procedural) review of a designated policy.

China also has opinion polls but because of China’s journalistic system, content of opinion polls concerning the government or policies remain as a taboo. The small-scale polls conducted by mainstream media often serve for political needs and are therefore are not so reliable. Sometimes, opinion polls conducted by governmental organizations among certain groups of people even cheat by selecting their favored interviewees. In order to achieve wanted result, falsification or even fabrication is not rare. In academia, many scholars have conducted reliable opinion polls; however, most of them target on a relatively small group of people for academic analysis. They often circulate among the academic community with limited influence. The topic of their research often concerns issues that have long-term and far-reaching meanings, and may fall short of the timeliness which reduces the practical effect of their polls. Therefore, opinion polls are not the major channel for public opinion to play a role. In most of the cases adopted by this research, public opinion serves via societal pressure in discourse of contentious politics. They are invisible in that one cannot find public opinion directly in any organizational form. However, public opinion is also ubiquitous in full exposure of media coverage, Internet discussion, real-time social media (especially WeChat very recently).

3.2. Mass Media

In democratic societies, the role of mass media is so prominent that it is regarded as the “fourth power”, after the administrative, legislative and judicial power. In autocratic states, mass media also plays a vital role in that it constitutes the very few means to inspect and contain the unlimited political power. Chinese media has long been, and is presently still under censorship of the CCP and state authorities. Communication systems under authoritarian regimes rarely extend beyond transmitting, framing and interpreting for the audience the decisions and actions of the government. They facilitate government recruitment, socialization and mobilization, hence communications have distinct social and

political responsibilities of social control and nation building that are consistent with the
development of priorities and ideological assumptions of the regime.\footnote{Ibid.}

However, as media developed from square to cubic (paper media, digital media, and
more importantly Internet), censorship of mass media by any government is getting
increasingly difficult. In particular, the rapid development of the Internet over the past 10
years has brought China the second largest population of “netizens” after the U.S.\footnote{Lai, Hongyi. The Domestic Sources of China's Foreign Policy: Regimes, Leadership, Priorities and Process. Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon; New York, N.Y.: Routledge, 2010.} The
nature of the Internet makes it even more difficult for the CCP and governmental censorship
over mass media, though it could use the aforementioned “Green Dam” and the nine major
Internet gates to restrict the flow of information to China.

The inner driver of China’s media change dates back to the market-orientated reform
and restructuring of State-owned enterprises (SOEs) in the late 1990s when most media that
used to be fully funded by the government, became financially independent and had to
make profit as an ordinary business. This change was significant, since financial
independence also means autonomy in their operation. In order to survive the market, media
has to “serve” the market. The political and social implications of that decision are still
unfolding as the Chinese government, media, and the society were still adapting mutually to
each other and to the changed political and social and information environment. But it is true
that it has brought, for many, the spring for Chinese journalism. Many media elites with
ideals quit the regime to establish their own media in China’s coastal Guangdong and
Shanghai areas where media enjoyed greater freedom. One of the famous newspapers,
which had played an essential role in a major case of this research, the South Metropolis
Newspaper, was launched in January 1, 1997. It was also China’s first in-depth investigatory
newspaper. The identity changes of the media from a propaganda mouthpiece into a
watchdog agent are far-reaching. From then on, the media has been involved in each major
event in Reform and Opening-up program, and it is safe to say that no progress in decision-
making and political development would be possible if the role of media is absent. As
displayed in some of the cases, when media access was completely denied and the space for
maneuver between journalists and political authorities was completely denied, societal
engagement did not bring any results.

Chinese media themselves have undergone fundamental changes and their role has
been expanding over the past decade or more. As it has shown in public affairs through cases
such as the outbreak of SARS and the Sun Zhigang incident, as well as the Sichuan Great Earthquake, anti-corruption campaign, Xiamen PX plant incident, the Qianyunhui case, the Wukan protest, and the Wenzhou Train clash, the role of the media themselves has changed from merely a record of the CCP and the government, to a more independent role in inspecting and containing political power, truth-teller, and promoter of joint actions, organizer of social movement, and conventionally, as an educator and as an agent of socialization. As Chinese media became more mature, it also serves as an independent player with its own attitude, propensity, and values in major social happenings, especially in a period of crisis. Among those multiple roles played by the media, the most important one has been truth-teller and carrier of public opinion that creates strong societal pressure, and becomes part of the decision-making process. Therefore, the writer would like to examine the role of the mass media in the decision-making process of each case and figure out how it functions and in what pattern it interacts with other societal forces and well as the decision-making organs.

This said, constrained by the political system and its media management system, Chinese media cannot simply perform their normal roles as in the case of the Western media. Especially given that there is a great anxiety of conflicting identities that the Chinese media holds simultaneously. The media have to balance their role to serve to grandmothers: the party and the market. The former requires it to be consistent with party’s doctrine, favorability and priority, while the latter needs the media to play a more diverse, professional, and “social” role. Often the directives and guidelines they receive from the party propaganda division tend to be against the spirit of professionalism that favors the “rights to know” of the public, neutrality of the media itself and other technical details. For known reasons, professional lives of Chinese investigative reporters are extremely short, they often work under high-pressured sometimes dangerous work environments, maneuver with difficulty with the uncooperative bureaucratic system and its affiliates and other parties; suffer from severe censorship imposed on their reporting, and the often low input inconsistent with their paychecks. Several very prominent and committed investigative journalists died young, including the most recent death of Chief Reporter Guo Guoliang (1983-2014) of the Zhuhai News Center, Southern Metropolis Daily. Guo had a very special role in the Wenzou Train Clash accident.

In January 2004, half a year after the Sun Zhigang’s case, Deputy Chief Editor Yu Huafeng, Li Mingying, senior investigator and head of social committee of the South Metropolis Group; and another former Deputy Chief Editor Deng Haiyan from the Southern Metropolis Daily were accused of corruption which later developed into a major political-legal case since it was regarded as persecutions of their journalist freedom for their role in the Sun Zhigang’s case and their disclosure of the Guangdong government in withholding true information during the outbreak of SARS which caused panic among population. The case had incited a long legal battle until very recently when an important Guangdong Party leader was arrested for corruption, who was believed to be deeply involved in the legal case of the South Metropolis Newspaper. As of 2008, the international NGO Freedom House ranked China 181 worst out of 195 countries in terms of press restrictions, and Chinese journalists have been aptly described as “dancing in shackles”.\textsuperscript{238} Without strong will and journalistic ideals, seldom can an ordinary reporter endure the pressure of an investigative job. It is also for this reason that media participation in decision-making is most valuable. It also shows how different societal participation is without institutional protection of journalism in an autocracy.

3.3. Professionals

Professional expertise proves to be very important in crisis management, emergency response, legal affairs, and state-society interaction, especially in times of questioning government authority and in incidents where the government (in most of the cases, local governments) often withhold information and avoid taking due responsibilities. On the one hand, people need official evidence to support their pursuit. Evidence has shown that often a report of a scientific test or technical expertise provided by qualified and specialized reporting institutions helps greatly. For the government, in order to prove the credibility of their stance, they are willing to rely on professional organizations. In a word, both government and society for their expertise, neutrality, and objectiveness often trust professional organizations. In most social incidents as this study will analyze, professionals play an essential role.

Professionals in this research study cover lawyers and legal experts, medical and medical-legal experts, as well as engineers, and others professionals. Because many cases of societal involvement concern human rights violations, abuses of power, and other legal

affairs, the expertise of lawyers or legal specialist are important, such as in the example of Sun Zhigang’s case, the suggestion of a lawyer to do a medical-legal test proved to be very important since the test confirmed the real death was caused by physical torture instead of disease based on a previous statement.

In the case of Wenzhou Train Crash, because of the disputes between “the technician cabal” and the “administration cabal” over the major causes of the train crash, reliable and neutral investigations from a third party was vital. Wang Mengshu, the Chief Scientist for China’s high-speed train and railway system, was mainly responsible for technological development for China’s new locomotive trains. Wang firmly believes that the major cause of the severe accident lies in the negligence and malversation of the conducting center and the actions of the driver (who also died in the accident), as one train had stopped and was stationary before the accident, and it was the train which ran after it that hit the train stationed before it. Therefore, it was because the conducting center had given wrong directions to both trains that made the accident happen while in fact, the accident could have been avoided and had nothing to do with technical liability of the train. However, if this was the conclusion, the workers at the conducting station, the conductors of both trains (especially the ones that hit) would be responsible.

More importantly, public outrage was poured on the whole railway ministry that had long been criticized for its deficiency, poor service, and corruption. As usual, the head of regional railway systems and even the minister needed to assume responsibility. For the administration cabal of the ministry, attributing the accident to technical defection was a relatively more pragmatic choice since they had only developed the new technology within one decade, and the Chinese public may render an understanding attitude even if there is minor technically defect with the system. But doing so will also hurt the reputation of the Chinese high-speed train, which had become a proud achievement for China. Since both parties are stakeholders in the matter, a neutral third party investigation was very important in defining the major reason for the crash and further decided who should take the responsibility.

3.4. Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs)

NGOs are an important part of the civil forces. In fact, various interest groups, societies and associations, civilian corporate and youth movements, are the major component of societal forces or the more commonly adopted term “civil society”. In terms
of numbers, the NGO family is large in China, which grew from some 100 in 1965 to more than 200,000 in 2000. Since the second half of the 1990s, “social groups”, the Chinese term for NGOs, have flooded all over China. By the end of 2013, China hosted over 500,000 registered NGOs. Between 1988 and 2013, the number of registered NGOs had increased over 100 times, from merely less than 4,500 in 1988 to over 540,000 in 2013.\textsuperscript{239} This number does not contain those unregistered social organizations. A worker from the Ministry of Civil Affairs has admitted that registered civil organizations roughly account for about one-fifth to one-third of the total number.\textsuperscript{240} Many of them, however, have to register as enterprises while conducting the normally non-profit activities, making it fairly hard to track and observe their activities.\textsuperscript{241}

However, Chinese NGOs have a dichotomy: those small organizations do not have sufficient means to influence the decision-making process, while those influential ones are almost exclusively non-political government-funded or government-affiliated, such as the Song Qingling Foundation.\textsuperscript{242} Meanwhile, the Chinese government greatly tightened its control over the NGOs after the “color revolutions” in Central Asia that further reduced the influence of the NGOs as a group.

The period of the research, 2002-2012, marked the rapid growth of the NGOs both in numbers and influence. The Hu Jintao-Wen regime had rendered greater tolerance, if not acceptance towards the NGOs. Sustained economic growth and the diversification of interests of the Chinese society, more importantly, since a factional disputes among “leftists” and “liberals” have nurtured a few very influential civil organizations in Beijing and other cities. Many foreign NGOs were allowed to open their offices in Beijing and a number of Chinese NGOs were established.\textsuperscript{243} Different from the NGOs under government branches and public service organizations whose activities were mostly confined to functional, professional or industries, the new type of the NGOs are more involved in public policy making. Not like the NGOs affiliated to government branches that had shown consistency in

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{239} Registered NGOs in China, 1988–2013. Sources PRC Ministry of Civil Affairs, Ying and Zhao (2010: 9), Zhongguo Shehui Zuzhi Wang (2014).
  \item \textsuperscript{240} The information is based on an interview with B.F., a staff from Bureau of Civil Affairs Beijing Municipal Government, Fall 2012, date undefined. The number he provided was a national wide assessment.
  \item \textsuperscript{241} Ma, Qiusha. Non-Governmental Organizations in Contemporary China: Paving the Way to Civil Society. (Routledge Contemporary China Series) (2005).
  \item \textsuperscript{242} Also known as Soong Ching Ling Foundation (SCLF). The Foundation was established in commemoration of Soong Ching Ling, the late Honorary President of the People's Republic of China.
  \item \textsuperscript{243} NGOs in China: Pummelling the little platoons. The Economist. 22 August, 2015.
\end{itemize}
their political attitude with the government, or international NGOs that concentrated on human rights and environmental protection, the new types of NGOs have implicit political propensities.

Put simply, they focus on political affairs, and are created to advocate certain political values and social policies. Their involvement in policy-making is more general and comprehensive. They regularly hold discussions, seminars, issue academic research papers and reports airing their concerns and perspectives about on-going reform and gained a lot of audience and influence with the decision-making process. Among them, the most influential leftist group is the “Utopian” (wu you zhi xiang), which adopts the Maoist ideology and calls for a just and more balanced society, always inviting experts from the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) or foreign universities. While another organization called the Transition Institute (chuan zhi xing she hui jing ji yan jiu suo) is typically a liberal one who favors “liberty, equality and human rights” and always holds discussions about sensitive topics such as historical and present human rights abuses, they often invite U.S. embassy officials, human rights or environmental activists to give speeches, and publish manuals about taxation, human rights protection, etc. They also print educational materials concerning liberal philosophy, researches concerning rights of vulnerable groups such as taxi drivers, migrant workers, staying-at-home children (liu shou er tong) and women; they publish books and reports, and are involved in rural education. These two organizations could be regarded as the NGOs even according to the strictest definition, and have gained a huge body of audience.

More importantly, these organizations, especially the latter have created a wide social network that has brought together famous social activists who are involved in major events concerning decision-making. Its members have been active in independent representative nomination, investigation of Zhejiang Qian Yunhui case, the Wukan incident in Guangdong, and also the recent case of the blind lawyer Chen Guangcheng. It is also for this very reason that the Chinese government has been alert against activities of the NGOs, whose living conditions remain very worrisome. However, they represent a

244 Some social activist believe according to the related law and regulations concerning the selection of representative of People’s Congress, citizens have the right to be nominated if they have enough nominators and they can also be selected via due procedure. They regard it as citizen right and there are already a few cases in China of “independent candidates”.

245 With the help of key members of the above-mentioned NGO, blind lawyer Chen Guangcheng was “rescued” from “soft custody” by guards sent by local governments and taken to Beijing where he entered the U.S. Embassy for asylum, which turned out to be a major diplomatic issue between China and U.S. Chen later became a visiting scholar at New York University.
major approach to studies of civil society and the much broader topic of democratization.

3.5. Scholars/Intellectuals

Academia have developed similar roles in China’s social participation. A small family of scholars serve as government advisors though regular seminars and consultations, and sourcing-out research projects. A considerable number of members of the advisory committee of the CCP are from Chinese top universities, such as Beijing University, Tsinghua University, Renmin University and China Academy of Social Sciences, among other universities and think tanks. They are to some extent part of the decision-making process. However, in terms of public incidents, they seem not that salient in the advisory aspects. Instead, their role is more about reshaping public opinion through writing articles, having interviews, making comments on their own webpage or weichat pages.

There are also many scholars and intellectuals from policy-orientated research institutes under universities. In some independent think tanks, research fellows are mostly former university professors or present university researchers. Therefore it is fair to categorize the two in one class.

In the past, most Chinese think tanks were governmental or semi-governmental. They may be a division under a party department or ministry of the state. In general, they are independent organizations “under the guidance and supervision” of the party or government. For instance, the Center for Chinese Economics Studies under Beijing University is the most influential think tank in economics. Research institutes such as the China Academy of Social Science (CASS), the Chinese People’s Institute of Foreign Affairs (zhong guo ren min dui wai you hao xie hui) (CPIFA), China Institute of International Studies, Institute of Contemporary International Relations (zhong guo xian dai guo ji guan xi yan jiu yuan) and China Society of Strategic and Management (zhong guo zhan lue yu guan li xue hui) in international relations and Unirule Institute of Economics (Tian ze Jing ji Yan jiu suo) can to be also be cited here.

Since universities and their research centers host a number of highly professional personnel who are becoming more and more independent from the government, they constitute an important part of the Chinese think tanks. Because of that think tanks certainly

affect the decision-making process by doing research, publishing journals, writing reports, and having interviews since these institutes usually host well-known scholars and influential personnel.

3.6. Potential Candidates for Societal Forces

Though China’s authoritarian party-state centralizes all power and streamlines its policy-making process, one cannot deny that multiple potential groups as societal forces have managed to emerge and exert intensive influence. Besides the above-mentioned groups as societal forces, there are groups that may play a role in future state-society interaction. They have the resources and access to influence decision-making alone; however, they may also side with the society under special circumstances. As Chinese economic reform deepens, they will also be reorganized and become fragmented, allowing part of them, if not all, to join other societal forces in a future incident, even though their interest, attitude and role remain somehow unclear and ambiguous in the past cases.

Enterprises represent one of the major elements of society other than the political power. Enterprises and state government always appear as an interest alliance, they have a lot of differences in their pursuits, approaches and logics. Enterprises, especially State-owned Enterprises (SOEs) and large transnational companies of foreign investment or as joint ventures have been very influential in China’s decision-making. In fact, because the majority of China’s key industries, namely petroleum, petro-chemical, power grid, energy, telecommunication, railways, and tobacco industry are controlled by SOEs. Industrial policies are basically dominated by those SOEs. Their great economic power as well as their relationship with the government, especially when we take into account the fact that they expand their business through national monopoly or crony capitalism, are likely to constitute part of the interest group. In this sense it seems reasonable to attest that SOEs have great say in the Chinese decision-making process. Very often the SOEs are game players against what we term as society. However, in some other cases, they may be part of the societal forces.

Private companies have shown strong dynamism in recent years. Especially in the high-tech arena, private companies far outpace SOEs. Huawei and ZTE had become world’s leading telecommunication solution providers. According to All China Federation of

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Commerce, in the year 2013, private enterprises accounted for more than 60% of China’s total GDP, private enterprises in 19 out of 31 provinces have contributed more than half of the economy, and in China’s most developed Guangdong, private sector account for more than 80% of its GDP. Because of the eminent role of enterprises in economic development and job creation, they had become an eminent player in engaging the government’s decision-making.

Enterprises are regarded as part of the civil forces because they gradually formed differentiated pursuits from that of the state power, though their interest is normally different from that of the general public too. The introduction of entrepreneurs into the Party by offering membership or the CCP’s system to develop “out-Party representatives” have also indirectly expanded the role of enterprises in decision-making. Corporate interest groups seek privileges and favorable policies through decision-making or through the administrative departments and supervising departments and via their special government and business relationship. An outstanding case is the delaying of an anti-monopoly law for 13 years by cartel-like corporations and their government protectors.

Additionally a very important factor for the emergence and rise of civil society in China lies in the local government, especially the provincial governments, which are considered as a special force in this dissertation. Reform centered on decentralization since the early 1980s entitled provincial governments, especially those in coastal areas with policy making powers in taxation, foreign trade, and economic development. For instance, the privileged location and advantageous trade arrangements granted by central government enabled the provinces in coastal areas to attracted more foreign investment and get industrialized and modernized sooner. Accordingly these provinces embraced the opening up policies at larger momentum. While northeastern provinces may require the central government for strategic support to revitalize its once strong industry; provinces in central China may demand to get more funding; provinces in the west side area where natural resources are abundant, may ask for a larger share of interest from the exploitation of natural

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249 Xinhuanet, Private Companies Contributed more than 60% of China’s Total GDP, Available at: http://news.xinhuanet.com/2014-02/28/c_119558098.htm, 2015-02-01.

Competitive relationships seem to be significantly formed among provinces and a kind of tension began to arise between authority from the central government and provincial power. As a result, provincial governments began to air different ideas and may have neglected or even resisted orders from central government (and indeed this is not a rare happening. It has been happening in Guangdong, Shanghai and even in Beijing as has been observed by the writer). In order to gain public support and justify their policies and most importantly in order to guard their own interests, these provincial governments choose to side with the media; the local scholars, general public and those from other provinces in similar situations, without openly challenging the central government or ministries. Therefore, an alliance among provincial governments and media, scholars and other possible forces may take shape. By far, there is no appropriate case to test this possibility. However, given the tension between central government and local government, and that the latter may have particular interest with the local societal interest the possibility remains open for future political development.

Prospective groups may cover a much broader scope of organizations, formal or informal. As the Chinese market economy develops, more diverse interest groups will raise and they tend to be more societal than governmental or semi-governmental, and this has great implications for Chinese governance. We shall next see how societal forces increased in the critical realm, often becoming a threat to the state and how this differs from the public sphere where civil society, the main feature of democratic society, freely discuss and identify societal issues.

4. Critical Realm and Public Sphere: from Societal Forces to Civil Society

To some extent, the temporary union of some groups of the societal forces in many public incidents covered by this dissertation could serve as the precursor of an emerging civil society in China. Comparison of the definitions of societal forces and civil societies in the early session of this chapter have revealed the differences between the two terms. We shall summarize again in the following paragraphs.

As mentioned previously, civil society is defined by the London School of
Economics Centre for Civil Society as the arena of uncoerced collective action around shared interests, purposes and values.\textsuperscript{254} Besides its distinctions from institutional forms of the state, family and market, civil society relies on and also favors a diversity of spaces, actors and institutional forms, varying in their degree of formality, autonomy and power. Civil society is visible via civil society organizations such as registered charities, development non-governmental organizations, community groups, women's organizations, religious groups and organizations, professional associations, trade unions, chamber of commerce, self-help groups, social movements, business associations, coalitions and advocacy groups in Western society.\textsuperscript{255}

The degree of development of the civil society is often valued by analyzing the number, autonomy, and activities of the NGOs which encompass a entire range of civil society once they devote to specific issues such as health, protection of environment, humanitarian relief and protecting basic civil and political rights. However, for the reasons mentioned before, it is not quite effective to focus solely on the NGOs because of the characteristics of the NGOs in China, though they do provide an important and useful benchmark to evaluate Chinese civil society. However, given the fact that China’s NGOs themselves remain weak and not even able to influence the decision-making process alone without the support of other societal forces, let alone to incorporate the societal engagement in political decision-making, a comprehensive review of public opinion, media, academia, and professionals would be essential.

By adopting the concept of “societal forces”, which has a much broader meaning than civil society, this dissertation allows us to know how a society of a country where a (mature) civil society is absent can still interact with the state and make a difference in the latter’s political decision-making. Though societal forces cannot function as civil society who can legally and institutionally participate in public affairs in a peaceful way, it can still change the attitude, agenda, and pattern of decision-making though pressure or contentious politics. Both have differentiated stances or propensity from state government. In this sense, the participation of societal forces is sometimes unlawful and even violent, and therefore unusual.

Unlike civil society whose actions are more constructive, some of participation of societal forces appears to be destructive even though their appeals can be justified and

\textsuperscript{254} Definition followed the term adopted by the London School of Economics Centre for Civil Society.
\textsuperscript{255} Ibid.
reasonable. The former’s actions are often led or driven by values and some “public” purpose which does not directly relate to their own interest, while the latter’s participation often belongs to right-maintenance (wei quan) actions. Major actors often have a stake in the events. There are many social activists who are deeply engaged in more than one event just for their ideal for social justice. However, they seldom are major actors for most of the incidents. For instance, Xu Zhiyong and Teng Biao, two graduates of law school from Beijing University who later became lecturers at universities in Beijing have been engaged in Sun Zhigang’s case and the Qian Yunhui’s case as well as the Wukan activities. Their most recent engagement was their appeals for social support of the feminist movement and persecuted lawyers, but none had evident results. The general absence of values in societal participation and engagement differentiates civil society from societal forces and justifies that civil society is the advanced form of societal forces. These are preliminary findings of this research but certainly need further analysis.

The writer will adopt two terms to further illustrate the relationship between “societal forces” and “civil society” that are “critical realm” and “public sphere”. “Critical realm” is according to Yanqi Tong (1994) a term adopted to describe the political or dissident portion of civil society which poses a threat to the state, in contrast to the “non-critical realm” which refers to economic and professional activities that do not necessarily threaten the state and may even be welcomed and encouraged by it.256 White, Howell, and Shang (1996) make a similar distinction between the “political dynamic” and “market dynamic” of civil society.257 Evaluated against Chinese reality, we may find that the Chinese society is to some extend resembles the “critical realm” which often appears to be source of pressure and challenges the stability and legitimacy of the regime. That is why priority for and incident is to calm down the event instead of to intensify it. Almost all local governments adopt the approach of “to change big events into small, and small to none” (da shi hua xiao, xiao shi hua liao). However, that does not mean that the societal forces do not create a “non-critical realm”. In fact, in most of the cases, the society, especially in those incidents attended by middle class in big cities, choose to interact with the state government in a constructive way. However, the timeframe of existence of the critical is often short-termed and temporary. As a case-specific problem-solving mechanism, the “realm” often

decayed or disappeared immediately after the settlement of an incident.

The “critical realm” is different from “public sphere”, which is a core term that characterizes the civil society. Public sphere is an area in social life where individuals can come together to freely discuss and identify societal problems, and through that discussion influence political action. It is “a discursive place in which individuals and groups congregate to discuss matter of mutual interest and, where possible, to reach a common judgment”. Public sphere mediates between the private sphere and the “sphere of public authority”, the appearances of which indicates a mature society is already empowered enough to either confront or partner with the state power. The public sphere comprises civil society in a narrower sense, that is to say, the realm of commodity exchange and of social labor. Evaluated against the reality, we can observe apparently the creation and development of the “critical realm” while the very under-development or even absence of “public sphere”. However, the former has provided the soil for the development of the latter which also proves the conclusion of societal forces being the predecessor of “civil society”, and accordingly, the “critical realm” serves as the predecessor of the “public sphere”. As the public sphere widens, and societal forces become stronger, the mentality and party doctrine evolves; civil society will finally be full-fledged in the long run.

If we review within a longer timeframe, the space and role has definitely expanded. The CCP has displayed its willingness in improving its regime legitimacy through allowing more social participation so as to enlist the decision-making process with a more democratic essence, and of course image too. Before 1978, social interests were highly unitary, social strata solid, and people’s privacy was totally deprived. There was no public sphere. People in rural zones lived a public life in communes, while people in urban areas lived in public residences assigned by the Units (dan wei) within small communities. Free speech was repressed, dissident intellectuals jailed; even those who made oral mistakes that violated political correctness were severely punished. The party even sought to control people’s minds, let alone speeches that had an independent nature from the official statement. Nowadays, the social interest has become very diverse, and the society is segmented, public space has been greatly expanded. Before 1978, the intensity of social involvement was

greater because of the campaign, however, participation was done in a non-institutional, motivated, and not legally ordered manner. Now social participation is becoming increasingly regular, institutional, voluntary, and legally ordered. Concerning the motivations for participation, it is largely ideology-based before 1978 while motivation for participation in contemporary China is interest-based after 1978.

5. Is China in the Process of Building a Civil Society?

Civil society may be found in any field where the governmental power is weak and its control remains loose. The existence of civil society indicates that there is always a structural tension between state and society. Normally, civil society is believed to comprise of various nongovernmental organizations, such as interest groups, associations, civilian corporate and youth movements. Chinese scholars raised their own definition for civil society within a Chinese context. Since the concept of civil society is too abstract a notion covering a wide variety of social dynamics, a practical approach is through assessing the living conditions of the NGOs and their capability to progress and develop. Probably since after the later 1970s, China experienced a rapid growth in civil society organizations, from less than 100 in 1965, to over 135,000 NGOs and 130,000 non-profit organizations (NPOs) from 2000. However, if we were to take into account the organizations below country level, the total number of the NGOs may be three million or even more. A survey carried out through September to October of 2003, by the Swedish Embassy in Beijing in collaboration with Sida’s NGO Division estimated a total of 136,000 social organizations and 82,000 private non-profit corporations registered with the Ministry of Civil Affairs at

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the end of 2002, with approximately 1.3 million unregistered organizations. Though we are lacking concrete data or supporting evidence, an increasing influence of the NGOs can be easily discerned. Suzanne Ogden (2002) has observed over 200,000 county level, regional (city) level and provincial level interest groups and professional associations and over 1,800 national level organizations and studied the outcome of governmental grants of power to civil society organizations. Ogden discovered that such organizations better represent the interests of their members and sometimes they may be put into competing relations with the government.

Professor Lester Salamon and his colleagues from Johns Hopkins University (1999), after having studied NGOs over 40 countries, identified five common characteristics of them: 1) organized, 2) private, 3) non-profit, 4) self-governing, and 5) voluntary. However, if closely examined by these criteria, no organization in China may be termed as a NGO.

Therefore, because of the vagueness of the definition according to what classifies NGOs, as well as their great number, it is fairly difficult to analyze the Chinese NGOs and their activities in depth. But it is rather clear that, either for reasons of the authoritative political regimes or for funding problems, seldom can a NGO remain truly independent from the government in the case of China. They normally rely on the support of government and the party for funding or policies. Typical NGOs that function smoothly were the traditional mass organizations, such as the All-China Women’s Federation and the Youth Federation; national charitable organizations such as the China Charity Federation, the Youth Development Foundation, the China Poverty Reduction Foundation and the Song Qingling Foundation, which are actually semi-governmental organizations, people who seek jobs with these organizations take the same exam with ones seeking jobs with the central

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264 Kristina Gough. 2004. Emerging Civil Society in China, Department fro co-operation with Non-Governmental Organizations and Humanitarian Assistance, Sida. Available at: www.sida.se/publications
267 By 2000, there were at least 70 grant-making foundations, 70 advocacy groups, 200 humanitarian organizations, and 150 faith-based charitable groups working in China. International NGOs play an important role in the Chinese political and social development as well as inter-cultural communication. See Carol Lee Hamrin. 2002. “China’s Invisible Social Revolution and Sino-American Cultural Relations”, in conference volume (forthcoming), from President’s Forum: U.S.-China Relations in the 21st Century, Baylor University, October.
government.

The Youth Federation share great administrative power in each level of government, Chinese former President Hu Jintao as well as President Zhao Ziyang and the current generation leader Li Keqiang all have been General Secretary of this Organization. The NGOs in the business sector, though do not rely on government financially, they need the latter’s support for economic interests. Religious organizations, for the sensitiveness of their business, prefer to maintain a sound relationship with the government in order that more freedom would be allowed for their concerned activities, which the governments feel uneasy with for ideological concerns.

Examining the distributions of the activities, we can easily see an apolitical tendency.\(^\text{268}\) The types of organizations in Chinese civil society are predominantly confined to environmental protection, green development, women’s issues, consumer protection issues. Very few are engaged in sensitive areas such as religious affairs, even less in advocacy work or political issues. The national government has never loosened its control and restrictions on the NGOs development; at least it never encouraged it. The first national regulation was introduced in 1989, when the Government saw the need to monitor and control the growth of new social organizations. In 1998, the State Council adopted the current “Regulations on Registration Administration of Associations” (III-06-04-202). In the same year, the State Council also adopted regulations for registration of private non-enterprise units: “Interim Regulations on Registration Administration of Private Non-enterprise Units” (III-06-04-203). Since former President Hu Jintao came into office, personal space and freedom have increased, permitting greater individual activism than before. However, space for political organizations still remains limited. The requirements and regulations for registration are still used, which still limits the development of the NGOs.

In brief, civil society in China, if any, has just begun to take shape from the late 1990s, with political democratization, decision-making professionalization and social diversification as the domestic context and globalization being the international context. Technical revolution with the Internet and modern media make it possible by providing vital means for the historical process. Though it still remains very weak and apolitical, and under rigid governmental control, Chinese civil society organizations are getting increasingly

influential in the policy-making process, the possible participation of provincial governments in the civil society will promise a more powerful civil society in China.

The government, on the other hand, under such social pressure, evaluates these different voices and makes adjustments to its policies. This interaction between the decision-making bodies and social forces are made possible only under a time of significant social changes, namely political democratization, professionalization and social diversification, while globalization makes up the exterior environment where Chinese decision-making is faced with increasing international pressure.

6. Government Attitude towards Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)

Government attitude is key to the development of social organizations. On October 13, 1989, at the 49th State Council Executive Meeting, the Regulations on Social Group Registration and Administration were passed and were implemented starting October 25, 1989. They consisted of 32 articles. It was not a law approved by the congress; however as the supreme administration body of the country, the state council has the right to issue guidelines and regulations. Therefore it well represents the attitude and direction of the government towards “social groups” or “social organizations”. Because of the diversity of emerging social organizations, the regulations did not provide a legal definition of social groups, but it did so by a list of “associations, academic associations, federations, research associations, foundations, friendship leagues, promotional associations and commercial associations organized within the PRC”. According to the lists, we see almost all types of what is termed as “civil society organizations”. According to the regulation, all “social groups” “must apply for registration according the regulations herein, and may undertake activities after their applications are examined, approved, and registered”. And after “examination, approval and registration”, those social groups shall be granted legal person qualifications. In order to operate nationwide, social groups have to meet the preconditions of being a “legal person.” It means the state government has been open to social groups/NGOs since the late 1980s.

Given the timing of the regulations, it was more a kind of restriction on societal organizations since unregistered students’ organizations were believed to be responsible for the many democratic movements in the latter half of the 1980s. Since approval is certainly

269 Article 2, Regulations on Social Group Registration and Administration (she tuan deng ji guan li tiao li), 1989.
270 Ibid.
based on some conditions, the most important one is the applicant organizations must find a
government branch or public service organization to serve as its supervision or sponsor body
(gua kao dan wei), many civilian organizations may not be able to find such a sponsoring
unit. By reviewing the applicant organizations during the registration, it will have all data
about the leadership, structure and funding source of the applicant originations and therefore
would easily control them if necessary. More importantly, since most sponsoring (not
necessarily financial funding) or supervision bodies are governmental branches or affiliates,
they would be very careful when sponsoring such social groups. And if they do decide to
agree to sponsor such organizations, they are responsible to make sure that the organizations
are running legally and in consistence with the “main rhythm” of the party’s policy.

During the Hu-Wen era, the general environment for social organizations remained
stable. Since most registered organizations tended to be non-political autonomic ones or
functional ones that provide social services supplementary to the governments. Applications
from those politically sensitive organizations were rejected to be registered or unable to
apply for registration since no government organizations or public service unit (shi ye dan
wei) dare to assist them in their application. However, many NGOs were registered as
business organizations but they operated under the name of research institutes for example
the law institute. However, after one wave after another color revolution swept the post-
communist countries, including but not confined to Yugoslavia's Bulldozer Revolution
(2000), Georgia's Rose Revolution (2003), Ukraine's Orange Revolution (2004), Lebanon's
Cedar Revolution (2005), Kuwait's Blue Revolution (2005), Azerbaijan in mid-2005,
Chinese governments’ attitude towards began to turn negative, because of the notable role
that the NGOs had played.271 Especially when reliable evidence shows most of those NGOs
had Western backgrounds or were directly supported by the U.S. government supported
NGOs, the Chinese government tightened their review and controls of the NGO activities in
China.

The most conservative organ in China had always been the ideological department,
namely the Propaganda Department. In 2011, the Central Propaganda Department of the
Government announced in January that “civil society” was a forbidden term for use by the

271 Donnacha Ó Beacháin and Abel Polese (ed.). The colour revolutions in the former Soviet
republics: successes and failures, London & New York: Routledge, 2010; see also Sreeran Chaulia.
Democratisation, NGOs and "colour revolutions", 19 January 2006. Available at:
https://www.opendemocracy.net/globalization-institutions_government/colour_revolutions_3196.jsp,
2012-12-12.
media. Since 2009, the term disappeared from the mainstream newspaper of the People’s Daily. However, as a conventional existence, banning usage of the term does not really make sense, on the contrary, it revealed the Party’s ideological insecurity. In reformist Guangdong province, major steps had been taken by announcing to promulgate its civil society organizations registration regulations that allows eight types of “social organizations” or “people’s societies” to be registered without separate sponsor from government organs or public service organizations. After around one year’s operation, on December 23, 2012, the Minister of Civil Affairs Li Liguo announced that the “Guangdong experiment” could be applied to other parts of the country. If this were true, a national regulation and guidance concerning the establishment of civil organizations would come into being.

