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Contentious Activities and Party-State Responses in Contemporary China – Investigating China's Democratisation during its Modernisation

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Contentious Activities and Party-State Responses in Contemporary China

Investigating China's Democratisation during its Modernisation

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Abstract

The macroscopic picture of China today is highly contradictory: on the one hand there is an explicit scenario of modernisation initiated by the government and developing in unexpected depth and rapidity, and on the other hand an implicit but unrecognised scenario of democratisation nurtured by modernisation and actively involving different social forces. Due to the intensifying social problems – and perhaps even social crisis – that accompany the many transformations, such as the restructuring relationship between Party-state, society and individuals and the changing culture and value system, remarkable contentious activities have been launched by a wide range of social actors striving for their rights and interests. Underneath the dynamic character of contentions in China, this research will try to test the normative and ethical presumption that contentious politics promotes both robust civil society and representative government – the substance of democracy. I examine the contentious actions of the three significant social groups - the labourers, intellectuals and religious groups - and the Party-state responses to their politics, which are largely co-optation, toleration and control-repression. I also examine the important dynamic between centre and province with regard to their responses. My methods of documentation, interviewing and internet content analysis have been adopted in order to study these contentions and Party-state responses. The thesis concludes that the relationships between Party-state, society and individuals are restructured in contentions and interactions driven by modernisation. There are mounting democratic pressures and open demands from people with an increasing political consciousness, which challenge authority to different extents all over the country and will lead to China's democratisation in both bottom-up and top-down directions.

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Chapter 1– Introduction

1.1 An intellectual curiosity

In October 2007, at the 17th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC) new national objectives were announced which were to build a strong, prosperous, democratic, culturally advanced, harmonious and modernised socialist country (Xinhua News, 2007). The official statement integrated the most recently announced doctrines of the 'Three Represents' and the 'Harmonious Society' and was evidence of the CPC's confidence that the emerging discourses at home and abroad regarded China as a rising global power.

This statement of objectives not only conceptualises an overarching blueprint designated and delivered by 'the great leadership'– the Communist Party – but it also accentuates a confident transition from the prospects, promises and ideology to the realities of China. Besides being up-to-date and emphasising modernisation and harmony, this statement underlines the basic nature of the regime as *socialist* and *democratic* to signify its ideological continuity. But are these claims only valid in the CPC's own terms or are they universally accepted?

As for *modernisation*, no one will disagree that there is an abundance of evidence that China has made historic achievements in its economic development as well as in social and cultural progress and thus in its *prosperity* and *civilisation*. The concept of modernity, however, is inevitably bound up with ideology and power relations and China needs to explore its own developmental path (Fewsmith, 2001: 117). The brief three decades of reform and opening up since 1978 are also divided into different eras. In particular, it can be argued that after 1992, during Jiang Zemin's era, China took a path that charged at full speed towards *modernism* or even *capitalism* rather than *socialism*. It did so by prioritising marketisation and privatisation while de-emphasising communist ideals. In Hu Jintao's era, such opinions were more balanced and there was a re-emphasis on *socialism* with a top-down ideology as well as policies regarding 'sustainable development' and a 'harmonious society'. Some have suggested that China has even developed along the lines of – and modelled itself as – a 'Beijing Consensus' as an alternative to the 'Washington Consensus' for developing countries (Ramo, 2004). Though there are claims as to the success of 'socialism with Chinese characteristics', this still falls short of the expectations of both the populace and academics

because of unsolved or emerging problems and the cost of reform, which can never be underestimated, concealed or ignored.

With regard to political and institutional aspects, the Party-state rhetoric of building up the Chinese characteristics of a *socialist democracy* has faced fiercer criticism over time. Until the early 21st century China was still categorised as an 'unfree' state in world politics, where citizens' human rights and liberties were systematically curtailed or denied (Kegley and Wittkopf, 2001: 64). Such arguments, supported by evidence of ongoing human rights violations, corruption and abuses of power, contribute to the unsettling puzzle of how China can sustain its rapid economic progress without substantial political reform, such as *democratisation*. In fact, the Party-state led practice of evolving political relations, such as village committee elections, intra-party democracy, legal reform, addressing social justice and welfare, internet consultations and public hearings, has been emerging and apparently contextualised by special Chinese conditions. The increasing amount of political transformation taking place in China has led to questions as to whether it is still possible to simply label China undemocratic. This has resulted in continual energetic intellectual efforts both inside and outside China trying to characterise the Chinese regime as neo-authoritarianism (Petracca and Xiong, 1990), post-Communism (Cook and Murray, 2001), incremental democracy (Yu, 2002), constitutional democracy (Y. Zheng, 2008) or deliberative dictatorship (Leonard, 2008). This has also stimulated a more fundamental controversy over how to define democracy in China in a way that distinguishes it from the dominant Western definition (Nathan, 2008; Zhao, 2000).

The drives behind such pro-democratic practice and observable involvement in political system in China are also different from its Western counterparts. According to the classic theory development promotes democracy (Huntington, 1968, 1991; Lipset, 1959, 1960) and, in the practice of the established democracies, economic growth produces an educated and entrepreneurial middle class who, sooner or later, begin to demand political rights and participation in the form of civil society organisations, which will undermine repressive governments (Mesquita and Downs, 2005). On the other hand is the development of a market economy and capitalism, and the effective use of resources that require free multiple decision making, independent property ownership and citizenship, and a whole network of independent processes of scrutiny, justification, transparency and accountability of which

democracy, in the sense of representative government, is crucial (Hutton, 2008). However, the Chinese practice seems a mix of these deductions.

China also has an emerging civil society, but according to Western standards, it appears to be neither forming organisations that enjoy full autonomy and independence nor working as a check and balance to the state. China has a growing middle class and wealthy class, yet it can be suggested that greater wealth alone does not automatically lead to greater political freedom and democracy. In certain circumstances, the regime can reap the benefits of economic development and legitimise its political control. A new conceptual framework with both practical feasibility and theoretical adaptability is then needed to connect modernisation and democratisation in China. This thesis begins with such an academic curiosity and inquiry.

1.2 Background

The CPC came into power through revolution – the anti-federalist, anti-imperialist, anti-colonialist revolution – to free its people from a century of humiliated and chaotic history. After 1949, under Party-state hegemony and revolutionary-style rule, much emphasis was put on unity, uniformity, centralisation, egalitarianism and collectivism. The all-embracing impact of the CPC was felt as it became embedded in almost all aspects of people's lives, from ideological, political, economic, social and cultural to organisational practice. However, within the homogenised, totalitarian and introverted society, there was still a great, conscious or unconscious, both top-down and bottom-up demand for change, for pluralism, individuality, autonomy and liberation. Deng Xiaoping's great decision to reform, open up and liberate the thoughts could be successfully and efficiently put into action only because it acknowledged and met the public demand at the time. As a result, this reform has become China's second revolution, resulting in a market economy, global competition and the development of high technology and telecommunication. The market has replaced central planning as the dominant mechanism of resource allocation. There is a separation of government functions from enterprise management. More autonomy, incentives and revenue-raising powers have been offered to local governments during the process of decentralisation. As the interconnection between China and the world deepens, different actors and agents from outside China, whether corporative, collective, national or international in nature, have strengthened their mutual communication and participation in the trend towards globalisation.

Such economic liberation and exchange has multifaceted political, social and cultural implications: the old totalitarian mode of control, in which the state absolutely controls society, has gradually eroded. Both decentralisation and institutionalisation have stimulated and shaped the significant dimensions of reform programs such as village elections, educational and legal reforms in reaction to people's growing demands for more political and social rights, legal guarantees and geographic mobility. There is a further separation between the party and the government, an empowerment of the National People's Congress and an opening up of public spaces for civic associations (Lin, 2006: 3). Economic development and improved quality of life are also important for the growth of civil society in diversifying social roles and sustaining associational relationships. Information and ideas can be shared and exchanged in an external globalising network through high-tech communication tools, most notably the internet. The once floating, marginalised, unofficial, informal, alien, ignored, underground and minor voices are now making their demands heard by insisting that they are allowed to enjoy a certain degree of autonomy and freedom and to be guaranteed their individuality. These institutional changes, openness and pluralism have enabled different social groups to gain a better negotiating position *vis-à-vis* the Party-state, and have been regarded as opportunities for broader social participation and expression.

On the other hand, the problems of modernisation deeply shape the transitional process itself. China is becoming a heterogeneous society, not as harmonious as officially propagated, but contradictory in many aspects. The main contradiction is the conflicting co-existence of both an old and a new China during the modernising process, which inevitably generates and intensifies a diversity of political, economic and social-cultural problems, such as polarisation, corruption and a mutual penetration of political and economic power (Fewsmith, 2001: 113). Inequality and injustice can turn into threats to people's lives and rights and easily trigger people's grievances. Contentions will then take place in reaction to problems, which will palpably lead to social unrest and demand a decent official response.

There is an increasing amount of remarkable contentious activity all over the country including appeals, petitions, publications, sit-ins, demonstrations, rallies, parades, campaigns, strikes, riots, violent attacks and confrontations and so on. The actors range from farmers, urban workers, residents, migrants, students, scholars, entrepreneurs, religious groups and dissidents to officials, taking individual, organisational or collective form. Although not all protests are political, or have democracy as their goal, they have truly challenged the Party-

state to different extents. The protests do have the potential to accelerate China's transition to a more democratic and liberal regime by striving for people's rights and interests as well as expanding their impact in spite of the government's restriction, persecution and repression. When ongoing unrest becomes an urge for the people and an alert to the Party-state, the authorities start to realise that China could face greater political, social and economic instability if they do not change their repressive strategies, acknowledge people's desire for democracy or push for democratisation themselves (Moore, 2008).

The background to this research is that the achievements and transformations during modernisation, and the problems of the uneven transitional status within this authority-led process, provide opportunities and triggers for an expanding arena of expression, participation, mobilisation and contention. This activism, which is both shaped by and dynamically shaping the Party-state responses, is directing China towards a robust civil society, a more representative government and a democratic transformation of the political system.

1.3 Identifying Topic and Statement of Significance

The macroscopic picture of China is that of an explicit scenario of modernisation at high speed, with an uneven distribution of wealth and social goods on one hand and an implicit scenario of democratisation contributed by different social forces on the other. This research, embedded in the background settings and processes of Chinese modernisation, will investigate the complex circumstances and prospects of Chinese democratisation in-depth. It will do so by examining the contentious activities of different social forces and the respective governmental reactions, and seek to establish lessons for democratic transitions from the restructuring of state-society-individual interactions.

The contentious nature of politics in contemporary China is the thematic focus of this research, which addresses the question of how the contentions are driven by modernisation and how they may lead to democratisation. Empirically and analytically I have chosen three contentious groups – labourers, intellectuals and religious groups –examined their interplay with the Party-state and presented my finding as case studies, which provide a comprehensive discussion at the macro, meso and micro level in order to capture the dynamics of a transforming individual-society-state relationship from contention to democratisation.

This research seeks to contribute to both the literature and the actual practice during China's contemporary transitional period for the following reasons. Firstly, studying contentious politics is important not only because it is emerging, growing and expanding quickly all over China, but also because it signifies new, unconventional, different and oppositional expressions and actions. These types of contention have enormous implications for China's political democratisation, which begins with a tolerance of and then a co-existence with different voices. How the contentious groups and activities challenge the limits of tolerance and demand a response from the authorities is not only phenomenal but also conducive to greater political transitions, and, potentially, democratisation. This indicates the intellectual curiosity set out at the beginning, i.e., that contentious politics can be the connecting point between modernisation and democratisation under China's conditions. This is the insight that is derived from this empirical study.

Secondly, my research on contentious politics has adopted a people-oriented approach. Its emphasis on the strength of the people is demonstrated by the interviews conducted with the people in order to gather their concepts, evaluations and attitudes towards modernisation and its problems, towards social organisations and networks, and towards varied contentions and Party-state responses. The range of people engaging in the research also covers a diversity of contentious social groups, from labourers and intellectuals to religious groups. It is of great practical significance to record and analyse the power of people to push forward political transitions. This reflects the renaissance of people's self-consciousness to act against the abuse of power and social injustice, and act as subjects and agents in their own life and in pushing forth historical change. This study will also contribute to the literature on civil society and social movements in China from the perspective of contentious politics and the people.

The involvement of individuals according to political science in classic state-society relations underlines an input of individuality and citizenship into the political power structures, a positioning of the active role of discursive and cultural framing at the micro level and a combination of two directions of contentions: a breaking down of defending public rights resulting in individual rights, and a congregating of individual demands into organisational networks and public voices. This displays both conceptual and methodological innovation. Theoretically, the integration of individual and microscopic mobilisation into the bigger picture of contentious politics and the provision of a two-way dimension into the analysis

framework can better capture the dynamics of interactions between different actors, or parties, at different levels. Empirically, the in-depth interviews, internet content analysis and case studies data collected in the field enriches the research findings and discussion and leads to a more comprehensive and confident conclusion.

1.4 Hypotheses and Questions

According to the research theme and topics, three hypotheses are proposed for the particular case of contemporary China as we examine the role of contentious politics in promoting robust civil society and representative government – the substance of democracy. These are the practical inquiries into the visible causes and the predictable futures of the contentions. They are developed in accordance with the theoretical framework and its formulation of macro opportunity structure, meso mobilising structure and micro strategic structure.

H1: Contentious politics is modernisation-driven

H1 is proposed on the basis that all of the micro grievances and struggles that trigger particular contentions are attached to the macro structural problems. As stated in Section 1.2, a vast range of opportunities for the growing contentions has been opened up by China's modernisation and economic liberation, its engagement with the world, the pluralisation of social roles, groups and cultures, the enlargement of the public sphere and the increase in public consciousness and public demands. On the other hand, the problems and distortions generated by the reforms, including corruption, polarisation, unemployment, insecurity and so on, indicate the institutional contradictions and deficiencies of the reforms, and have ultimately become the chief causes of collective grievances leading to numerous contentious activities.

H1 is required in order to investigate two research questions, Q1 and Q2:

Q1: What are the social changes, along with social problems, that are emerging and intensifying in China's modernisation process?

This question is not only the crucial starting point for an inquiry into Chinese modernisation but it is also an opportunity for reflecting on other variables that are important for democratisation. Since China shares some of the characteristics of pre-modern, modern and

post-modern societies, this makes the transition from a traditional phase to modernity more complicated. The challenges facing the government and the people, caused by an internal vacuum of value systems and an external network of information sharing, are increasingly severe. The current research uses in-depth interviews as the main method to discover how individuals and different social groups view and describe the modernisation process and its attendant problems in terms of their political, economic and social-cultural aspects.

Q2: How are the changes and problems of China's modernisation process transformed into the drivers behind contentious actions?

There is also a greater need to find out how individuals and groups themselves perceive measure and evaluate the opportunities and threats of the modernisation process as realistic motivations for contentious activities. People engage in contentious activities of expression when given more opportunities, more freedom and larger space, or of resistance when faced with threats, deprived of certain rights, repressed, or in a combination of both types of contentious activities. The cultural implications of social change, media interpretation and personal experiences are the keys to evaluating and attributing the opportunities and threats faced by people. It is therefore necessary to explore popular trends in how people perceive opportunities and threats in response to changing social realities and problems. These trends are the drivers that transform objective social change into subjective grievances and real contentions.

H2: Civil society is both the origin and destination of contentious politics

Civil society is a significant concept and practice in relation to modernisation, contention and democratisation. It is also the mediated sphere between Party-state and individuality. To build up connections between civil society and contentious politics is by no means an easy task. Theoretically civil society is the organisational basis and setting for contentions, and in the long term contentions will increase individuals' awareness of their rights, be bounded by civil virtues and directed by the rule of law, and change into a robust system of checks and balances on the state. Based on this assumption, H2 proposes that civil society is both the origin and the destination of contentious politics. However, this hypothesis is arguable under China's special condition. This hypothesis seeks to help answer two questions, Q3 and Q4:

Q3: How does civil society develop with Chinese characteristics?

To answer this question I again used interviews to collect information about people's membership of and participation in civil society organisations (CSOs) in China. I also focussed on their opinions and attitudes toward different cleavages that are influential in organisational operation and mobilisation and on their own informal networking resources as well as on state interference. Another type of civil society involvement is found in online activism in cyberspace, which reflects an expansion of the public sphere[1] to some degree. To encompass all these activities, I define civil society in China as comprising SCOs, informal networks and the online public sphere. The Chinese characteristics of civil society will be demonstrated by the degree of freedom of affiliation enjoyed, the propensity of people to participate, the type of organisation people participate in, the density of social network spaces, the effect of state involvement and the structural potentials, as well as any deficit of civil society.

Q4: How is civil society related to contentious politics?

Firstly, a subsidiary question should be asked: is civil society in fact the origin of contentious politics? Since mobilising structures for contentions refer to both formal and informal networks, I will look at how the organisational and networking resources available to a Chinese characterised civil society can generate necessary social appropriation of mobilising structures for people to take contentious activities. Since civil society organisations, networks and cyberspace are all in development and overlapping with each other, I will also reflect on the potential coherence and fragmentation of civil society based on the nature, processes and consequences of contentions.

Secondly, is civil society the destination of contentious politics? The answer to this question will prove or disprove part of the theme – whether contentious politics will promote a robust civil society. It is important to study the dynamics between the two through the lens of interaction among the individual-society-state relationship, and whether the strong private sphere of informal networking or the spontaneous cyber activism can be contained, subjected and destined to mature civil society.

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[1] Habermas (1989) originally described the public sphere as strictly a 'bourgeois' public sphere, the sphere of private people who join together to form a 'public', to indicate a new opening in the social and political fabric of Europe during the 18th and 19th centuries. Here I adopted a more generalised definition in the contemporary context that the public sphere has been significantly altered by the internet, which I will further elaborate in chapters 2 and 7.

H3: Contentious politics will lead to representative governance and democracy.

This is the main assumption of the thesis and requires a large collection of empirical evidence with theoretical support. The final aim or potential outcome of this project is to identity the prospects of contentious politics to a pro-democracy course in China after reviewing and sifting the vast scope of contentious activities and evaluating their interplay with the Party-state. I work out a two-way flow of discussion: 1) from the macro opportunity structure and meso-level mobilisation to record the micro framing of contentions; and 2) from the contentious interaction between different groups of people and the authorities, which is taking place at a grassroots level in order to generalise their implications for the macro transformation of government and political system. H3 will help explore two questions, Q5 and Q6:

Q5: What are the features and trends of contentions of different social groups?

Contentious activities can be researched at the meso and micro level by mobilising structure and the cultural framework to identify organisational resources as well as emotional, moral and cognitive triggers for the dynamics of contention (McAdam *et al*, 1996, 2001; Jasper, 1999). The subjects targeted in this research fall into three social groups – labourers, intellectuals, and religious groups – and they are selected depending on their unique attributes and positions in the changing society, their tendency to express their grievances, their associational bases, their frequency of taking action and their influences.

Firstly, labourers consist of peasants, workers and migrant workers who have been marginalised and disadvantaged due to a lack of opportunity and distribution inequalities during the reform era and the restructuring of social stratification. Besides the miserable life experience of numerous deprived farmers and laid-off workers, tens of millions of migrant workers from rural to urban cities live precarious lives with irregular employment, poor wages and working conditions, and an absence of social welfare. However, these unprivileged labourers are beginning to constitute an active social force in the civil society by forming associational networks offering mutual aid, friendship and solidarity. The demands of labourers have become increasingly concrete, for instance, with regard to compensation on land requisition, social security for re-employment and pensions. They also disapprove of the large income gap, corruption and all kinds of social injustice. Their protests, often resulting in riots, are mainly for economic purposes, welfare and medical care, children's education, local

politics and environmental issues; moreover, the authorities have recently paid greater attention and surveillance to these 'collective actions' (a delicate phrase rather than a protest-related vocabulary delivered by the governmental media). Although white-collar workers are categorised as labourers, their form and trajectory of contentions are largely different from that of the peasants, laid-off workers or migrant workers. Cyber activism is also one feature of their contentions.

Secondly, the intellectual group, regarded as having the power of knowledge in this Information Age, contain students and scholars in higher education institutions and universities, academic elites in all fields, writers and freelancers. This group of dissidents, both at home and aboard, usually have gained advanced education, been sensitive and responsive to the changing world, had a more substantial understanding of democracy and attached much more importance to freedom of speech and publication, which is never fully enjoyed in China under the strict authoritarian censorship. All these factors determine that they have the potential to be a tower of strength in Chinese civil society and the public sphere in a broad sense. Their contentions are likely to be deliberatively social-political, pro-democratic or nationalist. Noticeably the internet has become a new and popular battlefield for intellectuals. They, together with a growing number of white-collar workers, are pioneers in this new arena of internet contentions.

Thirdly, religious groups here mainly comprise the underground churches and fellowships and religion-related associations, which are excluded from governmental religious networks, and who are repressed rigidly and persecuted ruthlessly at times. As a socially and morally reforming force, religion is spreading quickly in China both in quantity and in quality by way of the internet and other methods of modern media and involving people of all regions and all kinds of groups, professions, status and hierarchies. Unauthorised churches have been built up in many parts of the country and unofficial religious practice has flourished in recent years, even though the Chinese Government places restrictions on religious practice outside its officially recognised organisations (U.S. Department of State, 2004). Their grievance comes from the fact that the government is violating their religious freedom, but rather than passive tolerance, they've also taken non-violent actions to protest and they've appealed to the international community for help. Contentious activities from religious group in China have the unique nature of combining religious movement with civil society mobilisation and so they witness a more exterior influence from the global faith-based communities.

The empirical studies conducted for this thesis, which include interviews, internet content analysis and case studies on the contentious activities of the three groups, will provide rich resources for further discussion and characterisation of the causes and effects, features and trends of micro contentions.

Q6: How does the Party-state respond to different contentions and how can we evaluate such state-society-individual interactions?

The state would show different faces to different challengers and may be more or less inclined to support or suppress particular movements (Tarrow, 1996: 41-61) with regards to its special interests and to impose its legitimacy and authority over the country. White *et al* (1996: 1-38) argue that the state has practiced 3 strategies – co-optation, toleration and repression – to cope with civil society organisations; a similar mechanism also applies to the context of contentions. For example, in the case of the patriotic movements with nationalist emotions, such as anti-America or anti-Japan or anti-Taiwan independence protests, the government would cooperate with the actors and organisations, and even provide material support in order to guide the pace of the action to achieve their own goals. In the case of the single-event or small-scale regional protests, with similar-background actors, the government would to some extent tolerate and try to appease people's dissatisfaction and relieve their grievances. However, with the cross-regional, cross-group and large-scale movements or political dissidents, the authorities would not hesitate to repress them as can be seen in the case of the 1989 pro-democracy students' movement and the 1999 Falun Gong spiritual movement. Yet, there is a fluid variation and combination of different Party-state strategies from time to time.

Another significant fact is that the central and local governments react differently to the contentious activities. When it comes to carrying out the policies or commands from the centre, the local governments, in fact, have created their own space to bargain for the regional profits and some even overtly agree but are covertly opposed to the central instruction. The responses also differentiate from place to place depending on the regional development of economy, politics and society. It is evident that there is an emergence of real grassroots civic discourse and contentious activities wherein events at the local level can affect political leadership. There is then a possibility of a mutual dialogue between leaders and citizens rather than a strictly top-down communicative interaction between the Chinese central government and its people and within the government among its various branches or

competing factions (Powers and Kluver, 1999). On the other hand, local officials may prevent local grievances from appealing to the higher levels of government and take revenge on those who blow the whistles.

Therefore, in order to evaluate these individual-society-state interactions, one should take into account both the effectiveness of state strategies and the cohesion between the central and local state towards social and individual contentions. The strategic governmental responses inevitably have both positive and negative influences on the multifaceted development of diverse contentious activities. Studying in detail the interplay between the two and treating the whole process as having a circular, dynamic and progressive continuity would definitely help with understanding prospective mechanisms for transitional pro-democracy movements. Thus the study of Party-state response is directly related to the other part of the theme – whether contentious politics will promote a representative government.

1.5 Research Outline

A brief overview of the structure of the thesis is as follows. Chapter 1 is an introduction of the research background, topic, hypotheses and questions. In chapter 2 the thesis will establish an over-arching theoretical framework by introducing the three-level model of contention: 1) opportunity structure and social attribution at the macro level, 2) mobilising resource and social appropriation at the meso level and 3) strategic framing and social construction at the micro level; and by re-theorising the interaction and power transition among the spheres of Party-state, civil society and individuality. Based on the paradigms for the research and methodological design, chapter 3 will demonstrate the main methods of interviewing, internet content analysis and documentation. In-depth interviews were carefully designed to involve all the important elements of the research enquiries. Internet content analysis in particular is used to analyse the details of different online cases of contentious events and debates. Documentation is in general required to search for related information from a wide range of sources including books, journals, magazines, newspapers, websites, and documentaries. There will not be a literature-review chapter, since different literature has been reviewed and discussed in the following empirical and analytical chapters.

Chapters 4 to 9 are based on a combination of interview results, case studies and a wide range of documents. In relation to Q1 and Q2, Chapter 4 will portray the popular conceptualisation

of social-political-economic problems and indicates the social opportunities and threats that may trigger contentions. Relative to Q3, Chapter 5 will characterise the development of civil society organisations and compare the networking and organisational resources for contentions. In order to answer Q4 and Q5, Chapters 6 to 8 respectively focus on the three groups' contentions and illuminates the causes of their grievances, the way they mobilise and the strategies in which they frame contentions. Each chapter will conclude with the role civil society (organisation, networking or cyberspace) has played in contentious politics. In relation to Q6, Chapter 9 will record the Party-state responses to each group by co-optation, toleration and control and also examines the important dynamic between the central and local state. Chapter 10 will be the conclusion to summarise the whole thesis, and concludes with the results of the test on the hypotheses and answers to the research questions.

Chapter 2 – Theoretical Framework

2.1 Introduction

As the thesis title states, this research examines the prospects for China's democratisation during the process of modernisation through an investigation of the contentious politics pursued by different groups in China and the responses of the Party-state at all levels. China is currently passing through two paths simultaneously: one is modernisation, a vigorously government-sponsored process according to grand design along with unavoidable non-governmental spontaneity, whilst the other is democratisation understood as a significant aspect of the political transformation in a more vaguely and markedly fluctuating process. Modernisation is regarded as the broad background and an irresistible trend indicating the reality in China. This great, though often ungoverned, transformation from traditional to modern society and civilisation, is a big opportunity and challenge for the state, society and the individuals, which results in the dynamic and contentious activities of different groups. Meanwhile, the power transition among three spheres – Party-state, civil society and private sphere – resulting in contentious politics is the key to understanding the process of democratisation in China. Contention can then be considered as the connecting point between modernisation and democratisation through its reshaping of the individual-society-state relationship. The macro, meso and micro levels of mechanism are required to contour a comprehensive picture of contentious politics.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a theoretical basis for the hypotheses and research questions in the introduction chapter and to establish a theoretical framework in order to describe the dynamics of modernisation, contention and democratisation. The structure of the discussion will begin with a clarification of key words followed by an analytical model to demonstrate the flows between contentious politics and democratisation.

2.2 Key Words

To do the analytical modelling, the prerequisite step is to identify and clarify some of the most important concepts from the perspective of political sociology with reference to the

special circumstances in China. There are four key words requiring explanation: modernisation, democratisation, contention and the Party-State response.

2.2.1 Modernisation

Modernisation is understood as changes resulting directly or indirectly from the industrial, technological and scientific revolutions (Moody, 1995: 3). In China the discourse of modernisation has replaced that of revolution but brought along with it the revolutionary impacts on Chinese state, society and individuals. He Chuanqi (1999) extended the definition of modernisation to, 'Two-Phase Modernisation Theory' by identifying the two phases of the modernisation process from the 18th century to the 21st century. First-Phase Modernisation is the process of the transformation from agricultural to industrial society, economy and civilisation, whilst Second-Phase Modernisation is from industrial to knowledge-based society, economy and civilisation. The achievements in China's modernisation process, including the dramatic economic growth and social-cultural development, have stunned the world. However, China still shares the characteristics of both phases and has agriculture, industrial and knowledge societies co-existing, which makes the transitions from tradition to modernity more complicated and uneven.

Firstly, the remaining agricultural society, much of which is in isolated, remote and in underdeveloped areas (in the West and Northwest of China and within the ethnic minorities' communities) is resistant, consciously or unconsciously, to the industrialisation procedures and is unfamiliar with modern organisations. This shares most of the characteristics of Gemeinschaft, a concept of the traditional societal entity established by Ferdinand Tonnies (1925 in Cahnman and Heberle, 1971). Fei Xiaotong (1947) also illustrates that interpersonal relationships in traditional China take the centre of self, emphasises the blood, family and native ties, and reflects Confucian ethics and the allocation of natural resources in the private sphere. Culture is stable and fixed in this society, and is a highly significant independent variable, with traditional values rooted in people's minds, customs, language and behaviour, and it influences political-economic-social developments and activities. However, the symbolic and ethnic dimension of the cultural tradition, the social space of integrated groups and the continuity of successive generations, are under great pressure from the emergence

and intrusion of modernity and reformation; there is a potential breakdown in the social solidarity of traditional Chinese society (Kerr, 2009).

Secondly, the Chinese version of Gesellschaft (Tonnies, 1925, in Cahnman and Heberle, 1971), an industrial society, the modern counterpart of Gemeinschaft, is still under construction as modernisation proceeds. Within this modernising society, it can obviously be observed that the retreat of state power from economy, mobility and other social welfare arenas, the diversity of culture with looser ideological control, the emergence of village elections and grassroots associations, the construction of domestic legal system and the integration into international treaties and laws and rules, all demonstrate China's passive and positive adaptation to the transforming economic, social and cultural realities. However, there are cumulative and intersectional problems at this stage. First, urbanisation and industrialisation takes place where traditional networking and the private/family sphere still occupy a concentrated power and dominance within the individual-society-state relationship. Second, the problems from the rapid transformation of industrial society itself, such as the environmental crisis and poor-rich polarity, have been prevailing, which projects an impression that the a few privileged individuals enjoy the fruits of reform whilst a majority bear the costs.

Thirdly, the knowledge-based society naturally plays its role of vanguard in the national and international currency, and the CPC also commits itself as the representative of the most advanced productivity by promoting 'informationalisation' as a leading and crucial part of the grand course of modernisation. The internet has speedily entered into people's daily life not only as a medium for information exchange, a platform for interpersonal communication and an absorber and emitter of novelties but also as a lifestyle choice for the new generation. In the knowledge-based society, where the popularity of postmodernism and critical perspective has penetrated academia, public ethos and social movements, stable and fixed culture does not exist anymore. Furthermore, there is a microscopic contextual view of how people and groups attempt to further their own interests and jostle for domination by maintaining institutional status quo or promoting change[2]. The emergence of heterogeneous cultural contexts, contents and discourses are random and unpredictable, and include an increasing

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[2] This discussion is indebted to the paper 'Production and Consumption of Chineseness in International Business Studies' delivered by Can-Seng Ooi at the ChinaWorld International Conference on 'Made in China vs. Made by Chinese: Global Identities of Chinese Business', 19-20 March 2007, Centre for Contemporary Chinese Studies, Durham University, UK.

prevalence of contentions with sentiments of anti-society, anti-authority, cynicism, scepticism and radicalism.

The co-existence of the above-mentioned characteristic of society occurs in the contemporary Chinese context. The Communist Party-state has set the 'Three Represents' and the 'Harmonious Society' as two official pillars in order to direct the modernisation process. It claims it has defined the core task as improving people's quality of life and representing the fundamental interests of the overwhelming majority of Chinese people with positivist and functionalist perspectives. The authorities have made strenuous efforts to integrate and transform the less developed status of society towards a more advanced one through gradual reforms whilst also keeping conflicts to a minimum. However, in practice the ambition and grand project of integrating the three societal statuses into a grand *harmonious society* encounters various contentions from the borders and from different conflicting zones of the three societies. The character of modernisation in China then becomes the biggest drive behind the contemporary contentious politics.

2.2.2 Democratisation

It is predicted that modernisation, especially economic development and liberalisation, will lead to political liberalisation and, eventually, democracy. However, the case of China has illustrated so far that development may not lead to democracy and an authoritarian state can even be considered a better political system to promote prosperity. Democratisation refers to the way, and process in which, democratic norms, institutions and practices are evolving and disseminated both within and across national and cultural boundaries (Hauss, 2003). Nevertheless, the definition of democracy is crucial to clarify the meaning of democratisation in the context of reforming China. This requires appreciation of China's particular characteristics and its own conceptualisations.

There is general agreement that democracy means 'rule by the people' and the liberal view of 'the people' is all-inclusive, individualist and plural. However, the Chinese Constitution and its official ideology still holds firm to the ideal of socialist democracy, which refers to the political system using the two seemingly self-contradictory terms: democratic dictatorship and democratic centralism. The former term is the outcome and the continuation of the class struggle between the people and the enemy classes since 'the people' refers both to the ruling

classes and is also a collective or community-centred entity that transcends the interests of its individual members (Ding, 2002: 5). The latter term is the theoretical base for the organisation of the Communist Party of China (CPC), defined by Lenin, as allowing Party members the freedom of discussion but insisting on unity in action once a decision has been reached. Although it was supposed to provide balance between grassroots input and executive power, in practice centralism was stressed as far more important than democracy (Hunter and Sexton, 1999: 102). This mainstream statement of socialistic democracy is a transformation driven by both bottom-up challenges and top-down reconstruction. As a result, there are certain differences, divergences and competitions among popular, intellectual and official interpretations of democracy.

The popular demand for democracy in China appears in the public's growing consciousness, voices, actions and powers in defending and protecting their private rights, which publicises such efforts for public rights and for better governance. The contention of the people is in itself an interpretation of democracy in action.

As for intellectuals, the ideas influenced by Western-style liberal democracy, which is based on a self-conscious dualism that distinguishes between state and society and on a multi-party election system, have been on the retreat and been shared mainly among dissidents abroad since Tiananmen in 1989. The present situation with numerous cases of poor human rights records, repression of contentious activities, violation of religious and press freedom, rampant institutional corruption, benefit-driven value system and moral decay have disappointed many of these democracy advocates. On the other hand, most domestic academics remain optimistic and have developed the concept of democracy as related to the implicitly recognised expansion of autonomous social and economic life as indicated, for example, in the increasing reform focused on 'small government and big society' (Ding, 2002: 1). There are other indigenous ideas such as 'incremental democracy' to engage more with the role of the government, initiated by Yu Keping (2002), which differs from both orthodox Marxism and liberalism. Incremental democracy sees an autonomous civil society as a pre-requisite for democracy; it believes in rule of law; it affirms the critical role of government in promoting democracy, rather than seeing democracy as a way of minimising the functions of the state; and it tries to build democracy on the basis of co-operation between governments and citizens.

Another embryo theory is 'deliberative democracy' to prove that one-party states can deliver a degree of popular legitimacy in an era of globalisation and mass communications through

consultative and deliberative institutions in the form of public hearings (Leonard, 2008). There is also an intellectual search for 'deliberative democracy' in China (Leib and He, 2006), in which government can be responsive to public needs and citizens can voice their views in a context of equality and mutual respect. Other scholars like Zheng Yongnian (2008), also propose that there should be top-down intra-party selection (intra-party democracy), bottom-up social consensus (social democracy) and the orderly interaction between the ruling party and society within a legal framework (constitutional democracy).

As for the official discourse, President Hu Jintao in his report at 17th Party Congress asserted that he would unswervingly develop socialist democracy (Xinhua News, 2007):

> "People's democracy is the lifeblood of socialism. Political restructuring must be constantly deepened along with economic and social development to adapt to the growing enthusiasm of the people for participation in political affairs … We must keep to the path of political development under socialism with Chinese characteristics, and integrate the leadership of the Party, the position of the people as masters of the country, and the rule of law. We must uphold and improve the system of people's congresses, the system of multiparty cooperation and political consultation under the leadership of the CPC, the system of regional ethnic autonomy, and the system of self-governance at the primary level of society … The most effective and extensive way for the people to be masters of the country is that they directly exercise their democratic rights in accordance with the law to manage public affairs and public service programs at the primary level, practice self-management, self-service, self-education and self-oversight, and exercise democratic oversight over cadres … We will implement the intra-Party oversight regulations, strengthen democratic oversight and give scope to the oversight role of public opinion, pooling forces of oversight from all sides to make it more effective."

The report also emphasised improving institutions for democracy, diversification of its forms, expansion of its channels and socialist democratic education. In addition, it underlined that public hearings must be held for the formulation of laws, regulations and policies that are in the interests of the public, while social organisations should be encouraged to help expand participation by the public and to report on their petitions to improve the self-governance capability of society. This official rhetoric and changes from before have seen reconciliation between elite intellectuals within and outside the Party. A harmony among different parties,

groups, interests and strata is heavily propagated and promoted. In the meantime, one-party leadership and socialistic ideology remains upheld.

This research refers to the universal values of democracy as defined in the rich literature of Western liberal democracy theories: democracy involves the equal rights of access to government through popular participation, and contains representative and accountable institutions derived from regular and competitive elections by citizens and based on the rule of law, so that political decisions have to take into account citizen preferences, be justified publicly, and embrace the maintenance and protection of public liberties and citizen's rights, such as the rights of free speech, publication, organisation and assembly (Wasburn, 1982: 272; Linz, 1978).

Specifically, to study democratisation in China, more attention should be paid to how different ideas of democracy can be reconciled by eliminating bias, misunderstanding and distortion, and how the Party-state, civil society and private sphere can be reconciled in transforming authoritarian rules whilst pushing for the goal of democracy. On the one hand, because of various kinds of relations among individuals, organisations and the government, the Party-state must be tackled carefully, especially in the issues of how interest accommodation and power transfer are centred in democratisation (Dinkelaker, 1997). On the other hand, more emphasis is to be put on the empowerment of the people and establishing a democratic citizenship through education, participation and deliberation, which can be accomplished through the achievement of consensus and respecting disagreement. In this way, contentious politics can then provide a starting point to explore such relations among multiple factors and to facilitate democratisation. This is based on Joseph Schumpeter's (1994: 233-83) argument in 1947, that contestation and participation define democracy. As Markoff (1996) also states in his book 'Waves of Democracy: Social Movements and Political Change', democracy is in the process of continually being reinvented rather than an ideal political system. Instead of reducing democracy to well-defined and routine practices and institutions such as elections and parliaments, he shows how political movements have repeatedly challenged and re-made existing institutions. Such elucidations of political mobilisations and contentions result in a revelation about China's democratic transformation, especially in promoting a vigorous civil society and a representative government.

2.2.3 Contention and Party-state Responses

Contention, the key word used in my research, is a broad category and adopts many viewpoints from political science compatible with the sociological perspective of the social movement. In the literature of contentious politics, contention is extracted by McAdam *et al* (2001: 7), in distinction from institutional politics, as consisting of:

> " … episodic, public, collective interaction among makers of claims and their objects when at least one government is a claimant, an object of claims, or a party to the claims and the claims would, if realised, affect the interests of at least one of the claimants, at least some parties to the conflict are newly self-identified political actors, and/or at least some parties employ innovative collective action. (Actions qualified as innovative if it incorporates claims, selects objects of claims, includes self-representations, and/or adopts means that are either unprecedented or forbidden within the regime in question.)"

This definition implies three important criteria: it should involve the interaction with government; it should exert influences; it should employ innovation in terms of either identity or means. Such understanding is fundamental for both the whole empirical examination of the contentious activities of different groups and the complex interpretation of different causal relations.

China is now experiencing collective political struggles everywhere, which is a significant characteristic of contentious politics according to the definition and the observable events happening in China. Two critical relations in this regard are between contention itself and Party-state responses, and between contentious politics and democratisation. McAdam *et al* (2001) also provide a suitable analytical model that can be applied to my research. It identifies political opportunity, mobilising structures and framing processes of repertoires as the most important factors in contentious politics; it also develops these concepts in such a way as to put the mobilisation in motion. In the Chinese society filled with change, conflict and resistance, this model will work effectively to identify the complex trajectories and recurrent causal mechanisms of China's contentious politics. Noticeably, contentious mobilisation in China is about people and power – how people perceive, obtain, distribute and exercise power – which is far from straightforward.

When it comes to Party-state responses to the contentious action the classic approach, in political science, centres on the state-society relationship. This perspective is intended to achieve a more balanced understanding of political processes, especially concerning democratic transition and consolidation, by apprehending not only the structure and nature of the state but also the interaction between the state and society (Zhao, 2001: 13). This theory is especially appropriate in the case of China with its flourishing civil society within its existing authoritarian regime.

Here I add the dimension of the individual/private sphere[3] and investigate further the relationship between the Party-state and a transforming private sphere. Thus, the specific reaction strategies of the Party-state towards the contention such as co-optation, toleration and repression (White *et al*, 1996) can be more dynamically comprehended within the three intertwined spheres of individuals, civil society and the Party-state. The evaluation of the Party-state responses will also provide an insight into how the government can be rendered more representative and accountable.

2.3 The Analytical Model

An analytical model of connections in China's contentious politics towards democratisation is provided in Figure 1. The sequence of the analysis begins from Axis 1 to examine the contentious politics. This mainly adopts the contentious structure theories from macro opportunity to meso mobilisation to micro framing of specific groups. I use the full line to indicate the practical settings, resources and interactions within contentious politics. Axis 2 is intended to explore implications for democratisation through restructuring individual-society-state relationships within contentious politics. Dotted lines are used to indicate how invisible power is transferred among the three spheres and how contentious politics can lead to democratisation. Through the angle of contentious politics I hope to find out the internal driving forces and developmental prospects for China's democratisation. The two axes show a two-way flow: movement and transition are both from top-down and from bottom-up.

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[3] According to Habermas (1989), the definition of private sphere has included private concerns/interests of individuals in their familial, economic and social life (Kellner, 2000).
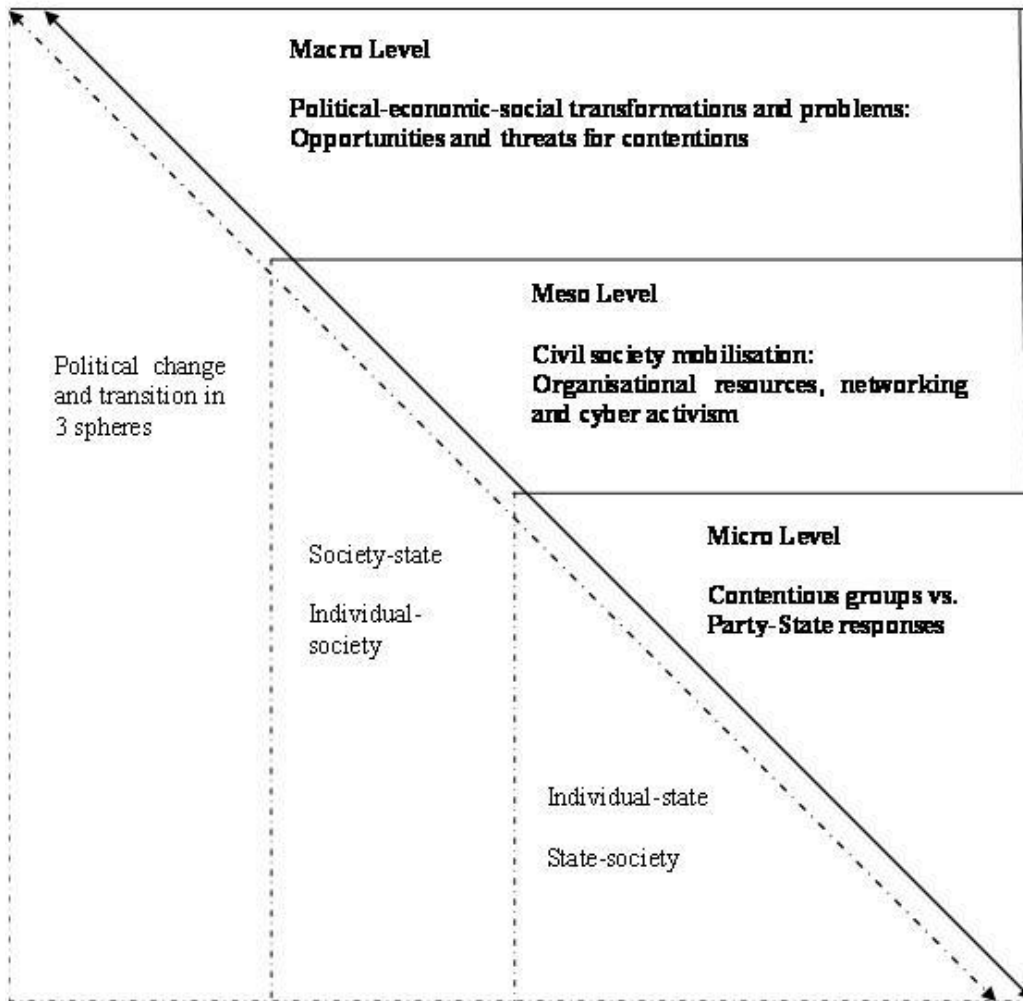
Figure 1: Theoretical model

2.3.1 Axis 1: Contentious Politics

As McAdam *et al* (2001: 4-5) state, different forms of contention – social movements, revolutions, strike waves and more – result from similar mechanisms and processes. This research will focus on the causal sequences in contentious politics. I will start from a reasonable, if overly structural and static, baseline model for contentions, which includes political opportunity bearing on potential actors, mobilising structures that promote communication, coordination and commitment within and among potential actors, framing processes that produce shared definitions of what is happening and repertoires by which participants in contentious politics make collective claims (McAdam *et al*, 1996). From here,

I will take into account the dynamic factors and procedures in order to explain how complex episodes of contention come into being in China.

Opportunity structure and social attribution (macro-level)

The 'opportunity structure' model produces accounts of institutional structures, party systems, elite alignments, policy changes, state capacity, legitimacy and the international factors. At the macro level, the processes of modernisation and transformation in China have changed the social-economic structures, accelerated institutional reforms, facilitated mass communications and, as a consequence, empowered different groups of contesters with more opportunities and diverse channels for contentions. On the other hand, the emergent problems and conflicts with modernisation have also become the direct or indirect causes for public and collective grievances. International factors also matter in different episodes of contentions and can affect both the contentious groups and the state and thus should be incorporated in the explanation properly. Another significant factor is state capacity, which has two dimensions: first, the degree of control state agents exercise over persons, activities and resources within their government's territorial jurisdiction (McAdam *et al*, 2001: 78) and second, the capacity to deal effectively with the rise of new problems, to learn over time, and to limit the range of strategic choices of groups or individuals. These two dimensions of state capacity can be demonstrated with a central-local complexity.

However, rather than looking upon opportunities and threats as objective structural factors, the dynamic mobilisation model regards them as subject to attribution, since no opportunity/threat, however objectively open, will invite mobilisation unless it is visible to potential challengers and perceived as opportunity/threat. Attribution of opportunity/threat is an activating mechanism responsible in part for the mobilisation of previously inert populations (McAdam *et al*, 2001: 43). So, particular attention should be paid to the conceptualisation of social realities from the viewpoints of challengers and participators before and during contentions.

Mobilising structure and social appropriation (meso-level)

This dimension implies the importance of social context and organisational settings in the origins of contentions. The structures generally include personal ties, inter-organisational linkages and recruitment networks that increase the probability that people will be reached by the contention, operating at both an informal and formal level. Research has discovered that activists in most contentions tend to be recruited through some pre-existing structures, including greater number of affiliations, high propensity to participate, greater density of social organisations and social capital, and greater structural potential for social movement activity (Kriesi, 1996). The mobilising structures are significant for both individuals and organisations in contentious politics. People who belong to groups and who previously participated in activism are more likely to join. Participation in an organisation heightens their belief in the efficacy of organisations and the more extensive the network, the more links people may have with contention, the greater number of people who can be reached by mobilisation.

Nevertheless, in the real world, challengers are more likely to possess organisational deficits than resources and therefore the majority of social settings typically constrain rather than facilitate contention (McAdam *et al*, 2001: 44). That is also the case with China's development in civil society and the cleavages that hold its pace. The informal interpersonal connections and networks – *guanxi* – also prevail within the formal institutions and organisations as a Chinese characteristic. Attention then should not only be pointing to pre-existing mobilising structures, but it should also focus on the active appropriation of sites for mobilisation. On many occasions it is not the prior structural propensity that matters, but rather the dynamic interaction of groups and individuals within these structures that count. The key issue is how to appropriate existing organisations and turn them into vehicles of mobilisation and how to turn the private *guanxi* networks into a public resource for mobilisation. Social appropriation is the second mechanism that permits oppressed, disadvantaged or resource-poor populations sometimes to overcome their organisational deficits and expand their resources for contentions (McAdam *et al*, 2001: 44). This social appropriation of pre-existing organisations, informal networks and spontaneous structures is also applied to internet contentions, which have a more fluid and explosive nature.

Strategic framing and social construction (micro-level)

The framing process lies in parallel to the mobilising process. It refers to conscious efforts by groups to craft their rhetoric and issues in ways that appeal to potential recruits (Zald, 1996), which indicates the importance of individual and social constellations of meanings, discourses, cultural symbols, identities as well as moral principles, values, social memories and emotions. Although it is difficult to translate mental states into action, the role of culture acts as a significant constraint and facilitator of contention and culture can be encoded and decoded as people interact in contentious politics.

As Laclau and Mouffe (1985) argue, social order, practices, institutions and identities are constructed, contested and reproduced through culture and the order of discourse. In this 'everything is cultural' point of view, discourse is the explaining threshold to understand political culture in China as well as the actors' identity and perceptions during the contention. So to frame means 'to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, casual interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described' (Entman, 1993: 5). The strategic framing in contentious politics also involves transgressive and innovative repertoires as indicated in the interpreting and mobilising patterns of a particular contention. Jasper (1999: 137, 151, 148, 223) also introduces the idea of cultural triggers and moral shock as explanations of how emotional, moral and cognitive processes influence the causes of contentious politics and how these change the calculations of costs and benefits about joining a contention while also changing the nature and interpretation of the information individuals have.

During China's modernisation, the cultural impacts of Westernisation, globalisation and postmodernist trends increased quickly and changed people's thoughts, behaviours and ways of life, causing a collision with traditional values and stability. Contentious culture, identity and repertoire has then been shaped, identified and diversified between different groups of people during the cultural collision of the three societies and the institutional transformation in industrial society itself. When investigating the specific groups' (outlined above) identities, discourse and culture and their interaction with their own members, with other groups and with the state, I will focus more on the power and strength of people and ask why and how people's mobilisation turns into action. This, together with the structure at macro and meso

level, seeks to work out a dynamic picture of China's contentious politics and its developmental path to democratisation situated in the background of modernisation.

2.3.2 Axis 2: Individual-Society-State Relationship and Democratisation

Politics has long been divided into three spheres: the private sphere, (civil) society, and the State. Democracy presents the interaction of these spheres in the following ways: government is empowered by individuals, but in practice the role of the individual is minimised; there is a pluralistic system of bargaining between groups and state actors. This pluralism arises because the mobilisation of civil society forces an opening up of state to the interests and ideologies of these groups. Therefore, democracy (referring to the political system) has indeed demonstrated the reciprocity and mutual constraint among the three spheres, rather than the character of the state only. Democratisation in China, measured by individual-society-state relationship, is then another axis running through this thesis. It is intertwined with the macro, meso and micro levels of analysis of contentions and signifies the interaction of the state, civil society and the private sphere.

As illustrated in Figure 1, civil society and contentious mobilisation at the meso level and the contentious activities and Party-state responses at the micro level both indicate the dynamics of society-state, individual-society, and individual-state relations. In a two-way flow, this axis of three-sphere interaction defines contentious participants, mobilisation and consequences that are in turn being reshaped by the axis of contentious politics. Meanwhile, this interaction is under transformation as it is embedded in the process of modernisation and is transformed into a balanced power relationship contributing to democratisation at the macro level. I will introduce each layer of the relationship: Party-state, civil society and individual-state relations and then analyse how power changes within the three spheres.

Party-State

The nature and development of contentious politics cannot be understood without reference to the central role of the state. As the institutionalised centre for the legitimate monopoly on the means of violence, the state is the ultimate arbiter for the allocation of socially valued goods (Jenkins and Klandermans, 1995: 1). Therefore, the state is simultaneously the object

of diverse contentious actions, implicitly or explicitly, and is required to respond actively or passively.

The defining characteristic of the Chinese political system has been the leading role played by the Communist Party of China (CPC). Since it came into power in 1949, the CPC has been self-improved becoming a mature, powerful and a huge formal organisation that has defined the power structure with its organisational principle – the minority is subordinate to the majority, the lower level to the higher level, the part to the whole and the entire membership of the Party to the Central Committee. In theory, the Chinese government is democratically elected by a system of People' Congresses that convenes and authorises from town to county, provincial and central levels. However, in practice, the manipulation by the CPC has turned the democratic structure into a facade (Dreyer, 2000: 87). At the top the National People's Congress elects the State Council, headed by the Premier, but like all other state bodies in China, it is entangled with, and subordinate to, the Party apparatus. So the term Party-state is applicable in China and indicates the fact that the Party is not parallel to but interlocked with the state apparatus. Every element within the government is shadowed by a corresponding Party organisation to caucus separately before the decision-making meetings and to ensure all the members following the correct 'line'. Moreover, the Party controls all major appointments to state bodies and most leading state officials are also Party members (Hunter and Sexton, 1999: 101).

Steven Lukes (1974: 1) holds that the exercise of power involves a conflict of interests characterised by observable or latent *conflict* or can take place in a context dominated by *persuasion*, *inducement*, *manipulation* or other forms of influence broadly conceived. Although the political system has transformed into a mix of authoritarian one-party rule, local factionalism, limited experiments of democratic practice and ideological adaptations during the reforms and opening up, the exercise of power in China has never been transparent. Firstly, *manipulation* is prevalent, as Party decision-making processes are not exposed to public scrutiny and public discussion was forbidden, especially with regard to personnel decisions (Yan, 1995). There are hidden and ambiguous rules that govern the processes, patterns and hierarchies of daily politics and obvious contradictions among institutionalisation, vested interest and arbitrary power. Secondly, *conflict* of power is also common. The fragmentation of authority lies in the threatening competition among different factions, the central-local separation and conflicts of power. Weakening Party-state controls

and the accompanying accelerating shift of political power from the centre to the regions and locals continue to erode the centre's authority (Goldman and MacFarquhar, 1999: 16).

Thirdly, *inducement* is consciously introduced by the CPC as it started to conduct a series of democratic experiments such as 'intra-Party democracy'[4], 'grassroots democracy'[5], and the more appealing political institutional reforms. The key to these reforms is the separation of the party from the government. As early as 1988-1989, the reform agenda began to set the functional transformation and innovation of government. From Deng's time the party has proposed to formulate overall national goals and priorities whilst the government makes and implements policies to carry out (Fewsmith, 2001: 9), which enhances the authority of the NPC. Although this separation had the potential to gradually diffuse the party's power by shifting some of its function to the governmental administration, it added credit to the party and to its solid resolution for political reform and power withdrawal as testified by an old Chinese saying 'to lose is sometimes to gain'. 'Small government and big society' was the idea accompanied by political reform as was the move from political monism (i.e. the centralised domination of economy and society by the state) to the 'dualism of politics and economy, the state and society, and the government and citizenry', which is regarded as part of the process of political modernisation (Ding, 2001: 35). However, as long as the Party's political leadership towards government – leadership over political principles (four cardinals[6]) – was sustained, their functions, forms of organisations and working methods could not be completely distinct from one other.

Fourthly, but not lastly, *persuasion* mentioned above in the exercise of power is all about legitimacy, which is important for the authorities to maintain the ruling power. The CPC had a self-determined destiny, which was to rule and lead the Chinese people from the beginning of the People's Republic of China. The Communist ideology is the cornerstone for the establishment of CPC's legitimacy. However, such legitimacy was undermined by waves of exhausting political movements under Mao Zedong. Since 1978, when the decision to reform set the priority of consolidating economic development and modernisation over ideology and class struggles, the performance legitimacy based on economic growth was seen to advance a re-justification and re-adaptation of CPC (Fewsmith, 2001: 9). As multiple problems have

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[4] Refers to reforms relating to the selection of Party officials (Chang, 2001: 215).
[5] Refers to village elections in which peasants got to choose representatives and such elections were even starting to spread to the towns and cities.
[6] Four Fundamental Principles for monolithic Party rule: the leadership of the Party, supremacy of Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought, the socialist road and the people's democratic dictatorship.

been generated during the process of modernisation, Party-state legitimacy is again seriously challenged by the enlarging rich-poor gap, social injustice, corruption, unemployment and pollution, and, as a consequence, by vigorous social and political contentions of different groups.

As an ideological adaptation, the CPC established the 'Three Represents' theories, which have been interpreted broadly and inclusively in the way that the CPC represents the business people (advanced productive forces), intellectuals (advanced cultural forces) and the workers and farmers (the masses) (Jensen and Weston, 2007: 20). Under the new leadership of Hu Jintao, the CPC has also put forward the construction of a harmonious society and scientific thinking for development by initiating new policies to solve the rising social problems (Zheng, 2004: 87). These adaptations are put forth as the latest progresses in the application of Marxism in China and the foundation of shared ideals towards which people from all groups in China are working hard. Another change has been the rise of nationalism as an assertive and patriotic ideology supported by China's increased economic power and enhanced national prestige, which is promoted by the CPC to legitimate its power.

In effect, patriotism is successful in meeting the party's legitimate requirement especially in its justification of its own position in society by equating the nation with the Party-state, stressing the party's patriotic achievement, declaring party members to be the most exemplary patriots and claiming that the CPC is the best representative of the nation's interest (Fairbrother, 2003: 10). In fact the form of state legitimacy, which can be justified or opposed in ideological terms and also as an unwritten social contract within individual-society-state relations, will change a society's political culture and slowly become an integrated part of that political culture.

To understand the Chinese Party-state, its dominance in the political system and the way it exercises power, will facilitate the comprehension of individual-society-state relations and will enrich the analysis of civil society mobilisation and the Party-state responses to different contentions. The legitimacy and capacity of the Party-state is also an important component in the opportunity structure and attribution at macro level to motivate or contain contentions.

Civil Society

There is a strong correlation between an associational sphere and democracy, since civil society acts as a system of checks and balances to the state, even if the formal political system lacks them. Civil society has also been understood as a key concept in scholarly discussions on the contemporary society-state relationship and on democratisation. It is argued that civil society retains a distinctive character to the extent that it is made up of areas of social life, which are organised by private, voluntary or autonomous arrangements between individuals and groups outside the direct control of the state whist capable of influencing public policy (Held, 1987: 281; Lindau and Cheek, 1998: 4). The term itself comes to symbolise a combination of economic, social, cultural, and political elements that are considered as preconditions for democratisation. These elements include economic freedom, autonomous social organisations, a political culture that values individual rights and freedoms, equality and independence, and the ability of society to manage its own affairs and to participate in the political process (Ding, 2001: 36-9). In practice it is a free democratic regime that can assure these features of civil society in which society dominates the distribution of power between the state and society (Kang and Han, 2008). Thus, robust civil societies are usually embedded in Western states with more mature capitalist economies, liberal democratic political systems and well developed legal systems that are characterised by the rule of law.

The emergence and maturation of civil society acts as a growing institutional autonomy enjoyed by social groups or organisations *vis-à-vis* the Party-state and as a crucial counterweight to authoritarian tendencies and forces within the Party-state (Wong and Chan, 2002). Concretely it will facilitate different forms of social participation and engagement, including contentious activities, and in the end provide a boost to the values and cultural patterns associated with them by furthering participation, trust, and civic virtue among citizens (Edwards, 2004: 54; Ertman, 1998). Therefore, theoretically, civil society is the organisational origin of contentions and, in the long-term, these contentions will increase the recognition of individual rights, be bound by the civil virtues, directed by the rule of law, and advance into a robust system of checks and balances on the state.

In China, in spite of limited freedom of association and vast Party-state interference, the concept of civil society was first adopted in China by academics with different translations in order to convey some parts of the broad consequences of the changing social realities (Wang,

1991; Ma, 1994; B. He, 1997; Deng, 1997; Z. Liang, 2001; Z. Zhang, 2002). This version of *shimin shehui* (urban people's society) highlights the role of urbanisation and commercialisation in creating a social force of its own to promote China's economic and political modernisation. The description of *gongmin shehui* (citizen's society) emphasises public and civic awareness and the participatory culture that is crucial for building a Chinese citizenship conducive to China's political future. The talk of *minjian shehui* (non-governmental or popular society) stresses that the non-governmental organisations, popular participation and mobilisation and *public sphere*, where private people can exchange opinions on matters of public importance, is free from the hand the state (Tai, 2006: 60-2). According to Sunyun Ma's (1994) review of literature in the field of Chinese discourse on civil society, we can have a better idea, from the angle of the 'right' (*quanli*), of how discourse was transformed from a mistranslated conception of 'bourgeois right' to class-neutral 'civil rights', how collectivism based 'mass' was transformed into individual rights and equality based 'citizenry' and 'civic awareness', with the active involvement of the state, and how the emergence of the whole range of quasi-autonomous associations could affect the landscape of Chinese civil society.