In addition, according to the Ministry of Civil Affairs (MCA) and the China Foundation Center, the number of private foundations (under private capital) for the first time exceeded the number of public ones (those older ones associated with government, such as the Red Cross Society and the China Charity Federation by the end of 2011). Finally, an experiment in Beijing started in June, which involved using the local MCA bureau as both the registering and oversight body resulted in more social organizations being registered there than in previous periods. As of the end of the year 2012 there were approximately 500,000 registered social organizations all throughout China, an increase of 10,000 over the previous year-end total. These facts suggest that the government recognizes the need to loosen the current “double track management system” (shuang gui zhi) to make it easier for at least some Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) to gain legal existence.

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272 David Bandurski. China bans “civil society” which is available at: http://cmp.hku.hk/2011/01/11/9523/, 2014-01-07. Though the author have not yet found the document testifying this ban, the news was confirmed by journalists from several newspapers.

273 Estimation by Mr. F.B from Bureau of Civil Affairs, Beijing Municipal Government, the data is an estimation of China’s total. Interview conducted at Spring, 2013, date undefined.
Chapter 5: Group Incident and Societal Forces

This chapter serves as introductory guide for the chapters contained in Part Two, which comprise a review and analysis of several “group incidents” (qun ti xing shi jian). As explained at the beginning of this dissertation, six group incidents were selected according to their relevance in the Chinese decision-making process and they were organized into pairs so as to compare between successful and unsuccessful cases. The cases were organized according to three different categories: institutional transformations, behavior changes, and policy adjustments. The organization was performed according to the degree of influence that each case caused in government’s decision-making.

In China, group incidents are considered the same as “protests” in Western discourse, but the CCP has been wary of the use of political terms that have an explicit “Western” nature. Terms such as “social group”, which describes the NGOs, or “civil society”, may pose a threat to the CCP’s ideological security. More importantly, as groups rose from the organization of protests and uprisings, the CCP also avoided using terms such as “workers’ strike”, “protests”, and “uprising” since according to fundamentalist Marxist thoughts, these terms only exist in a capitalist system, and therefore would never exist in a socialist society, since the contradictions within a socialist society are contradictions among its people. However, since the number, scale, and frequency and intensity of social conflicts and protests have grown far beyond the CCP’s expectations, group incidents constitute one of the most challenging tasks for the Party.

Scholars’ definitions for “group incident” also vary. Song and Yu (2010), for instance, argue that group incidents refer to legal or illegal gatherings or antagonistic movements against governments, such as outer-regime activities that are often incited by social conflicts. Often groups involved in incidents have common purposes of protecting political, economic, or liberal rights; others expressing specific ideals, appeals, or dissent against a designated government. Such activities may have major implications for social order and stability. Xiang Deping and fellows (2003) state that group incidents refer to large-scale social incidents that are incited by social conflicts. Such activities go beyond social conventions and have some influence on normal social order. Group incidents take very diverse forms ranging from group petitions, systematic soldiering, labor strikes, illegal

gatherings, riots, protests, violence, popular panic, etc. Group incidents have gradually become one of the main factors that assume to undermine social stability.

The Chinese government’s recognition of “group incident”, however, has undergone different stages owing to different social discourses. In the revolutionary years, gatherings of farmers or workers petitioning to leaders or expressing dissent against the leaders by the masses was somewhat tolerated provided they abided by the guidelines of Chairman Mao, though it brought trouble. In the 1970s, popular antagonism was called “mass riots” or “crowd riot” (crowd trouble). This changed in the 1980s when China’s Opening-up process brought unprecedented political freedom that combined with a high unemployment rate, which was caused mainly due to underdeveloped industries, resulted in many public incidents which were often accompanied by criminal cases that affected the public order. Therefore these public incidents were called “public order incidents”. From the late 1980s through the 1990s, such happenings received a new definition; “public security contingencies” or “emergent public security cases”. Since the late 1990s and the early 2000s, those happenings gained another new name; “group public security incidents”.

More recently the Ministry of Public Security defined “public security incidents” as “collective behaviors of a group that violate the law, rules and regulations, disturb the social order, endanger public security, or violate the individual safety or safety of public and private property”. As a government branch responsible for maintaining social stability and order, it is not surprising that the Public Security authority wanted to highlight the illegal side of the group incidents because these incidents may bring social instability.

This chapter, however, does not focus only on defining the term “group incidents” which is regarded as a large-scale social protest against the government. They could be human right abuses or legal injustice and incited social outrage; or major accidents resulting from governmental dereliction of duty; or disastrous happenings or simply human rights abuses. While the governments want to avoid responsibility by withholding information, the public, on the other hand, wants to make sure that the people responsible for an incident would be punished and “justice can be done”. Thus in order to better understand the interaction between societal forces in the decision-making process, the next section shows in which conditions this interaction may occur.

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275 Xiang Deping & Chen Qi, Studies on Group Incidents in Transition Era, Social Sciences Studies (She hui ke xue yan jiu), 2003(4).

1. Societal Forces’ Involvement in Decision-making: General Approach

Societal forces engage the government in many ways, the most common of which should be legal and institutional participation within legislation, due to bureaucratic procedures in policy making and external supervision. The involvement of Chinese societal forces in political decision-making is comprehensive. Besides the approach of institutional and legal involvement, some new forms of interaction have emerged. The societal forces “negotiate” in some cases with government branches, not without “supervision” and “guidance” of government representatives. Negotiation was adopted to solve those tensions between the state and society that are lesser antagonistic. Negotiation remains the key component of cases where rational bargaining led to compromise accepted by both sides, even though government branches are often in a more favored status.

The way in which societal forces currently function in the way of contentious politics is what this dissertation mainly addresses. However, what is the mechanism in contentious politics? What factors influence the result of contentious politics? The passages below will focus on the general approach of the interactions between Chinese societal forces and decision-making.

1.1. The Interaction Patterns Between Chinese Social Forces and Decision-making

Though societal participation is becoming more visible, regular, and common, its scope, depth, and effects vary from time to time, and from area to area. These forces may have regular channels to influence the decision-making process alone or in collective actions with other organizations. The writer has defined the interaction patterns between the societal forces and government according to two different types: centralization and decentralization. Certainly different patterns of interaction might lead to different results.

1.1.1. Pattern 1: Decentralization

As shown in Figure 1, decentralization means that each group of the societal forces is involved separately and in a fragmented manner in order to settle an incident. Their stances are not well coordinated by a unitary organization or person and the pursuit of each societal force may differ to some extent but they are working on the same incident. The
length of involvement, roles played and functions performed vary from one another, and from case to case but generally they jointly created strong societal pressure for the government to make a difference.

Figure 1 – Structural Transformation Based on Decentralization’s Pattern

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Structural Transformation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Entrepreneur Monopoly</td>
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<tr>
<td>Provincial Government</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nuclear Political Power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGOs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Public Opinion</td>
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<td>Think Tanks</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: elaborated by the writer.

This “synchronized movement” or “alliance” is loose, unstable, and only for a temporary period of time. The “alliance” is formed naturally because of similar awareness and public concern instead of being organized by anyone of them or by a third party. Decentralized interaction patterns often take place in the early phase of societal involvement when the situation remains unclear and consensus is still not formed. The alliance remains loose often because most, if not all, societal forces do not have a stake in the resolution of the incident or the relativity is not high. The degree of tension is also an important variable, if the state-society tension stays high in an incident, societal forces may choose to unite with each other to be stronger in their negotiation with the government, and the greater or more consistent their stance towards the government will be. We suppose based on tentative findings that this interaction pattern renders limited results. However, it is not a clear-cut conclusion, and this assumption will be further analyzed through the following case studies. This pattern of interaction has profound significance because without societal participation, many cases would not have even reached the public.
1.1.2. Pattern 2: Centralization

In most of China’s public incidents, government behavior and policy at the initial phase remained very unresponsive and unreasonable. When a confrontation occurs, local governments often choose to use the police and even armed police to settle highly sensitive issues of land disputes, labor disputes, serious medical incidents, or apparent abuses of human rights by government affiliates, therefore leading to an antagonistic reaction by society, and therefore this is when the group incident takes shape. During most of the cases evidence has shown that improper actions by the government proved to be vital. Given public mistrust of government that has been serious in many localities, the inappropriate responses of government often serves as a catalyst for a group incident since society has been vigilant against apparent misconduct.

In such cases, a centralized interaction pattern often takes place. A potential coalition is often created based on coordination and cooperation among different societal forces. Sometimes a temporary organization is launched to coordinate the stances of all parties. Common conviction is that unity instead of fragmentation would bring better conditions. A centralization pattern often appears when facts are relatively simple and the consensus is achieved concerning what goals are to be achieved. The alliance becomes stable either by formal or informal contract. In such cases, often the stakeholders have strong social support, necessary skills and knowledge in dealing with the government or have close ties with them. The degree of tension is often very high, and injustice is apparent that could urge or justifies wider and more active societal involvement. Typical cases are the Wenzhou Train clash and

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**Figure 2 – Decision-making Based on the Centralization’s Pattern**

![Decision-making Diagram]

Source: elaborated by the writer
the Wukan Incident, which will be explained in detail in a later part of this dissertation.

1.2. Rationality

Generally one can suppose that rational engagement will be more effective since it allows the societal forces to better persuade the government branches under pressure of public opinion. The more rational the engagement, the stronger sympathy public opinion may render to the societal forces involved, and the more favorable position the latter will have in the negotiation. On the other hand, the writer’s observation is that irrational dealing, which includes unreasonable or over-demanding requirements, harsh criticism and blaming of the government, violence, targeting all government bodies in an indiscriminate manner, creating rumors, has led to the government’s counteractions. In particular, the appearance of violent protests that may justify government repression, which is likely to happen in authoritarian states; repression may be considered a simplified approach to solving complex problems by an authoritarian government, who “justifies” the use of violence against an apparent violation of law.

Research on the CCP’s behavior has indicated that the Party prefers to crush those perceived as anti-government or anti-Communist Party, while often urges local governments to compromise on demands that are environmental or economic in nature. Therefore it would be wise not to make the CCP confirm that the engagement of societal forces has an anti-government stance. The unchecked authority of government leaders and bureaucrats created a deeply-embedded sense of privilege and arrogance of power that they believe is beyond challenge, while a challenge, perceived or actual, will lead to a breakdown in cooperation and become perfunctory at the very least or radical reactions at the most, despite the top leadership launching waves of campaigns to “improve the working style” of the Party and government officers. As mentioned previously, the writer believes that the engagement of the middle class often leads to a better result since the group has the necessary knowledge, experience, and wisdom to properly engage the government in the discussion while the latter is often willing to make a compromise.

However, this seems to be an obvious intention. A rational-good result while irrational-bad result nexus would be an oversimplified and hasty generalization. China’s bureaucratic system is characterized by a multiple-head governance because of unclear division of responsibilities, which leads to a “ball-kicking game” whenever there is a tough
job to handle. Rational communication, especially for ordinary citizens, is often neglected leaving the problems unsolved. While controllable tension or antagonism commonly arouses the attention of officials who may choose to deal with the matter immediately after it occurs since they may be afraid once they lose control of the matter; it hurts government officials’ chances of being promoted or even punished for not having handled the problems properly. The rational-irrational nexus revealed how rationality of societal participation affected the result of government-society interaction.

1.3 Societal forces involved

Who participates in a group incident does matter. The emergence of societal forces all resulted from the economic boom and political development after the Reform and Opening-up program started. However, in none of the incidents was the participants’ involvement spontaneous, nor was it similar. Most societal forces have a role in the cases studied; here the writer explains a bit more about the public opinion and the media as major participants.

In each incident, public opinion and mass media never seems to be absent. They remain two major sources of social power. Even in diplomatic decision-making, they have shown strong influence, particularly in decision-making regarding Sino-US and Sino-Japan relations. Let us take the US as an example, how the Chinese public perceives the US may directly affect US policy-making or help reshape the perceptions of the policymakers toward the US and thus exert potential influence on the Policy-making process. Chinese scholars Yufan Ho and Lin Su (2006) conducted a very interesting survey on the US perception of 261 IR students and MPA students who held mid-ranking positions within the Chinese bureaucratic system and examined the possible effect of their perceptions on the construction of US policies.277 David L. Shambaugh (1988), on the other hand, studied the sources of anti-Americanism in China during the Cold War and how it affected the Sino-US relationship.278 It is a fact that policymakers do not just follow the public mood; good

policymakers guide them.

Media had been very active even at the harshest times of the “Cultural Revolution”, when different factions among the elites competed for “public opinion bases” (yu lun zhen di). But the 1980s proved to be an important period for media development, and China witnessed a decade of increasing involvement of the media in Chinese policy-making until the tightening of the Chinese political atmosphere after the Tiananmen Square Incident in 1989. The freedom of the media throughout the 1990s was a recovery of the 1980s. During the last ten years China was filled with overwhelming international pressure (the four major Sino-US crises, namely the 1993 Yinhe Tanker Incident, the 1996 Taiwan Strait Crisis, the 1998 Embassy Bombing, and the 2001 Connoisseur Plane Crash with a Chinese fighter) accompanied with the revival of Chinese political consciousness as well as the expansion of national power which aroused the national enthusiasm for international politics.

The quick development of the Internet in the late 1990s functioned as a catalyst for public awareness and participation in domestic politics. For the first time in history, Chinese society began to emerge as a powerful civil society, though a virtual one. The general public gained direct access to information and different perceptions outside China, and, on the other hand, enjoyed unprecedented freedom of speech through this virtual world and cyberspace. This was possible because the Chinese government is unable to control the Internet in the same way it does for paper media.

One important factor the writer has to mention is that the former Premier Zhu Rongji, in order to show his determination in anticorruption and gain social support from his ambitious reforms, granted the Chinese media unprecedented freedom. The latter exploited this freedom earnestly and gained its say in Chinese decision-making. The rise of think tanks and NGOs is easily discerned in present China’s decision-making process, though the latter met with a short-term shrink after the Chinese government tightened its control after the color revolutions in central China. This research covers the timeframe between 2002 and 2012; a period of rapid development with twists and turns.

1.4. Issue Areas

The reason and cause of the incidents partially decides the effects of societal

participation. In international policies, negotiation and cooperation among states is in the low politics areas of trade, as well as investment which would be more easily concluded than in the high politics areas concerning territory, sovereignty and security. In domestic policies, the effect of societal participation will be different from area to area. Generally speaking, in those incidents concerning institutions, regime legitimacy, and social stability, the government was more vigilant and conservative, and therefore societal involvement was more active but less effective. Societal involvement in other areas tends to be less active but more effective. In the environment protection area, which was deemed to be a low-level politics area, the will of societal participation remains strong and the government seems more engaging. A tentative explanation is that the incident of environmental protection directly related to people’s security and daily lives, especially when it relates to a potentially dangerous program. Societal involvement turned out to be more effective also because environmental protection is consistent with the CCP’s priority list.

1.5. Sensitivity

Sensitivity means the extent of what the government is subject to. There are several determinant factors for sensitivity. The scale of the event, the government role in the incident, and policy area all affect the sensitivity of the issue.

We suppose that large-scale incidents have greater sensitivity. The greater number of people interested, affected or involved, the greater economic loss, often means the higher degree of sensitivity with the event, especially when hints of violence appear. In that case, the government needs to respond more urgently and settle the issue more carefully. Once the sensitivity is neglected the issue can often become worse. From 2001-2013, there are 271 incidents that involved more than 1,000 people, and another 10 incidents that involved more than 10,000 people.\(^\text{279}\) Apparently, such large-scale incidents tend to call for more domestic and international attention and the governments need to handle them with greater caution.

A key criterion for defining sensitivity is whether the incidents have resulted in loss of human life. Incidents with casualties tend to be of a higher sensitivity than incidents without loss of human. The greater number of human losses means the higher sensitivity. Death caused by natural disasters such as earthquakes, landslides, and floods tends to be of

lower sensitivity than incidents of death caused by irresponsibility, negligence, or malfeasance. Therefore, the role of governments in the incident is also an important factor for sensitivity. According to the report mentioned above, 44% of major incidents were caused by conflicts between citizens and governments (government officials), 174 out of the 871 cases were caused by legal injustice (roughly 20%). Apparently, sensitivity of such cases is much higher than cases where the government remained neutral.

Policy area is another criterion. As stated above, we cannot simply conclude that sensitivity is lower with purely economic affairs while sensitivity is high when it is related to political and ideological security. The Chinese government remains very alert against any incidents that challenge regime legitimacy, social stability, and the political system. Once such cases happen, the governments’ attitude may turn negative and conservative towards societal involvement and possibly take repressive actions leaving societal engagement unfulfilled.

The paragraphs above have outlined the basic analytical framework of the incidents. In each case, the framework will be considered to explain why involvement of societal forces was successful or unsuccessful. Besides the peculiarities of each case, this dissertation aims to understand what pattern maximizes the result of societal participation, and which pattern was basically effective.

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280 Ibid.
Part Two
The Implications of Involvement of Societal Forces:
Institutional Transformations
Chapter 6: The End of Custody and Repatriation System

1. Background: Guangdong and Its Huge Migrant Population

When Deng Xiaoping initiated China’s Reform and Opening-up program in the late 1970s, he selected 14 special zones in coastal provinces as a pilot experiment. Standing against China’s long-embedded egalitarian ideal, Deng devised a strategy of “allowing certain areas and some sections of the population to get rich first”. Undoubtedly, coastal Guangdong would be the ideal subject for this experiment. As the pioneering region for the Reform and Opening-up program, Guangdong has taken the lead in economic development, institutional reform and other social governance experiments. Guangdong’s GDP had grown from RMB18.6 billion in 1980 to RMB1.07 trillion in 2000, raising its share of China’s total GDP from 8% to 10% in this period.\footnote{GDP data from the World Bank, data for Guangdong’s GDP, trade and investment from China Bureau of Statistics.} In this span, Guangdong’s share of FDI fell from 42% in 1990 to 27% in 2000. Given this remarkable rate of growth, many rural farmers from the populous inland provinces of Sichuan, Henan, and Anhui crowded into Guangdong to look for job opportunities and better living conditions, growing its population from 62.8 million in 1990 to 86.4 million in 2000 to 104 million in 2010, for an average of over 2 million per year.\footnote{China National Bureau of Statistics, the 4th and 5th population censor report, 1990, 2000.} Although we do not have precise data as to how many of these were migrant workers, the figures for 2000 and 2010 can shed some light on this issue. During the decade, 6.44 million migrant workers arrived from other provinces in addition to 2.08 million migrants with official registration (hu ji ren kou), for a total of 8.52 million, accounting for 47.7% out of an overall population growth of 17.88 million.\footnote{China National Bureau of Statistics, the 5th and 6th population censor report, 2000, 2010.} Chinese urbanization and the expanding disparity between regions, especially between coastal regions and inland areas had fueled the population flow to cities like Guangzhou. Because of Guangdong’s fairly high share of China’s total industrial output and FDI ten years ago, the proportion of migrants would be even greater when compared with the Fifth Population Census, owing to the economic rise of the Yangtze delta and the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei delta which became the new destinations for migrant workers.

As the capital city of Guangdong province, Guangzhou has been hosting the bulk of the population inflow. This rapid increase in population created many problems as illegal
dealing and criminal activity become sources of social instability. To combat this, in 1982 a Custody & Repatriation system (hereafter C&R) was adopted nationally. This system initially applied to the people of “three withouts”, namely those "without fixed place of residence” (homeless), “without means to make a living” (jobless), and “without Temporary Residential Permission” (zan zhu zheng) issued by the local public security authority, but in 1991 was expanded to cover those “without residence or work permits” in 1991.

Temporary Residential Permission is connected to China’s household registration system, which the CCP has relied on for social governance. The major purpose is to restrict the free flow of rural labor into cities via the household registration system (hu kou). Hu kou not only reflects identity, but also grants the holder accesses to medical care, education, employment opportunities, and other social welfare benefits. Temporary Residential Permission allows those migrant workers to live and work in cities outside of their hu kou, but without access to social welfare. The intent of C&R was to accommodate the jobless and beggars for a short period of time before compulsorily sending them back to their registered hu kou, often their hometown, with all costs are borne by the Guangzhou government.

However, problems with the system abound. Human rights violations went unchecked and the system deviated from its original purpose, culminating in the death of a college student named Sun Zhigang. Backlash from Sun’s case eventually led to the abolishment of the notorious C&R system. Laws and regulations constitute an important institutional pillar in any country, and the case was symbolic of Chinese political decision-making. This chapter will examine the roles of both media and individuals as well as internet, whose challenge to authority has led to significant progress in China’s endeavor for better governance.

2. The Faulted System and the Sun Zhigang’s Case

As mentioned above, the CCP manages its population with household registration (hu kou) that separated the majority rural population from urban dwellers. Before 1978, migration away from the place of hu kou registration was illegal, and police would often detain any prospective migrants and send them back to their “due places” (repatriation).

The compulsory C&R system was launched in 1982. Originally it was deemed a social security program with the major responsibility of “assisting, education, and resettling” vagrants and beggars. According to the Measures of Custody and Repatriation of Urban
Vagrants and Beggars:

Custody and Repatriation is a forcible administrative apparatus under which the Civil Affairs departments and Public Security bureaus may send back to their places of hu kou registration any persons whose homes are in the rural areas and who have entered cities to beg; urban residents who are roaming the streets and begging; and other persons who are sleeping in the open or have no means of livelihood. This measure is employed by the state to provide relief, education and resettlement to those persons who are indigent and begging in the cities, so as to protect urban social order and stability and unity.\textsuperscript{284}

Evidently the system was adopted in the early reform era when economic growth and industrial development in urban areas have encouraged migrants flow from rural areas to neighboring cities and regional centers. However, concerted managerial reform did not follow, and the old registration system, which still in effect today, and rigid population control can no longer meet the demand for labor in cities. The system allows the government to assist vagrants, beggars and the jobless by providing short-term accommodation, meals and return tickets.

The government was to fund the system. With China increasingly opening, foreign investment, mostly from overseas Chinese in Hong Kong, Taiwan, Macau, and Southeast Asia, began to flood into the mainland. Major cities regarded the system as means to keep up appearances, as in the minds of governmental officials, vagrants and beggars wandering the streets would hurt the images of the cities that were making every effort to attract foreign investment, and building such a system furthermore showcased the capacity and responsibility of the government in managing the population flow, pleasing their superiors, investors, and other beneficiaries. However, the primary consideration for launching the system was “to protect urban social order, stability and unity” as stated in the official document.

The operations of the C&R proved to be quite tricky. According to regulations, the Civil Affairs Ministry and the Ministry of the Public Security should be responsible for running the system with the Civil Affairs Ministry as the first-order entity. In theory, the

\textsuperscript{284} Measures of Custody and Repatriation of Urban Vagrants and Beggars, promulgated in May 12, 1982.
regional centers and stations follow this joint working pattern with civil affairs division chiefly responsible. However, in practice, since the Civil Affairs division did not, and does not, have the right to detain or take other compulsory actions against the target group, it had to rely on collaboration with and cooperation of the police, especially local police stations and street level policemen to “arrest” or “detain” the vagrants and beggars who, in turn, often resisted arrest or detention. After bringing the vagrants and beggars into C&R centers and stations, the Civil Affairs staff was responsible for their routine management and care. Since they were often arrested in groups, just like in a prison managing them proved to be a huge headache, with frequent disputes and fighting, which came to light during Sun Zhigang’s case. As some detainees were held for prolonged periods, they naturally formed cliques based on origin or kinship, nurturing a source of instability which further reinforced the role of the policy. Therefore, from the very beginning, the C&R centers and stations were jointly run by the Civil Affairs division and the police, with the latter exercising the stronger role.

However, the role of the Civil Affairs division was not absent. They built medical care stations close to the C&R to provide basic treatment for sick detainees, yet as their number increased many problems, particularly financial, arose. Gradually the Civil Affairs divisions became pessimistic about the system and starting from the late 1980s, the Police Authority took greater responsibility. Given that the ministry and the police work through asymmetric approaches, such arrangements have harbored structural risks for “accidents” concerning severe human rights violations. The Civil Affairs division provides social welfare for veterans (and their relatives) and other vulnerable groups, registration and management of civil organizations, marriage (and divorce) registration, disaster relief, and other civil affairs.285 The police forces are responsible for suppressing crime, preventing counter terrorist activities, and maintaining security and social order.

Police authority is a tool that maintains societal order with legal authorization to use force. Based on the fundamentalist doctrine of Marxism however, police authority is often tied to the maintenance of the State’s interests and capitalist property relationships, and hence cannot be considered as serving the working class. In China, the insufficient number of policemen compared with the huge population,286 large proportion of migrant workers in

286 Though government authority stopped to reveal the number of police in recent years, media estimates place the number at around two million. It is almost certain that the number of police
urban areas, rising crime rate, heavy workload, poor working conditions, low salary, and the structural problems have demoralized the police force. They often feel depressed and it is common to treat suspects improperly, to the extent of torture or soliciting bribes. Chinese police have been harshly criticized for violent abuses, violations of human rights, and corruption, and there are daily newspaper reports about detainees dying suspiciously in police custody or prison.

In 1992, the State Council issued the “Guidelines Concerning the Reform of the Custody and Repatriation Work (guan yu shou rong qian song gong zuo gai ge wen ti yi jian) which expanded the system to cover the aforementioned “three withouts persons” - those without fixed place of residence, without means of livelihood, without temporary residential permit. However, it was a common practice in all cities to expand the application to cover even more people. For example, Shenzhen, another special economic zone at the forefront of the opening-up process, applied the C&R to cover 6 groups of people. According to Tang Rongsheng, who became the third director of Shenzhen Municipal C&R Station after its establishment in 2001, in addition to the jobless, vagrants, and beggars, the station also accommodated people without the Special Economic Zone Entry & Exit Permission, used to control the inflow of population to Shenzhen and from Mainland to Hong Kong, people without a fixed residence, and people without an ID card or Temporary Residential Permission.

According to regulations in Shanghai, Beijing and Guangzhou, migrant workers from a foreign province must apply for temporary residential permission, or else be regarded as homeless. The police had the right to arrest those without this permission and send them home or detain them in the C&R center. While they normally target migrant workers, the homeless, and beggars, the police soon found the policy a convenient means to deal with petitioners and criminals as well, and cities frequently wage campaigns of mass arrests to

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maintain their image or to strengthen security.

The situation worsened in the late 1990s and early 2000s because of the huge masses of workers laid-off in the SOEs restructuring as well as college graduates whose numbers have increased by 30% annually since “Enrollment Expansion” in 1999. The case of Sun Zhigang happened just 4 years after he graduated from college. Since the C&R system was effectively run by the police, the Civil Affairs staff served only in an assistant role and did not wish to be embroiled in controversies surrounding the C&R stations, even hiring “social personnel” to do part of their job. Petitioners and criminals were sometimes sent to the stations temporarily due to insufficient police manpower or over-crowdedness at stations, and in some cases, simply for convenience.

Therefore, the system serves both as the sole means of controlling the flow of the rural population into cities and as a “semi-prison” for those detained. The Chinese government has never revealed the exact number accommodated in the C&R stations throughout China, but the figures from Shenzhen may be revealing. According to Sun (2015), the head of the Shenzhen Municipal C&R station received around 300 people per day, or more than 10,000 per month and roughly 130,000 per year between 2001 and 2003, right before the abolishment of the system. Given Shenzhen’s population, the number of people who have experienced the C&R system must number in millions.

In addition to the issues of arbitrary detention, human rights abuses, physical torture, and poor living conditions, there is sufficient evidence to show that the police made an already problematic system worse by exploiting it as a business opportunity. By detaining citizens randomly, who in turn contact their relatives or employers to provide proof they do not belong in the system, often alongside a sum of money. Those sent back to their hometowns were also required to pay for accommodation and transportation that should have been funded by the government. Therefore, the police had strong incentives to detain as many people as possible, and arrested many local residents simply going for a walk,

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289 Since the C&R involve many illegal and immoral business dealings, such as blackmail of the police by prolonged detention, forced labor, regular public servant from the Civil divisions were reliant to be involved in the management of C&R, instead, they just maintain a presence in the system or doing routine procedures in applying for funding, writing yearly plan and report, some necessary assistance to the police. Interview with a former civil servant from the Civil Affairs Administration, late 2010, concrete date undefined.

290 Tong, Yi. Kidnapping by Police: Custody and Repatriation, This is an edited version of a paper presented to the Congressional Executive Commission on China on June 2, 2003. For more details about the C&R, see HRIC’s detailed reports: “Not Welcome at the Party: Behind the ‘Clean-Up’ of China’s Cities—A Report on Administrative Detention Under ‘Custody and
job-seeking college graduates, and other individuals who could have much more easily been sent home by their relatives or employers instead. Migrants from inland provinces often resisted expulsion and some could not afford a return ticket, and many resorted to bribing the police to be released. At times the police even waited at the C&R stations looking for potential targets, and many people were arrested immediately upon arrival and sent back at their own expense, forcing their families to pay before they were released by the counterpart C&R stations in their hometowns.

Many Civil Affairs staffers and legal scholars have questioned the legitimacy of the C&R system and called for revisions of or restrictions on the system. The central government had likely realized the systemic problems with the C&R, and in early 2003, the Ministry of Public Security, in conjunction with the Ministry of Civil Affairs and the Ministry of Finance, issued official guidelines that required concerned units not to recklessly expand the number of potential targets, and to set a “cushion period” between the C&R and future arrangements meant to provide assistance to targeted people. However, major reforms were carried out only under strong societal pressure and intensive popular participation that led to the abolition of the entire system, and only at the cost of the lives of Sun Zhigang and others who remain unnamed and unknown.

3. The Development of Sun Zhigang Case and Societal Involvement

Sun Zhigang (1976-2003) was a graduate of Wuhan Institute of Science and Technology and an employee of Guangzhou Daqi Clothing Company at the time of his accident. On March 17, Sun was arrested for not having up to date residential permission, as he unfortunately had not brought his ID Card with him, and illegally detained at the Guangzhou Police Holding Center before being transferred to a nearby custody station.

292 ID card is a card by issued by the police authority as an official document of one’s identity, which carries the information of one’s name, gender, date of birth, address, ID No (similar to the U.S. Social Security Card No, which follows a person life long) and issuing authority (often local police).
Sun’s situation by no means meets the conditions for detention according to regulations, but as analyzed earlier, the police had become reckless in arresting and detaining people at C&R stations. Indeed, it had become tolerated and supported by the municipal government who hoped to control the inflow of unwanted migrants, who were often uneducated, unskilled, and “smelly” farmers. Those arrested invariably belonged vulnerable groups, spoke in dialects, dressed shabbily and behaved indecently, always carrying a large bag of clothing. When arrested, they would attempt to secure their release without making any trouble for the police or the C&R staff, as doing so would bring further trouble for themselves. Arbitrary detention had become rampant and seen as “normal” and hence Sun Zhigang’s detention came as a surprise to no one.

The sordid details of his subsequent tragedy soon became well known. Reports and later investigations indicated that, on the night of March 18th, Sun reported the police that he was suffering a heart attack and was sent to the center's clinic. On March 20th, Sun was found dead. Initially, no details were revealed concerning what exactly had transpired during his three days of detention, but later government reports confirmed that he had been beaten by his fellow detainees in the clinic, under orders from an attendant named Qiao Yanqin. The station maintained that Sun had died of disease, while the government was initially irresponsible to the matter, only acting when some professionals revealed information vital to the case. After the media intervened a month later, information surrounding the case was released to the general public and incited nationwide outrage. Sun’s death aroused sympathy primarily because he was a college student, which at that time had not yet lost its elite status since in 2003, only 3.82 million out of 6.13 million high school graduates were able to continue on to college, while in 1997, the year of Sun’s graduation, only 1 million high school graduates entered higher education (including senior vocational training).

The case gained nationwide attention and under strong societal pressure, the government intervened and conducted a thorough investigation, which revealed the real cause of Sun’s death, and punished the 12 responsible persons. Qiao Yanqin, the clinic attendant and ringleader of this notorious abuse of human rights, was sentenced to death, Li Haiying was given a 2 year suspended death penalty, and the remaining 10 criminals received prison sentences ranging from 3 years to life imprisonment, with 6 of these being officials convicted of dereliction of duty.

294 “Sun Zhigang’s brutal killers sentenced”, China Daily, 10 June 2003, Available at:
The lasting achievement of this landmark societal participation was the wholesale reversal of policy under the new “Measures for Assisting Vagrants and Beggars with No Means of Support in Cities,” signed by Premier Wen Jiabao on June 20th, under which the detention centers would be replaced by simple service stations providing necessary assistance to poor beggars or homeless persons on a purely voluntary basis. It signals a return to the originally intended functions of the program established in 1982, and most importantly represents the official abolishment of the C&R system. Needless to say, such achievements are significant and rare in China’s communist history, and this case especially was one of the few incidents where societal pressures on governmental decision-making actually made a lasting impact. Encouraged by the experience, the same societal forces have become further engaged in the decision-making process surrounding later incidents, and the hence warrant further examination.

4. Societal Participation and Institutional Implications

The following sections will detail the respective roles of each of the societal forces involved, discuss their effects on the government’s decision-making, and further elaborate on their importance in pushing for greater change moving forward

4.1. Societal Involvement: a review

Broadly speaking, societal intervention in Sun’s case can be divided into three stages.

4.1.1. Stage 1: Fighting alone (March 17th to April 3rd)

Sun’s family negotiated with the clinic and the government individually without an attorney and understandably made no progress. Although Sun’s family contacted various governmental organizations, including the C&R station and clinic, as well as the police and the procuratorate, the Guangzhou Civil Affairs Bureau, Public Health Bureau, and Medical Association, they received no response. As usual, these organizations played the “ball-
kicking game,” none willing to take the necessary responsibility.295

4.1.2. Stage 2: Professionals (April 3rd-25th)

Professional expertise proves to be an important factor in crisis management, emergency response, legal affairs and state-society interaction, especially in times of questionable governmental authority and in incidents where the local government often withholds information and avoids fulfilling its responsibilities. On the one hand, people need officially recognized evidence to support their causes, and often a scientific report or technical data provided by qualified organizations adds considerable weight to their cases. On the other hand, governments also rely on professional organizations in order to prove the credibility of their stances. Therefore, both government and society trust professional organizations for their expertise, neutrality and objectivity, and indeed in most social incidents studied here, professionals played an essential role.

For the family, the priority was to find the real causes for Sun’s death. None of his relatives had the expertise necessary to reveal the truth, not knowing who should be held responsible for Sun’s death, how to press the case, or even if a lawyer would be necessary. However, local lawyers in Guangzhou whom Sun’s relatives had consulted all refused to be involved in the case.296 The family’s economic condition may have been an important reason for this, since large law firms had become involved in many major cases that were far more sensitive, complex, and difficult. Fortunately, Wang Xiangbin, the lawyer employed by Sun’s relatives in their hometown, advised them to immediately seek medical and legal expertise the sooner the better, and his guidance proved to be great value to the family.

On April, Sun’s family went to the Medical-Legal Expertise Center of the Sun Yat-sen University Hospital to procure a legally recognized document as key evidence of Sun’s death. The report pointed out that Sun Zhigang had died from frail cell tissue, through injuries and traumatic shock, and the result of the autopsy also indicated there was no problem with Sun’s internal organs. The conclusion ran against the clinic’s acclamation that Sun had died from a cerebral hemorrhage and heart attack. Sun’s symptoms indicated he was beaten within the last 72 hours prior to his death, indicating the C&R station and clinic,

296 Ibid.
were responsible for Sun’s death, since he had spent his last 72 hours there according to all official documents including his own account, work report, and signature as well as witness testimony.

4.1.3. Stage 3: Media involvement (April 25th)

A major breakthrough in Sun’s case came with the intervention of the influential Southern Metropolis Daily (nan fang dou shi bao), a Guangzhou-based newspaper notable for in-depth investigative reporting. In mid-April roughly one month after Sun’s death, one of his classmates working for the Supreme People's Court contacted the newspaper which agreed to report it. On April 25th, the paper reported Sun’s sad story with banner headline entitled “Sun Zhigang was beaten to death”, and also provided in-depth analysis under the subtitle “Should Sun Zhigang be detained by the C&R?" as well as a personal depiction of Sun Zhigang’s story to arouse public sympathy. In the story, the newspaper also revealed the medical-legal report by the Sun Yat-sen University Hospital noted in Sections 6 and 7. This public exposure proved to be vital since it aroused national outrage and the mounting public pressure attracted the attention of senior leaders at the central and provincial level.

Although circulated nationwide, South Metropolis Daily is still a local newspaper, but their reporting led the central media to follow suit, making the incident into a truly national event. On April 30th, the China Youth Newspaper (zhong guo qing nian bao) reported extensively on Sun’s case in a story entitled “Without Temporary Residential Permission, A Company Employee Lost His Life in Guangzhou C&R Stations”, which subsequently led to intensive coverage by Xinhua news agency, CCTV, People’s Daily, Workers’ Daily and other central media outlets. Most notably, the People’s Daily (East China News) published a commentary entitled “How Far Can the Sun Zhigang Case Goes?” calling for further inspection of legal implementation, by starting with “details of truth, open procedure, and necessary inquiry”. Public opinion became strongly favorable towards

Sun’s family due to expectations that mainstream media would continue to track these events and arouse public pressure.

Unsurprisingly, several days later the Central and Guangdong government jointly announced a thorough investigation of the case. Beijing Youth Newspaper made a total of 9 reports and commentaries on Sun’s case, and the Newspaper of Shenzhen Special Economic Zone and many other local newspapers all had reported on the story. The Workers’ Daily, a newspaper affiliated with the All China Federation of Labor, organized a special seminar on the C&R system, where renowned scholars and social attendees discussed the institutional causes of Sun Zhigang incident and questioned the legitimacy of the system.

The Hong Kong-based Phoenix TV program, an influential Chinese media outlet popular all over Chinese-speaking, especially in Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan and the Southeast Asian countries, commented on Sun’s case on May 14th and publicized the story to a wider audience, particularly overseas. On May 14th, the BBC News also reported the initiative of three law PhDs to review the constitutionality of the Measures of Custody and Repatriation of Urban Vagrants and Beggars, further expanding the case’s international exposure. On June 2nd, 2003, the U.S. Congressional-Executive Commission on China held its first roundtable testimony on Sun’s death, followed by a second testimony in October to make further evaluations.

On July 10th, after the outrage had finally smoothed over, South Weekend, the most influential newspaper focused on social problems published a front page commentary entitled “Never Allow A Second Sun Zhigang to Appear”, pushing for institutional reform of the entire system.

i) Leadership Involvement

While leadership involvement does not fall under societal involvement, it is certainly a key component of the decision-making process, as the engagement of leadership indicates

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301 Tong, Yi. Kidnapping by Police: Custody and Repatriation, This is an edited version of a paper presented to the Congressional Executive Commission on China on June 2, 2003.
that the preceding societal engagement was at least partially effective. In China’s decision-
making, official responses from the government authorities, particularly regional leaders,
rather than the functional branches, often marks the watershed in the development of a
social event or solution to a social crisis. While functional branches of the government often
play the “kicking ball” game, promises of government leaders signal a commitment to a
systemic and coordinated solution between the government branches and functional
organizations. Governmental statements also intensify media coverage and raise public
awareness since speeches and special visits by leaders are often noteworthy news items for
local media, and also serve to justify further societal involvement and follow-up inspections.

Since the media coverage and public outrage over Sun’s death has brought was
unusual in recent decades, the Guangzhou municipal and Guangdong provincial government
finally took over the matter. On May 11th, Guangdong provincial leaders as well as the
concerned departments visited Sun’s father and other relatives and expressed strong anger,
promising that this case would be made clear no matter the difficulties. Thereafter Sun’s
case entered into the official agenda and decision-making procedures, which would not have
been possible without media disclosure and societal pressure.

4.1.4. Stage 4: Involvement of academia and intellectual elites

After the May 11th visit by Guangdong leaders, the due investigative and legal
procedures officially started, and appeared to go smoothly at the outset. However, for
societal participation had already entered into a new phase, as the public was no longer
satisfied merely with resolving Sun’s case. Headed by legal scholars, voices for further
institutional reform of the C&R system were becoming stronger.

On May 14th, 2003, three Ph.D. graduates in law from some of the most prestigious
universities in Beijing, Yu Jiang (School of Law, Central China Science and Technology
University), Teng Biao (School of Law, China University of Politics and Law), and Xu
Zhiyong (School of Arts and Law, Beijing University of Posts and Telecommunications)
submitted a suggestion to the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress to
reexamine the constitutionality of the 1982 “Measures for the Custody and Repatriation of
Vagrant Beggars in the Cities” according to which the C&R system had been launched. The
legal provision they cited was that under the PRC’s Administrative Punishment Act and
Legislature Act, promulgated in 1996, citizens could only be deprived of their freedom
through laws passed by the National People’s Congress or its Standing Committee. The State Council and the various provinces had no power to make regulations that effectively deprived citizens of their personal freedoms, and therefore C&R, which arose from Party and State Council directives, was unlawful.

A week later, more prestigious legal experts joined the three scholars in their appeal. On May 23rd, He Weifang (贺卫方), a leading liberal scholar in law from Beijing University, Sheng Hong (盛洪), a liberal scholar in law and economics and co-founder of the leading civilian think tank Unirule Institute of Economics, Shen Kui (沈岿), a law scholar from Beijing University, Xiao Han, a law scholar from the aforementioned Unirule Institute of Economics and active media commentator on social affairs,304 and He Haibo (何海波), then a law scholar from the China Academy of Governance,305 jointly appealed to the Standing Committee of National People’s Congress, urging it to immediately begin a special investigation into the C&R system.

The Law of Legislation promulgated just 3 years before Sun’s death, in Article 90, item 2, granted ordinary citizens the right to initiate “suggestions” of constitutionality review to the Standing Committee, so the three doctors were certainly eligible to initiate their review. Because the appeals of the legal scholars were rational, legislative authorities were quite active by early July, and related committees had already confirmed the reception of the appeal, indicating that authorities had begun reviewing it.306 Niu Longyun, speaker of the Office of Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress, published a special commentary in Outlook Weekly (Liao Wang), a weekly journal affiliated to the Xinhua News Agency, issued in early July, admitting that China’s conditionality review system was incomplete. He also analyzed the common practice of “review after legislation” under the legal framework, indicating that the State Council could possibly revise the Measures of Custody and Repatriation of Urban Vagrants and Beggars promulgated in 1982, upon the official request of Special Committee or Legal Committee of the National People’s Congress.307

304 Xiao is now professor of law at China University of Politics and Law.
305 He became professor of law at Tsinghua University since 2005.
i) Collaboration of entities and individuals

Many other people were also involved in this landmark event and contributed in various ways. Initially, 18 of Sun’s college classmates provided the needed financial aid, while Professor Ai Xiaoming from Sun Yat-sen University, and Phoenix TV’s host Dou Wentao also rendered financial assistance. Given their influence, their help would be symbolic of the elites’ attitudes towards these events, though they did not express their own opinions publicly.

Doctor Liu Xiaoshan and his colleagues from the Medical-Legal Expertise Center of Sun Yat-sen University Hospital also played a critical role in assisting Sun’s family. Generally, it takes about a month to obtain the results of an autopsy, but Liu Xiaoshan and his colleagues worked hard to finish the report half a month in advance. Though time may not have seemed a pressing issue here, Liu and his colleagues had won another 15 days which may ultimately have made a huge difference in the subsequent development of Sun’s case.

It would be difficult to predict what would have happened if the autopsy results had come out only two weeks later, but there were great uncertainties that were averted by its timely release. Sun’s family members could have given up their appeal out of disappointment and left unfriendly Guangdong, or due to the coming outbreak of the SARS they could have been forcibly quarantined, the most commonly adopted measure for those who came from afflicted areas or displayed symptoms such as fever.

The roles of some of Sun Zhigang’s classmates were also essential. At that time, one classmate worked at the Supreme People’s Court and was the first to contact the Southern Metropolis Daily. We might suspect that the occupation and affiliation of this classmate may have influenced the newspaper’s interest in the story since some of Sun’s poor relatives had also tried to contact other media outlets without success. For his prominent role in breaking the news on Sun’s case in the Southern Metropolis Daily, journalist Chen Feng was elected by CCTV as one of the Most Influential Journalists in 2003.308

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308 Probably under some pressure and also encouraged by the internet-based media, Chen later transferred to other media, and now serves as a deputy of the PPTV, an influential internet-based TV Media.
5. End of the C&R System: A major step toward Rule of Law

On July 16th, two days before the decision by the state council on the official abolishment of the Measures of Custody and Repatriation of Urban Vagrants and Beggars, the state council also held the due Expert Audit for abolishment, a major development in decision-making in the recent decade. China first included an article stating “the State respects and preserves human rights” in a 2004 Constitutional amendment by the Standing Committee of National People’s Congress, marking a milestone in its human rights development. Because this revision took place only half a year after Sun Zhigang’s death, it is quite possible that the human rights abuses in Sun’s case played a major role.

Compared with its pace of economic reform, China’s progress in the political sector had always lagged behind. As each incremental but valuable step proved difficult, progress is only possible when societal forces join to put sufficient pressure on the government that can no longer be neglected. During Hu-Wen era, the government developed other institutional innovations, arranging to promote “democratic, professional, and scientific” decision-making, including the letters visit system (xin fang zhi du), the public hearing system (gong kai ting zheng hui zhi du), the information opening system (xin xi gong kai), and the speakers system (fay an ren zhi du), though the effects of these policies proved limited and difficult to interpret.

On other hand, unlawful administrative detention such as for re-education (收容教育) and compulsory rehabilitation (强制戒毒) of drug users and sex workers still operates. The resolution of the Sun Zhigang case signaled a new approach toward reviewing, revising, or abolishing these laws, it would seem impossible for this process to being without a major tragedy, as these regulations and guidelines are part of Chinese law. However, the Sun Zhigang case aroused public awareness both domestically and internationally awareness, and many social activists continue to press the government to review its legislation.

A similar system of assistance was established to protect homeless children in 2006, and the Ministry's Social Affairs department launched a RMB1.12 billion ($164 million) program to build 300 centers by 2010, capable of serving over 150,000 homeless children per year in prefecture-level cities and large counties across the country.

After Sun’s case, the Chinese government also began to dismantle the system of Reeducation Through Labor (RTL), one of the pillars of its extensive extra-judicial

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309 Ibid.
administrative detention system.\textsuperscript{310} In 2013, after a new generation of leadership entered office in March, official documents of the CCP’s Third Plenary Session of the Eighteenth Central Committee announced an intent to “Abolish the re-education through labor system, perfect punishment and execution laws for unlawful and criminal acts, complete community correction institutions.”\textsuperscript{311} In December, the system of RTL was officially abolished.

As an important component of the legal system, the Law of Legislation was further discussed and reform carried out. On August 25th, 2014. The Tenth Meetings of the Twelfth National People’s Congress reviewed proposed revisions to the Law of Legislation, for the first time since 2000. Other efforts included announcing limited reforms to the \textit{hu kou} system of household registration that had denied social services to China’s internal migrants, and granting slightly improved access for disabled persons to the all-important university entrance exam.

Sun’s incident was a remarkable example of how societal forces, led by investigative journalism, and in conjunction with citizen participation and legal activism could bring about positive change. It is now regarded as the event that began the \textit{weiquan} or rights defense movement, in which ordinary citizens use the law as a tool to defend their rights through litigation or activism.\textsuperscript{312} After Sun Zhigang’s case was settled, Xu Zhiyong and Teng Biao turned human rights maintenance into careers and both later became prominent legal scholars and social activists, whose presence was even more evident in many subsequent cases.


\textsuperscript{311} Decision of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on Some Major Issues Concerning Comprehensively Deepening the Reform, adopted at the Third Plenary Session of the 18th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on November 12, 2013.

Chapter 7: The Bobai County Protests Against Family Planning Policy

The Bobai protest is a major group incident that took place in early 2007 in Bobai County, in China’s southwestern Guangxi province. The protest was directly incited by the harsh measures taken by local government to fulfill their responsibilities in family planning, and also revealed how difficult it is for societal involvement to make a difference if the state will remains strong. The incident was adopted by the writer as a failed case of societal forces in institutional transformation.

1. The Family Planning Policy

The family planning policy was a population control policy China introduced between 1978 and 1980 and has been adopted until the present day. It was initiated after Chinese government decided to shift its focus from the class struggle to economy and construction in 1978. When economic developed prioritized the CCP’s agenda, the fast growing population turned out to be a “burden”. Actually Mao Zedong and former premier Zhou Enlai had also realized the possible side effects of fast expanding population and had advocated “late, long and fewer” family planning (delaying marriage, having fewer children and more years between births) on a voluntary basis. Almost throughout the 1970s, the government advocated the slogan “one is too few, two is just ok, three is too many”, which simply explained its early family planning policy.

During 1979-1980, the 7th Mechanical Industry (qijibu, became the Department of Aerospace Industry in 1982, again canceled in 1993 and became the Aviation Industry Corporation in 1999) and a research fellow from China Academy of Social Sciences had conducted research on population prediction. The Office of the CCP Central Committee organized another five seminars on population policies from late March to early May 1980, the first two of which were attend by senior officials from State Planning Commission, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Civil Affairs, General Bureau of Labor, Women’s Association and other relevant departments, as well as scientists and sociologists.

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314 Qiushi, Secret Stories About the 5 Seminars that Determined the State Policy of Family Plan”, http://www.qstheory.cn/society/2015-05/20/c_1115351748.htm, 2015-12-02.
five seminars basically decided to adopt the “One Child Policy”, but the seminars also proposed to implement the “One Child Policy” for only one generation”. 315 In February 1982, the CCP Central Committee and State Council announced the “Guidelines Concerning Further Carry out the Family Planning Work” that officially made the Family Plan a State Policy. 316 In 1982, the Family Plan policy was incorporated into the constitution, which says,

“The (Chinese) state adopts family plan policy so that population growth could be adapted to economic and social development plan”, 317 and “both parties of an couple has the obligation to practice the family plan policy”. 318

Undoubtedly, the one-child policy was a very aggressive population control policy, aiming to make immediate progress in birth control. The rapid population growth in the 1960s had raised the official awareness of the population issue since the early 1970s. From 1962 to 1972, the annual number of births in China averaged 26.69 million, totaling 300 million. In 1969, China's population exceeded 800 million. 319

The CCP’ priority change proved to be the vital reason for the Family Planning Policy. As a somewhat isolated agricultural country, the state government had to accumulate capital from agricultural production for industrial development, while agricultural productivity was very low and consumption was high owning to the huge population. In the year 1980 when the decision was made, China had a huge yet young population close to 1 trillion, China was still under a planned economy and there was a general shortage of supply of basic living commodities. There was a general tendency of attributing the financial and material shortage to overpopulation. The understanding was not reliable but it was very common among top leadership.

The decision-making process of the “Family Plan Policy” and the “One Child Policy” were very democratic at the very beginning since it was determined based on former studies and consecutive seminars participated by many concerned ministries, scientists and

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315 Ibid.
316 The CCP Central Committee and the State Council, Guidelines Concerning Further Carry out the Family Planning Work, February 9, 1982.
experts, especially if one takes into account that China had just experienced 10 years’ turmoil and repression of speech. However, the final decision was made under strong instruction of leadership who had made it clear that the goal for those seminars was to control population. The very first and second seminars were attended by around 100 officials and experts from many departments which were gradually reduced to around 20 for the last concluding seminar, which was to decide whether it would be okey to carry out the “One Child Policy”.

In addition, two of the most influential Seniors Chen Yun and Song Jian (then deputy leader of the 7th Ministry of Industries who later became the Minister of Science and Technology had played an important role in the making of the of “One Child Policy”. In order to carry out the “One Child Policy”, Chen also proposed five measures accordingly: publicity, legislation, scientific studies of pregnancy prevention, “favorable treatment of single child” and a social welfare system that may help avoid the “raising kids to prepare for aging”. In fact, such policies, if carried out, may have helped cushion the severe problems brought by the “One Child Policy”. However, given China’s financial shortfall and priority of economic development, most supportive policies remained an idea except the “One Child Policy” itself.

2. The Faulted Policy and Its Implementation

Over population has been a human challenge. The UN Population Fund had warned that, if human beings do not take prompt and determined moves to control population and maintain a balance between consumption and development, the world population would reach up to 12.5 billion by the mid-21st century and bring negative influences for human development. As the most populous country, China probably had a better understanding how population has affected daily life as well as national development. Many other countries have also adopted a type of population control policy. The difference is, seldom has a country adopted such a radical almost reckless, demanding policy.

Generational inheritance is a natural biological process, and often has very complex cultural and sociological contests, the number of children a couple have is a very individual choice, while the family planning policy is a bold and harsh intervention in the private realm.

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320 Qiushi, Secret Stories About the 5 Seminars that Determined the State Policy of Family Plan”, http://www.qstheory.cn/society/2015-05/20/c_1115351748.htm, 2015-12-02.
The “One Child Policy” proved to be very tough for most Chinese people, it was far below the natural replacement rate of 2.1, which means the Chinese nation will not be sustainable if the policy is carried out for long. Actually during the seminar discussions of before the “One China Policy” became official policy, officials and scholars had a general consensus that the “One Child Policy” shall be carried out for only one generation. However, the “One Child Policy” has been carried out until 2015 for many reasons.  

Because the Policy itself is problematic, its implementation had led to many serious problems. The greatest challenge was that China was a typical agricultural country, and labor, especially male labor proved to be vital for agricultural production. The absence of a social welfare system made it desirable to have at least one male child. If the couple give birth to a daughter first, they are likely to continue to have a second or third child until they have a son.

The family planning policy had displayed a strong will of the government but the desire of the grassroots to have a second child was also rational and reasonable. The family planning policy had met with strong resistance in rural China. In order to carry out the state policy, the family planning law had authorized the local family planning officials to take compulsory actions of forced abortions or confiscation of assets, which have also be sources for rural contention. The majority of family planning workers are grassroots who have no better education than their “work targets”(gong zuo dui xiang), and the way they dealing with the “work targets” is often very harsh and violent once they met with resistance.

Because it was not possible to expect all the people to be cooperative to family planning cadres in carrying out the one child policy, cadres from the family planning department have to resort to compulsory actions, sometimes even use violence. Liu Ji and De Xinjian observed four types of regulatory means the government adopted to implement the family planning policy: administrative order, economic punishment (collecting fines and social raise fee, confiscation); comprehensive management (restraining unplanned kids via household registration, schooling, social welfare); and discourse disciplining. However, the most effective compulsory means are economic punishment, forced abortion and forced

323 On December 2, 2015, the China State Council passed the “Revision of Population and Family Plan Act” (draft), calling to revise the “One Child Policy” to allow each couple give birth to two kids.

324 Liu Ji and De Xinjian, On the Implementation of Birth Planning Policy: Four Means and Three sets of Relationships,
fertility prohibition surgery (jie zha). Therefore, family planning has always been a major source of rural contentions.

In order to carry out the plan, the family planning commission established a department in each level of government and the family planning work remained an important task and the performance of township or county level governor in carry out the plan was a major criterion for his or her future promotion. While on the other hand, most cadres come from the same town or nearby localities; it was very difficult for them to carry out the plan as strictly. The financial punishment for an extra child was very heavy; often times of average annual income of a locality (the author will clarify later) and it is often impossible to collect the “social raise fee” because of the family’s poor economic condition. Often the family with an extra child will choose to bribe the family planning officials with relatively less money and therefore corruption in local operations of the family planning policy is quite common.

3. Bobai County and the Family Planning Policy

Bobai is an inland county in China’s underdeveloped western province of Guangxi, which is also one of China’s five autonomous regions of ethnic minorities. The family planning practices in Guangxi have always been problematic and it also revealed the ubiquitous tension between the government and society in terms of population control. As time went on, population problems began to draw intensive academic and social attention. Bobai County had 1.45 million of its 1.6 million population living in rural areas (by the end of 2007), whose agricultural activities still relied heavily on male laborers. Through raising the “social raise fee” and numerous small unregistered fines, promotion and other interest transfer means, grassroots level officials had benefited greatly from the family planning policy and therefore, have not carried out the rules and regulations concerning the one-child policy. Ironically, quite a few Bobai local cadres themselves have one or two “extra” children, which were strictly prohibited by party discipline and relevant law. The violation of family planning law by cadres had worsened the situation since it undermined the credibility of family planning agencies, and was deemed by many in the grassroots as another source of social injustice.

In early 2007, not long after the Chinese Lunar Spring Festival, the Provincial government held a seminar on Population and Environment-related Work and another
seminar on Population and Planned Family Work, when the party head of Guangxi pointed out that, “there are serious problems with our population and planned family work, the situation is impressing”, “we should strictly control births, punish responsible person and implement policy of reward and punishment.” In the last conference, Bobai County was given a “yellow card” for its poor control over “unplanned” birth. After receiving the “yellow card”, the leaders from the Bobai County felt great pressure from the provincial leadership.

The amount of the fine is often calculated based on the average wage of a locality, often many times of average wage of the locality. According to Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region Population and Family Planning Guidelines (Guangxi Zhuang zu zi zhi qu ren kou he ji hua sheng yu guan li ban fa), article 31, for those who illegally give birth to children, a “social raise fee” will be collected based on the average disposable income of urban residents (for urban residents) or average net income of rural families (for rural farmers):

1. for those who give birth to one extra child illegally, three to five times of the annual disposable income (urban residents) or net annual income (rural farmers)
2. for those who give birth to two extra children illegally, five to seven times of annual disposable income (urban residents) or net annual income (rural farmers)
3. for those who give birth to three extra children illegally, seven to nine times of annual disposable income (urban residents) or net annual income (rural farmers)
4. for those who give birth to four or more extra children illegally, the amount of social raise fee should be calculated accordingly.)

The National Family Planning Commission is responsible for raising public awareness, registration of new-born children, inspection work and post-birth social awareness of population policy, and ensuring the policy was enforced at the provincial level through fines that were imposed based on the income of the family and other factors. "Population and Family Planning Commissions" exist at every level of government to raise awareness and carry out registration and inspection work.

As indicated above, the due amount of “social raise fee” is heavy when compared with annual income, especially for people in the less developed Guangxi Province, the

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“social raise fee” becomes a severe burden for an average family, so people often choose to pay a relatively smaller fine worthy from RMB1,000 to 2,000. This money often goes to the pocket of local officials from the Family Planning Department. It is often not registered, or accumulated to deduct from the due amount of the fine, the local officials don’t even provide an official invoice or receipt. The next time the family is caught, it will be fined again. Therefore, the fine has become a way for local Family Planning department officials to raise extra income in many places. Township government officials and village heads had sold made family planning policy a good business by selling “Birth Permission” (zhun sheng zheng) and “certificate for Sterilization” (jie zha zheng) rampantly in Bobai.

“Bobai’s Family Planning work is centered on collecting the “social raise fee”, they do not care about other work (publicity, persuasion, inspection, etc.), the township level government always assigns tasks of collecting of the “social raise fee” in the form of quota to each village to settle the fiscal problems”. As an incentive, 20% of the social raise fee will be returned to the township level government after they successfully collected and submitted the fee.”

Because both the villagers and the grassroots level governments have a stake in giving birth to more children, cheating the superior level governments has become common, especially when a higher level government official come to inspect the implementation of the family planning policy, the local family planning officials often side with villagers to cheat those inspectors. However, such an “alliance” may be a problem, since the family planning policy is regarded as “basic state policy” (ji ben guo ce), the performance of government officials in carrying out the family planning policy is one of the major criterions for their promotion, failure in strictly carrying out the family planning policy may risk their futures, especially if the superior officials find out they are being cheated by lower level government, they may have to “correct” it by strictly sticking to the policy. The Bobai County received a “yellow card” because its Jiangning township level government was found cheating in family planning statistics and many more cases of cheating were revealed thereafter. The “Yellow Card” was regarded a huge problem. It brought great pressure upon the Bobai county government, and the county waged a campaign called “removing the Banner”. The Provincial Party head of Guangxi, Liu Qibao, has taken aggressive policies

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327 Ibid.
aimed at making the underdeveloped western province “economically competitive”, and the “radical” family planning work was part of the “aggressiveness”.

4. The Campaign and the Protest

As a Chinese saying goes, “a crooked stick will have a crooked shadow” (shang liang bu zheng xia liang wai). The campaign starts with harsh punishment of cadres and party members who had more children than regulated. In 2007 alone, Bobai has fired 104 cadres for their violation of the Family Planning Law.328 Among the 104 cadres, 38 are middle and primary schools teachers who had reported to “organizations and received punishment. According to family planning regulations; they could be exempted from further punishment. However, they were dismissed together with other cadres.329 Bobai was not alone, provinces like Hebei and Hubei had waged similar campaigns to “clean” its cadres’ violation of family planning law. In the year 2007, more than 900 cadres and party members had been punished, many were dismissed.330

They were also assigned quotas of collecting fines of RMB500 on behalf of the county government. Parents of “extra” children were required to hand in “social raise fee” (ranging from RMB10, 000 to RMB 70,000), those who failed to hand in the fine and “social raise fee” would have their possessions taken away to make up for the fine. The family planning workers took 42 pigs from Pang Liwen, owner of a farm in Shuangwang town. For those who did not have anything worthy of money, the family planning officials turned over the roof of their houses as punishment; and if, the estimated value of their possessions was not sufficient for paying the fine, the family plan divisions would “pull down” their houses as a further punishment.331

Liu Yongzhong (刘永忠), furniture shop owner, received an “Announcement on Paying Social Raise Fee by deadline” on May 13 by Shapi family planning department, ordering them to hand in a social raise fee of RMB24,159 by the same date, or the Compulsory Confiscation Team will “execute” confiscation of their assets, they took away

329 By the end of 2013, the teachers are stilling appealing to national authorities for correction of the improper punishment imposed by Bobai local government, interview with Mr. Zhou, a former principle of a local middle school.
330 A Number of Cadres in Bobai County were punished for violating Family Planning State Policy, http://news.xinhuanet.com/newscenter/2008-01/15/content_7427505.htm, 2015-11-08.
331 Email Interview of a county family plan department at the Bobai County, he admitted such measures were taken but indicate that it was “a political task” assigned by provincial government.
Liu on the same day, and more than 100 family planning workers surrounded the shop and ordered them to hand over the fee within 10 minutes, then rushed into the room and took everything, including living possessions.

Besides, the county government has been very aggressive in operation of the policies. “Everyday, there were around 80 family plan officials rushed into the village, each worn armed uniforms and helmet, with iron hammers, electric torch and handcuffs”, a local villager described, “they surrounded two families, opened their doors by force, took everything away, destroyed everything left behind”. A slogan was panging over the family plan department buildings which read,

“for those who don’t conduct fertility prohibition surgery and pay fine spontaneously, firmly take actions of confiscating their assets, cutting off water and electricity supply, sealing off the house and arrest the people”（dui bu zi jue luo shi huan zha he jiao fei de dui xiang, jian jue shi xing shi wu di ding, duan shui duan dian, feng wu zuo ren deng qiang zhi cuo shi）.

The Family Planning Department could even, without fulfilling legal procedures, order the bank to freeze the bank account of those who have violated the Family Planning Law by giving birth to “unplanned” children, they keep this account until the family pays the fine (often a huge amount) within a designated period of time, or they would take the money directly. A family who have nine children had bought eight ‘birth permission and fertilization certificate’, but still this time needs to pay RMB 94,884 “social raise fee”.

Other repressive measures contained forced sterilization of women and property confiscation in lieu of fines. The family planning department officials were met with strong dissent but no serious confrontation appeared at the very beginning. And those compulsory actions proved to be somewhat effective. Until the end of April, Bobai County had carried out 18,110 sterilizations and other three types of surgeries to prevent further pregnancy, which, the government claimed that it had avoided the birth of 3,855 babies. The total fine and “social raise fee” collected reached up to RMB 7.88 million. Foreign media estimated

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332 Interview with an unnamed local peasant (whose first name is Wei (Mr.), in late October, 2012.
333 Huang Tao, Jiang Dexing and Wang Ruyuan, the Social Capital and Government Performance in Bobao’s Implementation of Planned Family Policy, Journal of Chengdu University (Social Sciences), 2009(3).
334 Huang Tao, Jiang Dexing and Wang Ruyuan, “the Social Capital and Government Performance in
better “achievement” during the first phase of the campaign. It was estimated that between February 6 and April 10, Yulin carried out 48,554 sterilizations and collected some RMB 27.6 million (about $ 3.5 million) in fines. Propaganda has never been absent in the CCP’s campaigns. This time was no exception. The county government made around 6,000 banners of slogans, large propaganda boards, and over 300 thousand advocacy manuals.

However, those repressive actions raised public outrage. On May 17, 2007, starting in Dungu town, violent protests took place in more than 10 towns of the Bobai County. On the evening of May 17, Dungu town government buildings were surrounded and attacked and seven police automobiles were damaged in protests; On the morning of May 18, several thousand people gathered at Yong’an town government, attacking and destroyed the doors, windows and offices of government buildings, turned over automobiles, burned documents and archives, and some villagers rushed into the houses of the family planning officials and burned their personal belongs; During the afternoon of May 18, villagers began to attack Shuiming town; On the morning of May 19, protests spreaded over eastern part of the county, Datong, Shapi, Nabu, Yingqiao, Wendi, all together eight township governments had been attacked, with the number of participated by protesters ranging from 200 to 10,000. Township level governments of Yashan, Fengshan, Lingjiao, Langping, and Jiangning were also attacked.

On May 19, a large-scale riot took place in the town of Shapi. Some 10,000 protesters clashed with hundreds of anti-riot police armed with guns and electric cattle prods. The police were bused in after demonstrators had pulled down a wall, chased and beat officials from the family planning department, smashed cars and lit fires.

The problem with Bobai County was very common and represents the general situation for many parts of rural China; this is especially true with China’s underdeveloped western provinces like Guangxi, Guizhou, etc. Less than ten days later, on May 29, 2007, stronger protests took place in the nearby Rong county, some 3,000 residents from Shitao township of the Rong county surrounded local government offices, and when the

Bobai’s Implementation of Family Plan Policy”, Chengdu University Journal (Social Sciences), 2009(03).


336 Provided by worker from Family Plan Commission, Mr. L. he now serves as deputy of the county commission. The commission now has transferred to Heath and Family Planning Commission by merging with the Ministry of Health.

confrontation escalated, an estimated 20,000 protesters joined in the surrounding of government buildings, burning vehicles, motorbikes and police vans and cars. 338

5. Result of the Bobai Family Plan Protest

It is not the author’s purpose to detail the confrontation between the local governments and the interaction between the protesters and government officials. Faced with intensive protests and public crisis after the SARS in 2003, the local government officials had systematic plans to settle down all sorts of local protests. Actually, each level of government, department, and party schools had intensive training courses concerning emergency or crisis response. Concrete measures include deterrence of riot police, arrest of social activists, persuasion of higher level officials, commitment in punishing responsible officials, explanation of the necessity for the family planning policy, and possibly reassuring of exemption for further punishment of early engagement. 339

After the peak of the protests on May 19, the people involved in the protests began to decline. For scholars like Yu Jianrong, many people involved in such cases simply regard it as a good opportunity to release their anger instead of having any real purpose in their protest. Therefore such cases are stress-releasing or venting anger incidents. 340 This is

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339 Confirmed by interview with Prof. Zhang from Central Party School, Prof. Zhang from State Academy of Governance, Prof. Liu and Cai from Beijing Municipal Party School, Mr. Wei from Zhejiang Provincial Party school, Miss. Chen from Shaanxi Provincial Party School, Dr. Deng from Beijing Tongzhou District Party School and Miss. Jin from a county Party school in Central China’s Hubei Province. During the peak time of social protests between 2007 (before the Olympics) and 2010, group incident management courses accounted 1/3 to half of all cadres training courses all over China. All governors, majors, governors of counties, townships had attended at least one training course in crisis management. Besides, different ministries, like the Ministry of Public Security, Ministry of Civil Affairs, the Family Plan Commission, Ministry of Health, General Bureau of Safe Production Inspection, Department of Publicity all had their own training program attended by different level of bureaucrats. Interview conducted between late autumn of 2010 to spring 2011. Because land disputes arose between 2010-2012 peaked, there were more training courses on land protests.
340 Yu Jianrong, China’s Anger Venting Incident and the Dilemma of Management and Governance, Contemporary World and Socialism, 2009(11); Yu Jianrong, The Major Types and Their Features of Contemporary China’s Group Incident, Journal of China University of Politics and Law, 2008(02). Other anger venting cases are the Weng’an protest in June 2008, when the satisfaction of the investigation result of a female middle school student by police led to major social protests and populist attack of government buildings, burning of cars, since rumors came that the girl was assaulted and murdered. For details and analysis of the case, see Yu Jianrong, The Study of Populist Psychological Mechanism in Anger Venting Incident: An Explanation of the Mechanism of Weng’An Incident, Journal of Beijing Institute of Governance, 2009(01). A third anger venting event was a protest in Shishou of Central China’s Hubei Province in December 2009, when the suspicious death
especially true given the fact that many protesters did not have to pay the fines or do the sterilization or they had already done the surgery long before.

“They don’t have any real goal, just because they want to see the “well-furnished” government buildings and offices be destroyed, cars burned, and the once arrogant family plan officials to lower their head to persuade them to leave”. 341

Therefore, once anger was vented, there was not more reason to continue the protest. Because in all townships, government buildings, offices of the Family Planning Division had been damaged or destroyed, prior experience indicated that the police would probably arrest some social activists after the riot. Many people quit soon to avoid being arrested.

On May 23, Bobai County government announced that the protests had been settled down, and altogether 28 people were arrested for their role in advocating and organizing the protest. The government also sent 28 working groups made up of about 4200 cadres to all 28 townships of Bobai County. The executive vice chairman of Guangxi Autonomous Region of Zhuang Ethnic Minority resided in the village to inspect and direct their work. 342 In order to relieve public outrage and dissent against the family planning work of local government, the Bobai County had temporarily stopped collecting “social raise fee”. 343 On June 18, Bobai County government organized a conference calling on the family planning workers to learn and practice their work according to an official regulation that strictly prohibits officials and party members from earning improper benefit by making use of their occupation, as a correction of their misconducts before the campaign, which the provincial

of a cook from a government hotel led to violence against government buildings, joined by local residents and nearby villagers. The most recent anger-venting event took place days ago when the author was revising the dissertation. On December 28, 2015, a 13-year old middle school student committed suicide by jumping from a 17-floor building in Jinchang County of Gansu Province, simply because she was found to bring a chocolate, a clothes hook and soft drink out of a store without payment, the clerk insulted her by calling her names and asked her parents to pay RMB150 as a fine. More than one thousand angry local people gathered attacked the store, and even attacked the major who came to settle the issue. The protesters partially felt pity for the little girl, partially because they were not satisfied with the government because of disparity, poor social welfare provision, and poverty. This is why anger-venting event often happen in less developed areas.

341 Interview with a former deputy of a township government in Bobai, in late 2010, date unregistered. He now runs a tea house in the downtown area of Bobai county.