Wang and He (2004) further explored the upsurge of organised voluntary activity and the creation of private, not-for-profit or non-governmental organisations in contemporary China. Rather than investigating whether associations are autonomous from state control, they looked into what extent people were associated with one another in some structured forms and how social capital, i.e. resources embedded in social networks, was accessed and used by actors for action. As they put it, 'China is indeed part of the global association revolution.' (Wang and He, 2004: 55).

Apart from civil society organisations, it is worth noting that the 'public sphere' is another significant concept interwoven with civil society from Western political literature. Public sphere, originated by Habermas and well developed in the contemporary era, is conceptualised as a space in which to facilitate maximum public participation and debate over key issues in the conjuncture of the time and consequently to promote the cause of participatory democracy (Kellner, 2000: 259-60). Habermas also emphasised the role of the public sphere as a way for civil society to articulate its interests; the 'sphere' of the public sphere denotes a space that is often a mix of formal and informal institutions and organisations (Poor, 2005). In this knowledge society Harbermas' insights can be further

transferred and fitted into a new technological structure – the internet. The internet even solves some of the structural problems that Habermas saw in traditional mass media: it can be more open for interactive exchanges and for a wide plurality of voices (Bohman and Roberts, 2004). In China, the internet has not only been increasingly used as a new media by offline social movements in organisation and appropriation, it is in itself facilitating rational-critical debates or contentions on public causes and forming an inclusive online public sphere by utilising a combination of chat, forums, social networks, the World Wide Web, email and other protocols. Virtual association, formal or informal groups, and virtual communities, such as the Bulletin Board System (BBS) have been growing rapidly online and claims the largest number of virtual membership (Wang and He, 2004). The internet has greatly expanded social space for Chinese associational life and contentious activities. I incorporate the concept of 'online public sphere' into China's civil society dynamics and internet-facilitated contentions.

There are another two Chinese characteristics for civil society in China. One is the role of the Chinese Party-state. The Chinese state has decentralised some of its direct control powers but has subsequently concentrated on creating a comprehensive system of governance for the large number of civil society organisations. Interference and co-optation from the authorities still dominates, and the autonomy and independency of these organisations is in doubt. Amongst the scholars who studied the relationship between Chinese civil society and the Party state, White *et al* (1996) developed a mechanism of Party-state co-optation, toleration and repression towards civil society organisations of different natures (this mechanism will be elaborated in Chapter 9). But interesting findings also came from Qiusha Ma's (2005) research that Chinese NGOs enjoyed much greater autonomy than might appear on the surface and they actually had the ability to obtain official power and resources for their own growth. However, the type of NGOs still counted, as the political religious and advocacy groups only played an insignificant role in the overall rise of NGOs (Ma, 2005: 10-2).

Another characteristic is the informal interpersonal networking (*guanxi*) that has to a different extent consolidated or fragmented Chinese civil society. Informal networks as knitted by *guanxi* sometimes play a more active role in mobilising resources and organising collective action. Thus, in the particular case of China, the relationship between the formal and informal spheres of association is crucial in understanding how individual-society-state relationships have evolved within the terrain in which state institutions, social groups and individual networks have overlapped and interpenetrated in different mixes, from the official to the

semi-official to the popular. *Guanxi* is an important and very Chinese term that indicates social capital and resources are to be built, maintained and developed for the structures and purposes within these interconnections. It can also be a disastrous term that disturbs the normal interaction within the civil society mobilisation.

Since the early 1990s the debate about 'civil society' has become heated and both official and academic discourse and public opinion found that it could cover an extensive range as well as reflect the original meaning. This paper mainly adopts and combines the notions of *gongmin shehui* (citizen's society to indicate the non-private, non-state sphere) and *minjian shehui* (non-governmental or popular society) to understand the concepts and values of Chinese civil society. The forms of civil society mobilisation in China cover not only the formal civil society organisation, but also the informal offline and online networks. According to this broad conceptualisation, it is true that in China now more and more people covering all kinds of occupations and hierarchies express their grievances through various contentious activities via social groups, associations, networks and online forums. Civil society indeed acts as an organisational basis or platform for mobilising structures and social appropriation before and during contentions at micro and meso-level.

Individual-state Relations

Maslow (1970) suggested that human needs exist in a hierarchical order and that an individual generally attempts to satisfy his needs in sequence. Human beings move from the lowest level of needs to the highest level of needs in the following order: physiological needs; the need for safety, love and a sense of belonging; self and group esteem; self-actualisation. But, individual needs are often discounted in Chinese tradition. At the core of Chinese ethics and morality there has always been the ideals of repressing self-interest and glorifying self-sacrifice for the collective and it is always some relationship, such as position within the family or a homogenous group, which determines self-identity. The need for safety, belongingness, esteem and achievement can all be realised more fully in the context of collectivity rather than individuality. However, this cultural basis is changing and is reshaping individual-state relations. The collapse of Communist ideology and a crisis of faith have weakened the security of group-based identity and compelled people to worry about themselves as individuals, especially after the reformation of *danwei* (work units). At the same time, the encouragement of a free market, personal acquisitiveness and private

ownership, and especially an opening up to and exchange with the global community has nurtured an environment to inspire a spirit of individualism amongst the modern Chinese.

As for the Chinese state, there has been a significant withdrawal of the state from the society and from individual people's lives. However, its legitimacy has been brought into greater question because of problems with economic reforms, consequent social instability and the way the state deals with them. Tremendous changes have occurred to the moral virtue, the worth, the rights and the status of the individual as China goes through its crisis of ideological legitimacy, with cracks appearing both in the public's awe of the Party-state authority and in the general hostility towards individualism (Pye, 1996: 16). There seems to be a dual process of ritual behaviour: state's actions have become more formalistic and less substantive, while the people's response to the state's authority has become increasingly cynical, with general acceptance on the surface, but private reservations, combined with a touch of anger underneath (Pye, 1996: 30). The popular dissatisfaction, disappointment and grievance in China are illustrated in covert negative attitudes and sentiments towards fundamental values, norms, institutions and the leadership of the Party-state (Chen, 2004: 3). Individual citizens' general 'belief in legitimacy' of the political regime (Easton 1965 in Chen, 2004: 4) has a huge effect on individual-state relations. In particular, individuals' degree of satisfaction with the local and central authorities in dealing with social-economic problems and in policy-making and implementation also determines their specific attitudes towards these performances and policies and affects the probability of grievances turning into contentions.

Therefore, individuals' self-needs and identities, their assessments of state legitimacy and performance are the two dimensions that manifest themselves in the interactions among contention participants and between participants and the state. With the erosion of the primary group identity, such as in *danwei*, individuals, such as workers, migrants, intellectuals and the like on an occupational basis, are more likely to reshape their own identities in terms of the broad strata of society. Other socio-demographic attributes such as gender, age, education, income and political and religious affiliation also matter in deciding their needs, identities and social appropriations. The indicators of individuals' evaluation of personal living conditions and social status, perception of social realities and problems, assessment of public policies and their effectiveness on the individual at local and national

levels (Chen, 2004: 9) are also linked with the triggers for contention towards different authorities.

It is worth noting that on the one hand, individual citizens are still attached to the tradition of being passive, dependent and parochial participants in the face-to-face group structures, no matter if this is family or *danwei*; on the other hand, they are transformed during the economic and political modernisation in a direction towards being an autonomous citizen capable of political relationships with the Chinese state through independent participation and organised mobilisation. Along with this has come a far more pervasive and influential form of interpenetration among state, organisations and individuals through informal interpersonal networks and connections, known as *guanxi* as mentioned above. The privatisation and publicisation of *guanxi* can effectively orient the power relations between actors on different levels as in the description below:

> "*Guanxi* facilitates the privatisation of power in situations where people draw on their personal ties to strike deals about issues that are of public concern and should have involved a public discussion. *Guanxi* encourages the publicisation of power when people recognise their networks to be a public site of collective bargaining. Actors using *guanxi* to publicise power resort to ties with state bureaucrats or other social groups to mobilise support in a public negotiation or debate rather than to seek favours for personal solutions." (Lo and Otis, 2003: 145)

As for the implications of democratisation at the macro-level, the complexity and contradiction within China's political transition is ascribed to the inherent overlapping and interaction of three spheres – the Party-state, civil society and private sphere – which is also signified in the transitional individual-society-state relationship. The strong private sphere is historically introspective, family and connection-centred and dominated by patriarchy, hierarchy and traditional morals and rituals, and was once totally ideologically and organisationally controlled by the Party-state before reforms. Following the impact of comprehensive modernisation, part of this sphere, with increasingly emerging mass organisations and interest groups of all kinds and the insertion of modern values of autonomy, cooperation and trust, is extending from familial and quasi-familial relationships into civil society, notably with the publicisation of *guanxi*.

Civil society itself is vibrant and active but weakened by deep divisions due to private barriers, state interference and the enlargement of social inequality: urban-rural, North-South, class, wealth, education, age, ethnicity, religion and relationship to power structures. The Party-state is the defining characteristic of the Chinese political system since the CPC is always dominant and interlocked with every level and aspect of state governance with the purpose of ideology and organisation. The Party-state appears monolithic but is one of the most faction-ridden and corrupted states in world politics because of the way the private sphere penetrates through the privatisation of *guanxi* and the fact that the immature nature of civil society has not yet constituted an effective balance and check of state power. The explicit description of contentious politics can illustrate the implicit rules and dynamics of the three spheres and can further predict how to transform the individual-society-state relationship in the direction of democratisation.

2.4 Summary

The purpose of the research is to connect mobilisation and democratisation in China with contentious politics. This is a highly contradictory macroscopic picture of China today – on the one hand an explicit scenario of modernisation initiated by the government and developing at an unexpected speed and depth and, on the other hand, an implicit but unrecognised scenario of democratisation boosted by modernisation, triggered by the concomitant problems and actively involving different social forces with different as well as common requests. Underneath the observable dynamic complexities of contentions and pacifications, conflicts and tolerance, resistances and repressions in China driven by modernisation, there is a normative and ethical presumption in human society that contentious politics as a whole promotes representative government with accountability and transparency and a mature civil society based on law, this being both the substance of democracy and a good way for people to govern themselves. The indications are that the greater the pace of modernisation, the greater the disequilibrating forces on the old structures, especially among the spheres of Party-state, civil society and private sphere, the more pressing the need for measures to promote and achieve a new equilibrium in these complex relations towards democratisation.

In order to construct an holistic theoretical framework with a conceptual structure, this research adopts a political and sociological perspective by associating systematically a multiple theoretical basis. An analytical model is in place to demonstrate and predict the above mentioned dynamic processes, covering the macro, meso and micro levels of contentions and individual-society-state spheres of political transition. As for the modernisation-driven contentions, the uneven and fragmented development of agricultural, industrial and knowledge-based societies provides opportunity for contentions whilst the conflicting zones can be the spaces created and expanded for activism of different contentious groups leading to political changes. The vigour of civil society, interpersonal networks and online forums can be the mobilising resources to push for public courses, while a construction of identity, discourse and strategies within different contentious groups can frame the contentions at the micro level.

On the other hand, this study of China's democratisation focuses on the restructuring of individual-society-state relationship, which represents the nature and essence of a political system and justifies whether it is democratic or not. The Party-state responses to contentions and interference with civil society, the dynamics among formal organisations, informal networks and cyber space will be investigated in detail. Therefore, China's political transition and democratisation is not just about opening the state and rendering it accountable and transparent; it is also about transferring 'power' between the other spheres. Arguably the private sphere must become weaker, or at least subordinate to legal equality, the civil society must be strengthened but also its cleavages surmounted, and the Party-state must be more transparent and representative, with the disguised pluralism of factionalism transformed into an open political pluralism, which in the end is a three-way transition, not one-way (state only).

Chapter 3 – Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The systematic study of the prospects of China's democratisation through the features and tendencies of contentious politics during modernisation should be based on a reliable and valid assessment of three questions: what is out there to know about, what can we (hope to) know about it, and how can we go about acquiring that knowledge? (Hay, 2002: 64) Having decided on the research topic, specified its scope and developed a theoretical framework, this chapter of methodology is designed to answer the question of how to conduct the research and obtain such required knowledge. The structure of this chapter begins with a stratified explanation of the research paradigm, methodological principles and a practical research design. It will then specify the main methods of interviewing, documentation and discourse analysis, detail the research procedures and explain any issues rising from the collection of data and analysis.

3.2 Research Paradigm, Methodology and Design

Firstly, the research paradigm is to be set up as the fundamental disciplinary and epistemological pattern in order to direct the methodological choices and research design.

Here I mainly focus on new institutionalism and rational choice after having studied some of the dominant paradigms that have shaped political science. Institutions are defined more broadly by the new institutionalism 'as a set of rules, formal or informal, that actors generally follow, whether for normative, cognitive or material reasons' (Hall and Soskice, 2001: 9). So, new institutionalism sees political behaviour as 'embedded in an institutional structure of rules, norms, expectations and traditions that severely limited the free play of individual will and calculation' (March and Olsen, 1984: 747). This perspective was based on the idea that methodological collectivism of the whole is not reducible to the sum of its parts and emergent properties may arise from the collective (Burnham *et al*, 2004: 24). In the Chinese context, the flux and variety of the contentious activities often take place in certain political opportunity/threat structures so that institutions serve both as a shaping and a constraining force resulting in a dominant one with the asymmetries of power that arises from the way in

which institutions work. Historical institutionalism, which leads to an emphasis on path dependency resulting from key historical choices made by states from which initial policy choices and the institutionalised commitments emanated so that it was difficult to change track (Burnham *et al*, 2004: 19), is also applicable to the Chinese Party-state system.

The rational choice perspective was based on methodological individualism – the assumption that social situations or collective behaviours are the result of individual actions and can be reduced to individual beliefs and dispositions (Burnham *et al*, 2004: 20-4). Through the rational pursuit of their interests, individuals make decisions about how they should act by comparing the costs and benefits of different courses of action. Sometimes such individual behaviour patterns of utility maximising can make the collective co-operative action that politics requires difficult to achieve (Hay, 2002: 9-10). As in China, certain patterns of behaviour in both challengers and state officials in contentious politics can be explained and predicted based on their rational choice and calculation in accordance to their stable preference functions. There is some reconciliation between institutionalism and rational choice approaches: rational and utility-maximising individuals might find 'that their goals can be achieved more effectively through institutions, and find their behaviour is shaped and constrained by the institutions' (Peters, 1999: 44). Rational choice should also incorporate cultures, values, beliefs and even historical factors into this perspective in order to explain why actors move toward particular outcomes (Hall and Taylor, 1996: 956-7). Moreover, an actor-centred institutionalism can be also open to game theory (Scharpf, 1997), as the bargaining capacities and strategies between the populace and the authorities have become the focus of the contentious studies in China. Thus institutionalism and rational choice paradigms will be integrated in this research, with more concern paid to how individuals and institutions interact with each other to create behavioural and institutional preferences.

Secondly, methodological principles are to be considered following epistemological paradigms. Positivism will be applied with the aim of building an objective empirical foundation for knowledge that will produce testable and verifiable statements to explain, predict and attribute causality to events and processes (Burnham *et al*, 2004: 23). The case of contentious politics in China should involve the observation of value-free facts and inductive reasoning based on quantitative approaches such as statistics and structured interviews to depict and reach conclusions on the institutional changes and problems in China and the organisational constellation, group profiles and contentious interactions between groups and

the Party-state. On the other hand, hermeneutics and constructionism are deemed as more important principles to guide the research based on two assumptions: human beings are seen as the agents of meaningful acts and as the creators of their social world (Benton, 1977: 12); human action belongs to the realm of concepts and is subjected to the social construction of meanings (Winch, 1958: 124-8). In the complexity of Chinese politics there is an inevitability of conceptualisation and construction/reconstruction from the reliable, plausible or fluid evidence including interview results, discourses, events, news and various documents. The methodological implications are then directed to situational logic and context-specific reasoning based on qualitative approaches, such as unstructured interviews and content and discourse analysis, in order to deeply anatomise and interpret the contentious courses and Party-state responses in China. The seemingly contradictory methodological philosophies can be integrated in this research to encourage methodological pluralism and to establish both external/contingent and internal/conceptual relations between different factors and actors. Then the qualitative emphasis on knowledge in depth will be reconciled with the quantitative capability to make generalisations about the phenomenon as a whole, rather than one being at the expense of the other.

Thirdly, bearing in mind the links and consistency among paradigms, methodology and research methods, the purpose of the research design is to propose an operational plan, and to ensure that the strategies and procedures adopted within the plan are adequate to provide valid and accurate solutions to the research questions (Burnham *et al*, 2004: 29-33). The general aims in carrying out the research are stated as follows: first, to analyse the social, economic and political transformations during Chinese modernisation and identifying the conditions and stimuli for broad contentions, second, to picture the contentious activities of three categories – labourers, intellectuals and religious groups – and their interplay with the authorities, and to explain the causes and effects, and third, to learn lessons from the contentions for Chinese democratisation by exploring the state-society-individual relationship, the development of civil society and the power and strength of the 'people'.

The key issue is which research method (or methods) will be most appropriate to achieve these goals? I believe a more comprehensive understanding about Chinese contentious politics and a more accurate correlation among modernisation, contention and democratisation will be achieved through the reconciliation of new institutionalism and rational choice perspectives, incorporation of positivism, hermeneutics and constructionism

and a mix of both quantitative and qualitative methods. The main instruments adopted for data collection were interviews, documentation and discourse analysis, which will be detailed respectively in the sections below. The use of such a combination of methods will check the accuracy of data and provide complementary data that will strengthen the findings.

3.3 Interview Design and Procedure

Semi-structured interviews comprise a traditional approach that is utilised here to collect first-hand information. The subjective perception, conceptualisation and attitudes of people from the three groups is important in order to understand in a closer, deeper and more practical way the attribution of political opportunities/threats, appropriation of mobilising resources and construction of framing strategies in the broader public. The research design of the in-depth interview is flexible and open to new ideas and interpretations (Burnham *et al*, 2004: 219). Open-ended questions are also valuable in discovering what the respondent really feels. Moreover, the data collected will be valuable and useful for further discourse analysis. At the beginning of the interview design, who to interview should be decided, since what questions will be asked is inevitably shaped by who is going to answer them. The size, sub-categories and demographic features of samples from labourers, intellectuals and religious groups are deliberately defined and sampling methods are accordingly designed. Then comes the framing of interview questions and the drawing up of interview schedules. This section will involve the real procedures and problems encountered during the interviews, followed by the process of coding, transcription and analysis.

3.3.1 Sampling design

By focussing on the likeness of embarking upon contentious activities, the research was conducted on the following sample groups: urban workers (including laid-off workers and white-collar workers) and migrant workers to labourers; university/institute students and scholars, writers, journalists, lawyers and dissidents from intellectuals; and Falun Gong practitioners, both official and underground Christian/Catholic church members and a few Buddhist monks from religious groups. With the limitations of time and funding, fieldwork was carried out in only two cities in China: Beijing, the national capital and Wuhan, the

capital city in Hubei, an inner province. Both are typical locations for Chinese studies. Beijing is the political, economic and cultural centre of China with global significance and Wuhan is seen as a hybrid mixture with its geographical label as the 'thoroughfare of nine provinces' for a national-scale communication, trade and transport centre.

With regard to interviewing the smaller portion of dissidents and Falun Gong practitioners, it is almost impossible to identify them within China and getting access to interview them is difficult due to the great security surrounding their identities. Therefore, the interviews were conducted abroad with people of such categories and with Chinese nationals living overseas. Another reason why I include samples from intellectual groups abroad is that there is a growing and influential Chinese intellectual community outside China. There is long existing and evolving Chinese Diaspora mainly dwelling in Western countries, which is composed of political dissidents especially exiles from the 1989 Tiananmen movement, democracy and human rights advocates, Falun Gong appealers and supporters, other religious and ethical critics and radicals. Though greatly differentiated from the native intellectuals in standing, viewpoints, goals and directions and seemingly very idealistic with regard to China's social reality, this community abroad is exempted from mainland surveillance and has thus enjoyed a high degree of freedom of expression and they have tried to exert its impact as far as inland China through the use of advanced technology such as the internet and telecommunication. It also constitutes a broad Chinese intelligentsia, which has its own weight on public opinions and especially in the social and political movements both at home and abroad. This enlightened but controversial, proportionally small but rapidly developing arena should not be ignored and will be paid certain attention. The dissidents' involvement will make the research result more interesting, diversified and comprehensive. Moreover, political attitudes, participation and actions can be clarified and illuminated by comparison with similar groups of people in different national and international contexts.

The sample size was 30-50 people per group depending on the availability and 90-150 in total. Though the number is small, it is large for semi-structured interviews. The research not only seeks to generalise public opinion, but to see how diverse and unique these opinions are. Because of the number and specified groups of samples, I employed non-random sample designs i.e. quota sampling and snowball sampling. Quota sampling is applied as the main sampling method based on an appropriate mix of demographic features such as gender, age and occupation. This is a very popular means of generating information on public opinion

and if quota selection procedures are carefully followed it can provide accurate and reliable results (Burnham *et al*, 2004: 39). Quota samples also have the great advantage of being quicker, less expensive and more efficient than random samples. In quota sampling key variables such as age, gender, residence, occupation and social group status are assigned a particular quota, and the interviewer is free to choose any person who fits the criteria. As for the procedure of snowball sampling, I employed initial contacts and asked them to recommend people in similar circumstances to be interviewed. This is a valuable strategy to generate a sample of people or groups and it is more suited to in-depth interview research (Burnham *et al*, 2004: 92-3). In each of the three groups of people, according to the availability and accessibility of a certain occupation or category, the interview survey may under-represent subgroups. For example, it cannot cover all the occupations in the groups of labourers and intellectuals or all religions in religious groups.

3.3.2 Interview questions

I employed the semi-structured interview that has both more structured and less structured parts. The former part takes the form of a fairly detailed list of specific questions, and the latter includes just topic headings or general questions to guide the interviewer in a more relaxed discussion. Most of the open questions are attached to multiple choices around a structured theme. The design of the semi-structured interview is detailed below – its general aims, specific research areas and the parameters that define and measure research questions, around which the interview questions are framed and the attitude scales are developed.

According to the general aims of the research, the interviews collect public opinion from Chinese people of specific groups (labourers, intellectuals and religious groups) in relation to: 1) The social-economic-political reality; 2) State-society-individual relations; 3) the waves of contentious activities and the Party-state responses. The first one covers conditions, changes and problems in a variety of subjects in political, economic and social-cultural themes in order to explore the opportunity/threat structure for contentions. The second one includes the interviewees' personal autobiography, self-identity, interaction with both formal and informal groups and networks and the personal/organisational relationship with the state. This part will then investigate the mobilisation structure base for contentions and explore the elements of inclusion and cooperation, trust and support, interference and empowerment within the state-

society-individual relations. The third one includes the interviewees' (possibility of) participation, forms and strategies for contentions, attitudes and evaluations towards both the contentious activities and the Party-state responses. The analysis underlying this part of the thesis forms the strategic framing and cultural structure for contentions as well as strategic responses and capacity of the Party-state.

Based on the above three aspects, 14 parameters have been set up to define and measure research questions:

A. The way people obtain or exchange information;

B. Concerns and comments on any great change or problem within contemporary China's national/international conditions;

C. The influence of the social-economic-political environment on people's own life;

D. The objective factors to trigger people's grievance;

E. People's value systems;

F. Relationship with others and relation networks;

G. Organisations and different cleavages;

H. The organisational factors for collective activities;

I. Concerns and comments on state-society relations;

J. Concerns and comments on state-individual relations;

K. People's own life conditions, self-identity and subjective factors for contentions;

L. Classification of the ways people release their grievances;

M. Attitudes and responses towards contentious activities;

N. Concerns and comments on the Party-state responses

The interview questions are divided into four parts and Part 1 contains structure questions about the samples' basic information including gender, age, residence, education, occupation and political and religious affiliation. The other parts are drafted around the parameters, with an indicator in brackets before each question (see appendices). The order and wording of questions was modified and finalised after a pilot study.

In Part 2 people were first asked about the frequency and the way they obtain or exchange information. Then they were asked in detail about the changes, problems and triggers for contentions in certain areas and what they are most concerned, close to, satisfied or dissatisfied with. All the subjects were listed and presented to the interviewees on cards and some of those that have not been mentioned at all will be significant for analysis. Interviewees' sense of social justice, degree of national pride and esteem, value system will also be explored in this part.

Part 3 aims to examine the state-society-individual relations. The interviewees were asked about their network, relationship with others and any organisational membership and attendance. The types of organisations, rights and responsibilities of members, cleavages and any collective actions were further inquired about. State-society relations focused on the freedom of organisational activities and state interference. State-individual relations were mainly targeted at the personal trust, support and evaluation of the party and government.

Part 4 dwells on contentious activities and the Party-state responses at a more micro level. It begins with an examination of people's personal life standards, self-satisfaction, self-actualisation and subjective factors that trigger contentions. Then people were asked to talk about their experience or likelihood in making contentions, their attitudes and responses towards different forms of contentious activities as well as their opinions on the contentions of specific groups such as labourers, intellectuals and religious groups. Lastly they give their knowledge and attitudes towards different Party-state responses.

3.3.3 Interview procedure

A pilot study enabled me to test the interview structure and questions, to reveal ambiguous, meaningless or embarrassing questions, to discover whether new issues were raised during the pilot test and whether new questions needed to be developed. It also enabled me to rehearse the actual survey, to alert myself to difficulties that were unforeseen, to give myself an opportunity to discover how the respondents would react to the survey and thus to estimate the level of non-responses (Burnham *et al*, 2004: 39). The pilot research was conducted as follows:

a. Categories of interviewees: Chinese overseas students and visiting scholars, Chinese immigrant workers, Chinese religious activists;

b. Sample size: 3-5 people from each category;

c. Interview methods: face-to-face interview, telephone interview, email interview, group discussion;

d. Date: 22/5/06 - 12/6/06;

e. Venue: Newcastle upon Tyne and Durham, UK;

During this trial research, the interview questions and procedures were evaluated and finalised after making modifications or corrections, taking into account new topics revealed by the trial, and providing solutions to any practical problems. The length of the interview was the biggest methodological defect. The longest time to answer all the questions with some comments on open topics from the interviews was about two hours. Limited by the length of the interview, there is a need to prioritise the topics to be covered. More attention should be made to the question order, when to skip particular questions and when to emphasise particular words or questions. According to the classification of interview questions (Steward, 1997: 155), the essential questions are about interviewees' basic information, the contentious activities they take and the state responses they know, which are two core themes of the research. The necessary questions that are important to the research and should be covered as much as possible are those on perception of the problems during modernisation, organisational and networking resources and attitudes towards different contentions. Finally the desirable questions, which are those on interviewees' value systems, life experience, comments on particular issues especially the sensitive ones, can be inserted if time permits and if the interviewees are willing to share. Attention was also paid to ethical problems and the codes of conduct due to the fact that I touched upon controversial themes in the interviews.

The formal interview research was entitled '*Assessment of China's Realities, Problems, Contentious Activities and Party-State Responses*' with an introduction letter issued by the department of politics at Durham University (see appendices). This fieldwork was carried out in the summer of 2006 (26/6-11/8) in the cities of Beijing and Wuhan. At the end of the primary data collection, there were 43 labourers, 42 intellectuals and 15 religious people as identified by themselves or by the researcher. As stated in the sampling strategy, non-random

sample designs were used to select interviewees from certain sub-categories. For labourers, 15 laid-off workers were chosen from bankrupted or privatised SOEs (state-owned enterprises), while 11 white-collar workers came from foreign or joint enterprises, and 17 migrant workers were sampled from their most common occupations such as construction, restaurant, hairdressing and port workers.

Domestic intellectuals here were composed of university/institute students and scholars, journalists and lawyers. The samples of students and scholars mostly came from the most famous universities and institutes in Beijing and Wuhan, because these are recognised academies and share the incomparable social, cultural, historical, prestige and policy resources, assemble and attract the most talented elites and the most cutting-edge thoughts, they always closely interact with the government (either central or local) and greatly influence mass media, policy making and evaluation, and public opinion as a whole. As for the domestic religious groups, there were 11 Christians, five of whom were ministers and one Catholic nun; the rest were students, entrepreneurs and retirees, who had stronger religious identification to be categorised into this group. There were also four Buddhist monks from the temples.

I made some slight changes to the sample groups during the fieldwork and added five entrepreneurs and five cadres. Entrepreneurs were mostly private business owners, one of the newly emerged categories and emerging as a powerful interest group (Thakur, 2005). I also encountered a few young local Cadres, identified by Thakur (2005) as an upwardly mobile group, with a lower mean age, more education and higher technical skills. They could be grouped into the urban middle class who have a certain degree of prestige and power, enjoy a well-off family and a comfortable life, possess a confident recognition of their own identities, cautious attitudes and behaviours and have the least potential to be challengers. There had also been a tendency towards alliance between local cadres and entrepreneurs from the early stage of reforms and their interdependence with each other either for political protection or for economic prosperity. Growth of private wealth in both groups determined that they were the most supportive of the political status quo. Therefore, it is interesting to include their attitudes and opinions towards China's problems, contentions and official responses.

The email interviews with dissidents and Falun Gong practitioners overseas were conducted in September 2006. Five self-conscious dissidents, who resided in the USA and UK, were tracked through their online publications and blogs. Five Falun Gong practitioners who

resided in Canada and France were tracked via contacts from their news network 'the Epoch Times' and interviewed using emails. A particular finding was a special group of Chinese intellectuals with religious adherence and the mobilisation of overseas Chinese communities; the chapter on contentions of religious groups will detail the overseas Chinese intellectual-religious movement in the Christianity and Falun Gong related cases.

All the domestic (110) and overseas (10) samples participated in the interviews. The outline and basic statistics of the 120 samples including districts, occupations, and demographic factors are listed in the Table 1 and Table 2:

Table1: Outline of Samples

Location (N=120)	Labourers (N=43)	Intellectuals (N=47)	Religious (N=20)	Others (N=10)
Beijing (N=61)	Laid-off workers (8), Migrant workers (9), White-collar workers (6)	Beida[7] (4), Qinghua[8] (4), Renda[9] (4), CASS[10] (3), Other universities (3), Lawyers (2), Journalists (2)	Christian/Catholic (7), Buddhist (3)	Entrepreneur (3), Cadre (3)
Wuhan (N=49)	Laid-off workers (7), Migrant workers (8), White-collar workers (5)	Wuda[11] (4), Wuhan University of Science and Technology (4), Huazhong Normal University (4), Other universities (4), Journalists (2), Lawyers (2)	Christian/Catholic (4), Buddhist (1)	Entrepreneur (2), Cadre (2)
Overseas (N=10)		Dissidents: North America (3), Europe (2)	Falun Gong: North America (3), Europe (2)	

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[7] Beijing University
[8] Qinghua University
[9] Renmin University of China
[10] Chinese Academy of Social Sciences
[11] Wuhan University

Table 2: Basic Statistics of Samples

Sex (%)	Age (%)	Place of birth (%)	Current residence (%)
Male: 64 (53.3)	20-30: 45 (37.5)	Beijing: 27 (22.5)	Beijing: 61 (50.8)
Female: 56 (46.7)	31-40: 44 (36.7)	Wuhan: 30 (25.0)	Wuhan: 49 (40.8)
	41-50: 21 (17.5)	Other cities in Hubei: 17 (14.2)	North America: 6 (5.0)
	51-60: 10 (8.3)	Other provinces: 46 (38.3)	Europe: 4 (3.3)
Education (%)	**Occupation (%)**	**Political affiliation (%)**	**Religious affiliation (%)**
Primary school: 3 (2.5)	Laid-off worker: 15 (12.5)	CPC member: 23 (19.2)	Catholic/Christian: 30 (25.0)
Junior high school: 10 (8.3)	Construction worker: 8 (6.7)	Youth League member: 20 (16.7)	Buddhist: 24 (20.0)
Senior high school: 14 (11.7)	Waiter/waitress: 5 (4.2)	Member of other parties: 3 (2.5)	Falun Gong: 6 (5.0)
Vocational school: 9 (7.5)	Hairdressing apprentice: 2 (1.6)	None: 74 (61.6)	None/Atheistic: 60 (50.0)
Diploma: 14 (11.7)	Porter: 2 (1.6)		
Bachelor: 46 (38.3)	White-collar workers: 11 (9.2)		
Master: 18 (15.0)	Scholar: 11 (9.2)		
PhD: 6 (5.0)	Student: 29 (24.1)		
	Journalist: 7 (5.8)		
	Lawyer: 6 (5.0)		
	Ministry: 5 (4.2)		
	Monk/nun: 5 (4.2)		
	Cadre: 5 (4.2)		
	Entrepreneur: 7 (5.8)		
	Retiree: 2 (1.6)		

Stimulating new ideas and in-depth sharing with the interviewees was an important intention of the semi-structured interviews. How the interviews were then practically conducted was decisive to achieve the goal. In order to establish an atmosphere of mutual trust and understanding from the beginning, I first showed the interviewees an introduction letter with the purposes of the research explained. I then tried to create a relaxed but purposeful environment in which interviewees were willing to discuss issues in greater depth and length and enjoy sharing their ideas and perceptions. Different types of probes, for continuation, clarification, completion and redirection (Rubin and Rubin, 1995: 150), were used throughout the interviews, especially for some of the open questions or the interesting points that were stimulated. Examples of the probing questions are 'so what happened next?', 'could you say a little more about that?', 'you said earlier that…'. Rambling, or going off at a tangent, was encouraged (Bryman, 2001: 312) in the qualitative interviews, while I was also aware of the importance of redirecting the discussion from irrelevant dialogue. A digital recorder was used during the interviews, and back-up notes were taken at the same time. All of the 18 interviewees did not give permission or showed reluctance to using the recorder.

The sensitivity of this research topic was of great concern to some interviewees, as if an inquiry into unrest was in itself rebellious. So one of the biggest problems I encountered whist conducting the interviews was resistance, non-response or vague responses to some of the questions rather than precise and meaningful answers. There were some sensitive topics, such as Falun Gong movements. When interviewees were asked about their comments and attitudes towards these contentions, the rate of non-response was high. However, for some interviewees, as the rapport developed as the interview progressed, I found we could move toward more difficult and sensitive questions. I also noticed that the recorder inhibited interviewees from being as frank as they would be in its absence. In the end, only about half of the interviewees were able engage in a fruitful dialogue with the interviewer. On the other hand, I was continually discouraged from writing about the 'black spots' in China, Chinese people, CPC or the government and foreign academia. Such discourses, indicative of nationalism, will be further explored in the following chapter.

Another practical problem was that the interviews were full of multiple choice questions. It was strategic for me to clearly present the interviewees with a list of choices in cards to choose, but the hints on cards also deprived them of desires to explore their own choices. Some terms were unfamiliar, abstract or too general for them, and as a result some of the

interviewees only provided generalities or platitudes as answers. The categorisation of groups was found to be somewhat problematic in one aspect: the white-collar workers were in closer alliance with intellectuals than with labourers in regards of their means of contentions such as the use of internet. Therefore in the following chapter on internet contentions my analysis will be based on a combination of intellectuals and white-collar workers as the main online forces for contentions.

3.4 Analysis of Interview Data

The first-hand data from qualitative interviews provided the research with richer material, valuable quotations to enliven the findings and has made the results more interesting, although it is difficult and time-consuming to code. Quantitative data from closed questions, such as those in part 1, could be quickly and accurately coded. The data from open-ended questions presented more complex coding problems. The questions in part 2, on social realities and problems, in part 3 on membership and participation in organisations, and in part 4 about the contentious activities, attributes towards different contentious groups and towards state responses, were mainly open-ended with a large variety of choices and combinations. The interviewees were encouraged to talk a little more on the choices they were interested in. So it was particularly useful to record the interviews and listen back as soon as possible after the interview finished; transcription time (including translation) for a recorded interview was much longer than that for a note-taken one.

In all the interviews, I discovered that the analysis and interpretation of results was far from straightforward. As for the open-ended answers, I first coded the data to pick out themes in light of the theoretical framework. I then paid more attention to some topical, interesting and incisive opinions and did further analysis of the data. The presentation of straightforward answers, especially from the multi-choice questions, should be understood with a full exploration of related arguments and comments from interviewees as well as the underlying meanings. Even the rate of non-selection of choices, non-responses or refusal to answer particular questions was of great significance to understand how interviewees reacted to and felt about the topic under discussion. The interviewees could provide rather rich and meaningful information and valuable insights and understanding on the research themes, particularly the sensitive areas. I also found a range of dominant and marginalised discourses

were revealed, communised and contested in the interviews. So I analysed the interview data in a way so that discourses were organised and categorised in terms of the binary opposites of discourses of dominance and discourses of contention (Milliken, 1999). The two are not necessarily opposed to each other all the time, but they compete with each other, challenge each other and interact and overlap with each other.

Therefore, qualitative interviewing requires enough attention to the meaning, interpretations, and understandings that construct the world-view of the interviewees (Rubin and Rubin, 1995: 7). I picked up from the interview data a few transcripts that could be classified and analysed according to key words and concepts, and these concepts then could be defined and refined with their implications being deduced from the data. A delicate balance had to be maintained between understanding the respondents' definition of the situation and trying to place that definition in the context of a theoretically informed research project (Burnham *et al*, 2004: 213-4). I was concerned about the balance between expertise and knowledge, between opinions and information, and between the attitudinal questions and factual ones on a wide range of social processes and issues gained from the interviews. Some intellectuals are experts on topic themselves, with their expressive abilities and scholarship in social sciences, while some respondents are information-rich and contributed to the information gathered based on a range of personal experiences, both of which require equal attention. With regard to the discourses on opinions and attitudinal questions, I needed to exercise judgment of people's attitudes and responses to contentions. For example, I had to evaluate from the discourse whether to draw conclusions about the interviewees' present and future social behaviour, such as how likely they are to have grievances and how likely they are to take individual or collective contentious action.

It is also noted that representativeness cannot be guaranteed from the small amount of samples and interview results, which are qualitative and indicative rather than valid for the whole population. Therefore it is essential to use more than one method to collect data so that information obtained by the semi-structured interviews may be supplemented by evidence from documentation and, in particular, internet content analysis.

3.5 Documentation and Analysis of Internet Data

The collection and analysis of secondary data is a very cost-effective way of discovering what research has already been done on the topic and what evidence is available, which elucidates areas where new research needs to be performed (Burnham *et al*, 2004: 33-4). Secondary sources, including internet data, are most effectively employed in combination with analysis of primary data from interviews. For this research, in order to build a theoretical framework and a general picture of China's modernisation as well as generate new knowledge on the topic of contention and democratisation, documentation is still the main method complementary to interviewing. The procedure of documentation research is composed of searching for related literature from sources including books, journals, magazines, newspapers, websites, internet forums, TV programmes and videos by using search tools such as categories, search engines or tracing references. I accumulated the necessary materials by taking notes, analysing and sorting out useful and important information using a combination of extensive and intensive examination of selected materials with critical and comparative perspectives, summarising and evaluating the literature on the research topic by integrating different arguments systematically, and developing new ideas about the theories and realities in a creative and practical way.

Among the documents and literature what was worth noting is the Chinese governmental discourse, such as pervasive slogans and ideological speeches, which contain rich meanings, messages, implications and contradictions. This kind of data can typically be found in the largest national news network *Xinhua* or in the newspaper the *People's Daily*. There are also valuable government documents and publications including policies, regulations, laws and statistics from governmental departments and organisations as well as the official statistics bureau. Another useful source is the documentaries made and circulated through non-official channels by popular intellectuals, dissidents or independent organisations.

As for the contentious event analysis, mass media offers a unique approach to the study of past events inasmuch as they are time-specific and datable (Wilkinson, 1994: 50). The Internet provided an innovative cost-effective way of undertaking this documentation. Increasingly, much documentary material is available 'online'. The electronic version of paper-based media resources and academic resources, online government and civil organisation documents, quantitative data such as online polling surveys and qualitative data such as online elite interviewing can all be reached through search engines and the

'snowballing' strategy. It can be noted that the internet is transforming political research and politics itself, especially for analysis of online activism and contentions. The internet can be a main and immediate source and provide a synthesis of stories from different news portals (such as China.com, People.com, Xinhua net, Sina.com.cn, QQ news, Times online, BBC, New York Times, The Epoch Times) as well as perspectives from popular forums and web blogs (such as Tianya, China Digital Times, Global Voice, EastSouthWestNorth).

Since the Chinese government and the Communist Party rigidly control the mainstream and mass media inside China including the internet, the availability and authenticity of the materials about Chinese political conditions is difficult to guarantee. It is noted that internet resources in both English and Chinese are more accessible outside China because they escape domestic censorship. However, the resources' authenticity, systematisation, reliability, validity, impartiality and objectivity should be double-checked. For example, some of the internet resources, especially from overseas, might indicate some political bias and list the extremes of violent solutions.

For the sheer range and diversity of documentary sources from online newspapers to research reports, from governmental records to documentary materials, from websites to blogs, I adopted mainly a qualitative method of content analysis, whereby I made subjective judgments about the selection of resources and assessments on the value of content (Berelson, 1952: 18). The first criterion I used was to choose material that was public, with no problems of access or informed consent. I then decided that the material should be appropriate for the research themes and able to provide concrete evidence to the background arguments. Texts and transcripts of the material were treated as narratives to be understood and interpreted for meaning; meanwhile words were also used as data based on the links between specified words in known political texts and their subsequent political implications and positions (Laver, Benoit and Garry, 2003). This qualitative analysis of internet content is primarily based on the methodological philosophies of hermeneutics and constructionism.

3.5.1 Collection and coding of internet data for internet contentions.

Networking and debating in cyberspace has formed a significant online public sphere contributing to the mobilisation of civil society contentions. In this thesis I provide a specific chapter on the growing number of recorded online contentious activities that were mainly

conducted by intellectuals and white-collar workers. The selection and coding of internet resources is based on results from the fieldwork interviews. I first found out what topics people are most contentious about and what the most popular trends are. For the former, it is the problems during reforms and modernisation, mainly about the dissatisfaction with the governance and the overall moral decay of society. For the latter, it is obviously nationalism. Then I employed these findings to categorise and construct equivalent online case studies, in order to examine how people react to the problems through cyberspace and how they express nationalism online. In particular, I examined how contents and discourses are shaped in the lead up to the social mobilising process and how groups use the weapon of language to impose their assumptions and values on others in order to promote their own interests.

After grouping online cases into administrative and legal cases, moral cases and nationalist cases, I targeted governance issues, social moral issues and nationalism issues, respectively. I also added the recent Wenchuan Earthquake case as an inclusive case that can integrate different interesting elements. I then conducted an internet search based on the key words found in the most typical cases in each category. I also collected different online content from the news, forum discussions and blogs for one of the cases. Meanwhile I combined them with accounts from mainstream media reports to form a whole picture. In the chapter on internet contentions, I will also provide detailed sourcing of the text for both internet and media report data.

3.6 Summary

This chapter has discussed how the research was conducted and how the required knowledge for the research themes was obtained. Firstly, a research paradigm was set up as the fundamental disciplinary and epistemological pattern in order to lead the methodological choices and research design. An integration of new institutionalism and rational choice combined both methodological collectivism and individualism for a better comprehension of interaction between the institutions and the challengers within China's contentious politics. Based on the epistemological paradigms the methodological principles of positivism and hermeneutics/constructionism were applied to deliver both inductive and content-specific reasoning, to build up both an objective empirical foundation and a subjective interpretative tower. Such methodological pluralism led to a practical research design containing both

quantitative approaches, such as statistics and structured interviews, and qualitative approaches, such as unstructured interviews and internet content/discourse analysis. The main instruments adopted for data collection were interviewing, documentation and internet content analysis. Attention has also been paid to semi-structured interviewing with regard to the design of sampling methods and interview questions and on the actual procedures of sampling and interviewing as well as the problems encountered. The following chapters will seek an application of the methods and a full analysis and discussion of the data collected.

Chapter 4 – Modernisation and Problems

4.1 Introduction

Social movement theories shed great light on the discussion and analysis of the multi-layered and multi-faceted nature of contentious activities. The analytical model can be divided into three pillars to examine the whole contentious process: political opportunity structure, mobilising structure and cultural structure. Each of these is detached by a certain degree of independence, yet they are interdependent of each other in forming an overarching and penetrating network for analysis. The political opportunity structure, operating at the macro level, provides a theoretical skeleton for the influential factors that account for the emergence of social-political contentions. This macro-structure is also entwined with the possibilities for the preparation, transformation and emergence of mobilising resources at the meso level. Lastly, these two structures penetrate the culturally framing mechanism at the micro level.

In reality, and especially in the complex context of China, the waves of social and political contentions fluctuate and are thus difficult to capture, conceptualise, categorise and predict. Therefore, the key objective of this research is not only to draw an explicit picture of the opportunities and threats of contention, but also to understand the structure itself as dynamic rather than static development. Perhaps even more important is the question of how individuals and groups themselves perceive, measure and evaluate the opportunities and threats as realistic motivations for contentious activities. For this reason, I will start not by presenting a single objective macro-level point of view to describe China's realities and problems, but by adopting a more culture-oriented approach to analyse the characteristics of China's modernisation. Analytically this means that the reading of literature, documents, statistics, news reports and online resources has to be combined and compared with the results from the interviews of 120 samples from the groups of labourers, intellectuals, religious people, cadres and entrepreneurs.

The interview questions on China's contemporary realities and problems have been designed to ascertain any positive change in the form of opportunities and any negative problems in the form of threats. Nevertheless, it is soon disclosed that opportunities and threats cannot be treated separately, as there are no well-defined boundaries between them; rather, they are usually transferable into one another and grow within each other. During the complicated and

zigzag modernising course, positive changes may give way to new threats and problematic decline may give birth to new opportunities. We should also bear in mind that opportunities and threats can be converted into each other; even the state censorship and repression can be another kind of opportunity for people to take actions. In fact the threat of repression, including being unequally and unjustly treated, is more visible to the participants than opportunities (McAdam *et al*, 2001: 43). The discourse, language and attitudes are full of anticipated trends and unexpected inclinations and implications. Opportunities and threats generally would not be perceived and realised by people automatically and consciously for they are embedded in the transforming system of the modernising process and the coexistence of three societies. Social changes have made opportunities and threats emerge, flow and intensify, whilst the mass media and various ways of information exchange have made them visible, empathetic and influential. It is then that different trends of mentality and behaviour are evoked among the populace.

This chapter provides an account of the interviewees' perception of social change and problems in section 4.1. It follows with an academic assessment of what these perceptions reveal about the structure of potential opportunity and risk of contentions in section 4.2. In this way, this chapter tries to answer the two research questions for hypothesis 1 – contentious politics is modernisation-driven.

4.2 A Contour of China's Realities and Problems: Interview Results

The year 1978 was a revolutionary boundary for China, with its significance being even greater than that of the 1949 establishment of the People's Republic of China. The launch of reform and the opening-up of China can be seen as a milestone both from an historical and global perspective. It was from then on that China rocketed off at an unexpectedly high speed towards modernising itself and entering the globalised world. The theoretical chapter clarified the definitions of the co-existence of agricultural, industrial and knowledge-based society during China's modernisation, which allow us now to establish a better understanding of the grand changes, transformations, opportunities and threats inside the changing structure. Furthermore, in the dynamics of this transforming process, how to locate the attributions of opportunities and threats and how to draw a close relationship with the contentious framing needs to be given a more incisive view. I divide the section into three dimensions – political,

economic and social-cultural in accordance with the interview questions and results. Questions are open-ended with a range of topics provided from the three dimensions, such as: in what area do you think the greatest changes have taken place? Which aspects are you most concerned about? What do you think are the biggest problems? What are you most satisfied/dissatisfied with? What aspects relate most closely to your life? What aspects have greatest influence on your life either in good or negative way? The quantitative analysis of the answers recorded any response that touched the topics in a 'one comment per person per topic' structure. The statistics also traced the negative comments included in the answers in order to indicate whether the issues on the list were regarded as problematic. The next three sections identify the most popular and problematic issues in the three dimensions that are likely to shape opportunities and threats in contentions.

4.2.1 The three dimensions of change: politics

Table 3: Number of responses offered in terms of political issues

Political issues	Labourers (% of 43)	Intellectuals (% of 47)	Religious Group (% of 20)	Cadres (% of 5)	Entrepreneurs (% of 5)	Total (% of 120)
1. International position & relations	13 (30.2)	33 (70.2)	5 (25.0)	3 (60.0)	1 (20.0)	55 (45.8)
2. Reunification with Taiwan	0	2 (4.3)	3 (15.0)	0	0	5 (4.2)
3. Minority ethnics and races	0	2 (4.3)	3 (15.0)	1 (20.0)	0	6 (5.0)
4. Democracy & human rights	28 (65.1)	41 (87.2)	19 (95.0)	3 (60.0)	2 (40.0)	93 (77.5)
5. Party & state leadership	3 (7.0)	8 (17.0)	6 (30.0)	0	2 (40.0)	19 (15.8)
6. Governments & bureaucracies	7 (16.3)	15 (31.9)	3 (15.0)	0	2 (40.0)	27 (22.5)
7. NPC & elections at all levels	20 (46.5)	29 (61.7)	7 (35.0)	2 (40.0)	1 (20.0)	59 (49.2)
8. Democratic parties & CPPCC	0	0	0	0	0	0
9. Policy making & implementation	5 (11.6)	9 (19.1)	2 (10.0)	2 (40.0)	4 (80.0)	22 (18.3)
10. Rule of law	41 (95.3)	47 (100.0)	18 (90.0)	5 (100.0)	5 (100.0)	116 (96.7)
11. Political rights & participation	5 (11.6)	33 (70.2)	4 (20.0)	2 (40.0)	2 (40.0)	46 (38.3)
12. Ideological & political education	1 (2.3)	9 (19.1)	7 (35.0)	2 (40.0)	0	19 (15.8)
13. Patriotism & nationalism	0	6 (12.8)	3 (15.0)	1 (20.0)	0	10 (8.3)
14. Political culture & bureaucratism	11 (25.6)	28 (59.6)	8 (40.0)	0	2 (40.0)	49 (40.8)
15. Corruption	43 (100.0)	47 (100.0)	20 (100.0)	2 (40.0)	5 (100.0)	117 (97.5)
16. Party factionalism	5 (11.6)	25 (53.2)	9 (45.0)	0	1 (20.0)	40 (33.3)
17. Political taboos	0	10 (21.3)	9 (45.0)	0	0	19 (15.8)
Total comments (average)	**182 (4.2)**	**344 (7.3)**	**126 (6.3)**	**23 (4.6)**	**27 (5.4)**	**702 (5.9)**

Table 4: Ranking of responses to political issues

No	Overall ranking *(N=120)*	Labourers *(N=43)*	Intellectuals *(N=47)*	Religious Group *(N=20)*	Others *(N=10)*
1	(117) Corruption	(43) 1	(47) 1	(20) 1	(7) 2
2	(116) Rule of law	(41) 2	(47) 2	(18) 3	(10) 1
3	(93) Democracy & human rights	(28) 3	(41) 3	(19) 2	(5) 4
4	(59) NPC & elections at all levels	(20) 4			
5	(55) International position & relations	(13) 5	(33) 4		(4) 5
6	(49) Political culture & bureaucratism				
7	(46) Political rights & participation		(33) 4		(4) 5
8	(40) Party factionalism			(9) 4	
9	(27) Governments & bureaucracies				
10	(22) Policy making & implementation				(6) 3
11	(19) Party & state leadership				
12	(19) Ideological & political education				
13	(19) Political taboos			(9) 4	
14	(10) Patriotism & nationalism				
15	(6) Minority ethnics and races				
16	(5) Reunification with Taiwan				
17	(0) Democratic parties & CPPCC				

Table 5: Ranking of political issues as problematic

No	Overall ranking *(N=120)*	Labourers *(N=43)*	Intellectuals *(N=47)*	Religious Group *(N=20)*	Others *(N=10)*
1	(112) Corruption	(38) 1	(44) 1	(20) 1	(7) 2
2	(92) Rule of law	(35) 2	(39) 2	(18) 2	(8) 1
3	(49) Political culture & bureaucratism	(11) 4	(28) 3	(8) 4	(4) 4
4	(32) Democracy & human rights	(13) 3	(8) 5	(12) 3	
5	(21) NPC & elections at all levels	(9) 5		(6) 5	(3) 5
6	(17) Political rights & participation		(11) 4		
7	(12) Governments & bureaucracies				
8	(10) Party factionalism				
9	(8) Policy making & implementation				(5) 3
10	(8) Patriotism & nationalism				
11	(7) Political taboos				
12	(6) Ideological & political education				
13	(3) Party & state leadership				
14	(3) Minority ethnics and races				
15	(2) International position & relations				
16	(2) Reunification with Taiwan				
17	(0) Democratic parties & CPPCC				

I endeavoured to build up a picture of the political reality and problems by interviewing different groups of people about their knowledge of the political system and its operation, their feeling about political roles and institutions and their judgment about the effectiveness of government. In table 4.1, the numbers in each column vertically display the number of responses people in each group made towards the 17 political issues. It was not surprising that labourers were the least talkative on political issues while intellectuals had the largest capacity of oral expression on such topics: 182 comments from 43 labourers (4.2 comments per person averagely), 126 from 20 religious groups (6.3 per person) and 344 from 47 intellectuals (7.3 per person) compared to the total average of 5.9 comments per person (the total number of comments 702 divided by the total number of sample 120).

There were some topics that appealed to all or certain groups and others that were unsuitable for a semi-formal interview or were too serious for casual discussion, with several least popular items at the bottom of the list in table 4.2 still strongly indicating certain political and psychological tendencies and implications. Surprisingly, there was no single comments on 'Democratic parties & CPPCC' even with three members from democratic parties (see table 2 on the basic statistics of samples). Although the ruling party of CPC always highly commended this consultation, supervision and think tank of China's top advisory body – the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference – as a form of multi-party cooperative and consultative system, people seemed not to have recognised its significance and remained indifferent.

Labourers tended to evaluate social changes, in terms of both progress and problems, by referring to their own familiar experiences and from their familiar channel of information and exchange. Most of them avoided those unfamiliar or politically sensitive issues such as the Taiwan question, the ethnic question, state leaders, political rights, ideological questions or political taboos. Instead, they were more concerned with the practical and pragmatic issues that would have direct impact on their living and they would talk more on seemingly abstract issues if they could find a connecting point with their realities, such as the relations between bureaucracy and their experience with officials' superiority and inefficiency. However, there was also exception with only 11.6% of labourers showing their interest in 'Policy making & implementation', which deserved more attention because of its close relation to ordinary people's lives and its potential and vital impact. A possible explanation might be that some

policies were too distant, grand or too moderate for labourers to build a realistic connection with or to get excited or annoyed about.

Intellectuals covered almost every issue but obviously and logically couldn't give each an equal weight. It was out of the ordinary that less than 5% had interest in 'Reunification with Taiwan' or 'Minority ethnics and races', which were supposed to be hot topics amongst intellectuals according to news reports and online discussions concerning separatist versus nationalist sentiments and activities, and concerning cultural communication and multiculturalism. The same abnormality was apparent in the low percentage of intellectuals (12.8%) commenting on 'Patriotism & nationalism', which was both a popular ideology promoted by the CPC and accepted by the populace; it was a controversial movement conducted especially by younger intellectuals and often triggered by international events yet criticised by different trends of rationality from different intellectual viewpoints at home and abroad. One of the reasons might be that other issues outweighed the importance and urgency of these three areas in the mind most of the intellectuals, but such topics could also be considered to fall into a certain forbidden zones of expression and discussion. The interviews with the five dissidents demonstrated a slightly more radical atmosphere on certain topics, such as democracy and human rights, party factionalism and political taboos, whilst on others they were trying to hold on to an attitude and a discourse that was rational, objective and just.

As for respondents from religious groups, they showed a relatively balanced view on each issue according to their smaller number within the sample. As reflected by the tendency of their own group identity as more spiritual than political, they saw a higher rate (35%) than intellectuals (19.1%) when considering 'Ideological & political education' but evidently a lower percentage of 20% in 'Political rights & participation' compared to 70.1% of the intellectuals. The five Falun Gong practitioners outside China set an extreme and grievingly anti-CPC tone by mainly focusing on the issues of Taiwan, ethnic separatism, democracy and human rights, corruption, party culture and factionalism and political taboos, and by attributing all the problems to the authoritarian ruling of CPC.

Although there was no statistical significance due to the small scale of the cadre group and entrepreneur group, they were still listed out separately as having comparative significance in relation to the three major groups. It could be seen that cadres were even a little more cautious than entrepreneurs in speech (23 vs. 27 in the number of comments and 7 vs. 6 in the number of skipped issues). The cadres, who represented the Party-state at its medium or basic

level as local bureaucrats, predictably emphasised the positive changes of their chosen topics while lightly mentioning the problematic facets, even on the topic of 'Corruption'. In addition, they avoided commenting on leadership, governments, bureaucratism, factionalism, which were closely related to their work, identity and status, let alone sensitive issues like taboos. Entrepreneurs tended to be comprehensive and brief on the political issues and were more interested in covering international relations, national institutions and local policies. They preferred to pay fair attention to certain issues with moderate language rather than pinpointing specific problems, while there were two worrying narratives as victims of corruption and policy implementation especially at the local level.

Tables 4 and 5 represented refinements of the responses in Table 3, to list top five popular political issues and top five problematic ones. Table 5 demonstrates aggregated responses across all the groups in order of significance based on the comments to the questions 'What do you think are the biggest problems?' or 'What are you most dissatisfied with?' According to the aggregate calculation the most commonly cited political issues (see table 4) were 'Corruption, 'Rule of law', 'Democracy & human rights', 'NPC & elections at all levels', 'International position & relations'. This also agreed completely with the responses from labourers. Although the top three topics remained the same among all groups, 'Political rights & participation' was added in by the intellectuals and the others (cadres and entrepreneurs), 'Party factionalism' and 'Political taboos' by religious groups (due to a heated debate from the majority of Falun Gong practitioners, though with low overall ranking) and 'Policy making & implementation' by the others. All of the top five popular issues also appeared to be problematic (see table 4.3) except 'International position & relations', in which people indeed showed great interest and 45.8% of the interviewees made comments that were mostly positive. This demonstrated a certain degree of national esteem and pride, as well as hopes to relocate China on the world stage.

When asked about the most problematic issues in politics, corruption was overwhelmingly ranked in first place among all of the groups, with a 93.3% agreement, except from the cadres ironically with only 40% considering it as a big problem. 'Rule of law' followed closely behind. 92 of 116 respondents who commented on 'rule of law' considered it as seriously absent or problematic and difficult in enforcement and fulfilment. Although 93 respondents commented on 'Democracy & human rights', only 32 regarded it as having changed negatively. Likewise, 59 commented on 'NPC & elections at all levels', 21 saw this as

problematic. On the other hand, 'Political culture & bureaucratism', which was outside of the top five list, could be listed in the top five problems because all 49 comments were negative. Besides, 'Political rights & participation' was ranked as the number four problem for intellectuals and 'Policy making & implementation' as number three for the others. There were some general and harsh critiques such as 'Chinese politics is much darker than one can ever imagine.'

Many felt corruption was incurable as power had been concentrated in the hands of one party, and power in the party concentrated in the hands of a few. Some strongly criticised economists and social elites, who defended corruption arguing that corruption was the unavoidable cost of reforms as part of the system. The so-called 'High Salary for Clean Government' strategy to resolve corruption also received fierce criticism and there were more calls on severe punishments and sentences. With deep anger and cynicism towards corruption, respondents showed a profound suspicion of those in power and an awareness that corruption pervaded the whole system. As for corruption's deadly damage to society, a professor raised the issue with great anxiety: 'Yes we hate those involved in the big crime with large amounts of money and high rank of officials, but we should also worry about the small corruptions everywhere as if we are living in a system or network in which corruption is inevitable and people are getting used to it as a habit and mentality.'[12] Most respondents realised that behind the tough problem of corruption was a lack of rule of law. According to the comments, numerous news reports on laws, regulations and policies were appearing onstage, but the inefficiency and deviation in the implementation of these laws (especially judicial corruption) became extremely severe. As a white-collar worker ironically put it, 'how can the party deal with the defects from inside and how can it constrain its own power through its own rule by law?'[13]

As for 'Political culture & bureaucratism', criticisms were focused on arbitrary and dictatorial political culture, as well as inefficient, redundant and arrogant bureaucracies. These criticisms showed further public contempt and disappointment towards Chinese politics and leadership. One migrant worker even quoted an ancient metaphor to describe the dark politics today, 'A harsh and oppressive government is more ferocious and fearsome than even a tiger that comes back.'[14] Another radical complained, 'All are pseudo and deceptive!

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[12] Interviewee number 70.
[13] Interviewee number 19.
[14] Interviewee number 6.