343 Bobai Temporarily Stopped collecting Fine to relieve public anger after Settlement of Riot, Wenhuibao, 2007-05-23. The Internet version of the article is no longer accessible now.
leadership regarded as the major reason for the poor performance of the family planning agency, instead of the policy itself.

On July 10, Mr. Shen Beihai, Head of the Provincial Department of Publicity, and a member of Guangxi Party Committee, emphasized

“(Guangxi) shall unwaveringly stick to the policy of Stabilizing the organizations responsible for population and family plan work, and constantly innovate the work system and mechanism”

ensuring that no family plan officials would be punished for the campaign from late February to the middle May. He also conveyed the instructions from provincial party secretary, Mr. Liu Qibao, that the stance of Guangxi authority will not change because of the “storm against family plan policy”, because the family planning policy is China’s “basic state policy”, and it “concerns the quality of Chinese population and the long-term sustainable development of China as a whole”.

There were also serious discussions about the reason for the protest, and understandably, the government had been blamed for their hasty decision-making, their improper conduct during implementing the policy and their bad behaviors. 344 However, the Bobai County case itself seemed to not have aroused further criticisms upon the family planning policy, even though there was already harsh criticism on the policy in international academia and media. 345 Therefore, it would be safe to say that the Bobai County protests against the family planning policy and the family planning campaign had stopped as a populist movement that successfully stopped the harsh actions taken to implement the family planning policy that should have been carried out before. However, it didn’t arouse more media discussion and scholarly appeals concerning the family planning policy as an institutional arrangement.

6. Involvement of Societal Forces

6.1 The rural protesters

344 The Guangxi Bobai Public Incident was Caused by Hastiness for Success, Lian He Zao Bao, 2007-05-24.
345 Leading sociological scholars like Zhou Xiaozheng and Sun Liping had been criticizing the one child policy and urging the government to adjust the policy soon in recent years. However, their gestures had little to do with the Bobai protests.
Many group incidents were not actually organized by individuals or organizations. Because there was general dissents against the family planning policy and officials, the violent means the family planning workers had used often turned out to be the catalyst for large-scale group incidents.

Before the riot took place, the villagers had expected confrontation between family planning work team (task forces). However, the violent measures taken by the work team still shocked the villagers. Especially in relatively less developed ethnic areas, some of the actions were deemed very offensive: such as breaking the glass of the window (suggesting their future would be very poor since their wealth may escape from the window instead of being kept) and breaking the pots and pans (suggesting they will lose their job or other means of living)

Therefore, the villagers, those stakeholders whose interest, dignity and human rights (those who had sterilization) had been hurt, are the natural part of societal forces in the protests. Many villagers who didn’t have a problem with their family planning policy also participated in the protest either to support their relatives (very common in Chinese rural society where family ties remain strong) or just to express their dissents against the local government. As mentioned before, in the most violent protest in Shapi, an estimated 12,000 villagers had been involved in the protests. In protests within other townships, the population involved was all in thousands. Almost each family from the ten townships had been involved in protests against the township government.

6.2 Social Activists

After protests took place in Dungu on May 17, it soon expanded to another seven townships within two days. Though it is understandable that the family planning campaign was carried out all over Bobai County, and protests in one township could encourage neighboring townships to follow suit, however, it failed to explain why other 15 townships out of the 28 townships didn't have large-scale group incidents and other 5 townships just had small-scale group incidents.

In fact, as in any social movement, social activists played an essential role. In the Bobai County protest, some young villagers from the Dungu township and the Shapi had visited the neighboring townships Yongan, Shuiming and Nabu, telling them the government had bullied the villagers and invited the villagers to come to Dungu as support. In inland rural areas like Guangxi, geographically close townships are often connected by family ties
and marriage. By far it is clear that two of the activists who led the protests in Dungu have relatives from Shapi whose family is somewhat influential. It was not surprising these two townships had the fiercer protests. Several students from Nabu had also been very active in some coordination work during the protests.

Two other activists from outside of Bobai County provided an official document stating that the amount of fines due is often in thousands instead of tens of thousands Chinese Yuan. This document had served as evidence that the family planning officials disobeyed official regulations, and therefore “justified” their resistance against the government. The two activists had showed the document to villagers from more than three other townships while the news about the document was widely spread orally all throughout Bobai County. After the protests settled down, the Bobai government arrested 28 activists and announced that they “had organized, incited, and connected secretly with (chuan lian)” during the protests.

6.3 Students’ Involvement: what’s new in Bobai’s Family Planning Protests

Young students have been natural and ideal participants in modern social movements for their knowledge, passion and sense of responsibilities. They also have organizational convenience (students societies especially) for social engagement. Students played a leading role in China’s modern social movement, starting from the May 4 movement in 1919 and ending after the Tiananmen Square incident. However, after that event, students had faded away from China’s political agenda. The eminent role of students in societal protests in China can also be attributed to the low literacy rate of China’s peasants in the vast rural areas and the working class in China’s urban cities. In remote townships of west China’s Guangxi province, middle school students are even regarded as educated people. By reading the newspapers, watching TV news and analysis, using the Internet, they have better knowledge and understanding about social affairs. And in Bobai’s family planning protests, especially in the township of Nabu, several hundred students from the junior middle school participated the protests. Because the students come from different

346 Later this “official document” was proved to be fabricated and fake, the two activists were later arrested together with other three leading protesters, other 23 were released and punishment was changed to “residential surveillance”.
347 The Group Incident of Bobai Mass Surrounding and Blocking Township Governments were Settled Down (guang xi bo hai qun zhong wei du xiang zheng fu shi jian ping xi) http://gb.cri.cn/14714/2007/05/23/1245@1601052.htm, 2015-12-18.
villagers of the the Nabu town, they served as coordinators among villages and several students were believed to have engaged in linking with other townships.

6.4 Media’s Absence

The Bobai’s County’s campaign lasted for roughly two and a half months before the protests fizzled out. Misconduct of the family planning workers had begun since late February, 2007. However, before the protests in the middle of May, neither national media nor local media (newspapers, TV programs, broadcasting) had revealed the news, except the Internet webpage people.cn under the People’s Daily, which reported the settlement of Bobai County’s protest on May 23, 2007. This is probably because family planning disputes had been quite common over the past decades while Bobai County is a relatively closed area and media from other provinces didn’t cover the event.

As a major protest, international media had sent journalists to the Bobai County when the protests took place but were blocked and prevented from entering. However, the Singapore-based Lianhe Zaobao published two reports about the event on May 24 and July 10 when a conference on family plan policy was held as a follow-up. The Washington Post and the New York Times had reported the news; Radio Free Asia also reported the following protest by the neighboring Rong County on May 29. But for obvious reasons, the news failed to reach the Chinese public and therefore had insignificant influence.

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348 Bobai’s Group Incident of Mass Surrounding and Blocking the Governments Settled Down, http://politics.people.com.cn/GB/14562/5766376.html(no longer accessible by December 31, 2015, probably of deletion of news by publicity department, but the author had copied the news two years ago)
349 One exception was a report by the Shanghai-based Wenhui Bao, Bobai Temporarily Stopped collecting Fine to relieve public anger after Settlement of Riot, Wenhuibao, http://paper.wenweipo.com/2007/05/23/YO0705230011.htm, 2007-05-23 (The Internet version of the article is no longer accessible by December 31, but the author had copied down the news two years before)
Exposure of the Bobai County protest by the Internet was also very limited. After the incident, there were just few articles pasted on the BBS and local Internet-based community. For the majority of protesters, the villagers didn’t have access to the Internet, neither did the students, so modern technology did not have a role in the protests. Several social activists even went to nearby townships in person to ask for support. This was unique for the Bobai protest.

6.5. Scholarly Involvement and Follow-ups

As a “basic state policy” that had been carried out for more than three decades, a policy turn proved to be very hard. Even the 2014 government work report still stated, “unshaveringly stick to the state policy of family planning, practicing the policy that allows the couples to have two kids if one of them is single child”. 352

However, demographical and sociological scholars and economists have been urging the government to review the one child policy. Since 2010, Wang Ming from Tsinghua University and Shandong University began to initiate bills jointly to the National People’s Political Consultative Conference, advocating to give up the “One Child Policy”, encourage “two children for each couple”. 353 In early 2013, leading scholar Yi Fuxian published an influential book “Great Country, Empty Home” and warned the comprehensive dangers of the family planning policy, calling for abolishment of the policy.354 On March 22, 2015, 50 legal scholars from 21 universities, headed Beijing University Professor Zhan Zhongle and Li Jianxin, joined by the “Thee Seniors of Law”(former editor-in-chief of China Legal Studies, Professor Li Buyun from China Academy of Social Sciences, and leading professor and former president from China University of Politics and Law) and other influential scholars, 355 presented a bill to the Standing Committee of National People’s Congress and the State Council, urging the latter to revise the Population and Family Planning Act.

353 Two members from the National People’s Political Consultative Conference (NPPCC) had initiated Family Plan Policy Act for 6 consecutive years, since http://www.yicai.com/news/2015/03/4580879.html, 2015-12-12.
355 Including Professor Zhang Qianfan, who had been defending for Mr. Pu Zhiqiang, the well known human rights lawyer; and Shen Kui, who was one of the five professors who urged the Standing Committee of National People’s Congress to conduct constitutionality review of the Custody and
Lasting scholarly pressure, fueled by China’s increasingly serious shortage of cheap labors in urban cities (yong gong huang), meant that for the first time, the 2015 government report didn’t have such a statement, instead emphasizing “promoting reform on family plan service and management”, therefore indicating that the “One Child Policy” would change soon.

On October 29, 2015, the Fifth Plenum of CCP’s 18th Party Congress announced that “(China should) carry out the two children Policy comprehensively and take actions to address aging”. However, this is a result of continuous endeavors of scholars and enlightened officials. It is also a major decision by the top leadership to maintain the momentum of China’s economic growth. Generally, aside from the Bobai County protests, which was the only major protest against the family planning policy in recent decades, other incidents remain very small.

What’s the Different in Sun Zhigang’s case and the Bobai County Protest?

The Compulsory Custody & Repatriation System (C&R System) and the Family Planning Policy are two institutional arrangements that have been adopted for decades: the C & R system was adopted in 1982 (can be dated back to the early 1950s) and the Family Planning Policy was officially adopted in the 1980s. Both were proved to be somewhat effective and useful at the early phase for China’s social management (the former were adopted to manage China’s migrant population during China’s early urbanization, while the family planning policy was adopted to manage China’s population for faster modernization). As time passes, both the two systems have proved to be very problematic in their institutional design as well as their implementation, with ubiquitous human rights abuses and rampant corruption.

Both systems resulted in numerous human tragedies and cost human lives (even in the cases of the Bobai County family planning protests, there was no direct human loss according to official news, it is certain that many people lost their lives in forced sterilization, confrontation and even suicide, over the decades) and therefore, there was

Repatriation System in 2003, He Bing from China University of Politics and Law and Xu Xin from Beijing Science and Technology University.

widespread dissent against them and societal forces calling for the abolishment of the two systems.

The two cases analyzed by the research present two societal movements that had institutional implications for societal involvement in decision-making. However, the result of the two cases was very distinctive. In Sun Zhigang’s case, fragmented involvement of professionals (lawyer and medical-legal review expert), media (mainly traditional media, national media, local media in Guangzhou and media from other provinces), social activists, and scholars successfully forced the government to abolish the twenty-year old C&R system. However, in the Bobai County protest, which was characterized by fiercer confrontation and a greater number of the population, involvement of societal forces failed to lead to institutional changes with the family planning policy. Then what contributed to make the difference?

1. Limited Involvement of Societal Forces

In terms of societal forces involved, though more people were involved in the Bobai County’s protest, the way they engaged the government was simple: confrontation, and almost venting anger as mentioned earlier. Very importantly, because of the withholding of information and relative isolation of the inland rural area, the news about the protests failed to gain enough media exposure by both traditional and new media and therefore failed to form a strong public opinion. Without such a pressure, the government’s willingness to make major compromise declined. The major protests lasted just three days (from May 17-19) until it were settled down. Though several the social activists and the students had played a role, however, their major function was no different from that of the villagers.

Intellectuals and professionals were basically absent, making societal involvement very limited compared with the case of Sun Zhigang. Understandably, compared to other societal forces, the scholars’ role is very special. In most cases, their concern doesn’t lie in the immediate solution to an impending problem. Instead, they tend to focus to long-term issues that serve the longer-term interest of a greater number of people. Therefore, their role will be vital in legal and institutional affairs and their absence may be a very important reason too.

In Sun Zhigang’s case, societal forces were involved in a fragmented and rational manner while in the Bobai County protest, the societal involvement was made respectively
in a somewhat coordinated yet irrational manner. However, since the violence didn’t lead to government repression, one can’t simply attribute the failure of societal involvement to the rationality of the involvement as well.

What then had hindered the incident from more media exposure and scholarly intervention? Besides the local media withholding information and Bobai County’s geographical location, media from other provinces were also silent, this was very different from the case of Sun Zhigang case and all other cases to be researched in later part of this dissertation. Scholars had involved much during the Bobai County protest, though they have been advocating revising the family plan long before and after the protest, then why changing the family plan policy so difficult given that it was almost the national consensus that the one child policy was problematic and needs immediate change?

Family Planing commission: the Interest Group

The interest groups approach may explain the phenomenon. As a state policy, the family planning policy had been carried out for nearly thirty years before the Bobai County protest. Different from the C&R system which mainly benefited the grassroots level policemen and civil affairs workers within the C&R centers. The Family Planning Policy benefits the powerful family planning commission, a government organ. According to statistics by the family planning commission, by December 31, 2005, the family plan system had 13 national, 252 provincial, 1,799 municipal, 10,730 county level and 69,556 township level organs, totaling 82,350 organs. It has a total of 508,713 workers including 45,555 workers at township level.357 Once reform was decided, all levels of officials and the half a million workers would prove a headache for the government.

More importantly, officials from the family planning organs had benefited from the policy. The system had been collecting “social raise fee” up to RMB 20 billion to RMB 30 billion annually, and instead of being spent on children, most of it had been utilized by the family planning department.358 The National Auditing Agency announced that, findings from the auditing of the “social raise fee” of 45 counties from 9 provinces indicated that a

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designated proportion of the fee was returned to family planning department and the fee was an important funding source for family planning work. Statistics by scholars indicated that the total “social raise fee” collected since 1980 totaled more than RMB1.5 trillion.\textsuperscript{359} Therefore, the family planning department had become a powerful interest group and became a barrier that hinders any challenge to it. Also importantly, as a “basic state policy”, performance of in family planning work is often regarded as one of the major criterion for promotion of leaders. When the Bobai County protests took place, the party head of Guangxi, Liu Qibao, had taken very aggressive economic actions to improve Guangxi’s competitiveness. It would be equally understandable if he took aggressive actions in the family planning department, too.

\textsuperscript{359} He Yafu, Social Raise Fee Shouldn’t be So Unclear (she hui fu fei bu ying gai li bu qing), \textit{Dong Fang Zao Bao}, 2013-09-06, Z23.
Part Three
The Implications of Involvement of Societal Forces:
Behavioral Change
Chapter 8: The Xiamen PX Plant Incident

The Sun Zhigang case, analyzed in the previous chapter, can be considered an unusual case where societal engagement led to broader institutional change. This chapter looks to the behavioral side of the Chinese government. Indeed, another major incident occurred during the timeframe of the study, at the Xiamen PX plant to be precise, and we aim to again investigate how societal engagement influenced the behavior of the Chinese government. Thorough review of behavioral continuities and discontinuities allow us to obtain a more general picture of the progress as well as the limitations of societal forces in the reform and evolution of government decision-making.

1. Concepts and Analytical Methods

Governmental behavior refers to the government’s actions and mannerisms in conjunction with its environment. Simply put, it is the response of the government to various stimuli or inputs, whether internal or external, conscious or subconscious, overt or covert, voluntary or involuntary. For example, let us suppose two mayors of cities A and B received orders from the provincial government to maintain yearly GDP growth above 8% while reducing carbon emissions by 5%, two requirements that are manifestly contradictory. Suppose now that new investors in aluminum production showed interest in both two cities and choose between them on the basis of land and taxation conditions. Assume that the mayor of city A is a fundamentalist GDP-first supporter, believes that the welfare of its citizens relies primarily on economic development, and decided to attract the investment even though it would cause heavy pollution and that would worsen the city’s environmental record, and also promised to provide a piece of land without the villagers’ consent. While the mayor of city B also needs to meet the GDP growth target of 8%, and could best achieve this by expanding production and agreeing to the investment, he also cannot ignore the issue of severe air pollution which would cause widespread dissent if not addressed. In order to make a decision that would be acceptable to all sides, he organized a public hearing, inviting both experts and ordinary citizens to attend.

Predictably, the investor chose city A. In order to provide the land that he promised,
the mayor arrested the villagers despite their protests. By year’s end, environmentalists harshly protested against the air pollution from the new investment while villagers were still struggling with the mayor’s unjust handling of the land disputes. Nevertheless, the mayor of achieved his primary goal of GDP growth at 8%, and the unemployment rate declined steeply. Concerned that protests may hurt his chances for promotion, he arrested the leader of an environmentalist NGO and a journalist who reported on the pollution in the city, only releasing them after the case was reported overseas causing harsh criticism. In contrast to his counterpart in city A, the mayor of city B is broadly supported for his environmental protection policies as well as for his democratic manner, but as GDP growth declined to 7%, people became unhappy due to the high rate of unemployment.

Both mayor A’s acceptance of the new investment as well as major B’s inactivity fall under the broad scope of government behaviors. Likewise, both mayor A’s arbitrary decisions and mayor B’s deference to democracy are also behaviors. The story indicates how separate governments might act differently under the same stimuli, within the same institutions, and in the same context. That mayor A first arrested and later released the environmentalists and journalists indicates how the same government behaves differently in opposite contexts.

Recently, Chinese citizens have experienced unprecedented change with respect to their legal rights to participate in the decisions affecting increasingly important environmental issues. In late 2004, China had adopted a law that requires an environmental impact assessment before launching new projects, which had constrained some local officials in their “partial pursuit” of economic growth. Therefore, examining governmental behavior with regard to environmental issues became useful to studying China’s political decision-making. In this chapter, the author will first introduce an event to analyze how societal participation can result in behavioral changes in local government, and then evaluate these changes according to criteria laid out earlier in this dissertation.

We now examine how the government, namely the Xiamen municipal government, responded to the societal pressures as the incident developed. The criteria we adopt to evaluate the government include: 1) How did the government initially respond? A government unable to fulfill its responsibilities shows a lack of accountability of a

government; 2) How quickly did the government respond? Timely responses are obviously desirable; 3) Did the government respond arbitrarily or democratically? Did it follow an elitist or populist approach? Did it respond to social stimuli in a repressive, coercive, or persuasive manner? 4) What was the role of higher and lower level officials, such as the Fujian provincial government and local district government, respectively? Did each of these act consistently?

The PX plant incident in Xiamen was a rare instance where societal involvement finally led to considerable changes in governmental behavior. After analyzing these changes, we will evaluate what factors affected these results, focusing on the participants, interaction patterns, rationality area, and sensitivity. A shortcoming of these findings is that governmental response tends to be quite specific to context, and official commonly apply multiple methods in an inconsistent manner. Nevertheless, the analytical framework allows us to see the extent, pattern, results, and limitations of societal participation on the behavioral aspect of government.

2. The Xiamen PX Plant Incident: a Review

The Xiamen PX plant incident was a major event symbolic of China’s increasing societal participation in decision-making. As a rare success of citizen protests that led the government to make major compromises, the PX plant incident became the focus of many narratives and analyses by scholars both at home and abroad.362

The PX plant was a major chemical program located in the southeastern coastal city of Xiamen in Fujian province, one of the first “Special Economic Zones”. Due to its geographical proximity to Taiwan, Xiamen attracted heavy Taiwanese investment. With total investment of over RMB10.8 billion and expected to create an annual value of over RMB80 billion, the PX plant program was Xiamen’s “largest ever industrial program”. More importantly, it was approved by the state council in February 2004, and was listed among the major programs of “Eleventh Five-year Plan”, indicating support from the state. The program was officially launched when construction began on November 2006, and was expected to render benefits by 2008.

Compared to other chemicals on the 3,823 item Dangerous Chemicals List,

paraxylene, or PX, is only mildly poisonous and but is believed to be highly risky for pregnant women, their infants, and young children as it may damage human development and reproductive systems.\textsuperscript{363} International organizations required such programs to be at least 100 km away from cities, while in mainland China, the average distance is less than 20 km. However, Haicang, where the Xiamen PX plant program was located, was only 5 km away from a community of 100,000 residents. The nearest residential building was less than 1.5 km from the factory while both Gulangyu, Xiamen’s main tourist site, and the Xiamen island were within 7 km. Two middle schools were also located within a 4 km radius of the factory. Before March 2007 however, the public had little knowledge of the program itself.

In late 2002, the National People’s Congress enacted the Environmental Impact Assessment Law of the People’s Republic of China (EIA Law).\textsuperscript{364} In 2004 alone, some 30 projects had construction suspended under a mandate by the increasingly powerful State Environmental Protection Administration (SEPA) in December. Most of these projects were hydro or thermal power plants, which failed to meet the environmental impact assessment standards of the EIA law.\textsuperscript{365} Nevertheless, the PX plant project had passed the original assessment in 2005, but without the results being released to the public.\textsuperscript{366} The EIA Law imposes the additional requirement that the entity drafting the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) consider all opinions of the relevant departments, experts, and the public, and to include their reasons for accepting or rejecting the initial opinions in the final EIR submitted for approval.\textsuperscript{367}

A proposal submitted to the National People’s Political Consultative Conference to relocate the PX plant program raised public awareness and eventually developed into an

\textsuperscript{363}National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) Education and Information Division.


\textsuperscript{366}No news directly indicates that the Xiamen Municipal government had released the EIA report. However, the EIML had made it clear that participation of citizens in the EIA should be ensured. However, the law didn’t specify concrete measures to ensure participation, and in now where had it required the result of the EIA be published opening.

\textsuperscript{367}Environmental Impact Assessment Law (promulgated by Standing Comm. National People’s Cong., Oct. 28, 2002, effective Sept. 1, 2003), art. 5, Available at: http://www.sepa.gov.cn/ law/law/200210/t20021028_84000.htm (P.R.C.), arts 11, 21. (“The Special Plan drafting organ shall, before the drafts of such plans are submitted for examination and approval, hold evidentiary meetings or testimony hearings or adopt other forms of soliciting opinions on the environmental impact report from relevant work units, experts and the public).
organized protest. Under increasingly strong pressure and opposition from society, the Xiamen municipal government relented and conducted another EIA, based on which the program was relocated to a small peninsula in neighboring Zhangzhou city. The Xiamen PX plant incident represents a typical case where concerted, rational, and elite-led involvement of societal forces had successfully reshaped government’s behavior, and marked a watershed moment for societal involvement in environmental decision-making within China.

3. Societal Involvement

To outline the model of societal involvement, we divide the process into four stages: 1) early involvement before the middle of March, when the program was mostly unknown with few rights-maintenance activities; 2) media release and widespread protests between mid-March and early June; 3) society-government stalemate from early June to early December; and finally 4) the democratic “decision-making” that led the government to relocate the plant and reconsider the program.

3.1. Early Involvement: from rights-maintenance to protest

Due to a lack of general awareness, people had failed to understand the potential hazards of the PX plant program except residents-to-be of a nearby real estate development, called “Future Seaside” (wei lai hai an). They felt cheated by the developer and were upset at having a chemical program so close to their future homes, an formed a small rights maintenance group and appointed Huang Qizhong as their “speaker.” However, as major construction of the program had not yet started, their voices remained insignificant, and most Xiamen residents remained uninformed about the program.

It was not until China’s annual parliamentary session, the “Liang Hui,”368 took place in March 2007 that the PX plant program and its dangers were fully revealed to the public. On that occasion, 105 members of the NPPCC, headed by Chen Yufen, a renowned chemist from Xiamen University, initiated a proposal requiring the NPPCC to reevaluate the environmental consequences of the Xiamen PX plant program and consider relocating the plant. Though it became the most important proposal of that year, it did not lead to any real

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368 Liang Hui, or the “two conferences”, refers to the annual conference of People’s Congress and the National People’s Political Consultative Conference (NPPCC).
changes in the program’s actual content but did arouse public awareness. Only the nearby homeowners of the newly planned “Future Seaside” residential community were acutely aware of the potential harm.

3.2. New Media: Blog, Bulletin Board Systems (BBS), SMS

On March 18th, the China Business journal reported on the proposal initiated by Zhao Youfen and 104 other members of the NPPCC, and exposed the PX plant program to the national public. Yet initially, report made little difference, unlike with the South Metropolis Newspaper in the Sun Zhigang case, which was quickly followed up by mass media.

By contrast, in this case new media played a greater role. Before releasing the news to traditional media outlets such as newspapers and TV programs, the people of Xiamen began to publish small news items on Internet blogs and bulletin board systems (BBS) concerning the PX plant program, revealing the dangers of the program. Anti-PX forces from both society and government began playing a “cat and mouse” game in the virtual space of the Internet, and established a special community to discuss the incident.

In late May, large numbers of SMS messages began circulating among Xiamen citizens via mobile phones, with the text partially taken from Zhao Youfen’s proposal, and it was estimated that over one million Xiamen citizens had received the message which reads:

The Xianglu Group has started contracting the PX Plant Program in Haicang district. Once the production of such highly poisonous chemicals starts, it is like an atomic bomb placed on the entire Xiamen island, the people in Xiamen will be living in Leukemia and deformed children ever since! We want life! We want health! International organizations had required that this type of programs be developed no closer than 100 kilometers from cities. Our Xiamen is just 16 kilometers from the plant! For our sons and grandsons, please send this message to all friends in Xiamen!\(^{369}\)

Later evidence showed that this message proved vital. Given that Xiamen’s only had a population of roughly 3 million, nearly all families in the city had been informed about the dangers of PX plant. The message also called for a “walk” on June 1st in front of the government building.

3.3. Government Response and Government-society Interaction

Realizing that a protest may lead to unexpected consequences, the Xiamen municipal government began to take action in late May. On May 28th, it published a long Q&A Report in the Xiamen Daily entitled “The Haicang PX plant program has been under construction after being approved according to the national legal procedure,” emphasizing that the program was legally and environmentally approved and that sufficient precautionary measures would be taken to ensure the safety of the plant. On the same day, the head of Xiamen Environmental Protection authority sought to appease the people by addressing their concerns, and the following day an extensive article was published in the Xiamen Evening News, by the CEO of the Xianglu Company, “correcting” Professor Zhao, who had testified to the possible harms of the program, by noting the highly technical perspective of the program.

More importantly, on May 30th, two days before the scheduled “strike,” the Executive Vice Major of the Xiamen Municipal Government, Ding Guoyan, announced the suspension of the PX plant program in the news. He further announced that the municipal government had authorized a leading academic institute to conduct a new Environmental Impact Assessment extending to the whole industrial zone.\(^{370}\)

However, the encouraging news did not prevent protesters from initiating a “walk” on June 1st and 2nd, attended by approximately 8,000-10,000 local residents, under the careful eye of the police. Convinced of the potential danger of the PX plant and encouraged by the success of their previous engagement, which had forced the government to change their irresponsible and repressive policy, the citizens of Xiamen had turned firmly against the PX plant program.

\(^{370}\) Xinhuanet, Xiamen government decided to suspend the construction of the PX program. Available at: http://news.xinhuanet.com/local/2007-05/30/content_6173301.htm, 2015-0-03.
Since early June, the interaction between society and government had become less tense and relatively stable. The protest marked the peak of tension even beforehand, the government had shown a willingness to respect the appeals of citizens and engage society in the decision-making process. However, repressive measures were still taken as several blogs, BBS and Internet communities had been shut off and on June 3rd, some protestors were detained. The leading organizer of the walk, Wu Xian, had already been detained on May 30th before the protest took place.

Since early June, Professor Zhao Yufen had attracted Internet criticism, as other analysts termed Zhao’s proposal faulty and rumors circulated that the PX was not a “highly poisonous chemical” as Zhao had previously termed. Meanwhile, Zhao’s students defended her on the university BBS and website. Obviously, Professor Zhao was under pressure for her attitude towards the PX plant and on June 3rd, Xiamen University spokesperson made a statement on her behalf in support of the government's temporary suspension of the PX plant project.

Zhao Yufen has never been interviewed and never authorized any media to express her opinions concerning the Xiamen PX plant project; Zhao believed that the fact that the Xiamen city government has decided to suspend construction of the PX plant project and reassess the environment impact showed that the city party and government respect science, public opinion, and environmental protection.

Alongside its usual repressive measures, the Xiamen government also sought to engage and communicate with its citizens. On June 5th, authorities published a brochures entitled “How much do you know about PX plant?” and circulated it free of charge to citizens on June 7th and 8th. The government also signaled that it was willing to

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371 The writer had taken a simple note for the criticisms against Zhao, however, at the time being, those tiezi, cannot be found. But such news was known to all during the PX incident. Later reports showed similar views about the PX that may not be consistent with Zhao’s perspective. However, Zhao and other scientists had also conducted strict research concerning the potential danger of the PX program. See “One Year After the Xiamen PX Incident, http://www.fjsen.com/newscenter/2007-06/03/content_276555.htm. Accessible by June 2, 2015.

372 Clarification by Zhao Yufen, Available at: http://www.fjsen.com/newscenter/2007-06/03/content_276555.htm, 2015-06-03.
accommodate public opinion via SMS, telephone, fax, email, and letters.

During this phase, the society-government relationship remained stable. Because investment in the PX program would contribute to the economic growth and job creation, the municipal government was of no mind to abandon it and sought to educate people on the potential dangers in a rational manner. For their part, the Xiamen citizens had been steadfast in their opposition. Neither side expected the other side to compromise, so any progress would need to be supported by more reliable evidence coming from a new Environmental Assessment Report.

4. Citizen Symposium: Democratic Decision-making?

On December 5th, a 14 page version of the Strategic Environmental-impact Assessment Report, conducted by the Chinese Research Academy of Environmental Sciences, was released on Xiamen Net, the government’s official website. The report revealed faulty environmental protection measures in another major petrochemical program by the Xianglu and Dragon Group and criticized the company’s repeated emission breaches and their disregard since 2003 of requests by the local environmental protection bureau to address these problems. Although less concerned about the environmental effects of the plant, the report pointed out serious flaws in the development scheme for Haicang that simultaneously pursued the conflicting goals of industrialization and urbanization in such a small area. The report suggested that the district should choose between becoming a “petrochemical industrial zone” or a “sub-center of Xiamen”. Releasing the EIA via Internet demonstrated transparency, as was the EIA Law.

The following two weeks marked a significant transition in the political decision-making of the CCP, albeit on the local level. The municipal government took the initiative to fully engage society, and took the decision on whether to relocate the PX plant in a highly democratic manner.

While releasing the report, government pointed out that it did not suggest whether development of the PX plant should be halted. Citizens were welcome to express their ideas or suggestions via hotline, email, and letters, and were invited to attend an upcoming symposium on the matter. To encourage participation, an internet vote began on the

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evening of December 8th, but was unexpectedly shut down on the December 9th.\textsuperscript{374} Statistics before closure indicated 55,000 votes against the program, with only 3,000 in favor. While the reasons for the early shutdown remain unclear, the vote nevertheless showed that the Xiamen government had some measure of respect for public opinion.

Between December 13th and 14th, the municipal government held a symposium attended by 106 citizens randomly chosen from 519 eligible applicants,\textsuperscript{375} along with 100 representatives from the NPC and the NPPCC. Among the 106 citizen representatives, nearly 90% were against the program while among the 15 speakers from the NPC and the NPPCC, 14 opposed it.\textsuperscript{376} In the ten days following the release of the EIA report, the government had also collected over 6,100 items of criticism or suggestion, of which were 3,720 were via email, 2,380 via registered telephone calls, 47 via letters, and the other 6 petition letters jointly signed by 2,491 persons.\textsuperscript{377}

Evidently, an overwhelming majority of Xiamen people opposed the program. To make the event open, transparent, and reliable for all, national media as Xinhua News Agency, People Daily, and Guangming Daily were invited to attend and report on the symposium. Both the process of randomly selecting representatives and the symposium itself were broadcasted live. Based on the results of this participation, the provincial government held a special conference on December 16th, deciding to relocate the Xiamen PX plant program after half a year of intensive interaction between society and government.

5. Government Behavioral Change

A close examination of the Xiamen PX plant incident reveals that strong societal pressure led to behavioral shifts in the Xiamen government occurred under strong societal pressure. We will now explore the three main facets of these shifts.

\textsuperscript{374} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{375} Xinhuanet, the 100 Representatives for the Xiamen PX Program EIA Symposium Has Been Chosen By Ramdom.
\textsuperscript{376} Liu, Xianghui; Zhou, Lina, Witness of History: Xiamen PX Incident (li shi de jian zheng: Xiamen PX Shi Jian Shi Mo, China Newsweek, 2007(48). A more reliable assessment of the result of the symposium is provided by the China Academy of Environmental Sciences, according to which 71% were against PX program, 11% were for it.
5.1. Responsiveness

The municipal government of Xiamen had become increasingly responsive to societal outcry. Initially, obsessed with the potential benefits of the petrochemical program, the government did not take any action in response to early criticism and concerns from residents. As typical with Chinese cities, the leaders of Xiamen were likely aware of the potential dangers and the environmental impact of the PX plant program, but economic growth undoubtedly took priority, as “Development is the Law.” The approval of the EIA had also justified the environmental feasibility of the program, and even the proposal to relocate by the 105 members of NPPCC proposal did not yield an immediate result.

However, growing public concern and Internet discussion over the program had become led to increasing pressure on the government, especially when social activists advocated a protest, an incident that would undermine social stability and further hinder the progress of the PX plant program. For the first time, the government made official explanations about the PX plant through news releases, publications and unsuccessful efforts at socialization. By the final phase, when societal attitudes stood firmly against the program, the Xiamen government fully engaged societal forces to make its decision, taking the initiative in encouraging participation, conducting public opinion polling, and holding a symposium to ensure that decision-making was open, transparent, and credible.

5.2. Repression, Persuasion, Democracy

Government responses to societal pressure had gradually evolved from repressive to persuasive and finally to democratic means. Typically, the Chinese government held a hardline mentality of “stability maintenance” prioritizing social stability above all else. Therefore, they preferred to address tension with force, media control, and coercion. In late May, right before the “walk” on June 1st, the government had deleted news, blocked SMS, shut off internet chat rooms and blogs, and arrested the protest organizers and activists.

The Phoenix Weekly published an article entitled “Xiamen: the Petrochemical Shadow of an Island City” but was forced off the shelves by the municipal government for revealing the dangers of the PX plant program. In this, Xiamen was not alone, as in

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dealing with a similar PX plant incident, the government of Kunming in Yunnan province even required anyone advertising, printing, buying masks or t-shirts to register their real names, while sale of white t-shirts was even forbidden. By early July, rumors spread that the municipal government had planned measures to punish those who released or spread “harmful and bad information” and citizens would be forbidden to publish news anonymously, but under societal pressure, the government gave up these plans.

After the protest however, the government became more cooperative and engaging, and their repressive approach gradually turned persuasive. Since late May, the government had held press conferences in an attempt to relieve the public frenzy towards the petrochemical program, and had also used traditional news media to win public opinion and support. In consecutive days, the head of Xiamen Environmental Protection Administration and the CEO of the petrochemical company each published long articles in two major local newspapers, written in a highly coordinated manner with the former concentrated on the legal and policy issues while the later focus on technical matters. The government also published a live manual and distributed it freely to citizens. The purposes of all of these measures were similar, in that each was meant to ensure the Xiamen citizens that the program was legal and safe, and persuade them to accept the program. Persuasive rather than repressive measures had become the primary mode of government behavior.

In the last phase of incident, governmental response went beyond persuasive measures and took on a democratic nature. The government conducted a third-party EIA that was more reliable and convincing, and encouraged societal participation in the EIA so that public opinion would be taken seriously. Most importantly, the government held a symposium inviting 100 participants in addition to 100 candidates randomly chosen from over 600 applicants, allowing each of their voices to be heard. Even Professor Yuan Weixing from Xiamen University, a strong opponent of the PX plant program was specially invited. Therefore, the incident serves as a remarkable example of how government behavior can evolve, in a relatively short period of time, from employing repression and control to embracing democracy.

5.3. Secrecy, Openness, and Transparency

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Transparency refers to the practice of conducting official business in a way that makes substantive and procedural information available to and broadly understandable by people and groups within society, subject to reasonable limits to protect security and privacy.\textsuperscript{380} As such, transparency is the basis of good governance and the first step in fighting corruption.\textsuperscript{381} Transparency implies not only disclosing information about the political process, but also allowing the public to supervise, criticize, and evaluate the process as, ensuring their participation. The shifting behavioral patterns of the Xiamen government was best demonstrated in its record of transparency records through the incident.

Transparency requires both societal participation and institutional compliance. The UN has simplified the principle of transparency into “openness from above, participation and scrutiny from below, honesty from all”.\textsuperscript{382} While the Chinese government has taken steps to improve transparency by disclosing public affairs, public hearings, and speaker system (\textit{fāyān rèn zhí dù}),\textsuperscript{383} but so far there are no legal or administrative means to ensure sufficiently transparent decision-making during major incidents. The Xiamen PX plant incident thus reflects a typical case in which government gradually made its decision-making transparent to increase the credibility of its policies while encouraging participation.

The early decisions were made somewhat “secretively”. The launch of the program itself and the results of the first Environmental Impact Assessment had not been released to the public. Though this was the norm case for many local governments, it violated the 2003 EIA Law requiring “public participation”.\textsuperscript{384} As “a major event that are closely related to people’s life”, the dangers of the program should have been made known to public, but as it happened, even Professor Zhao, a chemist and member of Congress, was not informed. To some extent, the program progressed smoothly because of this secrecy.

\textsuperscript{382} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{383} The ministryes and their equavalent, local government (provinical, municipal and conty level), large state-owned enterprise, and the PLA had designated a worker to announce important news, hold regular or irregular news release, dealing with the media, following the speaker system of the Foreign Ministry), the system was established to ensure the public “right to know” and transparency.
After sensitive information had been leaked, the government could no longer withhold details and showed a limited degree of openness towards criticism and societal participation. However, it continued to control information as many news sites, blogs, and internet communities were shut down and traditional media was ordered not to report on PX plant issues to avert greater social unrest. Nevertheless, the process was relatively open, and citizens were updated on government actions to address the issue. Over time the government’s grip weakened as planned information control measures were given up to ensure openness.

In the aftermath of the release of the EIA report, unprecedented levels of transparency were observed. The report, the short-lived voting system, the random selection of representatives, the name list, and most importantly the symposium were all publicized. Both the selection of representatives and the symposium itself were broadcasted live to ensure transparency. All telephone calls, emails, letters, and petitions were sourced out to a third party, the China Academy of Environmental Sciences, in order to ensure credibility of the analysis and publication. The entire event was carried out in an open, transparent, and credible manner, and reviewing this development thoroughly allows us to observe the shift in the government behavior.

6. Societal Involvement: What is New in Xiamen PX Plant Incident

The Xiamen PX plant incident was not the only case that saw extensive societal engagement. In its aftermath, PX protests became increasingly common, with unrest in Ningbo, Shifang, and Qidong in 2012 alone. Another major incident surrounded the Dalian PX plant program that had was ultimately scrapped due to protests against soon to be disgraced Party Head Bo Xilai. Nevertheless, nearly a decade later the Xiamen experience remains a unique and inspiring event, and the triumph of societal involvement is indisputable. In the following passages, we will analyze the particular elements of society and the role that each played in the ultimate success.

6.1. Societal Forces Involved

6.1.1. Professionals
Similar to the Zhigang case, where the medical-legal autopsy confirmed the victim had been beaten to death and served as vital evidence of human rights abuses, the Xiamen PX plant incident aroused public awareness through an NPPCC proposal led by Professor Zhao Yufen. Professor Zhao was a young academic from the China Sciences Academy, a leading scientific institute with a good reputation for research and professionalism.

Among the 105 members of the NPPCC who jointly initiated the act, there were at least ten academics and “several scores” of university presidents amongst many other scholars and experts. Notably the NPPCC, unlike the People’s Congress, consisted primarily of members from democratic parties, social celebrities, and entrepreneurs with an evident elitist nature. Only a small proportion of influential scholars could have been elected to the NPPCC and the “all-star” list of names itself became a catch phrase.

In order to make the proposal reliable, another scientist, Professor Yuan Dongxing from the Xiamen University Center for Environmental Science Studies, had conducted strict research on the impact of the program, the findings of which were shocking. Together with the existing PTA (Purified Terephthalic Acid) program by the same company, the two new programs would emit at least 600 tons of chemicals into the air. Furthermore, the program consumes 5,000 tons of coal daily, a considerable source of further air pollution. These professionals provided evidence that reinforced the convictions of scientists to firmly stand by Zhao in resisting against PX plant program in Xiamen.

The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) also involved professionals, with two academics and 19 other experts appointed by the China Academy of Environmental Sciences to conduct the new EIA. This lent credibility to their report they submitted which was accepted as trustworthy by both the public and the government. While no evidence indicates the extent to which the government’s attitude had been influenced by the report, as one of the few reliable sources, the EIA by the China Academy of Environmental Sciences must have played a role in the government’s deliberation.

When compared with the lawyer and the medical-legal doctor in the Sun Zhigang’s

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385 Ibid.
386 Based on neutrality and professionalism, the report didn’t support the government’s insisting on continuing the program, while criticized the disrespect in environmental requirements of the same company in another program, which may further incited public outrage, and left the supporters of the PX plant program in an unfavorable situation. More importantly, since the report didn’t make it clear whether the program should be stopped, suspended or continued, the government had to resort to public opinion poll or other participatory means, which showed overwhelming opposition to the program.
case, Zhao’s contribution in the Xiamen PX plant program was prominent, if not decisive. Further elaboration will follow in later paragraphs.

6.1.2. New Media

Any public incident needs media exposure to arouses public awareness and bring societal forces together. On March 18th, the China Business Journal reported the NPPCC proposal initiated by Professor Zhao and exposed the PX plant program to the public. This time however, new media played a greater role.

Xiamen is a small city with few newspapers and TV programs, and therefore the press was relatively easy to be influence. Even after the China Business Journal revealed the PX plant program, it did not garner much press. However, protests had already begun in the internet as Xiamen residents began to publish small news items on blogs, bulletin board systems (BBS), chat rooms, especially the Little Fish (xiao yu she qu, a famous local internet-based community) and the Xiamen University BBS. Some were specially established to discuss on the PX plant program. The Tencent chat groups were efficient in organizing discussion, starting by revealing the dangers of the PX plant program and then calling on actions to oppose it.

Mobile SMS also proved effective. In late May, large numbers of SMS messages began circulating among Xiamen citizens via mobile phones, albeit somewhat exaggerating the risks of the program, and calling for a protest in the form of “walk”. The high circulation of the message aroused public sentiment and served as a simple yet effective platform for organized protest, directly leading to the government’s behavioral change. Subsequently, online social media and local knowledge of urban terrain also initiated a large scale anti-PX protest in Guangdong’s Maoming city in 2014, even without the support of mainstream media and the middle class.

6.1.3. Social Activists

Say, stating that the PX was “highly” poisonous and comparing the PX program to a atomic bomb.

Several social activists expressed their concerns about the incident, though as ordinary citizens their role is somehow hard to evaluate. However, while their contributions were neither well-known nor noticeable, this by no means suggests that they were not important.\textsuperscript{389}

Wu Xian, who initiated the Tencent chat system (also known as QQ), began a discussion group entitled “Return our clean water and blue sky” (\textit{huan wo bi shui lan tian}), which later expanded to three due to an overflow of members. As participation grew, their discussions evolved from merely announcing the dangers of the PX plant to finding ways to actively resist the program. Wu was an active organizer and controlled the discussion, mediating “extremist” and “conservative” members to “keep the unity of the group,” and, critically, keeping the group rational and peaceful. Through this method a discursive public sphere appeared on the virtual space.

On May 27th-28th, Wu called for a “walk” on the street and in front of government buildings. All participants were to bring a banner emblazoned with the slogan “No PX, Protect Xiamen” and wear a yellow ribbon on the left arm as a symbol of the movement. At noon of May 29th, he also brought printed materials to examine sites for the proposed “walk,” but dropped out when they knew that police awaited them in the site, and organized discussion among the core participants to make the “walk” peaceful and successful. Late on the afternoon of May 30th, he was detained for 15 days. Lian Yue, a former prosecutor and journalist of South Weekend’s press, then a famous columnist and critical blogger, had published many articles in opposition to the Xiamen PX plant program. He had served as a public opinion leader and intellectual (\textit{gong gong zhi shi fen zi}), who was later chosen as one of the top 10 “citizen journalists” (\textit{gong min ji zhe}). Lian became the face of Chinese blogging in 2007 for his role in increasing awareness about the Xiamen PX plant.

6.1.4. Xiamen Citizens

The Xiamen case was special because of the overall level of participation among ordinary citizens. Xiamen was one of the first Special Economic Zones and a wealthy coastal city with a GDP per capita close to RMB10,000 in the year of 2007.\textsuperscript{390} A large

\textsuperscript{389} The writer had contacted one of the organizer, however, he did not provide more information than this dissertation has suggested.

\textsuperscript{390} According to China Statistics, Xiamen’s GDP per capita was RMB 56,595 in 2007. Demographic studies estimated Xiamen’s GDP per capita reached up to $15,600 in 2007,
proportion of the people were well-educated and middle class, and had shown social awareness and responsibility, as well as good communication skills in negotiating with the government.

Seldom had a city been so comprehensively involved in a social movement like Xiamen in this incident, with later studies showing that over 70% of the people had become engaged whether through emails, fax, telephone calls, letters, protests, or the symposium which directly led to the relocation of the Program. During the six months of society-government interaction, officials, policemen, protestors, and ordinary citizens all had displayed rationality and prudence, and did not resort to violence. Even during the most contentious protests on June 1st, police did not confront the protesters and only maintained order. While the police did arrest some protest leaders and detained them for up to 55 days, they seemed to show a level of respect rather than giving the usual harsh treatment. One policeman, when detaining Xu Xian, comforted the crying young man by saying that “history will give you a final judgment.” Evidently, even the police believed that the protest and the Xiamen PX plant incident would indeed be a “historic event.”

At the end of 2007, the South Weekend selected Xiamenren (Xiamen people) as one of the top 10 Most Influential People of 2007, because of their commendable performance during their interactions with the government.

6.2 Interaction Pattern

Unlike the Sun Zhigang case in which the societal forces engaged the government in a fragmented and decentralized way, the Xiamen people had been well organized and coordinated in their interactions.

Starting from the NPPCC proposal, Professor Zhao and other scientists had formed the initial coalition and over time more and more societal forces became involved. Immediately after Zhao’s proposal was publicized, the speaker of the Residential Community “Future Seashore” wrote a letter to Zhao, expressing their gratitude for exposing new evidence to support their rights-maintenance activities. The new media of blogs, BBS, and the Web-based Little Fish Community, under the leadership of Wu Xian, Lian Yue, and other social activists, gradually formed the core for the societal interaction. Though there was no evidence indicating that Zhao and other scientists cooperated with the ranking 10th of Chinese cities, http://www.demographia.com/db-chinacitygdp.pdf, 2015-06-12.
social activists, the latter had been consistently using the former as a banner to attract more participants. Zhao’s initial assessment also became part of the SMS community, which circulated among ordinary citizens of Xiamen.

As noted before, Xiamen had a population of around 3 million at the time of the PX plant incident, so that an estimated circulation of 1 million meant that nearly all household had received or conveyed the SMS to others. Beginning in late May, nearly all residents were discussing the PX plant, most of them against the program. Other national and local media followed up on the story and created greater external pressures on the government. All segments of society including professionals, activists, traditional and new media, as well as ordinary Xiamen citizens, had been highly consistent in their anti-PX stance. Their actions were highly unitary and concentrated instead of fragmented or mutually contradictory, as revealed in the protest and the symposium. This centralized application of coordinated and concerted societal forces had functioned as a temporary civil society that was powerful enough to negotiate with the government, the key factor in its ultimate success.

6.3 Rationality: Constructive Engagement

Improved governance requires an integrated long-term strategy built upon cooperation between government and citizens, and while an engaged citizenry is critical to social participation, equally important is “the ability of well-informed citizens to exercise their democratic rights and to play an active role in society”. In mature democracies, citizens are used to participating in bureaucratic decision-making as well as major events such as elections. In China, people lack such experience and expertise in decision-making, because of the absence of proper institutional channels. Recently however, the government has come to realize that public participation is an important mechanism for collecting information and gaining expertise on which to base rational regulation as well as for gaining public acceptance of and compliance with new laws and regulatory decisions. The State Council has made new regulations to encourage public participation and cities such as

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393 State Council Office of Legislative Affairs Notice on Further Intensifying the Degree of
Guangzhou promulgated regional regulations to ensure the right of societal participation in lawmaking.\(^\text{394}\)

However, as noted before, Chinese citizens have neither practice and training in democratic participation nor the institutions to ensure such participation. The effects of new channels such as public hearings, open meetings, news releases, and speaker systems remain limited. Chinese societal participation is often “achieved” via contentious politics or pressure politics. Larger scale gatherings, often violent protests which damage or destroy buildings, cars, office, and other symbols of “government,” are the usual means of societal “participation,” but such demonstrations often justify repressive measures by the government. Violence may arouse government attention or elicit directives from superiors, but it not only threatens social order and stability but also sharpens tensions between government and society. Therefore, rational and constructive engagement would be the most desirable path for China to develop benign state-society interaction in the long-term.

The PX plant incident proved to lie within such a pattern. Professor Zhao Youfen, who headed the proposal, acted rationally and professionally in engaging the government. Her expertise could partially be attributed to her doctoral studies in U.S. where she was likely influenced by American politics and social participation. Her rationality can be attributed to her occupation as a scientist as well as her experience as a member of the NPPCC. As a leading expert who had benefited from the regime, she had every reason to promote its positions rather than going against them. Indeed, by November 2006 Zhao had realized the danger of the program, and had private talks with several other scientists in the same university. In late November, Zhao and other 5 scholars with the Chinese Academy of Sciences wrote a letter to the leaders of Xiamen city, explaining the potential danger of the chemical program from their professional perspectives.\(^\text{395}\) On December 6th, leaders from Xiamen municipal government held a small seminar with the 6 academics aiming to change their attitudes, while the scientists likewise hoped to persuade the government to relocate the program. Understandably, no progress was made. Zhao’s private engagement with the government showed she did not expect the matter evolve into a social incident and instead


sought to influence the government through her professional status as both a scientist and a NPPCC member.

In order to put forth her proposal without publicizing it, Zhao prepared three versions of material, the first for group discussion at the NPPCC, the second to the officials, and the third with more academic and professional detail to be published on the “NPPCC Information”. This shows that she was familiar with the political process of the NPPCC and more importantly, did not seek only to resist the PX plant in Xiamen as ordinary citizens would and indeed tried to work out a solution for program. After intensive research, the scientists proposed the Gulei peninsula, a desolate 20 km wide region well suited to the program both environmentally and economically. In hindsight this proved decisive as the program was indeed moved to Gulei just as Professor Zhao proposed. They even proposed the innovative idea of making the Gulei Peninsula a “flying lands” of Xiamen, where the Xiamen government would buy the Gulei Peninsula so as to retain the investment, while paying taxes to Zhangzhou, where the peninsula is located. This allowed both Xiamen and Zhangzhou to share the economic benefits.

Compared to other instances of pressure politics, such constructive engagement had a relatively easier time gaining the acceptance of the Xiamen government. Social activists, protestors, ordinary Xiamen citizens, and internet-based communities showed restraint, concentrating on the PX plant itself without targeting any individuals or the “government” more generally. In response, the Xiamen government also showed respect for civil rights, social participation, and free expression. Both sides consistently favored rationality over radicalism and constructive engagement rather than antagonistic destruction. The spirit and experience of cooperation, prudence, and constructive interaction deserve more attention for future social movements.

6.4. Issue Areas

The Xiamen PX plant incident was an issue of an impending “environmental crisis” rather than long term degradation such as soil, air and water pollution, deforestation, or industrial pollution. It differs from climate change and global warming, which are considered more severe, but structural and so not directly or immediately felt by individuals. The particular danger of petrochemical programs is that any accident would have catastrophic consequences. Most recently, an August 2015 chemical explosion in Tianjin
claimed more than 160 lives and led to incalculable economic losses. Air, water, and soil pollution in neighboring areas would last for decades since the hazardous PX pollutants would contaminate each phase during the storage, transportation, and production process.

Given China’s faulty management system as well as the problematic EIA, 396 lack of effective public participation, 397 and loss of credibility, Chinese society strongly mistrusts Chinese petrochemical companies who are notorious for disrespecting environmental law and regulations, and do not believe that the GDP-oriented fundamentalists of the Chinese government would be truly responsible in managing those programs. The “success” of societal involvement in Xiamen PX plant incident meant only that residents of Zhangzhou, instead of Xiamen, would be subject to the environmental and health risks posed by the plant's continual operation, as evidenced by the explosion at that very plant on July 29th, 2013. 398 Besides Xiamen, PX plant programs in Dalian, Zhanjiang, Ningbo, Chengdu, Nanjing, and Qingdao as well in 15 other cities, have faced protests.

Together with other major environmental crises, severe accidents such as the aforementioned explosions have become the major focus of large-scale group incidents. Among all 10 such incidents, involving more than 10,000 people over the past 14 years, 5 were caused by severe environmental accidents. 399 These environmental incidents concern economic strategy, political processes, social stability, governance, and international relations, and therefore environmental issues had become an independent area with comprehensive significance. China’s societal participation and decision-making process in these issues has been distinct from other areas, and therefore demand lasting and in-depth academic research and investment.

6.5 Scale

The Xiamen PX plant accident involved the majority of Xiamen population. More than 70% of its total population had been reading newspaper articles and discussions about

398 Li Jing, South China Morning Post, 30 July 2013.
the incident while others had participated via complaints, telephone, email, letters, sending messages, or the protest “walk”. Despite being a highly contentious activity and the least adopted means of participation, the protest was been attended by around 10.8%, according to a questionnaire conducted in 2008, numbering in the tens of thousands. We can therefore conclude that the Xiamen PX plant incident was one of the largest such incidents in recent decades.

6.6 Sensitivity

Sensitivity refers to the extent to which the government is subjected. According to the definition and analysis in the introductory chapter of Part II, sensitivity of an event is evaluated by three criteria, namely whether it relates to regime stability, whether there was a human cost, and whether the government held responsibility for the event. Sensitivity relates to the scale and dynamism of confrontation and policy areas. Based on these criteria, the Xiamen PX incident did not cause great sensitivity, but only a moderate level.

7. Preliminary Remarks

The Xiamen PX plant incident was as a unique example where concentrated participation of professionals, social groups, new media, ordinary Xiamen citizens, and other societal forces led to major behavioral changes by the Xiamen municipal government. These changes were evident in the government’s responsiveness and in its shifting means of engagement from a repressive attitude to persuasive ways and ultimately to democratic conduct. The government’s information policy also changed from opacity to transparency.

The success of societal forces in effecting behavioral change can be attributed to the forces involved, concentration of interaction, rationality and constructiveness of involvement, and the large scale of the incident contrasted with the medium level of sensitivity.

China has been undergoing rapid urbanization and industrialization simultaneously. However, the two goals and trends are often contradictory instead of synergistic and

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400 Zhou Zhijia, Environmental Participation, Group pressure or Interest Involvement: The Motivation of Xiamen People in Environmental Movement concerning PX, Society, 2011(01).
401 Ibid.
coordinated. In China’s present phase of development, the dilemma between economic priorities and societal harmony may be a lasting quandary for Chinese cities. As the Chinese economy slows down, while societal expectations in good governance, in areas such as the environment, human rights, social welfare, citizen participation, and democracy, continues to rise, this dilemma will intensify. Thus the interaction of Xiamen is both particular and typical.

China had launched altogether 16 mega PX programs in its major cities, including in Xiamen, despite protests. But its experiences from this incident, dubbed “the Xiamen PX Model”, continue to reshape government and societal behaviors in China’s environmental movements. For instance, in the most recent societal PX protests in Maoming, Guangdong province, both society and government used the Xiamen PX plant incident as an example to follow. Maoming citizens and social activists used the new media to successfully halt the PX plant program, again without the support of traditional media and middle class, using the Xiamen PX plant program to encourage people and citing it as evidence to support their pursuit. The government, for its part, adopted the strategy of the Xiamen government, holding a public hearing, ensuring transparency, and freely distributing PX manuals to inform citizens.

The central Chinese government has also been improving. In 2014, the State Council published the revised version of the Regulations on Safe Management of Hazardous Chemicals in China of March 11th, 2011 (Decree n. 591). These regulations, which include clauses dealing with the production, storage, import, use, sales, and transport of hazardous chemicals, was implemented on Dec 1st, 2011 and replaced the old version issued in 2002.
Chapter 9: The Qian Yunhui’s Suspicious Death

“No matter what is the truth of Mr. Qian’s death, doesn’t this demonstrate a political crisis, considering the preference of public opinion? If you’re the ruler, shouldn’t you be feeling anxious and concerned? Even if you don’t strive for justice, equality and progress, shouldn’t you start considering (political) system reform simply for the sake of ruling?”

Yasheng Huang, MIT professor

The Qian Yunhui case is by far the most mysterious public incident that had aroused national attention and concern, societal forces were intensively yet had limited results owing to a combination of factors. The case has many different features that are worth analyzing for this research.

1. Background

Qian Yunhui (钱云会, 1957–2010) was a village headman in eastern China’s Zhejiang province. He was elected head of the village in the 2005 despite government intervention because of his long history of petitioning against land abuses by local government developer, the Yueqing Electric Power Plant. He was crushed to death suspiciously on December 25, 2010 (Christmas Day) by a truck loaded with crushed rocks for a nearby building site operated by the Yueqing Electric Power Plant.

An eyewitness, Qian Chengwei (钱成委), the nephew of Qian Yunhui, said that Qian Yunhui was “murdered” by four uniformed men who held the victim down on the ground while the truck killed him by driving over him. The eyewitness was arrested and detained by the police. Other eyewitnesses including villager Huang Diyan (Chinese: 黄迪燕), who claimed she saw four uniformed men with gloves pulling and hauling Qian and then put his body under the front tire by force. The truck's owner and driver, Fei Liangyu (Chinese: 费良玉) was detained by the police, along with other villagers who questioned the police's investigation, including Qian's daughter. Qian’s death was quite suspicious for several reasons.
First, Qian had a long history of petitioning against land abuses by local government and enterprises, and therefore was deemed troublesome for interest-driven officials and developers. Ever since he was elected as village head in 2005, he had been leading the villagers to visit the superior level government (shang fang) and protest against land seizures by local government, he was even detained for three times, each time he was released, he continued to protest, and right before his death, he was still leading the villagers to protest the Yueqing Power Plant Company and the local government. Another election for village head was coming soon, and with little doubt, Qian Yunhui would have been re-elected as head. Therefore, the possibilities of Qian Yunhui being murdered can’t be excluded.

Second, two witnesses said they saw Qian was murdered by four uniformed security guards, and all witnesses were arrested, Qian’s family members, those who may have proof of the truth behind Qian’s death were arrested illegally. Their attitude and description of the case changed under pressure and intimidation. Wang Liquan, who kept a watch on Qian with video, recorded the last moment of Qian Yunhui’s death, and was also arrested. The local police had destroyed the real site, instead of protecting it; they also took away Qian’s body by force despite strong confrontation with the villagers. Apparently, it seemed the local government had obvious tendency. Those there was a possibility that the local government took the body in order to preserve it for furher medical legal autopsy, and the police is justified to do this by the law that states “the body of accident should be preserved at places that can better preserve it”. It was also true that it would be in the interest of local government and the police authority if Qian Yunhui really died of “accident”.

Third, there are some suspicious technical details that remain unexplained. The monitoring cameras that may provide key evidences “happened” not to be working that day. Many people questioned why Qian’s position was exactly vetical (90 degrees) against the wheel while the truck was moving in a reverse direction, violating the traffic rules.

2. Societal Involvement

Because government credibility was questioned and Qian’s death was very suspicious, the general public was outraged by the local government and was pressing for a thorough investigation for the truth. The situation was worsened when the local police illegally arrested Qian’s relatives and key witnesses, and unbelievably exerted pressure on their oral testimonials; the police had also harshly destroyed the site of the case and taken
away the body of Qian Yunhui by force. Therefore, the Chinese society had a general expectation of a third party, independent and objective investigation. Famous journalist and social activist Xiao Shu advocated for the first time a citizens’ investigation team be organized to settle the issue and was warmly supported. In this sense, the Qian Yunhui case is different from other cases. Besides the main stakeholders, namely the villagers, other societal forces were also involved, making it a national incident.

2.1 Social Activists

When the suspicious death of Qian Yunhui was reported first through the Internet and newspapers, it soon aroused public concern. Many social activists were fully involved in the investigation of the death NGO.

Well known Chinese online activist Tu Fu (alias, real name Wu Gan, 吴淦) was among the first citizen reporters to visit the crime scene, and began interviewing local eyewitness. Wu had obtained a police video of the crime scene right after the victim's body was being removed, and had since posted the video online. Wu regularly posted comments on Twitter and other Internet platforms, and with the help of a group of Chinese lawyers, is offered free legal aid to villagers in need.

2.2 Non-government Organization (NGOs) Investigation Teams

The Qian Yunhui case is special in that several “Citizen Investigation Groups” arrived at the village to investigate the real cause of Qian’s death, besides the 11 working groups made up of 43 workers sent by Puqi township government to the village of Zhaiqiao for investigation and reconciliation of Qian’s family and his relatives.

2.2.1 Citizens’ Union Investigation Group

One of the teams organized by the Citizens’ Union, a non-governmental organization established by Dr. Xu Zhiyong in Beijing, who had issued an appeal to the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress for constitutionality review of the Custody & Repatriation System during Sun Zhigang’s case and later established the Citizens’ Union and involved in many social activities.
Also among the team is Mr. Peng Jian, the lawyer hired by Peng Chengyu, Qian Yunhui’s nephew, who was arrested in the name of “affray” (because he was believed to be the key “witness” of Qian Yunhui’s death, and he claimed at the very beginning that Qian Yunhui was held by four security guards hired by the Yueqing Power Plant Company, and put under the wheel of the truck which drove over his neck to kill him. Later the nature of his crime was changed to “Obstruction of official business”; the other three members are Miss. Liu Shasha, Mr. Zhang Yongpan and Mr. Xu Jian.

2.2.2 Academic Sector Investigation Group

The most famous yet most reliable report was done by the Academic Sector Investigation Team, which was made up of political science and legal scholars, journalists, lawyers, former policeman, but later split into Qian Yunhui’s Death Investigation Group (Led by Xiao Shu) and the Land Investigation Team (headed by Yu Jianrong). The Qian Yunhui’s Death Investigation Group later published a report that denied both the conclusion of “traffic accident” or “murder”, which means it was reluctant to draw a hasty conclusion because of lack of sufficient evidence, especially when the key evidence was absent. However, the report revealed many important details and facts during their investigation.

The members of the team included: Xiao Shu (real name Chen Min), commentator of South Weekly; Piao Baoyi, journalist; Chen Jieren, research fellow at Center for Legal and Journalist Studies, China University of Politics and Law; Si Weijiang, well-known lawyer from Shanghai; Lv Wenju, former police officer; Ma Shen, lawyer, Associate Professor from Guang Dong Institute of Commerce; Guo Weiqing, Professor from School of Politics and Public Administration, Sun Yat-sen University, joined by two of his Ph.D students (unnamed here); Yu Jianrong, Professor from Institute of Rural Development Studies, China Academy of Social Sciences; Fu Guoyong, famous historian scholar, public intellectual; Yang Jianguang, Professor from School of Law, Sun Yat-sen University.

402 He resigned from the South Weekly for his involvement in the investigation of Qian Yunhui’s death, probably because of the Newspaper was under pressure. Xiao Shu later joined the Transition Institute, a famous liberal NGO based in Beijing, which was forced to shut off in the name of illegal operation (NGOs is not easily registered in China to be legal social organizations, instead, they have to be registered as companies, which means publications, and other social advocate work is not included in their due business. The government could choose to shut off it in economic names, as is the case of Transition Institute) because its director Mr. Guo Yushan and other workers had played an eminent role in the case of blind lawyer Chen Guangcheng.
Besides, there were two volunteers, Liu Chang, an investigative journalist and Ye Yin (nickname) whose occupation was not revealed. Both volunteers had no right to vote.

Because the team was made up of professionals, they made a “Charter for Academic Sector Observation Team” (called Yueqing Eight Rules including “objectiveness and professionalism”; “independence”, “truth seeking”; “non-media”(they seek truth instead of media effect”, “inclusiveness” (conclusion shall include those disputes); “unity” (all members were not allowed to release any news concerning the team); “self-funding”, and; “Robert’s Discussion Rule”.

The teams worked separately but had coordination and collaboration during the investigation, through they had released different investigation report during and after the investigation.

2.3 Scholars/intellectuals

The investigation team was supported by famous columnist Lian Yue, a former journalist from the South Weekly who had a role in the Xiamen PX Incident, in one of his blog posted on December 29, 2010, he praised the fact that “Qian Yunhui’s death had resulted in the emerging of Citizens’ independent Investigation Team, this is an ice-breaking tour.” He also warned that “if such independent investigation Teams appeared often, they will help alleviate the dilemma of mistrust between government and grassroots”, he further warned that “The Yueqing government should not fear it, instead it should welcome it”. The Yueqing official blog “Ping An Yueqing” (Peaceful and Safe Yueqing) also sent an announcement that “it welcomes the Investigation teams”.

 Aside from scholars within the observation team, many other scholars had expressed their support of the team. Distinguished Professor Chang Yuan from the China Aerospace Laboratory of Social System sent an open letter to the investigation team encouraging it to

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406 The system is the first of its type in China that strives to conduct systematic studies of social sciences.
conduct independent, reliable investigation with norms that support orderly and constructive participation.\textsuperscript{407}

2.4 Mass Media and Public Opinion

As in other cases, media exposure of incidents proved to be vital since public awareness and opinion are always the first step for contentious politics. Media coverage was intensive in Qian Yunhui’s case. Qian Yunhui died at around 9:45 am on December 25, 2010 (this time was claimed by police, while there was evidence indicating it happened at around 9:30 am, the author will elaborate later), but his death was first revealed by a blogger “somebody 1199” at 19:39 in the same evening. Because his blog doesn't have fans, the news about Qian’s death didn’t spread to a wider audience. At 0:03, December 26, 14 hours later, the message was sent with two photos by a blogger Meng Jianwei, a protester and relative of a land dispute victim who had 3,065 fans and the news was transferred for over 3000 times.\textsuperscript{408} The news began to circulate among blogs but the local government had no answer. Because those micro bloggers described Qian’s death as “murder”, more and more people began to look for truth via the Internet. A journalist form Ningbo introduced Qian’s former right-maintenance work and Qian’s story gradually became known to the people.\textsuperscript{409} And as many new facts were revealed, national attention was drawn to the suspicious case. To some extent, investigations began with the Internet.

The Citizens’ investigation teams also highly relied on the Internet. News about the investigation, the reports and analysis were all released via blogs. Because of the very sensitive nature of the issue, and also because many facts were unclear, traditional media was somewhat reluctant to report or comment on the matter. The situation changed later.

Coverage by traditional media appeared at around 7:33 am on December 27, nearly two days after the incident. As was the case of the Xiamen PX protest, when local media was under pressure, the role of media from other provinces and localities proved to be vital. Foreign media had also reported Qian’s death intensively. The New York Times, the

\textsuperscript{409} Ibid.
Guardian, CNN, the Wall Street Journal and some Hong Kong media had reported or posted commentaries.

3. Result of Societal Involvement: an Assessment

Was Qian Yunhui’s death a murder or an ordinary accident? The goal of involvement of societal forces was clear: “truth” based on reliable evidence, especially when there was a general societal distrust over government, who had exerted strong influence and even adopted repressive means trying to reach a conclusion of Qian’s death as an ordinary accident. Therefore, whether societal involvement is effective lies in whether they finally make a difference in governmental behavior or lead to different conclusion. Though many people suspected about the real cause of Qian’s death, and there was a general tendency of deeming it as a murder, the society didn’t have any reliable evidence leading to that conclusion. Therefore, whether the government has changed its behavior, policy or conclusion under societal pressure would be a major criterion. The author will first make an assessment of the effect of societal involvement based on the reports respectively made by the government and the citizens’ investigation team, and then analyze the reason by comparison with the Xiamen PX Protest which had led to obvious behavioral changes of government to see what pattern of societal involvement, and under what conditions, could really make a difference in government behavior.

3.1 Government Conclusion of Qian’s Death

The police announced at the very beginning that “it was a normal accident”, the police also published the evidence for this conclusion. Evidence includes photos of the truck, body, the brake marks of the truck and the umbrella used by Qian before his death; the record of the news release by the police; telephone records; testimonials by witnesses (Qian Chengwei, Huang Diyan, security guards, the driver, etc), videos; report of the technical test of the truck; a polygraph report of the two witnesses.

Though the conclusion seemed reasonable and logical to some extent, it won’t help relieve societal skepticism. The most important evidence for a reliable conclusion resided in the testimony of the witness. If the government was neutral and the investigation process was made open in a transparent manner, the conclusion would prove more convincing. However, the government had a great stake in making the case “an accident”. The government, together with the Yueqing Power Plant Company, seized the land from the villagers and had, improperly even illegally arrested Qian and his fellows before Qian’s death. If it proved to be a murder, it would be a great scandal not only for the local government, but also for the whole political system and greatly undermine social stability, though the possibility of “a murder” can’t be excluded.

Though the Wenzhou municipal government had directed that investigations be conducted based on both possibilities (murder and accident), the behavior of the government in arresting all witnesses (driver and his assistant driver, Qian Chengyu, Huang Diyan, Qian Yunhui’s daughter and former fellow, etc) and apparently that all the testimonial of these people had changed before and after their arrest because of strong pressure from the police). Meanwhile, during the investigation, the police took away the body of Qian Yunhui by force and destroyed the site of Qians’ death; and meanwhile the police had kept pressure upon Qian’s family for earlier cremation. Qian Chengyu even telephoned his family urging Qian Yunhui’s family to accept compensation (conditions from the police were that they had to agree that “it was an normal accident”) so that he and other arrested villagers could be released soon. The “conclusion” of “a normal accident” seemed a predisposition to be proved.