All the propagandas and statistics are singing a high praise of the policies and situations.'[15] A migrant worker who often experienced rude treatment by the Urban Administration (UA) in his hometown said, 'The CPC kept a bunch of bandits and running dogs.' More cases depict the unpleasant interaction and communication between the local bureaucracies, including delay, hindrance, restraint, repression, injustice, inefficiency and ineffectiveness in various civil affairs. The complaints also implied the intensifying contradictions between the national and local official level on policy implementation and bureaucratic behaviour.

As for 'Democracy & human rights', some mentioned that the breach of human rights was a result of inadequate democracy and a weak legal framework. However, not everyone was in favour of Western democracy, in fact under half of the respondents were. Some also argued that much of the difficulty in establishing democracy in China was historically and culturally embedded. A few Falun Gong practitioners and dissidents believed that the second and third generation of leadership of Deng Xiaoping and Jiang Zemin, who respectively ordered the assault on Tiananmen Square and commanded the suppression of the Falun Gong movement, were not going to express any regret or bring in authentic democracy. But they had expected more from Hu Jintao, who had no involvement in the 1989 slaughter and was unburdened by the past, and free to reverse Tiananmen and Falun Gong judgment and modernise China's political system. However, some also expressed disappointment towards Hu Jintao's leadership that had tightened media and press controls to a new level, especially on the internet, arrested more dissidents, banned more NGOs and repressed more protests. Apparently these dissident intellectuals, outside China, turned out to hold a more radical view on democracy and human rights.

Nearly half of the respondents mentioned 'NPC & elections at all levels', of whom one third said they were very interested in elections but complained that they were never clear about when and how the leaders, especially the national leaders, were selected, or what the NPC (National People's Congress) and local People's Congress were doing, how often the meetings were held, and when and where they could have the chance to vote. Others, who regarded it as a problem, mainly doubted significance, independence and function of the NPC under the shadow of the National Congress of CPC, and they insisted that the leadership changes at senior levels were already decided in the Party's congress rather than elected by

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[15] Interviewee number 7.

the NCP. Some pessimistic conclusions were made that those elections were useless, just formal without any content – the higher the level, the prettier and emptier the vases would be.

People might tend to exaggerate these problematic aspects, but they still expressed their expectations for power separations and checks, accountability and transparency of representative politics, and others that were far from achieved. As for the local village elections, the respondents' views were more controversial and diverging. They were, on one hand, affirmative about the governmental intention for direct democracy and the willingness of villagers to actively participate in voting their own committee and, on the other, they admitted that great enthusiasm from the state or the villagers was not enough by itself, and that the local officials' cooperation or resistance could often be the key to the success or failure of elections. Some intellectuals said they once had the hope that this experiment of direct multi-candidate election in villages and townships from the 1980s onwards would extend gradually and finally to national popular election. Now they felt disappointed by those procedural problems, and started to ask why time, money and human resources should be spent on this experiment. Several migrant workers said they always missed the time of election in their villages and anyway, they did not care much when they were striving for a living.

4.2.2 The three dimensions of change: economy

Table 6: Basic statistics in economic issues

Economic issues	Labourers (% of 43)	Intellectuals (% of 47)	Religious Group (% of 20)	Cadres (% of 5)	Entrepreneurs (% of 5)	Total (% of 120)
1. Comprehensive national strength	0	6 (12.8)	0	1 (20.0)	0	7 (5.8)
2. Market economy	0	0	0	0	0	0
3. Macro regulation & control	0	0	0	0	0	0
4. Open-up & international market	5 (11.6)	16 (34.0)	4 (20.0)	1 (20.0)	2 (40.0)	28 (23.3)
5. Reform of SOEs	35 (81.4)	32 (68.1)	8 (40.0)	3 (60.0)	4 (80.0)	82 (68.3)
6. Private & civil enterprises	10 (23.3)	30 (63.8)	12 (60.0)	1 (20.0)	3 (60.0)	56 (46.7)
7. Job market & recruitment	14 (32.6)	18 (38.3)	10 (50.0)	3 (60.0)	1 (20.0)	46 (38.3)
8. Pension & welfare	30 (69.8)	20 (42.3)	7 (35.0)	3 (60.0)	3 (60.0)	63 (52.5)
9. The problems of agriculture	40 (93.0)	43 (91.5)	14 (70.0)	4 (80.0)	1 (20.0)	102 (85.0)
10. Financial & stock market	18 (41.9)	25 (53.2)	6 (30.0)	2 (40.0)	3 (60.0)	54 (45.0)
11. Real estate market	20 (46.5)	28 (59.6)	7 (35.0)	4 (80.0)	3 (60.0)	62 (51.7)
12. Environment & resources	39 (90.7)	45 (95.7)	18 (90.0)	5 (100.0)	3 (60.0)	110 (91.7)
13. Business competition & ethics	20 (46.5)	18 (38.3)	1 (5.0)	1 (20.0)	4 (80.0)	44 (36.7)
14. Poor-rich gap	40 (93.0)	41 (87.2)	19 (95.0)	2 (40.0)	2 (40.0)	104 (87.7)
15. Fake goods & poor quality	42 (97.7)	38 (80.6)	14 (70.0)	4 (80.0)	1 (20.0)	99 (82.5)
16. Power-money exchange	40 (93.0)	45 (95.7)	17 (85.0)	2 (40.0)	4 (80.0)	108 (90.0)
17. Economic crime	1 (2.3)	8 (17.0)	2 (10.0)	0	1 (20.0)	12 (10.0)
Total comments (average)	**354 (8.2)**	**413 (8.8)**	**139 (7.0)**	**36 (7.2)**	**35 (7.0)**	**977 (8.1)**

Table 7: Ranking of responses to economic issues

No.	Overall ranking *(N=120)*	Labourers *(N=43)*	Intellectuals *(N=47)*	Religious Group *(N=20)*	Others *(N=10)*
1	(110) Environment & resources	(39) 5	(45) 1	(19) 1	(8) 1
2	(108) Power-money exchange	(40) 2	(45) 1	(18) 2	(6) 4
3	(104) Poor-rich gap	(40) 2	(41) 4	(17) 3	
4	(102) The problems of agriculture	(40) 2	(43) 3	(14) 4	
5	(99) Fake goods & poor quality	(42) 1	(38) 5	(14) 4	
6	(82) Reform of SOEs				(7) 2
7	(63) Pension & welfare				(6) 4
8	(62) Real estate market				(7) 2
9	(56) Private & civil enterprises				
10	(54) Financial & stock market				
11	(44) Business competition & ethics				
12	(36) Job market & recruitment				
13	(28) Open-up & international market				
14	(12) Economic crime				
15	(7) Comprehensive national strength				
16	(0) Market economy				
17	(0) Macro regulation & control				

Table 8: Ranking of responses to economic issues

No.	Overall ranking (N=120)	Labourers (N=43)	Intellectuals (N=47)	Religious Group (N=20)	Others (N=10)
1	(108) Power-money exchange	(40) 2	(45) 1	(17) 1	(6) 2
2	(101) Poor-rich gap	(37) 3	(41) 2	(14) 3	
3	(99) Fake goods & poor quality	(42) 1	(38) 4	(14) 3	(5) 3
4	(94) The problems of agriculture	(35) 4	(41) 2	(12) 5	
5	(92) Environment & resources	(35) 4	(33) 5	(17) 1	(7) 1
6	(66) Reform of SOEs				(5) 3
7	(52) Pension & welfare				(4) 5
8	(50) Real estate market				
9	(38) Business competition & ethics				
10	(30) Job market & recruitment				
11	(17) Financial & stock market				
12	(12) Economic crime				
13	(9) Private & civil enterprises				
14	(5) Open-up & international market				
15	(0) Comprehensive national strength				
16	(0) Market economy				
17	(0) Macro regulation & control				

The same methodology of questioning and presentation of statistics was applied to economic and social-cultural issues. According to the total number of comments and the atmosphere built on each dimension, people were more comfortable to talk about economic issues. Table 6 clearly demonstrated that, from 977 comments (8.1 comments per person of each group in the 'total and average comments') economic issues attracted the widest attention and most participants were actively involved in giving opinion towards the economic realities and especially the problems that arise. Economy was still most closely related to people's basic living, working, welfare and security, which were indicated to be the majority of people's deepest concern. Economic interests and relations still determined the nature and development of other human relations and motivated other political and social changes. In addition, people were more sensitive to economic issues and gained more information from the media thanks to less official boundaries and taboos and thus felt freer to talk about them in detail without reluctance or constraint. There were still two nil response here: none of the respondents made any comments on 'Market economy' and 'Macro regulation & control', but one of the reasons might be that these two terms were too abstract for specific feedback. People were obviously obsessed by the concrete presentations and consequences of marketisation and state interference – the enlarging poor-rich gap, economic corruption, unsatisfactory welfare system, the SOE reforms, agriculture, real estate market, environmental crisis, and counterfeit storms, all of which provoked interests from over half of the respondents.

Generally, 'Comprehensive national strength' and 'Open-up & international market' received less feedback, with most of them being simple and positive. Only the intellectuals with a certain degree of speciality on international economy and WTO expressed some concerns and worries on the severe challenges that China was facing in the global competition. 'Economic crime' also ranked very low, partly because other economic deviation and transgression such as 'Power-money exchange' or 'Fake goods & poor quality' or even the distortion of 'Business competition & ethics' had a more nationwide and deep-rooted impact than any single local special crime or group of crimes. A little surprise arose with the relative low concern towards 'Job market & recruitment', interestingly only 32.6% of labourers compared to 50% of religious group gave their opinions. While the labourers concentrated on the practical difficulties of getting an ideal job for themselves and their children, intellectuals and religious groups focused on the intensification, irregularity and imbalance of the job market

as a whole, and cadres' comments were basically positive on the blossoming of recruitment fares and the improvement of re-employment.

Notably, labourers were much more active and interested in economic issues than in political ones and they continued to follow the pragmatic line of thinking and discussion with regard to the problems more relevant to their everyday life. Over 90% of labourers, 80% of intellectuals and 70% of religious groups all commented about the top five popular economic items: 'Environment & resources' (with a totality of 91.7% of respondents' comments), 'Power-money exchange' (90%), 'Poor-rich gap' (87.7%), 'The problems of agriculture' (85%) and 'Fake goods & poor quality' (82.5%) (see tables 7 and 8).

The issues of 'Reform of SOEs', 'Pension & welfare' and 'Real estate market' also attracted over half of the respondent's attention because compensation, pension, medical care and housing were important aspects to personal welfare and social security. Amongst these problems, power-money exchange or the rent-seeking phenomenon of corruption was rampant in the economic and business field. Respondents expressed their abhorrence and contempt in this grey nature of economy and towards some cadres with lucrative posts and open doors for bribes, and entrepreneurs who were engaged in offering bribes to achieve business goals. The enlargement in the poor-rich gap, reported by state statistics and in the media, was also captured by the respondents. It was noted, that besides those privileged classes, some heavy speculators in stocks, real estate, other business or trade and even adventurers in various gambling industries, gained their buckets of gold and edged themselves into the classes of 'new rich'. Some commented that polarisation between and within urban and rural areas was made worse in some parts of China, as peasants were still staying in the lowest level of the society, along with the urban unemployed and retired. Some labourers said they had gotten used to the feeling of 'being abandoned'[16] or the fact that, 'we've become the real disenfranchised'. More complaints came from those migrant workers whose wages were delayed and unpaid by urban labour contractors, from those laid-off workers who compared their own miseries with those well-off leaders from the same loss-generating SOE, and from those who were angry and helpless at the unequal opportunity such as access to the markets, to resources and to higher education. Even the white-collar workers, with good educations and middle-income jobs, still had a feeling of being relatively deprived due to increasing life pressures and the increasing price of real estate. They called

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[16] Interviewee number 5.

themselves 'little white-collar' and even 'new poor', compared with 'parvenu' and the 'new rich'[17].

Besides the traditional popular enquires into economic corruption, injustice, inequality and deprivation of weak groups, the respondents also raised questions about the violation of customer rights and the emerging environmental and resources crisis. The goods they consumed and the environment they lived in seemed to have a more direct and profound impact on their everyday lives. People were actively talking about all kinds of counterfeit products they knew about, bought and used. It was the group of labourers that consider this problem high in their list as the fake goods, especially food and medicine, would have the most destructive and life-threatening damages for them. One said, 'you cannot find a real thing of a real brand in our village shop.' [18] As mentioned by some intellectuals and entrepreneurs, fake identification, pirated software and other piracy of intellectual property were regarded as another prevailing economic problem affecting market consumption and competition. As for environmental problems, water and air population, soil deterioration and desertification, improperly treated industrial, agricultural and urban waste was listed by respondents as a notable problem. Some also exemplified vehicle emission control, south-to-north water diversion, 'cancer village', 'black brick kilns' and so on, to express their deep concerns about the overexploitation of natural resources and appealed for more government action and protection.

Compared to the political statistics, concerns over economic issues were more concentrated and intense. For example, in table 4 (except for the top three popular political items) number four and number five had less than half the interviewees respond. Obviously, there were more economic issues to talk about or worry about, thanks to the emergence and severity of the problems themselves, people's attitudes and conceptualisation towards the influences, as well as the relative freedom and openness of discussion. Table 7 also showed that the three main groups of labourers, intellectuals and religious people, shared the same kinds of economic issues, but responded with different ideas of significance. The trends also indicated both the professionalism of intellectuals, who tended to investigate deeply into some topics with specialised knowledge, information and terms, and the pessimism of religious groups who were inclined to condemn the evil consequences of material expansion and desire extension. The choice of the others, once again, proved that the groups with vested interests in economic

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[17] Interviewee number 21, 23 and 43.
[18] Interviewee number 4.

reforms, such as cadres and entrepreneurs, were trying to avoid involving themselves in any conflicts, so that 60% of them ignored the poor-rich polarisation, 60% of cadres, in particular, escaped commenting on economic corruption, while 80% of businessmen were silent on fake commodities, despite their smaller number and proportion among the respondents as a whole.

4.2.3 The three dimensions of change: social-cultural

Table 9: Basic statistics in social-cultural issues

Social-cultural issues	Labourers (% of 43)	Intellectuals (% of 47)	Religious Group (% of 20)	Cadres (% of 5)	Entrepreneurs (% of 5)	Total (% of 120)
1. Mass media	10 (23.3)	33 (70.2)	9 (45.0)	1 (20.0)	4 (80.0)	57 (47.5)
2. Official & civil organisations	0	7 (14.9)	1 (5.0)	0	1 (20.0)	9 (7.5)
3. Charities & endowments	0	2 (4.3)	1 (5.0)	0	0	3 (2.5)
4. Marriage & family	8 (18.6)	30 (63.8)	7 (35.0)	2 (40.0)	0	47 (39.2)
5. Human relations	3 (7.0)	9 (19.1)	4 (20.0)	0	1 (20.0)	17 (14.2)
6. Traditional & modern culture	12 (27.9)	40 (85.1)	15 (75.0)	2 (40.0)	3 (60.0)	72 (60.0)
7. Religions & beliefs	22 (51.2)	15 (31.9)	17 (85.0)	2 (40.0)	2 (40.0)	58 (48.3)
8. Social ethics & morality	24 (55.8)	37 (78.7)	15 (75.0)	1 (20.0)	2 (40.0)	79 (65.8)
9. Social ethos & public opinion	7 (16.3)	20 (42.3)	7 (35.0)	2 (40.0)	1 (20.0)	37 (30.8)
10. Entertainments	1 (2.3)	5 (10.6)	1 (5.0)	0	2 (40.0)	9 (7.5)
11. Problem of population	19 (44.2)	24 (51.1)	6 (30.0)	3 (60.0)	1 (20.0)	53 (44.2)
12. Migration & social mobility	14 (32.6)	24 (51.1)	4 (20.0)	4 (80.0)	1 (20.0)	47 (39.2)
13. Stratification of social status	0	29 (61.7)	2 (10.0)	1 (20.0)	3 (60.0)	35 (29.2)
14. Problem of education	30 (69.8)	30 (63.8)	8 (40.0)	4 (80.0)	4 (80.0)	76 (63.3)
15. Academic corruption	0	16 (34.0)	2 (10.0)	0	0	18 (15.0)
16. Juvenile delinquency	17 (39.5)	24 (51.1)	4 (20.0)	2 (40.0)	2 (40.0)	49 (40.8)
17. Drugs, gambling & pornography	22 (51.2)	36 (76.6)	11 (55.0)	4 (80.0)	3 (60.0)	76 (63.3)
18. Gangsterdom	10 (23.3)	11 (23.4)	3 (15.0)	2 (40.0)	3 (60.0)	29 (24.2)
Total comments (average)	**199 (4.6)**	**392 (8.3)**	**117 (5.9)**	**30 (6.0)**	**33 (6.6)**	**771 (6.4)**

Table 10: Ranking of responses to social-cultural issues

No.	Overall ranking *(N=120)*	Labourers *(N=43)*	Intellectuals *(N=47)*	Religious Group *(N=20)*	Others *(N=10)*
1	(79) Social ethics & morality	(24) 2	(37) 2	(15) 2	
2	(76) Problem of education	(30) 1	(30) 5		(8) 1
3	(76) Drugs, gambling & pornography	(22) 3	(36) 3	(11) 4	(7) 2
4	(72) Traditional & modern culture		(40) 1	(15) 2	(5) 3
5	(59) Religions & beliefs	(22) 3		(17) 1	
6	(57) Mass media		(33) 4	(9) 5	(5) 3
7	(53) Problem of population	(19) 5			
8	(49) Juvenile delinquency				
9	(47) Marriage & family				
10	(47) Migration & social mobility				(5) 3
11	(37) Social ethos & public opinion				
12	(35) Stratification of social status				
13	(29) Gangsterdom				(5) 3
14	(18) Academic corruption				
15	(17) Human relations				
16	(9) Official & civil organisations				
17	(9) Entertainments				
18	(3) Charities & endowments				

Table 11: Ranking of responses to social-cultural issues

No.	Overall ranking *(N=120)*	Labourers *(N=43)*	Intellectuals *(N=47)*	Religious Group *(N=20)*	Others *(N=10)*
1	(71) Social ethics & morality	(22) 1	(34) 1	(12) 1	
2	(65) Drugs, gambling & pornography	(20) 2	(29) 2	(9) 3	(7) 1
3	(53) Problem of population	(19) 3	(24) 4	(6) 5	(4) 5
4	(49) Juvenile delinquency	(17) 5	(24) 4		(6) 2
5	(46) Problem of education	(19) 3			(5) 3
6	(30) Stratification of social status		(27) 3		
7	(29) Traditional & modern culture			(7) 4	
8	(29) Gangsterdom				(5) 3
9	(24) Social ethos & public opinion				
10	(21) Religions & beliefs			(10) 2	
11	(20) Mass media				
12	(20) Marriage & family				
13	(19) Migration & social mobility				
14	(18) Academic corruption				
15	(17) Human relations				
16	(9) Entertainments				
17	(3) Charities & endowments				
18	(0) Official & civil organisation				

In Table 9, the total number of comments on social-cultural issues was 771 with an average of 6.4 comments per person, which were intermediate between political and economic dimensions. All groups were unexpectedly more talkative on these 18 items than on political ones, except for religious groups who fell from 6.3 to 5.9 comments on average. However, statistics of this dimension were mostly scattered and fluid: there was no nil responses or an absolute majority consensus since every issue could open a door to a large theme and thus invited different people to offer diverse interests and opinions. Generally, it was reasonable to expect most respondents to have no enthusiasm in 'Charities & endowments', which was not a prevailing action amongst ordinary people. The only three comments on charity were all negative (see also table 11) and concentrated on the official embezzlement of endowments for calamity-stricken areas or 'Hope Project' (nationwide endeavours to support compulsory education in poor and rural localities). 'Official & civil organisation' encountered the same ignorance, although the proliferation of organisations especially NGOs could be seen as a burgeoning social phenomenon and filled with the hope of transforming the social landscape in China. Organisations, official or non-official, had not yet played their deserved and necessary part in society, at least not enough to raise more concerns from the respondents.

On the other hand, that people did not have much enthusiasm for entertainment (only 9 comments) was not so reflective of the reality. Entertainment in China developed with a tendency for being diverse, creative and globalised with flowers and weeds coexisting, while the nine respondents all criticised the poisonous effects of pornography or gambling-related entertainment without a balanced point of view. Most controversially, 47.5% of respondents (including 70.2% of intellectuals, 45% of religious people and 80% of entrepreneurs) commented on 'Mass media', though some answers were brief, perfunctory and superficial. Some dwelled much on the wide variety and the high-speed nature of information exchange and dissemination, the increasing convenience of living, the expanding freedom of expression and the explosive influence of the internet. Others noticed that the mass media might be an invisible force exerting and strengthening certain negative and destructive influences in the younger generation, whilst a few focused on the official restriction on the freedom of the press.

Amongst the top five most popular issues and the five most problematic ones, respondents' interests and worries were scattered and there was no apparent and strong consensus like with the political and economic dimensions. This relatively weak concentration was allocated on

the interrelated top three most problematic issues of 'Social ethics & morality', 'Drugs, gambling & pornography' and 'Problem of education'. As many as 60% of respondents also expressed an interest and understanding in 'Traditional & modern culture', while 48.3% commented on 'Religions & beliefs', but these two issues ranked only as the fourth and second problems, respectively, among the religious groups. Instead, 'Problem of population' and 'Juvenile delinquency' were placed amongst the overall top five most problematic issues.

It was noticed that the top problems in every dimension witnessed a top-down corruption, deviation from law and other serious crimes, and thus formed the map of crime in China covered up with complex networks that connected countless dots. Behind the scenes was the bankruptcy of social ethics and morality from either a traditional or a Communist direction. What interviewees found most problematic in social ethics and morality were mainly fastened to the growing visibility of phenomena such as cheating, fraud, theft, robbery, burglary and a lack of public security. Many interviewees had experienced being robbed of handbags or mobile phones on the streets. Others criticised the ignorance or violation of basic moral principles such as social courtesy, helpfulness, care for public property, environmental protection, and being law-abiding. Some sighed, 'private, family and public virtues were at the lowest ebb.'[19] 'Social conscience and human relation was becoming thinner.'[20] 'Market greed and deception is everywhere.'[21] 'Young people are becoming increasing unfilial.'[22] 'We are dropped and trapped into the moral conflicts and faith vacuum.'[23] Many respondents talked of 'drugs, gambling & pornography' not only as crimes but also poisons banefully polluting people's bodies, minds and souls as more and more cases were prevailing around them and some of the victims were their close friends or kin. What's more, the scope and influence of criminal organisations and mafia (known locally as 'black societies') has grown rapidly. The 'police-bandit collaboration', criticised by interviewees, also provided an umbrella of protection and conveniently opened the doors to illegal activities and juvenile delinquency, which was another worrying concern among the top five problems.

Senior respondents readily recalled the Chairman Mao era at this point. It was argued that since the Maoist controls had been loosened, the vices of old China such as gambling and prostitution under many different covers, manufacture, trade and the smuggling of illegal guns

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[19] Interviewee number 82.
[20] Interviewee number 33.
[21] Interviewee number 23.
[22] Interviewee number 38.
[23] Interviewee number 96.

and drugs and the abduction and selling of women and children had reappeared and now threatened society. Some others attributed this decay to official values, especially to the high moral standard of Communism and the modelling effect of Communist party members, and the influx of Western influences in economics, politics and cultures through all kinds of resources, connections and information. They said, 'good role models are still being presented but of not much use now in the wave of Western consuming cultures and fashions.'[24]Another intellectual argued that the root of the moral problem was the pursuit of wealth, which had not only become the life goal for individuals but had also been greatly advocated and prioritised by organisations, enterprises, classes, local governments, central government and the whole nation. It was then suggested that concerns about social ethics were being marginalised and the questions 'why' and 'how' were becoming less important. In addition, it was ever more dangerous because cunning, profit-driven materialism had been justified by popular morality as people were increasingly pragmatic.

Besides morality, social problems were attached to the fundamental question of there being over 1.3 billion people in China, which could not be overlooked. 'This is the hidden or direct cause of many unresolved and difficult problems', as one scholar assured me.[25] Quite a few interviewees contributed to this topic, commenting that the enormous size of the population base was proving to still be a bottleneck in economic development, urbanisation capacity, poverty elimination, policy implementation, resource utilisation and environment protection. Some quoted the negative effects of the 'One-child policy', such as rapid population aging, unbalanced sex structure and spoiled children who were treated as little princes and princesses. Others were also concerned about rural population, migrants and the residential restraints and welfare defects attached to this issue. Another one of the top five problems – education – was also closely related to that of population. For individuals, higher education was emphasised as a life-changing way out of the villages and small towns into the big cities and even abroad, whilst the nation improvement of people's holistic quality through education was the key for holistic social development. However, faced with the gloomy jobs market after graduation and rampant nepotism, people began to doubt, 'is education still the way that will change life as they expect?' A second year undergraduate student from Qinghua University expressed his worries about future employment. He said, 'millions of students cannot find a job, even with a privileged background of the very top universities, and it's particularly difficult to stay at the

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[24] Interviewee number 61.
[25] Interviewee number 47.

capital Beijing.'[26] The national university entrance exam and its related problems drew a large amount of criticism. Other problems included the old educational system, teaching and learning methods, the obsolete textbooks, random irregular educational charge, teachers at universities too busy on funding applications and writing papers to strive for professorships, an imbalance of sciences, social sciences, humanities and physical education, and a mismatch of scores and values. Fierce criticism was levelled at marketisation, privatisation and the expansion of higher education and low public spending financed by central and local budgets, the latter resulted in a soaring increase in tuition fees, heavy dependence on private resources and less accessibility for the general populace.

4.3 Evaluation and Attribution of Opportunities/ Threats for Contentions

Modernisation in China is not only destroying the old and establishing the new, it is also a painful process which seeks to balance the previously unbalanced and to right the accumulative wrongs, to liberate the former bondage and to restrict the new anarchy. This is a process of deconstruction, reconstruction and contradiction, which has initiated and triggered changes in the political, economic and cultural environment. The positive and negative effects of political, economic and social-cultural changes and forces in China should be considered, since all the changes themselves are intertwined with each other in exerting a transforming influence. How, then, does this model of political opportunity/threat function and operate? How – and how much – does social change affect the opportunities and threats bearing on potential groups and actors? The mix of support and opposition attributed by a given contentious group is conditioned by the perception of opportunity and threat embodied in the group's self-identities and goals.

Political opportunity/threat structure is closely related to cultural structures and identities in contemporary China. People are performing contentious activities either when they are given more opportunities, more freedom and a larger space, or in resistance to perceived threats, deprivation of certain rights, restriction and repression, or as a result of a combination of both types. The cultural implications of the social change, media interpretation and personal experiences are the key to evaluating and attributing opportunities and threats. Moreover, insurgents are those who interpret environmental stimuli, attribute opportunity and threat to an

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[26] Interviewee number 48.

evolving situation and act according to these calculations. Therefore, it is necessary to explore the popular trends in social perception and mentality in response to the changing social realities and problems.

Popular trends themselves are dynamic and hybrid in their fluctuations. These represent how people subjectively regard opportunity, however objectively open, as an opportunity and threat as a threat. There are also profound changes lying in mass media and popular discourse: language is important and powerful in constructing and reconstructing people's worldviews, attitudes, behaviours and social realities themselves. Such collective perceptual trends, behind the political-economic-social-cultural scene, can be reduced to the discourse itself: social ethos, public opinions and faith. The following sections list the practical factors that decide the opportunities/threats structure with relation to popular conceptualising trends in order to demonstrate the whole evaluation and attribution process. They are demonstrated by the sequence of international factors, social-economic transformations, political system and state capacities and the role of media - a sequence coherent with the opportunities/threats structure in contentious theories.

4.3.1 International environment and nationalism

International factors were not mentioned much in the interviews conducted, but in contentions the analytical model is significant in influencing both the contentious groups and the state. In practice, China's modernisation is embedded in the process of globalisation; the flux of international opportunities and threats has risen since China made itself more open to and involved in international society. Thus, the international environment, China's position in global politics, Chinese diasporas abroad and the transnational political, economic and cultural processes can increasingly structure domestic possibilities and should be necessarily incorporated. China's engagement in the world has benefited China greatly, especially with regard to economy, business and trade; on the other hand, with the widening and deepening penetration of foreign cultures and values, it has also brought about contradictions between nationalism and globalism as well as other economic, cultural, moral and ethical conflicts.

Patriotism and nationalism (*aiguozhuyi* and *minzuzhuyi* respectively in Chinese) has become one of the most popular trends in response to the changing international environment. What

became apparent from the interviews was that people were claiming to have great pride towards the nation. Although 'democracy and human rights' were admitted to be among the most problematic issues in Chinese domestic politics, people would assign themselves with a different role and perspective when considering it in an international context. Out of a nationalist dignity, many interviewees constantly asked the researcher not to expose the dark side of China to international society and they sometimes made critical comments on sensitive topics after the recorder was switched off. This stand is common and prevalent especially with the majority of the younger generation and urban middle class in China. Amongst them is a strong self-identity and identity with the nation-state. They are more concerned about the speed, pace, width and depth of modernisation, national security and international status than which political form the government takes – liberal democratic or authoritarian. It is also the authorities' strategy to blur the lines and differences, to justify the status quo, to maintain the national cultural identity and dignity and to marginalise liberal democracy labelled as 'Western'. The stated objective of the Party's political reform turns out to be a gesture showing that the Party is more willing and has worked hard to democratise China on its own terms in accordance with socialism and Chinese characteristics. The superiority of socialist democracy over capitalist democracy and the criticism of new nationalism on foreign bourgeois liberalism are still disseminated among the mainstream media within China and delivered to the new generations, from elementary schools to postgraduate studies, with the compulsory course of politics.

From the interview discourse, the official terms of 'peaceful evolution', 'spiritual pollution' and 'bourgeois liberalisation' and products of the 'international reactionary forces' for the swelling influx of exotic heterodoxy, were still quoted and exerted their influences on people's mentalities. The once sacrosanct principle of liberal democracy as the yardstick of modernity and human rights was being questioned as representing no more than the imposition of Western values and standards over developing nations like China. Non-interference was still the classic Chinese maxim. Some doubted, and were alert towards, the intention of international interferences and critiques: 'are they to help China improve its human rights record or defame China or even violate China's sovereignty?'[27] People were especially opposed to theories of 'China Threat' or 'China Collapse' and dissidents were usually accused of lacking patriotic sentiment or as worshipping the Western system and power. For some scholars, America's promotion of democracy in China is designed both to

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[27] Interviewee number 42.

divide China and to weaken Chinese competitive ability (W. Zhang, 2002). Both the Chinese authorities and the people can hardly accept the disparaging perspectives and criticisms from foreign media, especially American and European accusations, towards China's poor human rights record – the authorities' mistreatments towards minority, religious or dissident populations. Therefore nation-building and stability maintenance has been prioritised and has guided a series of nationalist movements in the wake of China's rise.

It seems that to some people there are sensitive contradictions between democracy and nationalism, and democracy has often to be sacrificed for what Chinese authorities see as the higher interest of saving and building the existing nation-state. However, the other side of nationalism, with minor voices from dissidents and Chinese diasporas abroad, has attempted to combine democracy and nationalism together. Dissidents and Falun Gong practitioners in the interviews expressed their passion, patriotism and prospects for the Chinese nation and culture, but such sentiments were based on a more globalised solution and they blamed Chinese authorities for not fulfilling their promises to the UN human rights charters, also thinking that international society hadn't done enough to move the Chinese government in this aspect of democracy, human rights and the rule of law. This side also greatly influenced the dissident movements inside and outside China in this era of globalisation and informatisation.

The positioning of the West towards China is transforming too. There is no doubt that Western liberalism has been utilised as a kind of weapon to challenge the Party-state doctrines by critical intellectuals, notably at the time of the 1989 pro-democracy movement, and has initiated an influential tendency towards political pluralism and threatened the party's absolute monopoly of power and ideology. The pressure on democratisation and improvement of human rights record from Chinese communities abroad and Western democratic countries is also growing. There is international criticism of the Chinese state's repression on social political contentions. International governments, NGOs and the media can function as an important resource for some challengers, especially the dissidents, but such pressure has been indeed less antagonistic than in the period of the post-Tiananmen massacre and focuses more on support for good governance to help underpin China's domestic stability. More weight is also placed on other issues such as climate change, environmental protection, IPR (Intellectual Property Rights) protection and anti-counterfeiting, sustainable development,

energy and resources, world peacekeeping and so on to engage China as an international stakeholder.

However, it can be argued that in order to be a more responsible regional neighbour and global actor, Chinese official rhetoric must undoubtedly welcome increasing openness and transparency in the face of the irreversible waves of information globalisation. Yet, this current 'peaceful rise' (Zheng, 2005) as a regional and world power may incline the Chinese state to be even less willing than in past decades to accept a democratic solution based on compromise and power-sharing (He, 2004: 182). As nationalism dominates the national project of socialist modernity, people are still attached to different versions of nationalism, which can be emotional, cultural, liberal and pragmatic. In fact different groups have varied degrees and ways to express nationalism. It can be deduced that the sentiments of national Chinese identity are established through an informal, private, casual and vivid way rather than completely compliant with official channels. The full range of nationalist contentions will be detailed in the following chapters.

4.3.2 Double-edged sword of reform and people's new request

As the major part of modernisation China is experiencing a national market economy reform and the result is a massive and painful restructuring of industry and society. The profit-driven reform is a double-edged sword, which has on the one side raised millions out of poverty, changed the existing power relations and provided soil to nourish new classes, associations, social roles, identities, values and cultures in favour of more autonomy, freedom and access to power and profit. The development of civil society organisations and consciousness is undoubtedly a consequence of reform-driven modernisation, which advances opportunities for social mobilisation and contention. On the other side, there are new problems generated from and attached to China's reform and rapid economic growth. The deepest cause is the imbalanced processes of modernisation: imbalance between social-political transition and economic reforms, between material pursuit and spiritual demand and between human and nature. Such imbalance is also a result of the conflicting co-existence of agricultural, industrial and knowledge-based societies. As the above tables showed, the cost and side effect of reforms can be presented as corruption, injustice, inequality, unemployment, insecurity and deprivation of certain groups of people, value vacuums, moral conflict, identity confusion,

environmental pollution, resource shortage and ecological disruption. These problems have covered the dysfunction and abnormality of individuals, the society, the Party-state, and Nature. As can be understood from the interviews, respondents have different evaluations and conceptualisations. Some are afraid that all these are reversing China's success in achieving the fundamental conditions essential to democratisation while others regard them as both threats and opportunities to initiate more critical and radical transformations. Undoubtedly, the accumulation and complication of problems has threatened the social, political and environmental system and thus triggered new requests from discontented people.

On the political-economic aspect, market-oriented reform, rapid economic modernisation and globalisation have introduced greater economic and social inequalities and led to 'distributive conflicts' (Wang, 2000) where social groups and regions have benefited from reforms very unevenly. Social stratification and mobility have raised more attention than before. The phenomenon of new poor and new rich also represent the inequality of classes, opportunities, industries and places and reflect the conflicting coexistence of the three societies with the rich-poor gap expanding at the societal borders. Criticism also arose in the interviews toward the fact that the state is still a representative of the dominant groups in society with policies and rules in favour of them, delicately or directly forcing the subordinate groups to accept them. Therefore, the problem of inequality is entangled with that of injustice; people admit that there cannot be absolute equality in society, but they cannot tolerate inequality created by unjust means and they severely oppose any unjust institution. The most unbearable cause of inequality is corruption, which has become an institutionalised injustice. It is commonly and widely believed that people with political power divert public property for their own economic gain. These always involve complex webs composed of different levels of officials from the basic to the top and thus drive 'rent seeking' to new heights, hobbling the emergence of a more effective administration (Fewsmith, 2001: 9-10). It can be concluded that corruption has wilfully prevailed all state apparatus from civil and judicial to military departments, fiercely swallowed the country's treasure and severely eroded people's confidence in the country's politics. It is further argued that the lack of a legal and regulatory framework and an independent judiciary, the absence of the essence of the 'rule of law', the party's continuing control over law enforcement and the empty shell of other non-party surveillance institutions are the causes of the ineffectual anti-corruption campaigns (Goldman and MacFarquhar, 1999: 14).

Therefore, one of the strongest and most popular requests is for equality and justice. This opposition against inequality and injustice is most likely to irritate people's emotions, grievances and agonies. The more people that value equality, justice and equity, the more they scorn and detest the problems of corruption, power-money exchange, the rich-poor gap and absence of law. More and more contentious cases are appealing for the initial equality of opportunities, the procedural fairness of the rules and finally the ultimate justice of results. In addition, people's strong demands for equality and justice in redistribution are directly attached to an inherent need for social security where, in spite of the constant efforts and emphasis from the government, a welfare system has still not been completely established.

On the social-moral aspect, behind the request for equality and justice is a deep transformation and demand in the value system. During economic reform, with the accelerating tendency of capitalism and globalisation, moneymaking has obliterated other values. Official corruption has resulted in the widespread loss of idealism, alienation from the people, loss of political vigilance and rampant materialism among senior cadres. The model effect of individual actors in the political system, who seek personal financial benefit from socioeconomic changes, has even made corruption an excuse as a necessary means for getting by in the world and 'even a little person seeks a favour'. Attention becomes directed more towards how to get along in a corrupted world and how, if possible, to benefit from it rather than towards how to change it (Levy, 2002: 49). The incurable corruption of the Party gives the Chinese people another kind of freedom – the freedom to feel justified in engaging in anti-social behaviour to fulfil one's own selfish desires – which may be the most harmful legacy of this regime in China (Liu, 2002: 28-30). For example, the fake and inferior commodities are widespread and uncontrollable, which not only harm the interests of consumers and original producers, but also damage the trust, credit and business ethics of society. And this is not simply a result of moral failure but of systemic pressures and temptations.

There are other problems focusing on the cultural and moral conflicts between tradition and modernity, between different generations and, particularly, on the deviation and anti-social behaviour of the younger generation. Although on the surface the Marxist anti-theism is still the philosophic basis for socialist ideology and worldview, it is not rooted any more in the minds of the majority, with more and more people converting to other old, new or mixed beliefs, faiths and religions. Public security was another big concern that follows with increasing variety and quantity of crimes. The profound psychological impact of insecurity

along with the stressful pace of modern life has either recalled people to regress back to traditional social values or thrown them into the formless flux of information and cynical nihilism.

Social morality related contentions, especially online exposure and contestation (detailed in chapter 8), have shown that citizens are falling into persistent habits of entrenched corruption and other social-economic-political problems, which will undermine public faith in society and its leaders. The last question in the social reality part of the interview was about people's value system: 'what do you value and pursue most in your life (money, power, prestige, faith, ideals, morality, family, social justice, societal welfare, national prosperity, etc.)? Have you ever changed your values and beliefs (if yes, what are the influential factors – family, friends, celebrities, changing society, religion, media, the Internet, etc.)?' The responses showed that over 90% of interviewees affirmed their values were spiritual rather than materialistic, and altruistic rather than egoistical, as social justice and welfare have been most mentioned. This, though, does not accord with the society often described as crazed with the pursuit of money and power, but reflects people's good will and a request for a reestablishment of the traditional value systems.

4.3.3 Central-local complexity and deconstruction of authorities

While the centralised Leninist Party-state has made great efforts to remain in control and hold China together, it has been challenged and changed by the modernisation process accompanied by economic decentralisation. On the one hand, the Party-state has shown its capacity for integration by making a massive and largely successful attempt to integrate the economies of the localities into the national economy. On the other hand, the mechanisms of marketisation have transformed the economic function of central government's direct control into a more indirect and macroeconomic-based control, with more local decision-making over economic activities and affairs. Furthermore, central leadership is resisting any political reform that will undercut Party authority whilst at the same time weakening centralised functions and the accompanying shift of political power from the centre to the local and continuing to erode the authority of the centre (Goldman and MacFarquhar, 1999: 16). New local alliances are forming united fronts against the centre's commands because of their divergent interests. The economic protectionism of local interests has also expanded to

become a political and a criminal faction. On the one hand the central government has been hard-pressed in the delivery of public goods such as public health, education, pension reform and protection of the environment, and on the other hand there remains a lack of effective enforcement and implementation in the localities (W. Chen, 2007). The application of laws, regulations and policies is sometimes biased by corrupt arrangements or is reflecting the local balanced interests (OECD, 2005: 24).

The centre has taken anti-corruption as its incumbent task in order to save the party and the nation from deterioration. The Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (CCDI) of the CPC have made major progress in 'digging out big graft cases, improving supervision system, curbing commercial bribery and correcting malpractice that harms the interests of the people' under the principle of curbing corruption by both punitive and preventative measures (Xinhua Net, 2007). Thorough investigation might eventually become a deterrent for the corrupt officials, however, it encounters barriers, protectionism and interest conflicts on all levels below. The way officials stick up for and protect one another is very common, which is known as mutual self-interest or nepotism. The corrupt officials from the city, villages and township levels all have certain links to higher authorities for their 'corruption' protection. The phenomenon of corruption has become institutional. It has penetrated most organisations, departments and institutions in the political system and has become a way of arranging the redistribution of political, economic, social and cultural resources used to reduce the inter system frictions. Anti-corruption is not merely a punishment and surveillance of corruption, but has become a tool for political intimidation and factional struggles. There are inadequacies in the court system, such as judicial ignorance of the law, corruption within the judicial system, pressures on judges from the local government and CPC officials and an inability by the courts to enforce their own decisions (OECD, 2005: 26). Widespread corruption and indiscipline have also reduced the general capacity and effiencicy of governments, which have allowed sectional interests to capture local governments in some parts of the country, empowering kinship groups, chambers of commerce or even criminal gangs (OECD, 2005: 69). Since the police may utilise criminal gangs to subdue other criminals, the so-called combat-poison-with-poison policy has, in fact, legitimised the existing 'police-bandit collaboration' (Liu, 2002: 29).

Faced with the complex nature of the central-local issue, which has opened both opportunities and threats for various contentions, the population perceive the state as both strong and weak.

It is strong in the sense that the centre still makes vital decisions and the use of repression is largely under their command. Controls in some social-political arenas have actually been strengthened, as the Party-state is fighting cultists, activists, separatists and all other dissidents groups with hardly any tolerance for other voices. It is weak in the sense of serious local resistance and protectionism in different regions. The central-local conflicts have, to a great degree, affected the centre in mobilising resources, delivering social goods, implementing policies and laws and managing local interest. A scholarasserted in the 2006 interview that the weakening Party-state is less able to handle social problems and unrest with effective solutions.[28] While some people protest against the powerful Party-state violating their rights and freedom, others oppose an impotent state to try and solve the problems of inequality and injustice. The state response has indicated the intricate central-local relationship, since different contentions are treated with toleration or repression from local government inconsistently with central ruling.

It needs to be clarified that there are no direct and open confrontations of central-local or state versus the people. The centre does not want a contradictory relationship with localities or its people but neither can it afford the growing power of local alliances involving officials and interest groups at the expense of weakening itself. However, it is interesting to note that underneath the official unification, upholding and complying with the authority, there is an irreversible momentum of fragmentation, diversification and deconstruction of authority. The deconstruction of authorities has begun not only in the theories and discourse on postmodernism but also in practice. Less unquestioning obedience to authorities, less dependence on the elites or experts and more initiatives to find alternatives are all around the scene of people's everyday lives. There are different groups challenging the dominant values and Party-state claims that they are representative of society as a whole. Chinese leaders' lack of moral and practical authority has also been questioned by local citizens, which is shown in many aspects of local bureaucracy. The deconstruction and defiance of authority on the one hand reinforces the self-conscious autonomy of people to initiate a reconstruction of state-individual and central-local relationships, while on the other hand it produces a greater satiric cynicism, which will have a corrosive effect on the legitimacy of the CPC and Chinese state institutions.

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[28] Interviewee number 77.

'People', as a collective consciousness, are indeed becoming stronger. The people – the mass of ordinary human beings – are believed to have a sense of their own self-worth and of their own rights. The self-consciousness of subjectivity and rebellion, along with a tendency toward rapid commercialisation, the rise of a diverse popular culture and the gradual formation of a private and civic sphere, all provides a pool of expressive and symbolic resources for particular individuals and groups to draw from in their attempt to make sense of their own situation and create a viable identity when confronting socioeconomic problems. In the seven series documentary 'Unseen China' (2003), which has taken a close look at the disadvantaged groups of farmers, migrant workers, laid-off workers and retirees by a human rights activist, the author and producer was asked the question, 'Who can fix the problems?' to which he replied, 'History. The people will make history and solve their problems themselves.'

The state has realised the strength of people and their movements. There is constant ideological adaptation, policy orientation and regulation to represent people's interests, channel people's grievances and join contentious forces together. The administrative reforms, such as those on appealing institutions and procedures, can be great policy opportunities for the dispossessed to appeal to a particular department or higher authority. Such opportunities should be carefully balanced against the threat of defection and the inefficiency of policy implementation, the local resistance to central decisions, and other political, financial, identity or physical risks. This thesis will further discuss how people make use of the complexity between the central and local state and interact with the state during their contentions to deconstruct various authorities and reconstruct the power of people themselves.

4.3.4 Mass media and the internet

The transformation of the mass media is part of a wide-ranging social change. The above-mentioned administrative reform in favour of appealers does not automatically open an objective opportunity until it is widely spread, perceived, and subjectively constructed. For example, as early as 1990 the Administrative Procedure Law came into effect to make bureaucracy function more justly, but at that time many ordinary people neither realise that they had the right to bring a suit against rapacious, arbitrary officials nor did they dare to take brave action until the media exposed more of these cases. The civil laws introduced to protect

people's rights and regulate the market economy, the reconfiguration of political structures and the gradual blossoming of a versatile civil society have all opened up opportunities for further and deeper social transformation and popular movements. However, the people themselves have to visualise and conceptualise these opportunities not only through official channels but also through various unofficial, civil, exotic, underground and informal ways to get a comprehensive view of the whole picture. This requirement, of comprehensibility, should also apply to the view and understanding of threats. The media in general have taken the important role of making such opportunities and threats visible, promoting both apprehension and potential among ordinary people and, in particular, inviting mobilisation initiated by some potential challengers. This is one of the vital steps in the attribution of opportunities, threats and the distribution of their related information.

According to the interview question 'Are you interested in China's national and international situation?', unsurprisingly, all the respondents showed a certain degree of interest at the average level or above: 67.2% claimed to be quite interested in daily news and events while 10.2% were extremely interested in them. From the multiple-choice question, 'In what ways do you obtain or exchange such information as the national or international news', it can be seen that TV (92.1% of respondents), newspapers (80.6%) and the internet (65.5%) were considered to be the top three methods for intellectuals to gain information. Radio (43.8%) and magazines (42.4%) are also favourable alternatives for some students and professionals (journalists and lawyers), however, few would stop at the community or street bulletin board to see what is going on around them.

Music, films, TV programs, magazines, newspapers and all sorts of media are flourishing in quantity, quality and content and their function is considered as the official propaganda tools that gradually transform into authentic media and resources for popular cultures or subcultures. The press industry has planned major transformations in order to democratise the distribution of newspapers to all the population. As stated in the official 11th Five-Year Plan Period (2006-2010), efforts will be made to accelerate the transformation from state-owned newspapers to 'enterprises', to focus on digital newspapers, in all of its production and distribution aspects, to increase government investment towards rural areas and to increase the penetration rate, but to strictly forbid the apportioning of newspaper circulation to rural grass-roots organisations and farmers (State Press and Publication Administration, 2006). The plan also calls for the quality-oriented growth of the press, rather than the current quantitative

boom in the number of titles. As always, those points are ideologically conservative and economical, and remain at this paper stage, but they are still open to the possibility of reform by showing China's prudent approach towards a market economy for newspapers, coupled with a strong desire for innovation and modernity.

It is remarkable that the internet is becoming increasingly popular as 'it is a pragmatic and convenient tool for both input and output of information', as a 56-year-old scholar commented in an interview.[29] The internet is especially useful for the exchange of information (65.5% chose the internet). As a university student said, 'the anonymity and diversity of the online forums or blogs cannot be praised too much as people can find a perfectly safe and special space to express their own opinions and appreciate others'.[30] When talking about the internet as a means of catapulting China into the future, both the Chinese government and the ordinary people, especially the young generation, are exploring it as a unique public sphere for discussion and debates and making the best of it during this nationwide craze. The penetration of the internet has had an unexpected impact and brought about changes unconsciously in every aspect of people's lives, and it has also pressed the authorities for more transparency and openness. While the traditional media is not free enough to follow and report on government behaviour and suffers from government intervention in the topic and content of the news and risks punishment, the internet has broken through these barriers with its omnipresence, immediacy and creative distribution of information. There will be a specific chapter focusing on internet contentions as this is the most popular and effective way of social mobilisation for intellectuals and white-collar workers. Since people have increasingly recognised and practiced this power of the media, especially the internet, both the deprived and disadvantaged groups and the privileged intellectuals can take advantage, seek to express their own subcultures, build up coalitions, vent grievances and gain resonance.

4.4 Summary

In order to operationalise the extensive theorising on contention, this chapter first examined a list of indicators from political, economic and social-cultural dimensions through statistics and quotations taken from the results of the interview. Thus, the first half has provided a

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[29] Interviewee number 69.
[30] Interviewee number 58.

contour of China's realities and problems, which is ready to be translated into opportunity/threat structures for social-political contentions. Based on the descriptive categorisation, it is clear that all the political, economic, social-cultural problems interact with each other and with the popular trends that perceive and are attributed to opportunities and threats.

There is strong nationalism from different areas in response to China's modernisation and globalisation. There is an ironically perceived contradiction between the poor/weak and rich/powerful in reaction to the fact that the ruling classes, who are more responsible historically for the old institution, have gained most of the reforms by benefiting from privileged status, unchecked power and corruption, while labourers have shouldered the cost of the reforms and benefited much less from them. There is a towering rage towards the depth and width of corruption in China, which has threatened economic prosperity and political authority. However, there is growing awareness of the party's inability to control corruption, because of its weak law enforcement and the central-local complexity, which further undermines its legitimacy. There is a prevailing recognition of profit-driven cultures derived from the poorly regulated market economy and reform opening up the accompanying moral decay, ideological collapse and faith vacuum. There is a worrying concern about social safety and security and a deep grievance towards the government's failure to establish a complete security system.

While people are expressing more concerns on the side effects and problems with reforms, there emerges a strong request for nation-state re-establishment, on social equity and welfare, on morality reconstruction and on economic sustainability with an emphasis on environmental issues. These requests have constituted the popular response to social realities and problems at the macro level, which set up a background for the emergence of social and political contentions. The international environment, domestic political system and Party-state capacity are all interrelated to frame the landscape of contentions. The mass media and the internet have also empowered people to challenge Party monism and other sources of authority and produced opportunities and threats perceived and transferred to the challengers.

I have established this broad context of the political, economic and social-cultural dimensions from the answers given by the interviewees and set out the main macro-level structures of social change in transitional China – the international environment, domestic political system and Party-state capacity. The following chapters explore mobilising structures within a

framework of state-society-individual relationships, and then demonstrate concrete causes and cultural structures for each group's contentious activities at meso and micro level, This will explain how each group perceives its own position within the multiple transitions that China is currently experiencing and how they transform their perception of the distribution of risks and opportunities into real contentious mobilisation.

Chapter 5 – Civil Society and Mobilisation Structure

5.1 Introduction

The mobilising structure at the meso-level is the second mechanism in social movement theory to be employed in the analysis of the entire contentious process. As explained earlier in the theoretical framework, mobilising structures refer to formal and informal structures. These structures are used to manifest the protest by mobilising resources and organising collective actions. The formal pre-existing structures and institutional resources are relatively inadequate in China compared to mature civil societies, such as those in the democratic world. However, networking and organisational resources, especially by means of informal links, on-site appropriation and now the explosive resource of internet mobilisation, may be particularly helpful within the contemporary Chinese context for transforming state-society-individual relations. In the real world of contentions, where challengers may experience organisational deficits within the pre-existing mobilising structures, and where prior structural propensity may be rather fluid, the dynamic interaction and appropriation of groups and individuals within these structures will be highly significant.

A civil society can be the breakthrough point for the mobilising structure of contentions, bearing conceptual and practical significance. This civil society with Chinese characteristics, involving civil society organisations (SCOs), informal networks and the online 'public sphere', is a process of dynamic transformation rather than static social setting. This chapter will concentrate mainly on the offline organisations and networks, as well as offer a depiction of the new arena of the online public sphere, in order to demonstrate how these civil society structures can be appropriated and turned into vehicles of mobilisation for contentions. It will begin with the variety and diversity of CSOs in China, followed by a discussion of the different cleavages that are influential in organising the operation and mobilisation of contentions. Then I examine the individual-society-state relationship by comparing people's networking resources and organisational resources, and by looking at state interference in CSOs. Last but not least, the online arena will be introduced as a new component of Chinese civil society and contentious mobilising structure. Interview results with the support of related literature will be combined and discussed.

5.2 The proliferation of organisations and Typology

Table 12 Organisations and activities

Organisations	Membership	Leadership	Attendance of organisational activities
1. Business association	2	0	9
2. Professional association	3	0	1
3. Academic and alumni association	65	3	31
4. ACFTU	22	1	16
5. ACWF	0	0	5
6. Political group	40	7	22
7. Neighbourhood committee	1	0	1
8. Township-based community group	17	1	22
9. Religious or spiritual group	22	7	45
10. Cultural group or association	11	1	7
11. Sports group	4	0	2
12. Youth volunteer group	7	2	5
13. Non-governmental organisation or civic group	13	0	11
Total	207	22	176

Amongst the multiple-choice questions for the 21 types of organisations proposed during the interviews, [31] 13 of them have been selected with different densities of organisational affiliation amongst the interviewees (see table 12). It is not surprising that rural-based organisations such as farmer/fisherman groups or co-operatives, village committees and burial societies or festival societies (which enjoy more popularity in the countryside) are absent

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[31]   Farmer/fisherman groups or cooperative, other production groups, business associations, professional associations, academic and alumni associations, All-China Federation of Trade Unions, All-China Women's Federation, political groups, neighbourhood/village committees, community service group, township-based community groups, ethnic-based community groups, religious or spiritual groups, cultural groups or associations, burial society or festival society, finance, credit or saving groups, education groups, health and medicine groups, sports groups, youth volunteer groups, non-governmental organisations or civic groups.

from the table as the interviews were mainly conducted in metropolitan cities such as Beijing and Wuhan. Other production groups, community service groups, ethnic-based community groups, finance, credit or saving groups, education groups and health and medical groups are also deselected. However, the results from small-scale interview surveys do not rule out their existence and potential for development in the real world. A whole range of CSOs have sprung up as the Party-state's reach shrank considerably. This mushrooming proliferation of organisations also meets the newly emerging social demands and deals with the complicated mediation of interests between the state and private spheres. To take the 'finance, credit or saving group' as an example, rural small-credit issues (providing financial services for productivity purposes towards ordinary farmers with medium or low income) were first managed under the governments Poverty Alleviation Office and then moved to the Agricultural Bank and Rural Credit Cooperative with main funding from governmental allowances. After 2000, more and more non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and private foundations were gradually established and prospered in order to provide such services for disadvantaged farmers. This was in accordance to the growing demand from rural areas with their flexibility and various resources of funding (Xie, 2005).

Referring to table 2 on 'The Basic Statistics of Samples' under the categories of 'Occupation', 'Political affiliation' and 'Religious affiliation', it is evident that these three mentioned variables are still the decisive factors for respondents with different occupations and social status to join different types of organisations. All of the business associations mentioned by the respondents are different industry associations with members and attendants mainly from entrepreneurs and white-collar groups, with organisational activities covering exhibitions, training and conferences. The attendance rate is obviously higher than that of membership. As for journalists, lawyers and other professional white-collar workers, only three of them possessed memberships in related associations and the attendance rate is low. Instead, some of them prefer to join Non-governmental organisations or civic groups, which represent more elements of public interest, charity and volunteerism. On the other hand, 9 out of 11 researchers, lecturers and professors and 17 out of 26 students have joined various local, national or international associations for academics. Moreover, the alumni associations at all educational levels are not limited to campus but open to all groups of people, and have thus gained the highest membership in spite of the relatively low attendance. Noticeably many of the alumni associations are network based and operational in cyberspace and thus recruit

members and participants online.

22 of the respondents were clearly aware of their membership in the official All-China Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU). One national leader proudly claimed that the ACFTU in the new era of reforms has been transformed and is preparing to respond to new industrial development. This creates a new space of independence and freedom for itself and its commitment to labour law and economic democracy. Ironically, over half of these respondents were from elite groups such as intellectuals and cadres, while amongst the labourers 17 migrant workers were excluded from the trade union and most of the 15 laid-off workers were also detached from their original organisations. Due to its special organisational structure, which accepts only a collective membership in the All-China Women's Federation (ACWF), no interviewees regarded themselves as members of this national official organisation with its numerous local branches, but several said they had attended the activities organised by ACWF or had approached them for consultation, help and support.

Questions about political groups in the interviews primarily referred to political movement organisations, excluding China's formal party organisations such as the CPC, Communist Youth League or other existing political consultative parties. However, most respondents with these political affiliations identified with this category. This interesting result meant the boundary between political organisations, within and outside the institution, was indeed obscure among the Chinese public; politics also linked closely with parties in Chinese discourse. The activities organised by the CPC or Youth League were largely compulsory and formalised, including frequent study seminars on current policies and theories, meetings, visits, celebrations and so on. None reported to have joined any political movement organisations or attended any organised political contentions inside China. Only two dissidents in this category claimed to have joined political groups outside China. Concerning politics, most interviewees were still cautious about affiliations and labels and preferred playing politics safe within officialdom than joining popular political organisations that are subject to restriction and even persecution. However, beyond the formal one-party politics and direct organisational pro-democratic confrontations, indirect and spontaneous political challenges are everywhere with a burgeoning popular consciousness and participation in everyday life and contentious activities.

Migrant workers have spontaneously established and voluntarily taken part in alternative organisations to strengthen mutual contacts and protect their rights based on their original townships in the present communities. Nine out of 17 migrant worker respondents have such memberships while 13 of them have even joined organised activities spanning bargaining for migrants' rights, friendship networking and festival celebration. More details will be demonstrated in the next chapter. All the 20 self-conscious religious people belong to either formal or informal religious groups such as churches, fellowships, temples, religious study or evangelical groups and spiritual movements, while seven of them are ministers or spiritual leaders. Besides day-to-day religious interaction, outreach and services, there are silent protests and accumulative rage against government persecution of house churches and radical demonstrations from Falun Gong groups abroad. Cultural groups, NGOs or civic groups, as well as Youth volunteer groups, recruit mainly intellectuals, from university students to a few professionals. Some of them have religious backgrounds. Popular cultural groups have covered people's interest and professions in literature, arts, music and various other forms with casual meetings and collective sharing. NGOs or civic groups mentioned by the respondents include non-government charity and welfare groups, environmental groups and anti-AIDS associations, all with different scales of campaigns including public education and fund-raising activities.

The flourishing of civil society has been primarily and obviously presented by the proliferation of civil society organisations. Between the time of Mao and the Reform Era, all social organisations were under strict state control. More than 100 nationwide associations and more than 6,000 local associations existed before and during the early 1960s until they were paralysed by the Cultural Revolution (Wu and Chen, 1996). It is argued that the economic reforms introduced in the 1980s brought with greater freedom for individuals in China. The country witnessed a resurrection of civil organisations when the state relaxed some of its controls over organisational management. By June 1996 there were more than 1,800 such registered national organisations and nearly 200,000 local ones (Wu and Chen, 1996). Individuals were also granted greater freedom to assemble and form private or popular organisations. Chinese civil society organisations include a variety of groups, such as national mass organisations, that the Party authorities created and funded, smaller citizen associations registered under national regulations and loose networks of unregistered grassroots organisations (Congressional-Executive Commission on China, 2005). During the Reform

Era, new mass societies and associations appeared and proliferated into an increasing number of fields with diverse titles and definitions. According to official Chinese statistics, the number of registered CSOs increased from 289,432 in 2004, 354,393 in 2006 to 413,660 in 2008[32]. One Chinese source estimated the number of unregistered organisations could be as high as three million (Ministry of Civil Affairs, 2004; 2006; Zhao and Dong, 2005).

The interview results provide a total account of memberships, leadership and attendance which prove to be useful statistics. Except for the 14 respondents who had nothing to do with any organisation, the remaining 106 respondents had joined on average 1.95 organisations and attended various organisational activities 1.66 times. Amongst those over 10% were leaders ranging from alumni administrators to church ministries to group chairpersons. It is found through the interviews that the membership, with its requirements, responsibilities and rights, is highly related to the socio-economic-political features of the interviewees. For example, the groups of intellectuals and religious people have shown a stronger associational attachment than labourers. Meanwhile, not all of the CSOs, CPC/Youth League and ACFTU organisations account for more than one-third of total membership. It cannot be denied that the mentality and consciousness of a number of respondents towards organisations remains within the range of formal and governmental organisations, such as the party and even work units. Despite that, relative attendance is not proportionate. On the one hand, organisations such as business associations, Women's Federations, township-based community groups and religious or spiritual groups have attracted more attendance from non-members and involved them in group activities. On the other hand, the rest of the organisations consciously or unconsciously limit their activities within membership, and demonstrate a deficiency of attendance or sometimes a lack of willingness to attend. Some argue that China does not lack associations in all aspects of people's daily life, but still lacks some kind of underlying value akin to Habermas's 'civil society' – a humane society (Lindau and Cheek, 1998: 6). Therefore, according to either Western and Chinese interpretations or realities, civil society is not only about organisations. It is necessary to look into organisational cleavages, cultural and power relations that lie behind, or within, the organisational proliferation in China, into the qualitative essence of the quantitative prosperity, and into delicate and profound changes as well as the stubborn obstacles.

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[32] Source from the official website of Chinese Social Organization, http://www.chinanpo.gov.cn/, hosted by the Bureau of Nongovernmental Organization Management under the Ministry of Civil Affairs.

5.3 Different cleavages within civil society organisations

The interview question examining organisational categorisation is:

> ➢ There are differences in characteristics: age (generation), gender, place of birth, residence (and duration), dialects, ethnic background, education, occupation, income, social status and religious and political beliefs. To what extent do any such differences divide your organisations?

The main answer (with 72.3% of the valid responses) can easily lead to the conclusion that their organisations are based on a form of similarity rather than differences. As long as they have one of the categories in common – the same hometown/religion/political affiliation/interest/other social goals – this is the most significant factor defining the nature of their organisations; other demographic or social-economic-political features seem not to matter at all or get excluded in the first place. It is not difficult to understand that when people prioritise harmony and solidarity as traditional merits, differences may be accepted but separation or division (which are in Chinese traditional discourses related to conflicts) would be mentally avoided and practically prevented. The principle of inclusion rather than exclusion is usually praised in the organisation. However, for a minority of the interviewees, a few complaints have still actively covered almost all the factors. State and non-state sectors have also been mentioned as sources of deep psychological cleavage distinguishing group members from each other, especially in the alumni associations. Disagreements and conflicts during the organisational decision-making process persistently emerge from different social backgrounds or experience, and economic status represents the primary conflicting factor. One minister quoted an example that the explicit division and implicit comparison in occupation and income among church members may more or less influence the spiritual health of the church as a whole[33]. The generation gap is another divisional factor between the elder and younger believers as different generations, with different experience of the historical periods, may have wide gaps in perspectives, knowledge, perceptions, concepts, value systems and culture[34].

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[33] Interviewee number 92.
[34] Interviewee number 92.

Besides objective factors that form cleavages within organisations, the Chinese are also presented by Bo Yang (1992) in his book 'The ugly Chinaman and the crisis of Chinese culture', as a nation of people best at inner-organisational dissensions, small factions and internecine struggles. It can be further argued that differences in characteristics might not be automatically turned into cleavages but that these are sometimes encouraged at the establishment stage of the organisation. However, as long as the organisations are not based on the modern social contract and obligation of civil society but on the enlargement and extension of the private sphere with its emphasis on personal connections and networks, the cultural origins of prejudice, jealousy, clique, exclusion, indifference, selfishness, distrust and rivalry will sustain the objective differences to a level significant enough to produce cleavages and even conflicts that may divide an organisation. The reality of civil society development and organisational mobilisation has exposed different cleavages and organisational deficits that many participants suffer, and this is vividly represented in the fragmentation within and among organisations during contentions.

The cleavages within civil society organisations are deepening with reference to social classes and groups, regional differentiation, age groups, ethnicity and religion that possibly lead in turn to the stratification, contradiction and exclusion within social contentions. Some of these were caused by the grand social and economic transformations of the post-reform era while some were shaped by historical and cultural factors. For example, as social inequalities have been aggregated rather than weakened during reforms, the conceptions of class and hierarchy still have strong roots and influence in society. There are also cleavages in the understanding of democracy or foreign involvement that distinguish the pro-democracy groups from other domestic NGOs. By comparing urban residents with farmers, young people with elder people, strata of higher educational levels with those of lower ones, people in developed coastal areas with those in mid-West regions, it is clear they all have different demands for autonomy and freedom. It is also noticeable that there are some forces of instability, though these are also the weaker groups such as the laid-off workers, migrant workers, underground religious groups, dissidents and unhappy intellectuals. There is a gradual tendency for different social groups to integrate with one another, to form a broader social network and mobilise more resources to claim people's voices and rights, to overcome the participatory indifference or distorted factions and to limit authoritarian power. These will be discussed further in the following chapters.

5.4 Resources of networking and organisation: a comparison

By contrasting the two interview questions below, the author goes on to further explore the expansion of networking resources and organisational resources in China and the interaction between the two:

➤ 'What kind of people make up your networks? How is your relationship with others (frequency of contact)? How do you understand the function and influence of informal networks and relationships in your own life and in China?'

➤ 'How deep is the relationship within your organisations and how is the leadership? Do you trust each other? Will you have financial links with or support from other members?

The first question deals with the formation, density, function and influence of people's networks. With reference to the previous question about information exchange it can be seen that there is a dynamic of communication within people's relational networks. 76.5% of them would like to have occasional or regular discussion on certain news and topics with their families, friends, classmates, teachers or colleagues. Among the factors that form people's networks, familial, alumni and occupational attachments remain strong and count for up to 90%. The geographic connections such as hometown are popular among university students and migrant workers while neighbourhood is often ignored by urban residents. On the other hand, respondents' views towards informal networks and human relations or connections (*guanxi*) varied. Some typical opinions are that, 'it is impossible to put an end to "depending on connections" in China.'[35] 'I don't regard it as a social evil but rather as a deep-rooted tradition.'[36] 'Sometimes it is necessary or even beneficial as long as the result turns out to be a win-win situation (to both sides of the connection) no matter what method you use.' [37] Others take critical views against *guanxi* as an essential tool to achieve any personal goals in every aspect of social life and they argue it is a very abnormal, distorted and helpless social phenomenon that has accelerated the destruction of commitments towards social equality, justice and rule of law. Certainly, these criticisms differentiate such malfunctioned *guanxi* from the normal human relations people have with each other. There are also worries that the

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[35] Interviewee number 67.
[36] Interviewee number 40.
[37] Interviewee number 67.

boundaries between the two have been gradually obscured.

In the field of academic discussion considering China's lengthy, complex and sophisticated cultural traditions (Moody, 1995: 1-15) as well as the growing popularity of egoism, the strength of the private sphere is still perceived as wielding its influence through the Chinese characterised informal relationship or connection – *guanxi* – which historically prevailed in all aspects of life. *Guanxi*, as 'social connections', is based on a blend of exchange and mutual affection that create feelings of responsibility and obligation on the one hand and indebtedness on the other (Ma and Ortolano, 2000: 77-96). In general, *guanxi* is maintained by trading favours over long periods and such exchanges are often viewed as creating a resource that can be used to 'get things done'. As the reforms have deepened without a complete regulatory system, this resource of networking, involving a broad range of activities and strategies held to be widespread in Chinese business, has interacted with political power and progressed from advancing the interests of friends and family, or performing services in exchange for future favours, to outright bribe-taking (Wank, 2002). When complex chains of obligation, created by the exchange of favours, have developed to a delicate degree and when the private sphere is penetrating into the Party-state without proper power checks or surveillance from the society, the practice can easily turn into corruption. Normal political and economic operation can be replaced by the illegal and unfair measures of goal-achievement. Furthermore, patriarchal or familial relations tied by blood as another dimension of *guanxi* would create an attenuated citizenship that has encouraged paternalism and elitism (Lindau and Cheek, 1998: 9). This would weaken the potential sociality of civil society by marginalising volunteerism and autonomy. This aspect in turn has made it difficult for civil society to become formalised or institutionalised under the principle rules of law and organisation. This strong private sphere on the one hand inhibits the already-difficult process of the development of mutually trust-based co-operation and supporting networks among strangers within civil society organisations and on the other hand, the broader sense of *guanxi* has indicated a deep-rooted Chinese philosophy of relational humanism and Chinese relational morality (Y. Liang, 2001). This focus on the harmonious relationship among people emphasises communication and empathy, and encourages sharing from the core family to the whole society. This ethical networking resource, through utilisation rather than privatisation of *guanxi*, might be ideally transferable and complementary to organisational resources, based on the morality of responsibility and obligation. As implied by the interviewees, sometimes

guanxi is unavoidable, indispensable and can be beneficial to both the individuals and the society.

The second question focused on the trust and credit of inner-organisational relationships. 88.3% of the respondents (106) belong to more than one organisation, about half of whom join in semi-governmental or non-governmental organisations with varied degrees of attachment. These respondents are not all keen on describing in detail their relationship to or the leadership of their civil society organisations. Most comments generally lean toward complaining about unfamiliar leadership or loose relations without much interaction, commitment, responsibility or activity. This is particularly the case in occupation-based organisations such as business, professional or academic associations. The main problems lie in the dissatisfaction with government-assigned leaders, small intimate or core groups that seek to exclude others, lack of vertical or horizontal contact and lack of knowledge about the organisational operation. Under such conditions, credit and trust are not easily built up, let alone financial linkages or support. One lawyer referred to the lawyers' association he took part in and said, 'To trust each other we must have known each other very well. But I seldom have other kinds of contact with my colleague members apart from business, so how can I put trust in them?'[38] One entrepreneur as a member of a business association said, 'I don't trust in people, but I trust in interest. I often get business information from them but I have to discern which is true or false based on their interest compared to mine…. Money is about doing business and we don't have financial relations personally.'[39] Another student, an initiator in an alumni group, said, 'I trust my previous classmates and schoolmates, but I won't share with them my financial difficulties or loan money to them except if we are very best friends.'[40] Many interviewees' distrust the organisations they joined. It has much to do with the decline and even destruction of social trust, credit and morality as a whole, which has been attributed largely to the expansion of egoism and materialism. Furthermore, the ill-regulated money-driven market, the bankruptcy of Communist collectivism and the misuse of *guanxi* have greatly motivated a prevailing pursuit of egoistic interest by taking advantage of others at the cost of others. This has significantly devastated the reliability of relationships between people.

[38] Interviewee number 83.
[39] Interviewee number 112.
[40] Interviewee number 45.

However, the situation is quite different in most religious groups, art and cultural groups and some active NGOs. Because of common faith, hobbies and ideals, members and leaders have more confidence and enthusiasm towards their organisations and the leadership. The contacts among members within the groups are more comprehensive from daily communication to business, which have strengthened interpersonal relationships and helped establish a trustworthy platform. Some church members stated that they would not hesitate to provide financial support to their fellows when they are in trouble.[41] It cannot be denied that the well managed informal social relationship (*guanxi*) has played an important role as glue in enhancing the solidarity of the organisation and the trust among its members as well as its leaders.

5.5 State interference in civil society organisations

The following question deals directly with state interference in organisations and respondents' personal lives:

> 'Do you think people have the right to form organisations freely? Have you ever heard of or experienced governmental interference in your organisation or in others? Did you feel or experience any (unpleasant) interference from the state power in any area of your own life?'

78.3% of the respondents (94) believed that Chinese people have the right to form free organisations. Although with different degrees of certainty and cautiousness, some of them avoided a straight answer about the reality and quickly ended their comments by quoting the Constitution that guarantees such a right.[42] Some also added that 'As long as your aim of organisation is not anti-CPC, anti-socialism or anti-society you can form any organisations within the legal process.'[43] The remaining 26 interviewees thought that people have not enjoyed full freedom, if any at all. Some argued that certain forms of organisations are strictly forbidden such as political parties,[44] underground religious groups[45] and gay/lesbian clubs.[46] Others complained that the registration requirement and process is too complicated and some

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[41] Interviewee number 95, 101, 20, 44, 76 and 81.
[42] Interviewee number 14, 28, 69 and 117.
[43] Interviewee number 69.
[44] Interviewee number 87.
[45] Interviewee number 87, 107 and 110.
[46] Interviewee number 57.

large-scale organisations are even required to establish grassroots party branches within the organisation. [47] Most interviewees kept away from detailing any concrete state interference either in the organisations or in their personal lives. A few bold replies focused on the fact that the party or government officials are assigned to be the leaders of the business, professional or academic associations, though many, in contrast, have nothing to do with the speciality or expertise. [48] Others revealed police intrusion into the underground house church and detention of their ministries. [49] Falun Gong is a case in point as some fierce criticisms were targeted on the state violation of both their organisational and religious freedom in contravention of the Constitution. [50]

According to the historical development of social organisations, Deng's reform era allowed numerous social organisations to emerge relatively free of political control. The dynamics of these social organisations have gradually undermined the authority of organisations sponsored by the state and the CPC. This is a contradiction confronting the CPC in promoting economic reform, which will eventually weaken its capacity in exercising organisational control (Leung, 2002). From 1976 to 1988, confusion reigned as there were no unified procedures for registering or monitoring social organisations until the State Council charged the Ministry of Civil Administration with bringing order to the situation. After the spring of 1989, the government realised the importance of controlling this domain closely, and issued new structures and regulations for registration and administration to put civil organisations under state patronage and control (Saich, 2000). The control apparatus has worked through double-lines of management – that means any civil society organisation is required to register with a national professional organisation, as well as with the Bureau of Civil Administration (Wu and Chen, 1996). In 1998, the regulations were further tightened to eliminate any loopholes. The double registration system is effective in ensuring two lines of control through two state organs.

Most of the registered CSOs are under the guidance and control of the state. Many others are officially registered as businesses because the registration process is easier, while others simply remain unregistered rather than facing the difficulties of registration and administration that are characteristically made in China. In order to minimise risks, most

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[47] Interviewee number 64.
[48] Interviewee number 61 and 114.
[49] Interviewee number 94 and 104.
[50] Interviewee number 107, 108 and 110.

people are likely to be members of organisations that are legalised and promoted by the government rather than joining or setting up a grassroots NGO. As a result of strict registration regulations and other interferences, many CSOs are driven to operate without government recognition. However, in practice, unregistered groups generally experience little or no government interference as long as they avoid financial misdeeds or overt political challenges.

As another important part of the organisational and institutional control, the state adopted a traditional measure to 'clear and readjust' all the CSOs for censorship, qualification and approval at a fixed time periodically. The State Council has organised several clearing and readjusting measures towards CSOs respectively in 1984, 1990, 1996, 1998, 1999 and 2004 (Yan, 2007). In the early 1990s, scholars at home and abroad argued that a uniquely Chinese version of civil society allowed for greater intrusion of the state into social organisation (Wakeman, 1993). As the Party-state seeks to modernise and find ways to allow the emergence of CSOs without facing direct competition for political power, it has also rationalised its administration of this arena by investigating how to build party organisations into the CSOs as early as 1994. It has further been regulated that if there are more than two CPC members in the standing committee of an organisation, then a grassroots party organisation should be built in (Yan, 2007). In a word, though reforms have to a great extent undermined the CPC's political and organisational control mechanisms and altered the state-society-individual relationship, state administration and interference is becoming more regulatory, systematic, strategic and flexible rather than simply weaker. Because of the dynamics of simultaneous loosening and strengthening of state power, there is a process for CSOs to gain autonomy as well as for the state to incorporate them (Solinger, 2002: 276; Ogden, 2002: 280-302).

Generally CSOs' relationships with the state are determined by their group interests, functions, organisational resources, the provision of public services or goods and the capability for challenge. Example organisations from the interviews, including most business, professional, academic and cultural associations, are representatives of the interest of the elites in the fields of economy, knowledge and art. Such functional organisations possess a fair capability for mobilising resources, providing public goods and organising collective activities under state encouragement. Yet, at the same time, their compliance with the

government's registration and regulation system has neutralised their challenging potentials. Although trade union, women's federation, neighbourhood committees and village committees have stronger challenging potentials, in practice they have been directly controlled and co-opted within the structure of government. Another example is religious organisations that may provide and practice alternative systems within the value and moral realm. This unique function of faith and ritual, as well as the interest of a broader public, provides them with varied channels of resources and greater challenging capabilities, which provokes state restriction and even repression.

The community groups based on original townships for migrant workers and university students show a strengthening tendency of friendships based on geographic connections, and have provided relatively less public goods and limited organisational vehicles and are therefore relatively free from state management and censorship. Other grassroots NGOs or civic organisations, which either provide little public necessity or have no capabilities to challenge, do not face much interference by the state but are generally not legalised either. Basically, underground religious organisations, political opposition and movement organisations, and those challenging human rights are most likely to be marginalised or repressed. In December 1998, when the key leaders of a number of pro-democratic groups tried to register as the China Democratic Party, the party was declared illegal. In the same manner, Falun Gong was declared illegal and was forced to de-register and be banned. The chapter on Party-state responses to contentions further details the official strategies based on White *et al*'s (1996: 1-38) framework of incorporation, toleration and repression.

5.6 A new arena: the online public sphere

As mentioned in the last Chapter, there is an increasing tendency to exchange information online for those people who have internet access. The growing popularity of internet activism also sheds new light on the theoretical and practical revitalisation of the public sphere, providing a social forum for legitimate, normative consensus to be reached through public discourse, rational debates and open discussion (Edwards, 2004) that are taking place on the internet. Internet technology provides the traditional media with multiple resources and activates citizen participations by creating a space for numerous networks of interest and interaction to overlap and intersect (Putnam *et al*, 2003: 293-4). In the Chinese context, the

public sphere is immature because 1) it is still greatly manipulated by state propaganda and 2) an increasingly commercialised mass media has brought both liberation and limitation. However the hi-tech medium of the internet has enlarged and strengthened the Chinese public sphere by providing a social arena for individuals and groups to critically and rationally discuss public affairs of common concern and to contest notions of social welfare and charity, nationalist identity and claims, to contest against the coercive and oppressive forms of state power, against social injustice, immorality and other problems.

One of the most outstanding features of this online public sphere is, 'mobilisation exigency', in the form of online discussions, debates, protests, form letters and signatures which can come together instantly – typically in a matter of days or even hours – and that the internet's non-hierarchical structure makes it possible for individuals to bypass 'standard procedure' to allow information to be circulated both to a widespread user base and to specifically targeted responsible individuals and high-level leaders (Gurak, 1997). In this way, the internet has actualised the concept of public sphere. In spite of the internet's own weakness, the online public sphere has gradually transformed its function from a marginal complement to traditional media to a mainstream arena for critical thought and debates especially relished by the young and educated middle class.

This arena has also become part of China's emerging civil society. During the process of China's modernisation to a new knowledge-based society, people's social affiliation in the traditional concepts of a work-unit, the university, the neighbourhood and all kinds of organisations has increasingly intertwined with the identity of cyberspace societies and communities. On one hand, online networks have formed a significant channel for offline organisations and mobilisation. Many organisations have their own websites, which greatly facilitate recruitment, participation and interactions. A large number of offline social contentions also began with online debate and appropriation. On the other hand, the online public sphere in itself has disseminated and promoted democratic and civic merits in bonding the loose and anonymous relationships amongst strangers in virtual realities through open, equal and rational online debate and networking. Civil society in this sense is no longer merely limited to formal organisations or informal networks, but should also include the fluid structures of the online public sphere. Meanwhile, this online public sphere was also subject to Party-state interference and control the moment it came into being. The interaction between

the authorities and the online public will be detailed in the following empirical chapters.

5.7 Summary

Civil society with Chinese characteristic consists of civil society organisations, informal networks and the online public sphere. This chapter first focused on different types of SCOs and an informal networking resource – *guanxi*. It explored the individual-society-state relationship by examining how private *guanxi* penetrated into the associational sphere and how the state interfered in it. It can be concluded that governmental, semi-governmental and non-governmental organisations broadly exist in people's everyday lives. Located between the still strong private sphere and Party-state, China's currently striving organisational realm can be attached with a stronger sense, although not complete, of civil society than in the early stages of reform. However, formal organisational and institutional resources are still not evident or significant to most Chinese people, because of deviant penetration of *guanxi*, different cleavages and state control. Among the interviewees, only a few made use of the organisational resources by developing a strong sense of belonging, being actively involved in group activities, and enjoying sociable, trusted and supportive relations with each other; even fewer motivated and mobilised the existing organisational resources to achieve collective social goals.

People continue to depend on the wide-ranging informal networks that provide necessary social capitals, resources and relations. Ideally this pervasive, influential and very Chinese characteristic form of *guanxi* should be properly built, maintained and developed within the organisational structures in cultural and ethical directions. The publicisation of *guanxi* can even create the space and mobilise the resources for public causes, as can be found in the cases in the following chapters. Therefore, the state-society-individual relationship has evolved within a terrain in which informal networks, state institutions and social organisations have overlapped and inter-penetrated in different mixes. Notably, the emerging arena of the online public sphere has further enriched Chinese civil society and made it more dynamic. Online networks and forms also shed new light on the social movement theories about the meso mobilising structure. Chapter Seven will form a detailed discussion about internet contentions based on China's fluid online structures.

Chapter 6 Labourers in contention

6.1 Introduction: Contentions in general

Acting as a more practical and specific continuation of the last two general chapters, this chapter leads the investigation into those three groups' conceptualisation, expression and acts of contentions and generates the features and trends from each group's mobilisation and inter-group interaction. The investigation is based on various episodes of land/house eviction disputes, salary appeals, nationalist parades, rights defending suits, cyberspace mobilisations, spiritual movements and so on. The incidents that are quoted in the interviews took place around the nation with ever increasing cross-group engagements, innovative actions, follow-up appropriations and waves of influence. This typically results in a ratcheting up of shared uncertainty among all parties to an emergent conflict including challengers, their opponents, elements of the state, third parties and the media (McAdam *et al*, 2001: 44-5). Besides interview results, related information was also collected from other literature, documentaries, news reports and in particular online resources, in order to analyse and examine the contentious cases more extensively.

Out of the theoretical fluency from macro attribution of opportunity and threat, meso-level of civil society mobilisation and micro-level strategic framing, the following three chapters dwell on individual and social constellations. The micro dynamics include discourses, cultural symbols, identities, moral principles, values, social memories, emotions, mobilising patterns and arts of leadership, all of which shape contentions. The aim is to find out how 'framing' works as a collective process of interpretation, attribution and social construction at the same time as it mediates between opportunity and action (McAdam *et al*, 2001: 41) for each group. It is also worth noting that from the interviews many people were quite conservative or reluctant to talk about this politically sensitive topic of contentions. Therefore, when analysing the discourse from the interviews, attention was paid to their tones and worries behind their reluctance. The group of labourers was the most cautious in expressing willingness to take any contentious activities. However, in reality they were the main actors in generating the majority of the 'collective actions' and most violent confrontations recorded by the official statistics (Kang, 2008). The subjective factors, including different cohorts' own life condition and status, self-identity and value system, have been very important in

understanding entire episodes of contention.

From the answers to the question about their personal life standards and their self-categorisation, it was evident that most interviewees had a strong self-consciousness of their own group identity and status into low, low-middle, middle, or middle-high social strata. 36% of them were satisfied with their status while 61% were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. Likewise, 42% were confident that they were able to make some changes to their families or the society whilst the rest showed different levels of uncertainty or pessimism. Thus, the contentions, which may include resistance and protests, could be viewed as beyond the boundary of overt group acts of opposition to state authority. In fact, it may also exist at the individual level, in the thoughts, attitudes, expression and dispositions of some groups who have disadvantages or grievances towards the passive acceptance of present social realities and self-status (Fairbrother, 2003). They could well form a set of critical and constructive conceptualisations of their own, as well as their contentious strategies, repertoires and innovations of actions. In turn they influence the authority, the media, public discourse and social culture.

There were two other multiple-choice questions. The first focused on interviewees' possibilities and forms of actions: 'What would you like to do (did you do) to release grievance over anything?' The top five choices were 'Give vent or resort to families and friends', 'Resort to the judiciary or consult with solicitors', 'Use the internet to sign petitions or express opinions', 'Appeal to the local or higher governmental department' and 'Expose to the media'. It was no surprise that the intellectuals and white-collar workers were more dependent on the media including the internet and the labourers showed incremental consciousness of using legal and administrative channels. Only five respondents had chosen to 'resort to the civil organisations' or 'establish interest group with other victims' in comparison to the 85% choosing to turn to families or friends. This shows the marginal status of civil society in the actual mobilisation of formal or informal organisations and the strength and dominance of the private sphere. As for taking public actions such as signing petitions, strikes, demonstrations or sit-ins, only 10% of the 110 people interviewed showed some interest. On the contrary, the ten dissidents and Falun Gong practitioners were much bolder in sharing the information about their international experiences and mature strategies in contentious techniques.

The other question targeted their attitudes towards contentions. Over 80% of those interviewed were adamant that people have the right to take contentions, while some expressed concerns that the aims, measures and courses of contention should be righteous[51]. According to the sample cases of the laid-offs' sit-in, most expressed their understanding, sympathy and support. Anti-Japanese demonstrations had aroused a few rational reflections among intellectuals themselves while the Tiananmen student protest, although evoking sympathies as well, was more controversial and more of a political taboo.

The Falun Gong movement was the least popular one in that it evoked instant objection and blame from domestic respondents, only around 8% of whom showed their confusion and sympathy. Overall the group of labourers received the most identification and support from other groups. This chapter examines the three sub-groups of labourers – peasants, migrant workers and laid-off workers, who are self-identified and pragmatically categorised as the most economically disadvantaged groups. They were generally of low status, and they were sensitive and affected by the transformation in reforms, therefore likely to take contentious action triggered by various causes and problems.

This part leads to the description and generalisation of contentious activities of different groups based on categorisation. It begins with the labourers.

6.2 Peasants

Although the interviews took place in cities, comments about country life could still be obtained through communication with migrant workers and others. In the meantime, news about the peasants' contentions could be accessible and influential in urban cities. Inequality still dominates a grand picture as the urban-rural income gap has increased and reached 3.3:1 by the end of 2006 (Yang and Gu, 2007). Among 900 million peasants, the stratification of classes and groups is accelerating while the basis for new integrations and new orders is under construction and is transforming the traditional society towards modernity. The polarisation rate in the countryside has risen from 3.61 in 2000 to 5.70 in 2005 (Yang and Gu, 2007) and the rural Gini Coefficient is exceeding the 0.4 alert (Guo and He, 2007) with considerable regional disparities in the growth rate.

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[51] Interviewee number 16, 46 and 83.

Some migrant workers expressed their dissatisfaction towards the hardship of life in the countryside, complaining that living expenses kept rising sharply in the countryside while income hardly ever went up[52]. Some also revealed they were floating in cities for a better-paid job partly because many Township and Village Enterprises (TVEs) were now on the decline with a shrinking capacity to provide employment[53]. Although economy and living status proved to be the main cause, the sources of peasants' grievances and contentions are manifold and intertwined with other social-political factors.

Land requisition was one of the biggest problems during social transition, industrialisation and urbanisation. This is most closely related to peasants' livelihood and sustenance. The land of compulsory expropriation has been increasing by three million acres each year, which has forced two to three million peasants to lose their land and resulted in a total number of 40 to 50 million 'three-no' peasants (no land, no job and no social insurance) (Huang *et al*, 2007). In the documentary 'Unseen China', produced by Jiang Xueqin and Brian Keeley in 2003, one of the peasants who had lost his land to greedy developers and corrupt officials disclosed that:

> "It was the police who hired the mafia thugs, killing someone for 30,000 yuan and causing injury for 15,000 yuan. They were looking for me all day and said I was a saboteur, a leader of peasant protestors, because I refused to give up my land, which caused delay of the road construction … I dare never challenge again. We ordinary people are doomed to suffer. How to live? There is no hope. Now I have no land and didn't get any money …"

Collective actions emerge because of the low compensation, relocation of the displaced peasants and violent enforcement during and after land requisition.

The contradictions between local cadres and peasants are severe. Apart from land requisition, other policies, implementations and obligations are the elements that easily provoke peasants' grievances. A migrant worker in the interview has quoted a countryside saying that, 'what did the state want from peasants? Grain, money (fees and taxes) and life (family planning

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[52] Interviewee number 4, 5 and a few others.
[53] Interviewee number 7 and 24.

policy)!'[54] Peasants' traditional resistances include refusing to meet quotas, failing to pay taxes or local fees and resisting birth control laws. Spontaneous riots take place and they often involve violence among angry peasants against local cadres and sometimes result in the intervention of the militia. In their confrontations and bargainings with the highly organised authorities that have unsymmetrical power over information, human resources and even violence, scattered peasants need to lower the cost of consensus among themselves by increasing the degree of organisation and their bargaining abilities to form a more effective balance and pressure on the authorities.

As for the individual-society-state relationship in the countryside, one extreme of the rural grassroots authority structure is the dominance of state organs and party branches. This results in a scarcity of popular organisational resources, which has led to the monopoly and abuse of public power by local officials. On the other extreme, numerous villages have been dominated by the re-emergence of clans, various cults and sects, as well as criminals, who can form independent authorities or organisations that paralyse primary-level Party organisations and administrative units (Blum and Jensen, 2002: 27-8). However, recently, many new functional organisations including new clan societies and civil groups have emerged to provide social networking resources for their members and bear some of the responsibilities in negotiating with the local government about excessive burdens or unsatisfactory public services.

There have been healthier interactions between the state's administration, ideology and culture and the historical clans, religions and village cultural networks in transforming the traditional rural social structure and reshaping of the state sphere in the countryside (Li, 2004). The use of law and state policy as the basis and instrument of their resistance has become more popular and effective for peasants (Li and O'Brien, 1996; Yu, 2004). They utilise legitimate and policy-centred strategies more frequently such as appealing politically or legally to a higher authority if local officials are corrupt or break the law. Peasants have also been able to collaborate with policy researchers, the media and rural delegates to the NPC to push their grievances forward.

As an extension, and also consequence of peasants' contentions, the movement towards village self-government is flourishing. Guaranteed by 'the Organic Law of Villagers

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[54] Interviewee number 30.

Committees', it is pushed by central officials with the aim of improving the quality of local leadership and implementing state policies. Such experimental democratic practice reflects the needs and interests of a broader public. It is also for individual peasants to go beyond their narrow or egoist interest and to establish the power to balance and check the state. The experimental practice of the grassroots democratic election of a seven-member committee takes place every three years in rural areas. The villager committees – the local autonomous institutions elected and operated by the peasants themselves – are established widely at the grassroots level to govern village affairs and form the middle level between households and townships. It is also interesting that the government sometimes uses these committees as a sort of channel of social control, while the committees often expand their power through the support of the authorities (Wang, 1998).

The self-governance institution for villagers is propitious for promoting the development of rural civil society and establishing a basis for rural political modernisation (Li, 2004). Optimistically we might say that a balance of power among the three spheres is progressing and a healthy relationship between state-society-individual is a prospect. However, the internal source of social legitimacy and the external institutional guarantee from the state have together determined the contradictory nature of villagers committees, opening a dynamic field for the state and peasants to encounter, to contend and to interact. Moreover, the contentions around grassroots elections and self-governance are also dynamic and sometimes intense, with regard to the candidates, procedures, election results and dismissals, since these can challenge the vested interests and abuse of power by the local and township officials.

Another serious problem in the countryside is that of social security, where the weak welfare and medical care systems have received a lot of attention from the state. According to the statistics from the Ministry of Labour and Social Security, only 55 million peasants, 5.8% of the total rural population, were covered by pension insurance in 2006 (Song, 2006). One migrant worker just sighed:

> " … those peasants (in my village) especially the elders are so pitiful as they don't have any social security or welfare. Their children also earn very little through farming. I also saw some old men over 70 years' of age still doing farm work in the field and I really sympathised with them. Yes, the government has done quite a lot to solve the rural problems such as regulating the taxation. But I think the government should provide a

life guarantee for people over 60 or 70 in the countryside."[55]

Although the rural medical system has regularly seen improvement, there are still grave complaints about the unaffordable medicines and unqualified services.

One of the negative consequences of the reform is the structural deterioration of the environment. Environmental problems have been increasingly hazardous recently, especially as demonstrated by the escalating cancer rate in rural areas and emerging 'cancer villages' exposed by the media. Water and soil have been seriously contaminated and over 300 million peasants have no access to – or cannot afford – safe and clean water according to the Hygiene and Irrigation Department investigations (Yang, 2007). Regarding further research, conducted by the Beijing Normal University, into 64 villages nation-wide in 2006 (Yang, 2007), various types of factories have caused various pollutions and ecological damage, while the degree of pollution is completely decided by the type of the factory rather than the strength of supervision by environmental departments. The only cure for the local environmental problem seems to be the contentious activity by the peasants themselves. As peasants are more concerned about the environment and more aware about their own survival and sustainable rights, the number of collective actions is growing. They were largely organised by sprouting popular organisations and led by local environment activists. One typical example is that the villagers in Shanxi Fenhe collectively kneeled down for 3 days in front of an illegal chemical factory, which wantonly emitted exhaust gas and liquid waste and caused serious sickness and symptoms amongst the villagers, to protest and urge the closure of the factory (Xinkuai Newspaper, 2008). This action of kneeling down shows the greatest sincerity, humility and helplessness in the confrontation, which effectively caught the eyes of the national media, the environment department and the government. However, the power and effect of peasants' contentions is inadequate especially in terms of social function, since most of the contentions' result in material and economic compensation rather than the protection of the ecological environment.

6.3 Migrant workers

Migrant workers mainly consist of peasants who have left their land in the suburban and rural areas to pursue a better life in the cities and have thus become an independent interest group.

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[55] Interviewee number 4.

A scholar in the interview said that migrant workers were a group of disadvantaged people, the contributors and cost-bearers to urbanisation and rapid economic development[56]. They were the disadvantaged class to whom more concern should be given, especially to their problems, needs and demands. The statistics of 'White Paper on China's Employment Situation and Policy' revealed that there were 15 million peasant workers in 1990, increasing to over 98 million in 2003 (State Council Information Office, 2004), but by the end of 2006 that figure had dramatically escalated to 200 million (J. Liu, 2007). A lecturer in economics said that:

> "The labour cost in China is the lowest in the world but in essence the wages should contain the living expense for labourers themselves and family maintenance, education fee for their children, medical insurance, pension and other welfare cost. However, exploitation is severe in China during the capitalist transition as most labourers in the factories set up by joint ventures in the coastal cities get their pay and welfare below the social average level. This is even more phenomenal for the migrant workers of the inland." [57]

As a disadvantaged and marginalised group of people, migrant workers encounter some major problems in connection with their living, working and welfare. Discrepancy between their expectations and realities, between stereotyped urban and rural identities, were fully expressed in the interviews as obvious and influential. It was also indicated that their dissatisfaction was directed towards the backlash of market transitions and government policies. The targets of their contention were mainly the local government, their workplace managers, service providers including job agencies, and the urban residents and the major causes were centred around basic social and economic interests.

The most common and visible trigger for migrants' contentions was still unpaid wages. It was often heard that workers who were owed over a year's worth of back wages, or have been injured, received no compensation. In particular, China's construction boom has left a tangle of debts between developers, contractors and sub-contractors, which often resulted in workers not getting a paycheck. The Chinese government evaluated unpaid migrant wages for 2003 alone at an extraordinary US$12.1 billion. Vice-Premier Zeng Peiyan revealed in September

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[56] Interviewee number 89.
[57] Interviewee number 77.

2004 that a total of 360 billion yuan (US$43 billion) in unpaid wages remained outstanding to migrant workers and thousands of projects invested in by the government or real estate developers accounted for 70% of the total unpaid wages (Fu, 2004; Magnier, 2004). Accidents, industrial diseases, work injuries and medical compensation were another major cause for contentions among migrant workers. As a result of such aggravated grievances, they were utilising and developing all kinds of eye-catching strategies, inventive activities as well as self-destructive reactions. Petitioning the labour or related departments, sit-ins, kneeling, parades, strikes, blockades, threats and violence against the contractors, destruction of property and so on were not uncommon phenomena. The group of over 20 migrant wives travelling a long way from Sichun to Yunnan requesting unpaid wages for their husbands (R. Wang, 2007), the Guangxi construction workers writing a bilingual petition letter of Chinese and English to the media (News Clue Network, 2007) were examples of creativity mixed with helplessness. Moreover, the unwritten rule of contention for these disadvantaged groups was that, 'making big trouble will earn a complete settlement of the problem, mild trouble partial settlement, no trouble no settlement'. They had developed the strategic and delicate experience to know and keep the action within the bounds of state toleration. However, some took risks to show desperation by demonstrating on tower cranes or highway bridges to draw public attention. Suicides by jumping off high-rise buildings had become such a regular occurrence among unpaid construction workers that a mandarin expression, '*tiao lou xiu*' (literally, jumping off buildings to show) was coined to name these desperate attempts to draw attention to their plight (Kahn and Yardley, 2004; Toy, 2006). Killing and murder were also extremes in the struggles for unpaid wages. In October 2005, a migrant worker, Wang Binyu, was executed after killing four people in a rampage over unpaid wages (Toy, 2006). Such cases were by no means rare.

Hukou (registration system differentiating and managing residents in urban and rural areas) was still the biggest stigma to essentially deny full citizenship rights in the city in terms of public resources and social welfare, including subsidised housing, medical care and education for their children (Yardley, 2004). Although there was an increase in the availability of purchased *hukou* all over the urban cities, some of which even had floating migrants accounting for one quarter to one-third of the total population (Mallee, 2003: 148), it remained difficult to make such purchases in provincial capital cities like Wuhan and extremely hard in the national capital Beijing. Despite the efforts from groups of people like

intellectuals and the resulted experimental reforms, this stubborn institution, born with the establishment of New China, still played an important role in shaping unequal life chances across the urban-rural divide.

The temporary residence permits (*zanzhuzheng*) introduced since the mid-1980s, as a complementary measure to the *hukou* system to control the mobile population, was another source of contradiction and conflict. This condemned the already marginalised group to further vulnerable status, additional fees and the threat of being sent to a detention centre (*shourongzhan*). There was an inevitable contention between migrants and related officials. During the interviews, 7 out of 17 migrant workers mentioned their unpleasant experiences of applying for the costly, but seemingly necessary, permits and certificates as well as encounters with the urban management teams who checked their papers and treated them hideously. One migrant worker said:

> "There are no human rights in Beijing for migrant workers. I remember when being checked for the temporary residence permit, migrant workers were never treated as human beings. They were scolded by rude language, forced to kneel and even beaten violently. One of the workers I know once experienced this in 2000, and had a severe confrontation with the civil defence officers (they are not police officers)." [58]

However, their weak and disadvantaged status meant that any overt protest or individual confrontation towards the officials would end in further suffering. On most occasions, migrants usually relied on 'invisible' resistance, or attempts to take refuge elsewhere in order to weather the storm and remain at a distance from the authorities (Mallee, 2003: 149-52). The resolution lies in the reform of the institution itself, which requires pressure from different social groups including labourers themselves and a combination of both bottom-up and top-down efforts, as exemplified in the Sun Zhigang case (to be detailed in the next chapter).

Among all the side effects of the residential registration system, children's education has been prioritised. As a universal belief and dream shared by Chinese parents and revealed in the interviews, education was the only way for their children to rise out of poverty and

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[58] Interviewee number 4.

humiliation. Therefore, some of the families were willing to throw themselves into the lowest social level of work so their children could have a good education. The number of school-age children accompanying migrant workers to the cities was counted in the tens of millions and their educational problems had become a public topic. However, one of the greatest difficulties for these children was the restriction of the registration institution, which set limited permission for migrant workers' children to go to local schools. After a long struggle by the migrant parents and other social forces, more and more cities opened their doors to accommodate these children in public schools following public and central government pressures. But potential difficulties still lie in the requirement for over-elaborate certificates, the underlying discrimination of the selective procedures, various additional and illegal fees and the limitation of vacancies for the children of migrant workers (Yuan, 2008). Special schools were individually and privately set up for these children, but they were not brought into the nationally and formally recognised educational system and they faced strict official supervision and sanctions, were forced to move and close, had insufficient financial backing, poor conditions and facilities and inadequate teachers (Song and Li, 2006). This was another area that caused contention for different parties, including the self-established schools, and demanded urgent institutional reforms.

The conflict between migrant workers and city residents turned out to be complicated during China's increasing urbanisation and economic liberalisation, with both parties regarding themselves as victims. There were wide gaps in defining and expressing the rights of both parties. During the interviews some migrant workers stated that they felt rural life was too constraining, dull or unrewarding so they travelled a long way to Beijing, Wuhan and other big cities to pursue wealth, new perspectives and a new identity for their children and families. But the deep inferiority complex, and the extreme hardship they had encountered, often added to the difficulties and hopelessness in achieving their goals. The migrant workers felt that without them the economic boom of local cities would have been impossible. They believed they had been unfairly treated on different occasions or were being deprived of what they deserved. What's more, these former peasants mentally lack a sense of belonging to the cities. For example, in Beijing the city was proud of its skyscrapers, luxury stadiums and places of interest and some of the buildings had been constructed by migrant workers. However, they still could not say 'this belongs to *my* city'. Therefore, the social identity problem and discrimination they experienced remained largely unchanged and became worse

in some circumstances when they were blamed for the overcrowded communities and deteriorating public security, environment and hygiene, especially in the advent of the Beijing Olympic Games. As concrete demonstration of these contradictions, some urban residents complained in the interview that mobilising and group-renting migrants filled the community with noise, rubbish, insecurity and risk of fire.[59] When some local schools were open to migrant workers' children, the urban parents collectively protested in front of the schools to exclude these children's 'wicked' influence on their own ones (Yuan, 2008).

Such an unpalatable combination of distorted self-identity and discrimination easily generated deep grievances, depression and antagonism towards the city, especially amongst the younger generation. It was calculated that the new generation of the post-1980s had exceeded half the total population of migrant workers, some of whom were relatively better educated, more socially active, had more of an identify with the city lifestyle and were more concerned about their rights than their fathers. But, because of their rural *hukou*, they could hardly melt into the city nor were they willing to go back to the countryside. Instead many chose to wander between different jobs and different cities (Lai, 2007). Many others just finished junior high school and were still struggling, as their parents did, in the understratum of cities on a minimum wage. What was worse was that some of the girls were helplessly turned into prostitutes and boys misled into gangsterdom. The research conducted by *Outlook Weekly* described that the mental deviation from this second generation of migrant workers led to a sharp increase in juvenile delinquency, suicide and other anti-social behaviour (Xiao and Yuan, 2006). The migrant workers had less intellectual, economic and social networking resources than the local population, and their ability to get access to these new resources was limited. Therefore, migrants were more likely to become the victims of illegal and criminal activities. According to the statistics, half of the targets of migrants' crimes were the migrants themselves (Yang *et al*, 2006). When there was a lack of proper means to defend their legitimate rights and interests, or the cost of such a defence was too high, they might yield or be silent in order to avoid greater harm, or take other measures to protect themselves including resorting to illegal organisations and even the mafia, becoming criminals themselves and illegally conducting extreme revenge or violating others' rights. The vulnerability of such a population would induce more criminal acts by and against migrants.

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[59] Interviewee number 12, 35 and 39.

If we turn to empirical research, there was a floating population of 5.4 million in Beijing alone by the end of 2007 (Ma, 2007) and nearly one million in Wuhan (Jiang and Hu, 2008). The occupations of the 17 migrant worker interviewees were in the fields of construction (8), restaurant (5), hairdressing (2) and porter (2). Based on the official statistics, the largest group of migrant workers (about 30%) earned their living on construction projects, most of whom worked seven days a week under difficult conditions, camping out on the construction site, in makeshift barracks or on unfinished floors of the construction projects (Wang, 2003), and living harsh and isolated lives. On the contrary other migrant groups such as waiters and waitresses, apprentices in hairdressing, porters, peddlers, traders, garbage collectors and domestic workers had much more frequent interaction with the local population and more possibilities to get into direct contact with the authorities, not necessarily the state and local government, but also the local police station, semi-official management organs and neighbourhood committees (Mallee, 2003: 149). Such overt division of occupation within the group of migrant workers had more or less distributed their social networks and resources, but the main organising principle of migration chains was formed on the basis of kinship and a native place.

Blood ties and native ties – such elements of traditional agricultural society as a 'differential pattern'[60] to form human relations and social capital – still determine the conception and behaviour of migrant workers facing grievances and solving problems. These township-based community groups (*Laoxianghui*) were fraternities in nature, but they had taken up the various functions that formal institutions did not cover or failed to respond to. In the interviews over half of the migrant workers were members of *Laoxianghui* and most of them attended their activities. Statistics show that migration operated at a very low organisational level: 93% of migrant workers seek jobs through families and friends or by themselves with only 7% being introduced through organisational labour output or the labour market (Fan, 2004). It is not surprising that construction workers were organised in teams along native place lines, they lived in the same dormitories on the site and in the manufacturing factories and the whole team or workshop was comprised of migrant workers from the same township. The percentage of contracting labourers was even lower, which made it difficult to defend their rights. Without organisational or contracted protection, most migrant workers were pushed into resorting to *Laoxianghui* when being injured, deceived, had deducted or delayed

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[60] Based on Fei Xiaotong's 'Peasant China', differential pattern refers to a social relationship is traditionally defined by the distance to, and affiliations with, one's family line and relatives (Fei, 1947; Wu, 2007).

wages or were ill-treated.

In this way, occupation-based mobilisation and township-based spontaneous organisations become the main organisational and leadership resources for the fragmented contentious activities of the weak against the powerful. Popular *Weiquan* (defending rights) organisations were built up from the soil of prosperous *Laoxianghui* and other friendship groups within the same occupation, and developed an alternative behaviour model to defend the rights of migrant workers. Sometimes the team leaders and middle managers, who became the representatives of the *weiquan* institution, dwelled in the spontaneously-formed *laoxianghui* (Mei and Huang, 2005). That '*Laoxiang* (people with native ties) should help *laoxiang*' is a traditional concept. A leader of such an organisation in Beijing for migrant workers coming from Henan said in the interview, 'we had duty and responsibility to demand rights and fight if necessary for our fellow men of the same origin and it is free of charge to register as a member'. [61] A member also mentioned they would first think of *laoxianghui* when encountering any hardship and *laoxianghui* would represent them to negotiate with the workplace managers if the problem was very serious[62]. Generally these negotiations have a high possibility of winning and sometimes the leader led a group of members to the workplace and won the negotiation through sheer numbers and even violence, whilst at other times the representative got the advantage and attention over the dialogue by the strong identity of such a representation. Their appearance was effective in problem solving because the message had been passed to the manager that hundreds and thousands of *laoxiang* were standing and supporting behind them. Besides negotiation, they occasionally led strikes and mass protests of migrant workers in front of the companies or local government buildings.

6.4 Laid-off workers

If the migrant workers are those peasants who are discontented with their status and *actively* flow to cities to find a better chance in life and then face regulations and institutions that fail to accommodate the acceleration of social mobility and other emergent social-economic problems, then these laid-off workers have *passively* fallen into this category and have to bear the cost of reform on state-owned and collective-owned enterprises (SOEs and COEs) and the adaption of the industrial structure. The urban unemployed increased dramatically as a result of the government's program to privatise and downsize state-owned enterprises. It seemed

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[61] Interviewee number 8.
[62] Interviewee number 17.

impossible for laid-off workers to form alliances with migrants in the ruthless competition of the job market. Nevertheless, together they comprise the sub-category of the new urban poor.

There was no consensus to gain an accurate total of laid-off workers because of the fluctuation in the aggregated figures from new additions, continuing unemployment and return to employment each year. During the peak period of SOE and COE privatisation, restructuring, regrouping and bankruptcy from 1996 to the end of 1990s, according to the statistics collected and compared, the number rose from 8.96 million in 1996 to 11.51 million in 1997 (Yao and Ai, 1999) and then up to 14-16 million in 1998 (Ding, 1999). The accumulative number of laid-off workers (including re-employment) amounted to 30 million people before 2000 (Zhang, 2000). The tendency of this dramatic increase has slowed down since 2001 (Yang, 2003), and the problem of re-employment of the laid-off has also been given more attention. There were still over 14 million laid-off workers unemployed in spite of the fact that the rate of re-employment has begun to rise quickly, reaching 5.05 million in 2006 (Ministry of Labour and Social Security, 2007). The entire condition of the labour market was still under enormous pressure, with an excessive supply of over 12 million labourers beyond the total demand every year (Liu and Liu, 2007).

10 out of 15 laid-off workers in the interviews had been unemployed for over five years, and found it difficult to be properly re-employed through the labour market or agencies. Eight laid-off workers are now self-employed as vendors or operating small business, but they had also led difficult lives and suffered from inflation, business risks and security risks. Only three of the young laid-off workers, aged under 35, felt contented about their status in the new jobs, but they admitted that the contracts could not be achieved without strong personal relations. Generally they had long accepted the fact that the old 'iron rice bowl' system (lifelong guaranteed employment) was breaking down, that some SOEs and COEs were indeed old, inefficient, obsolete and in great need of reform. However, those laid-off workers aged above 40 or 50 with over 15-30 years of service had inadequate education and narrow working experience, especially in manufacturing factories. They could hardly find a new job and they bore heavy family burdens, having to pay a large sum of pension and medical insurance by themselves (3,000-5,000 yuan per person per year) until the age of retirement and were easily disturbed by any social-economic changes. They felt the most difficulties, weakness, injustice and unfairness, which were likely to kindle their contention and public sympathy.

As summarised from the interviews and the protest profiles from other sources, the largest cause for laid-off workers' petitions and insurgency was the controversial economic, welfare and labour relationship between themselves and the enterprises that dismissed them on issues of wages, pensions, severance pay, medical reimbursement, refundable funds, social insurance and rearrangement. When they were forced into the job market again, they shared common problems with the migrant workers such as the unregulated labour relationship without formal or fair contract, non-fulfilment of pensions, work injury and medical insurance and security protection and high work intensity with low or unpaid wages. Without better education and strong knowledge of law, individual victims were unclear about how to protect and defend their rights and became inferior in negotiations with employers when signing the contracts and when victimised. Besides individual petitions and appeals, those who were owed wages, pensions or medical compensation by their previous work and dissatisfied about the rearrangement or mistreated in the new working places were prone to take collective actions. These could be organised by selected or voluntary worker representatives in order to negotiate with the managers to solve problems, to collectively appeal to the higher administrative and judiciary departments and to expose incidents to the local or central media or to consult various legal aid centres (Ye, 2007). It was not shocking to see tens or hundreds of laid-off workers sit in and demonstrate at the front door of local government buildings. A combination of various resorts and resources were utilised and the most popular organisational resources for laid-off workers to take contentious activities and defend their rights were still grassroots, popular and spontaneous *wenquan* organisations based on work units and communities. It was noticeable that the trade unions had not exerted their importance and influence, as they should in the labour unrest, though they were under transformation to be more representative for labourers.

It was noted that public interest in an individual enterprise was also a strong concern for the deprived workers, because it was closely related to these workers' private rights and benefits. News about the unregulated privatisation process in selling enterprises at the cost of the collective interest of the workers and the state was often widely disseminated among the grassroots organisations and regarded as intolerable. Some revealed the scandals that the managers turned the enterprise into their own property without any cost (or with the money

from the state-owned banks)[63], and some workers were even asked to contribute money to buy the company shares otherwise they would be laid off.[64] There were acute criticisms against the whole unregulated process of restructuring and privatisation under the motto of 'Cross the river by feeling the stones', since the relations between local officials, SOE managers and private entrepreneurs (who purchased or merged SOEs) were knotted and they were conspiring to 'seek rents for power'[65]. There were comments such as 'practice does not make perfect and now it still follows the wrong conceptions and directions'[66] and 'the flowing out of state capitals has only fulfilled the money pockets of the individuals.'[67] In addition, the fact that those SOE managers, who might be responsible for the loss-generation or bankruptcy of the enterprise, enjoyed the luxury of housing, car and living conditions, and those who should be punished for their corruption and misconduct became beneficiaries of the reform, which caused psychological imbalance and resentment in the workers. As a way to unleash grievances, there was a great number of anonymous informants' letters sent to local procurators and the Central Party Discipline Committee to expose corrupt managers and the collusive officials (Xu, 2008), many of which have been published on the Internet[68].

More radical and cynical attitudes towards the Party-state itself were driven by the belief some laid-off workers held, especially those remaining unemployed, dissatisfied about the minimum living allowance or unhappy about their re-employment, that the proletariat was now being abandoned and oppressed by the Party who had turned to represent the entrepreneurs and the new rich. Many collective protests and even riots were taking place and multiplying through spontaneous mobilisation with such resentful sentiments at their heart. One laid-off worker in Wuhan, who was originally from Sichun, supported such a statement by noting that:

> " … about 100,000 workers gathered in protest in Mianyang City, Sichuan Province, after their factories declared bankruptcy and it was found that officials had embezzled their unemployment relief funds. The armed police were called in to suppress the

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[63] Interviewee number 11, 13, 36 and 38.
[64] Interviewee number 36 and 37.
[65] Interviewee number 62.
[66] Interviewee number 58.
[67] Interviewee number 94.
[68] For example, a complaint letter collectively signed by 3000 workers, including laid-off ones in a Nanyang Medicine Company to the Central Party Discipline Committee against the local government department and company leaders in regard to the privatisation of the company and compensation to the workers, was published online and cited by many websites, bbs and forums. The content of the letter can be found from the Web-blog of Kaidi Lawyers' Window.

protestors with force, resulting in many arrests and injuries."[69]

Another one said confidently that, 'the government's unemployment relief funds are being ravaged by corrupt officials'.[70] Some believed the government only cared about the vested interest of their own group, stating 'SOE restructuring made so many old workers redundant with little or low income, while the bureau restructuring still entitled an advanced retirement and good welfare for those just over 40.'[71] Others also felt they were being cheated by such statements that 'the system has brought more positive benefits than negative liabilities' and 'there is still a long way to go and to fight against certain problems' when they were fighting against their own hardships.[72]

Laid-off workers' grievances and discontent were not only caused by economic relations in connection with the economic structure reforms but also in various cases where they were forcefully evicted from their houses, ill-retreated by officials when running small businesses and they encountered problems regarding medical care or children's education or with the inconstant stock market and inflated housing market, which were all detailed in the interview stories. Home eviction undoubtedly affected and seriously victimised laid-off workers because many of them lived in the old welfare housing provided by their former work-units and now faced either sale or reconstruction of the factory/dormitory sites or the overall makeover of the urban landscape. This prevailing phenomenon worsened the already grave situation for them when they were sometimes violently forced to move out of their houses with little compensation. Two laid-off interviewees had such experiences in Beijing. One of them, who was forcefully evicted their house because of the new green belt built for the Olympic Games, said in despair, 'I've worked for decades but now jobless. I've lived there for a lifetime but now homeless. No job, no house, no money, I have nothing at all.'[73] Another one said, 'it is adding insult to injury and we six people now lived in my father's small two-bedroom apartment.'[74] Although there were numerous appealers and petitioners everyday queuing at the national petition office for housing eviction disputes, with many having travelled from other provinces, these two interviewees regarded lodging petitions as useless and ineffective. This was especially the case in the capital Beijing with a strong emphasis

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[69] Interviewee number 35.
[70] Interviewee number 34.
[71] Interviewee number 33.
[72] Interviewee number 10 and 14.
[73] Interviewee number 11.
[74] Interviewee number 15.

placed on control and stability when it prioritised exalted project such as the Olympics to urge the '*laobaixing*' (common people) to sacrifice compliantly. There was also an opposite case, as one Wuhan laid-off worker complained:

> "Our house has waited for demolition for around ten years. This building block was too old, small, shabby, dangerous and dirty with public toilet shared by eight households and not fitted in the surrounding business centre at all. We expected a fair compensation to buy a house elsewhere after the demolition and we appealed to the urban planning office every year with other households collectively. But the office just ignored this urgency, and put off our appeals every year."[75]

The two contradictions both targeted the government's decisions, behaviours, effectiveness and justice, and were aimed especially at the urban design department. On many occasions, as told by the interviewees as well as exposed by the media, ordinary residents became the direct sufferers under the power-money exchange between urban planners and estate developers (and sometimes with SOE managers). This also involved the violence combined by public security forces and mafia forces hired by the developers. According to the statistics, throughout China, disputes over home evictions as well as land confiscations had led to violent clashes, which occasionally escalated into local insurrections. The Chinese Construction Ministry also admitted to having received three times as many complaints in the first quarter of 2004 as in the same period the previous year, and by the end of June 2004, 4,000 groups and more than 18,600 individuals throughout China had lodged petitions over allegedly illicit housing demolition and compensation (Cody, 2004; Kurtenbach, 2005).

The arbitrary urban administration was another trigger to fuel the anger of the laid-off workers who earned their modest living as peddlers, vendors, and tricycle drivers on the streets. Interviewees mentioned the pervasive phenomenon of street violence exerted by the urban and economic law enforcers, who are regarded not as executors of the law but just as antagonistic bandits upon those small traders.[76] One incident on the evening of September 4, 2007 in Chongqing municipality highlighted that such conflicts of unbalanced power could also spontaneously cause large-scale public contentions with all groups and audiences taking part:

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[75] Interview number 37.
[76] Interview number 10, 37 and 38.

"It began with the urban administration officers maliciously beating a street vendor after smashing his push stall and created such dissatisfaction among the present crowd that city residents themselves began attacking them. The incident escalated into one urban administration vehicle being set on fire, and local citizens of over 2000 crowding around and cutting off all traffic. The violent conflict continued to escalate and get worse when the police came and clashed with the masses, the fire-fighters showed up and then the anti-riot squad warriors sealed off the area." (Kennedy, 2007, internet resource)

There were also furious comments that followed online such as, 'the UA don't just smash people's rice bowls [means of living], but their dinner tables too … not letting people eat, not even letting them earn a living…'. Such street protests and riots showed that people's grievances were mounting over injustice and the violation of the human rights of the poor and weak. Certain government officials, such as the eviction officials and urban administration officials, had become the personal or collective targets of social grievances.

The urban workers, who were more privileged in pre-reform status than peasants and migrant workers, still gained more social resources in experience, information and networking (*guanxi*). They also developed better self-consciousness and tactics in using the law as a weapon. The radical popular movements in the Cultural Revolution, the post-Mao democratic movement and Tiananmen protests from 1960s to the end of 1980s, all affected the collective social memory and participants' experiences. These influences on the different generations, from late 30s to over 50s, in the urban cities had shaped their leadership building, cultural framing and repertoire construction during contemporary contentions. They realised that, to meet their collective goals within the limits of state tolerance, collective action rather than individual contentions would exert more pressure on the state, which was more concerned with local stability.

6.5 Reflections

From the fieldwork research, the obvious causes and triggers of grievances and contentious activities for peasants was land requisition, power abuse by local cadres, conflicts around

grassroots elections and self-governance, lack of social security and environmental problems; for migrant workers the problems were unpaid wages and compensation, problems with temporary residence permits, difficulties in children's education and conflicts with city residents; for laid-off workers the issues were also unpaid wages and other welfare funds, unregulated privatisation of SOEs, corrupted managers and officials, house eviction and arbitrary urban administration. Building the analysis from their profile and interview results, this chapter has discussed the fundamental causes of their psychological deviation, their vulnerability and strength for contentions.

The popular demand for equality and justice lay in the gulf between rural and urban societies, and between ordinary citizens and the privileged class. Labourers' perceptions of the social realities were easily turned into triggers of contentions when this group was in a disadvantaged situation. When inequalities were generated through unfair manipulation of rent-seeking, the marketisation of power and corruption, they were rendered as unacceptable, and it was then that contentions with disadvantaged groups arose to indicate a class tension. There even emerged anti-social behaviours, terrorist activities, personal damages to the rich and sabotage of SOEs. Anger had further been driven towards the Communist Party itself that once fought alongside the workers against capitalist exploitation but was now supporting the capitalists in their struggle against the workers, and that once seized property from rich landlords and redistributed to the poor, but was now taking lands from the poor and passing it on to the developers and the enterprising local governments (Broudehoux, 2007).

As a whole the group of labourers could be characterised as both scattering and gathering, which greatly affected their contentious strategy. Generally they lacked the necessary social protection and effective channels to relieve their grievances, so they were disadvantaged in the processes of bargaining and contention (Song, 2007). The loose organisational base, or even a lack in organisational resources, meant that the cost of establishing a formal leadership, collective strategy and consensus was relatively high among the dispersed labourers who were more concerned about their individual rights. But private concerns could also be publicised, scattered forces be gathered and individual appeals collected. The catalyst for the emergence and growth of collective contentions and popular organisations was the increase of *weiquan* in the consciousness of labourers. Another feature of the gathering of labourers was the spontaneous organisation of *Laoxianghui*, noticeably popular within migrant worker

communities. Since migrant workers were connected with each other in everyday life through this informal township, kinship and friendship network for housing, hunting jobs and other social activities, information and grievances were usually shared and spread quickly and emotionally, and in certain cases more effectively within these small circles. This was likely to bring into play spontaneous contentious activities with a natural tendency towards escalation and, in some instances, such snowballing collectivity would become violent. Other *weiquan* organisations among migrant workers, peasants and laid-off workers were also prevailing and some involved people of other social status and classes.