There were also very suspicious details of the story that may never be revealed forever. There was mutually-proved evidence indicating that Qian’s death took place at around 9:30 instead of 9:40-9:43 as claimed by the police.411 The key evidence of the video record by Qian Yunhui’s mobile seemed to have been edited and the lawyer’s request to conduct a legal review of the video was rejected by the judge.412 Another very important question is that the police insisted the last telephone call Qian Yunhui received was by Wang Liquan at around 8:30-31 am, but in fact, many evidences indicated the last phone call was made by another person at 9:00, hints indicated that it may be made by deputy head of

411 Qian’s family members, an official record by traffic police indicated this. See Liu Jianfeng and Oiyang Yanqin, The Investigation Record of Cell Phone and Micro video in Qian Yunhui Case, http://www.21ccom.net/articles/zgyj/ggzhc/article_2011021429774.html, 2015-08-08.
412 Ibid.
township government Xu Zhongxiang.\textsuperscript{413} However, truth is not what this research wants to address. Instead, the author intends to analyze how societal forces interact with the local government and whether this interaction has made a difference.

3.2 Report of the Citizens’ Union (Gong Meng)

On December 31, 2010, seven days after Qian’s death (in Chinese tradition, relatives of the deceased shall respect the lost family member) and 48 hours after investigations, Dr. Xu Zhiyong from the Citizens’ Union Investigation Team (mainly made up of legal scholars and lawyers) was the first report via the Internet.

In order to draw reliable conclusions, the team visited more than 20 villager witnesses, interviewed Qian Chenyu’s mother, elder sister and other villagers who were present at the site of the “accident”; Mr. Peng Jian visited and talked to Qian Chengyu as his lawyer; the team had also read the materials of the villagers’ appeals over the land seizures; they invited villagers to watch two videos recorded immediately after Qian’s death as well as Qian Chengyu’s talk with the police, analyzed the talks between Qian Chengyu and Fei Liangyu (the driver of the truck); they visited the power plant, the security guard company, Fei Liangyu’s company; they also had talked to some journalists.\textsuperscript{414}

The report denied the public suspicion of “Qian Died of murder” and claimed that Qian’s death “was a normal accident”; it became a major public incident because of public mistrust of the government who had improperly dealt with the issue.\textsuperscript{415} Understandably, the report was criticized very harshly by the public because there seemed a general expectation the investigation will prove the case to be a “murder” instead of an accident, especially given that the report was hastily published 48 hours after investigation when many important facts were still unclear and that there was disagreement in conclusion within the investigation team.\textsuperscript{416} There were even serious journalistic comments that expressed disappointment about the “Citizens’ Union” indicating that the report didn’t reach

\textsuperscript{413} ibid.


\textsuperscript{415} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{416} Ibid.
satisfactory result because the team was not so serious in drawing a reliable conclusion, it was so accused of giving in because of "fear". 417

In late 2011, when the incident about “Qian Yunhui’s death” calmed down and more details were revealed and the conclusion of “accident” by Yue Qing police seemed to be the final and official conclusion, Dr. Xu Zhiyong released a second report on behalf of the Citizens’ Union Investigation Team. While he added more details and analysis based on “complementary investigation” conducted during January 1-16, 2011, he insisted on the conclusion that “Qian Yunhui’s case was a normal accident which developed into a public incident because of societal mistrust on the government” and that “the conclusion of the police was basically reliable”. 418

3.3 Report of the Academic Sector Investigation Team

In comparison, the academic teams’ report was more prudent, cautious and more detailed. It recorded the whole investigation process of the team and other teams, including disputes among its members; analyzed the credibility of all evidences, including testimonies of all witnesses and all related persons, listed all suspicious aspects of the incident, and provide reasonable analysis of the truth. However, lacking of reliable evidences, especially when credibility of those key evidence (testimonials of witnesses, the video that were claimed to be original from Qian’s watch, for instance) were questionable, Qian Yunhui’s Death Investigation Group (split from the Yueqing Citizens’ Investigation Team because several other professors quit and claimed they would focus on investigations concerning land issues of the case, members of Qian Yunhui’s death Investigation Team included Xiao Shu, Piao Baoyi, Chen Jieren, Si Weijiang, Lv Wenju) finally concluded that it could neither support the case being “an accident” nor could it support it to be “a case of murder”. 419

3.4 Other Reports

417 Xia Youzhi, the “Qian Yunhui Case” and the Fineness of the Citizens, Dong Fang Daily (Shanghai: Dong Fang Zao Bao), 2011-01-21.
418 Xia Youzhi, the “Qian Yunhui Case” and the Fineness of the Citizens, Dong Fang Daily (Shanghai: Dong Fang Zao Bao), 2011-01-21.
Besides the two reports, there were three other reports concerning the investigation. The most valuable one was written by Mr. Liu Jianfeng, a journalist from the China Economic Times, whose report was written based on his secret investigation and interview of the witnesses. His report revealed many facts about Qian’s death that were different from the official statement of Yueqing police authority; much of this evidence was also proved by findings of other teams.\(^\text{420}\) However, he also revealed some key facts as well as evidence from witness of the whole process (of Qian’s death) and based on the “confidentiality Agreement” he signed with the unnamed witness, the latter would make testimony of the “murder” “in person” once the central government sent an investigation team directly.\(^\text{421}\) Though many people believe the conclusion of Liu’s investigation, the evidences presented by Liu could hardly lead to the conclusion that “Qian Yunhui died of murder”.

A third report was made by Ling Xin and Yan Jianbiao entitled “Details of Qian Yunhui’s Death” and a fourth report was made by famous columnist Tufu (nickname, meaning “butcher”) titled “Tufu’s conclusion of Qian Yunhui’s Death”, both opinions remain very personal and failed to reveal new evidence.

4. Analysis of Societal Involvement

According to the analytical framework, the author will review the sector for the Qian Yunhui case, the societal forces involved, the interaction pattern and rationality, the sensitivity of the issue and how it relates to the effectiveness of the involvement of societal forces.

4.1 Involvement of Societal Forces

From the above description, we can see that social activists, mass media (traditional media, and new media such as internet based BBS and blogs), public opinion, NGOs, professionals and scholars were involved in the investigation of “Qian Yunhui’s suspicious death”.


\(^{421}\) Ibid.
As with other cases, media exposure and coverage made Qian’s case known to the general public and further created a strong public opinion that urged the government to conduct an official investigation while calling on third-party, independent and neutral investigators because of a general mistrust of the local police who had a stake in “making” Qian’s death an accident. Professionals here in Qian’s cases refer to the many lawyers who, in collaboration with scholars and social activists, formed the multiple investigation teams, which were actually NGOs in nature. Technical review and tests of the truck did not make a difference because of poor conditions, also because local police may have influenced the process. The unique part of societal involvement was the role of NGOs that was basically absent in other cases.

4.2 Pattern of Interaction

Societal involvement in the decision-making during the investigation has a very diverse and fragmented nature. The Chinese society had great expectations from those non-governmental investigation teams, and different teams had the same goal to find out whether Qian Yunhui’s death was “murder” or “an accident”, and they did coordinate and cooperate with each other before and at the very beginning of the investigation. However, different opinions and disputes existed from the very beginning.

Xu Zhiyong’s Citizens’ Union, Liu Jianfeng’s journalist investigation and the Academic Sector investigation had been carried out separately, even though the people they visited and the details they wanted to confirm were almost the same. They had discussed and consulted each other about how to find evidence, the credibility of evidences they collected and in a way supported each other in dealing with the government. However, their judgment of the situation and about the credibility of the evidences was different which led to the split of those teams.

Because the incident was highly sensitive, and local police had created a strong atmosphere of fear, some members of the investigation team quit during the investigation. The report of Dr. Xu Zhiyong’s team came out within two days of the investigation and was criticized harshly, even his team members didn’t agree to publish the report, some members refused to publish the report in the name of the Citizens’ Union whose head is Dr. Xu Zhiyong.
The Yueqing Academic Sector Investigation Team was quite influential; however the team proved to be the severely divided and disputable. The members couldn’t reach an agreement on the basic action code “The Yueqing 8 Items of Rules” (yue qing ba tiao), Yu Jianrong, once the leader of the team, refused to publish any announcement as a team, and he refused the “Robert’s Discussion Rule”. On December 31 afternoon, not long after the team members arrived at Zhaiqiao Village and the on-site investigation, Yu predicted that a large scale group incident may take place and proposed to stop the investigation and retreat from the village soon. Later, the team split into two groups: the Land Issue Investigation Team headed by Yu Jianrong and Qian Yunhui’s Death Investigation Team headed by Xiaoshu. Even worse was that the major advocate of the Citizens’, “independent”, “objective” investigation, did not strictly follow the rules of the Yue Qing Eight Items, and released news individually, though he later retracted the news, the possible negative influence had already been created and was irreversible.

Disputes among scholars and media were more apparent. Wu Danhong, an associate professor from China University of Politics and Law, had criticized Si Weijiang and Zhang Xuezhong for not being professional. He criticized Si for over-emphasizing the “procedural justice” as a lawyer of intellectual property rights, and Zhang from East China University of Politics and Law since the latter had required the government to explain many societal suspicions. In terms of mass media, CCTV and other traditional media (the China Economic Times, for instance) had different propensities while disputes on the Internet were even fiercer.

4.3 Rationality

Right after Qian Yunhui’s death, the outraged villagers attacked a police officer (Qian Chengyu was arrested in the name of “affray” because a later video showed he was throwing a stone at the police), surrounded the site of Qian’s death to protect the site and had confronted with the police when the latter attempted to take Qian’s body away. However, generally speaking, the protests and investigation had been conducted in a peaceful manner. Most members of the investigation team were legal scholars or lawyers, and they engaged the government in a very peaceful and rational manner.

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4.4 Sensitivity

Disputes and even protests resulting from land seizures was very common in China over the past decade (2004-2014), therefore land issue is by no means something very sensitive. Local governments often use repressive means to settle land protests. However, Qian Yunhui’s case was more sensitive than ever, first because there was abnormal loss of human life; second because Qian’s suspicions death was believed to be relevant to local government whose lost credibility had also revealed and affected the questionable accountability of Chinese government as a system. Once proved to be a murder by local government, it would be a great scandal and may cause unexpected consequences. Therefore, the Qian Yunhui’s case is highly sensitive.

5. Summary: unchanged government behaviors

The intensive involvement of societal forces in the Qian Yunhui case failed to bring any positive result. Investigations by several citizen investigation teams had revealed many new facts, and some helped relieve public skepticism, however, some increased their doubt and reinforced their belief that Qian was murdered. However, neither of the investigation teams had drawn convincing conclusions. The conclusion of the Qian Yunhui case as “a normal accident” made by the Yueqing police remained the official conclusion. A more disappointing part of the case was that strong pressure from domestic and international media, strong public opinion, legal scholars, lawyers, social activists and the Citizens’ Investigation Teams (NGOs) had not changed the repressive, arbitrary and manipulative behavior of the Yueqing police. Though, police authority is a special government organ, its behavior may be different from what we normally call “government”. As the responsible body designated by the Yueqing and superior Wenzhou government to settle the issue, the Yueqing police had been authorized to settle issues beyond just investigation. Simply put, it stands for the political system. The government’s repressive, arbitrary and manipulative behavior constitutes one of the major causes for the failure of societal participation, and is part of the failure.

A Comparison of the Xiamen PX Protest and the Qian Yunhui Case: How Governmental behaviors are changed
The Xiamen PX protests and Qian Yunhui case are two major group incidents in Southeastern China’s Fujian and Zhejiang province. The Xiamen PX protest is a typical environmental protest that is gaining importance in recent years, the Qian Yunhui case is a combination of land disputes and legal injustice. The two cases together could reveal the general picture of China’s protests and societal involvement since environmental concern, land disputes and legal injustice are exactly the three main sources of social conflicts. More importantly, the societal role in both cases had apparent implications for the Chinese government’s behavior under societal pressure. In the Xiamen PX protest, the combination of the major stakeholders (Xiamen dwellers), media (especially new media) and public opinion, leading scholars, professionals, and social activists together had urged and rationally engaged the Xiamen Municipal government to change its behavior from repressive to engaging, from less responsive to more responsive, from information withholding to transparency. However, in the Qian Yunhui case, government behaviors remained repressive, arbitrary and manipulative, resulting in serious government loss of credibility and wasted an important chance for benign government-society interaction, especially given the intensive role of NGOs. By reviewing the process and the result of societal engagement, we can draw interesting findings of what factors, under what conditions and in what way, could societal engagement lead to the government’s behavioral changes. The author will first compare the societal involvement bases on the basic analytical framework and then further elaborate whether other factors had affected the success and failure of government’s behavioral changes.

1. Societal forces involved

Societal involvement in both cases was wide and in-depth. Among all six cases covered by the dissertation, and even among all major group incidents that took place in the past decade, the Xiamen PX protest and the Qian Yunhui Case have the most complete record of societal forces. In both cases, mass media coverage was intensive, traditional media from other provinces and international media, instead of local media, new and media like mobile and internet-based communication means had played a more salient role; national attention was drawn and strong public opinion had been formed; social activists,
professionals, and leading scholars had been deeply involved. However, there are three aspects concerning the societal forces involved.

1.1 Role of NGOs

The first major difference is the involvement of NGOs in Qian Yunhui Case, while NGOs were basically absent in the Xiamen PX protest. The NGOs in Qian Yunhui Case refer to those non-governmental investigation teams made up of lawyers, scholars, social activists and volunteers. They were temporary working groups instead of regular registered social organizations, but they were to conduct a non-profit, public, independent third-party investigation, therefore differentiate themselves from the government organizations and therefore had the major essence of NGOs. NGOs also appeared in Xiamen PX protest and the Wukan Land Protest, however, those temporary civil coalitions were far from conventional NGOs and even incomparable with the investigation teams in Qian Yunhui’s team. It was a great pity that the role of NGOs in the Qian Yunhui Case somewhat disappointed the public and lost the chance to rise as an emerging societal force. It revealed the limited function of NGOs in China and also revealed the limited degree of development of Chinese society as well as the political regime.

1.2 Scholars

The role of scholars was vital for both cases. If not for Prof. Zhao Yufen and the other 105 famous scholars who initiated the bill to the National Political Consultative Conference (NPPCC), the news about the Xiamen PX program would not be released to be public and probably the PX would have been constructed smoothly. In the Qian Yunhui case, if it were not advocated and participated by many scholars, the citizens’ investigation teams would not have been so influential and there would not be any possibility to figure out the real cause of Qian’s death.

However, there is a huge difference between the ways the two groups engaged the government. While scholarly engagement in the Xiamen case was institutional and constructive, scholarly involvement in the Qian Yunhui case was in a way deemed by local government as challenging authority. Zhao and several other professors, after doing close researches on the potential danger of PX program, had written letters to the Major of
Xiamen before they submitted the bill to the NPPCC, and the Xiamen government had organized a private consultation with the five professors from Xiamen University, aiming at changing their mind by explaining and ensuring the safety of the PX program. They even conducted economic and geographical studies based on which they propose to relocate the Xiamen PX program to Gulei peninsula, which was actually adopted by the government latter.

While in the Qian Yunhui case, the scholars announced at the very beginning their purpose was to conduct independent investigation, they refused any donation and also refused the offer of Yueqing Publicity Authority to accommodate them. This was deemed by local government as a potential challenge to the local government as well as the primary conclusion made by police, especially when the team work in the form of NGOs, which the government had been vigilant against. It was for this reason that in their investigations in the following days, anxious government officials and police officers refused to contact the investigation team, arrested almost all witnesses and relevant persons and had exerted strong pressure on them and created a very strong atmosphere of fear that had negatively affected the team’s investigation.

1.3 Professionals

Compared with the case of Sun Zhigang’s death and the Xiamen PX protest, professionals were more deeply involved in the investigation of Qian’s death. Among the members of the investigation teams, there were several well-known lawyers, former police officer, investigative journalists and researchers (to some extent could be regarded as professionals too), different from Sun Zhigang’s case where the medical-legal autopsy proved the real cause of Sun’s death, and the research conducted by Zhao Yufen and her colleagues which confirmed the danger of PX program in Xiamen. Other professional engagement is a second EIA review conducted by the China Institute of Environmental Sciences that also indicated Xiamen’s PX program may not be suitable to be built in the tiny island, the lawyers, police officers and legal scholars were unable to apply their professional knowledge, while the key part of professional process, the test of the truck (which failed to

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evaluate the speed of the truck) was either designated by local police and the possibility of police manipulation couldn’t be excluded or rejected (medical-legal autopsy of Qian Yunhui).

2. Pattern of interaction

The different pattern of societal interaction in the two cases can also help explain the different results. In the Xiamen PX protest, mass media, professionals, social activists, ordinary Xiamen citizens, had been generally consistent in their goals (to keep the PX program out of Xiamen) as we can see from the opinion poll (the overwhelmingly majority of the representatives rejected the PX program) during the Citizens’ Symposium based on which the decision of relocation was made. This was also true in that the mass media, the social activists and the professionals had better coordination among each other, therefore making a stronger voice and constituting greater pressure upon the Xiamen government.

However in the Qian Yunhui case, the societal forces were highly divided. There was a huge gap between the attitudes of traditional media and new media. The state-owned CCTV made an investigative report indicating Qian’s death was an accident, while Mr. Liu Jianfeng from China Economic News published an investigative report suggesting that Qian probably died of murder. 424 Official media from local government introduced Qian as a trouble maker and former prisoner while most BBS, blogs, webpages had shown great sympathy for Qian, some even regarded him as a hero. Most importantly, the citizens’ investigation teams, which once were expected by the general public to reveal the truth of Qian’s death, were extremely divided from the very beginning. The three teams conducted investigation independently though they have some mutual support and coordination.

The Citizens’ Union Investigation Team, headed by Dr. Xu Zhiyong, wanted to expanded its own influence and insisted to publish the first investigation report on December 31, 2010, hastily drew the conclusion of Qian’s death as “an ordinary accident” in the name of his Citizens’ Union (Gong Meng), against the will of other three members who were not members of Xu’s NGO and disagreed with Xu’s conclusion. 425


425 Interview with Dr.G, director of the leading grassroots think-tank Transition Institute (an Beijing-based non-government organization majoring in citizens’ enlightenment, the organization was forced
Yueqing Investigation Team were also divided at the very beginning, Leading scholar Yu Jianrong declined to make a unitary announcement, nor did he agree with the *Robert’s Rules of Order or the Yueqing 8 Items*, and within hours of the investigation, he proposed to retreat from the Zhaiqiao village because he predicted a large scale group incident may take place, and later he and another four members announced that they would focus on land issues instead of Qian’s death. Dr. Xu, who advocated to establish the citizens’ investigation team and who invited Professor Yu to lead the team believe Yu’s quitting was a huge loss to the team, but understandable because Yu knows when to go ahead and when to quit to keep his influence while remaining safe.

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427 Interview with X, a member of the academic investigation team, he was well known investigative journalist form the *South Weekend* and after the Qian Yunhui event he resigned from the newspaper under pressure and joined the Transition Institute. Interview conducted in middle March, 2011, Beijing.
Part Four
The Implications of Involvement of Societal Forces:
Policy Adjustment
Chapter 10: The Wukan Village Democratic Practices

China had been an agricultural country until the most recent decade. Land has been the core resource for Chinese life, and land polices were one of the most decisive reasons for the rise and fall of dynasties. China’s Communist rise was, to a large extent, based on its “land revolution” that appealed to the vast rural population. China’s Reform and Opening up also started with rural land systems changes as the Household Contract Responsibility System, where peasants were responsible for working the land (confined to agricultural production). However, since the late 1990s, when China started massive construction of new towns, industrial and development zones as well as high-tech zones, land disputes began to intensify. The tricky point for Chinese land disputes lies in its land ownership system. Chinese land is either state-owned or collectively owned (a village, for instance), farmers, business, social organizations only have the “right to use” it but not own it. This has granted the state or officials of the government great advantages in land use while leaving the farmers vulnerable on their lands. A constitutional amendment passed by the People’s Congress in March 2004 further confirmed the de facto collective ownership in rural China, which is also considered as a human progress compared with the constitution promulgated in 1982 which states “Land is owned by the state”. The 1982 Constitution denied the private ownership of land for urban citizens and allowed the state to appropriate the collective land free of charge.

As early as 2001, a Chinese scholar published an article analyzing about China’s rural land disputes during appropriation by the government and the consequent tension between rural farmers and local governments. The new constitution revised in 2004 also authorized the state to legally appropriate the land and reclaimed back from farmers the “rights to use” it by providing appropriate compensation and conditions. But the constitution did not clearly specify the entity of appropriation, and the meaning of “public

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428 China’s urbanization rate reached 51.3% by the end of 2011, which means more Chinese people now live urban cities than in rural areas. Although one can’t simply define a country as agricultural country because it has a low urbanization rate, it indicates a large proportion of Chinese are still making a living on agricultural activities. Even in urban cities we have famers living in “villages in towns” (cheng zhong cun). See Niu Weiyuan and Liu Yijun, (eds), China’s New Type of Urbanization 2011, Beijing: Science Press, 2012.


interest” as well as the standard of compensation, which is actually subject to arbitration of local governments. Without legal or institutional constraints, improper and even illegal seizures of land by local government had become rampant. Along with China national real estate boom since the past decade, city and county-level governments have been increasingly dependent on land sales as a source of revenue in what is known as “land-based fiscal policy” (tu di cai zheng).

Because in rural China, land is owned collectively by the villagers, the revised 2004 Constitution authorized the state government to take appropriate lands for collective ownership, and villages within cities (cheng zhong cun) and villages neighboring cities gained tremendous interest from real estate agents. As organization of village autonomy, the Village Committee holds huge power in deciding the major decisions of land sales. According to the Chinese law, villagers enjoy autonomy and have the right to select village heads and the village committee via direct voting. However, education, traditional rural governance structure (relying on “gentlemen” or xiangxian, which is often from wealthy big families), kinship, and lack of necessary knowledge and experience have confined rural governance. For instance, Xue Chang, Wukan’s Party Secretary before the incident, had acted in the party role and managed the village since 1970, 41 consecutive years until his removal.

The danger for rural governance is that owing to the structural problems with the rural political system, some rural economic and political elites may easily dominate village affairs. Xue had, over the past two decades, sold over 20 thousand mu (each mu equals to 666m²) of land without informing the villagers, while the villagers were left vulnerable, especially given that China lacks a social security system. Therefore, rural land seizure by local government, intertwined with corruption and legal injustice, had become one of the major sources of social stability and unrest. According to the research conducted by China Academy of Social Sciences, there were 871 public news reports on mass incidents with 100 participants or more in the time period from January 1st, 2000 to September 30th, 2013. Among them, 97 were caused by relocation and land requisition (chajian zheng di), which

434 The statement was provided by many villagers in open journalist account, their negotiation with the government and some scholarly interviews. However, the narrative may not be so reliable for the long spectrum of time and the fact that the village committee had distributed the land to villagers for times and some land sales were among villagers. However it would be sure that Xue had stealthily sold large piece land to developers, including the most recent land deals with Biguiyuan, and large Chinese real estate developer, that directly caused the large scale protest.
was the second most important cause of mass incidents only after labor disputes (*laozi jiufen*).\(^{435}\) About 65% of mass incidents in rural areas are triggered by land disputes, which are affecting rural stability and development more than any other issue.\(^{436}\) In Guangdong, as the most developed coastal province in China, 30.7% of all mass incidents, for instance, were related to land disputes.

These data also shows that the vast majority of these incidents occurred between 2010 and 2012. China’s perceived vulnerability makes it wary of any popular gathering or protest, since a protest in one place may incite other localities to follow suit and therefore undermine social stability and party legitimacy. Often the government uses highly repressive methods to address the land disputes that only create counterproductive consequences. Experts believe that China will likely to enter a period of frequent social conflicts in the decades to come. Chinese scholar Yu Jianrong even believes the possibility of a major crisis where peasants join hands with workers and members of the intellectual class so as to confront the elitist alliance that dominates society.\(^{437}\)

In this sense, the protests in Wukan were not different from other land disputes that occurred in other provinces. Even in villages close to Longtou, for instance, villagers were also planning protests. However, the Wukan’s engagement with government, and the latter’s response had displayed quite different characteristics. The result of such an interaction was also inspiring. Depicting the story is not the writer’s sole purpose here given the research topic. Instead, the writer will focus on how the societal forces, led by villagers in this case, led to a change in policy of Guangdong’s multi-layer governments. And through systematic analysis based on the designed framework, this dissertation tries to figure out what is special in the society-government interaction of this case.

1. The Wukan Incident: A Review

Wukan is a small fishery village in Lufeng city (county level city), in Guangdong province. It was immediately thrust into the spotlight when a protest took place on September 21\(^{\text{st}}\), 2012. The number of protestors numbered between three to four thousand people but later involved almost all villagers. The residents gathered outside the village

\(^{435}\) China Academy of Social Sciences, Year Book of China’s Rule of Law, Beijing: 2014.
\(^{437}\) Yu Jianrong, Social Conflict in Rural China, China Security, Vol. 3, No 2, pp. 2-17.
committee compound and asked Xue Chang, the party head of the village to release the land sale documents and village financial accounts. Villagers also protested in front of enterprises, which they believed had benefited from their secret deals with the village committee, and the protests later extended to the city government building. The lack of response and confrontation with the police dispatched by the government resulted in the damage of several police cars and police office buildings over the following days. As the confrontation intensified and protests continued, Donghai township government (township, as the lowest level of governments, is responsible for “guidance” of village autonomy under Chinese administration system), Lufeng city government (a county level), Shanwei city government (director-general level government) and the provincial government of Guangdong were all involved in. Appeals of the villagers also expanded from transparency of village affairs, and compensation of illegal land sales by the former party head and village committee, to reclaiming back lost land and demanding democratic elections; additional requirements also included education assistance and environmental intervention of the Wukan harbor, among others.

1.1 Early Protest (before the end of September)

Before the protest, villagers had over two years’ unsuccessful petitions to the township and city government about the land abuses and serious corruption of the village committee. Early petitions were headed by more than 20 young villagers in a peaceful way, and within two years’ time they kept engaging the government via letter of visits, which is a major channel for rural petitions concerning social injustice and rights abuses, among others. The youngsters later established their organization named Wukan Iron Blood Youth Group. Adopting the somewhat violent name does not mean they would use violence to protect their interest, rather, it revealed their resolution to make sure that “justice would be done”.

On September 24th, the villagers elected 15 representatives to negotiate with the Donghai town government and Lufeng city government and on behalf of the villagers, the representatives raised three requirements which comprised of firstly, investigate all land sales in Wukan since the period of Reform and Opening-up; secondly, investigate the elections and tenures of the village committee; and thirdly, open village affairs and fiscal details. Executive vice-Mayor of Lufeng city, Qiu Jinxiong, had agreed to send working teams to the village since September 26th and also required the villages to be rational by
refraining from using violence. The first phase of contention and negotiation seemed to work quite well and once the working team entered into the village and started to investigate the land sales and other required issues, the villagers began to calm down.

However, the improper response of the local government had later created further tensions and new rounds of protest were waged under the new leadership, which was chosen by the villagers’ conference. The event even went into a very dangerous confrontation between armed police and villagers. Only when the provincial government, under guidance of Party secretary Wang Yang and direct leadership of vice party Secretary Zhu Mingguo, became involved in the issue did the event lead to stabilization and basic resolution of the crisis.

The most important event during the protest in September is that the villagers had launched their own organization to lead and coordinate the protests. The way they selected the members, the principles, and power structure and operation of the organization, and its later function had been very intense. On September 29th, 117 candidates of representatives were elected by the villagers’ conference based on the proportion of family names according to the total population. In China’s rural politics, large families have been very influential in local governance, which is especially true with the provinces of Guangdong, Fujian, Zhejiang, Anhui and Shanxi, where commercialism (entrepreneurism, though the essence is fairly different from what we mean today) had developed well. Further illustrating the role of big families and the mechanism for their function is beyond the writer’s academic ability, however, the writer would like to emphasize the representatives of the selection.

Out of the 117 candidates, each family (by family name) could recommend one more representative to further form 38 candidates, out of whom 13 members were elected to form a new power organ called “Temporary Council of Representatives”. Even evaluated against the strictest terms, the formation of the 13-members of the Temporary Council of Representatives was commendable. In a way, it allowed the rural village to form a highly representative, well-balanced and reliable entity. Lin Zuluan (now Party secretary’s head), a well-respected senior villager was elected as advisor of the council, Yang Semao as the chair, three deputy chairs and nine other members were also elected. They were to lead the villagers in protest, “inspect and cooperate with the working team sent by the government”, and hold the villagers’ conference. They even decided to raise funding from donation of villagers and all expenses open to public. Apparently, the villagers have the expertise and knowledge of democratic governance of their own affairs. It somewhat proved the former
assumption that the grassroots in wealthy coastal areas tended to have better awareness and skills for social participation. In inland or remote western provinces, constrained by poverty and low education levels, daily practice, social unrest, and protests turned out to be anger venting, as was the case of 2008 Weng’an incident in Guizhou province.

1.2 From Stalemate to Escalation (Late September to mid-December)

The 13-members of the Temporary Council of Representatives were actually a new power entity and decision-making body in the turbulent village. The former village committee had lost credibility and was under investigation by a working group sent by the Lufeng government. According to the Chinese social organizational registration system, the Temporary Council of Representatives remained an illegal social organization. This is very clear: the social organizations, which failed to register with the Ministry of Civil Affairs, are considered illegal and shall be dismissed, especially when the organization was established to lead the protest. The Shanwei government had avoided directly negotiating with Lin Zuluan, Yang Semao and other nuclear members, since doing so meant recognition of the organization. However, the township, county, and city level governments were all dealing with the members, and since the Shanwei government had been proceeding with the five requirements proposed by the Council, no major confrontation happened between the Wukan villagers and the government until early December, except on November 21st, when the villagers initiated another medium sized protest. What deserves to be mentioned is the slogan of the protest that had evolved from the “right maintained” ones to “Over-thrown corrupted leaders”, “return our farmland”, “punish corruption”, and “government-business collusion kills democracy” to name a few. The slogan used also showed that their pursuit was turning political instead of remaining economic. This is unique and important for Wukan’s social participation.

However, news released by the Shanwei government on September 9th led to another highly antagonistic confrontation that immediately worsened the situation and only cooled down after the provincial government’s intervention. Shanwei’s mayor announced the removal of Xue Chang and deputy party secretary and village head Chen Shunyi.\textsuperscript{438} He also announced that all the villagers’ five major requirements, which were investigation of the village’s fiscal problems, land abuse, election, educational assistance, and environmental

\textsuperscript{438} Chen was removed from the post of deputy party head and he resigned as village head.
protection of Wukan Harbor, had been met, which was a success for Wukan’s societal involvement. However, in the same day, the Ministry of Public Security arrested five nuclear members of Temporary Council of Representatives, including the organization’s deputy chair Xue Jinbo, Zhang Jianhong, Hong Ruichao, Zhuang Liehong, and Zeng Zhaoliang.

The public security authority also made it illegal for the organization of the Wukan Temporary Council of Representatives and Wukan Women’s Association, and therefore deemed they should be dismissed. Such a decision incited the most severe protest on December 10th that led to a dangerous confrontation with riot police. The situation was further worsened because of the unusual death of Xue Jinbo during his detention. This became very decisive since ubiquitous human abuses and the unusual death of citizens at during police detention had provoked very harsh criticism against police authority, and the issue itself had brought many protests and group incidents. The Wukan Temporary Council of Representatives even claimed openly that they no longer trusted any government in Guangdong and called for intervention by the central government. The police besieged the village to prevent the flow of living materials into the village while the villagers were also stopped suspicious people entering, but foreign and Hong Kong journalists were welcome.

Again, the slogans of the banners is worth mentioning: “Oppose tyranny!”, “Return U.S. human rights!”, “Open national election!”, “Return our farmland!”, and “Overthrown government-business collusion!” which indicated that the villagers’ political awareness had grown.

1.3 Provincial Interventions and Democratic Election

Protests had been rare in the past two decades after the Tiananmen in 1989, and as that protest had won international attention and the protest itself had been politicized. The 18th Party Congress was impending. At the right moment, (probably under provincial party leader Wang Yang’s directive), deputy party leader Zhu Mingguo announced that the villagers' basic demands were reasonable and understandable. In the evening the police and villagers respectively retreated from confrontation. Advisors of the Temporary Council of Representatives agreed a meeting with Zhu on the morning of December 21st. Zhu agreed the conditions raised by Lin who asked first for the return of the body of Xue Jinbo for a second medical-legal autopsy to confirm the real cause of his suspicious death; the reexamination would be attended by journalists from five leading international media;
releasing other three other members from the Temporary Council of Representatives; and recognizing the legal status of the Temporary Council of Representatives. Then the villagers’ conference decided to cancel the protest scheduled in the afternoon on the same day.

Later developments were relatively smooth, under support of the provincial government, Lin Zuluan was nominated as party leader of the village and was responsible for preparing for a direct election by which a new village committee was formed. The New Enlightenment Institute, which was an active political NGO head by Xiong Wei, who also had been very active in promoting rural election, was invited to assist and prepare for the election.

2. The Wukan Incident: an Assessment

The Wukan Incident was an extraordinary case of a societal movement that occurred in the past two decades. In terms of its implication, seldom is there a case where societal movements had been so resolute, and consistent in their engagement of the government.\textsuperscript{439} Domestic and international observers all praised the incident from different perspectives.\textsuperscript{440} Many international observers believed the Wukan model could be used as a national political tool to placate grassroots political protests.\textsuperscript{441} Chinese observers also considered the event as a “turning point” for how government-society disputes over land could and would be handled in the future.\textsuperscript{442} Sun Liming, a leading Chinese sociologist, believed that the Wukan case signifies a new model for resolving social contradictions and contention in rural China, i.e. “realizing people’s interests while maintaining social stability”.\textsuperscript{443} As with the case of Xiamen PX incident, the municipal government and the provincial leaders of

\textsuperscript{440} It was viewed as a card played in the higher-level political game between politburo members Guangdong’s Party Secretary Wang Yang and Bo Xilai, who before his fall from grace was the Party chief of megacity and Municipality of Chongqing. Johan Lagerkvist, The Wukan Uprising and Chinese State-Society Relations: Toward “Shadow Civil Society”? International Journal of China Studies Vol. 3, No. 3, December 2012, pp. 345-361.
\textsuperscript{443} China Youth Daily, Wukan Election Filled the Gully within the Hearts of the Grassroots (wu kan xuan ju tian ping min zhong xin zhong de gou he), http://news.sina.com.cn/pl/2012-02-06/033223886066.shtml.
Guangdong were also deeply involved; the careful and prudent handling of the incident by the provincial government was believed to be unique. However, as far as this research is concerned, the writer would be analyzing the behaviors reminiscent of many other relatively less conspicuous achievements.

2.1 Societal forces Involved

2.1.1 Wukan villagers

Similar to the case of the Xiamen PX incident, Wukan villagers were major stakeholders in their protest against the grassroots level and local government in their land seizure. Compared with the areas of legal and social justice (such as Sun Zhigang case, Qianyunhui case), anger venting cases (as Huanan Tiger case and Weng’an Incident), preventive protest against potential risks, and post-event settlement (punishment of officials after Tianjin Fire or Weznhzhou train clash and the following-up compensations), Wukan people had a great stake in their interest concerning the land sales. Therefore, citizens from Wukan as a whole have been the major player. The population numbers, their close ties and kinship, and their unity made the village powerful enough for a confrontation against the government. However, it does not mean that other societal forces did not play a significant role.

2.1.2. NGOs

Compared with the other two cases referenced in this study, the role of NGOs had become prominent in the societal involvement of the Wukan’s case. In the initial phase of right maintenance, the youths who later became members of the Wukan Iron Blood Youth Group (Wukan tiexie qingniantuan, hereafter Wukan Group) had played an essential role. The Group later served as a nucleus force of the protests. The Wukan Group held a QQ chat group[^444] in which they posted and shared different documents, including the International Convention on Human Rights and the United Nations Convention against Corruption.