It was noted that leadership was of greater significance in a collective contention or in an organisation. A few middle-aged, experienced and active individuals were likely to become leaders and the factors causing them to 'appear and lead in public' included a sense of justice, social and community pressure and confidence (O'Brien and Li, 1995; Cai, 2002；Ying, 2001). 'It could be very difficult sometimes,' as commented by the same leader in the Beijing Henan *Laoxianghui*.[77] Organisers, like him, were usually required to give a great personal commitment, sacrifice and a large amount of time, energy and money. They also bore a higher risk of being punished or arrested once they were labelled by the authorities as dangerous to social-political stabilities. Therefore, there was an unavoidable unsteadiness in the leadership regarding the willingness and perseverance of individuals to become leaders.

As the experiences and social memories of this group revealed, defending rights first needed righteous causes and nominal justification, which should be both compliant with the law and justice and constrained within the official boundary of tolerance (Shi, 2005). In the contemporary context, familiarity with laws and policies was becoming increasingly important. As one lawyer said in their interview:

> "Though most of the laws and policies were neither taken seriously by the officials nor the populace, if the victim groups used the strategy of 'taking them seriously' as a justification for their contentions, such laws and policies could become very powerful in exerting pressure on the local and higher level of government to force them to solve the local problems."[78]

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[77] Interviewee number 8.
[78] Interviewee number 82.

However, it was very rare for ordinary citizens to win a lawsuit against the local government and, moreover, if they lost the case they were also deprived of legitimacy for further appeals. So, using the weapons of law often meant seeking administrative intervention rather than appealing through courts. Petitions to the higher administrative level (*shangfang*) also required the framing of the art of contentions, including timing, place, opportunity, number of petitioners and presentations, in order to both raise the higher authority's attention and save its face. The actors' consciousness in law and policies was growing and they became more and more sophisticated in the use of strategies to distinguish boundaries and to evade punishment. For example, they were increasingly aware that devastating activities on infrastructures, buildings, vehicles, machines and equipments was equal to disturbing public order and unacceptable in higher authority's eyes (Ying and Ji, 2005). Such violent or radical actions were then contained by the actors themselves both for self-protection and to provide an effective resolution to their problems. Another strategy, 'constant pestering and nagging', mentioned by a laid-off worker in Wuhan who appealed for the shabby building they lived to be demolished[79], was often adopted as a follow up to contentions, to react and to avoid the related officials' tactics of 'protraction and inaction'. It meant constantly appealing and pressing the authorities in order to accelerate the resolution, though one problem could still take several months or even years to be finally resolved.

A deep-seated reason for popular *weiquan* was in fact the high threshold for labourers to defend their rights through channels provided by the authorities, which meant the normal administrative or legal resort was ineffective, inefficient or costly. At present many non-state enterprises have still not complied with the regulations and established trade unions and even where a trade union was founded, the chairman was employed by the enterprise and could not fully guarantee the labourers' rights. In addition, contractors, managers, developers, local tyrants and government officials, with whom labourers were contentious, were far more advantaged and powerful during the normal bargaining process, let alone when they used illegal measures to repress and silence the appealing labourers. Clearly there was complexity, delay and ineffectiveness in the arbitration of trade unions, labour departments and the procedure of court judgment that restricted labourers' individual appeal channels, and further drove them to take on popular collective *weiquan*.

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[79] Interviewee number 37.

In order to direct the future contentions in a democratic and peaceful way, and make it a real vehicle to push for representative governance and promote civil society, groups of labourers need to increase their organisation, manage and converge their scattered forces, lower the cost of achieving consensus among themselves, improve their self-consciousness of rights, make good use of networking and all kinds of resources, and enhance their negotiation capabilities through empowerment within themselves as well as inclusion of other groups.

Chapter 7 Internet Contentions of Intellectuals and White-collar workers

7.1 Introduction

Looking specifically at the intellectual group, it appears that these sub-groups of scholars, students, lawyers, journalists and dissidents have largely shared in and contributed to the new tendency of contentions brought about by the internet – in social-political, nationalist or pro-democratic movements. Driven by the social, economic and technological development of the post-reform era, the internet has become the most convenient and fastest-spreading way to connect various groups in China and for them to make use of prevailing internet contentions that are different from actions and movements on the streets. Based on the interviews, most intellectuals and white-collar workers were using the internet as their tool to communicate and also as their weapon to express, deploy and impose their different demands and ideas on social realities. Internet networks and online forums, what is called the public sphere online, has also become an important part of Chinese civil society dynamics.

As of January 2001, the total internet population in China was 22.5 million (China Internet Network Information Centre, 2001); by April 2006 China had a population of 123 million internet users, over 80% of whom were under the age of 35 and over half of whom were well-educated (China Internet Network Information Centre, 2006); by February 2008 the number had reached 221 million, exceeding that of the USA, and China was ranked first in the world (Feng and Zhou, 2008). Based on the growing population of internet users, a new term emerged and was normalised – 'netizen', a portmanteau of internet and citizen, coined by Michael Hauben in 1992 (Hauben *et al*, 1997) and this was used to refer to people who used internet resources to engage in online communities through participation, contribution, creation and other responsible actions. Netizens were believed to be distinguishable from other internet users in that they focused on: 1) using the internet as a social tool to participate in various social activities, 2) making use of the opportunities the internet provides in order to expand social involvement and influence, 3) forming connections that would otherwise be impossible (Hauben *et al*, 1997). Millions of Chinese have been attracted to the internet, most aged between 20 and 40. They have gained college-or-above education with stable occupations and income. They have gone beyond the functions of merely information

receiving or entertainment, but explored deeper into the network power of information and discourse, and they have formed numerous discursive communities in the virtual world from the mid-1990s to the present. The components of Chinese netizens were mostly from the group of intellectuals as well as the sub-category of the white-collar labour group, and the locations of these netizens were mostly limited to the urban cities.

As for intellectuals, Xu (1999: 12-3) has stated in his book 'Disenchanted Democracy' that many intellectuals intended to adopt a new strategy of indirect criticism towards serious social and statist problems by advocating humanist spirit and new Chinese nationalist studies, and by describing monumental problems like corruption and social injustice in moral and professional terms, as the erosion of general moral standards and breakdown of professional integrity. This strategy, though not sharp enough to penetrate the deep institutionally problematic core of the Party-state, still provided an alternative discussion that was more acceptable to the authorities and more accessible for the populace. Now such discourse, discussion and criticism has been moved online. The internet has become a better stage for intellectuals to conceptualise and to express their thoughts, ideals and dissatisfactions for both themselves and for other disadvantaged groups. On this new stage they are born to be advisors, representatives, coordinators and leaders in the contentions and find it easy to mobilise and unite with other different groups under different circumstances.

Besides students and scholars, white-collar workers also comprised a large proportion of netizens while they were divided in different self-perceptions: more than half of them had strong self-consciousness to categorise themselves into middle class and to distinguish clearly from the grassroots in education, profession, prestige and influence, as shown in the interviews. On the other hand, rising living standards and higher pay also caused a few manual workers to adopt middle-class values and lifestyles and more instrumental forms of behaviour in the process of 'embourgeoisement' (Goldthorpe *et al*, 1968: 54). In the same way, some white-collar workers still regarded themselves to be salary-man, working class even a class of 'migrant workers'[80], just differentiating from blue collar in the type of work, not in terms of privilege or status. The white-collar workers had their own problems and grievances as their families, friends and themselves set high expectations for them, which becomes a great pressure[81]; the three mountains of 'medicine, education and housing' are also overloaded

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[80] Interviewee number 22.
[81] Interviewee number 20.

on them[82], which reinforces vulnerability. Though most of them believed that social chaos and political instability would definitely result in economic setbacks and people suffering, they are more and more likely to participate in contentious activities or to identify with other insurgents. The anonymity, freedom and creativity of the online sphere were perfectly suited for them to take such contentions.

This term of netizen has been used recently in China most frequently referring to the vigorous netizen movements. Since the internet has penetrated into every aspect of Chinese society with revolutionary and empowering effects, the growing offline contentious activities have fuelled the online discussion with various topics and problems and interwoven these with internet contentions. On the other hand, the involvement and even initiative of the internet in various contentions has blurred the boundaries between virtual and real communities, redefined existing social relations and propelled existing civil forces into new possibilities (Tai, 2006: xx). Generally netizens are participating actively in online forums and discussions, in building and disseminating blogs, in breaking through the governmental blocks of information, in using the human flesh search engine (*Renrou sousuo yinqing*, detailed later), in signing online petitions and organising a mixture of movements in a fashionable, collective and united way, showing a new tendency for social and political contentions.

Therefore, instead of a categorised analysis of the sub-groups of intellectuals and their types of contentions, this chapter is going to investigate their domain of contentions – the internet - and how intellectuals as well as urban white-collar workers mobilise internet resources in an enlarging online public sphere to influence real life and interact with the government on different occasions. The investigation into the micro dynamic framing of internet contentions is based upon the internet content analysis of administrative and legal cases, moral cases and nationalist cases, with the Wenchuan Earthquake case seen as an integrated and maturated example.

7.2 Administrative and Legal Cases

Administrative and legal cases are directly related to the quality and legitimacy of governance. Justice, accountability and transparency are the core of good governance in many people's

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[82] Interviewee number 22.

judgement. As anger and defiance against social problems and injustice were prevailing, the danger of social unrest increased, as demonstrated in the large number of collective actions in public. As a more acceptable and safer platform, the internet and cyberspace then provided a channel for Chinese netizens to express their feeling that they should do something for social justice and create pressure on the problem-solving process. Recently many important civil and criminal cases have been made public online, local cases being given nationwide coverage, with follow-on arguments full of suspicions, exposures, controversies, protests and recommendations. Administrative cases of inefficiency, deficiency, corruption, rent-seeking and other malfunctions often involved individuals or a group of officials and intertwined with the legal cases being targeted and explored by netizens. Since there was no judicial independence and courts often colluded with governmental officials, netizens might understandably redress what they perceived as unfair or unjustified decisions by taking issues into the virtual court of appeal on the internet and thus swaying the tide of public opinion (Tai, 2006: xvi). They were concrete and pertinent criticisms targeting the most specific problems in which lay the general social and political ills, as well as governance deficiency. On the other hand, online activism and activities to a certain degree evoke, organise, mobilise and energise offline contentions.

The tragic death of Sun Zhigang, a 27-year-old man, on March 2003 was first revealed and reported online by Southern Metropolitan Daily one month later.

> This university graduate and graphic designer from Hubei Province was arrested on the streets of Guangzhou for not carrying a temporary resident ID permit, and brought to a 'custody and repatriation' centre. After 3 days he was dead in a penitentiary hospital caused directly by savagely beating of his body 72 hours before the death and indirectly by the abuse of police power under the custody and repatriation system. (Chen and Wang, 2003, media report)

Immediately following the news becoming public, newspapers and websites throughout China republished the account, chat rooms and bulletin boards exploded with outrage, substantial public discussion of the flaws of the repatriation system was heated and legal experts intensified calls for the abolition of the abuse-ridden 'custody and repatriation' centres (Beach, 2005, internet resource). Within two months, the State Council declared that the government

would replace the system and rescind the regulation that once allowed police to detain people who failed to produce local residence permits. This showed the rare speed and efficiency of the authorities responding to public opinions and movements (Cai, 2003, media report). It was the first time in China's entire history that an improvement in law was initiated from the bottom to the top with online initiatives, and finally the government made a compromise.

The Xu Ting Case was another legal case in which waves of online discussions pushed for a real change in court decisions and for the legal system.

> In April 2006, when Xu Ting, a 24-year-old young man, took out cash from an ATM in Guangzhou, he discovered every time he took 1000 RMB only 1 RMB would be deducted in his card. Thus he took out money for 171 times of totally 175,000 RMB ($23,000) and then escaped. One year later, he was captured and got life imprisonment in the first trial under the law of 'theft from financial agency' (Huang and Li, 2007, internet resource).

Immediately after the trial thousands of netizens urged the media to take up the case, mounted pressure on the court and brought the case to a second trial, which changed the life sentence to 5 years. Not only was this young man's fate and future altered, but the existing legislation and judiciary system had also been challenged and been subjected to debates from all kinds of professionals, experts and even the insiders of the system. The court had to give special judiciary explanations, and discussions were heated on how this law should be modified. There was no doubt that the next People's Congress meeting would mention such a case that had seized so much public attention and would hopefully bring forth an adjustment to the law. There also appeared a Yunnan 'Xu Ting Case' and a 'Xu Ting Case' with similar causes and consequences (a life sentence) which pressed for retrial and justice (Yin, 2008, media report).

Dahe.com, a famous news portal and online community based in Henan Province, published an open petition letter on June 6, 2007 (online resource) from a group of 400 parents, striving to retrieve their lost sons, who had been captured as forced labourers in the many notorious brick kilns in Shanxi, China.

> These 400 fathers of missing boys from the central province of Henan had joined forces

to find their sons at kilns hidden deep in the mountains of neighbouring Shanxi for the past 2 months and rescued over 40 children. However, still hundreds were in the hands of the black factories. The parents sought help from village, county and city officials from police and labour departments, only to find indifference and red tape. Then their seeking for help online in extreme desperation had raised grave concerns all over China. After the letter being published for 5 days on the internet, it had received more than half a million hits. Many posts in forums expressed anger and shock with accusations of collusion between officials, police and the kiln owners and calls for establishing popular organisations to rescue child labourers. (Bu, 2007, internet resource)

Such scandals directly brought attention from the central government and influenced governmental policies and decisions: on June 9 Zhengzhou (Henan capital city) police soon started a one-month campaign against abduction and forced labour and set up an information system for all missing/abducted persons in the municipality. Henan police also reported the incidents to the Public Security Bureau in order to foster collaboration from their Shanxi counterparts (Z. Liu, 2007, media report). Up to October 2007, 95 Party officials were punished, including the head of the department of labour and security of the Shanxi provincial government and two responsible mayors, after more than 1,000 people, including children and mentally handicapped people, were rescued from Shanxi brick kilns. Meanwhile, life and even death sentences were given to five kiln owners, managers and guards (Xie, 2007, media report).

The South China Tiger ('Zhou Tiger') photo controversy case came into focus when netizens accused officials of using fake photography to promote tourism, and the ensuing firestorm pushed the national media to investigate the possible fraud.

In October 2007, Zhou Zhenglong, a Shaanxi farmer, shot pictures of a rare South China tiger in the wild that was thought to be extinct and was then called a hero. Two months later, however, he was very likely to be, along with the Shaanxi Forestry Department, the biggest liars in 2007. They were exposed by millions of netizens that got to the bottom of the matter: there were professional photographers that scanned every pixel of the photos to question their authenticity; there was a botanical expert from the China Academy of Science who, based on the plants around the tiger, put forward his

questions; there was even a netizen that managed to fumble out an age-old picture that was recognised as the original copy by which Zhou made a fake, flat tiger on a poster cut-out. Also present were sceptics that analysed the financial gain of the Forestry Department once the existence of the tiger seemed proven and the sizable reward granted to the farmer (Ding, 2007, media report; Tan, 2007, internet resource).

This consequently spurred a heated debate over cover-ups, culpability and corruption, as well as whether Zhou was forced to take the fall for powerful officials. During further investigation, mainly initiated and demanded by netizens and involving all kinds of experts and scholars on the South China Tiger case, it was revealed that:

> Mr. Hao Jinsong (the founder of the Public Interest Lawyer Centre) even sued the National Bureau of Forest for their administrative review decision and said that the aim of his litigation was to urge the national administration to respond to the public appeal. This litigation was still meaningful, though Beijing Second Intermediate Court made a decision not to place this case on file (C. Zheng, 2008, media report).

As one blogger wrote on 11 October, 2007 on Tianya BBS (internet resource), 'the government agency's credibility is on the edge of extinction in China'. In this credit-losing age, an amazing number of netizens undertook finding out the truth as their responsibility, venting their indignation towards liars and boodlers while Zhou and the Ministry had hitherto withstood the inquiry. The Southern Metropolis Daily acknowledged the popular dissidence, saying that 'the era when people blindly believe what the government tells them is over. Likewise, the era when the people are too afraid to speak out is also over' (Duerme, 2007, media report). Not until the end of June 2008 did the controversy finally settle down, and it was confirmed that the photo was a 'paper tiger', staged under pressure from the central government. Netizens were able to celebrate the 'late victory':

> as in June 2008 Zhou Zhenglong was arrested on suspicion of fraud, and 13 officials in Shaanxi province were fired or disciplined, including media officials who were sacked for dereliction of duty and the Provincial Forestry Department deputy head, the official in charge of wildlife preservation (C. Zheng, 2008, media report).

The rapid and heated popular inquiry into the tiger fabrication was in sharp contradiction to the nonfeasance or malfunction of the government performance and administration. This spontaneous mobilisation has gradually transformed into demands of surveillance of local governments' behaviour as well as just punishment for abuse of public power.

7.3 Moral Cases

It is undeniable that there has been a loss of moral values in contemporary China since the early 1990s – as reflected in corruption, commercialism, crime and hedonistic lifestyles. Some intellectuals stated during the interviews that the 'spiritual vacuum'[83] and 'moral crisis'[84] resulting from fundamental contradictions in ideology and the decline of Chinese traditional values have become one of China's most serious problems. On one hand, netizens were condemning certain macro-level issues that clearly and truly existed: the unfairness of the judiciary, moral degeneration, and the ills that were attacking and degrading the system. On the other hand, most moral cases of contention on the internet were targeted on questions of individuals' social immorality by ways of debates, criticisms, exposures, explorations and a mass tool more unique to China – large-scale human flesh search engines.[85] This tool has mobilised a large number of young and well-educated netizens to participate in search and punishment on the individual perpetrators of morality crimes (Fletcher, 2008, media report). With the convenience of the internet, netizens who uphold the value of righteousness have taken matters into their own hands and wield influence in the real world through a process of moral consensus-building and spontaneous online/offline organisation that has been motivated, dominated and led by some of the strongest and most earnest voices yearning for the re-establishment of morality in the civic sphere.

On the internet, netizens fiercely attacked individual or chain corruption within the government, the polygamy of high officials (D. Li, 2006, internet resource), the extravagance and even burning money of the wealthy classes (Huang, 2006, media report; Zhang and Peng, 2006, media report). They also detected and exposed sexual scandals, domestic violence and a dilemmatic internet charity (Beijing Youth Daily, 2005, media report). Apart from judgmental

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[83] Interviewee number 90.
[84] Interviewee number 47 and 70.
[85] An internet term: Netizens searched out all the private details of leading roles in the cases, and publicised the privacies and contacts while calling upon the public to participate in the attacks towards individuals, not only limited to discursive abuse but also expanding to insults, disturbance and harassment in real everyday life.

moral condemnations, the powerful human flesh search engines were often applied in these cases. Once the personal information of moral criminals appeared online, those implicated were bombarded with curses, threats and even 'execution orders'.

In an early case in 2006, a woman now dubbed 'the kitten killer of Hangzhou' posted a video of herself stomping a kitten to death with her stiletto heels. China's netizens erupted with rage and hundreds of amateur sleuths traced the video to Hangzhou, a city south of Shanghai. They discovered the woman's name and that she had recently purchased a pair of high-heeled shoes on eBay. They attacked her until she apologised on a local government website and lost her job (China Daily, 2006, media report).

A civil case involving an ordinary Nanjing citizen drew a strong response on the internet as a good-deed-earned-a-bad-end example.

At around 9:00 am on November 20, 2006 in the eastern city of Nanjing, an old lady, Mrs. Xu aged 65, was waiting for a bus and fell down during the jostle to get on the bus, with her left collarbone fractured. Citizen Peng Yu, a 26-year-old man, came off the bus, helped her get up, then took her to the hospital for treatment and gave her 200 RMB; Mrs. Xu then sued Peng as the person who pushed her and sued him for a large amount of medical expenses and compensation for emotional suffering; Peng Yu claimed that he was only a kind-hearted citizen trying to help a fellow citizen in distress. On September 7, 2007 at the 4th session of the case, the district court finally released its verdict: Peng Yu, partially liable for the accident, would pay 45, 876.36 RMB (US$6,076), about 1/3 of Xu's claim to Ms Xu (Martinsen, 2007, internet resource; Web-blog of Global Voice, internet resource).

The court's sentence was based on the following analysis:

As the first passenger off the bus, it was most likely Peng who slammed into Ms. Xu. And according to 'common sense', if Peng had not been the one who collided with Ms. Xu, it is reasonable to assume that instead of sending the old woman to hospital, even giving her 200 RMB, he would have caught the real troublemaker. As Peng's actions ran contrary to common sense, it was ruled that Peng Yu held responsibility for Ms. Xu's

injury. Therefore, the court based its judgment entirely on 'common sense' in the absence of sustainable facts or any witnesses. Unfortunately, this 'common sense' to which the chief judge referred was precisely the coldness and non-involvement that mainstream values have long opposed (Cai, 2007, media report).

A fire was immediately lit on the blogosphere, with many netizens and bloggers protesting the ruling, most of them inclined to see Peng Yu as innocent, and lamenting what impact this immensely-discussed incident would have for society when future roadside or traffic injuries occur (Web-blog of Global Voice, internet resource), and the danger to directly damage social trust in the law and the sanctity of the law itself. The netizens, in a response much more severe than the local media, also created a campaign of human flesh search and called on netizens to 'give integrity one more chance' (Martinsen, 2007, internet resource). With information collected and accumulated from various channels through the search, and more inner stories untouched by the court dug out by netizens, half a million netizens had participated in the discussion, analysing the evidence, recreating the scene demonstration, appealing for more witnesses and discerning every detail until the truth was basically retrieved. Finally the spearhead of the netizens' anger was targeted at the old lady, her policeman son and the court officials (Web-blog of Global Voice, internet resource) and some also accused the hospital over the unreasonably high charge of over 40,000 RMB for treating the fracture (Y. Li, 2007, internet resource).

In this case, Chinese netizens were playing the role of civil jury, though without judiciary efficacy, providing an alternative way to some kind of justice outside the untrustworthy court system. The eventual result of the case was announced by the judge of Jiangsu Provincial Superior Court that both sides had agreed for reconciliation and withdrew the appeal; it was also revealed that Peng Yu still had to pay over 10,000 RMB to Ms. Xu (Ou, 2008, media report), apparently not satisfactory to concerned netizens and leaving stains on both the law and morality.

The Peng Yu case was different from other moral cases because it was transferred to legal channels. However, the executor of law made a distorted judgment that ran against public moral values, which endowed the case with a typical meaning – how the law system should protect and preserve the judgment made by the social morality. Another moral case also

involved a judiciary trial, but pointed to the immorality of the human flesh search engine itself.

> In December 2007, a 31-year-old Beijing woman named Jiang Yan jumped off the 24th floor balcony of her apartment. A post on her blog before her suicide blamed her death on her husband's extra-marital affair. News of this 'death blog' spread on the Chinese internet and soon, a mass of outraged netizens launched a human flesh search engine to track down the guilty parties. Within days, every detail of her husband's personal life was all over the internet. For months, this man, his alleged mistress and their parents were bombarded with attack messages and even death threats. In March 2008, the husband sued three websites for cyber violence and privacy violation. On April 17, a Beijing court began deliberating the case – the first anti-'human flesh search' case to come before the Chinese courts (Youth Weekend, 2008, media report).

This case has raised heated discussion and reflection over the powerful strategy and tools provided by the internet, as is understandable as a consequence of China's ubiquitous manpower and ingrained tradition of 'people's war', tracing back to Mao. An intellectual's comment in the interviews could also be applied to the internet contention: 'We don't need violent revolutions; the real revolution is a quiet revolution from within and it is to revolutionise ourselves and make ourselves stronger, wiser and more tolerant, rather than depriving others of their freedom or life.'[86] As netizens organised to support, speak and act in the name of truth, conscience and justice, their actions were transient and their organisations were loose without a roadmap for how these moral forces should progress. Therefore, in practice, the waves of public anger and emotion of strong disapproval or harsh criticism were easily stirred up and widely spread. Furthermore, they contained a certain unstated risk because they lacked self-reflection, rationality and order, which meant they could exhibit violent tendencies.

7.4 Nationalist cases

From the interviews, justice, morality and nationalism were three strong sentiments among intellectuals, both domestically and abroad. As for nationalism, people did have, to different degrees, an emotional attachment to the nation, a sense of duty to the nation, the precedence

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[86] Interviewee number 65.

of national over individual and regional interests, and a desire for China to be a more powerful nation. Since national identity involves a relationship between the individuals and the party, state and nation, the intellectuals' relations with the state and with society have been transforming, but have also been highly delicate in the post-1989 era. One university lecturer commented about Tiananmen 1989 and said:

> The Chinese government reported on how the PLA soldiers were beaten and killed by the rioting students and crowds while the foreign media focused on how cruel was the repression and slaughter towards innocent people. It is difficult to judge which side is more biased – those are all precious lives, gone and left behind only numbers and news. So no matter what is the worth of death and sacrifice, no matter what is the cause of such tragedy, we are all Chinese people struggling for our own country.[87]

At the start of the new century, liberalism and demand for democracy still persisted and had even shown new vigour, but it was no longer the common faith of intellectuals. The new intellectual discourse emerging in the 1990s was largely independent of politics, a genuinely societal discourse and more tolerant and even supportive implicitly or explicitly of the government (Fewsmith, 2001: 159). The justification and emphasis on accelerating the process of modernisation with a nationalist call had largely outweighed cultural criticism and oppositional thinking, and had shown a reconciliation of intellectual inquiry with the prevailing political orders or an intentional avoidance of sensitive socio-political issues (Xu, 1999: 1-3). This new atmosphere tended to push democratic activists to the margins of Chinese intellectual and social life (Fewsmith, 2001: 160). During the interviews, though democracy and human rights were still regarded as two of the most problematic issues in politics, respondents tended to assign themselves a different role in an international context. Many interviewees showed strong nationalist dignity and constantly asked the researcher not to expose the dark side of China to international society, and they only made critical comments on sensitive topics after the recorder was switched off. They were alert and suspicious towards the intention of international interference and critiques: to help China improve its human rights record or defame China or even violate China's sovereignty?[88] They were especially antipathetic towards international opinions of the 'China Threat' or 'China

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[87] Interviewee number 77.
[88] Interviewee number 53, 71 and 85.

Collapse'.[89]

It is also noticeable that since information flow has overcome the boundary of geography, the discord among intellectuals at home and abroad has more to do with generational and social memories. The dissidents, still with deep national identities, were more likely to develop nationalism in a cosmopolitan sense and integrate it with universal values of human rights and democracy to transform China. However, domestic young students and scholars were more internalised with a belief in the importance of patriotism over internationalism. The 5 dissidents in the USA and UK participating in the interviews were all aged over 40 and involved in the expanding overseas Chinese intellectual community. They regarded themselves as having inherited and borne the burden of Chinese history, especially social memories of 1980s liberalism. Some of them portrayed the post-1980s and post-1990s Chinese students studying abroad as a generation of loyal and fervent followers of the Party-state line on nationalism, who echoed the governments' anti-Western and nationalist propaganda in a series of debates over human rights, Taiwan, Tibet and Falun Gong.

Dissident cyberspace activists were mainly established in the Western developed countries, taking advantage of the environment for intellectual movement, freedom of speech and press and the access to information. They regarded themselves as more objective, precise and critical in what happened in China and the outside world, and as both actors and outsiders in the patriotic movement. As they believed in democracy as the fifth modernisation[90], the most direct and farthest-ranging proposals for democratisation and political reform since Tiananmen emerged, such as calls for multiparty democracy, direct elections of legislative bodies at all levels, the acceptance of international economic and political norms, freedom of the press, respect on human rights and an improvement in China's international relations.

The internet was chosen as their battlefield to reveal the existing problems of an authoritarian China, to circulate their viewpoints and ideals, and to influence overseas Chinese students. As one of the interviewees commented,

> Since 1989 the student and scholar exiles initiated early waves of movement in Hong

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[89] Interviewee number 53 and 77.

[90] The other four are modernisations of agriculture, industry, technology and defense.

Kong and America and there have been various pro-democracy associations and even the creation of a Democratic Party. There have been numerous demonstrations and rallies, publications and online websites and forums along with other international appeals.[91]

For nearly two decades, their influence seemed to be limited to a small circle of intellectuals and it was difficult to break through the mainland information block and reach a wide audience. This is partly because, as indicated by one interviewee,

> Some dissidents do not have a decent reputation among mainland Chinese, but are regarded as being simply cranks and lonely people in exile whose minds have gone wobbly. What's worse, dissidents and Falun Gong practitioners are always viewed as just making every effort including asylum seeking to get the green card abroad.[92]

Though the overall intellectual ethos showed that nationalism outweighed democratism, dissidents' contentions indicated a tendency for their increasing union with domestic human rights defenders, other disadvantaged groups and victims of brutal land grabbing, forced eviction, exploitation of labour and arbitrary detention (their interconnection with Chinese Christians and Falun Gong practitioners abroad will be further discussed in the next chapter). This was shown in the list of demands in a typical open letter published online to Chinese leaders before 2008 Olympic Games:

> 1. Declare amnesty for all prisoners of conscience so that they can enjoy the Olympic games in freedom.
>
> 2. Open China's borders to all Chinese citizens who have been forced into exile for their beliefs, expression, or faith, so that they can re-unite with their loved ones and celebrate the glory of the Olympics in their motherland.
>
> 3. Implement the government ordinance to allow foreign journalists to conduct interviews and reporting without pre-approval by authorities before October 17, 2008, granting Chinese journalists the same access and independence.
>
> 4. Provide fair compensation to the victims of forced evictions and land appropriations that have been done in order to construct Olympic facilities, and release people who have been detained or imprisoned (often violently) for protesting or resisting such

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[91] Interviewee number 87.
[92] Interviewee number 87.

actions.

5. Protect the rights of workers on all Olympic construction sites, including their right to organise independent labour unions; end discrimination against rural migrant labourers and give them fair compensation.

6. End police operations intended to intercept, detain, or send home petitioners who try to travel to Beijing to complain about local officials' misconduct; abolish illegal facilities used for incarcerating, interrogating, and terrorising petitioners; end the "clean up" operations aimed at migrants that demolish their temporary housing and close down schools for their children.

7. Establish a system of citizen oversight over Olympic spending and provide public accounting and independent auditing of Olympics-related expenditures; make the process of awarding contracts to businesses transparent, and hold legally accountable any official who embezzles or wastes public funds (Asia News, 2007, media report).

On the other hand, it was true that inside China popular nationalism and nativism persisted among China's growing middle class and its college students. This was demonstrated graphically in the popular protests against the NATO bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade in May 1999 and in the uproar surrounding China's downing of a US spy plane in the spring of 2001 (Blum and Jensen, 2002: 16). The over 20,000 strong anti-Japan rally on the streets of Beijing in April 2005 was still fresh in some of the interviewees' memories. Some of them had attended or witnessed the largest state-sanctioned protests since 1999, or had signed the online petition on their own[93]. In fact, nationalist movements and contestations were prevailing both offline and online.

> The large-scale internet nationalist campaigns against Japan's UN Security Council bid among Chinese netizens in February 2005 proceeded into the public demonstrations (Duffy, 2005, media report). With the supportive involvement of national media and their official websites such as people.com.cn (Tai, 2006: 275, academic literature), and with netizens' spontaneously setting petition stands on busy streets of major cities to collect signatures from non-netizens, over 22 million signatures had been gathered by the end of March (Kahn, 2005, media report). In April 2005, as Chinese authorities endorsed a series of anti-Japanese public demonstrations throughout China such as in Shanghai, Beijing, Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Chengdu and Wuhan, allowing people to

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[93] Interviewee number 48, 49, 67, 60 and others.

voice their anger after the publication of a new Japanese history textbook that played down Japan's wartime atrocities, the internet has played an essential role in organising public protests of the major cities regarding the time, venue, route, slogans and other instructions (South China Morning Post, 10/4/2005, media report). Online messages about real-time protest pictures and information were circulated via internet forums, BBS, emails, SMS and texts, and called for ongoing recruitment (Yardley, 2005, media report).

However, as the anti-Japanese protests began to gain momentum over a period of several days, the state discovered the important risks carried by such diversion tactics, and realised that public discontent, once unleashed, can be difficult to contain (Broudehoux, 2007, academic literature).

> All Chinese media were then forced to stop coverage of the public protests (South China Morning Post, 6/4/2005, media report), websites participating in the organisational efforts and spreading protest information were shut down (Xinhua Financial Network News, 2005, media report), and the author of a text calling for protests in Shanghai was even arrested and sentenced to five years in prison, which triggered all kinds of online posts against the government's impotence and manipulation with law experts challenging the legality of this imprisonment based on current laws (Tai, 2006: 280, academic literature).

As the waves of demonstrations eventually died down in May 2005, internet protests and boycotts against the Japanese commodities continued. As the protesters wished, the Chinese government was pressured to take a more rigid and tough posture in its diplomatic relations with Japan, such as Chinese Vice Premier Wu Yi's sudden cancellation of her scheduled meeting with the Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi (China Daily, 23/5/2005, media report). In this light, the protest achieved success: activists were pleased by the changes in the Chinese government's foreign policy; students were satisfied with the rightness of their patriotic enthusiasm; other urban white-collar workers and marginal groups also achieved the exercise of their civil rights and gained social attention (Zhou, 2007, academic literature).

Apparently the radical anti-Japan sentiment in Chinese cyberspace became a landmark of 'internet nationalism' in China (Liu, 2005, academic literature). Since then, nationalism has reshaped the crucial elements underlying most popular political communication in cyberspace, and the offline nationalist movements have become more connected and intertwined with the online activism. The literature also showed that there existed two divided, competing yet interrelated types of nationalism – official and popular. While the official nationalism was trying to include all the social classes into a common national goal under the Communist Party's leadership, the intellectuals and the populace towards pluralist nationalism often challenged and transformed this monopolistic leadership. However, during the state-society bargaining, the fact that the survivability of public opinion and popular nationalism could only be guaranteed when it was aligned with the interest of the state strongly demonstrated that the internet could also function as a state activation apparatus in online domestic as well as international political communication (Chow, 2007, academic literature).

2008 had seen a year of increasing unrest and threats from within and outside China prior to China's hosting of its first ever Olympic Games.

> Tibetan protestors were the most violent and radical as Buddhist monks and other ethnic Tibetans erupted in March 2008 following the 49th anniversary of the Tibetan Uprising of 1959 and reached the climax in their clash with Chinese security forces in Lhasa, the Tibetan capital. The 2008 Olympic Torch relay from March is another uneasy course. When the torch was lit on the Ancient Olympia Mountain in Greece on 24th March, 2008, the ceremony was disrupted by the members of 'Reporters without Borders' and 'Free Tibet' activists; clashes went along the torch route in London, Paris, San Francisco and India and even Hong Kong. (Synthesis of media reports and internet resources)

The contentions upon Tibetan turmoil and the Torch Relay had driven the nationalist movement to a new climax, taking the form of public demonstrations, newspaper editorials, online petitions and other internet activism which directly involved the overseas Chinese, especially students.

Chinese netizens showed their support for Chinese sovereignty and administration of Tibet by collecting and spreading evidence of 'the true face of Western media in the Tibet riot'

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(YouTube, 20/3/2008, internet resource) to disprove and criticise perceived biased Western coverage of Tibet.

> The whole campaign began with an individual effort initiated by an aged-20 Canadian Chinese young man who first created the video 'Tibet was, is and always will be a part of China' (YouTube, 18/3/2008, internet resource) to 'tell the world a real Tibet', which after two weeks received over 2 million clicks and tens of thousands of comments, was reported on CCTV, forwarded by bloggers and major Chinese portal sites, followed by a spontaneous establishment of particular forums/websites such as www.anti-cnn.com and a series of further analysis by Chinese scholars on Western media agenda (Coventry Journalism Review 2008, media report).

Overseas Chinese, mainly students, also organised and called for demonstrations for anti-Tibet independence and anti-Western media distortion as they also managed to support and protect the Olympic torch relay against the pro-Tibet protesters and other anti-Chinese government forces in major cities of Canada, Australia, the USA, the UK, France and Germany through online websites, forums, instant messaging and emailing mobilisation, which were widely reported by the Chinese domestic media while mostly ignored by its Western counterparts (BBC News, 10/4/2008, media report).

When Chinese authorities first removed the ban on the BBC after the Tibet riot and opened domestic access to other foreign media, massive negative online comments were spreading in China against the BBC and others, unexpectedly antagonistic to the habitual thinking and one-sidedness of coverage by Westerners (BBC News, 25/3/2008, media report). This indicated that there was a wide gap between the formation of information about Tibet in China (shaped by the assumption that Tibetans were backward, feudal, superstitious, and badly in need of Chinese style modernisation) and Tibet in the West (shaped by notions of Shangri-La, religious freedom and the authoritarian Chinese government's poor human rights record) (Bajoria, 2008, internet resource). When Western journalism met Chinese populace, especially in the coverage of Tibetan insurgence and the Olympic torch relay, there came the peak of the credibility crisis, undermining confidence among Chinese in Western reporting, who once firmly believed in its reliability, impartiality and objectivity. The government quickly learnt a lot from this and its practice was turning in a direction to let people judge for themselves. The

authorities also realised that China needed strategic, external and genuine communication with the outside world.

Creative strategies by netizens emerged for nationalist expression and protests inside and outside China.

> The 'I (Heart) China' movement spread like wildfire over MSN to millions of Chinese netizens in two days. 'Don't be too CNN' – a ditty of musical retort to the Western media outlets such as CNN and the BBC also caught the imagination of the Chinese blogs and chat-rooms and were disseminated throughout the online communities. (Synthesis of internet resources)

The offline activities also quickly converged with the online information flow. For example, Olympic protests in Paris during the torch relay had drawn particular indignation in China and led to calls for a boycott of French goods resulting in a large-scale Carrefour boycott in Beijing, Wuhan and other major cities (People's Daily, 15/4/2008, media report). With nationalist sentiments heating up, printed T-shirts with creative nationalist slogans, which in Chinese are called *wenhua shan* (cultural shirts), suddenly became very popular in the free markets of Beijing in the few months before the Olympics. There were even anti-CNN T-shirts and a line of products released immediately after the CNN host's insulting words shocked and infuriated Chinese at home and abroad, proving that in certain situations in China, politics quickly becomes fashion (Goldkorn, 2008, media report).

Human flesh search engines were also politicised and widely applied during the waves of nationalist explosions. Grace Wang, a Chinese student at Duke University in the USA, was one of the most prominent targets.

> On the day of the Olympic torch relay in San Francisco, Wang encountered a handful of students gathered for a pro-Tibet vigil facing off with a much larger pro-China counter-demonstration (Dewan, 2008, media report). She had written 'Free Tibet' on a protestor's back and later defended her action in the Washington Post, saying that 'I did this at his request, and only after making him promise that he would talk to the Chinese group.'(Eberlein, 2008, media report) Being spotted by other overseas Chinese as

betraying her country and siding with Tibetan independence, instantly, some angry Chinese students launched a human flesh search engine witch hunt on the Chinese language online portal *Tianya*, found personal information about Wang and her family and began the torrents of horrid abuse (BBC News, 17/4/2008, media report). Grace Wang says her parents had to go into hiding in China, with no help from the police (Eberlein, 2008, media report).

The internet has given nationalists more power to vent their anger and these recent incidents have particularly shown the huge influence of the Chinese Diaspora and students in southeast Asia, Europe, and North America and their close contact with mainland residents through an easy flow of information and nationalistic rhetoric facilitated by the internet. On the other hand, the Chinese government can also employ the internet to activate or make use of what is begun by the citizens through the medium of the internet to advance national interests in the international arena (Chow, 2007, academic literature). It is revealed that the dualistic framework of China versus the West still hid the problematic assumptions of Chinese uniqueness, so that nationalism may be obsessed with Chinese uniqueness and concomitant defensiveness against criticisms against China. Therefore, nationalist contentions are always under reflection and criticism within the intellectual circle.

7.5 Wenchuan Earthquake

The May 12th Wenchuan earthquake in 2008 filled the internet with numerous critical themes for hundreds of millions of netizens to debate and to facilitate actions. Since this devastating earthquake happened under the condition of a society with highly-developed knowledge, the internet, living broadcast, mobile communications and other technologies greatly facilitated and affected the way people received and spread information. In a very short time the destruction caused by the earthquake was well-known and became the focus of the world, covering the hot topics of death toll, emergency measures, rescuing capability, international aid, management of donations, collapse of schools, economic loss, reconstruction and reflection after the disaster. The maturity and power of netizens could be seen in their aid participation, charity contribution, appeals, critiques and revelations of the truth.

Firstly, the scale of the earthquake brought about heated discussions. On May 12th the Sichuan Earthquake Bureau held a press conference through Sichuan Satellite TV and announced it was an 8-degree earthquake, though it was soon reported by CCTV as 7.8 degrees. It was believed that Chinese authorities made such an adjustment out of concern for 'face' because the international convention for international aid to obligatorily enter the region meant the degree of earthquake had to be 8 or above. Doubted by many netizens and with the international aid already entering to help, the national official media corrected the degree to 8 again on the 18th of May (*Tianya* BBS, internet resource). Others also defended the government that these were technological adjustments and the official information channel was much more transparent than that in the period of SARS (*Tianya* BBS, internet resource). It was also discussed that the government at the beginning was truly reluctant to admit international professional rescue teams, but after 72 hours and with massive pressures from netizens, the government finally opened the door (*Tianya* BBS, internet resource). Grievances flooded over the online forums towards the authorities for the latecomers; when the Russian rescue team saved a trapped survivor after 127 hours on 17th of May, all the netizens were so moved and expressed their treasuring and caring for every single life along with their appeals for international aid (*Tianya* BBS, internet resource).

Secondly, on the 18th of May the State Council decided that the whole country would mourn for tens of thousands of earthquake victims for 3 days from the 19th to the 21st of May. During the mourning period, all national flags at home and at Chinese missions abroad would fly at half-staff, and public recreational activities would be cancelled. Netizens including professors and experts actively expressed approval in the forums and blogs for such governmental behaviour. This was an extremely rare experience in China, regarded as the precious and meaningful first time that the CPC had established a national mourning on behalf of ordinary people. Internally the Government had shown more concern about people's livelihoods, embodied in the concept that 'your pain is my pain' (the government is also suffering the pain of the people) (Global Times, 2008, media report). Externally, it was also in line with international practice, which showed that China had learned from international experience, and was looking to be more easily acceptable to the world. The three-day pause of the torch relay was also confirmed so that the Olympic Games could give way to the tragic loss of life (Global Times, 2008, media report). When this regime, often regarded as ignoring and violating human rights by the West, paid great respect and poured love into every life under

the ruined town, China's national image was beginning to be transformed towards an enlightened and humanistic one.

Thirdly, netizens were on the front to trace the responsibilities of the State Earthquake Bureau officials, to demand all the donations be properly and transparently applied to the disaster areas and victims, and question why there were as many as 7000 school buildings collapsing, killing more than 11,000 children and teachers (BBC News, 1/6/2008, media report), while the government offices and commercial buildings were kept intact. The media also took the initiative to report and record in an open, transparent and courageous way what was happening and echoed the suspicions and appeals of netizens (Web-blog of Rights-defending Alliance for Chinese Citizens, internet resource). When the supervision of the collaborative media was strengthened, problems were exposed and explored more easily and promptly.

Fourthly, netizens had automatically and spontaneously organised a range of activities to search for the lost, disseminate touching stories, give blood, raise funds, transport materials and provide medical support, as well as organising a psychological consultant service. The eroded social ethos, value vacuum, worship of money and materialism had been transformed to empathy, mercy, selflessness, caring, mutual trust and help through a volunteer ethos. Moreover, when the contemporary nationalist youth experienced the catastrophe of earthquake, and recalled the keenly felt pain, they also learnt to understand the catastrophes of other countries. The grave experience melted away the public rage, cruelty, and violence relating to the Tibet turmoil and disturbance of the Olympic torch relay, and made the nationalist youth more tolerant to different voices in the international community. As for the cohesion and maturation of Chinese nationality, it found the pivot of revitalisation for rationality, tolerance, democracy and civilisation.

Fifthly, apart from spontaneous individual and collective contributions, hundreds of NGOs were also active in varied types of help and support during the Wenchuan Earthquake. Aided by the proliferation of online bulletin boards, blogs and on-the-ground coordination centres, unregistered grass-roots organisations, considered weak due to their lack of a supportive environment, were functioning as legitimate earthquake-relief NGOs and helped manage the crisis (Fan, 2008, media report). Some had teams of volunteers in the quake zone almost as fast as the military troops, and they showed effective organising and enforcing abilities in the

rescue work, proving themselves as healthy and positive forces in society. Experts and professors also participated in the discussion about the previous sensitive relationship between state and grass-roots NGOs, and they found though many self-organised social networks were not formal organisations, their resources and roles in society were much larger than the government officially allowed in the past. Commentators noted that with this disaster, the government came to realise the power of grassroots organisations, which could be helpful in establishing and managing a law-based civil society; they also expected that a system would be built for NGOs so they could take part in an orderly way (Fan, 2008, media report).

The earthquake also reminded people of the snowstorms in southern provinces in early 2008, the Jiaoji railway train crash in late April 2008, and the disastrous Tibet insurgency and Olympic torch relay protests. China was surely revitalised through great sufferings and struggles, especially during the Wenchuan earthquake; the disasters had recharged the collective values and nationalist sentiments among Chinese people. It also helped people to regain social consciousness and release the tension of the individual-society-state relationship. However, a complete transformation still has a long way to go. To avoid going backwards, this process of transformation should be institutionalised: the already opened media reporting and internet forums should not be blocked again; the already tolerated NGOs should not be forced underground again; the citizens who defend their, or others', rights should not be arrested or punished under the crimes of subverting state power. All the setbacks should be bigger challenges than the earthquake itself.

7.6 Reflections

Clearly the internet has speedily entered people's daily life not only as a medium for information exchange, a platform for interpersonal communication, a tool for updated entertainment and an absorber and emitter of novelties, but also as a platform for new forms of civic activism, with which people can fulfil what they may not be able to fully enjoy in reality — the freedom of speech, public participation, the pursuit of justice and the direct influence on governance and policy. I therefore call it an online public sphere, as part of China's civil society mobilisation. Although the internet has not dramatically disrupted the basic constellation of power relations among state, society and individuals, it has fundamentally reinvented grassroots social and political activism by breathing new life into

networks in cyberspace and by decentralising the power into the hands of the individuals and marginal social groups in different ways (Tai, 2006: 259). As shown in the above cases and many more, the internet can facilitate the formation of public opinion, the orchestration of popular political movements and the production of a trans-boundary public sphere.

The virtual identity of netizens and the real identities of intellectuals have been combined by means of disseminating information and organising online petitions and offline protests, and in turn extracting varying degrees of responsiveness and accountability from the authorities and affecting government decision making on important social, political, economic and diplomatic issues (Tai, 2006: xxi). Netizens have engaged in all forms of online social activities, such as exchanging viewpoints, reporting and discussing recent news and information and engaging in social interactions for either intellectual goals or pleasure – mostly in regards to their social affiliation or the subject of their social group.

The phenomenon of 'experts turning to the internet' has also become more and more commonplace for the group of intellectuals. Intellectuals have begun to rethink their own academic and professional endeavours and reassess the aims and obligations of their critical engagement for social-political changes under new circumstances. Celebrities from elite intellectuals and popular intellectuals have both their space and influence on the internet and the internet has blurred such variation. They have been writing blogs online, giving internet lectures, getting involved in popular focuses and providing expert explanations and suggestions, all of which has had an impact on public opinions and policy makers while bringing themselves more publicity, prestige and influence beyond university campuses. They were made opinion and press leaders in the enlarging online public sphere and enjoyed the title of 'public intellectuals' or even 'opinion leaders'. Since local institutions and governance have been closely monitored online, the internet has in fact created more connections, communication and cooperation between the local political elite and intellectuals. It has also reflected the greater role intellectuals play in policy formation in contemporary China and suggested the increasing need to respond to, refute and encourage views growing up independently among the intelligentsia and broader public (Fewsmith, 2001: 186).

As discussed before, a typical and popular behaviour in most cases was the utilisation of the human flesh search engine, a vivid description of the frequent phenomenon that online crowds

gathered via China's bulletin board systems, chat rooms, and instant messaging to collaborate on a common task of an intensive and effective human-assisted search that sometimes bordered on a lynch-mob mentality (Shirky, 2008, media report). There has been growing intellectual reflection on such assumption of moral superiority and involvement of harassment. The attacks on the individuals' immorality cannot be based on a form of collective violence. It falls into the vicious circle of 'an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth'. In this way public opinion may change from the angle concerning the immorality to the focus on the netizens' collective violent behaviour. The new terms such as 'internet punk' or 'internet mob' have been invented to harshly criticize how human flesh search engines have degraded their original moral advantages to a new type of immorality.

> Therefore some rational and reflective netizens opposed the use of such moral contentions as an outlet for indignation, and wished to regard them as opportunities to rebuild the Chinese national value system and save China from moral crisis. They called upon more complete internet laws, the termination of cyber violence and collective expressions of netizens' rationality for social conscience. They also tried to prove that netizens can also establish the milestone of democratic spirits, social justice, and the rule of law as an independent force. (Synthesis of internet resources)

Nationalist contentions have also been under reflection and criticism within the intellectual circle. The anti-America or anti-Japan demonstrations and parades earlier had made Chinese students and white-collar workers the most radical and active vanguards in nationalist movements; the following protests, boycotts and all types of online activism showed their heated patriotic enthusiasm for the nation.

> Experts say from the Tibet turmoil to Olympic torch relay disruption the public outrage and rising nationalism appears to be more genuine, instigated by perceived unfair treatment by the West rather than stoked by the Communist Party. This change could pose challenges not only to the West that is coming to terms with a rising China, but also for the Chinese government that tries to maintain peace and stability within its borders (Bajoria, 2008, internet resource).

Inside and outside China there have also been intellectuals trying to adopt a broad sense of nationalism, not negatively exclusive, revengeful or arrogant, but a positive, inclusive and comprehensive nationalism, a self-renewing nationalism to learn from other countries and

cultures during the era of globalisation, re-discover and preserve its own national merits and reconstruct Chinese national identity. The online public sphere is undoubtedly a new platform for such a communication and learning process.

The internet has also gradually transformed the function of the traditional media from official propaganda tools to provision of authentic popular media resources. When an issue became the focus of netizens' attention, traditional media would probe the issue and provide in-depth reports. Likewise, reports by a traditional media agency about an individual event might cause intense debate in online forums and rapidly elevate it to the public agenda (Wang, 2008: 56). Many reporters from the print media in China, including the leading official People's Daily, often searched for new clues to stories or new perspectives on a story by browsing online posts and feedbacks. They were prone to explore news and seek publications with the audience input and participation (Tai, 2006: 265). Once a piece of influential news burst out, the reports and following stories would come from multi-channels, but especially cyberspace.

> For example, the disaster of the railway accident in April 2008 has converged officials, workers, victims, experts, eyewitnesses, popular heroes and even evictees behind the accident. Those stories became more than media reports but revealed the deep explorations and evaluations of the institution involved. (Synthesis of internet resources)

More and more high-profile events occurred with the course changed by opinions and actions from massive numbers of Chinese netizens, and this rise of public opinion mobilisation has generated a new catching phrase of 'network opinions' among both online and offline media (Tai, 2006: 293). Therefore, the phenomenal growth of the internet has also greatly facilitated the internationalisation of Chinese discourse and democratisation of Chinese public opinion. Now public opinion tends to be more fragmented and pluralised, with the periphery elements exploiting this new opportunity provided by the internet far more actively than the mainstream.

The online public sphere and internet resources of communication have inadvertently framed the discourse for participation and movements. As Chinese language has such power and charisma of wit, acuity, satire, metaphor and implication, it has been rhetorically and delicately applied into the online public sphere with a growing consciousness making changes to unsatisfactory realities. The versatile forms of the Chinese internet language, including sets

of numbers, symbols, letters and abbreviations, all represented the netizens' intelligence and creativity (Shenzhen Daily, 2006). Internet contentions have also shown an increasing prevalence of discourses of anti-society, anti-authority, deviation, cynicism and scepticism. But they are more than mere contention of discourse, but contain the whole process of attribution of social threats and opportunities, social appropriation and mobilisation, strategic framing and social construction. The state-society-individual relations have also been enriched and deepened with these new dimensions of knowledge society, where the trends of globalisation as well as the opening of borders have replaced the verticality of hierarchies with the horizontality of communication (Castells, 1996).

As for censorship, there were still ideological taboos that continued to restrict public discussions, with topics banned including the Tiananmen Square events of June 1989, the Falun Gong movement and any explicit criticism of China's leaders (Wacker, 2003: 68-70). It is well known that the Chinese government indirectly controlled Chinese cyberspace by developing an attitude of voluntary self-control and self-censorship among netizens and service providers. Because of commercial interests, firms, whether Chinese or foreign, complied with government requirements (Mengin, 2004: 51-70) and there was a whole range of sensitive words banned in BBS and online search engines. As for the big corruption cases, smuggling abroad, local problems, and certain international topics, decisions of censorship were still made on a case-by-case basis (Tao, 2001). However, due to the vast size of China, the spread and influence of information often goes beyond the controlling capacity of state hands, no matter how much the surveillance technology has been made up-to-date. Netizens always can and do find ways to outsmart government blockades and restrictions through methods such as using proxy-servers overseas to access banned addresses (Wacker, 2003: 71). They also use nicknames or initials or spaces between letters as substitutes for sensitive language. The freedom of expression has expanded considerably and the limits of tolerance are constantly being tested and re-negotiated.

Chapter 8 Religious groups

8.1 Introduction

Communist China officially regards science and materialism, not idealism, as the sole accurate way to explain the world, so atheism has become the instrument of ideology. From the 1950s to the 1970s there was strict prohibition and forceful repression on all traditional beliefs, religious organisations and activities, which reached a peak of religious destruction and persecution in the Cultural Revolution. However, the man-made spiritual vacuum during these three decades and people's subsequent disillusion with Communism generated a rapid and fierce rebound in religious movement and strength after the reform and opening up of China from the 1980s. As the CPC failed to provide answers for those seeking meaning in life, as in the Mao era, more and more people have turned to religious or quasi-religious organisations to find spiritual and ideological sustenance. Religious expression has become an increasingly notable phenomenon and gained more attention from the state, academia and the populace.

In China there are five official and institutional religions: Islam, Daoism, Buddhism, Protestantism and Catholicism. According to the State Administration for Religious Affairs, the official statistics of religious believers remain high, and the figure has reached 'over 100 million' in recent years. However, research conducted by East China Normal University in 2005 revealed that 31.4% of Chinese aged 16 and above, or about 300 million people, were religious, of whom 67.4% were believers of the five aforementioned major religions. Other forms of religion included ancient folk religions, ancestor worship, popular charismatic cults and traditional practices such as fortune-telling, the study of the Book of Changes (*Yi Ching*) and Geomancy (*Fengshui*); it has also become difficult to draw clear lines among religion, superstition (*mixin*) and tradition. Apparently religious and spiritual life has become extremely diverse in contemporary China. As commented by a professor in the interviews[94], China is flourishing, not only materially, but spiritually as well. The opportunity attribution as a whole for religious contentions has greatly changed, with the distinctive character and tendency toward multi-culturalism. The sharp contrast between the official statistics and the survey results indicates firstly, a large number of unregistered adherents of major religions,

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[94] Interviewee number 51.

secondly, a wide range of revitalised traditional and folk religions and third, a popularity of all forms of quasi-religious and superstitious activities. Those official religious traditions are thoroughly enmeshed with the unofficial, popular religions, some of which lie far outside the radar of official government acknowledgement (Blum and Jensen, 2002: 309). Thus the existence and growth of religious affiliations outside the official statistics, which is transforming the social, political and cultural landscape of many parts of the countryside as well as in cities, has become the source of contentious forces and the problem of social-political-religious instability in the eyes of the authorities.

The Chinese constitution explicitly affirms the freedom of religion, especially within the context of established and, most importantly, officially acknowledged religions. An important prerequisite of China's policy of religious freedom is that faith is a personal thing and must not interfere with other people or any organisation (Kerr and Swinton, 2008: 127). However, as a socially and morally reforming force, religion is no longer merely personal, inward, isolated or closed: religious groups are spreading quickly in China by ways of modern media and the internet and involving people from all kinds of groups, professions, status and hierarchies. Such features have added both difficulties and enlightenments to the research on religious contentions, as it is intricate and sometimes impossible to separate the elements of their religious movements from contentious activities, to discern religious factors from the social-political context and boundary, or to single out the religious individuals from their backgrounds and connections with other groups. Indeed, the identity of religious groups is an elaborate practice of judgment for the researchers to define as they have overlapped identities in the interviews and in broader social realities.

The interviews in the 120 samples (10 of whom were from abroad) have shown an even higher rate – 50% of respondents were affiliated with religions to different degrees, while there were 20 people with clear self-consciousness for religious movements and contentions who were categorised into the religious group. Among the three sub-categories (labourers, intellectuals and religious group), notably Christianity has attracted most adherents, accounting for 25% (30) of the whole sample and 55% (11) of the religious group including five ministers. As for Buddhism, most of the 24 (20% out of 120) people, who were just temple visitors, believers of fortune tellers or worshippers of Bodhisattva, claimed themselves to be affiliated with Buddhism; so only four monks/nuns, including two Tibetan Buddhists,

were classified into the religious group. As for Falun Gong, five members of this domestically banned quasi-religious organisation were identified from outside China. No adherents of Daoism or Islam were identified for interview. The border between religious and non-religious spheres has become obscure, as the groups of labourers and intellectuals have increasing religious attachments. Religious groups shared the conceptualisation of transforming opportunities and threat structures in social-political change, especially the money-worshipping, moral decay and corruption as well as loosening central control and the maturing civil society. The organisational mobilisation of religious groups varies from one religion to another and creates different gaps between formal and informal organisational spheres, which depend on the limitation of official boundaries and religious groups' bargaining power. In their unavoidable encounter and interaction with authority, they also developed diverse and combined strategies to mobilise and integrate all kinds of resources and forces of both mainland and overseas Chinese communities, using both traditional and modern techniques. Notably religion has played an important role in Chinese society, evident in the Chinese domestic religious movements of Christian house churches and the rise and suppression of Falun Gong. The appeals for religious rights are also interwoven with other human rights requests.

The prosperity of religion has not only influenced the public and community sphere of the ordinary populace, but it is also interesting that officialdom has begun to develop a delicate and intertwined relationship with both the five orthodox religions and other cults and activities. It is becoming difficult for the government to control people's pursuit of religious and spiritual life through coercive measures. It is common that officials and Communist party members join the unregistered family church or have practised Falun Gong, and more and more officials, especially the corrupt ones, go for fortune-telling, *Fengshui* and other superstitious activities under different covers of Buddhism or Daoism. Some intellectuals are even worried that the religious challenge towards the official ideology will put the root of CPC legitimacy at stake[95]. Some also believe that religious groups usually do not press for political power, and if the authorities adopt tolerant attitudes or methods, there will not be major conflicts between religion and politics[96]. On the contrary, if the government takes tough or forceful measures, such conflict will probably impact on the regime stability[97].

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[95] Interviewee number 51 and 63.
[96] Interviewee number 89, 91 and 101.
[97] Interviewee number 63.

The contentions of religious groups contain first the religious movement itself as a counterbalance to the excessively materialistic drive and the accompanying spiritual vacuum. Secondly, there is also the knotted process of their confronting and bargaining with the government to demand religious freedom or protesting against any forms of repression. This chapter will look into the twin tendency of religious contentions from two large groups who are most likely to take active contentions – the unofficial underground Christians and the outlawed Falun Gong practitioners. Along with the religious blossoming and conflicts, both Christians and Falun Gong practitioners have attempted to resist political orthodoxy, engage religion and spirituality in many aspects of contemporary Chinese life and stake out independent moral positions. The focus of this research will be on the recent intellectual religious movement flourishing abroad oriented respectively by Christianity and Falun Gong. Besides the methods of documentation and interview interpretation, the content analysis on 'China's Confession', 'The Cross' and 'The Nine Commentaries' will also be utilised as case studies to reveal constructive conceptualisations and innovative contentious repertoires of these two groups.

8.2 Overseas and Underground Christians

Christianity has never been considered as a strong tradition in Chinese history and has often been regarded as the vanguard of imperialist invasion. From the official statistics, Catholicism was introduced into China intermittently from the 7th century while Protestantism was first brought to China in the early 19th century, but they did not spread widely until after the Opium War in 1840. Notably and most strikingly, Christianity, given its foreign origins and relatively short history in China, has experienced an astonishing and quite unpredictable explosion in membership in recent years among both rural and urban areas.

> At present, according to official figures, the number of Christians rose from less than 10 million in the late 1990s to 16 million in 2005 in the officially sanctioned 'patriotic' Christian churches, including Catholic churches in China. China has over 4 million Catholics, over 4,000 clergy and 5,400 churches and meeting points, while there are about 10 million Protestants, over 18,000 clergy and 37,000 churches and meeting points throughout China (source from State Administration for Religious Affairs of

PRC).

However, the East China Normal University survey in 2005 found 12% of all believers, or 40 million people, were Christians. The number of China's Christian believers is a hotly contested issue as Christianity has recently been the most active and fastest-developing of the five religions in China. Different guesses showed there were between 40 and 140 million Christians (Ramzy, 2007), since no one knows how many unofficial, underground Christians exist and it is assumed to be 2 to 8 times the number of official Christians.

The intellectual-political-religious feature of Chinese Christian movements and contention has become more prominent as more intellectuals turn to, or find sympathy for, Christianity. The connection between intellectuals and religiosity and the transcendental role of religion has empowered the movement with new energy and unprecedented strength. During the interviews, intellectuals, especially those with Christian belief or interest, were inclined to explain Chinese social realities and problems from a religious perspective. One in particular raised the question of the 'biggest ever vacuum in the national mentality, spirit and soul'[98]. The social-political problems such as corruption, coercion, structural domination and violence, lack of social and political consensus, profiteering and selfishness were readdressed as moral issues dwelling in 'the lust and ugly side of the culture'[99] and 'the loss of *zhongji guanhuai* (the ultimate concern)'[100]. It was not only the unpleasant consequences of commercialisation but also the deviation/loss of values in general that drove many intellectuals to search for meaning. Some famous intellectuals, such as Liu Xiaofeng, turned to Christianity for an absolute truth that transcends socio-historical and cultural-ethnic boundaries (Fewsmith, 2001: 107-108). As another famous writer Zhang Chengzhi claimed, religious faith is now the last resort for a conscientious writer to keep his moral integrity and his commitment to the transcendental value of literature (Xu, 1999: 46).

This nationalist depression and spiritual despair has led to the painful conversions to Christianity among both overseas and domestic intellectuals, along with the strengthening of links between inside and outside China. On the other hand, the self-assigned mission of these groups to carve out a 'space of faith' independent of the state, and to revitalise and renovate

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[98] Interviewee number 90
[99] Interviewee number 90
[100] Interviewee number 93.

Chinese civilisation based on enlightenment ideals (Fewsmith, 2001: 12) was also combined with religious consciousness and embodied in a nationalistic religious response to China's problems and modernisation.

8.2.1 Shen Zhou (China's Confession)

In the 1989 movement the intellectuals showed democratism, grievance and boldness in challenging corruption and oppression as two of China's root problems. There were other cultural influences inspiring the protesters as the intellectual groups ignited the flames of *Wenhua Re* (cultural fever) of the late 1980s, epitomised by the TV documentary *He Shang* (Yellow River Elegy). As showed in the film, China has a closed, changeless, arid land-bound and 'yellow' civilisation compared to the Yellow River, isolated from the world by the Great Wall and governed by despotic, semi-divine emperors. This contrasted to an idealised image of the West as an open, dynamic, fertile and 'blue' civilisation, enlightened by science and democracy, conquering the seas and trading with the entire world (Buruma, 1999). *He Shang* promoted a cosmopolitan and Westernisation orientation to discard China's nostalgia for past glory, linking domestic reform with opening to the outside would, based on its nationalism directed towards economic development and a critique of traditional socialism (Fewsmith, 2001: 93). This also reflected a deep intellectual introvertive self-criticism and self-reflection of Chinese tradition and history under a global perspective.

As the 1989 protest was repressed by Beijing authorities and the authors of *He Shang* were on the wanted list, most student leaders and intellectual dissidents were forced into exile. *He Shang*, a social phenomena of the 1980s, was thought of as discursively obsolete while any radical and liberal voices related to it were largely silenced or marginalised in public discussion in the post-1989 era. However, new *He Shang* has emerged from the middle of the 1990s as four of the five writers of *He Shang* escaped to the USA; two became evangelical Christians and one seriously considered it. Su Xiaokang, the most famous author, said to the New York Times in California that the Westernisation of China, which was advocated in *He Shang*, was superficial and simply lacked the one most important element – religion. 'If China wants to be as great as the West, we have to go to the root of Western civilisation.' He also stated, 'We intellectuals in exile, all struggling with Christianity'. (Buruma, 1999)

Another producer of *He Shang*, Yuan Zhiming, was converted to Christianity and became a theological scholar as well as a priest in the USA. He became prominently involved in the production of the grand TV documentary *Shen Zhou* (China's Confession, literally the Land of God), exploring deeply the journey of faith that China had taken over 5000 years. It was an embodiment of a new *He Shang* with the injection of a Christian perspective and religious eagerness to fill the intellectual vacuum created by the government's suppression of dissent (Source from the organisation website of 'China Soul for Christ Foundation').

The contrast between the cradle of Chinese culture and Western civilisation in *He Shang* was re-interpreted in *Shen Zhou*. The new version recounted the long-forgotten deep-rooted devout traditions and legends during the first 2400+ years of Chinese 5000 year history and demonstrated how China was going astray in a tragic circulation of exploitation and internal warfare produced by self-centeredness from the time of the 'Spring and Autumn' and 'Warring States' Period (BC770-221) until the arrival of the contemporary Communist regime (Documentary: Shen Zhou, 2000). The hidden message in *He Shang,* that Communist rule was as oppressive and closed as the old imperial system, was further explored in *Shen Zhou* in the way that limited and sinful men were worshipped and exalted as Gods from dynastic emperors to Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaopeng, and how they still failed their people's expectation and became tyrants throughout history. *Shen Zhou* also presented the early contacts and spiritual communications between China and the West, highlighting the fact that numerous foreign missionaries sacrificed their life to bring the Gospels to the Chinese and emphasising that God has never abandoned China (Documentary: Shen Zhou, 2000).

When the film summarised the bitter lessons from the painstaking attempts to reach salvation through human efforts and when it pointed out China's potential crisis of today and the solutions for tomorrow, it looked beyond the simple pursuit of wealth, power, and even democracy, which could not keep China from turmoil and suffering if she did not return to faith in God (Documentary: Shen Zhou, 2000). The film has greatly reflected the alternative path and efforts taken by a group of overseas Chinese intellectuals and received a good hearing and a strong response in both the religious and intellectual circles from outside China, spreading to the Chinese mainland. As a Christian student from Beijing mentioned in the interview, 'we often watched documentaries, videos and sermons in cafes and in private fellowship gatherings. *Shen Zhou* was one of the most striking and inspiring ones; many

students turned to Christianity just because of it, their parents were greatly influenced too.'[101]

Having something in common with the zealotry of former Chinese revolutionaries, Yuan Zhiming believed that China could be free only when all Chinese have received Jesus, and he believed in the wholesale spiritual transformation of China, in which it was Yuan's aim to spread God's word to his people in order to save China. Discussing his patriotic ministry with the New York Times (Buruma, 1999), Yuan said he loved China more than ever after being saved by Jesus. He noticed the unhappiness and emptiness in people's hearts during the reforms and modernisation and he realised that China could not be changed purely economically or politically. As he addressed it in an essay, 'Democracy is not merely an institution, mechanism or simply a concept, but a profound structure of faith. The root of democracy is the spirit of Christ.' (Source from the organisation website of 'China Soul for Christ Foundation'). As stated in *Shen Zhou* as well, the Western democratic principles began with the idea of human equality and value before God and the emphasis that God endowed people with power, and then people endowed the ruler/emperor with power from the Renaissance and Religion Reform. The cultural revitalisation in the West brought forth the fruits of science, democracy and social-economic development, but behind this success was the enormous spiritual impulse of religion, morality and ethics. *Shen Zhou* was a powerful and prevailing medium to outreach and transform the existing world view and historical perspectives of the Chinese intellectuals so that many rational intellectuals began to face religion with their hearts and spirits.

Like Marxism before, Christianity can be a vehicle for Chinese nationalism. Besides Yuan Zhiming, many other famous Chinese dissidents and 1989 student leaders such as Zhang Boli, Xiong Yan, and other enthusiastic promoters of science and democracy have become pastors and ministers after going into exile abroad. As those former dissidents took a religious view of their political missions and wanted to affect a moral transformation of China, they, together with other Chinese immigrants from Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore or Malaysia have led prominently evangelical movements for overseas Chinese such as theological training, biblical teachings, campaigns, conferences, concerts and sermons. There were Chinese churches and fellowships in big cities of the popular countries for international students. These devout overseas Chinese Christians spread such evangelical activism and passion for

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[101] Interviewee number 91.

their motherland and set up various organisations to promote Christian faith and disseminate information, music, publications and other resources. There were also Chinese magazines such as '*Zhong Xin* (Chinese Today)', '*Haiwai Xiaoyuan* (Overseas Campus Magazine)' – the most popular Christian gospel periodicals dedicated to reaching out to overseas mainland Chinese students, scholars and professionals for Christ. So it is not rare or eccentric for more and more people from Mainland China to join in Christian fellowship and get newly baptised in churches around Europe and North America. Immigrants and refugees, students and scholars, having escaped from their own authoritarian doctrines and being alone in a foreign country, are always receptive to the promises of salvation and fraternity in a religious community. As a journalist in the UK commented, church could be the most comfortable and safe place for Chinese people who came in a new contact with the exotic world.[102] The influence was built up on the outbound Chinese from the first contact. This Christianity effect was further fed back to China with the flows going back home. A few interviewees mentioned the presence and impact of those 'back-from-abroad' guest speakers or fellow Christians in their own communities[103].

8.2.2 The Cross

After the great success of *Shen Zhou,* the 'China Soul for Christ Foundation' established by Yuan Zhiming and Xie Wenjie, another Taiwan-born Christian entrepreneur, was transformed from its for-profit company status to a non-profit association based in the USA and engaged again in another 4-episode documentary film *Shizijia zai Zhongguo* [The Cross: Jesus in China] from 2001 to 2003 to record the development of underground churches (usually quoted as clandestine family churches or house churches located in private homes, improvised halls or anywhere away from the beady eyes of authority) during the domestic Christian evangelical movement. This group of keen Christians had made many trips to China, travelled to more than 18 provinces and major cities, and shot over 400 hours' footage of several hundred underground churches and Bible training schools. They had interviewed nearly 100 underground Christian leaders, several hundred ministers and ordinary Christians (Source from the organisation website of 'China Soul for Christ Foundation').

It is known that the official sanctioned religious associations such as Christianity have been

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[102] Interviewee number 86.
[103] Interviewee number 92, 93, 94, and 101.

tightly controlled by the CPC over the past five decades under the principles of self-administration, self-support and self-propagation of the Three-Self Patriotic Churches. Not only are they hardly adequate in numbers to serve increasing believers, but all their activities are also closely monitored by state authorities to comply with the Communist leadership's doctrine, which requires that they be free from charismatic expression of worship, sermon on Christ's Second Coming or any open evangelism (Aikman, 2005: 135-45). For many reasons a great number of faithful Christians refused to register as members of the patriotic churches. Some interviewees mentioned that they didn't have a feeling of close community in big churches; some didn't like the church formations, rules and restrictions for them to practice or evangelise their faith [104]. Fearing that they might have an anti-government bent, the Government was deeply antagonistic to 'house church' Protestantism, which involved informal gatherings of unofficial believers beyond party control, and many house church pastors were persecuted. A Christian pastor in the interview depicted how his fellowship was cautiously moved from one private house to another to avoid police harassment and how he himself was questioned by the university authority and security (his fellowship was on campus and mainly appealing to students and staff members)[105]. So there was a wide gap and dilemma between China's officially sanctioned churches and the illegal house churches that existed outside the limited sphere of religious freedom in China. The production process of *The Cross* in China was also filled with state interference and uncertainty, since they were sometimes under hidden surveillance, and at other times were openly followed and on one occasion their camera was confiscated (Source from the organisation website of 'China Soul for Christ Foundation').

In the four episodes of the documentary *The Cross*, 'Seeds of Blood' followed the bloody footprints of the Chinese missionaries of the older generation after the Boxer Rebellion, particularly in the past fifty years. 'The Bitter Cup' abounded with compelling testimonies by missionaries of the younger generation. Their dedication, suffering, faithfulness, and thanksgiving led to an unprecedented revival of the Chinese Christian church. Some of the elderly Christians interviewed in *The Cross* had been imprisoned for more than 20 years, and many young Christians had been arrested repeatedly. However, persecution of the faithful had contributed to a sense of martyrdom (Madsen, 1989). 'The Spring of Life' recounted the rebirth that the Gospel had brought to a broad spectrum of people in modern China, including

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[104] Interviewee number 91, 92, 101, and 102.
[105] Interviewee number 104.

testimonies from farmers, students, officials, criminals, orphans, actors, writers, scientists and entrepreneurs. 'The Canaan Hymns' told the amazing story of a farm girl Xiao Min, who was a high school dropout with no musical training; nevertheless, she created nearly a thousand hymns by the power of the Holy Spirit. Xiao Min's hymns, also called the Canaan Hymns, were popular in house churches and even in official churches[106]. In these ways the house church movement had shown the spiritual needs and prosperity of all social strata from the illiterate countrywomen to highly professional groups. The movement prevailed in both urban and rural areas. While the residents of China's cities have turned increasingly to matters of faith in addressing the attendant anomie of rapid modernisation (Jones, 2002: 301), travelling house church evangelists have introduced Christianity to numerous villages and towns for a religious revival (Aikman, 2005: 138).

Both *Shen Zhou* and *The Cross* re-interpreted Chinese history, culture, politics and society and wanted to tell both ordinary Chinese and the government officials/leaders that Christianity is related to Chinese culture and people's lives, rather than a mere Western religion (Aikman, 2005: 249). Such moral and faith construction for social-political transformation had a strong link with the broader populace in Mainland China and certainly had a great impact on contentious framing for the underground Christian groups. A number of Christian interviewees have mentioned these two documentaries and have indicated the intellectual input to indigenise Christianity and the house church movement. Being widely disseminated in Mainland China through different ways, these documentaries, as well as other media products such as recordings of sermons, have been frequently used by evangelicals as powerful tools to spread the message and they themselves have formed part of the religious movement repertoire.

8.2.3 Human rights tendency

While the interviewees were delighted with the rapid growth of the number of Christians in China, some were also aware that such growth did not mean a sign of increasing religious freedom[107]. The ongoing restriction and authoritarianism particularly aroused routine criticism in international society against the Chinese government regarding human rights violations and repression of religious freedom. International human rights and Christian organisations such as Amnesty International, Release International and the China Aid Association (a US-based

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[106] Interviewee number 91, 104.
[107] Interviewee number 92.

advocacy group for mainland Christians) have also played active roles in addressing religious persecutions and other human rights violations. But one of the interviewees also realised that the international criticism created little pressure on the Chinese government under China's non-interference principles. [108] Therefore, the struggle for improvement of the religious situation has to depend on the Chinese people.

It is also noticeable that the organisational basis for religious groups demonstrated greater inclusivity and inter-connectivity than other groups. They had a more inclusive membership based on the identical group motivation and function, and a more interactive relationship to overcome deep cleavages among social classes and facilitate their activities. As for Christian intellectuals, they had more opportunities to be bound with labourers, entrepreneurs and other social groups through faith. Furthermore, intellectuals often took the leadership role to appeal for religious freedom during their interaction with the government, combining both the religious evangelical movements and the social-political contentions. There were mainland Christian scholars such as Yu Jie and Ren Bumei devoted to social justice, ethics and spirituality, and regarded as being among the 100 public intellectuals who most influenced China (Web-blog of Inside China Today, internet resource).

Christian intellectuals, especially the Christian lawyers, have greatly supported and defended numerous house churches, advocated human rights, criticised the Party's persecution and appealed to international society. A case in point was Gao Zhisheng, a Christian, and also a Chinese human rights lawyer renowned for his outspokenness, courage and righteousness (Web-blog of Inside China Today, internet resource).

> He was the director, founder and star litigator of the Beijing-based Shengzhi Law Office since 2000, one of a few Chinese law firms being involved with human rights issues, and seeking justice for vulnerable groups such as the poor, the disabled and the persecuted. He dealt with land dispute cases against village officials, sued local authorities over coercion in implementation of China's family planning policies, appealed against the sentence of cyber-dissidents, wrote open letters to Chinese leaders to criticise the persecution of Falun Gong, and provided legal help for Falun Gong practitioners and underground house church members (Synthesis of internet resources).

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[108] Interviewee number 96.

His committed involvement with such cases was strongly bound with the emphasis of his Christian identity on morality and compassion (Finney and Xiao, 2007). There were constant physical threat and police surveillance for both Gao and his family; undeterred and unyielding, he has responded in the non-violent tradition of Gandhi by launching nationwide hunger strikes to intensify the call for justice and human rights in China.

8.2.4 Cultural and humanist tendency

Since Christ resurrected from the Chinese intelligentsia, apart from the conflicts between their faith and the authoritarian realities, Christian intellectuals had to further face a secular world of ordinary non-Christian populace, and in dealing with such relationships they were often held back from wielding more active and healthier influence in the public political field. Another tendency for Chinese Christian intellectuals, rising from abroad as well, was related closely to the questions of cultural transformation and the creation of a religion and volunteer motivated civil society for China.

One of the leading activists is Dr Liang Yancheng, a Christian, who established the Cultural Regeneration Research Society (CRRS) based in Canada in 1994 as a non-profit, non-political, non-denominational academic organisation, and at the same time a quarterly academic journal Cultural China was published in Chinese. The motivation behind it was his Christian perspective and passion, intellectual background, nationalist sentiment and experience abroad. He noticed that many intellectuals, with or without religious affiliation, had a solemn and sublime sense of mission for the revival of Chinese nationality and the flourishing of Chinese culture. They had very high expectations, confidence and endless love for the motherland and should break through the stereotyped thinking of conflict between Chinese and world culture and re-establish the concept of cultural dialogue. Dr Liang has played the role of pioneer in this great tidal current by initiating the work abroad and practising measurable actions in mainland China through three working bases – universities, the government agencies (including CPPCC) and the countryside. This organisation was first mentioned by a dissident outside China[109], who once attended the public evangelical conference chaired by Dr Liang. I then searched and collected information about the organisation and its leader from the internet.

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[109] Interviewee number 88.

First, this organisation tried to achieve an understanding of the latest developments in contemporary Chinese culture, its possible future direction and its harmonisation with Western culture, spiritual disciplines, religious thoughts and contemporary philosophies through academic dialogues, interchanges, publications and subsidisations. Dr. Liang himself had also travelled around universities and Christian evangelical camps around the world as well as in China. Speeches and lectures were held in big cities, with new themes in moral and cultural fields being brought forth with a mission in promoting Christianity and its culture in China through academic research. They were warmly welcomed and met with a positive response, especially amongst young university students. Second, Dr. Liang has been invited by senior officials to address the Chinese government on many occasions and he has always seized the opportunity to offer constructive suggestions on governance, education, moral transitions and promotion of a new Chinese consciousness to be a force for positive world change and renewal. This Canada NGO was funded by the Canadian government for the 1999 research project 'Chinese and Western Anti-Corruption Cultural Research Study', and it especially cooperated with Shanghai Fudan University and the Shanghai Committee of CPPCC on such projects as advocating uncorrupted political culture. Third, besides leading the tide at the university and governmental level, CRRS has been raising funds from abroad in a series of charity activities and supporting the 'Basic Education Program' in some extremely poor rural areas in China. All these actions and movements were not to scold China or complain about its problems and leadership, but to be involved in China, be with Chinese people and offer positive help and support. On the other hand, the cultural dialogue movement, moral education movement and uncorrupted political culture movement were initiated to combat the utilitarianism of culture and the disorder of social-economic-political morality since the reform. These movements also echoed the official education and propaganda of 'rule by virtue', with the hope to bring forth the regeneration and renaissance of Chinese ethics and culture.

As a charitable tendency of the development of Christianity in China, there have been more and more Christian-run homes for old people, Christian-run orphanages and hospitals and Christian private schools throughout the length and breadth of China (Aikman, 2005: 10).

8.3 Falun Gong Practitioners

Falun Gong in China is a native cultivation movement with an organisational, disciplinary, belief and doctrinal system drawn from Buddhism and Taoism. The Buddhist elements are embodied in *Falun*, 'Wheel of the Dharma' ('Law Wheel' in some other translation versions), referring to teaching Buddhist truth and ideas. *Gong* refers to the partly Taoist-inspired practice – its yoga practice of *Qigong*, which is a Chinese healing art with a range of physical/spiritual exercises and meditative components (Ching, 2006: 42-3; McDonald, 2006: 15). Falun Gong, founded in 1992 by Li Hongzhi, a former minor provincial government official, began to sweep China and mushroomed in the 1990s along with the evidently growing popularity found in the sets of *Qigong* practices, a host of other New Age religions or cults of human betterment, and the fascinating merging between the language of science and the languages of mysticism (Blum and Jensen, 2002: 310). Their intention was to explain the world entirely by means of purportedly traditional Chinese beliefs and, even more importantly, to demonstrate how scientific those beliefs are (Blum and Jensen, 2002: 17). Falun Gong cannot therefore simply be defined as a religious movement, and it claims that 'it does not have any religious formality, cult or worship' (Li, 1997: 104). It registered itself with the Civil Administration Bureau under the category of *Qigong*, which was the responsibility of a sub-section of the State General Administration for Sports (All-China Sports Federation). Therefore it was able to escape the government's scrutiny in the beginning because it fell outside the realm of responsibility of the state's traditional apparatus used to scrutinise religious organisations (Leung, 2002). In fact it was impossible for Falun Gong to be registered as a religion, as the government only recognised five religions (Buddhism, Taoism, Islam, Protestantism and Catholicism) with all others considered to be cults. Although Falun Gong did not perceive itself as an organised religion, in reality it is a quasi-religion with an eclectic blending of Buddhism, Taoism, classical folk religion and magic (Li, 1997: 50), and poses a greater challenge to the government and the CPC than any state-recognised religion in China.

8.3.1 Before the national ban

The emergence and flourishing of Falun Gong was in accordance with the social-economic-political structure changes in China. During the Deng Xiaoping–Jiang Zemin era of modernisation, economic reforms further brushed away the state-provided social security

apparatus, leaving no alternative healthcare system for low-income, semi-retired and retired workers. It is noticeable that Falun Gong and other similar associations and groups stepped in to fill the gap (Leung, 2002). On the other hand, during an era when ideological conformity failed, other belief systems emerged to fill the spiritual vacuum, and Falun Gong was one of these (Schechter, 2001: 3-4), claiming moral authority through teaching the cultivation of truth, compassion and tolerance. On the other hand, the Falun Gong movement had taken advantage of the social disorder caused by accelerated and uneven reforms and the CPC's decaying leadership and inability to deal with underground dissent. It had also taken advantage of China's opening up to the modern world and global technology by using mobile phones, e-mail and the internet to communicate and organise meetings.

The organisational capacity of Falun Gong revealed the state's weakening organisational control and the movement's modern characteristics. Many areas of daily life were beyond party control, especially after the reforms and economic liberalisation. Communications and instructions were effectively conveyed both horizontally and vertically: when the membership of a particular Falun Gong group increased to a certain number, a new group was formed under new leadership, forming part of a network. Thus, horizontal expansion was possible even when vertical communication was interrupted and the upper and middle levels were harassed. A movement that expands horizontally was more difficult for the state to suppress because it was harder to target the leadership (Leung, 2002). As repeatedly claimed by Falun Gong practitioners in the interviews[110], it was not a membership organisation, charged no fees and there was nothing about Falun Gong to be considered as rapacious, seditious or dangerous to the regime.

However, its size and components disturbed the authorities in the first place. Falun Gong had claimed 60 million adherents in China, twice the officially estimated number, and gained total worldwide followers of 100 million (including Taiwan, Singapore, the USA, Canada, Europe and Australia) before the 1999 national ban (Pappas, 1999). In Beijing alone it had over 2000 practice stations (Fang, 1999). An interviewee also mentioned that 10 years ago (i.e. 1996) every open space in Beijing was filled with people practising this Taiqi like exercise[111]. It was the largest voluntary and loosely-organised association of the alienated, the dispossessed, the middle class, the entrepreneurs, the upwardly mobile and the Party member (Blum and Jensen,

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[110] Interviewee number 107, 108, 109 and 110.
[111] Interviewee number 108.

2002: 310). Individuals were provided with a sense of belonging and bound to a group in which they found support and identity (Leung, 2002). The strength of Falun Gong lay in the devotion and loyalty of its members, most of whom were not profiting from China's economic modernisation.

> The main body of this organisation is from the bottom of Chinese society. The second cohort constitutes members coming from the margins. This group of people, although not found at the bottom of society, are still absent in the mainstream of society. They are primarily retired and semi-retired cadres, teachers and medical doctors, who have been ignored and marginalised by their working units as the state abandons the traditional structure of all-embracing state-owned enterprises and organisations and adopts commercial and privatised structures. The third cohort is made up of a small group of very influential members. They have high social positions in the Party, civil service, military and professional life. However, for a variety of reasons, they have felt unfulfilled in their professions, and been victims of power struggles. Having been stripped of power they have become very antagonistic to the present socio-political system (Leung, 2002: 775).

Because of its self-discipline and healthy approach – practitioners employed slow exercises and meditation good for health, did not smoke or drink alcohol and had a rigorous moral code – it was encouraged by the authorities at the beginning as it received the support from the powerful elite and even attracted spouses and family members of some of China's top leaders, including Jiang Zemin and Zhu Rongji (Hanson, 1999). The unprecedented embracing of an alien ideology by CPC members and senior state officials itself represented a direct challenge to the CPC, which should firmly hold the grip of ideological control.

As the authorities became cautious about the popularity of Falun Gong, its potential for transforming into a political organisation and its potential for rebellion from 1996 onward, they banned the sale of its publications and hardened policy towards all *Qigong* groups (Chang, 2004: 6-7). Li emigrated to the US in 1998, and TV programs and newspaper articles occasionally singled out Falun Gong for special criticism, which resulted in thousands of Falun Gong devotees surrounding and protesting in front of TV stations and Newspaper editorial offices. An example of the latter took place in April 1999 in Tianjin and escalated to

a 6000 people protest before the municipal government, with one protestor beaten and ten arrested by the police, which became the catalyst for a massive demonstration on April 25 in Beijing (Pappas, 1999).

8.3.2 1999 Breakout and suppression

On April 25, 1999 10,000 to 16,000 Falun Gong devotees coming from across China to Zhongnanhai, the CPC headquarters in the heart of Beijing, peacefully demonstrated and asked for freedom of assembly, the government's legal recognition of their status, the lifting of bans on their publications and release of their fellows in Tianjin (Hanson, 1999). The angry astonishment of the top leadership turned into immediate repression by mobilising the state apparatus for a massive anti-Falun Gong campaign. It began with the blacklisting by Beijing police of the participants of the demonstration and then interrogation of hundreds of them in May (Ownby, 2007: 103); a ban was launched alongside the confiscation of Falun Gong publications and all the audio and video materials (Chang, 2004: 9) from Beijing to the rest of China. On June 10, 1999 a special task force - '6-10' office (named after its foundation date) - was authorised into action by Jiang Zemin with its sole mission to suppress Falun Gong. Local government officials were ordered to arrest Falun Gong members by quota, and they held personal responsibilities if they failed to stop the protests flowing to Beijing (Leung, 2002; Johnson, 2000). As the state officially outlawed it in July 1999 and further in October labelled it through legislation as a '*Xiejiao*' (evil cult) that endangered society and that should be eradicated, the state media also began to unceasingly orchestrate criticism about the characteristics and evidence of such an evil cult. The leader, Li Hongzhi, was described as someone just using his followers to amass wealth and power (Schechter, 2001: 3) and there was also a death toll of thousands of practitioners caused by Falun Gong's teachings, which led to people's demon-possessed madness and forbade the sick from seeing physicians. As arrests and detentions went on, practitioners were identified publicly and forced to study Communist party documents and renounce Falun Gong allegiances, including thousands of party members (Faison, 1999), which contributed to another toll of renouncement.

The reasons why the Chinese government reacted with such alarm and urgency resulted from several aspects. First was Falun Gong's politicisation. Despite Falun Gong's self-avowed apolitical nature, such large-scale silent and disciplined protest had caused the biggest

political earthquake since 1989 on the top authority circle[112] and was conveyed startlingly to the Western audience as well. Boldly, surprisingly and perhaps unwittingly, the less educated and middle-aged Falun Gong devotees appeared to have taken up the torch of freedom and demanded greater human rights compared to those closely scrutinised intellectuals and democrats (Leung, 2002). It is argued that Falun Gong effectively and automatically became politicised since all demonstrations were forbidden unless they had state permission (Chang, 2004: 8). The happenings outside China and beyond the party's controlling hand also added an unexpected twist to the contention, as indicated in the increasing number of converts to Falun Gong in the Chinese Diaspora of major Asian and Western cities with their sympathy and protest, in the US and Canadian politicians' moderate criticisms on the Chinese government's anti-Falun Gong campaign (Ownby, 2007: 104-5). In the public and academic pronouncements there were even suspicions that Falun Gong was a plot designed by foreign anti-China forces and financed by the US (Schechter, 2001: 66-91).

Second was its organisation and resource mobilisation. Undoubtedly the movement's ability to gather over 10,000 members to Zhongnanhai from across the country to take part in an orderly protest needed an organisational network and a disciplined code of conduct. The following active reactions from the Falun Gong also added to the regime's fear for an organised force: in July 1999 some 30,000 Falun Gong devotees led by 70 to 100 leaders staged nonviolent protests in a dozen cities around China against the official decree of suppression (Ching, 2001); in late October many assembled in Beijing again and carried out silent protests at Tiananmen, trying to influence the National People's Congress in session at the time, and some of them even held a secret press conference for seven foreign journalists to appeal for international support (Ching, 2001). Falun Gong had infiltrated all levels of Chinese society, including the military, police force, academia and even the government itself. It was estimated by internal government sources in 2001 that there were four to five thousand Falun Gong sympathisers in the 200,000-strong air force alone (Murphy, 2001). Since the party itself had only 55-60 million members, Falun Gong seemed to compete for popularity with the party (Ching, 2001). So the CPC found Falun Gong more threatening when it could mobilise more human and various resources than any organised religions or other spontaneous organisations in China.

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[112] Jiang Zemin's speech on June 7, 1999 identified Falun Gong as 'the most serious problem'.

Third was its religious characteristics and especially its millenarian nature. Though the leadership of Falun Gong insisted that it merely promoted physical, spiritual and moral cultivation, rather than being a religion, the Party portrayed it as a religious 'evil cult' composed of the worship of the cult leader, spiritual manipulation of members, the spreading of evil teaching, illegal collection of funds and harm to people and society (Ching, 2001). The authorities also fiercely attacked on Li Hongzhi's tone of a catastrophic 'end of the world' to refer to our age as a final one before this end, as well as his own exclusive claim of himself as part of the cosmos and the '*yuan shen*' (primal spirit). [113] This reminded the Party of the danger of secret religious societies and millenarian movements of the past, all with charismatic leaders and the language of religious messianism, and all involved in peasant rebellions such as the White Lotus Society and the Taiping Rebellion[114]. Being a millenarian movement in origin itself and familiar with its potency, the CPC viewed Falun Gong at least as a quasi-religious organisation which could help accelerate any socio-political movement, and decided to nip it in the bud.

Horror stories about Falun Gong practitioners saturated the Chinese media and reached a climax at the happening on January 23, 2001, when 5 people including a child committed self-immolation by fire in Falun Gong style meditation gestures at Tiananmen Square. This dreadful incident shocked the world and stirred animosity against Falun Gong amongst the Chinese public. This was mentioned in the 2006 interviews as the main evidence for interviewees to denounce the sect[115]. When the CPC confidently asserted this to be a crime committed by Falun Gong followers, the latter immediately denied overseas that any member took part in the event because of Falun Gong's opposition to violence and suicide (Ching, 2001). Later on Falun Gong deflected the criticisms by pointing out the suicides were planned and staged by the government in order to discredit Falun Gong with a detailed analysis of the video clip and the whole episode[116]. However, as these practitioners were deprived of any debates or presentations inside of China, their voices were rarely heard and were automatically blocked.

The intensive anti-Falun Gong campaign had rapidly expanded to a nationwide anti-cult and

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[113] Some argued it as misleading since Li believed rather in universal participation in this spirit, showing a certain pantheism (Ching, 2006: 45).
[114] For a more detailed analysis, see Chang, M. (2004: 46-59).
[115] Interviewee numbers 3, 6, 11 and a few others.
[116] See www.clearwisdom.net, 'Staged Tiananmen Self-Immolation', for Falun Gong's version of the immolation.

anti-superstition movement involving the general public. The China Anti-Cult Association was formed to collect a million signatures in support of the ban on Falun Gong. Especially after the 2001 self-immolation, school children were required to attend anti-cult classes; 12 million Chinese youths were mobilised to sign a 'civil convention in the anti-cult struggle'; a large number of adults, from intellectuals to labourers, also attended mass meetings and signed petitions to denounce the cult, and thousands of anti-Falun Gong fighters were rewarded by the government (Inside China Today, 1/2/2001; 18/2/2001; 26/2/2001).

The above-mentioned '6-10' office had organised a ruthless crackdown on Falun Gong since 1999, issuing instructions to deal with the sect: active practitioners were to be sent to prison or labour camps; those who refused to renounce their beliefs were to be isolated and watched over by their families or employers (Chang, 2004: 9). There was also a careful distinction between sect organisers and ordinary followers according to the court admonition; the former should be treated harshly as criminals and the latter should be extricated from the cult, educated and then reintegrated into society (Human Rights Watch, 9/11/1999). However, the loose organisational structures of Falun Gong with numerous stations and training points all over the country had entitled many common practitioners to be low and media-level leaders. They were exposed to prosecution and huge pressure tactics were also used against those individuals who stuck to their faith: physical mistreatments were common during the detention and imprisonment with some practitioners tortured, resulted in awful injury, death or suicide (Turner and McCarthy, 1999).

On October 30, 1999, special legislation against this 'evil cult' was passed at the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress; after a further revision of the criminal code in November 1999, Falun Gong adherents were rendered as liable to prosecution for murder, fraud, endangering national security and other crimes and for longer prison terms and severer penalties (Human Rights Watch, 9/11/1999). Thus, the term 'evil cult' and the anti-cult law legitimised the use of stronger measures to control Falun Gong compared to other religious groups (Leung, 2002) and made those arrests or imprisonments constitutional, despite the fact that the denunciation and labelling was made by political officials on political premises rather than by any religious authority (Ching, 2006: 46-7). In 2001 onwards, more new guidelines and legal directives were issued by China's top court and procuratorate citing special laws to punish Falun Gong followers, such as defamation or libel laws against those who attack

President Jiang Zemin in their propaganda material or spray-paint names of police officers who allegedly tortured sect adherents (Inside China Today, 11/6/2001). Such practices had shown great flexibility and dependence on the 'rule of law' with Chinese characteristics to serve the Party-state interests.

8.3.3 'The Epoch Times', 'Nine Commentaries' and ongoing combat

The tragedy of the 1999 Zhongnanhai incident was not only a fate of destruction to be faced by the phenomenal success of Falun Gong, but also revealed the general fate of mass petition. This was the only way for mass protest and became the object of mass suppression, as had been seen previously in the 1989 student movement a decade ago (Ching, 1990). However, to the government's greatest surprise, the brutal suppression didn't bring Falun Gong to its knees; rather it encountered stubborn unyieldingness and its actions fanned stronger protests even including some anti-Communist sentiments and campaigns. If the Tiananmen self-immolation was not conducted by Falun Gong devotees as an extreme way to defy the governmental ban, there were still waves of uncompromising challengers undertaking bold acts of civil disobedience across China. Tiananmen Square had become a special and hot spot for their public defiance in individuals or groups, unfurling banners such as 'Truth, Compassion, Tolerance' at special anniversaries and national celebration occasions, despite the rigid security checks around the Square (Hitchens, 2000; The Economist, 29/4/2000; San Francisco Chronicle, 11/12/2000; Washington Times, 1/1/2001). There were also prominent collective hunger strikes in several labour camps (Inside China Today, 10/8/2001). However, these open confrontations, though raising the authorities' embarrassment and frustration, were easily subjected to a fiercer repression and cruel punishments by the much stronger state machinery. The domestic contentious activities then gradually turned more underground and utilised more soft strategies than hard measures and built more attachments and resources from outside.

Since there was no debating or bargaining space for the voice of Falun Gong inside China and its leader Li Hongzhi had already moved to the US, the battlefield was from the beginning diverted to the international arena. Falun Gong around the world kept on protesting to the international public, to foreign media, to various foreign governments, to Chinese overseas embassies and consulates, to human rights groups such as Amnesty International and to the United Nations. They actively lobbied with press conferences by victims to recall the hysteria

of being publicly humiliated, forced to confess and exposed to torture as well as female practitioners who accused the police of sexual harassment and abuse (Schechter, 2001: 11-2). The internet and other modern technology also helped the group to react quickly abroad and dynamically to the domestic media's stigmatising portrayals of Falun Gong and the ruthless repression and to effectively disseminate information of 'the truth'. Falun Gong volunteers established several media groups including an international newspaper (the Epoch Times), a TV (New Tang Dynasty TV) and radio channel (Sound of Hope) as well as several websites. The Epoch Times was founded in May 2000 with the headquarters in New York and a wide network of local reporters throughout the world, aiming to provide what they saw as uncensored coverage of events in China with a focus on human rights issues. It was gradually blossoming into a larger operation and was distributed free-of-charge in roughly 30 countries worldwide, and maintained print editions in 10 languages, and 17 on the internet, with a weekly circulation of over a million (Associated Press, 1/2/2007). The Chinese government's brutal tactics were criticised with evidence and witnesses supplied. Persecution stories and the death toll of the victims were published and updated. Falun Gong's contentions, demonstrations and rallies in the West and their various kinds of international appeals were made known and reported in detail. It became noticeable that though at the beginning it was established by *Dafa* disciples for validating the *Fa*, it was not merely a Falun Gong newspaper but rather a means for the Falun Gong to expand its outreach to non-followers especially in the intellectual groups and embed itself into global civil society for influence and legitimacy (Associated Press, 1/2/2007). So at the same time, they gathered the views of Chinese intellectual elites abroad, revealed China's poor human rights record and official corruption, called for the release of prisoners of conscience and demonstrated the grievances of other domestic deprived groups such as underground churches, demolition victims and the unemployed.

Therefore the severity of the Chinese government's repression and persecution of Falun Gong had not only triggered the overseas movement at a synchronous pace, but also connected more tightly the Falun Gong communities at home and abroad. With the help of outside fellows, domestic Falun Gong adherents in some major cities posted handbills on power poles and blanketed mailboxes with fliers to tell the truth about self-immolation and criticise the government (Inside China Today, 2/3/2001); city residents were also bombarded with videodiscs and automatic phone calls about Falun Gong; sporadic actions emerged now and

then, such as hacking attempts into China's local and national television network (Pan, 2002; Washington Post, 20/9/2002; Bodeen, 2002; San Francisco Chronicle, 2002; McDonald, 2006: 16). Moreover, Li Hongzhi in the fall of 2000 re-emerged from previous silence and encouraged his disciples to face suffering and persecution with perseverance in *Dafa* (great Dharma) cultivation in order to achieve consummation – regarded as the highest reward for martyrdom. At the same time he sent further apocalyptic messages to urge his followers to escalate their struggle against the government and fight against evil (Smith, 2001).

While the 2001 Tiananmen self-immolation incident marked an important public victory for Chinese Party-state within China, the turning point in the Falun Gong's counter-attack against the Chinese authorities lay in publications and heavy promotion of the series of editorials entitled 'The Nine Commentaries on the Chinese Communist Party' in November 2004 by the Epoch Times and an invitation to party members to renounce their membership. Based on a discourse analysis of 'The Nine Commentaries', it undisputedly blasted the strongest criticism against the CPC, its history and the Communist movement worldwide. In the series, it illustrated that rather than being chosen by the Chinese people, the CPC emerged, and ganged up, forced Chinese people to accept it, eventually seized power by conquering all in its path in contemporary China and thereby brought endless catastrophe to China. The 55-year history of the CPC was written with struggles, blood and lies. The stories behind this bloody history were not only brutally inhumane but also rarely known. Under the rule of the CPC, 60 to 80 million innocent Chinese people had been killed, leaving their broken families behind. What's more, the CPC had devoted the nation's resources to systematically and violently destroying China's rich traditional culture, its spirit and moral foundation of the entire nation. The commentaries also developed in great length on the collusion of Jiang Zemin with the CPC to persecute Falun Gong, labelling this as a genocide crime. They argued that the CPC was in itself an evil cult that harmed mankind and it matched every single trait of a religion: at the beginning of its establishment, it regarded Marxism as the absolute truth in the world, worshipped and exalted the top leadership and exhorted people to engage in a life-long struggle for the goal of building a Communist heaven on earth. 'The Nine Commentaries' claimed that the sudden invasion by the Communist spectre in China had created an extremely malevolent force against nature, humanity and the whole universe, causing limitless agony and tragedy and pushing civilisation to the brink of destruction; it was also stated that the demise of the CPC was only a matter of time and the evils of the Communist Cult would be

punished by God at Judgment Day. As president Jiang Zemin was believed by the Falun Gong as the one who led the charge against them and should be held responsible for the persecution, the Epoch Times in May 2005 also published a follow-up to 'The Nine Commentaries', entitled the 'The Real Story of Jiang Zemin', which portrayed the former Chinese President in a completely negative lights, calling him a 'lowlife who betrayed his own nation', and a power-hungry political opportunist who sold China to foreign powers and created domestic chaos (Da Ji Yuan, 2005).

The Epoch Times had began a peaceful 'truth' campaign against the regime and stepped up a continuing political campaign of 'Three Renouncements' since it encouraged members of the CPC as well as two major subordinating organisations of the CPC, the Communist Youth League and the Young Pioneers of China, to renounce their memberships. According to its web edition in October 2005, over 5 million members had resigned from the CPC and its affiliations, whilst in July 2008 the number escalated to 40 million on the *Tuitang* (quitting the CPC) website and was celebrated and supported through large-scale public rallies in the US. The cases receiving international attention included Chen Yonglin, a CPC diplomat and Hao Fengjun, a former police officer of the 610 Office of the Tianjin Bureau of State Security, influenced by 'The Nine Commentaries' and defected from the Chinese embassy in Canberra, Australia in 2005 (The Epoch Times). In October 2006, Jia Jia, Secretary General of the Shanxi Provincial Expert Association of Science and Technology, also made Epoch Times headlines due to his supposed renunciation of the CPC (The Epoch Times). It was undeniable that the campaign brought a powerful effect into people's life and perspectives, especially those in China's Mainland when they touched such astonishing stories and interpretations of the CPC. However, the inflammatory and revealing discourse and the historical revisionism of 'The Nine Commentaries' and related materials have triggered great controversy in the academic and journalist arena of debates especially on its objectivity, credibility and independence from Falun Gong propaganda. What's more, the Epoch Times obtained the number by tallying renunciation statements submitted to them via internet, fax, email, or telephone; this methodology was regarded as not scientific or valid and widely disputed.

As the combat between Falun Gong and the Chinese government began, the government acknowledged that some diehards remained and that the struggle to destroy the sect would be 'long-term, complex and serious' (The Economist, 29/4/2000). As the repression and

resistance went on and fluctuated, Falun Gong's organisation has seen more secrecy as devotees were driven underground and abroad by the official terror and public hostility within China. Its religiosity element has developed towards a more apocalyptic and mystic direction. The moral tenets of tolerance and endurance have been transformed towards rightful measures to eradicate the utterly inhuman Communist evil (Meyer *et al*, 2001). Its politicisation has also been intensified from its earlier status as a non-political movement. It can be argued that the Falun Gong phenomenon has generally reflected the social and cultural changes in contemporary China and taken on the critical characteristics of global movement and embraced the key dimensions of an emerging global model of social organisation as well (McDonald, 2006: 141). On the other hand, in the process of seeking justice for its own group existence, Falun Gong has become a political force with its members developing advanced political consciousness under persecution and has also been greatly involved in pressuring China to democratise by overthrowing the Communist ruling (Ching, 2006: 52).

8.4 Reflections

As the Chinese are pursuing modernisation, new belief systems are the natural by-products of modernity, especially if modernity in the economic sense of prosperity does not satisfy people's needs but leads to spiritual or internal emptiness. On the other hand, after the reforms, though the economy saw great liberation, popular demands for political participation were crushed, most notably in 1989. Religion is all that is left when the expression of secular politics is blocked (Buruma, 1999). Therefore the triangle of politics, intellectual development and religion has been established and solidified in the presentation of the intellectual religious contentions and in the changing nature of the relationship between religious beliefs, intellectual and popular consciousness and CPC problems of governance.

As for the multi-directions of the Chinese Christian movement, the intellectuals' role of enlightenment overlaps with their Christian identity when they are striving for democracy, for religious freedom and human rights and for the meaning of life and ultimate concern. The humanistic conscience and charitable culture they promoted was interlocked with religion and often became a substitute for political expression (Chen and Jin, 1997). So the apostle era of the Chinese Christian intellectuals and democratic transformation era of authoritarian China have historically overlapped each other. As illustrated by the above cases and documentaries,

the impact from Christianity has come to transform China from the outside inward. Most of the overseas Chinese intellectuals are very disappointed with the Marxism, materialism and the unlimited personal power without a God, and at the same time they are deeply influenced by the Western values and faiths. The bounds of faith and religion have also surmounted the regional, cultural, psychological, age and language differences amongst Chinese from Taiwan, Hong Kong or the mainland in a greater Chinese Diaspora, which in turn connected and nurtured the domestic Christian movements. The thriving of churches and fellowships among the overseas and domestic Chinese intellectual communities indicate that on one hand the political despair, material erosion and faith crisis have turned into bouts of new religious zeal with an upsurge in the popularity of Christianity. On the other hand, a growing number of intellectuals both inside and outside China have realised that the Christian moral foundation of social and cultural life was what made possible the emergence of capitalism and the successful transition to democratic politics (Aikman, 2005: 5).

The Communist Party has a particular fear of the evangelical zeal that combines faith and political subversion. The religious groups such as Falun Gong claimed that they have no political ambitions; but their movement can impact the political discourse and contribute to the political transition in China, as indicated in the history of their contention with all kinds of innovative strategies. Public responses both inside and outside China towards the Falun Gong movement and governmental suppression are still very diverse. It is obvious that Falun Gong's views and arguments are absent and easily repressed by the powerful state propaganda, policy and police machinery from the beginning of the crackdown. Based on the revision from the literature and my 2006 interviews, some interviewees, significantly influenced by the governmental statement, still deny Falun Gong's right to exist or to practice its beliefs freely. Some people still believe that the US had a hand in trying to use the Falun Gong to destabilise or bring down the Chinese government (Fewsmith, 2001: 234). A few were confused or found misrepresentation and distortion in state news reports after they received the information CDs, leaflets or even junk emails from Falun Gong. Others argued that the government should not infringe with people's inner spiritual freedom, let alone rendering judgements of good or evil, legality or illegality; more respect and tolerance on the government's part is needed (Ching, 2006: 49-53).

Whilst the preceding chapters have given public perception of mobilisation and contention

from different groups, it is necessary to consider state responses, which follow in the next chapter.

Chapter 9 The Party-state Responses

9.1 Introduction

Social contentions, as exemplified and described in the last three chapters, are spreading all over China and engaging all sorts of different groups. The Party-state's conceptualisation of the different processes of contention has determined its attitudes, strategies and responses towards these contentions. Some are regarded as just a vent to channel people's grievances; others are considered as problematic in endangering social-political stability. To avoid falling into a simple classification that attaches each category of groups to a certain governmental strategy, this chapter will review the different contentions of labourers, intellectuals and religious groups, and test a variety and a combination of concrete Party-state strategies. These suggest directions of co-optation, toleration and control, derived from the approach of White *et al* (1996), who developed a theoretical framework on the theme of Chinese civil society. Equally, the local-central context of cohesion, interaction and conflict of interests has also greatly influenced the official reaction to, and consequences for, particular contentions. The following figure 2 has enriched the theoretical framework of White *et al* to demonstrate the direction and level of Party-state reactions. The cases of each contentious group will be tested to prove or challenge this structure.

Figure 2 Level and direction of Party-state responses to contentions

	Co-optation			Toleration		Control	
Central							
	Ideology	Institution	Policy	Passive	Positive	Soft	Hard
Local							

According to Gordon White *et al's* research on the Chinese civil society constellation, the powerful state impetus has ranged from incorporation to toleration and repression in response to different patterns of social organisations. First, various degrees of incorporation have been

employed to construct the old-style mass organisations, such as the All-China Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU) and the All-China Women's Federation (ACWF), as well as the new strata of officially recognised social organisations such as trade associations, professional associations, academic societies and cultural clubs, with an emphasis on social stability, integration, regulation and harmony. Second, more or less intermittent toleration was in accordance with the irreversible proliferation of semi-formal, informal and interstitial organisations with less explicitly political forms and increasing social influences and spaces beyond the Party-state control, such as artist salons, lineage, clan or ethnic groups and *Laoxianghui*. Third, punitive surveillance or active repression has been targeted most evidently at those underground and independent social organisations which are perceived as potentially dangerous. In this category are the All-China Qigong Association and banned and illegal organisations classified as hostile forces as related to the 1989 democratic movement, secret societies and gangs (White *et al*, 1996: 26-37). As for the local-level politics, relationships between the authorities and social organisations especially of the interstitial category vary a great deal, ranging from mutual suspicion and uneasy co-existence to active co-operation and mutual support (White *et al*, 1996: 35).

Organisational mobilisation is the key element of China's social contentions, so the Party-state reaction towards this mobilisation is largely a reflection of its responses to the formation of civil society. We found that 10 years after the research conducted by White *et al*, the social contentions have become more diverse, complicated and fluid, and the Party-state has also become more sophisticated, using combinations of strategies of co-optation, toleration and control, with ongoing reconstructions and adaptations. Local politics is much more complicated than before, demonstrating elements of both centralism and localism, unification and segmentation, harmony and conflicts. As shown in figure 2, co-optation contains the transformation of ideology, institution and policy. The primary change in the state response took place in the ideology area. Ideological amendments are not new to the Communist party in its shift from Marx, Lenin and Mao to a problem-solving strategy of contemporary times. The 'Three Represents' concepts developed by Jiang Zemin is regarded as one of the biggest inventions of the official ideology, which has been written into the Party constitution since 2002, while 'the construction of harmonious society' as well as 'the scientific outlook on development' being proposed by the new leadership of Hu Jintao and Wen Jiabo has been adopted as a new resolution on social change, leading to further amendments to the

constitution five years later. The ideological changes have been applicable to all groups' contentions with slightly different emphases. The sponsorship, regulation and management of state institutions, the policy-making and implementation process are now practised more specifically between groups to actively co-opt and co-operate within emerging social contentions.

The limits of toleration are also expanded in some areas and reshaped in others. This is becoming an arena of more disputes and bargains. Passive toleration includes ignorance and delays in problem-resolving, while positive toleration mainly means pacification and effective problem-resolving with the aim to ameliorate the tensions between state and society and channel growing pressures for access and participation (White *et al*, 1996: 26).

As there are still acute tensions between all levels of state and a number of groups, the Party-state needs to take control in order to rein in the conflicts, exclude any officially unacceptable forms of social contentions and eliminate the political dangers posed by a decline in governability and control (White *et al*, 1996: 26). Soft control in this strategy contains economic means and surveillance and hard control implies all kinds of hard repressive measures such as imprisonment, violent suppression, physical threat, detention, house arrest, forced labour camps and police terror-tactics, some of which are suggested in the interviews. It is also noticeable that official and mass media has played an increasingly important role to deliver and stage all the Party-state strategies while being an arena for social contentions itself.

Table 13 presents a list of Party-state responses based on the three categories to test interviewees' awareness, attitudes and conceptualisation of these responses. As for the 120 interviewees, only 74 (61.7%) of them answered the question on 'what kinds of state responses towards contentions have you been aware of?' There were even fewer replies to the question 'to what extent do you agree with what the government has said or done?' Such a low response rate, caused by hesitation and rejection, also indicates the sensitivity of the topic, the unwillingness of the public to criticise the regime and the invisible and powerful pressure from the state. The top three common state measures known to the interviewees were 'financial sanction' (68), 'pacification' (62) and 'policy change' (60), which indicates that the public has general awareness of all the three official strategies. However, the 'media promotion' and 'financial support' of the social contentions from co-optation strategy sounded

unfamiliar to the interviewees, compared to the fact that more concerns and objections had targeted the strategy of control from 'media criticism', 'surveillance' and 'financial sanction' to 'imprisonment' and 'armed suppression'. While there was a certain degree of identification with the official responses on 'policy change' and 'pacification', there were also quite a few negative and even fierce criticisms, mainly against the ineffectiveness of problem-solving, the local misuse of power, inadequate implementation of central policy, any forms of violence and violation of human rights. The contradictions between the local and central levels of state had also been fairly perceived by the interviewees.

Table 13 Interview results on 'Party-state responses'

Party-state responses	Known	Agree	Disagree
1. Establishment of specific department	34	22	5
2. Policy change	60	41	3
3. Media promotion	6	1	3
4. Financial support	3	0	0
5. Ignorance	46	2	32
6. Pacification	62	46	0
7. Media criticism	59	11	16
8. Surveillance	57	10	27
9. Financial sanction	68	8	35
10. Imprisonment	55	3	52
11. Armed suppression	53	5	41

Therefore, taking into consideration all the complicated and intertwined factors, this chapter will provide a more analytical account of the dynamics of Party-state motivation, ideology, policy and behaviour towards contentious groups and activities across the spectrum, based on both the documentation and the 2006 interview results. The author will then provide evaluation of the state performance and capacity in the light of the state-society-individual relationship by ranking the weight of different strategies and examining the coherence and effectiveness in implementation.

9.2 Labourers: evaluation of Party-state responses

9.2.1 Co-optation

The fulfilment of economic needs is one of the basic human rights recognised by both the authorities and the populace in China. This group is most likely to take acts of contentions in accordance with their economic status, since some have been in the worst economic situation or have faced various difficulties in making a living and meeting the basic needs of education, medication and housing. As for the mental and psychological aspects, 83.7% of the labour interviewees were in their youth and middle age, an age that should be coupled with fullness of dreams and strength and resolutions, but all of them had varied grievances, helplessness and appeals. The rest comprised senior citizens who contributed much to the Communist revolution and transformation of Chinese society during their younger days and often felt that they were not profiting from the country's economic progress. The Party-state, claiming to represent the vanguard of workers, now struggled with theoretical orthodoxy and practical fears of labourers' unrest. The co-optation strategies have therefore been put into full practice. Starting with ideological change we see that one of Jiang Zemin's 'Three Represents' was to represent the fundamental interests of the overwhelming majority of the Chinese people. 'The scientific outlook on development' from Hu and Wen further put people first as its core, comprehensive, balanced and sustainable development as its basic requirement, and overall consideration as its fundamental approach. So the labourers, who accounted for the majority of Chinese people, were given more special attention ideologically through the official statements and mainstream media.

As for the institutional co-optation, the government consistently worked to co-opt this group by improving its own organisation, i.e. trade unions, to allow for legitimate interest expression and political participation. For example, the migrant workers and the re-employed laid-off workers were disadvantaged within labour-capital relations and found it difficult to fight against problems such as unpaid wages, unfair contracts and poor working conditions on an individual rights-defending basis. Therefore the government tried to adopt more of them into the local level of trade unions and deal with the labour-capital conflicts through the mediation of the state-controlled trade unions. There were 21 million migrant workers joining in the official trade union, accounting for 13.8% of the nationwide membership by the end of 2006 (China Discipline Inspection News, 26/1/2007). This enlarged recruitment and official

mobilisation granted a greater extent of representation, autonomy and bargaining power to the official-sanctioned trade unions and other labourer organisations. Another important function of the official organisation was training, which was intended to empower this vulnerable group with self-respect, self-confidence, self-support and self-protection through training and consultancy on general and specific knowledge, technology, laws, policies and regulations. On the other hand, a series of the legal, consulting, psychological and educational programmes and services, though in their infancy, had been provided by the civil organisation sponsored by the government to make labourers aware of legal ways to express and deal with their distress rather than resorting to methods such as protest or suicide.

Policy co-optation had been most widespread with evident and proactive effects, as the government set up policies favourable to labourers and strengthened related legislation for protection and prosecution. There were stronger official responses towards inequity, inequality and poverty, with more emphasis on 'harmonious society' and 'human-centred' policy orientation and more attention paid to social protection of vulnerable groups. The new Labour Contract Law came into effect in January 2008 with the purpose of promoting people's welfare and protecting workers' rights, which tried to establish a new relationship between enterprises, workers and the state. Chinese trade unions were also transformed and empowered by the new legislation to be able to act more like their Western counterparts, weighing in on discipline, safety, remuneration and working hours. They had also been granted the right to litigate (The Economist, 27/7/2007). It was reported that some industry remuneration negotiations had been initiated by trade union or women's federation. As labourers' problems with social welfare and social insurance became more acute and severe, the authorities had also taken more responsibility in their social security provisions for pension, medicare and injury insurance, though the OECD (2005: 35) advised that the whole social insurance system needed to be revised with a view to actual mobility patterns in the labour market. Up to the end of 2007, 201.07 million people joined the urban residents' pension system, including 151.56 million workers and 49.51 retirees, a rise of 13.41 million in total from the year before. 116.45 million joined the unemployment insurance scheme by 2007, 4.58 million more than that of 2006. Meanwhile 220.51 million joined the urban basic medicare insurance by 2007, including 31.31 migrant workers, with an annual rise of 7.64 million (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2008). The 'New Rural Cooperative Medical System' had been put into experiment since 2003, and about 730 million farmers (accounting

for 85.7%) joined the new system by 2007 (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2008). The 'Safety Plan' for migrant workers had also been fruitful: the number of migrant workers joining in injury insurance was rising from 12.51 million at the end of 2005, 25.37 million in 2006 to 39.66 million by the end of 2007 (China Economic Times, 2007; Bai, 2007; Labour News, 2007).

The problem facing the floating population was still institutional: there was a lack of explicit legal provisions to protect their rights. Since the abolition of the custody and repatriation system in 2003 after the Sun Zhigang case, further reforms on household registration systems (*Hukou*) were launched in October 2008. There had been a relaxation of standards and conditions for migrant workers to settle down in small and medium-sized cities in order to turn the farmers with stable residences and employment into urban residents in an orderly manner and gradually realise their equal rights and social welfare as urban citizens. A rural reform policy had also been announced for the first time that would allow farmers to lease or transfer land-use rights, a step that advocates said would raise lagging incomes in the Chinese countryside, reduce illegal land grabs or local corruption and avoid the danger that tens of millions of farmers would flock to cities in search of work, leaving plots of land to be tended by their elderly parents (Yardley, 2008). Besides these proactive strategies to act as a responsible authority and prevent labourers' potential appeals and protests, the Party-state also reinforced a formal and orderly appeal system within the labour department and other state departments, such as the visits and letters of petition offices. The regulation for visits and letters system had been established since 1995 and refurnished in 2005 so that citizens could lodge complaints to governments at all levels and the relevant departments at or above the county level through correspondence, e-mails, faxes, phone calls, visits and so on. It has been regarded as an important administrative and complementary channel to the formal administrative and judiciary route for the settlement of grievances.

9.2.2 Toleration

Passive toleration was obvious in the ignorance and delay in local officials' problem-solving strategies, as defined as 'inaction'[117] and 'nonfeasance against central rules'[118] by the interviewees. However, with the increasing resolution from the central state to harmonise

[117] Interviewee number 37.
[118] Interviewee number 36.

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society and pacify the labour unrest, the local state, especially the coastal provinces and metropolitan cities, had tended to take a more positive stand within the enlarged limits of Party-state toleration. The pacification had further regulated the governmental administration and accelerated the problem-solving process. Therefore, the Party-state responses to labourers' contentions have shown both toleration towards the bottom-up mobilisations and interest in attempting top-down pacification.

For example, regarding the wage disputes, the main forms of actions migrant workers had taken were sit-ins, containment, exposure to the media and appeals to the higher authority to seek unpaid wages. The state had generally tolerated most of these contentions, encouraging the resolution of problems through legal processes. On the other hand, the central state also launched so-called 'pay recovery movements' before spring festival to chase the arrears for migrant workers especially in the construction sector and put forth administrative punishment on those who were responsible (Yang *et al*, 2006; China Discipline Inspection News, 26/1/2007). The official control on the social organisations for migrant workers, laid-off workers and farmers had also been much loosened. *Laoxianghui* for migrant workers with native ties were generally tolerated and some have turned into rights defending organisations. It is also noticeable that the Party-state responses were dynamic and transformable rather than static, depending on the development of the contention trend itself. As mentioned in the sixth chapter, the individually and privately established schools for migrant workers' children were struggling to exist, survive and to be recognised. The state reaction for them had been through 3 stages: first, driving them away and closing them down; second, toleration and passively coping with them; third, positively engaging and regulating them (Song and Li. 2006).