The first 15 representatives and the Temporary Council of Representatives had been the most important in the sense that they actually served as a decision-making body as well.

[^444] QQ is a Chinese Internet social media which is a combination of facebook and skype.
as speaker for the more than 10,000 villagers. During the protests, the village had also established functional organizations such as Wukan Women’s Associations. The New Enlightenment Institute, which was an active political NGO, was invited to prepare for the election. International scholars even developed the concept of “shadow civil society” drawing from the case of Wukan where the media savvy youth at the ad hoc media center and the clan groupings that may have served as agents of political or social change in China’s future political development. The Wukan Incident is one of the few cases where the prominent role of NGOs had been observed.

2.1.3 Social Activists

Headed by Lin Zuluan, a senior citizen (67 years old), who was much respected by villagers, who was pushed to be a spokesperson and protesters leader since September 22nd. Lin was a member of the CCP who had once been in the military and a cadre. Lin’s role was prominent. He served as an advisor, and opinion leader at the beginning, but after the Temporary Council of Representatives was launched, he served as the core of the de facto decision-making’s body. He was influential in setting the agenda, organizing protests, negotiating with governments, mediating among villagers, and equally importantly remained very rational during the protest. It was due to his role that the CCP later nominated him as the party’s head of Wukan where he was responsible for the new election and operation of Wukan even today. Together with Lin, Xue Jinbo, Zhang Jianhong, Hong Ruichao, Zhuang Liehong, and Zeng Zhaoliang, among other social activists, deserve to be mentioned.

2.1.4 International and New Media

What is particularly special in societal involvement with the government in the Wukan case is that it relied on international media and new media instead of domestic traditional media (such as paper media and television programs). Because the issue was highly sensitive, coverage of domestic media was mostly provided by Guangdong local government, and the content were more about how the government were endeavoring to have the incident settled, and most domestic media also tried to track the development of the

incident. For the same reason, the Wukan villagers did not trust the mainland media that much and relied on the overseas media.

Provincial media accused Wukan villagers’ protests “as mobs”, which further increased Wukan’s trust in mainland media. In early December, when confrontation between Lufeng and Shanwei governments reached its peak, the access of mainland journalists into the village was also denied, since they believed that the journalist may side with the local government. On the contrary, international and Hong Kong journalists were welcomed. On December 19th, the party’s head Zheng Yanxiong of Shanwei city even criticized the villagers for engaging with international media.

Because of the scale and confrontation as well as the way Wukan people engaged with government, this soon differentiated themselves from “normal” protests elsewhere. It is for this reason that Wukan had attracted more international media coverage. Journalists from the BBC, The Daily Telegraph, NHK, the New York Times, Taiwan Eastern Television, and more media from Hong Kong had stayed in the Wukan village to provide realtime on-site reports. The village even established a newsroom especially for the international media. A survey conducted on December 19th by the Journalism and Media Studies Centre from the University of Hong Kong had indicated strong coverage outside the mainland China, but none of the more than 200 newspapers inside the country published any articles. The story was extensively covered in Ming Pao and Apple Daily in Hong Kong. The BBC, Financial Times, Reuters, The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, the Diplomat in Japan, all covered the Wukan incident. Among the 58 articles that were surveyed across the region in total, of which 37 were from Hong Kong, six from Taiwan, 14 from Malaysia and one from Singapore. Hong Kong media intensively covered and followed up the Wukan case partially because of the traditional ties between Guangdong and Hong Kong. The pro-democracy nature of Hong Kong media may also be an important reason for their coverage of the Wukan case, while there was much less coverage on other protests in other areas. Foreign media primarily focused on democracy and state-society relationship. This may

have helped the Wukan protestors to win more international awareness and scrutiny and therefore increased the safety of the protesters and contributed to the success of Wukan’s engagement.

The role of new media cannot be underestimated. In order to attract societal sympathy, videos that showed people of all ages being chased and beaten with truncheons by riot police had been spread all over the world through Internet-based media. Sina Weibo (a micro blog), for instance, was used by some villagers to update their protests, appeals, and worries, often with pictures and videos. Sometimes during the protests, Internet news of the protests, including photos and videos, were quickly deleted by the CCP censors because they brought many “troubles” for the government. Even words as Lufeng and Wukan turned to be “sensitive words” with baidu search engines.

2.2 Interaction Pattern

In the Wukan case, the societal forces had show consistence and mutual reinforcement instead of being fragmented and inner-consuming. Wukan’s interaction with government was highly organized and coordinated. Because of the common interest and appeals in reclaiming lost land and political rights, the Wukan villagers remain unified and stable, creating stronger societal pressure against the government. It was understandable that the near 20,000 villagers may not think exactly the same and there may be disputes and even competitions among villagers. For instance, there may be power struggles among the social activists and different attitudes towards the government during the more than half a year’s struggle. However, the villagers had successfully managed those disputes and speak with one voice, which seems to have been vital for their success.

In order to coordinate attitude and stance among villagers, and speak with a consistently way, Wukan had established their leadership and decision-making body for the protests, which is very rare compared with other protests. The Temporary Council of Representatives, under the leadership of Lin Zuluan and his colleagues, had performed strong leadership. Because illegal land sales were disclosed and the villagers’ rights violated, the international media and new media, in form of Internet-based blogs, Weibo, and BBS, all showed strong support of public opinion. The domestic traditional media had refrained from taking a stance since this may either violate political correctness or encourage violence under conditions of rising tension. However, in the latter part of the event, especially after
the Xue Jinbo’s death, the mainstream media had also rendered sympathy for Wukan and criticism against the local government. On December 22nd, the People Daily published an article “What did Wukan’s turn remind us?” Therefore the media had also functioned in a unified or non-contradictory manner.

Since the Wukan villagers mainly rely on their own forces to negotiate with local government, their inner unity as well as generally favorable media indicated their engagement with the government was centralized.

2.3 Rationality

Wukan’s protest was rare in the frequency, intensity of confrontation, the time lasted, and the resolution of the villagers. The Wukan incident lasted for roughly half a year, especially from the first major protest on September 21st to the December 20th when Guangdong deputy party head Zhu Mingguo visited the village and agreed on the five major conditions required by the Temporary Council of Representatives. Zhu also undertook to further address the problems, but major protests repeatedly took place, with each attended by several thousands of people. During the most emergent cases, in mid-December, up to a thousand riot police besieged the village, while the villagers erected barricades over the weekend to keep the police out. Outsiders even speculated that a major repression may take place, which led the chair of the Temporary Council of Representatives calls for “enrolling” 100 young men to build a Security-Maintaining Team (wei an dui), and another 500 as a preparation team.

However, it did not mean the Wukan’s protest were violent and irrational. From the very beginning, the Wukan had raised their requirements, which were by no means irrational. Violence did take place, but did not regularly happen, for most of the time; there was confrontation instead of direct antagonism. No one died or seriously injured except for the Xue Jinbo’s unusual death. Once the government made a compromise, the Wukan villagers responded positively. Therefore it is quite possible that the Wukan village had

449 Zhang Tie, Wu Kan Zhuan Ji Ti Shi Wo Men Shen Me (What did Wukan’s Turn Remind Us?), People Daily, December 22, 20015.
450 Deputy Provincial Party Head Zhu Mingguo agreed to held another neutral medical-legal examination, under inspection of journalists from 5 leading international media to ensure the reexamination was carried out neutrally and objectively. However, Xue’s family refused to do so. Given that the former examination done by Sun Yat-sen University Hospital showed no sights of physical torture, and the police had video during Xue’s detention, it is quite possible that Xue’s death cause was not because of violence.
adopted the doctrine of “escalation” to show resolution to fight for their due rights, and more importantly, leverage against the government for better conditions. And if a review of the later development is made, one finds that most of the conditions had been agreed and met by the government.

The Wukan villagers were aware that without the support of higher level government and leadership, their protests would bring very little results. Therefore they have learned to confine their goals to merely blame local officials, appealing to the central government in Beijing to protect their rights by saying that “We are not a revolt. We support the Communist Party. We love our country”.451 International scholars had also observed that the Wukan protesters had “continued to demonstrate while displaying banners pledging loyalty to the Communist Party”.452 This is very interesting and the writer believes it is closely related to the leadership of Lin Zuluan and his colleagues. Therefore, the Wukan’s case can be considered as “rational with antagonism”. This finding may challenge the writer’s former assumption that rational and constructive engagement would render better results in societal involvement and bargaining with government. One possible explanation may be related to the scale. Namely, when the protest reaches a certain scale, controlled violence will not lead to repression. The Wukan incident seemed to be in any means a large scale one, given that almost all villagers were involved and functioned in a highly organized and coordinated manner.

2.4. Area of Issue

Land disputes concern economic benefit. Because the land was sold illegally by the former village head of Wukan, it also concerns corruption of the grassroots level government. Therefore, the Wukan case could be regarded as an economical-political issue. Intertwined interests and appeals tend to be more difficult to solve. By far, the land issue had not been addressed well.

2.5. Sensitivity

Sensitivity is determined by the scale, areas, antagonism, and the government’s role. When a social incident involves more people, it tends to be more sensitive. Generally, the government would be subject to a city-wide protest rather than a small scale one; an incident with political motivations would be more sensitive than a purely economic matter; an incident characterized by greater antagonism is more sensitive than a less antagonistic one; an incident where there is loss of human life would be generally more sensitive than a incident without loss of human life. However, as far as the CCP is concerned, the most important criterion would be its relationship with the CCP’s regime security. An incident that relates more to a threat to the CCP regime legitimacy means the more sensitive it would be. The Wukan incident is a large scale and highly antagonistic incident that is intertwined with party legitimacy and social stability, among others. Therefore, the sensitivity for the Wukan case is high.

Sensitivity is also related to public trust or distrust. Popular trust in a government can reduce the sensitivity of an incident, while public disbelief and mistrust in government will increase the sensitivity of an incident. In almost in each of the public incident, the initial news revealed by government was questioned, especially in disasters or other deathly confrontations, the number of casualties, and the key technical data that concerns the accountability of the government has been kept questionable. Qian Yunhui case is another example, though later evidences tends to favor that the former village head may have died by accident instead of a cruel murder, but public opinion, newspapers, and netizens all remain skeptical even until today. A scholar on rural politics published on the Southern Metropolis Weekly magazine that this reflected a credibility crisis for local governments that now inhibits effective governance in the countryside.453

The presence or absence of rumors maybe a useful criterion to test popular trust or distrust of a government and also can detect the sensitivity of an event. As is the case in the 2008 Weng’an incident where public skepticism about an unusual death of a middle school student led to public protest and finally led to violence. Rumors had been created. During the initial Wukan confrontation, rumors circulated such as a child being beaten to death; after three leader protestors were arrested and one of them died suspiciously while two other were kept under detention, rumors were also spread that the two other protesters were also

beaten to death.
Chapter 11: The Dalian PX Protest

Similar to the Xiamen PX program, the Dalian Fujia Dahua PX program is a major industrial program promoted by local government but protested by its city dwellers. However, the Dalian PX program had been progressed smoothly while keeping a very low profile until the tropical storm “Muifa” broke through the protective dike to the Dalian PX program in the Jinzhou industrial complex and endangered its chemical reserves on August 8, 2011. The greater danger was that the Typhoon was approaching soon. The potential danger imposed by the PX program had aroused the general anxiety of the Dalian dwellers and later developed into a large scale NIMBY (not in my backyard) movement that forced the Dalian government to stop PX production immediately and undertook to relocate the program. However, in late 2011, the PX program already secretly recovered production and four years later after official announcement by Dalian Municipal government to relocate the PX program, the Fujia Dahua PX program was still producing PX in the same location without any further news. This questioned the credibility of Dalian government while also indicated that societal involvement in the Dalian PX program was unsuccessful. Actually the worst part of Dalian’s case is that, opposite to the Xiamen PX protest which provided a successful new type of government-society interaction model, the Dalian’s secret recovery of production was learned by governments of Kunming and Ningbo, as a “new” approach to deal with societal protests.

1. The PX Program and the Local Government

The Dalian Fujia PX program was by then China’s largest private enterprise-controlled PX program, with a total investment of RMB9.5 billion, an annual production value reached up to RMB26 billion and taxation of RMB 2 billion, therefore it was one of Dalian’s six major projects in the year 2007. Most importantly, the program helped to

454 The NIMBY movement could be regarded as a game type that occurs when residents or users protest against government projects (roads, industrial facilities, airports, wind turbines, and so on) that serve a public interest, not because they object against the objectives underlying these projects, but because they are confronted with specific costs produced by these projects that they do not want to bear. For more details, see Erik Hans Klijn and Joop Koppenjan, Governance Networks in the Public Sector, New York and London: Routledge, 2016, p86.

extend Dalian’s petrochemical industry from oil refining to PX and PTA and further to Polyester Chip (PET) to form a complete “gold industry chain”, improving Dalian’s industrial competitiveness, and “filled the blank of Dalian Industrial development History” of “lacking in lower end petrochemical industry” (zhi you you tou, mei you you wei, meaning Dalian had upper end oil refining, but not middle and lower end petrochemical industry such as PET). The Fujia Dahua PX program represented Dalian’s ambition to build China’s largest petrochemical industry base, and was also part of the state plan of “Revitalizing the Old Industrial Base in Northeast China”, a major initiative by former premier Wen Jiabao.

On a more general basis, China had become the world’s largest producer and consumer of PX, its production capacity accounted for 24% of the world’s total, while its consumption accounted for 32% of the world’s total. In order to stabilize domestic supply and improve China’s competitiveness in textile, it is vital for China to security the healthy development of the PX industry.

Understandably, the Fujia Dahua program was deemed by Dalian local government as a major breakthrough in its industrial development, and therefore would render strong support for the program to be launched smoothly, and its environmental impact would be a secondary consideration, and to some extent, was regarded as a “necessary cost for economic development”. Similar to Xiamen PX program, though the Environmental Impact Assessment of the program was conducted, the assessment was carried out silently, if not secretly without releasing any news to the main stakeholders, the Dalian dwellers. Because the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) was often conducted by government-affiliated agencies, it is very difficult for people to believe its neutrality, objectiveness and credibility of the EIA since it could easily influence the assessment. “We can imagine boldly, if we review of all China’s PX program, we will probably find ‘original sin’ with many of the programs.”

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458 Ibid.
459 Lu Ning, Dalian, Please be open in investigating its PX Program, Dong Fang Zao Bao, 2011-8-12, A22.
This was especially true with the Dalian PX program. It was revealed that the program was approved by the China Reform and Development Commission in 2005 and had received a subsidy using State Debt (a system adopted to attract major investment). In June 2009, the program began production. However, an official document titled “Safety Permission for Construction of Dangerous Chemicals Program” indicated that its plan for safety measures passed review and received permission only in January 2011.\(^{460}\) It means the factory was already producing PX ten months before being approved and seventeen months before the EIA was passed by the Ministry of Environmental Protection.\(^{461}\) The program even expanded its annual production from 450,000 tons to 700,000 tons, while the expansion was confirmed only in September 2009. Actually, according to the Environmental Impact Assessment Law, new EIA should be conducted if production capacity were to expand. Item 31 even regulated that production before completion of EIA would be punished.\(^{462}\) However, in reality, the regulations often stay on paper in front of local government who see GDP growth as the top priority.

Danger exists not only because of the Dalian PX program, but also because chemical industries are very concentrated in the same area and may increase the danger of the program itself. Journalistic investigation revealed that the Dalian PX was just 200 meters from the site of the major accident of the “July 16 Explosion”\(^{463}\) roughly a year ago.\(^{464}\) Actually in December 2014, another accident took place with the Dalian Fujia Dahua PX program when fire broke out because of a gas leakage. The Dalian authority claimed the accident was under investigation without any follow-up ever since.\(^{465}\)

2. The Dalian PX Protest: a Review

As early as 2009, immediately after the factory started production, there were already

\(^{460}\) Ibid.
\(^{461}\) Ibid.
\(^{463}\) On July 16, 2011, a pipeline explosion and fire hit the Dalian Xingang port, spilling around 1,500 tons of crude oil into the sea to leave a slick covering 183 sq km (71 sq miles). see Zhu Chengpei, Zhang Xiaoming, and Xie Yu, Dalian seeks to contain oil pipeline spill, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2010-07/19/content_10121115.htm, 2015-08-09.
small scale protests in front of the factory and government building, and the Dalian Bureau of Environmental Protection had to respond to the public skepticism, which circumvented the public’s question about “whether the program had passed EIA” by assuring the public that strict measures would be taken to ensure “safety”. 466

The damage to the dam and the coming danger supposedly to be brought by the typhoon had resurfaced the many procedural and operational problems with the PX program and called into question the role of Dalian government, who are responsible for reviewing, inspecting and settling the issue properly. On August 8, the same day of the dam damage, a dozen of journalists from China Central TV (CCTV) visited the site of the damaged dam to investigate and report the accident, together with officials from Dalian government and the Dalian Municipal Environmental Protection Bureau. However, they were surrounded, blocked and attacked, their cameras broken, and their investigation unsuccessful. Later investigations confirmed that many journalists were attacked, even though they had showed their certificate. 467 Later, news released that the Chair of the Board of the Fujia Dahua PX program even ordered the workers, “If you let in one journalist, you are a dead person”. 468

On evening of August 9, after well-known CCTV News Commentator Bai Yansong announced a report and commentary on the damaged dam of Dalian Fujia PX Program would be made soon, the report was canceled immediataly. Apparently, the CCTV had received strong pressure from the authorities. This action had annoyed the Dalian people and served as a catalyst for the city’s wide spread dissents. “If the PX program is safe without security problem, why shall the government force the CCTV to cancel the TV news program? The more the government colludes with the enterprises, the more problem is the PX program,” commented an ordinary resident close to the Gangwan Guangchang (the Harbor Square). 469

The Dalian people must have learned from the Xiamen PX protest (actually the local governments and societies had learned from the Xiamen PX protests in later environmental protests, especially those against PX programs), between August 9 and

468 Chairman of Dalian PX Program Board of Directors Was Revealed to Have Claimed Killing Workers If They Let in Journalists”, http://news.qq.com/a/20110811/000052.htm, 2015-08-12.
469 An interview in August 2012, Dalian, date undefined.
August 14, advocacy for a “walk” began to appear in cell phone messages, BBS communities, Sina Blogs and social media platform like QQ, twitter, etc. On August 14, 2011, many Dalian dwellers gathered before the People’s Square in front of Municipal Government to protest against the Dalian PX program. It was estimated around 12,000 Dalian local residents had participated in the on-site protest. The protestors wore T-shirts with anti-PX slogans, singing the national anthem, and called for the Dalian government to relocate the PX program out of Dalian (as Xiamen PX Incident).

On the afternoon of August 14, the Dalian Party Committee and the municipal government held a press conference and announced that the production of PX by Dalian Fujia Dahua would stop immediately and the program would be relocated soon. However, the new location was not revealed. Early in the evening, the CCTV news confirmed that decision by the Dalian municipal government to relocate the program and the incident gradually calmed down.

3. An Assessment of the Dalian PX Protest

The announcement of the Dalian government to relocating the PX program was encouraging. It was regarded as another major victory for Chinese environmental protests, and a victory for societal involvement as well. The Wall Street Journal called the Dalian government’s decision “an unusual display of responsiveness” and “bowing to environmental protests”. However, relocation of such a major PX program was never going to be easy. After the decision of the Xiamen government to relocate its PX program in the Gulei Peninsula of Zhangzhou city, the local residents immediately waged another protest to protect their own homeland and it took another year to successfully persuade the Zhangzhou people to accept the program and the investment rose from RMB10.8 billion to RMB13.78 billion. For the Fujia Dahua PX program, the Dalian government had to find a proper place that is both accepted by the local residents and Fujia Dahua Company. Given that the PX program had been stigmatized after the Xiamen PX protests, it is almost certain the relocation would not go smoothly. Besides, the Dalian government had to compensate heavily for the Fujia Dahua Company.

The trickiest part for the Dalian PX program was that, it seems that the production soon restarted while the matter of relocation seemed to have been shelved. On December 7, 2011, four months after the accident, an official letter from the Dalian Jinzhou New District Administration Committee, sent to the Dalian Customs authority claimed that the Fujia Dahua PX program, having suspended production and rectification, the danger to PX reserves cans had been eradicated,

“Experts believed the conditions for recovering production had been met, and therefore, Dalian Fujia PX program had been approved to recover production while preparing for relocation as a whole, and therefore, the customs authority was required to provide service to the Fujia Dahua Company”.

Another report revealed that news had reclaimed back the decision to relocate the program because the municipal government failed to find a suitable place, announcing the decision of recovery of production within a small group of people and asking for their understanding.

Further news was that the Dalian government had authorized Beijing Petrochemical Engineering Company to make the “Plan for Relocation of Dahushan Petrochemical Industrial Zone”, which had passed the review by China International Engineering Consulting Firm. And on December 7, the Dalian government organized a public hearing on the plan of overall relocation of petrochemical programs in Dahushan peninsula where the Fujia Dahua PX program located. The most shocking news came that that the PX program was shut down in September, and restarted production later in the month. Two years later, in late 2012, further news confirmed that the Dalian PX program had recovered production and its production capacity even doubled, though the news seemed to have been revealed to support a similar PX program in Ningbo that had also met

with strong public resistance. However, by the end of 2015, no further news about the relocation ever appeared about the relocation of the Fujia Dahua program, while the production of PX had recovered not long after suspension. This questioned the credibility of the Dalian government and indicated that the societal involvement of the Dalian PX protest was basically not successful in that societal involvement failed to really eradicate the potential danger and pollution of the program, or urging the government to relocate the program as promised. Three years after finishing a review of the relocation plan, the prospect of relocation still remain uncertain.

4. Societal Involvement in the Dalian PX Protest

4.1 Societal forces involved

4.1.1 The stakeholders: the Dalian dwellers

Those people who have direct interest in an event, namely, the stakeholders, are also part of the societal forces and as indicated in the introduction part and in analysis of the Xiamen PX protest and the Wenzhou Train Clash, societal forces tend be more fruitful when the stakeholders are middle class. This is also true with Dalian people. As a regional economic center, Dalian’s GDP capita weighed in at $14,000 in 2011, therefore it would be safe to say that Dalian is a middle-class society, which means the population has a better knowledge, awareness and resources to invest in the protests. Though the 12,000 plus demonstrators accounts for just a small proportion of Dalian’s overall population, more people are involved by sending advocacy messages, reading newspapers, daily talks, BBS, chatting rooms, etc. It is almost certain that the majority of Dalian people have joined the campaign against the PX program in one way or another.

4.1.2 New Media, Traditional Media and International Media

Though the Dalian PX protests lasted for a short time (roughly a week from August 8 when the tropical tide broke the protective dike aroused close to the PX reserves aroused media and public attention to August 14 when the Dalian government announced decision of relocation), media coverage was intensive and wide in scope. At the very beginning, local

475 The Dalian PX Program was under production normally, annual production capacity doubled to 1.4 million tons, http://xm.ifeng.com/baoliao/detail_2012_10/29/398903_0.shtml, 2015-08-12.
476 Global Nonviolent Action Database, Chinese middle class protesters challenge chemical plant in Dalian, 2011.
media were under strong censorship, while journalists were denied access to the site of the accident, and the CCTV journalists were even attacked. However, new media had played their role. Pictures and advocacy messages were transmitting among Dalian people via cell phone text messages, Internet chatting rooms and Twitter-like microblogs. When the news was known to all, traditional media from localities other than Dalian had published many articles urging the government to take proper actions. *South Weekly* criticized the Dalian PX program for “coming in muddiness and going in muddiness”, and pointed out that the most important thing for Dalian people is how to establish a truly transparent, and truly effective inspection system under the review of Dalian dwellers.  

Many international media, such as the Reuters, the Wall Street Journal, BBC News and the New York Times had reported the news, and the Guardian in particular tracked the issue closely and reported extensively on the issue. By exposing the issue to international community, the societal forces created a strong public opinion and pressure for Dalian government, who had been endeavoring to project itself as an open, stable, prosperous city ideal for investment.

### 4.1.3 Social Activists

The Dalian PX protests appeared to be well organized. Since August 9, BBS communities, Sina Blogs and social media platform like QQ, twitter, cell phone messages were started advocating a “walk” on the People’s Square toward the Municipal Government Building at 10:00 am on August 14, 2011. By observing the “organization” of the protests,

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One could easily find that there must be some social activists who had done researches about the Xiamen PX protests since many elements were very similar: the text message sent among Dalian people stated “(the Dalian PX program) is like an atomic bomb placed on Dalian land (Xiamen Island), the people in Dalian (Xiamen) will be living in Leukemia and deformed children ever since!”, exactly borrowed from the text message circulated among Xiamen citizens four years ago. The protesters wore similar preprinted shirts, signs, and slogans to that of Xiamen. Blog posts also show that during the week following the 8 August accident, Dalian people were increasingly talking about the 2007 protest in Xiamen.

There were also other social activists or even NGOs. For Instance, lawyers from the Center for Legal Assistance to Pollution Victims openly expressed their support of protesters. Bai Yansong, the major anchor from CCTV, had posted a message on the Sina Micro blog (Weibo) revealing his investigative program about the Dalian PC program was canceled. When his micro blog was frozen, he created a new account and criticized government infringement on “the public information sphere.” He was regarded as a social activist too. 480

4.1.4 Scholarly studies

Because Dalian PX protests, to some extent, marked a new stage for China’s government-state relationship at a time of economic updating and restructuring, rampant environmental and growing public awareness for participation and good governance, scholars of public administration, political science and legal studies had made Dalian PX protest an ideal case for academic studies. Some scholars explained the Dalian (as well as the Xiamen) PX program protests from the perspective of NIMBY, movements and protests against industrial or other production fallibilities that are potentially risky and dangerous for the neighborhood. 481 Academic studies of the protest had further exposed the Dalian PX program under spotlight, and also constituted pressure for the follow-ups of the program. Anyway, the Dalian government undertook to relocate the PX program four years ago.

479 Global Nonviolent Action Database, Chinese middle class protesters challenge chemical plant in Dalian, 2011.

480 Ibid.

481 William Glaberson, Coping in the Age of NIMBY, New York Times, 1988-7-19. Chinese scholars’ analysis of the Xiamen and Dalian PX incident were intensive. See Wang Na and Li Hao, Reflections on PX Movement: A Perspective from NIMBY Movement, Guanghua Law Studies, the 7th series, p30-40.
4.2 Interaction Pattern

The Dalian PX protest was conducted in a concentrated manner. After the protective dike was washed away by tropical tides on the morning of August 8, the danger of the Dalian people was impending since the greatest danger, the Muifa had not come. There was a general anxiety among the Dalian people. Because popular resentment about the stigmatized PX program was strong, and the Xiamen PX protest was naturally regarded as a model for Dalian’s protest, mass media, public opinion, social activists, scholars and Xiamen dwellers had a common goal and consensus to drive the PX program out of Dalian, therefore the societal forces had functioned in a coordinated and organized manner, making their engagement of the government centralized.

4.3 Rationality

Involvement by media, protesters, social activists and scholars were made in a rational manner. Though at the very beginning, there was confrontation between workers from the Fujia Dahua Company and journalists, those improper actions were taken by the Fujia Dahua Company, journalists, as part of the societal forces were not responsible for that. International media reported that there may be minor confrontation, a few plastic water bottles thrown at riot police.482

4.4 Sensitivity

According to the criterions stated in the introduction, sensitivity is evaluated based on whether there is loss of human life, whether the government is mainly reasonable for the occurrence of the event, and whether the event has to do with the regime legitimacy and has a major effect on social stability. The Dalian PX protest didn’t lead to human life loss, the government was not mainly responsible for the event and it didn’t have an apparent relationship with regime legitimacy or social stability. Therefore, the sensitivity of the event was low.

5. Similar Protests, Different Result

The Wukan land protest and the Dalian PX protest respectively stand for the successful and unsuccessful cases in policy changes driven by societal forces. The author will first compare the two cases to see what makes societal involvement successful or not, and will then compare the Wukan Land protest with the Qian Yunhui case, which mainly focused on Qian’s death, and was closely related to the land protests he led, while the local government had settled the case within the context of the continuing land dispute instead of a normal “traffic accident” as it had claimed. The author will also compare Dalian’s PX protest will the Xiamen PX protest in the hope that comparison between the two movements may reveal an mechanism or model that ensures policy implications in societal participation.

Societal involvement in Wukan land protest and the Dalian PX protest have many aspects in common. In terms of societal forces involved, both protests had involved traditional mass media, social activist, scholars and NGOs had also appeared in both cases, professionals were absent in both cases. In terms of media, new media and international media had played more evident role in exposure of the event, social motivation and creating public opinion and international pressure. Both cases had involved a large group of stakeholders, the 12,000 Wukan villagers and the 12,000 Dalian protesters, supported by more Dalian dwellers. Societal forces had functioned in a concentrated and consistent instead of fragmented or even inner consuming manner.

However, the Wukan land protests and the Dalian PX protest are different in three ways: rationality of societal involvement, sensitivity and area of the protests. In the Wukan case, societal involvement was rational yet with controllable confrontation. The villagers, as the major stakeholder, had confronted with the riot police under leadership of the Temporary Representatives Committee. While in the Dalian PX protest, societal forces involved in a rational way. The Wukan case was highly sensitive because of fierce confrontation, loss of human life, and the special timing, while the Dalian PX issue was emergent but not sensitive. The issue were different: the Wukan incident arose from land seizure while the Dalian incident from environmental concern. Area difference may determine the sensitivity of the issues and further determine the willingness and resolution of both societal forces and government.

1. What Really Matters?

Then did the differences in rationality of interaction, sensitivity and areas of issue
determined the different results? Hardly. Though these factors affect the scope and degree of societal influence on the decision-making process, they can’t explain the multiple cases. The six cases analyzed by this research respectively come from the area of legal injustice, environmental issues and land disputes, societal involvement in half of them failed while the other half were successful. If we assume that rational engagement tend to be more effective as proved by the Xiamen PX protest, then it can’t explain why societal involvement in Wukan land protest was so successful. Anyway, the Wukan protest was one of the most contentious movements over the past decade. Both the Wukan land protest and Qian Yunhui case were highly sensitive, but societal involvement in the former case was successful while the latter was unsuccessful. In the less sensitive cases of Sun Zhigang and Dalian PX, the results of societal involvement vary.

There are also other technical details that may affect the result of societal involvement. A comparison of the Xiamen PX Protest and the Dalian PX Protest may shed some light. The two programs were very similar in many aspects, as will be discussed in the following paragraphs. Firstly, both programs were major industrial investment that were supposed to contribute to the local economic development and job creation, and therefore were supported strongly by local government, since the latter needed such programs to ensure the annual growth rate of Gross Domestic Production (GDP). Secondly, societal involvement was quite similar in many ways. Though with minor differences, both Xiamen and Dalian local dwellers had been intensively involved in the protests, social activists, scholars, professionals, traditional media and new media had played an active role. Societal involvement was rational and concentrated. Because both cases belong to the environmental protection sector, the sensitivity of the issues remains similar.

However, the result of societal involvement is different. The Xiamen PX protests were by far China’s most successful case of societal involvement in the environmental protection sector, and in all sectors too. The society had successfully forced the Xiamen government to relocate the program far from Xiamen at low cost (less confrontation, no death, no serious punishment afterward); while the societal involvement in Dalian PX incident failed to force the program to really suspend its production and relocate even after four years had passed.

2. “Real Conditions”

As far as the two cases are concerned, the timing and location of the two
programs counts. The Xiamen PX began to arouse public interest in March 2007 while construction of its industrial park only started four months ago, while the Dalian PX program had finished construction in 2009 and by the time of the protest, it had been producing PX for two years with an annual production capacity of 70,000 tons after expansion. Prof. Zhao and her colleagues had completed an early research and proposed the new location while Dalian later found it very difficult to fulfill its early commitment (somewhat hastily made to resolve the protest) since the Dalian and neighboring area are densely populated. More importantly, Xiamen is a beautiful tourist city somewhat environmentally vulnerable for mega chemical programs, while Dalian was a leading industrial base aiming at building itself into China’s largest petrochemical center. Different priorities had also contributed to different results.

Then what factors made the Wukan case successful while the Dalian PX protests less successful or unsuccessful? To some extent, whether societal involvement could lead to a meaningful result is not decided by the smart strategies they employ, neither do they have such a strategy, societal involvement in protests are often spontaneous and unorganized, though there are often social activists involved in advocating, organization and coordination work.

3. Level of Leadership Intervention

Intervention of leadership from higher-level government proved to be vital for the settlement and success of societal involvement. In the Wukan case, the villagers had protested against illegal land deals four roughly two years before the major group incident broke out on September 21, 2012. However, their protests didn’t bring considerable results even in the following three months until Deputy Party Secretary Zhu Mingguo’s visits of the village on December 21. Interaction between government and societal forces went on benign track after intervention of provincial leaders. In the Dalian PX protest, the incident cooled down after the Mayor appeared on the People’s square and announced an immediate halt to production and a decision of relocation in the morning with official confirmation in the afternoon. This is also true with Sun Zhigang’s case (where national leaders urged Guangdong provincial government to conduct a thorough investigation), the Xiamen PX incident (intervention of top leaders from municipal and provincial government).

The opposite is also true. Two other failed cases, Qian Yunhui’s death and Bobai County protest, where decision-making was made at county level (Bobai County and Yue Qing city, a county-level city). Though the Wen Zhou government (upper level government
of Yueqing) had sent directives to the Yueqing government and police authority, the Wenzhou municipal government didn’t really get involved in the decision-making of the investigation.

However, involvement of higher-level government cannot explain why the Dalian government later failed to fulfill its promises. To some extent, the goal of the protests on August 14 was successful, since the Dalian government had undertaken to stop production and relocate the PX program. The question is, why no follow-ups? Even when the Dalian government knows failing to relocate the PX program will undermine government credibility and may bring unexpected consequences once another accident appear. 483

4. Interest Group (s)

Besides the real difficulties of relocating the Dalian PX program, such as funding and a suitable location, the Fujia Dahua Company may be the major barrier for the relocation. According to the official webpage of the company, Fujia Dahua is a joint venture established only in 2006 by the private company Fujia Group and the state-owned company Dahua Group with Fujia as the controlling shareholder (55%). 484 This was quite tricky, since the private company Fujian was only established in 1998 and almost had no experience and business in petrochemical industry before 2005. While the Dahua Group had been one of the more influential state-owned petrochemical companies, as a listed company at the Shanghai Stock Exchange, it was quite strange that Dahua Group should seek partnership with Fujia Group, let alone make it a controlling shareholder. Actually, there was news that the joint venture was a “forced marriage” proposed by a top leader from the Dalian Municipal government, who once opposed the idea of a sole investment by the Dahua Group. 485 The news also revealed “it is known to all in Dalian that the brother of this leader has close relationship with the Fujia Dahua”, and “some of the stakeholders have official background”. 486

Though the Fujia Dahua was a leading private company with numerous titles, its

483 This is quite likely since the gasoline pipe explosion in late 2010 had endangered the PX program, just one year before the dike damage. On December 6, 2014, fire broke out because of gasoline leakage. See “Fire Broke out for Gasoline Leakage in One of China’s Largest PX program, http://www.chinanews.com/sh/2014/12-07/6852369.shtml, 2015-12-12.
486 Ibid.
real economic might was still not comparable with state-owned enterprises. It only squeezed into the Top 500 Service Companies in 2010. However, the company had won very strong support from the Dalian Municipal government and Liaoning provincial governments whose top leaders all had visited the company. The company received a special subsidy of RMB 50 million provided by national debt, and had expanded its share within the Fujia Dahua from 51% to 81.5% before the protest, while the share of Dahua Group had declined to less than 20%. Thus, it is very hard to explain why such private company could receive so much favorable treatments.