9.2.3 Control

The co-optation strategy to promote official trade unions was still in partnership with strict restriction and occasional repression of the popular or underground organisations for labourers' rights-defending activities. The contentious issues such as illegal confiscation of land, house dismantlement, local corruption, problems of state-own enterprises, pollution, AIDS, working safety and food safety could invite both toleration and control at particular occasions depending on the cases' sentimentality, popularity, influence and the governmental officials involved. There were public lawyers or solicitors who had the commitment and made

it their missions to set up legal aid working groups for migrant workers regarding unpaid wages, injury compensation and contract conflict cases. These individuals and groups periodically faced surveillance and repression, as told by a dissident journalist in the interview[119].

According to the toleration strategy, all levels of states had shown a certain degree of toleration to collective contentious activities, but the central instruction of the boundary still acted as the guideline. When the contentions were regarded as beyond such a boundary, they would be repressed by the local authorities with no chance of winning any sympathy or support from the central authorities, as mentioned by a laid-off worker in Wuhan[120]. For example, the central government generally tolerated the populace's traditional practice of appealing to Beijing, but strictly controlled and prohibited such contentions on the National Day or any sensitive anniversaries, which would have embarrassed the central authorities.

Interviewees were also aware that the party-state perception and evaluation of the contentions according to the authority standards and boundaries were very important in deciding the responses and results. It was also revealed that those making big trouble ran the risk of going beyond the boundary and causing problems, and such troublemakers would be subject to both soft control and hard repression. Many migrant workers' unpaid wage cases, collective in nature, were easily turned into mass incidents such as blockading government buildings or main forms of transportation or committing suicide in public, when badly dealt with. Some pursuing repayment activities were regarded as driven by evil intentions and seen as a public nuisance. However, the rights of interpretation and definition of such incidents were in the hands of authorities, so guises and excuses for repression under criminal titles were becoming common. It is interesting that the use of economic means as part of the soft control was practised by the state in two ways: one was to exert economic sanctions and punishments towards those challengers; the other was to offer money to people with grievances in the hope of defusing protests because most people, the government assumed, ultimately put profit before principle (Wong, 2008).

Generally the application of strategies of restriction, prohibition and repression was done in a relatively covert way to avoid further resistance and unrest. As one interviewee mentioned,

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[119] Interviewee number 86.
[120] Interviewee number 34.

the authorities made use of *Guanxi* too.

> In order to control particular right-defending cases, some local officials often used all kinds of *Guanxi* (social relations and networks) to separate contentious leaders from ordinary participants or disintegrate participants' trust and support from the leaders through bribes or threats. When the leaders' credit was collapsing or under control, the whole collective activities would be easily controlled[121].

Another example of adaptive control was controlling the floating population in metropolitan cities like Beijing, which included the initiative to demolish their compressed shelter places, strengthen housing and renting management and improve the efficiency of the monitoring system. The practice of frequently changing living quarters by migrant workers, which might be an effective way to resist control from the authorities a decade ago, no longer worked well because of the decreasing availability of cheap accommodation, the increasing cost of moving and the tightening management on private-renting, as shown from the interviews[122]. Without enough available and acceptable retreats at both physical and psychological levels, random open conflicts between migrants and authorities were on the rise, as described by several interviewees[123]. Such conflicts invited more control and repression in a vicious circle.

9.2.4 Local/central

The labourers' cases witnessed great inconsistency between central and local government. First, there was a huge unbalance in state responses and policy implementation towards labour problems and unrest among different levels of the state's departments and localities. In the broad rural areas, local interests often led to resistance by the local Party organisations to the upper-level administration of the Party (Liu, 2002: 28). On one hand, local officials might hinder or sabotage the village committee elections; on the other hand, the local CPC power in some areas might even side with the peasants when they organised spontaneously, refusing to sell grain at low prices or to pay heavy taxes to the state. [124] As for the management of the floating population, Beijing had fully computerised the rental housing system by the end of 2007 (Beijing TV News, 7/8/2007) to register and manage migrant workers through computer networks. Beijing had issued over 530,000 identification cards to migrant workers mainly on

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[121] Interviewee number 15.
[122] Interviewee number 1, 4, 7 and 8.
[123] Interviewee number 1, 4 and 8.
[124] Interviewee number 25 and 30.

construction projects since April 2007 to make sure they were paid, utilising a monitoring system for firms to wire salaries to the workers' cards (The Reuters, 2007). Other cities and districts lagged behind in applying such hi-tech tactics. There were also problems with the operation of official trade unions at local levels: such institutionalised channels for workers' complaints were rarely independent from political powers or enterprise management in localities, as more than one interviewee stated[125]. As also summarised from the interviews, the local government had distorted the good intentions of some central policies or instructions.[126] Because of the varied power scopes and interest drives of state institutions at all levels, there existed vertical and horizontal conflicts between different levels and different departments in the whole administrative system (Ying, 2001). This had greatly influenced the implementation of policies and the reinforcement of laws.

Second, as some interviewees commented ironically[127], the Party wanted to further engage and infiltrate private businesses in line with its ideological amendments; one of the practical implications was the popular alliance of local cadres and local entrepreneurs. When labour disputes arose, the local government seldom supported the workers' claims, especially when it was likely to discourage foreign investment (Leung, 2002). As for the SOE reforms, it seemed the workers of SOEs rather than the managers, most of whom were appointed by the government, had born the consequences of the reforms. Privatisation as the remedy for SOEs had immediately brought about a massive sell-off of smaller businesses for the local officials' own benefit, and this continued to infringe workers' rights and welfare and trigger their contentions. What's worse, these breaches of rights were usually connected with corruption, resulting in the universal loss of trust of the populace towards the local state. When the contentions were targeted against the local authorities' violation of the law and labourers' interests, and their collusion with managers, entrepreneurs and developers, the contradictions between central and local authorities became even deeper.

Third, because of the authoritarian characteristics of the state itself, the rule of law could not be normally operated in all localities. The results of many contentious cases were not that the local elites received punishment according to the law, but rather the appealers and protesters were labelled and targeted. As exemplified by interviewees[128], some victims were negatively

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[125] Interviewee number 26 and 27.
[126] Interviewee number 26 and 28.
[127] Interviewee number 11, 16 and 35.
[128] Interviewee number 8 and 37..

labelled by the local government as activists, and even personal enemies to the local authorities, because they had become more active and experienced from the constant struggles in their own contentions, and had also become the natural leaders to help defend others against a similar injustice. *Laoxianghui* and other popular rights-defending organisations were also regarded by some local states as unstable factors for building a harmonious society.[129] Certain individual leaders and organisations were subject to local surveillance and persecution.

Last but not least, the central state was still largely in control, and was the only authority that could take the lead. In the countryside, there was still central control of three indispensable policy areas: food supply, taxation, and population. The central and provincial states had also tried to create a bond of obligation between leaders and villagers by removing incompetent or corrupt village leaders. Moreover, in the name of maintaining social stabilities, the Party-state had adopted a special indicator for competition for every province leadership during the promotion title match – the number and frequency of petitioners to Beijing. According to blogger Xu Zhiyong, a young professor of law and strong advocate for human rights, many supplicants to Beijing were actually intercepted by local officials on the way to the State Bureau for Letters and Calls, the Supreme People's Court or other departments, forcibly taken to some makeshift house of detention and locked up without any legal process. As the places that confined the petitioners were always hidden amongst ordinary buildings, people called them 'Black Jails' (Web-blog of Global Voice, internet resource). The central guidance had unexpectedly justified and increased the local practice of violence towards the petitioners.

9.3 Intellectuals: evaluation of Party-state responses

9.3.1 Co-optation

Stratification within the intellectual group could be defined as largely ideological, i.e. those inside the system, those outside the system and those opposed to the system (Thakur, 2005). The first group was also called establishment intellectuals who served and operated within the governing institution, in contrast to non-establishment intellectuals – public and critical intellectuals (Fewsmith, 2001: 15). Theoretically, the Party-state had different strategies – co-optation, toleration and control, respectively, towards the three sub-groups. Nevertheless, in

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[129] Interviewee number 8.

practice, the combination of official strategies had shown a complicated relationship between the intellectuals and the authority and a versatility of features in the broader arena of intellectual contentions during the internet era.

The crisis of faith in the Party's socialist ideology and a rising political apathy was increasingly prevailing, generated by corruption, abuse of power, income inequality, regional differences and other problems. From the interviews and online public opinions, many intellectuals were expressing scepticism or dissent towards the ideological doctrine. Some cared more about instrumental policies and material benefits, with individualism exaggerated and distorted towards egoism and utilitarianism. Others, especially the youth, were turning a negative and cynical attitude towards the –isms in the Party constitution and towards so-called 'socialism with Chinese characteristics' by disputing controversial issues, criticising realities and pinpointing social injustices. When the party was faced with such a crisis of the Marxist-Leninist legitimacy (Chen, 1995: 17-20; Ding, 1994: 13-21) and ideological deviation towards a market economy after a series of political campaigns, it began to interpret Marxism more flexibly. Co-optation at the ideological level was obviously intended to restate that all the intellectuals were an integral and vigorous social force, and they were still symbolic bearers of a historical burden, cultural identity and moral standard. As the party was claiming to represent the orientation of China's advanced culture as part of its 'Three Represents' theories, it endeavoured to re-establish the claim to legitimacy and morality, too. On the other hand, as a rejection of the Marxist notion of class struggle, the party had made efforts to revive traditional culture as a way of giving China more cohesion, in its state of rapid economic and social flux. The term 'harmonious society' then became a new party mantra, sounding like an allusion to classical notions of social order in which people did not challenge their roles in life and treat each other kindly.

Such official ideological and macro institutional rearrangements presented by successive leaderships had worked well with bureaucratic and intellectual elites, who were optimistic about the future of Chinese democracy and have high expectations for the leadership to press for further reforms. Most establishment intellectuals believe that the attitudes of Chinese leaders in the reform era were positive towards democracy and rule of law (Guo, 2003). They therefore did not think that bottom-up contention was necessary, effective or constructive, as

commented by some interviewees,[130] and such conceptions and attitudes to contentions had in turn influenced the policy-making of the Party-state. In addition, many were afraid of chaos (*luan*) to an extent that some argued that the strategies of co-optation and even censorship were good and important for the moral health of the policies[131].

Another important official co-optation strategy was the promotion of new nationalism, aiming to rebuild China's national identity, restore the nation-state and foster national unity. The 'state-led' nationalism, as it was called by some Chinese scholars (Zhao, 1998), not only equates the 'nation' to 'state' but also emphasised the government-defined 'Chinese characteristics' that encompassed such core norms of the regime as the necessity of one-party rule, the absolute priority of stability/order over individual freedom and the necessity of 'gradual' (if any at all) democratisation in China (Zhao, 2000). The Party-state was greatly concerned that the youth might turn to moral corruption, as an official in the interviews said[132]; rather, it wanted Chinese youth to have strong patriotic and nationalist sentiments and to understand the importance of the interests of the nation as a whole, so it used schools as a means of propaganda to cultivate the minds of young pupils with its specific political dogma. On the other hand, the nationalist movements of young students and the middle class fully enjoyed the constitutional rights and freedoms of organisations and demonstrations. Legal, organisational and material support had been offered by the authorities to the nationwide anti-America and anti-Japan protests in 1999 and 2005 to ensure and co-opt these large-scale movements with justified courses under the official line. During the recent Tibet riots, interruptive Olympic torch relay and the global human rights protests related to the Olympic Games, the authorities further lifted the restrictions on the domestic media, including on the internet, and tried to guide public nationalist sentiments against the Western media and China's critics.

9.3.2 Toleration

It was argued by a few students and scholars in the interviews that greater space for social and political expression, that in the past were regarded as sensitive or even taboo, was now

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[130] Interviewee 45, 46 and 73.
[131] Interviewee 73.
[132] Interviewee 118.

allowed.[133] First, the Party-state could afford toleration since there was deep division of thoughts and schools among intellectuals themselves. So an invisible counter-balance was formed during heated arguments, disputes and dissidences that was publicised in the media or exposed on the internet. For example, liberals and dissidents might well argue that a more democratic government could deal with those severe political, economic and social problems much better than China's authoritarian regime, but this view was not necessarily shared by a majority of China's intellectuals and reformers or even by ordinary people (Ogden, 2002: 38-9). As for cyberspace itself, some viewed it as a relatively free environment where people could experiment with various identities without fear of social, political or legal repercussions[134]. Such a conceptualisation gave rise to discourses that opposed intervention such as the so-called 'Great Firewall of China'[135]. For others, cyberspace was a dangerous environment where people were tempted into immoral or even criminal behaviour, which gave rise to discourses that supported the establishment of 'national borders on the internet' and justified official censorship (Hockx, 2008).

Second, the Party-state had flexibly used the passive toleration and positive pacification towards the emerging and new fangled intellectual discourse and contentions. For example, the consciousness of tax-payers was getting stronger amongst white-collar workers and the middle class as a whole. Since governmental expenditure mostly comes from tax revenues, some think that tax-payers should have the unrestricted right and legitimacy to question and criticise the government, as mentioned by a few white-collar workers in the interviews[136]. The concept of *weiquan* (defending rights) also helped define a growing consciousness of constitutional rights among scholars, lawyers, dissidents, and others. Such topics and concepts, with original sensitive status, were gradually accepted and to a degree legitimised by the authorities. Along with the increasing consciousness and discourse contention, people's demands for the rule of law, most often expressed in online forums, had largely escaped official censure because they often addressed issues within the government's own evolving policies such as legal reform and anti-corruption efforts.

> 'In human rights cases that are not too sensitive, public scrutiny falls within the grey areas of what is legal,' the famous Beijing-based writer Liu Xiaobo said in a recent essay. 'The people's wisdom is good at using this ambiguity to create a space to advance

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[133] Interviewee 54, 59, 61 and 69.
[134] Interviewee number 54 and 74.
[135] Interviewee number 80.
[136] Interviewee number 18 and 22.

their own interests' (Beach, 2005, internet resource).

Not only being tolerated, these contentions were more and more often positively dealt with by the authorities. As Chinese netizens were communicating daily beyond national borders on numerous issues concerning China's politics, international relationships with world powers and developing countries, and the prospect of Chinese civilisation as well as the local administration, judiciary and personal morality, the government was increasingly forced to take critical public opinion into account because of the mobilising potential inherent in it. The scope of a more obvious dialogue between state and society had significantly widened (Fewsmith, 2001: 161).

Third, and more specifically, it has long been observed by researchers that the internet provided an officially tolerated outlet for nationalist sentiments as long as the postings were not directed against the Chinese government and did not challenge state policies (Wacker, 2003: 70; Hughes, 2000). Although they were policed, bulletin boards and chat rooms were places where opinions can be expressed more freely. China's web users were under no illusions about the limits on their freedoms, but they remained hopeful for change (Sommerville, 2006). Relating to Chinese problems in all aspects from the general to the specific, the cases of Sun Zhigang, the Shanxi Black brick kiln, the South China Tiger and others were able to gain the attention of relevant state departments because of the concern and participation of netizens. Policy-making about people's livelihoods such as non-increase of train fares during spring festival, decrease of mobile roaming charges, the adjustment of the golden week holidays and so on could not have been achieved without the courageous suggestions and opinions from netizens (Tianya BBS, internet resource). When emotional netizens flooded major portal sites with postings and messages, expressing their disgust and demanding punishment for those directly responsible, their calls and voices were increasingly heard and responded to by local and national officials.

9.3.3 Control

The strategies of control were applied to those critical intellectuals who were opposed to the authorities and the present system amongst the media and through internet discourse. They were used sometimes when establishment intellectuals challenged their clientelist relationship

to the party leadership and tested the boundaries of the arbitrarily set 'limited zones of freedom', mentioned by one scholar[137]. Though there was a certain amount of toleration when intellectuals disputed the state-defined paths to economic growth and development or when ordinary citizens made jokes of official slogans, there was still a heavy use of controlling strategies, mainly in the means of censorship and repression when contentions moved out of toleration boundaries.

The act of censorship was an example of permanent risk-management in Chinese traditional media institutions.

> Some editors feared losing their position and carefully abstained from publishing anything that might be too critical. Some journalists felt that the new freedom of the media was illusory and that the new possibilities were limited to the politically irrelevant field of consumption (Sather, 2006: 49).

When journalists at China's national broadcaster CCTV logged on, one of the first things that popped up on screen was a notice about what not to report, as told by a journalist in the interviews[138]. These notices were often short and seldom said who had authorised them, but they all contained strict instructions about how to report a story. Certain subjects were always out of bounds in China, such as speculation about China's national leaders. Other issues, such as health, education and inflation, are closely monitored because they were potentially controversial (Bristow, 2008).

There were also government regulations and strict censorship towards the internet, especially the content. It was easy for censors to delete comments deemed offensive or dangerous, as observed by a few regular internet users in the interviews[139]. Supervision and control mechanisms on the information flow in the form of preventive regulations as well as repressive actions were implemented at the state, local, institutional and individual levels. It was argued that the state was good at providing some new ways of engaging in old practices (Lyon, 2003) and that the internet reinforced surveillance and social control and strengthened the ideological state apparatus (Mengin, 2004: 7). However, it was increasingly difficult for the government to control every website, chat-room, forum and BBS as they were growing in

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[137] Interviewee number 51.
[138] Interviewee number 65.
[139] Interviewee number 42, 44 and 80.

number.

As for the repressive strategies, ongoing repression against outspoken journalists, cyber-dissidents, critical writers, liberal intellectuals, labour activists and socially engaged lawyers had instilled a climate of fear throughout China, which sought to intimidate potential protesters and encourage self-policing (Broudehoux, 2007). There was a perception of the social, political and economic manifestation of authoritarianism and oppression, as also indicated by the interviewees. This perception on one hand provoked further conflicts and constant struggles as shown in more evidence collection and exposure by dissident intellectuals and more criticisms of China's poor human rights record and infringement of freedom, especially on the international stage. On the other hand, it led to a feeling of powerlessness in the face of authority among the domestic intellectuals in general, despite their elite status at that time. Certain taboos still remained frozen. As a dissident mentioned,

> When some intellectuals are bold enough in further bringing forth the problems of the unknown or misinterpreted facts of previous political movements, such as the Cultural Revolution, June Fourth 1989, or the unfair political-economic system, the single-party rule and its suppression of social and political dissidents, they will invite more repressions such as tighter surveillance, house arrest and imprisonment under different criminal charges.[140]

Nationalism was clearly a double-edged sword, of which the government was fully aware (Fewsmith, 2001: 13). Nationalism and patriotism that was deeply rooted in the souls of overseas Chinese intellectuals also motivated them to be involved in continuous pro-democracy movements outside China, and it was still a nationalist sentiment that was advanced by the Chinese Party-state to disclaim them as anti-China plotters in association with hostile foreign forces. On the other hand, the excessive encouragement of patriotic feelings had also dangerous and negative aspects as many youths were nationalistic to a certain, sometimes even fanatical extreme, with the mood of indignation and radicalism. So the co-optation and support of the nationalist movements in recent years was also combined with tight surveillance and occasional repressions. The authorities were fully aware that they should be particularly careful if this impacted its most important strategic relationships, as with the attacks on the US Embassy following the Belgrade Embassy bombing in 1999, or the

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[140] Interviewee number 87.

attacks on French businesses following Tibet protests during the Olympic torch relay in Paris.

9.3.4 Local/central

The local/central interaction and potential for conflict occurring during the intellectual contentions was similar to that during the labour ones. The regional imbalance and departmental divisions were obvious. With more intellectual contentions occurring on the internet, the Party-state was facing unimaginable energy from the omnipresent internet, the power of netizens' participation and the multifaceted propensities of contentious activities and discourses on the internet. The equally significant fact was that central and local governments reacted differently to the contentious activities. One university research student mentioned a famous grassroots AIDS activist Grandma Gao Yaojie.[141] As in the case of Gao Yaojie, who had been honoured by the United Nations and Western organisations for her AIDS prevention work in Henan province, she revealed that the rapid spread of the HIV virus during the 1990s in Henan among the impoverished rural population, with infection rates of more than 50% in some villages, was mostly due to the exploitative blood collection, transfusion and recycle program (China News Digest, 2001; Beech, 2006). The local government tried to cover up the situation of illegal blood collection and the condition of the villagers until 2003 when the central government decided to intervene to regulate the unsanitary blood centres and designate Grandma Gao on the CCTV 'Ten People Who Touched China in 2003'. However, Gao was still under constant house arrest by the local government. Her blog was occasionally hacked by detractors and people were paid to leave negative comments on it. Though in public and the media she was visited and presented with flowers and best wishes from the party head and governor of Henan province, she was covertly pressurised by these local officials to sign a statement that she was 'unable to travel due to poor health' to the United States to receive the 'Global Leadership Award, Women Changing Our World' in 2007 (Yardley, 2007).

Unlike labourers' contentions, which mostly occurred offline, the virtual environment and communicative convenience had facilitated internet contentions to be rapidly exposed and tracked beyond limits of location and time. The local elite politics, intra-party conflicts and factionalism, known as an open secret to the public, were also entangled with the intellectual

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[141] Interviewee number 48.

internal contentions. It was observed by a few interviewees[142] that internet contentious cases targeted at the local officials and powers were resolved more easily with the pressure from higher authorities and from the public and the media, but when it came to the provincial levels or higher, the bottom-up anti-corruption petitions were either repressed or ended without a substantial outcome or made use of as political manoeuvre for internal power struggles within the authorities[143]. Moreover, a top-down movement was sometimes mobilised to serve different interest groups in the factional combats, noticeably between Jiang-Zeng (Jiang Zemin and Zeng Qinghong) Shanghai Gang and the Hu-Wen Youth League network during the power transition from the 3rd to the 4th generation of leadership (Li, 2002; Shi, 2003). For example, Chen Liangyu, Jiang's ally, a former core member of the Shanghai Gang, party chief and formidable critic of Hu's macro-economic policies was brought up on charges of corruption in the pension fund scandal in 2006. His fall was regarded as a major political victory for Hu Jintao's camp to step up and reshape China's political landscape in ways that consolidated and expanded Hu's authority at both the national and provincial levels (Li, 2007).

On the other hand, local governments, especially in developed and coastal cities, had used the internet to distribute information and promote community interests, and their responses to the online public sphere and internet contentions had become more active and engaging. Some of the officials were transformed from passive receivers of complaints, critiques and pressures to members of a more and more proactive agency by paying gradual attention to the internet forums, utilising the internet as an information resource and for problem-resolving strategies and opening itself to the supervision of the broader audiences and populace.

> For example, on June 2nd 2008, Su Rong, secretary of the Jiangxi Provincial Party Committee met with 28 selected netizens face to face and 8.4 million netizens though web broadcasting, assembling their opinions and suggestions related to the economic, political and cultural development and problems in Jiangxi. At the briefing, Su Rong was asked by netizens about questions including the building of Central Poyang Lake ecological and economic zone, Jiangxi's opening up strategy, urban planning and how to select officials and so on. Turning to the problem of the selection of officials, Su Rong frankly admitted that besides the standards of both ability and political integrity there was the influence of unspoken rules such as social relations and indeed some people have tasted the sweetness. In response, Su Rong said, the future selection of Jiangxi

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[142] Interviewee number 40, 43 and 82.
[143] Interviewee number 82.

officials will be based on the election system, mechanism and institutional innovation to limit the role of unspoken rules (Synthesis of internet resources).

It is evident that there was an emergence of the real grassroots civic discourse and contentious activities on the internet at the local level that could affect the political leadership and transform the strategic grassroots governmental responses. The internet has facilitated the connection and communication between the Chinese government and its people and, within the government, among its various branches and competing factions. There is the possibility of mutual dialogue between the leaders and the citizens rather than a strictly top-down communicative interaction.

9.4 Religious groups: evaluation of Party-state responses

9.4.1 Co-optation

When religions were blossoming in contemporary China, either in a normalised and officially-recognised way or in a contentious, controversial and confrontational manner, the Party-state had to respond with, respectively, the consideration of immediate effects and long-term consequences. The biggest strategic co-optation was the constitutional and institutional regulation. The constitutional respect for and protection of the freedom of religious beliefs was also setting its boundaries. By compulsorily legitimising and defining five religions Buddhism, Daoism, Islam, Catholicism and Protestantism, the atheistic Party attempted to exclude folk religions, superstitions and cults from the bounds of protection (MacInnis, 1989: 385-410). On the other hand, the Constitution said, 'the exercise by citizens of the People's Republic of China of their freedoms and rights may not infringe upon the interests of the state, of society and of the collective.' (Constitution of the People's Republic of China, 2004: 36) Obviously it was the ruling party that defined such interests and what constituted an infringement. Therefore, to protect the 'official' and 'normal' religious freedom within certain boundaries was to co-opt people with religious beliefs into state provided institutions, require them to comply with imperatives of Party leadership and social stability and strengthen these believers' self-censorship by clarifying religious policies in constitution and Party documents. Notably in 1991, the CPC Central Committee/State Council's 'Document No. 6' expressed the regime's policy was in an effort to co-opt religious adherents while also repressing challenges to Party power (CPC Central Committee/State Council, 1991), with limitations on

proselytisation, recruitment, fund-raising and other activities in support of organised religion (Spiegel, 1992: 8-13). Dissemination and enforcement of Party policies on religion was the responsibility of an intersecting network of Party and governmental organisations, incorporating the State Council's Religious Affairs Bureau, the Propaganda Department, the United Front Work Department and the Public Security Ministry (MacInnis, 1989: 1-5).

The official organisational networks had been set up nationwide and locally for the purpose of religious administration to strengthen the state's organisational authority and national construction over religions. Eight national religious organisations (the Chinese Islamic Association, the Chinese Daoist Association, the Chinese Buddhist Association, the Three-Self Patriotic Movement Committee for the Protestant Churches of China, the China Christian Council, the Chinese Patriotic Catholic Association, the Chinese Catholic Bishop College, and the National Administrative Commission of the Chinese Catholic Church) were established by the CPC to monitor the activities of the five world religions in China. Party authorities on religion focused on strengthening administration of religious affairs according to law (Luo, 1997), which also kept the official religions dependent and framed within the state system for legitimacy, organisation, personnel and material resources. These five religions had all developed official and specific institutions to train personnel, with officially approved curricula incorporating state policy into religious instruction (Human Rights Watch, 1997; Nanbu, 2008). Such officially sponsored and inspected education of clergy also aimed at ensuring that religious leaders remained loyal to the principles of the Party-state (Potter, 2003). For example, through increased education and indoctrination of state-approved clergy, the Protestant Three-Self Patriotic movement (self-governance, self-support for financial independence from foreigners and self-propagation for indigenous missionary work) underscored its submission to Party leadership, support for the authority of the state and the socialist motherland, and obedience to the constitution, laws, regulations and policies of the state (Potter, 2003). Such nationwide movement had allowed the government to infiltrate and control much organised Christianity (Patrick, 2001: 164) and to prohibit any interference from foreign forces using religions. 20 out of 30 people with Christian beliefs in the interviews joined the 'Three Self' local churches. The actual strong public attendance at patriotic Christian churches had on one hand revealed a shortage in the number of churches, but on the other shown believers' compliance to the Party's religious policy, which became a public norm for religious behaviour (Potter, 2003).

On the ideological aspect of co-optation, in the 1990s the Party leadership had actively advocated the adaptation of religion and socialism[144] as an important composition of a national united front work in order to engage minor ethnic groups and Chinese nationals in Taiwan, Hong Kong and all over the world. The common elements of patriotism and adherence to socialism had been emphasised to bind those who believe in religion and those who do not (Zhen, 1989: 109). To introduce conventional religions against underground religious groups, in December, 2001, Jiang Zemin, in a speech to an important national meeting on religion, acknowledged that religions could help to stabilise society (Leung, 2005), and they should continue to exist as a fundamental component of human civilisation (Chan, 2004). More recently the Party had begun to put a more positive spin on the role of religion to echo its propaganda concerning the need for a 'harmonious society' and how to build it up. This concept of a 'harmonious society' was also applicable to recognising the function of religions to generate and strengthen the cooperation between socialism and religion when the authorities were searching for ways in which religion could effectively contribute to modernisation (Nanbu, 2008) and to the solutions of accompanying social problems.

Intellectuals and the academic sphere were actively involved in exploration, justification and demonstration of such changes in the official tune. Specialised religious institutions were working in cooperation with higher education institutions to offer programmes for the training of those in charge of regulating religions as well as scholars (Nanbu, 2008). University connections had been established to research on the religion's impact on the society and the positive influences were regarded as part of establishing harmonious society. The dialogues between religious leaders, scholars and higher level authorities had also been initiated in many directions, which were especially embraced by cultural and intellectual Christians as detailed in the last chapter. Especially in the moral and spiritual direction, the contentions of religious groups contained first the religious movement itself. It was regarded, as some interviewees put it,[145] as a counterbalance to the excessively materialistic drive and the accompanying spiritual vacuum, which was also one of the biggest concerns of the Party in the reform era. As a continuation of state co-optation towards intellectuals in the religious field, the authorities tried to make use of the union between the intelligentsia, religion and the appeal of religion to serve the regime, but also to minimise its potential threat to the regime.

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[144] Jiang Zemin's 7 November 1993 speech to a national united front work conference.
[145] Interviewee number 90, 93 and 103.

By addressing the positive function of religions and by retrieving morals, the Party also attempted to re-establish both the moral foundation of society and the authority of the CPC.

9.4.2 Toleration

On the spectrum from co-optation to suppression, the strategy of toleration was utilised from time to time and place to place withies a part of the negotiation between state and religious groups. The CPC document stated that 'implementing administration of religious affairs is aimed at bringing religious activities within the bounds of law, regulation, and policy, but not to interfere with normal religious activities or the internal affairs of religious organisations.' (CPC Central Committee/State Council, 1991). The reference to such non-interference seemed benign and often indicated a general guidance of toleration at the local level as long as religious followers remained loyal to the country, supported the CPC and obeyed the law (Yang, 2004). What's more, China had made a gesture along with the harmonious society themes to permit to some extent a dialogue on the moral and cultural roles of religion in civic life. Therefore deliberation arose around the degree to which religious expression and activities would be permitted and tolerated without infringing on the CPC's political control for both the governmental and religious sides. The limits were constantly challenged by the pro-religion intellectuals and the existing fact of religious prosperity.

Passive and positive toleration was evident especially in some southern and coastal provinces where temples, mosques and churches were rapidly rebuilt and religious activities revived in the reform era. Faced with such proliferation, the mentality of most local states was to avoid any trouble, outbreak and confrontation and try to maintain a peaceful contact and relationship with diversified religious groups. Taking Christianity as an example, the house churches grew larger and more deeply entrenched in Chinese society than the patriotic Christian churches associated with norms of compliance. The relative fluidity of Protestant organisational structures, particularly the role of lay clergy, had made it harder for the government to control (Pomfret, 2002). Some Christian interviewees also stated their dissatisfaction with official churches' dependence on the government and confirmed that they sensed little restriction or repression when joining in family church activities.[146] Moreover, as some Christian entrepreneurs, notably in the coast cities, were building up churches inside

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[146] Interviewee number 91 and 102.

factories or companies for their workers, local officials, eager for their investment and technology, often allowed the religious activities as long as the ministers did not attract a crowd out front.[147] Such unorthodox arrangement, toleration and ignorance happened in the centre as well. The metropolitan city of Beijing, as the interviewees revealed, was a multicultural capital where not only Buddhism and other traditions were promoted and well reserved[148], but foreign population and Christian ministries were also on the rise along with the soaring foreign investment and population inflow. Some university students mentioned in the interviews that those Christian evangelists, especially from the USA and South Korea, often reached out to students on the campus or in the cafes for gatherings and gospel sharing.[149] The authorities showed a high degree of tolerance to such secret or even public evangelism. Beijing even allowed Chinese Catholic believers to accept the Pope's 'spiritual' leadership, though it insisted that the Vatican must break diplomatic ties with Taiwan and 'not interfere in China's internal affairs' (Gittings, 2001).

The long-lasting suppression of Falun Gong also exhausted the local governments, as it was difficult to identify, convert, discipline or punish these adherents who were going increasingly underground. There existed a grey area full of delicate bargains on the limits of tolerance and repression, as indicated by the interviewees who had some contacts with mainland Falun Gong practitioners[150]. Inaction from the local government was common as long as they did not provoke or incite the local public or appeal to the central government. So the regime did not only tolerate compliance-based religious activities but also struggled with the boundaries between normal practices and the underground and even outlawed heterodoxies.

9.4.3 Control

The main challenges for the authorities came from Falun Gong and underground churches with their inter-group natures, which entangled religious rights and human rights issues and threatened the mainstream ideology. The officially atheistic government prohibited proselytising and was worried that if the spread of religion went unchecked, believers, especially those led by the intellectual elite, might ultimately challenge the Communist Party's authority. It was argued that the union of intelligentsia and religion could be a big

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[147] Interviewee number 95.
[148] Interviewee number 98 and 99.
[149] Interviewee number 44, 55 and 91.
[150] Interviewee number 67 and 106.

threat, said one local official. Some also argued that China's restrictions on Christianity were not necessarily a fear of religion, but of the possible threat to the Party's leadership that came from any organised group (Ramzy, 2007). As one interviewee put it, 'whether people believe in Jesus or Buddha, the government is not really bothered; what they are afraid of is that they meet together underground in a certain number without registration but under some unknown influential leadership.'[151] Such was the case with the governmental initiative to repress Falun Gong. The authorities had firstly illegalised the existence of any religions or cults other than the five official ones generally, and Falun Gong in particular, as well as any underground assemblies including the house church movement, to justify different types and degrees of suppression, soft or hard, of these illicit groups. Registration of all religious sites was government-mandated and official interference in the management of religious organisations widely existed.

Some interviewees from Christian and Falun Gong groups criticised that the state treated religion as a political matter in terms of its surveillance and controlling strategies.[152] Repression under the name of controlling illegal 'sects' (*Xiejiao*) was common (Li and Fu, 2002). Regarding the unofficial house churches and underground evangelical activities, it was well-reported that their house gatherings and services were periodically raided, interrupted and prohibited by local police. Their leaders were risking fines, surveillance or even arrest. Active members were also likely to face administrative detention without trial or being charged with conducting 'illegal' religious activities. Bibles and other related publications were confiscated, and restrictions on contacts between them and their foreign counterparts were strengthened. As an interviewee mentioned[153], all kinds of incidents and repressions had intensified the contradiction between the unofficial Christians and authorities, and triggered further contentions. The climax of the conflicts often involved the closing down of house churches and the demolition of church buildings, which were seen by many as an unwarranted intrusion in social affairs.[154]

The suppression of Falun Gong was more overtly conducted. As summarised from the state's controlling and repressing strategies towards the Falun Gong movement, it saw strong emphases on the monopoly of discourse – propaganda criticism, legitimate justification,

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[151] Interviewee number 88.
[152] Interviewee number 96, 107 and 108
[153] Interviewee number 104.
[154] Interviewee number 103 and 104.

national-scale mobilisation and a people's war. It was known that the ideological, institutional and legitimate resources were all used by the government to mobilise the anti Falun Gong campaigns, which began with discursive condemnation through media propaganda, which itself played an active part in serving Party-state strategy of co-optation. However, this further justified the cause of governmental control especially over the Falun Gong. As described by Amnesty International, it was a 'massive propaganda campaign' (Amnesty International, 2000). Through portrayals of the early history of the founder Li Hongzhi and Falun Gong, as well as reports on the deaths of 1,400 or more devotees, the official media had evidently charged Falun Gong as a superstitious and hypocritical cult, as harmful to people and society, as illegal and criminal and even as treasonous and seditious. It had been linked with Tibetan and Xinjiang separatists and to threats to Communist Party leadership and the stability of China. The US had been accused of being the headquarters of the banned cult (Human Rights Watch, 2002).

The China Anti-cults Association had been founded mainly against Falun Gong since 2000, and anti-cult education and re-education campaigns were organised and targeted respectively towards the general public and Falun Gong followers in particular. The anti-cult exhibit in Beijing in July 2001 had collected signatures of more than a million citizens in support of the ban. So Beijing's suppression of Falun Gong was claimed to be a response to popular demands and the people's will (People's Daily, 2001). Stories of successful re-education of Falun Gong addicts flooded the official media at the early stages of the anti-Falun Gong campaign. The official sources claimed to have made over 2 million followers give up Falun Gong.

The Party-state had put together the legal framework for the explicit prosecution of Falun Gong, starting by labelling it as an 'evil cult' (Ownby, 2007). The hard repressive measures towards Falun Gong were justified after the legislation and practised mainly under the specifically established department 6-10 office. Politically motivated charges, unfair trials, harsh sentences, administrative detentions through labour camps and forceful detentions in psychiatric hospitals were systematically and sophisticatedly applied by the government, courts and police at all levels of government (Schechter, 2001: 181-95). Since 1999, reports of torture, illegal imprisonment, beatings, forced labour and psychiatric abuse had been widespread (Leung, 2002). 66% of all reported torture cases in China concern Falun Gong

practitioners, who were also estimated to comprise at least half of China's labour camp population (U.S. Department of State, 2007).

Since the state controlled the major resources and power in the media, institutions and legislation, every aspect of society was mobilised against Falun Gong, including the public discourse, police force, education system, families, and workplaces. In a Cultural Revolution style, practitioners would lose their party memberships, jobs, education opportunities and pensions and even faced severe jail sentences. The interviewees, especially the Falun Gong practitioners[155], cited with anger and grievance various stories which concerned their or other members' experiences of torture in detention, including the abuse of female practitioners, water cells, solitary confinement in dark rooms, electric batons, etc. They repeatedly asserted that such violation of human rights was uncivilised, notorious and unacceptable all over the world.

The suppression and reaction from the government also saw features of fluctuation and differentiation: first, the propaganda against the movement gradually faded out, and violence became restricted as the legislative regulations were strengthened. For example, new rules had been implemented to define illegal users of the internet in regard to evil religious cults and to make China's rapidly growing cyberspace free of Falun Gong-related information, as one dissident journalist mentioned[156]. Second, taking into account the factors of place and time sensitivity, authorities often tightened control around some sensitive dates and anniversaries such as the National Day, June 4th, April 25th and so on, while hot spots like Beijing and Tiananmen Square were also under heavier surveillance. Third, ordinary practitioners had been strategically separated from the so-called Falun Gong diehards. The latter were still under the tightest supervision and subject to various severe coercive measures. For example, in December 2005, the author of the 'Nine Commentaries' was identified as Zheng Peichun, a Chinese dissident, who was arrested on the charge of crimes against the state and was sentenced to seven years imprisonment (Web-blog of China Affairs, internet resource).

9.4.4 Local/central

The overarching purpose of the central government was to confine religion to the limits of

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[155] Interviewee number 106, 107, 108 and 110.
[156] Interviewee number 87.

law and policy, and it had put great emphasis on the distinction between normal religious belief and activities that the state purported to protect, and on challenging religious contentions or 'illegal and criminal activities being carried out under the banner of religion' (Constitution of the People's Republic of China, 2004: 36). This classification determined different strategies such as co-optation, toleration and suppression to be adopted towards them. However, at the local level of governance, there was both coherence and conflict with the centre. The Religious Affairs Bureaus of China's provinces and major cities were empowered to issue local regulations on the control of religion. These generally echoed the tenets of central edicts (Madsen and Tong, 2000). At the same time, such edicts had also been localised and interpreted diversely to serve different purposes. Regional policies towards grassroots religious organisations varied significantly, some showing more tolerance than others while some were more repressive, as shown in the feedback from interviewees of different origins and localities.

There has been a bargaining process happening during the registration between the state and a large number of Christians, and the situation varies from place to place. Some of the interviewees did not yet feel any danger or inconvenience if joining an unregistered house church and thus remained doing so[157]; some were on great alert by regularly moving locations to protect their leaders[158]; others found the local officials indifferent or even favourable towards the unofficial evangelical movement[159]. Though the local governments were only allowed by the centre to authorise state-approved churches under strict conditions and had attempted to crack down on underground spontaneous churches, they had little success. This discouraged those officials to adopt an active confrontational strategy. Being aware but winking at the resurgence of house churches, some local authorities preferred minimum or not any interaction with house churches. They were often fearful of triggering unrest in their jurisdictions by enforcing unpopular policies that were not vital to the party's interests. It is therefore not surprising that there was often cooperation between the official and underground churches at the local level (Gittings, 2001). Some interviewees who came from rural areas also mentioned popular religions and local rituals. In the spatial politics, especially in rural areas, many government officials had bent the rules or turned a blind eye to popular religions despite the fact that some were underground and outlawed. It was also very common for them

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[157] Interviewee number 102.
[158] Interviewee number 103 and 104.
[159] Interviewee number 95 and 101.

to support these unofficially religious or ritual organisations as a part of local traditions or cultural attractions, and some even routinely took part in spiritual and ritual ceremonies. Even for the Anti-Falun Gong campaign, the authorities had in certain ways softened their strategies, especially at the local level. There was an unstated deal between local officials and Falun Gong practitioners, revealed by a Wuhan origin interviewee[160], that as long as they did not go to Beijing to protest or cause trouble for them, they would ignore their underground status and exercises. Since the central government had assigned the duty of dealing with the conflicts to provincial governments, the centre did not really want to know about the contestations and unrest unless they became a direct challenge or went public to catch the attention of the international media.

On the other hand, as for the hard control, Party documents directed public security organs to take forceful measures to curb those who used religious activities to 'engage in disruptive activities,' 'stir up trouble, endanger public safety, and weaken the unification of the country and national unity' or 'collude with hostile forces outside the country to endanger China's security.' (Chan and Hunter, 1995) Local officials were given unrestrained authority to implement the central government's directives and to achieve the success without questioning the process, which could lead to enormous abuse of power (Hutzler, 2001). Torture and mistreatment of religious detainees from detention centres, re-education camps and labour camps was also locally revealed and internationally reported. These transformation-through-labour (*Laodong Gaizao*) administrative commissions were operated under provincial or municipal governments and contained widespread abuse of local power. A typical case occurred when some Falun Gong practitioners were bewildered by the government's 'evil cult' pronouncement and tried to appeal to Beijing to correct this official inaccurate impression. After being arrested, fined and sent back home with a warning not to associate further with the movement, some still stuck to their principles and ended up being identified as diehards and were subjected to risks of imprisonment, torture and even death at the local prisons, as some interviewees revealed[161].

9.5 Reflections

As one might conclude from the above discussion concerning Party-state responses towards

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[160] Interviewee number 67.
[161] Interviewee number 107, 108 and 110.

the contentious activities of the three groups, the Chinese authorities placed different levels of emphasis, in terms of the main three strategies, with respect to each group. As described in figure 3, strategic toleration was ranked top for labourers, as in the case of single-event or small-scale regional protests with similar-background labourer actors, and the government would largely tolerate and attempt to appease their dissatisfaction and relieve their grievances with positive pacifistic methods. Co-optation strategies were more commonly applied to intellectuals because of the ideological adaptations and the co-optation of the internet. Moreover, during nationalist and patriotic movements, such as anti-America or anti-Japan or anti-Taiwan/Tibet's independence protests, the government had cooperated with activists and organisations in order to guide the pace of the action and therefore achieve the government goal. However, the implication of repression attracted much attention as the authorities did not hesitate to repress the cross-regional, cross-group and large-scale Falun Gong spiritual movement as well as the underground house churches. Similarly, it could be observed that institutional and policy co-optation was also widely utilised and directed towards labourers and religious groups in general. The controlling measures such as censorship and repression applied to pro-democracy dissidents were also heavily conferred upon intellectuals. Though ranked as the least prioritised strategy, control of labourers still occurred when the contentions expanded to a larger scale or involved other groups, and more often at the local level when contestants appealed to the central state. Likewise, toleration for intellectual and religious groups could be largely observed. So are the C-T-C strategies really working? Are they coherent, effective and committed? Based on the conceptualisation of how different cases fit together with regards to the response of the authorities, such ranking of strategic emphases indicates the activity and capacity for the Party-state as well as its passivity and limits. The authorities made great efforts to claim, win and maintain legitimacy, and at the same time, the Party-state might be just coping with conflicts, with its authority waning and weakening.

Figure 3 The ranks of priority in Party-state strategies towards the contentions associated with the three groups.

	Co-optation	Toleration	Control
Labourers	2	1	3
Intellectuals	1	3	2
Religious groups	2	3	1

The activity and capacity of the Party-state was demonstrated by the public identification of the necessity of these strategies, marginalisation of dissident voices and a high degree of self-censorship. The Party had been both adept and sophisticated at moulding its ideology to fit practical reality (Chang, 2001: 67) with great flexibility and adaptability. Many citizens felt the government had been more open, adaptive and positive in dealing with problems, and they still believed that it was necessary for the government to take action such as suppression, as shown in both the 1989 and Falun Gong movement, as became clear in the interviews. Ideological configuration and dissemination exemplified the Party-state capability in controlling the propaganda machine as well as mass media. For example, the earlier stage of the anti-Falun Gong movement featured a rapidly expanding to nationwide anti-cult and anti-superstition movement, and this was a great success. The atmosphere created by the intensive anti-Falun Gong propaganda and education saw nationalistic responses and support by the majority of the general public, particularly by the youth. The pro-democracy and anti-CPC sentiments were marginalised from the general public as they were contrary to nationalism and social stability. There was a popular belief that only a strong, centralised authority could provide the required socio-political tranquility (Chen, 2004: 106).

As a result of the regime's historical practices of identifying and enforcing norms of social conformity by denigrating and attacking nonconformists, the present government promised tolerance for the compliant and wielded repression for the resistant (Potter, 2003). It could be seen that the leadership has always resisted any reform that would undercut Party authority and is always on guard against any erosion of its power and ideology. These were certain premises and boundaries that could not be compromised by the Party-state, and this is why China has always fought hard against cultists, activists, splittists and all other dissidents with little tolerance for deviated voices. As a result, self-censorship had been reinforced among the public both mentally and physically, and in a sense the Chinese Communist leadership was holding a diverse China together, having contentions largely under control, and maintaining an orderly and stable society.

On the other hand, the passivity and limits of the Party-state could also be understood with regard to the ongoing resistance, popular cynicism and the great incoherence and ineffectiveness of the official responses themselves. This was a circle that could turn vicious: what the authorities said and did to respond to various contentions had a direct effect on the

population's conceptualisation and subsequent reaction. The deepening modern communication had also facilitated state-society-individual interactions. The 'harmonious society' sentiments had given rise to ironic criticisms of the government for the continuously disharmonious social problems and its inability to manage conflicts. The 'scientific development outlook' was another co-optation strategy that put people first to improve their well-being in terms of pension, education, healthcare and housing and to guarantee social equality and justice. However, the effectiveness of these policies depended on a normative consensus around both the content of policy and law and the processes of enforcement (Scharpf, 2000), which had often not met people's expectations. Some interviewees presented a negative evaluation of the official responses by implying that the state was good at paying lip service[162] or that repression was too harsh[163]. Though the dissent voices had been marginalised by the official controlling strategies, at the same time they were driven underground or outside of China, and were even becoming the seeds for mobilisation into new secret societies or the basis for miscommunications between China and international society. Unsurprisingly, popular protests and contentious activities still rise frequently despite tight control by the Party-state.

Such increased public cynicism, quiet resistance or public defiance appeared to be unpreventable (Perry and Selden, 2003: 1-19). This had been further reinforced by the perceived official incoherence and ineffectiveness when implementing those strategies. The central-local inconstancy was remarkable when the central authorities and activists found themselves to be partners in the same struggle against local government, such as in unpaid wages and anti-corruption contentions and when the local state was functioning as a buffer with regards to central decisions and strategies. As for the complaint and petition system, only a small percentage of those who filed grievances this way ever had their problems resolved (Weston, 2007: 74). Petitioners travelled to Beijing in large numbers with the belief that central government officials would be more responsive than the local ones, while Beijing, unable to cope with the increasing flood, made various efforts to force local officials to take greater responsibility. Additionally, during the official pacification or controlling actions applied to different contentions, law often gave way to administrative power, while the dysfunction of bureaucracies was unavoidable without rules of law and democratic supervision. This was why the local labour department or government sometimes failed in

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[162] Interviewee number 33.
[163] Interviewee number 107, 108 and 110.

efficient arbitration and the court judgments were badly implemented. However, on the contrary, making trouble could raise attention and seeking a higher authority could sometimes lead to a satisfactory outcome. Such a circle of practice weakened the strength of law in comparison to powerful administrative intervention and enlarged the space by 'rule of man' at the legislative, regulative and institutional levels. Interviewees further claimed that there were new local allies such as cadres with non-state entrepreneurs and police with gang leaders forming united fronts against the centre's commands and being autocratic over ordinary people.[164] Because of the divergence of the local groups' vested interests from the central government, economic protectionism could be expanded to criminal protectionism.

The Party-state was contradicting in itself. It was problematic to co-opt all social groups for the interest of the ruling party and for the purpose of ruling. It was also paradoxical to maintain political control while preserving an image of tolerance. The aim of contention management had been strategised for maintaining a restrictive political environment that kept social movements at a low profile and non-confrontational status and avoided small cases turning into riots. The authorities also tried to achieve this goal through self-imposed censorship and a set of moulding and responsive methods. Though the strategies were sometimes deemed as necessary and justified by the public, the process of local implementation and practice of power towards varied contentions was in itself questionable; cases of abuse were frequent. The relationship between the state and society contained missing links and a lack of mutual understanding or reflection. This was why the co-optation – toleration – control strategies did not work very well to channel the storms of popular grievance, nor did they work consistently to coordinate conflicting interests among different hierarchies of governance. An old Chinese proverb says, 'to lose is sometimes to gain': Chinese authorities should learn how to wisely lose control to the society, give up power to the people, build up mutual negotiation and dialogue and explore mechanisms to provide more social space for these interactions to take place, not passively but actively, after which can they gain genuine authority, legitimacy, popular support and social stability. However, China has experienced the converse situation: to gain (the control) was sometimes to lose, as the authorities were good at moulding and controlling while bad at institutionalising and channelling.

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[164] Interviewee number 26, 35 and 89.

In conclusion, the political system has made significant adaptations by performing new functions and strengthening regulatory capacity to the challenges of an increasingly diverse society. Because of the interaction between the authorities and different contentious groups, the power structure has been changed to some extent, which has changed the political-ideological environment and has urged the party to improve its leadership and governance. However, based on the examination of state response to the contentions of different groups at both central and local level, the co-optation – toleration – control strategies work neither coherently nor effectively. Adaptive moulding is the most significant feature of these strategies, which has short-term gains, but it cannot eradicate the roots of the problem or prevent grievances from becoming accumulated, organised and publicised into large-scale contention. Rules of law and democracy, to transform the existing legal and political system, are the only alternatives to solve and channel the unstoppable wave of contentions in the long term, leading to social justice, good governance with transparency and accountability and protection of freedom.

Chapter 10 Conclusion

10.1 Restatement of the topic

This thesis began with an intellectual curiosity and enquiry into the question of how China's rapid modernisation might be connected with its potential democratisation. There are unsolved puzzles as to why development did not promote democracy in China, whether China can sustain its rapid economic progress without democratisation, and whether the liberal democratic model of government suits China's political reality at all. However, there is academic consensus that China's political transformation is moving forward and showing dynamic progress rather than being simply static and frozen. The question of how this dynamic political change should be conceived and where it will lead to, if not towards the Western model of liberal democracy, has inspired a wide range of discussion and arguments, such as on incremental democracy, constitutional democracy and deliberative democracy in China. By adopting the universal values of liberal democracy and the contextualised

characteristics of Chinese versions, this research has tried to develop a new conceptual framework with both theoretical adaptability and practical feasibility to explain and predict how China's modernisation can generate democracy. The connection key word is contention.

As various types of contentious activities are emerging, growing and expanding quickly all over China, this contentious politics signifies new, unconventional, different and oppositional expressions and activism. With growing consciousness, people have strived for their rights and interests and truly challenged the Party-state to different extents. Contentious politics has direct connection with modernisation. The three-decade economic reforms and marketisation initiated by the Communist Party-state has decentralised the economic and political power, diversified social roles and classes, granted more civic freedom to the populace and increased public access to information, especially through the new medium of the internet. As a result, the modernisation process has facilitated the growth of civil society and the mobilisation of public contentions. On the other hand, a diversity of political, economic and social-cultural problems have been engendered and intensified by the uneven transitional process of modernisation. The incrementally severe inequality and injustice can turn into threats to people's lives and rights and easily trigger people's perceptions of grievance. Contentions then take place in reaction to problems, which will palpably lead to social unrest and demand proper official responses. This research has further explored the connection between contention and democratisation. I regard contention as a presentation and amplifier of people's power, and a congregation of social forces to transform individual-society-state relationships, and in perspective it is directing China towards a robust civil society, a more representative government and a democratic transformation of the political system. I've chosen three contentious groups – labourers, intellectuals and religious groups – and their interplay with the Party-state as case studies, and I present comprehensive discussions at macro, meso and micro level to capture the dynamics of a transforming individual-society-state relationship and the dynamics that are moving Chinese society from contention to democratisation.

Therefore, this research examines the prospects for China's democratisation during the process of modernisation through the investigation of China's contentious politics pursued by different groups and responded to by the Party-state at all levels. Chapters 2 and 3 respectively provide the theoretical and methodological infrastructures for the research. Two

main theoretical frameworks are employed for the research: first, the macro, meso and micro level as a form of mechanism (macro opportunity structure, meso mobilising structure and micro strategic structure) are formulated to contour a comprehensive picture of the contentious politics. Second, the power transition among three spheres – Party-state, civil society and private sphere - happening in contentious politics is the key to understanding and measuring the process of democratisation in China. An analytical model is then provided in Figure 1 to show the interaction of these two axes. Axis 1 is to indicate the practical settings, resources and mobilisations within contentious politics. Axis 2 is to explore implications for democratisation through restructuring individual-society-state relationships within contentious politics. Both axes intertwine with each other and show a two-way flow: the contentious movement and democratic transition are both from top-down and from bottom-up. As for the civil society and contentious mobilisation at the meso level, this indicates the dynamics of society-state relations in terms of interference from the state, and individual-society relations in terms of the penetration from the private sphere. For the contentious groups, activities and Party-state responses at the micro level, it focuses on the individual's challenge to the state and the state's responses to society at both central and local levels. The individual-society-state relationship defines contentious participants, mobilisation and consequences and is in turn being reshaped by the contentious politics. Meanwhile, this relationship is under transformation as embedded in the process of modernisation and transformed towards a better-balanced power relationship that will contribute to democratisation at the macro level.

For the methodological conduct of the research, an integration of new institutionalism and rational choice was refined as the research paradigm that combined methodological collectivism and individualism for a better comprehension of the interaction between the institutions and challengers in China's contentious politics. Based on the epistemological paradigms, methodological principles of positivism and hermeneutics/constructionism are applied to deliver both inductive and context-specific reasoning, to build up both an objective empirical foundation and a subjective interpretative tower. Such a methodological pluralism leads to a practical research design containing both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The main instruments adopted for data collection are interviewing, documentation and internet content analysis. With emphasis on the similarity of contentious activities, the semi-structured interviewing was conducted on the following sample groups with the total number of 120 participants: urban workers (including laid-off workers and white-collar workers) and

migrant workers from labourers; university/institute students and scholars, writers, journalists, lawyers and dissidents from intellectuals; Falun Gong practitioners, both official and underground Christian/Catholic church members and a few Buddhist monks from religious groups; a small amount of entrepreneurs and cadres. The fieldwork was carried out in two cities in China – Beijing and Wuhan - as well as using ten email interviews used to question overseas dissidents and Falun Gong practitioners in summer 2006. The questions have covered: 1) interviewees' opinions on conditions, changes and problems in a variety of subjects in political, economic and social-cultural themes; 2) the interviewees' personal autobiography, self-identity, interaction with both formal groups and informal networks and the personal/organisational relationship with the state; 3) interviewees' (possibility of) participation, forms and strategies for contentions, attitudes and evaluations towards both the contentious activities and Party-state responses. The first-hand data from qualitative interviews has provided the research with richer material and valuable quotations to enliven the findings and make the results more interesting. This information obtained by interviews is also well supplemented by evidence from documentation, tested and reinforced by discourse analysis of the data.

10.2 Evaluating hypotheses and questions

There is a normative and ethical presumption on human society that contentious politics as a whole promotes representative government with accountability and transparency and maturates a civil society based on law, being both the substance of democracy and also a good way for people to govern themselves. Based on this presumption and on China's specific conditions, I've developed 3 hypotheses to investigate 6 research questions.

H1: Contentious politics is modernisation-driven.

Q1: What are the social changes, along with social problems, that are emerging and intensifying in China's modernisation process?

Q2: How are the changes and problems of China's modernisation process transformed into the drivers behind contentious actions?

This hypothesis has been vindicated by Chapter 4. The theoretical basis behind H1 is the political opportunity structure operating at the macro level that accounts for the emergence of social-political contentions. Practically, I tried to find out how individuals and groups themselves perceive, measure and evaluate the opportunities and threats as realistic motivations for contentious activities through semi-structured interviews. For Q1, this chapter first examined a list of indicators from political, economic and social-cultural dimensions and provided a contour map of China's realities and problems. Over half of the respondents regarded the following issues as most problematic: 'Corruption', 'Rule of law', 'Power-money exchange', 'Poor-rich gap', 'Fake goods & poor quality', 'The problems of agriculture', 'Environment & resources', 'Reform of SOEs', 'Social ethics & morality' and 'Drugs, gambling & pornography'. Notably economic problems accounted for the majority of the public dissatisfactions while injustice and inequality received the most grievances.

For Q2, it is believed that the cultural implications of the social change, media interpretation and personal experiences are the keys to evaluating and attributing the opportunities and threats, so it is necessary to explore the popular trends of social perception and mentality in response to the changing social realities and problems. There is strong nationalism of different stands in response to China's modernisation and globalisation. There is a common perception that the ruling classes who are more responsible historically for the old institutions have gained most of the reform benefits through privileged status and unchecked power and corruption, while labourers have been burdened with the cost of the reform and benefited much less from it. There is towering rage towards the depth and width of corruption in China, which has threatened economic prosperity and political authority. However, there is growing awareness that the party's inability to control corruption, because of the weak law enforcement and the central-local complexity, further undermines its legitimacy. There is prevailing recognition of the profit-driven cultures derived from the poorly-regulated market economy and reform-opening up fever and of the accompanying moral decay, ideological collapse and faith vacuum. There are also worrying concerns about social safety and security and deep grievances towards the governmental failure to establish a complete security system.

While people are expressing more concerns on the side effects and problems of reforms, there emerge strong requests for nation-state reestablishment, on social equity and welfare, on

morality reconstruction and on economic sustainability with an emphasis on environmental issues. These requests have constituted the popular response and attribution to the social realities and problems at the macro level, which set up a social ethos background for the emergence of social and political contentions. The international environment, domestic political system and Party-state capacity are all interrelated to frame the landscape of contentions. The mass media and the internet have also empowered people to challenge the Party monism and other sources of authority and made opportunities and threats perceivable and transferable to challengers.

Therefore, the modernisation process, especially the economic liberalisation in China, has multifaceted political, social and cultural implications. The achievements and transformations during modernisation and the problems of the unevenly-developed society should provide opportunities and triggers for an expanding arena of expression, participation, mobilisation and contention. In practice, while the problems have overshadowed the progress in most aspects in public opinion, they form a more radical drive for contentions and a hopeful demand for change through the popular perception of opportunities that are transferred from threats. It is true that the current of contention is modernisation-driven.

H2: Civil society is both the origin and destination of contentious politics.

Q3: How does civil society develop with Chinese characteristics?
Q4: How is civil society related to contentious politics?

Chapter 5 as well as the empirical Chapters 6 to 8 sought to justify, in the Chinese context, the theories that civil society is the organisational basis and origin for contentions and that in the long term contentious mobilisation will increase individual rights awareness, being bound by civil virtues and directed by the rule of law, all of which will aid the advance into a robust civil society.

For Q3, data collected through the interviews about people's membership and participation in civil society organisations (CSOs) in China was analysed with the support of related literature, statistics, reports and cases. The flourishing of civil society in China has been primarily and obviously presented by the proliferation of civil society organisations. However, the divisions within the civil society are deepening with reference to social classes and groups, regional

differentiation, age groups, ethnicity and religion, and possibly leading in turn to stratification, confliction and exclusion within social contentions. The inter-penetration of the private and state spheres is also remarkable. On one hand, organisational and institutional resources are still not evident or significant to most Chinese people as they continue to depend on the wide-ranging informal networks (*guanxi*), which provide necessary social capital, resources and relations. These *guanxi,* with their penetrative effects, have been the most evidently Chinese characteristics of its civil society. On the other hand, the Party-state would like to continually form a civil society under its control by establishing government sponsored organisations and taking various approaches to restrain other interest groups, non-governmental organisations or religious associations. Such governmental co-optation and interference, especially on registration and management of CSOs, and CSOs' close relations with the government for development have been further palpable Chinese characteristics. Meanwhile, the new medium of the internet has enlarged and strengthened the Chinese public sphere by providing the social arenas for individuals and groups to critically discuss public affairs of common concern. This online public sphere also helps mobilise resources for both online and offline contentious activities. The characteristics of Chinese civil society can be defined as the alliance of different networks and social forces, the cooperation with the government and the use of modern information techniques. Chinese civil society is special, which adds a special condition to Hypothesis 2.