The strong government support of Dalian and Liaoning provincial government was partially because the joint venture Fujia Dahua PX program was China’s largest petrochemical company and important tax payer, also because its ties with leaders from Dalian and its perceived relationship with central government. This is the major reason to explain why Bai Yansong’s investigative report was suddenly canceled after the he announced it in the parade. Normally, even Dalian government leaders have no right to do this. It can help to explain why the workers from the Fujia Dahua dared to attack CCTV journalists when deputy secretary-general of Dalian Municipal government, and Head of Police Authority of the Jinzhou Development Zone were present, who even failed to persuade the company to let the CCTV journalists in and they were attacked too. Within the Chinese context, it was probably because the Dalian PX program, the Fujia group especially, had special ties with and special support from an even higher-level government, the details of which the author may not clarify here.

In the former analysis, the Dalian government’s break of its former commitment to relocate the PX program is understandable. Without support from superior (even national) level government, even the Dalian municipal government would have to think twice. Given economic growth had been the central task for local governments, the latter were often very reluctant to make compromises in environmental and land protests. Since those environmentally problematic programs were often mega investments (this is especially true with China’s 15 PX programs) while those rural land seizures were often made by major construction or industrial programs, which were in the interest of the local government.

488 Ibid.
489 The Public Wins in Dalian, Chemical & Engineering News, Sept. 26, 2011. The report mentioned that the program may “have background” from top leadership.
Therefore, interest groups are an important variable that affect the result of societal involvement in decision-making. In fact, interests help to explain all six cases covered in by this research. As analyzed earlier, the family plan system had its function as a powerful interest group that had protractedly delayed the adjustment of the notorious “One Child Policy” and limited the result of the Bobai County protest against the policy. While in the Qian Yunhui’s case, the Yueqing Power Plant served as the interest group that had played a neglected yet potentially epochal role. In the Xiamen PX incident, the Tenglong Fangting Company under the Xianglu Group, as a Taiwanese investment, had endeavored to keep the program in Xiamen, and later relocated part of its investment to Dalian under the name of Yisheng, very close to the Fujia Dahua program.490 While in the Wukan land protest, the Wukangang Development Co., Ltd, the Yidazhou Company and several other developers had been involved in the many land deals with the corrupted village committee. Even in the Sun Zhigang’s case, the local C&R station policemen and civil affairs workers, had created an interest network that was probably against abolishment of the system.

Generally speaking, societal involvement was more fruitful when the interest groups were less powerful (the Wukan case, Sun Zhigang case) and less fruitful or even unsuccessful when the interest group were more powerful (the Yueqing Power Plant in Qian Yunhui Case and the Fujia Dahua Group in Dailian PX Protest) with the exception of the Xiamen PX protest where societal involvement was very successful while the interest group was equally influential and powerful. Admittedly, the term “successful” or “powerful” is in a relative meaning.

And those “interest groups” were closely connected with political power. The “interest groups” in Sun Zhigang’s case and the Bobai protest, namely the faulted C&R stations and the family plan system were part of the political regime. While the Fujia Dahua Company had strong political support (though its controlling stakeholder, the Fujia Group is a private company, the Fujia Dahua joint venture was directly managed by the Dalian State Assets Supervision and Administration Commission) while the Yueqing Power Plant, as part of the Zhejiang Energy Group, is a powerful state-owned enterprise. In Wukan’s case, there were no influential state-owned enterprises involved or dominating the process. This may help explain why the societal forces in the Wukan protest were successful. This can also help to explain why Xiamen PX protest was successful even when the Xianglu Group is a

very powerful and influential investment group. Because even though the Xiamen government and Fujian province support this investment, they were not directly involved in the program economically, because the program was a Taiwanese investment. The comparison also indicates that involvement of societal forces may be more successful when they are opposed to foreign investment while less successful when they are opposing a state-owned company or government branch.
Conclusion

Fundamental transformations have taken place in Chinese society ever since the Reform and Opening-up in late 1970s. This is especially true in the past decade when sustained economic growth, deepened reform and opening-up and intensive international exchange changed China’s relationship with the outside world, and reshaped the relationship between China’s state and its society. This empirical study aims to review China’s social changes from 2002 through 2012 by analyzing the interactions between the emerging societal forces and China’s political decision-making system through six major public incidents, and further evaluates the institutional, behavioral and policy implications of societal involvement in China’s decision-making. Societal forces are defined as a temporary coalition of societal entities (individuals, organizations or groups) who share common interests, purposes and values that are differentiated from decision-making entities (government) yet hope to influence the decision-making process often via pressure politics. By adopting the term “societal forces”, the author hopes to examine how society can, within an authoritarian regime, still influence the decision-making process when civil society is underdeveloped and channels for institutional and regular participation are absent. The research regards decision-making as a unitary and systematic response to societal involvement.

Involvement of societal forces in China’s decision-making is not institutional or conventional; it is possible only in a certain context. At the global level, Chinese decision-making has been under increasing international scrutiny via internationalization of domestic politics, the Chinese government is becoming reluctant to use repressive means against societal pressure. At the CCP level, it has evolved from being a pioneer of the proletariat to a pioneer of the Chinese nation, as interpreted by the three representatives (the CCP forever represents advanced productivity, advanced culture and interest of the vast majority of people), and further to national rejuvenator incarnated in Xi Jinping’s Chinese Dream. The
severe domestic and international challenges the CCP faces helped reshape its new source of legitimacy by performing new tasks in economic development, better governance and international prestige. The decentralization, pluralism and professionalism of the CCP, intraparty democracy nurtured by generation change and factional politics helped bringing greater social autonomy. At one end of the societal level, the burgeoning middle class and their growing political consciousness created a “critical realm” for strong societal forces as well as a limited “public sphere” typical for civil society.

The author has the conviction that the three factors are very important in that they made societal involvement in decision-making possible. Those contextual changes are partially a result of globalization; partially a result of the CCP’s self-adjustment to domestic and international environmental changes. It also revealed China’s changed relations with the outside world. Societal involvement and participation in decision-making are expected to expand as China is increasingly integrated into the world system.

Institutions, governmental behaviors and polices are three facets of the political system and are also three major criterions to evaluate the structure and process of the system. This research examines the three facets and tries to establish a causal-effect relationship between societal engagement and changed institutions, governmental behaviors and policy output. By doing so, the dissertation provides a general picture of the degree and scope of China’s political development, and also may clarify the implications of societal involvement for China’s political future.

The study is based on the author’s closely documented observations, and face-to-face interviews conducted intensively on six public incidents between 2002 and 2012: the Sun Zhigang case that forced the abolishment of the Custody and Repatriation system (2003); the Bobai County family plan protests that stopped the violent family plan campaign but failed to lead to further discussion or institutional revision of the family plan policy
(2007); the Xiamen PX protest that successfully urged the Xiamen government to relocate the program to coastal Gulei Peninsula (2007); the Qian Yunhui case where societal investigation failed to figure out the truth of the suspicious death of a village headman who had organized villagers to protest against the local government’s land seizure, and the government’s behavior remained repressive, arbitrary and uncooperative(2010); the Wukan land protest in 2011 that successfully forced local government, under direct leadership of provincial government, to change its policy on social organizations, village autonomy, and market-oriented land policy, and successfully settled the land dispute and which was deemed a new model for settling land disputes, and; the 2011 Dalian PX protest that urged the government to suspend production and relocate the Dalian PX program, while the government failed to carry out the plan four years after the decision of relocation was made.

The author chooses to evaluate the societal involvement in decision-making during major public incidents for several reasons. Firstly, Chinese society over the past decades was characterized by numerous group incidents; dealing with those incidents had become an integral part of the decision-making process. Secondly, different from the prolonged routines and bureaucratic procedures, decision-making during public incidents is often fast and intensive, and therefore is relatively easier to track and analyze. Intensive and timely media reports often help create a certain degree of transparency which is rare for China but convenient for scholarly analysis. Thirdly, public incidents often mean opportunities for societal involvement to make a difference in decision-making that can hardly be expected under normal circumstances.

The six cases are all large-scale societal protests joined by mass media, social activists, professionals, scholars and other societal forces. Each of the cases had intensive domestic and international media exposure. The six cases respectively took place in the area of legal injustice (Custody and Repatriation System in the Sun Zhigang Case and Family
Planning Policy in the Bobai County Protest), environmental crisis (Xiamen and Dalian PX Protests), and land-related disputes (in Wukan and Qian Yunhui), whereas the three areas are exactly the three major causes for social conflicts in the past ten years.

The six cases are geographically representative: the Bobai County family planning protest took place in China’s rural area of inland Guangxi province; Xiamen and Dalian are relatively developed coastal cities, Wukan and Yueqing (Qian Yunhui case) are rural areas of the developed coastal provinces, while Guangzhou is a metropolitan city with huge population migration.

More importantly, the six cases had led to distinctive effects of societal involvement that allow the author to draw meaningful conclusions through comparison of the six cases. Three of the six cases, namely, the Sun Zhigang case, Xiamen PX protest, and the Wukan land protest, are examples where societal involvement had led to positive results while the other three cases, namely, the Bobai County family planning protest, the Dalian PX protest, and the Qian Yunhui incident, are examples where societal forces were deeply involved without bringing positive effects. By comparing the successful and failed cases, the author examines under what conditions and in what way positive or negative results are achieved, and therefore may shed light on some of the reasons for China’s contentious politics.

The six cases show different features in terms of societal forces involved, the pattern of interaction between societal forces and government, the rationality of the interaction, the sensitivity of the issue, and the effects of societal involvement.

Societal forces: Who Matters

Thorough studies of the six cases indicate that social activists, mass media, public opinion, professionals and scholars had arisen as the major societal forces active in public incidents, pushing for a change in China’s political decision-making. However, their roles
Mess Media: Among all the societal forces, mass media and public opinion proved to be the most essential and almost indispensable societal forces. In all the three successful cases, the Sun Zhigang case, the Xiamen PX protest and the Wukan protest, media exposure was often the watershed for the development of the cases. Before the news was released via media, the stallholders were hardly forthcoming. After the news release and public opinion was formed, societal involvement began to be reinforced and the positive effects began to appear after media exposure and increased coverage. Sun Zhihang’s family had protested hopelessly until the Southern Metropolis Daily reported Sun’s death and made it known nationwide; In the Xiamen PX incident, Xiamen citizens’ awareness was aroused and organized only after the China Business Journal reported Zhao Youfen’s anti-PX bill to the National Political Consultative Conference on March 18, 2007, Zhao’s bill had even failed to make a difference before it was reported. One of the major reasons for success of Wukan’s protests was the intensive involvement of international media and its use of new media.

New media, such as blogs, BBS, Internet-based communities, and cell phone messages had played a very important role in the case of the Xiamen and Dalian PX protests, the Qian Yunhui case and Wukan land protest. Xiamen and Dalian PX protests had both intensive traditional media and new media coverage, while the Qian Yunhui case and Wukan protests relied more on new media and international media because the two cases were both too sensitive for traditional media. Because Sun Zhigang’s case took place in 2003 when China’s information industry was still at its initial stage with a relatively small proportion of Internet and cell phone users, the role of new media was not evident. Traditional media from other localities proved to be more important than local traditional media since they were under censorship by the local government. A journalist from the
Southern Metropolis Daily later had trouble with the municipal and provincial government for its role in the Sun Zhigang’s case and its earlier report of severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS).

The Bobai County protest didn’t have sufficient media exposure either in traditional media or in new media, and therefore had not formed a nationwide public opinion. It is probably because the protests took place in the relatively underdeveloped villagers and townships of the isolated Bobai County that the protests failed to attract sufficient attention from media from other provinces while its local protesters failed to use new media in all other cases. It may also be because the protests only lasted for three days before they were settled down. Insufficient media exposure was one of the major reasons for the failure of successful involvement.

As an opposite example, the Dalian PX protest and the Qian Yunhui case indicated that intensive media exposure couldn’t ensure success of societal involvement. The Dalian PX protests had intensive domestic and international exposure; because Dalian is an open, coastal middle class society with a large proportion of Internet and cell phone users, new media was also very active. It was regarded as an unsuccessful case as the Dalian municipal government didn’t fulfill its commitment to relocate the Dalian PX program. However, the Dalian government’s slowness in follow-ups couldn't be attributed to societal involvement. The protestors had urged the Dalian government to take the decision of suspended production and relocation. Therefore, the protests before and on August 14 was in a way successful.

Involvement of traditional media, either in the form of newspapers and TV programs, especially mainstream central media is often very influential and symbolic. Sun Zhigang’s case and Xiamen’s PX protest were reported by central media; Qian Yunhui’s case was reported by China Central Television (CCTV) whose interview of the witnesses aimed to
prove Qian’s death was “an accident”; the CCTV canceled well-known anchor Bai Yansong’s report about the Dalian PX program. Whether the mainstream media reports an incident and how it reports the incident to some extent indicates the effect of societal involvement.

Social Activists: No group incidents happened spontaneously all of a sudden. The role social activists played were not significant yet indispensible in the societal involvement of decision-making. In all of the three successful cases and the three unsuccessful cases, the role of social activists seemed no different to the Internet-based community and chat rooms, connecting and coordinating protesters, organizing protests. However, stronger leadership of social activists tended to render more positive results. In the Xiamen PX protest and Wukan land protest, the social activists had a strong and stable leadership. Sun Zhigang’s case was a bit different since it was one of the earliest societal involvements. Because there was a general sympathy for Zhigang and his family, many people helped them without strong support from social activists as compared to the three failed cases of the Bobai County family planning protest (altogether 28 social activists were arrested, mostly local farmers and small business owners) and Qian Yunhui’s death investigation (all investigation teams were led, organized or participated by social activists), and the Dalian PX protests (unnamed organizers of the protests).

Scholars: The role of scholars is obvious in almost all group incidents, especially that of legal scholars and public intellectuals. Scholars played a decisive role in two of the three successful cases: the constitutional review requested by the three law graduates and the five leading law professors was decisive for the final abolishment of the C&R system in Sun Zhigang’s case; and in the Xiamen PX protest, the Professor Zhao Yufen and her colleagues had conducted research and the bill she and other 104 senior members from the National People’s Political Consultative Conference (NPPCC) proved decisive for the whole anti-PX
campaign. However, the role of scholars was not evident in the Wukan land protest. Among the three failed cases, the scholars’ role was absent in the Bobai County’s family planning protest, while in the Qian Yunhui case, scholars’ involvement was in-depth and broad. However, their involvement failed to make a difference. The scholars’ role in major reform and long-term legal and institutional reforms are evident and indispensible for their knowledge and vision. Other societal forces may not have similar effects.

Professionals: Professionals provide key support for societal involvement. All three successful involved professionals. In the Xiamen PX and Sun Zhigang’s cases, professionals had provided reliable evidence based on which, the society and the government could negotiate for a compromise, given that the mistrust between the government and society had been very strong. In the Wukan case, there was one social activist, Xue Jinbo who died suspiciously during police detention; however a third-party autopsy confirmed that in fact, death was caused by heart disease. In the failed case of Qian Yunhui, technicalities of the truck and the medical-legal autopsy of Qian Yunhui’s body may have provided key evidence about the real cause of Qian’s real death. However, the organization failed to figure out the speed of the truck before it killed Qian, and since it was the organization designated by Yueqing police, the latter may have influenced the result of the review. Qian’s family refused to do an autopsy of Qian’s body because his family didn’t expect it to bring a positive result. A few well-known lawyers and a former police officers also participated in the investigations of Qian’s death. The study revealed that professionals are very important once they provide key evidence. It also indicated that lawyers had been very active societal forces as professionals, while their role was often constrained by the political system. This

491 Sun Yat-sen University Hospital (the same hospital who provided medical-legal assistance to Sun Zhigang’s family in 2003) was commissioned to do the autopsy that basically confirmed social activist Xue Jinbo died of heart disease but proposed it do a further evaluation. Because of the tension between both the societal forces and government no suggestion of of human rights abuses (police torture) was made, or the professionals’ role in the Wukan case, which was not obvious. But the test helped to relieve the public mistrust of government since later Xue’s family accepted government compensation.
could also be proved by the most recent sentence of well known human rights lawyer Pu Zhiqiang.

NGOs: Different from Western society, the role of the NGOs was absent because of the CCP’s vigilance against NGOs and its tight control over them. But in the Xiamen PX protests and Wukan land protest, NGOs made their presence known Xiamen’s PX NGOs had been active as organizer, coordinator and even decision-making organ for Wukan village. NGOs legitimized the collective leadership of the Temporary Council of Representatives, optimized the policy choice and helped form a unitary policy towards the government that proved vital. Divisions between leadership and the grassroots were one of the key reasons for societal failure in engaging the government. The Wukan Women’s Association was also active during the protest and it was even claimed illegal together with the Temporary Council of Representatives, but later the decision was canceled under social pressure. In a later phase of the protest, the director of the New Enlightenment Institute, Mr. Xiong Wei, a senior social activist was involved in the general election under government supervision. It also displayed that the Guangdong government was more open-minded.

The Main Stakeholders: Actually, though all six cases had the involvement of different parties, the role of the main stakeholders and non-stakeholders was different. Stakeholders refer to societal forces that had direct interest in the protest. In Sun Zhigang’s case, the stakeholders were exactly Sun’s family; in the Xiamen and Dalian PX protests, the city dwellers were the main stakeholders; in the Qian Yunhui and Wukan land disputes, the villagers were the main stakeholders. In the Bobai County family planning protests, stakeholders were protesters from the 10 townships where protests against township government took place. Most of the incidents were joined by national and international societal forces (media for instance), however, societal involvement was often mainly conducted by the main stakeholders. What kind of main stakeholders often decide the
features of the interaction and somewhat determine the result of the interaction. Societal involvement proved more rational and effective when the main stakeholders have more resources, knowledge, and experience to engage the government. In the Xiamen PX protest and Dalian PX protests, good results were achieved because their main stakeholders were middle class. Due to the lack of participation of other societal forces, the Bobai County protest didn’t bring any significant changes with government policy or behavior, let alone adjustment of the family planning policy. This was very interesting compared with Sun Zhigang’s case. Involvement of very weak stakeholders (Sun’s poor family) but joined by strong societal forces, could still lead to very good result, while very strong stakeholders, joined by a few other societal forces could still be unsuccessful.

Varied Salience of Societal Forces in Different Stages:

Initial stage: social activists: Societal involvement is a dynamic process. In different stages, the salience of societal forces may change. At the initial stage, often the social activists prove to be important. In the Xiamen and Dalian PX incidents, the Wukan Land protest and the Qian Yunhui’s protest, the main stakeholders, under leadership or support of social activists, had protested for months, Qian Yunhui himself was a social activist before his death. In the Bobai County family planning policy protest, secret contact work (chuanlian) by social activists before the first protest on May 17 morning had incited more protests in nine other townships within the following two days and reached its peak on May 19. Before a major incident that could lead to media coverage and arouse public interest, social activists played a leading role. And understandably, many social interest conflicts and smaller protests didn’t develop into major incident, not because the conflicts were solved, but because there were no strong or “qualified” social activists.

Media coverage after the accident or major event: When something unusual happens
either a major accident or loss of human life, media reports and coverage would be essentially and important. After the Dalian protective dike was damaged, the breakout of the Wukan protest and the Bobai County family planning protest, Sun Zhigang’s miserable death and Qian Yunhui’s suspicious death, the public were exposed to the unusual events and therefore most importantly, it helped bring more societal forces in (scholars, professionals, etc.), and arouse the interest of the public and helped create a strong public opinion. At this stage, traditional media reports are often more influential than reports by new media, domestic media is often more desirable than international media. Because of media censorship, new media is becoming more important and effective. The Wukan protest, Qian Yunhui’s death the Xiamen and Dalian’s PX protest were all disclosed by the Internet-based BBS, blogs, Internet community, and chatting rooms, when things became clearer, Internet WebPages often started to report news about the events. And if the issue is not sensitive and censorship is not strict, traditional newspaper and TV programs will follow, and then public opinion will be shaped.

At the initial stage of media involvement, if there was no report of the event by traditional media, exposure to new media must be huge in numbers and intensive in frequency. Influential WebPages or popular internet communities are preferable. Timely updating is necessary since readers prefer the whole story instead of fragmented, isolated and somewhat “irrelevant” information. If there are onsite pictures to prove the event took place, or if there are preliminary analysis by insiders, the event would be more likely to be covered by an influential Webpage or traditional media.

The most recent trend is that mobile-based real time social media (Chinese versions of Facebook and Twitter, WeChat or the latter via client service) are gaining momentum because of tightening web controls (real name registration, deletion of news, sensitive words) by the present administration and the lack of credibility of Internet based news. In
the Tianjin explosion that pulled a whole stock area into the ground and killed over a hundred people, news and pictures about the fire were circulated via mobile-based WeChat for hours before the first news came out via the Chinese Web (most of the pictures were taken by locals onsite with short analysis and comment and many also came from onsite reports of international media). In the most recent public incident incited by the suicide of a middle school girl in Jin Chang of Gansu province, the news first came and circulated via WeChat and circulated on the internet.

Without being reported or exposed via traditional media or new media this often leads to the failure of bringing in more societal forces and even failure for the involvement, this is probably one of the reasons for the unsuccessful level of involvement in the Bobai County family planning protests.

Professionals: At this stage, professionals may be necessary in some of the cases, especially when there are deaths and accidents; technical reports by professionals are often desirable. Involvement of professionals and media are often co-related and mutually reinforcing. With reliable technical reports by professionals, the media, especially traditional media will provide more reliable reports and analysis and will create stronger public opinion and exert greater pressure for the government.

Scholars: As indicated in the earlier analysis, the role of the scholars is more salient in legal and institutional reform issues instead of immediate solutions or emergency responses to a major public incident. Therefore, in the later stage of the incidents and in major institutional and legal issues, scholars have greater say. Actually, most of the cases indicated in this study were later covered by academic research and theoretical discussions. Scholars do have a role as public intellectuals who may also publish some articles, posing questions, having interviews and even getting involved in advocating jobs and becoming part of the public opinion. However, their role is not as evident in pushing for major legal or
institutional reforms.

Major factors: Involvement patterns, rationality, and sensitivity. In terms of interaction patterns, both the Xiamen PX protest and the Wukan land protests and the early phase of the Dalian PX protest had proved the importance of coordination, consistency and concentration in societal engagement. In the failed case of the Bobai County family protest, societal forces were involved in decision-making in a concentrated way, while in the Qian Yunhui case, their involvement was very decentralized and fragmented. This involvement pattern has partially hindered them from getting closer to the truth behind Qian’s death. However, under condition of limited access to key information because of government manipulation, it is understandable that they should have very different opinions and interests. Even if they were involved in a well-coordinated and collaborative manner, their findings would be limited. Further explanation will be made in the later part of the conclusion.

The relevance of sensitivity to the effects of societal participation remains unclear. Societal involvement succeeded in the highly sensitive issue of the Wukan land protest and failed in the equally highly sensitive issue of the Qian Yunhuicase. This was also true with less sensitive issues of Xiamen (successful) and Dalian PX protest (unsuccessful) and medium sensitivity issue of Sun Zhiang case (successful) and the Bobai County family planning protest (unsuccessful). The Xiamen PX Plant Incident can be considered as a unique example where concentrated participation of professionals, social activities, new media, ordinary Xiamen citizens, and other societal forces had led to major behavioral changes of the Xiamen municipal government.

In terms of rationality, societal forces as well as the Xiamen government had demonstrated rationality in the Xiamen PX plant incident, based on which a commendable society-government interaction was achieved by engaging the government in a very
constructive manner. Societal forces, centered by within-regime scientists Zhao Youfen and her colleagues, have effectively changed governmental behavior from power and arrogance to responsiveness and further initiative; from repressive to cooperative to democratic; from information withholding to openness and finally to transparency. Rationality in Sun Zhigang’s case remained neutral, since it was in the social justice sector and none of the societal forces engaged were stakeholders. While Wukan’s protests appeared very antagonistic, prolonged and even dangerous, the author defines the Wukan case as rational with controllable antagonism. The villagers, under strong leadership of the Temporary Council of Representatives, adopted the “escalation strategy” as leverage to bargain with the government. The research also tentatively finds that controllable antagonism supported by large-scale participation could also be safe and effective, and different from the previous assumption of rationality and constructive engagement rendering the best results.

In the three unsuccessful cases, social involvement in the Bobai County family planning protests, mainly by local protestors, was violent. Confrontation and attacking of government buildings, overturning and burning of official automobiles appeared in all Bobai County’s 10 townships where large-scale protests took place. Violence by protesters had successfully stopped the local government’s harsh implementation of the family planning policy, but also justified government repression. Most importantly, involvement by the local forces in an antagonistic manner failed to bring any positive results. In the Qian Yunhui case, serious confrontation took place once between villagers and riot police when the latter wanted to take Qians’ body away. Subsequent involvement of villagers and other societal forces were all conducted in rational manner.

As to rationality, one thing must be clarified: in the Wukan land protest, Qian Yunhui case and Bobai County family planning protest, confrontation and even violence occurred. However, the confrontation and violence took place between the main
stakeholders and local government, and the involvement of all other societal forces remained rational and peaceful. The rationality of cases was summarized and evaluated in terms of societal forces as a whole since the government needed to make its decisions with a systematic response to the societal forces as a whole.

What Else Matter? Regional disparity

The effects of societal involvement showed geographical differences. The three successful cases all took place in the metropolitan city of Guangzhou, the middle-class coastal city of Xiamen and the rural Wukan village in Guangdong province. This may not reveal the whole picture since the three failed cases also covered middle-class coastal Dalian, the rural village of Zhaiqiao (in Qian Yunhui case) and Bobai County in China’s underdeveloped western Guangxi. However, if we review many other cases mentioned earlier in this study, (the Wengan protest in Southwestern China’s Guizhou, the Violent Protest in Shishou of central inland China’s Hubei, the great chemical explosion in Tianji and the most recent public incident in Jinchang in Northwestern China’s Gansu, and the PX protest in Maoming in South China’s Guangdong, and Eastern China’s Ningbo), protests in relatively developed coastal areas tend to be more concerned with land disputes, environmental protection and labor disputes, which are basically problems brought by urbanization and industrialization, while public incidents in less developed inland areas often resulted from minor accidents, but fueled by rumors in the context of problematic government behaviors and societal mistrust on government. Many of the group incidents from less developed inland areas were actually anger-venting incidents where a minor accident helped to incite and release the long-harbored anger of society in the government. Societal protests in less developed inland areas tend to be more violent and contentious than coastal areas while the result of societal involvement in government decision-making of coastal areas tends to be more rational, skillful and effective because both the society and
the government have more resources, better knowledge and experience, and are more open-minded to compromise. However, the analysis is a tentative evaluation on a comparative basis, to be further testified by more cases and in-depth analysis.

Level of Leadership Intervention: The intervention of leadership from higher-level government proved to be vital for settlement and success of societal involvement. In the Wukan case, the villagers had protested against illegal land deals for roughly two years before the major group incident broke out on September 21, 2012. However, their protests didn’t bring considerable results even in the following three months until Deputy Party Secretary Zhu Mingguo’s visits to the village on December 21. Interaction between government and societal forces went on a benign track after intervention of provincial leaders. In the Dalian PX protest, the incident cooled down after the mayor appeared in the People’s square and announced an immediate halt to production and the decision to relocation in the morning with official confirmation in the afternoon. This is also true with Sun Zhigang’s case (where national leaders urged Guangdong provincial government to conduct a thorough investigation), the Xiamen PX incident (intervention of top leaders from municipal and provincial government).

The opposite is also true. Two other failed cases, Qian Yunhui’s death and the Bobai County protest; decision-making was made at county level (Bobai County and Yue Qing city, a county-level city). Though the Wen Zhou government (upper level government of Yueqing) had sent directives to the Yueqing government and police authority, the Wenzhou municipal government didn’t really get involved in the decision-making of the investigation.

Therefore, there seemed to be a tendency that the top-down approach of decision-making still prevailed with the Chinese government. Zhao Youfen from the NPPCC is a scholar, but also a member of the intellectual elite as well as political elite (members of the NPPCC enjoy certain benefits in salary, housing, medical care and other social welfare
equivalent to certain levels of officials). Zhao (and her colleagues) engaging the Xiamen government could partially be regarded as an interparty discussion that increased the success of the Xiamen PX protest. The many protests, though started from the bottom, and had to involve higher ranking officials if it were to be successful (as is the case in Wukan).

However, involvement of higher-level government can’t explain why the Dalian government later failed to fulfill its promises. To some extent, the goal of the protests on August 14 was successful, since the Dalian government had undertaken to stop production and relocate the PX program. The question is, why no follow-ups? Even when the Dalian government knows failing to relocate the PX program will undermine government credibility and may bring unexpected consequences once another accident occurs.

“Real Conditions”: timing, strategy and location: As long as the six cases are concerned, there are also many technical details that may make a difference in the level of the societal involvement. Wukan’s success may be partially attributed to the crucial timing before the 18th Party Congress when political stability remained the top priority for the country and the provincial leaders’ prospects and therefore governmental willingness to make a compromise was strong; News of the Xiamen PX program was released not long before the annual NPC and NPPCC conference when Prof. Zhao was able to make use of the opportunity to initiate the bill with the other 104 NPPCC members. The Xiamen PX protest was organized four months after construction started, while the Dalian PX program had produced PX for two years and had its production capacity expanded. Prof. Zhao successfully found an alternative location for the Xiamen PX program, while it was fairly difficult for Dalian to found such an alternative since the Dalian and neighboring area are densely populated. More importantly, Xiamen is a beautiful tourist city somewhat environmentally vulnerable to mega-chemical programs, while Dalian is a leading industrial base aimed at building itself into China’s largest petrochemical center. Different priorities
have also contributed to different results. All contributed to the success and failure of societal involvement.

What Really Matters? Interest Group: Success and failure in societal involvement could be better explained by taking into account the emerging interest groups behind the state-society narrative and that the coalition between power and business are what really hindered societal involvement from making a difference in government decision-making. Interest groups are very effective in explaining all cases covered by this research. The violent protests by Bobai County people against the family planning campaign waged by local government stopped the local government’s harsh implementation of the family planning policy. However, violent protests wouldn’t shake the questionable family planning policy even though it was already under harsh criticism and that there were already many scientific studies by domestic and international demographical scholars that proved the absurdity of the policy. However, the family planning system had functioned as a powerful interest group that had protractedly delayed the adjustment of the notorious “One Child Policy” and limited the result of the Bobai County protest against the policy.

In Sun Zhigang’s case, the faulted C&R stations and its over 800 stations all over China had become a profit-seeking facility for grassroots level policeman, civil service workers and other affiliates (assistants, doctors, criminal cabals, brokers between police stations and victims, to name a few), a lesser “interest group” for short. The system was abolished partially because the “interest group” is small and local, without influential government departments or “system) (xi tong) involved. The Fujia Dahua Company had strong political support (though its controlling stakeholder, the Fujia Group is a private company, the Fujia Dahua joint venture was directly managed by the Dalian State Assets Supervision and Administration Commission) from even higher-level leadership than Liaoning provincial leaders. This may help to explain why the Dalian government undertook
to relocate the program while later being unable to fulfill the commitment. The Yueqing Power Plant, as part of the Zhejiang Energy Group, was a powerful state-owned enterprise that appeared to have been involved before in Qian’s death, however they disappeared from public eye during the investigation. The role was suspicious and mysterious. Behind the Wukan’s case, there were no influential state-owned enterprises involved or dominating the process. This may help explain why the societal forces in the Wukan protest were successful. This can also help to explain why the Xiamen PX protest was successful even though the Xianglu Group is a very powerful and influential investment group. Though the Xiamen government and Fujian province supported this investment, they were not directly involved in the program economically, because the program was a Taiwanese investment. The comparison also indicates that involvement of societal forces may be more successful when they are opposed to foreign investment while less successful when they are opposing a state-owned company or government branch.

To conclude, societal involvement was more fruitful when the interest groups were less powerful (the Wukan case, Sun Zhigang case) and less fruitful or even unsuccessful when the interest group were more powerful (the Yueqing Power Plant in Qian Yunhui Case and the Fujia Dahua Group in Dalian PX Protest); Another important finding is that societal involvement was more successful when the interest group had large foreign investment (Xiamen PX, Wukan land protest) while societal involvement was less successful or unsuccessful when the “interest group” was a large state-owned cooperation(Yue Qing Power Plant in Qian Yunhui Case) or large cooperation with strong governmental or official background (Fujia Dahua PX program in Dalian PX protest). This finding helps to explain the Xiamen PX protest where societal involvement was very successful while the interest group was equally influential and powerful. Admittedly, the terms “successful” or “powerful” are relative.
Those “interest groups” were closely connected with political power and therefore created the ubiquitous phenomenon of crony capitalism that had constrained societal forces. Anyway, compared with the coalition of economic and political power, societal forces are too weak. Crony capitalism is not what this study hopes to address. However, the finding of crony capitalism (interest groups) being the real constraint for societal involvement is significant since it challenged the conventional wisdom of the market economy leading to democratization since economic development will nurture the middle class that demands more political freedom and rights. This research partly proved the findings of Bruce Dickson about the cozy relationship between entrepreneurs and political leaders that had effectively co-opted the emerging business class to support the political order instead of becoming a pro-democracy agent, let alone side with the societal forces against the government.

Originality and limitation: This study reviewed the role of societal forces in China’s decision-making within the time frame of 2002-2012. It analyzed the interaction between societal forces and the government in six cases selected from a selection of public incidents that respectively cover legal injustice, environmental protection and land disputes. The six cases are geographically representative and had institutional, behavioral and policy implications. By evaluating the results of each case and making a comparison between successful and unsuccessful cases, the author has drawn tentative conclusions on what societal forces are involved; in what form, and under what conditions societal involvement can be more or less successful in decision-making. Through in-depth analysis, the dissertation was able to determine what societal forces are definitely playing a role in the various group incidents, the way they function and their implications in changed institutions, government behaviors and policies.

Through the six cases and many other group incidents until the present, the study was able to illustrate the policy making process in times of emergencies and under strong
societal pressure within the changed domestic and international context, allowing it to make the latest assessment about Chinese societal and political developments. The author endeavors to theorize the mechanisms through which society interacts with the government and makes a difference in the latter’s decision-making institutions, behaviors, and policies, in an authoritarian state where a civil society and a mature middle class are absent.

However, the limitations of the research are apparent. The studies were purely confined to China’s experience under a very specific context, the conclusion of which may not fully explain the practices of other cultures, given the differences in the political system, economic development and cultural traditions. Since the conclusions of the study were drawn from societal participation in terms of social incidents, it failed to review the mechanism for conventional and regular participation in routine decision-making, knowing that the interaction patterns and the effect may be different in normal and abnormal times. The research regards the political system as a unitary player and decision-making as a unitary process, therefore it may fail to take into account the important factors within the decision-making regime and the process; and for obvious reasons, many important details during the decision-making process were evaluated but many more details remain unknown and may have been important in the analysis.

Future Plan: In the coming years, the author intends to expand the existing research to cover more cases and establish a database of China’s public incidents within a broader spectrum, based on which more reliable conclusions may be drawn. The author also hopes to cover some cases of societal participation in decision-making during conventional decision-making to see the similarities, differences, and defining features of the two types of involvement. The author will also, if the opportunity arises, incorporate China’s crony capitalism, and social stratification and their implications for societal participation in decision-making.
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