As for Q4, as most contentious activities take place spontaneously, the organisational factors and resources for collective activities are always and inevitably intertwined with the informal and non-institutional ones, with the online networks and fluid factors. Therefore, it is not easy for civil society to conduct its representational function to pre-manifest the mobilisation of social interests towards political participation in a law-based manner within the complexities of state-society-individual relations (Kerr, 2009). From the interview results, the linkage between contentions and formal organisations is relatively weak. This fact to a certain degree also reflects the absence and inadequacy of particular organisations or structures, especially formal ones that purport to speak for the contentions and who constantly clarify group goals, organise and mobilise resources and dictate the course, content and the outcome of struggles. For example, the waves of the most frequent labour disputes and other observable contentions show a large degree of spontaneity rather than being pre-meditated, and this exposes the weaknesses and difficulties of an immature civil society. Even when the contentious groups

are formed within the civil society sphere, they often lack resources such as money, power and influence with other prominent institutions to make successful use of proper contesting channels. As a result they may have little choice but to pursue their ability to disrupt public order as a 'negative inducement to protesting and bargaining' (McAdam *et al*, 1996: 14-5), in ways that are easily de-legitimised and repressed by the state under the guise of prioritising stability. Contentions rather reflect the fragmentation and divisions of civil society organisations, the penetration of the private sphere and the interference of the state sphere.

On the other hand, though pre-existing CSOs and related resources are largely inadequate, there is still sufficient space and opportunity for *in situ* or online social appropriation within the special Chinese characterised networking and power context. Contention is not only about group mobilisation and articulation, but also about how the political context or space shapes these processes and channels them and the consequences for how the power is balanced, negotiated and transferred among different social and political forces. This as a whole must nurture the bases for a vigorous civil society, delicately surmounting its cleavages and adjusting the state-society-individual relationship. Even if there are no particular organisations or structures for social and political contentions, politics is also taking place spontaneously with social appropriation. There are still authentic organisational dynamics in the later stages of collective actions, and these produce more political opportunities and framing processes than during the emergent phases (McAdam *et al*, 1996: 15). This provides a mode by which the first unorganised contentions can be moved into several possible processes, including being repressed by the government into silence, or being tolerated, ignored or repressed and then advancing together to form some formal or information structure to plan for the next contention, or being guided or channelled by the government and then joining the governmental or semi-governmental association to further protect certain rights. The civil society organisations can construct communications, interactions and associational relationships within the socially contentious mobilisation in this way. From the social contentions of different groups it can be observed that the functions and roles of civil society have been diversified and through a variety of components; their political consciousness has been enhanced, making civil society itself increasingly vibrant. In general, when a vibrant civil society together with its associational proliferation and civic merits has become a social reality in China, this has begun to transform the political culture and power structure, though still with Chinese characteristics of interference by arbitrary state power and fragmentation by

egoism or cleavages. Moreover, the transformation of the media and the development of cyberspace to a great extent enlarge the public sphere, and thus influence the political culture and power structure by providing the public with information to qualify for democratic participation, supporting the development of both the social contentions and civil society during the process of mobilisation and inter-related frameworks. So Chinese civil society is still vigorously presented in the popular contentious waves and it obtains fresh and powerful sources and energies from the self-consciousness, mobilisation and contentions of different social groups.

If the Chinese characteristics of civil society are applied, H2 can be partially verified. The growing participation in CSOs, the publicisation of *Guanxi* and the mobilisation of internet resources all contribute to a hybrid contentious politics in China. And this contentious politics directs to a further evolution of civil awareness, strength of people and a more institutionalised civil society. As power is further balanced, negotiated and transferred among different social and political forces, there will be greater demand for organisational resources, autonomy and rule of law to inspire a promising future for the civil society. However, organisation and association should still be the cornerstone and dominant factor for civil society. At the moment, the immaturity and fragmentation of civil society in this sense, featuring inter-penetration of the private and state spheres, has indeed made the relationship between civil society and contentions a fluctuating one in China.

H3: Contentious politics will lead to representative governance and democracy.

Q5 What are the features and trends of contentions of different social groups?
Q6 How does the Party-state respond to different contentions and how can we evaluate such state-society-individual interactions?

Chapters 6 to 9 have tried to justify this core hypothesis of the thesis with a large collection of empirical evidence as well as document support. This has provided insightful deductive arguments to verify H3, identifying the prospects of contentious politics to a pro-democracy course in China after reviewing and sifting the vast scope of contentious activities and evaluating their interplay with the Party-state. Based on the grand theoretical model as shown

in Figure 1, I've conducted a two-way flow of discussion via the two research questions. For Q5, the direction of analysis is from the macro opportunity structure and meso-level mobilisation to record the micro framing of contentions. It's about how individual and collective grievances actually turn into contentious activities, and how different groups mobilise resources, frame contentious strategies and discourse and activate cultural and emotional processes. The subjects targeted in this research are three social groups – intellectuals, labourers and religious group – who were selected based on their unique attributes and positions in the changing society, their tendency to express their grievance, their associational bases, their frequency of taking actions and their influences.

Based on the data from fieldwork and documentation, the obvious causes and triggers of the grievances and contentious activities of peasants are land requisition, power abuse by local cadres, conflicts around grassroots elections and self-governance, lack of social security and environmental problems; for migrant workers the main issues are unpaid wages and compensation, problems with temporary residence permits, difficulties in children's education and conflicts with city residents; for laid-off workers concerns are also unpaid wages and other welfare funds, unregulated privatisation of SOEs, corrupt managers and officials, house eviction and arbitrary urban administration. As a whole group, labourers can be characterised as both scattering and gathering, which greatly affects their contentious status and strategy. The loose organisational base or even a lack in organisational resources determines that the cost of establishing a formal leadership, collective strategy and consensus is relatively high amongst the dispersed labourers who are more concerned about their individual rights. *Weiquan* (rights-defending) organisations among migrant workers, peasants and laid-off workers are prevailing, and some involve people of other social status and classes. The catalyst for the emergence and growth of such popular organisations is the increase in interest and *weiquan* consciousness of labourers. In the contemporary context, familiarity with the laws and policies is becoming increasingly important. However, using the weapons of the law often means seeking administrative intervention rather than appealing through the courts. Petitions to the higher administrative level (*shangfang*) also require the framing of the art of contentions including timing, place, opportunity, number of petitioners and presentations, in order to both raise the higher authority's attention and save face for it. Generally there is still a high threshold for labourers to defend their rights through channels provided by the authorities, which means the normal use of administrative or legal resorts by individuals is

highly costly and inefficient.

Though the interview results have shown that labourers are most cautious in taking contentions on their own, they are more willing and courageous when organised and led by activist leaders in taking collective measures. They are increasingly resorting to other groups and resources for resolution, representation and help, such as the local people's congress representatives, good governors (*qingguan*), lawyers, journalists, professors and even foreigners. Sometimes these groups outside labour circles are third parties in the contentious episodes and at other times they are fully engaged, taking the leading role in the beginning or in the middle of the contentions for mobilisation and strategic framing. The majority of labourers' contentions are still traditional and spontaneous, focusing on economic issues, targeting particular enterprises and suffering from the disadvantaged status in lack of modern organisational resources and negotiation techniques. Such localised and small-scale contentions are basically insufficient to wield overt political threats towards the authorities, nor are they enough to exert much pressure for the government officials to act and implement complete justice for them.

When it comes to the contentions of the intellectual group, we see that these sub-groups of scholars, students, lawyers, journalists and dissidents have largely shared in and contributed to the new social tendency of internet contentions, and in different forms – in social-political, nationalist or pro-democratic movements. As shown in a number of cases studied in Chapter 7, the internet can facilitate the formation of public opinion, the orchestration of popular political movements and the production of a trans-boundary public sphere. The virtual identity of netizens and the real identities of intellectuals have combined by means of disseminating information, organising online petitions and offline protests, and in turn extracting varying degrees of responsiveness and accountability from the authorities and affecting government decision making on important social, political, economic and diplomatic issues (Tai, 2006). The phenomenon of 'experts turning to the internet' is also more and more common. Intellectuals have begun to rethink their own academic and professional endeavours and reassess the aims and obligations of their critical engagement for social-political change under new circumstances. Celebrities from elite intellectuals and popular intellectuals have both their space and influence on the internet and the internet has blurred such different variations. The internet in fact has created more connections, communication and cooperation between

the local political elite and intellectuals. Different online behaviours such as the utilisation of the human flesh search engine are under constant scrutiny in the light to echo the merits of a free public sphere for civil society in promotion of democracy, sense of responsibility, bonds of trust, self-reflection, justice and other public virtues.

The intellectual religious contentions have presented the changing nature of the relationship between religious beliefs, intellectual and popular consciousness and CPC problems of governance. As for the multi-directions of the Chinese Christian movement, the intellectuals' role of enlightenment has overlapped with their Christian identity when they have strived for democracy, for religious freedom and human rights and for the meaning of life and ultimate concern. The religious groups such as Falun Gong claim that they have no political ambitions, but their movement can impact the political discourse and contribute to the political transition in China as well, as indicated in the history of their contention with all kinds of innovative strategies. Public responses both inside and outside China towards the Falun Gong movement and governmental suppression are still very diverse. It is obvious that Falun Gong's views and arguments are absent and easily repressed by the powerful state propaganda, policy and police machinery from the beginning of the crackdown.

In summary, the contentious activities of different groups vary from each other to a great extent. At the same time, they have all formed a set of critical and constructive conceptualisations of their own, as well as their contentious strategies, repertoires and innovations of actions to influence the authority, the media, public discourse and social culture. In addition, there is a growing tendency for the inter-group interaction and collaborations in contentious politics, which has also delicately surmounted the cleavages of civil society. Indeed, people's contentious activities in China have led to political changes; to answer the question whether it is leading to representative governance and democracy still needs to take into account the Party-state responses to contentions.

As for Q6, a disintegration of Party-state responses to each group's contentions shows that the flow of analysis goes from contentious politics to restructuring individual-society-state relationships, from the contentious activities taking place at the grassroots level to a generalisation of their implications for the macro transformation of the government and the political system. Chinese authorities have placed different levels of emphasis in terms of the

main three strategies – co-optation, toleration and control – with respect to each group. Based on the conceptualisation of how different cases fit together with regards to the response of the authorities, such ranking of strategic emphases indicates the activity and capacity of the Party-state as well as its passivity and limits.

The activity and capacity of the Party-state is demonstrated by its flexibility and adaptability, and its strength of control. The authorities have been both adept and sophisticated at moulding ideology and policies to fit practical reality. Meanwhile, there are certain premises and boundaries that cannot be compromised by the Party-state, As a result, dissident voices have been marginalised; self-censorship has been established within the public both mentally and physically, and in a sense the Chinese Communist leadership is holding a diverse China together, having contentions largely under control and maintaining an orderly and stable society.

On the other hand, the passivity and limits of the Party-state can also be understood with regard to the facts of ongoing resistance, popular cynicism and the great incoherence and ineffectiveness of the official responses themselves. The 'harmonious society' sentiments have given rise to ironic criticisms of the government for the continuous disharmonious social problems and its inability to manage conflicts. The implementation of pro-people policies, in terms of pension, education, healthcare and housing and to guarantee social equality and justice, has often failed to meet people's expectations. As for the complaint and petition system, only a small percentage of those who file grievances this way ever have their problems resolved. Additionally, during the official pacification or controlling actions applied to different contentions, law often gives way to administrative power while the dysfunction of bureaucracies is unavoidable without rule of law and democratic supervision. Though the dissenting voices have been marginalised due to the official controlling strategies, at the same time they are driven underground or outside of China, and are even becoming the seeds for mobilisation into new secret societies or the basis for miscommunications between Chinese and international society.

The central-local inconstancy is remarkable. The central authorities and activists often find themselves to be partners in the same struggle against local government. Petitioners travel to Beijing in large numbers with the belief that central government officials will be more

responsive than the local ones, while Beijing, unable to cope with the increasing flood, is making various efforts to force local officials to take greater responsibility. When it came to carrying out the policies or commands from the central authorities, the local governments in fact have created their own space to bargain, considered to be more concerned with regional interests and profits, and some even overtly agree but are covertly opposed to the central instruction. The responses were also different from place to place depending on the regional development of economy, politics and society.

Characterised by publicity, openness, interactivity, diversity, and instantaneity, network media have changed the logic of the public agenda setting (Wang, 2008). There is evidence to suggest the authorities as a whole have become more open, receptive and responsive. Netizens' collective civic wisdom is increasingly taken into account by the authorities, as the status and impact of netizens has become more and more significant and powerful in Chinese social life along with the popularity and development of the internet. Ordinary people may not be highly educated, but if they can have all the information and conduct a full discussion, their collective judgment is likely to be better than that of the government alone, and their decisions will be in the best interests of the majority of the people. As public opinions on the internet are formed, disseminated, selected and explored through online bulletin boards, forums, chat rooms, postings and blogs on numerous Chinese websites, the highest level of central government has its own team and websters to collect information, opinions and suggestions online. Internet polls, surveys and responses on bulletin boards are also gradually having a real influence. Slowly maturing public opinions have promoted the willingness of the Chinese government to take action on many occasions to address issues of concern to Chinese netizens (Tai, 2006: xiii).

The Party-state is contradicting in itself. It is problematic to co-opt all social groups for the interests of the ruling party and for the purpose of ruling. It is also paradoxical to make efforts to maintain political control while preserving an image of tolerance. The authorities try to achieve contentions management through self-imposed censorship and a set of moulding and combining responsive strategies. The process of local implementation and practice of power towards varied contentions is also questionable; cases of abuse are frequent. The relationship between the state and society contains missing links and a lack of mutual understanding and reflection. This is why the co-optation – toleration – control strategies don't work very well to

channel the storms of popular grievance, nor do they work consistently to coordinate conflicting interests among different hierarchies of governance.

In conclusion, the political system has made significant adaptations by performing new functions and strengthening regulatory capacity to the challenges of an increasingly diverse society. Because of the interaction between the authorities and different contentious groups, the power structure has been changed to some extent, which has changed the political-ideological environment and has urged the Party-state to improve governance and to be more representative. However, based on the examination of state responses to the contentions of different groups at both central and local levels, the co-optation – toleration – control strategies work neither coherently nor effectively. Adaptive moulding is the most significant feature of these strategies, which has short-term gains, but it cannot eradicate the roots of the problem or prevent grievances from becoming accumulated, organised and publicised into large-scaled contention. The mounting contentions and challenges have shown that rule of law and democracy, as a way to transform the existing legal and political system, are the only alternatives to resolve and channel the unstoppable wave of contentions in the long term, leading to social justice, good governance with transparency and accountability and protection of freedom.

Contention can render the authorities more representative, make them recognise and communicate with the civil society and it can limit the private corruption and penetration, in a movement towards a sincere regime of people's democracy. However, it can also reflect the fragmentation of both civil society and the authorities, and a deviated individual-society-state relationship by the penetration of private informal networks or strong state dominance, as shown by the interview results. Without an institutionalised fulfilment of the rule of law, social relations and mass media, and in particular the internet, have played more important roles in contentious politics. However, the hypothesis that contentious politics will lead to a robust civil society and a representative government, and finally democracy, cannot be fully verified considering the complexity of Chinese characteristics and the fact that society is still weak in China. Arguably the power and wisdom of the public should be further explored and their potential to challenge the authorities turned into positive strength to establish a better political and governing system. Meanwhile, the Party-state should realise that, with the basic single-Party authoritarianism remaining intact, maintained and even strengthened, the

problems of modernisation cannot be fully solved by the positive actions that it has already taken or the pro-democracy changes that it has made; serious political institutional reform should be stepped forward. Only by the combination of both bottom-up and top-down efforts will contentions be firmly and positively linked to democratisation in China.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Introduction Letter for Interview

This letter is to introduce **Ying Yu**, who is a 2nd year PhD student in Politics at Durham University, UK and who is working as a fieldwork interviewer for the research project *Assessment of China's Realities, Problems, Contentious Activities and Party-State Responses*. I, David Kerr, am her PhD supervisor.

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this research. The interview will take up to 40 minutes. The interviewer will ask you questions about your opinions and experiences on China's realities and problems. In particular, we are interested in your attitudes towards the current waves of contentions and your evaluation on the Party-state reactions. There are no right or wrong answers – we would like to hear whatever you have to say. If you feel uncomfortable about any of the questions and you don't want to answer them, please just let the interviewer know and she will move on to the next question.

The interviewer will ask to record the interview and also take some notes during it. This is to help us learn as much as possible from what you have to say.

Any information that you tell us will be treated with the strictest confidentiality and anonymity. This means that only the researcher will use the information. You don't have to give your full name and your contact details will not be shared with anyone else. In all the outcome reports, we will make sure that you cannot be identified. If you have any concerns during or after the interview, you have the right to withdraw from the research or ask for information you provided to not be used.

You may contact me or Ying Yu (*ying.yu@durham.ac.uk*) at any time if you wish to talk about the research. Thanks again for your time and help.

Yours sincerely,

(Signature)

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Appendix 2: Questionnaire (English version)

Part 1 Demographic questions:

1. Sex: M/F
2. Age
   - ◆ 20-30
   - ◆ 31-40
   - ◆ 41-50
   - ◆ 51-60
3. Place of birth
   - ◆ Beijing
   - ◆ Wuhan
   - ◆ Other cities in Hubei province
   - ◆ Provinces except Beijing and Hubei
4. Current residence
   - ◆ Beijing
   - ◆ Wuhan
   - ◆ North America
   - ◆ Europe
5. Educational level
   - ◆ Primary school
   - ◆ Junior high school
   - ◆ Senior high school
   - ◆ Vocational school
   - ◆ Diploma
   - ◆ Bachelor
   - ◆ Master
   - ◆ PhD
6. Occupation
7. Political affiliation
   - ◆ CPC member
   - ◆ Youth League member
   - ◆ Member of other parties
   - ◆ None
8. Religious affiliation
   - ◆ Catholic/Christian

- ♦ Buddhist
- ♦ Falun Gong
- ♦ None/Atheist

Part 2 The environment for contentious activities:

9. (A) Are you interested in China's national and international situation? (Level 1-5)

10. (A) In what ways do you obtain or exchange such information?
    - ♦ TV
    - ♦ Radio
    - ♦ Newspapers
    - ♦ Magazines
    - ♦ Community or street bulletin board
    - ♦ Internet – websites/forums/blogs
    - ♦ Family and friends
    - ♦ Neighbours
    - ♦ Workmates
    - ♦ Members from the same organisation

11. (B) a. The range of political subjects in China:

International position & relations; Reunification with Taiwan; Minority ethnics and races; Democracy & human rights; Party & state leadership; Governments & bureaucracies; NPC & elections at all levels; Democratic parties & CPPCC; Policy making & implementation; Rule of law; Political rights & participation; Ideological & political education; Patriotism & nationalism; Political culture & bureaucratism; Corruption; Party factionalism; Political taboos

b. The range of economical subjects in China:

Comprehensive national strength; Market economy; Macro regulation & control; Open-up & international market; Reform of SOEs; Private & civil enterprises; Job market & the recruitment; Pension & welfare; The problems of agriculture; Financial & stock market; Real estate market; Environment & resources; Business competition & ethics; Poor-rich gap; Fake goods & poor quality; Power-money exchange; Economic crime

c. The range of social-cultural subjects in China:

Mass media; Official & civil organisations; Charities & endowments; Marriage & family; Human relations; Traditional & modern culture; Religions & beliefs; Social ethics & morality; Social ethos & public opinion; Entertainments; Problem of population; Migration & social mobility; Stratification of social status; Problem of education; Academic corruption; Juvenile delinquency; Drugs, gambling & pornography; Gangsterdom

In what area do you think the greatest changes have taken place? Which aspects are you most concerned about? What do you think are the biggest problems? What are you most satisfied/dissatisfied

with? (C) What aspects relate most closely to your life? What aspects have greatest influence on your life either in good or negative way?

12. (D) What most easily trigger people's and your grievances? Under what circumstances are people and you more likely to take contention?

13. (E) Do you reckon yourself as a person caring about this country and its people? Do you have a sense of national pride and esteem (level 1-5)? Do you have a sense of social justice (level 1-5)? Will you have grievances when knowing anything unequal or unjust?

14. (E) What do you value most and pursue in your life (money, power, prestige, faith, ideals, morality, family, social justice, societal welfare, national prosperity, etc.)? Have you ever changed your values and beliefs (if yes, what are the influential factors – family, friends, celebrities, changing society, religion, media, the internet, etc.)?

Part 3 State-society-individual relations:

15. (F) What kinds of people make up of your networks? How are your relationships with others (frequency of contact)? How do you understand the function and influence of informal networks and relationships (*guanxi*) in your own life and in China?

16. (G) What kinds of organisations do you belong to? What role do you play and what are the rights and responsibilities in such organisation(s)?
    ♦ Farmer/fisherman group or cooperative
    ♦ Other production group
    ♦ Business association
    ♦ Professional association
    ♦ Academic and alumni association
    ♦ All-China Federation of Trade Unions
    ♦ All-China Women's Federation
    ♦ Neighbourhood/village committee
    ♦ Community service group
    ♦ Township-based community group
    ♦ Ethnic-based community group
    ♦ Religious or spiritual group
    ♦ Political group
    ♦ Cultural group or association
    ♦ Burial society or festival society
    ♦ Finance, credit or saving group
    ♦ Education group
    ♦ Health and medicine group
    ♦ Sports group

- ♦ Youth volunteer group
- ♦ NGO or civic group
- ♦ Other groups

17. (G) There are differences in characteristics: age (generation), gender, place of birth, residence (and duration), dialects, ethnic background, education, occupation, income, social status, religious and political beliefs. To what extent do any such differences divide your organisations?

18. (H) How deep is the relationship within your organisations and how is the leadership? Do you trust each other? Will you have financial linkage or support with other members? Did you ever take any collective actions within your organisations for any collective reasons? Did you participate in any collective actions organised by other organisations?

19. (I) Do you think people have the right to form organisations freely? Have you ever heard or experienced the governmental interference in your organisation or in others? Did you feel or experience any (unpleasant) interference from the state power in any area of your own life?

20. (J) Do you trust or support the central/local government and the Communist party? How did you show your support? When was the last time you got to vote? Do you have your own standard for voting? Did you have any contact with the governors or officials? Were they efficient in solving problems?

Part 4 Contentious activities and the Party-state responses:

21. (K) What are your personal life standards? What identity/status do you categorise yourself into? Are you satisfied with your status quo? What are you most worried about? Do you think you can make some changes to your family or the society by yourself? What occurrences are most likely to trigger your grievance?

22. (L) What would you like to do (did you do) to release grievances over anything?
- ♦ Give vent or resort to families and friends
- ♦ Use the internet to sign petitions and express opinions
- ♦ Sign petitions, give statements or speeches in public
- ♦ Expose to the media
- ♦ Resort to the judiciary or consult with solicitors
- ♦ Appeal to the local or higher governmental department
- ♦ Resort to the civil organisations
- ♦ Establish interest group with other victims
- ♦ Participate in collective strike, demonstration, parade, sit-in, etc.
- ♦ Take extreme, violent or armed actions

23. (M) People may take all the channels to express and release grievance. Do you think people have the right to take contentions? What are your attitudes and responses towards contentious activities of different groups?
- ♦ Object stoutly

- ♦ Blame
- ♦ Not agree or object
- ♦ Be indifferent
- ♦ According to the specific condition
- ♦ Identify with
- ♦ Understand
- ♦ Sympathise
- ♦ Support and help
- ♦ Participate in

24. (N) The government may have different responses towards different contentions. What kinds of responses have you been aware of? To what extent do you agree with what the government has said or done?

- ♦ Establish specific department
- ♦ Tolerate
- ♦ Pacify
- ♦ Cooperate
- ♦ Provide financial support
- ♦ Propagate in the main media
- ♦ Resolve problems effectively
- ♦ Delay in problem-resolving
- ♦ Ignore
- ♦ Criticise in the main media
- ♦ Blank off information
- ♦ Set on surveillance
- ♦ Rummage
- ♦ Threaten
- ♦ Restrict
- ♦ Prohibit
- ♦ Imprison
- ♦ Amerce
- ♦ Put in labourer camp
- ♦ Repress (with arms)

Appendix 3: Questionnaire (Chinese version)

中国当代社会现状及问题，社会抗争及政府应对措施评估

知识分子，劳工及宗教人士访谈——提问指南

第一部分：基本情况

01．性别

02．出生年份（请问您是几几年出生的？）

03．出生地

04．居住地（按时间顺序至今）

05．教育程度

06．职业（按时间顺序至今）

07．政治面貌（提供选项：共产党员［包括发展对象］，共青团员，其他党派，普通群众）

08．宗教信仰及倾向

第二部分：社会现状及问题

09．您对中国国家大事及新闻感兴趣吗？（级别 1-5）

10．您会通过那些途径获取和交流有关信息（国内与国外有何不同，目前居住地和家乡有何不同）？（提供相关选项：电视，广播，报纸，杂志，社区或街头宣传栏，网络新闻，和家人朋友谈论，和工作单位同事或其他组织成员谈论，网上交流等）

11．a. 中国政治的有关话题（制成卡片）：国际地位与国际关系，民主与人权，党和国家领导人，政府机关及公务员，各级选举与人大，其他党派与政协，政策的制定与执行，依法治国（立法，执法，守法），政治权利（强调自由言论，结社，示威，游行）与政治参与（居民委员会，基层选举，权力监督），思想政治教育，爱国主义与民族主义，意识形态（马列主义毛泽东思想邓小平理论江泽民"三个代表"胡锦涛"和谐社会"），官僚主义，公款消费，政治禁忌，政治犯，劳改制度，贪污腐败，派系之争。

b. 中国经济的有关话题（制成卡片）：综合国力，市场经济与宏观调控（市场规范，国家政策），对外开放（投资与贸易，走私），国企改革（国有资产流失，下岗职工），民营企业（乡镇企业），就业市场与人才需求，最低收入与社会保障（包括医疗），三农问题，金融市场，证券市场，住房市场，环境与资源，贫富差距，假冒伪劣（商品，服务），公共基础设施，经济伦理（游戏规则，致富手段），行业竞争（垄断行业，一窝蜂现象），钱权交易，经济犯罪（偷税漏税，高科技犯罪）。

c. 中国社会文化的有关话题（制成卡片）：大众传媒（政府宣传与口号，媒体自由，媒体腐

败），人口问题（计划生育，老年化，民工潮，贫困人口，人口买卖），阶层地位（机会）差距，教育问题（农村教育，应试教育，高等教育，大学扩招），学术腐败，婚姻家庭，青少年犯罪，毒品赌博和色情行业，黑社会组织（官黑结合），政府组织与协会（妇联，工会等），民间组织与协会，慈善捐助，人际关系，娱乐生活，社会风气，伦理道德素质，宗教信仰，传统与现代文化。

您对哪些方面最感兴趣，了解和感触最多（少），最（不）满意，和您的生活关系最（不）密切？哪些方面问题最严重，争议最大，最易激起民愤甚至民众的抗争行为？

12. 您觉得自己是忧国忧民的人吗？您的民族自豪感和自尊心强吗？（民族意识）您的社会正义感强吗？家人朋友怎样评价？

13. 您目前信奉和遵循怎样的价值观（您认为对您很有价值的，您在努力追寻的）？（金钱，权力，信仰，理想，道德，社会公益与个人利益等）您的观念曾经发生过改变吗？影响因素有哪些？（家人朋友，社会的变化，媒体，网络等）

第三部分：组织团体及国家-社会-个人关系

14. a. 您有参加过任何长期或临时的，正式的或非正式的组织（或协会）吗？该组织在社会中有怎样的作用和功能？参与人数或会员有多少？您有担任任何组织和领袖工作吗？您在组织中有何权利和义务？（提供选项，制成卡片：农，林，渔业合作组织，其他行业生产组，商会，职业性团体与协会［企业家，医生，教师，军人等］，学术性组织或校友会，工会，妇联，村民/居民委员会，社区服务组织，地域性老乡会，少数民族组织，宗教性组织，政治性组织［包括政党学习小组，时政讨论会，社会运动组织等］，文化艺术协会，婚葬节庆组织，理财信用小组，教育性组织［家长会等］，健康医疗组织，体育运动组织，青年志愿组织，非政府慈善福利组织，其他。）

b. 您所在组织的成员中，他们在性别，年龄（代际），民族，籍贯，居住地及年限，语言，教育程度，职业，收入，社会地位，宗教信仰，政党和政治倾向上差异大吗？（可制成卡片）哪些分歧会导致组织内部的矛盾？有任何歧视的态度和行为吗？

c. 您有参加组织中的任何集体活动吗？您有经历过任何为了社区（或团体）利益或为了解决社区（或团体）问题的群众自发的集体活动吗（包括共同向有关政府部门上访）？在集体活动中人们的合作性强吗？

d. 您信赖组织中的领袖以及其他成员吗？如果您经济上有困难会向他们求助吗，相反的，您会向他们提供经济援助吗？

15. 您信赖和支持中央和地方政府吗？（级别 1-5）两者您认为有很大区别吗？您会如何表示您的支持？您认为政府办事效率如何？您最近一次选举或投票是什么时候？您有自己的选举和投票标准吗？

第四部分：社会抗争及政府应对措施

16. 您对于自己和家人的生活，目前最担忧的事情有哪些？认为可以（单单）靠自己的努力改变现状吗？

17. 当您有任何不满或遭遇任何困难时，您会怎么做？（向家人朋友发泄和求助，公开发表言论［网上签名论坛聊天室部落格，公共场合发表演说，向媒体记者曝光或在报刊杂志发表文章，是否匿名］，向司法部门和律师咨询求助，向当地或上级政府部门上访投诉，向有关的民间组织求助，联合其他受害者建立共同的利益团体，支持和参与罢工示威游行静坐绝食等抗议活动，采取极端的武装抗议。可制成卡片。）

18. 您怎么看待八九民运（官方的说法），反美反日，法轮功，罢工，上访以及各种群体事件？您觉得目前人民的抗争行为形势如何？

19. 对于您本阶层的抗争行为，您认为原因有哪些，对象有哪些，采取的形式有哪些？一般结果如何？有何社会影响？你的态度及相应的做法——坚决反对，指责，不赞同，漠不关心，视情况而定，认可，理解，同情，援助，支持，参与（可制成卡片）。您在怎样的情况下有可能参与？政府态度和应对措施——态度略，措施包括成立专门部门，舆论宣传，批判，信息封锁，宽容，安抚，合作，支援，有效解决，拖延，不理会，监视，搜查，威胁，限制，监禁，经济处罚，劳教，禁止，武装冲突，镇压。您认为中央和地方政府在态度和处理上有区别吗？您怎么看待政府的行为？

20. 您了解其他阶层的抗争行为吗？问题同上。

21. 您认为政府处理方式不同的标准是什么？

Appendix 4: Categorisation of Respondents Interviewed

No.	Interviewee (Labourer)	Place of Interview	Date of Interview
1.	A migrant waiter	Beijing	26/6/06
2.	A migrant waitress	Beijing	26/6/06
3.	A migrant waiter	Beijing	26/6/06
4.	A migrant construction worker	Beijing	27/6/06
5.	A migrant construction worker	Beijing	27/6/06
6.	A migrant construction worker	Beijing	27/6/06
7.	A migrant porter	Beijing	30/6/06
8.	A migrant construction worker	Beijing	3/7/06
9.	A migrant hairdressing apprentice	Beijing	4/7/06
10.	A laid-off worker	Beijing	4/7/06
11.	A laid-off worker	Beijing	6/7/06
12.	A laid-off worker	Beijing	7/7/06
13.	A laid-off worker	Beijing	8/7/06
14.	A laid-off worker	Beijing	8/7/06
15.	A laid-off worker	Beijing	12/7/06
16.	A laid-off worker	Beijing	12/7/06
17.	A laid-off worker	Beijing	13/7/06
18.	A white-collar worker	Beijing	13/7/06
19.	A white-collar worker	Beijing	14/7/06
20.	A white-collar worker	Beijing	14/7/06
21.	A white-collar worker	Beijing	15/7/06
22.	A white-collar worker	Beijing	15/7/06
23.	A white-collar worker	Beijing	15/7/06
24.	A migrant waiter	Wuhan	17/7/06
25.	A migrant waitress	Wuhan	17/7/06
26.	A migrant porter	Wuhan	17/7/06
27.	A migrant construction worker	Wuhan	17/7/06
28.	A migrant construction worker	Wuhan	18/7/06
29.	A migrant construction worker	Wuhan	18/7/06
30.	A migrant construction worker	Wuhan	18/7/06
31.	A migrant hairdressing apprentice	Wuhan	24/7/06
32.	A laid-off worker	Wuhan	24/7/06
33.	A laid-off worker	Wuhan	25/7/06
34.	A laid-off worker	Wuhan	25/7/06

No.		Place of Interview	Date of Interview
35.	A laid-off worker	Wuhan	27/7/06
36.	A laid-off worker	Wuhan	27/7/06
37.	A laid-off worker	Wuhan	28/7/06
38.	A laid-off worker	Wuhan	28/7/06
39.	A white-collar worker	Wuhan	31/7/06
40.	A white-collar worker	Wuhan	31/7/06
41.	A white-collar worker	Wuhan	1/8/06
42.	A white-collar worker	Wuhan	2/8/06
43.	A white-collar worker	Wuhan	3/8/06
No.	**Interviewee (Intellectual)**	**Place of Interview**	**Date of Interview**
44.	Beijing University student	Beijing	28/6/06
45.	Beijing University student	Beijing	28/6/06
46.	Beijing University lecturer	Beijing	28/6/06
47.	Beijing University lecturer	Beijing	28/6/06
48.	Qinghua University student	Beijing	29/6/06
49.	Qinghua University student	Beijing	29/6/06
50.	Qinghua University student	Beijing	29/6/06
51.	Qinghua University professor	Beijing	29/6/06
52.	Renmin University student	Beijing	5/7/06
53.	Renmin University student	Beijing	5/7/06
54.	Renmin University student	Beijing	5/7/06
55.	Renmin University student	Beijing	5/7/06
56.	Beijing Normal University student	Beijing	7/7/06
57.	Beijing Technology University student	Beijing	8/7/06
58.	Capital Normal University lecturer	Beijing	10/7/06
59.	CASS student	Beijing	11/7/06
60.	CASS student	Beijing	11/7/06
61.	CASS researcher	Beijing	12/7/06
62.	A journalist	Beijing	12/7/06
63.	A lawyer	Beijing	13/7/06
64.	A lawyer	Beijing	13/7/06
65.	A journalist	Beijing	14/7/06
66.	Huazhong Normal University student	Wuhan	18/7/06
67.	Wuhan University student	Wuhan	19/7/06
68.	Wuhan University student	Wuhan	19/7/06
69.	Wuhan University lecturer	Wuhan	19/7/06

No.	Interviewee	Place of Interview	Date of Interview
70.	Wuhan University professor	Wuhan	19/7/06
71.	Huazhong Normal University student	Wuhan	20/7/06
72.	Huazhong Normal University student	Wuhan	20/7/06
73.	Huazhong Normal University lecturer	Wuhan	20/7/06
74.	Wuhan University of Science and Technology student	Wuhan	21/7/06
75.	Wuhan University of Science and Technology student	Wuhan	21/7/06
76.	Wuhan University of Science and Technology student	Wuhan	21/7/06
77.	Wuhan University of Science and Technology lecturer	Wuhan	21/7/06
78.	Hubei University student	Wuhan	22/7/06
79.	Hubei University student	Wuhan	22/7/06
80.	China University of Geoscience student	Wuhan	24/7/06
81.	Zhongnan University of Finance and Economics student	Wuhan	25/7/06
82.	A lawyer	Wuhan	26/7/06
83.	A lawyer	Wuhan	28/7/06
84.	A journalist	Wuhan	31/7/06
85.	A journalist	Wuhan	1/8/06
86.	A journalist in UK	England (email)	17/8/06
87.	A journalist In USA	England (email)	18/8/06
88.	A lawyer in USA	England (email)	21/8/06
89.	A lecturer in the UK	England (email)	22/8/06
90.	A lecturer in The USA	England (email)	23/8/06
No.	**Interviewee (Religious Group)**	**Place of Interview**	**Date of Interview**
91.	A Christian student	Beijing	30/6/06
92.	A Protestant minister	Beijing	2/7/06
93.	A Protestant minister	Beijing	3/7/06
94.	A Christian retiree	Beijing	6/7/06
95.	A Christian entrepreneur	Beijing	6/7/06
96.	A Catholic minister	Beijing	9/7/06
97.	A Catholic nun	Beijing	9/7/06
98.	A Buddhist monk	Beijing	10/7/06
99.	A Buddhist monk	Beijing	11/7/06
100.	A Buddhist monk	Beijing	16/7/06
101.	A Christian student	Wuhan	20/7/06
102.	A Christian student	Wuhan	26/7/06
103.	A Catholic minister	Wuhan	27/7/06
104.	A Protestant minister	Wuhan	2/8/06

No.	Interviewee	Place of Interview	Date of Interview
105.	A Buddhist monk	Wuhan	3/8/06
106.	A Falun Gong entrepreneur in Canada	England (email)	24/8/06
107.	A Falun Gong journalist in Canada	England (email)	25/8/06
108.	A Falun Gong retiree in Canada	England (email)	28/8/06
109.	A Falun Gong student in France	England (email)	30/8/06
110.	A Falun Gong lawyer in France	England (email)	31/8/06
No.	**Interviewee (Entrepreneur)**	**Place of Interview**	**Date of Interview**
111.	A business owner	Beijing	30/6/06
112.	A senior manager	Beijing	8/7/06
113.	A business owner	Beijing	10/7/06
114.	A business owner	Wuhan	20/7/06
115.	A senior manager	Wuhan	22/7/06
No.	**Interviewee (Cadre)**	**Place of Interview**	**Date of Interview**
116.	A community cadre	Beijing	28/6/06
117.	A district government official	Beijing	1/7/07
118.	A district government official	Beijing	10/7/06
119.	A community cadre	Wuhan	21/7/06
120.	A district government official	Wuhan	26/7/06

Appendix 5: Typical Transcripts (abbreviated)

Migrant worker on construction site in Beijing (interviewee number 4)

Female, aged 39, from Xiaogan, Hubei province, residing in Beijing, junior high school, no political or religious affiliation, administrator in catering and accommodation service for migrant workers at the construction field. No involvement in any organisations.

Religious affiliation:

There are many people believing in Christianity in my hometown. My sister and aunty are Christians, describing this faith as perfect and even persuading me to convert. But after reading Bible for two hours, I really had no interest in Jesus – a foreigner. There are some other people worshipping Buddha and Kwan-yin in the temples. I had no interest in Buddhism either.

Information exchange:

I am keen on news and want to know about the current affairs. I watch the 30-minute CCTV news network broadcast at 7pm every night. But we have only one TV in my room on this site, and there are almost no newspapers or magazines to buy as we are far from the city centre. Seldom did I discuss the news with my workmates and other migrant workers, who were really pitiful and had little access to information. This place is kind of isolated from the outside.

Actually I hate the Internet, which especially did harm to children. My son was 14 years old and he was addicted to the Internet games. I felt the regulation was so loose for the Cyber café that underage children were still allowed to enter. Once I even reported the case to the security authorities, but there were too many Cyber cafés in the town. At last I had to transfer my son to the village school where my mum lived and the environment is much simpler. I think this problem is serious everywhere and many parents are so headache.

Economy:

I found one of the most serious problems in economy is the Poor-rich gap, which is so huge. Power-money exchanges are particularly severe and everywhere, so are the fake goods, as you

cannot find a real thing of a real brand in our village shop. Rural problem is another big problem. Those peasants especially the elders are so pitiful as they don't have any social security or welfare. Their children also earn very little through farming. I also saw some old men of over 70 years' age still doing farm work in the field and I really sympathised them. Yes the government has done quite a lot to solve the rural problems such as regulating the taxation. But I think the government should provide a life guarantee for people over 60 or 70 in the countryside. They are also human beings, aren't they? However, not many people appeal for them to the higher authorities and they themselves just don't have the consciousness to demand and live to their own traditions generation after generation.

Society and culture:

Population is a huge problem; especially in the rural area the ratio between male and female is greatly unbalanced. For example, there are 80 students in my son's class (Level 7) – 60 boys and 20 girls. I'm really very worried about this problem in the countryside and the future effects on marriage since the peasant families still prefer males than females. The migrant workers did receive discrimination in the big cities especially 10 years ago when I first come, but the situation has been improved now. Maybe it's the transformation of my own mindset – more calm and peaceful: I AM a migrant, then what's wrong with that? Now it is so popular in the rural areas that husband and wife go to cities to work and leave our children and old parents at home, 80% is the case.

Education is the question I'm most concerned: the entrance mark for the students in Beijing to go to Beida, Qinghua is 200 degrees lower than it is for Hubei students. That's a huge and unfair difference! I really want to transfer my son's Household Register to Beijing. But it's nearly impossible after I tried several channels and relation networks. My husband and I worked here for over ten years and it's still impossible for such transfer. I don't know if buying house property would entitle me a Beijing Household Register. I cannot do anything that is not certain enough. There are just 5 years to go for my son to attend the entrance examination. I felt rather helpless in this issue. Another problem in educational system is the random educational charge. When my son went to primary school in Xiaogan, the school charged regularly without clear explanations or receipts. But the situation in Beijing schools is much better. My old sister has transferred her child's Household Register to Beijing through networking, buying two houses and lots of money. I feel every aspect of society in Beijing is

more advanced than in my hometown, in particular the quality and civilisation of people. I really want my son to live in Beijing – the metropolitan city in the future.

Drugs are really harmful and rampant especially in my hometown Xiaogan. My nephew who was only 20 has become a drug abuser, failing to give it up for 5 to 6 times and now his family is almost broken.

Politics:

(After looking through the subjects, she said:) we migrant workers are the lowest stratums of the society. We only know the outside world through TV news, and most workers themselves don't have such access. We don't know much about how the politics is operating. We have no social security, no medical insurance, no retirement income and we have so many future worries. For the politics and policies, I only care about those that have a direct impact on peasants or migrant workers' life. I'm also concerned about the rule of law and legislation. My favourite TV program is Focus Interview, which talks in truth and expose many unknown cases and the dark side of the society.

Life is so difficult. In my childhood, we even have no rice to eat (about 25 years ago). Now people can live a life at a subsistent level expect those who have no kin and cannot support themselves. Then you cannot blame those peasants who want a male heir even they know the number of male largely exceeds that of female. So the family planning policy cannot be completely implemented if the government doesn't reform the rural welfare system. Though people have changed their mindset and don't want to have many children now, the only child must be a boy – no family would cease bearing child if the first-born is a girl. There is one good point with the policy implementation that pregnant women in the countryside are not allowed to have B-Ultrasound Examination, so that there are less abortion of babies. Another problem is the medical care in the countryside – the worst condition you can imagine. People would choose to go to the big or medium hospitals in the town rather than local small clinics.

Self-evaluation:

I felt not much difference in living standards between Beijing and my hometown. Though we earned more here, we spend more economically. We have an attitude that the aim to be here is to make money rather than enjoying life. Anyway the living condition here at a construction field is awful and far from the luxurious city centre.

I can say I'm patriotic and I hope that China will be prosperous and powerful. I also have a certain sense of social justice and public morality, I'm happy to help people and do good things, but I think I won't take any action if I see anything bad happening. Family is most important to me, and the child as well. When I worshipped the ancestor during the spring festival, I just prayed for the peace in the family rather than riches and honour.

Networking:

I'm too easy to trust people and be cheated in the financial cases when borrowing money to others. Please don't tell my husband.

Relation with the government

I feel the policies made by the central government are really good, but they are obviously distorted when reaching the localities. I once voted in the village committee election in my mum's village and my mum asked me to casually pick up one candidate. I realise that this kind of election is not democracy! At last the person in the position has already been assigned by the higher authority no matter who those candidates are. Even the roll call is a kind of running forms. Nothing is real democracy.

There are no human rights in Beijing for migrant workers. I remember when being checked the temporary residence permit, migrant workers were never treated as human beings. They were scolded by rude language, forced to kneel or squat and even beaten violently. One of the workers I know once experienced this in 2000 and had a severe confrontation with the civil defence officers (they are not police officers). Now the administration is better and migrant workers were registered and managed through computer networks.

Contentions

We migrant workers as a whole don't have high quality or sense of self-protection. As for myself, I would resort to the judiciary or consult with solicitors. I believe in the legal measure to deal with conflicts, for example, with our building property management company. I also encountered the cases that the labour contractors delayed the workers' wages. But it can be resolved effectively and quickly when you appeal to the Labour Bureau, because you are in Beijing. In my hometown there are much more such cases and everything is ill regulated.

I remember once a time there was a very popular practice of opening brick factories in the village, which occupied large amount of land and polluted the environment and were

protested by many villagers. This case was made bigger and was exposed by the provincial media.

Party-state responses

My husband's sister, 60 years old, has been appealed to Beijing for 4 years. She was previously a worker in a textile factory, and then factory was bankrupted and brought by another company. She used to live in the factory apartment, but since all the land has been sold out she had nowhere to live. She came to Beijing every year but the government officials just delayed in solving her problems and sent her back several times. Now her basic living problems still remained unresolved. I felt really disappointed about that. You know other people laid off from the factory were also so poor and pitiful. But we can't do anything about that.

Cases

I don't feel antipathy towards Falun Gong, neither do I believe in them. At first I had some ill feelings against them when I heard the governmental propaganda and description about them. But one day I picked up a computer disk at my staircase in Xiaogan – it uncovered some unknown facts about Falun Gong along with photos, videos, reports and arguments. I began to believe Falun Gong might be a healthy Qigong exercise rather than an evil cult. But I was surprised that it also said the government and Jiang Zemin did manipulate such plots against Falun Gong. I really don't know which side is the right and wrong in this case.

I remembered and admired the student movement in 1989. There was also severe violence in Xiaogan. I didn't know much about the movement but I really thought it was good for young people to act. At least they were anti-defalcation and anti-corruption. I remembered there was a huge slogan on the ads broad in the city centre: 'Donations were given to Deng's (Deng Xiaoping) son; Coloured TVs were given to Zhao's (Zhao Ziyang) son; What can I give to you, my motherland?' You know at that time the son of Deng defalcated the donations to the disabled and Zhao's son sold and resold coloured TVs. It was really amazing. I heard there was too heavy a repression upon the movement. I felt the repression was too serious and grievous. But people were united and enthusiastic at that time. My neighbour's son, who studied at Wuhan University, went to Beijing to attend the movement. After the repression he came back being asked if he was afraid. He said, 'what should I fear about? I am just a son of peasant. You know the son of professor was also sitting there on the Tiananmen Square. Is my life more worthy than his?' People were so concerned about the country and its problems at that time. I found it a good period of time.

I also thought the anti-Japan parade was quite good. It was also very astonishing. My nephew attended the parade and they even besieged the embassy. But I didn't know the concrete situation, as the TV news report was too short and simple.

An undergraduate student in Psychology from Wuhan University (interviewee number 67)

Male, aged 22, from Wuhan and residing in Wuhan, BSc in Psychology, Youth League member (with no sense about it), Christian.

Information exchange:

Internet is the main media. I spend more than 4 hours online every day. Besides browsing the news, I also look through some interesting focus discussions, forums and others' blogs, making occasional comments. I myself have blog of my own. Besides exchange opinions on current affairs with a broad range of Internet users, I mainly discuss with my roommates and friends rather than course mates.

Social problems

I have totally no idea about elections, neither do I know anything about how the national or local leaders are selected out. And nobody has ever asked me to vote or talk about voting. So my feeling is that someone just became a certain leader in a very strange and incredible way. I heard something about village election from the news report and it seemed somewhat violent in some villages.

I think Wuhan is a relatively stable place according to the problems of population such like mobilisation, migration and different division and stratification of classes. And I don't think polarisation is serious in Wuhan. Though there may be labour conflicts or other contentions reported happening in Wuhan, but none seems to be very big news.

Among all the social-political-economic aspects and problems in China, I find the medical reform is the most outstanding one and one of the biggest failures. Its total system is unreasonable. Some reports from the media and institutions abroad, such as the International Red Cross, also criticised that this medical reform is a complete failed trial from the top to toe. Though I seldom go to see a doctor and have little experience about how it functions, I always feel it problematic due to the conflicts or contradictions appearing in the mass media.

Besides, the disorder and even a mess of real estate market is another serious problem that someone has bided up the price to an unbelievable extent. Another issue is the political elections and I never know what is going on especially according to the entire turnover of the state leadership in 2004. I also recall that during last 'Two-conference' some delegate exposed that there were huge corruptions and scandals in the 2008 Olympics construction projects. Surely I know corruption prevails in all aspects of social, economic and political life and this one impressed me a lot recently.

Self-evaluation:

I think my sense of social justice is relatively strong as I'm always concerned about the social phenomena and news and the law, etc.

Compared with other people around, the life standard of my family is above average. The most influential event to my family is that my mom went to work for a German company while working for Wugang (Wuhan Steel Processing Co., Ltd) at the same time. Generally we didn't encounter any great difficulties or troubles, but from last year when my father changed his job to another post by compulsory manoeuvre, his work became more unstable and more tiring.

Medical reform can most easily irritate my family and my grandma's family as it relates so close to us. Once the elderly go to the hospital, they would complain a lot. They want to change the situation but only to take some non-positive actions such as trying to transfer to another hospital or try to buy medicines by themselves or invite a doctor at home. I feel helpless to change the society with my own strength, but I think after finishing the studies, I can at least make some changes to my own life and my family in the future.

Networking and organisation:

Actually in my family we don't attach much importance to relations or networks compared with other families as we seldom invite other people home or go out with others. I think in China it's impossible to put an end to 'depending on the relations'. Sometimes it's necessary or even beneficial as long as the result turns out to be a win-win situation no matter what method you use. So it depends and sometimes it's inevitable.

Talking about the community, I suddenly recall that once a year my family was selected to be the 5-star family. It was so strange and funny and we even didn't know what was happening. We like joining the community collective activities such like watching movies. I remember one year in a festival, there were singing and dancing performances organised by Wugang since the residents in our community are mostly Wugang people. My family went to watch and had a good time. There were also charitable activities like collecting money and clothes for the people suffering from the flood. We made donations too.

I think if you just organise a small group or association, it's ok and you are free to do it. I don't know if you need to pass any scrutiny, but the direct upper institution should know what happens. For example, if you want to organise a club in the university, you should have sanctions from certain university department. Falun Gong is the organisation I know to be prohibited. I have two relatives who have practiced Falun Gong. They certainly encountered the governmental interference. But they, along with a gang of Falun Gong practitioners, always have gatherings at home or somewhere else. I remember at the peak time of prohibition, some officials or police officers went to their house to check and even arrest some of them. The result is their meetings became secret and underground. I really have no idea about the consequences of the arrested ones.

Contentions

When I by any chance encounter anything unequal or unjust, I will easily be irritated. And the measure I take is resorting to the Internet. I'll sign on the Internet or write in my blog or write on some forum. I'll also talk with friends especially Internet friends or even strangers in one forum. I remember after the recent Diaoyu Island issue, there raised a large movement widespread on the Internet to boycott the Japanese products.

I think among all these measures signing a petition whether on the road or on the Internet is the most convenient and easiest way and effective sometimes. Though it may have less impact than the parade or demonstration on the scene, the latter may be less likely to be granted sanctions and more dangerous indeed. The danger lies in the potential conflicts with the police who are usually surround the environment and if there are some participants with ill intentions to make trouble, the innocent populace may be at risk of being taken advantage by them.

People have the right to take contentious activities, but some are permitted officially, others are not. I remember in the 1999 anti-American parade when I was only a junior middle school student, my schoolmates and I asked to go on parade with great collective rage. Though the

teachers didn't allow us to do so because we were too young, I know a lot of students from high schools, colleges and universities took the actions. At that time, the government, no matter central or local, was also active and cooperative. And the solution to this tragedy was also effective and reasonable.

I by myself have signed for the anti-Japan movement on the Internet. I don't think such on-line patriotic movements would be interfered by the government; at least they have gone on well until now. Actually I'm not much concerned about the results of the movements, but I believe they should be useful and there should be relative reports afterwards.

Among our students, I ever heard from the news that some students collectively protested for the unreasonable fees or curriculum in some schools and universities. Most parents would participate as well and went altogether to argue with the school committee. Some of the conflicts are resolved in peace. Some are evolved into bigger issue exposed to the education department, the government and the media and the responsible person in the school committee may be punished.

Party-state responses

The government always said there were a minority of wicked people behind the contentions to manipulate the process. But I don't think it so complicated at least our students' parade is quite simplex though I don't know others like Falun Gong movement. Generally I believe in half of the governmental propaganda as there is certainly something deep being concealed by them though you can hardly find fault at the superficial level of the official explanation. Actually did the authentic report ever exist? I also received a lot of information from the Chinese media abroad which may show something different and can form good comparison and reference, but I don't believe them all either.

Cases

As I am a Christian, I found the Christian group in China can't gather openly and that's a sort of unequal treatment. In fact there are too few churches and they are too official to meet so many Christians' real needs to meet or have bible study. The thing is, the appearance and swift development of family churches, by itself shows a kind of repression from the government. It's a no-choice alternative because these Christians can't gather together openly and freely. I read from some books and news that some family churches in Beijing were interfered and persecuted by the government. And I once attended a meeting held by a family church organisation in a café bar. The locality was delicately picked because they ever encountered

previous persecution. There were also some foreigners present. We watched some officially-prohibited videos about the social cultural and historical reality of China, which really impressed and even shocked me a lot and reverse some of my opinions too.

According to Falun Gong, I find their books are nonsense after I read them. The thoughts and theories are problematic undoubtedly. But I think the exercise is useful. I don't fully believe what the government criticised about them, nor do I fully disagree with what the Falun Gong practitioners defended for themselves and even what they brought forth to resist and protest the government. Some should be true. I think the way they resort to the international society is feasible and quite tolerable. After all they are the weak and vulnerable group and need a lot of help and support. But I can't agree when they sometimes take extreme or too radical actions to protest such as self-burning or any armed or destructive conflicts against the embassy. At present, Falun Gong has become a political taboo and seldom do people talk about it. I think the spiritual and religious area as a whole including the underground Christian church is very sensitive to people who would concern it but rarely talk with others as if there is potential danger behind.

According to the economic protects conducted by labours, I consider them to be totally reasonable with great understanding and sympathy. The react from the government usually is negotiating with them but preventing them from agitation, parade or any open, collective and large-scale gathering or activities.

I also heard from the media as well as my parents about the June 4th 1989 and I only know my parents' attitudes are to sympathise for the students who were made use of by others. The responses from the government at that time were very negative and I think that was improper or even proved to be wrong.

A dissident lecturer in USA (interviewee number 90)

Male, aged 51, from Guangzhou, residing in California, PhD in Chinese Philosophy, no religion (but had an interest/empathy in Christianity), no political affiliation, a university lecturer and a news analyst at the local Chinese radio station.

Information exchange:
The Chinese media (TV programs and websites) appears the same at home and abroad. However, I may get some different information and voices from Chinese newspapers

published by Chinese community abroad, from the local media in English and from a lot of overseas websites in either language. The difference mainly lies in the content and the angle of viewpoint. But I don't think the viewpoint of a foreigner to look at what happened in China is always objective.

Social problems and resolutions:

Politics

About the international relationship: When China is developing in all aspects and becoming more interdependent with the outside world, China should pay more attention to the still great sufferings and disasters in the world – terrorism, racist hatred, conflicts, slaughter and war. We Chinese people have suffered some unimaginable and unbearable disasters from outside and inside, along with more than 70 million people's abnormal death and other countless miserable tragedies so that they fully understand the tribulation, suffering and death in the whole world. However, we should not take the attitudes of difference, ignorance, let alone gloat over other people's misfortune (malicious pleasure or self-satisfaction has shown the deep root of the worst and darkest part of the nationality); but should show sincerity, sympathy, concern and love to hatred and misery, to fight against violence and coercion using the weapon of justice. Actually what happened to every country is closely related to each other, we have to hold a whole-world breadth of mind and wide perspective, to explain and deconstruct hatred and conflict by benevolence and forgiveness, to reconstruct order by law and human right so that peace can be attained in the new global world. Today we must employ the deepest spiritual resources of Chinese and Western culture to establish the rational moral and harmonious future world.

Democracy and human rights

The cultural revitalisation in the West brought forth the fruits of science, democracy, and social-economic development. Behind the success is the enormous spiritual impulse of religion, moral and ethics. So China must realise that the western democratic principles, human rights and rule of law began with the idea of human equality and value. So cultural generation and moral reconstruction should be the scene ahead of and penetrating the actual political institutionalisation. China was often scolded for poor human rights record by the West especially the USA in the international society, but we need not scold them back but to find a way to improve the situation from our traditions. I believed not in individualistic human rights, but the human rights in relations to guarantee the interests of family, society as well as

individuals. As China in general finds it difficult to accept the individual dimension of human right and easily regards it to be egoism, Chinese traditions pay great attention to family relations and social relations. China always uses the perspective of relation or network to think and act. Therefore, we should not copy the Western models, but to absorb the spiritual essence of Western cultures as well as to explore our own in order to find a suitable path for China.

Society and culture

One of the biggest problems is social ethics and morality. The Communist revolution with its peak of the radicalism and craziness of the Cultural Revolution suppressed and destroyed the most magnificent tradition and civilisation and then created the ever-biggest vacuum in the national mentality, spirit and soul. Likewise, under such a barren condition, to blindly catch up economic modernisation, to reform and open up without mature institutionalisation would inevitably lead to national corruption. The lust and ugly side of the culture and national spirit has been shown everywhere. People as individual are not responsible for the society while deciding their own life but to fall into egoism to be self-centred and irresponsible. The government emphasised 'rule of virtue' as they realised the serious problem. But morality is deeply rooted in a nation's cultural soil; we can only go back to China, beginning with the heuristic education and encouragement rather than the heteronymous doctrine and propaganda to inspire people's moral autonomy, and walk to the authentic 'rule of virtue'.

Religion, unlike mere ethnics or morality or a virtue system to teach people to do good, is to solve the problems unsolved by philosophy and science such as suffering, sin and death. Though I claim to have no religion, I'm studying religions and philosophies and especially interested in Christianity. To some extent I believe there is a God existing. Christian evangelical movement has been flourishing in China these years, that's very good phenomenon, but Chinese are also resorting to various religious sects and practice to fill in their spiritual vacuum. Actually there is a huge supermarket of gods and idles, people can choose what or who they want to worship. So there are various choices and various superstitions, which have equal erosive and destructive impacts on the traditional culture and people's heart as the material/ money worship. Atheism is not as popular as propagated by the official media. Actually it is also argued that atheism is anti-superstition and an active world viewpoint. I once suggested the government to loosen and broaden the ideology as anti-superstition and active worldview rather than applying Atheism or Marxism only. The

officials showed interest in it but with smiles admitted it was not that easy to change. So I'm not a dissident in a rigid way, I have many interactions with Chinese authorities.

I also hope that China can correct many bad habits in hygiene, traffic regulation and social public order (such as spitting everywhere, crossing the road disorderly, jumping the queue, dirty toilets) by dint of the great opportunity of 2008 Olympics to be new and fresh in the eye of international society.

Consciousness and value

I care and concern for China and Chinese people very much and I'm always grieved and empathetic at those people suffering from social injustice. China herself has already suffered so much in the modern histories and now in China there are so many problems. You cannot just use the international standard to criticise China but rather be committed to the motherland of China, in the centre of China's tribulation and spend the tough times with over 1.3 billion Chinese people. As an intellectual, I have the solemn and sublime sense of mission for the revival of Chinese nationality and the flourish of Chinese culture. I also have very high expectation and confidence for motherland to break through the stereotyped thinking of conflict and opposition but to re-establish the concept of cultural dialogue between Chinese and the world culture. Chinese souls are most valuable to me. I wish to influence and transform more and more people through faith, culture, morality and love – love from human beings, from the entire cosmos and from God.

Contentions and Party-state responses

Contentions are not always negative – when people are faced with problems and when dissatisfaction and grief come out towards the authority, people can take active and positive measure to solve the problems and have communication with the authorities. But people's perspective needs to go beyond the current suffering, grief, competition and previous hatred, because hatred would give birth to new hatred; conflict would generate new conflict. Then more and more hatred and conflict would form severe clash and crisis. Therefore contentions are not to magnify and expand conflict, are not to upgrade hatred, are not to emphasise negative forces or destructive strengths, but to express people's different voices and grievance, to reveal social injustice and other problems, to appeal for the protection of human rights and freedom, to resist the coercive politics in pursuit of democracy in a constructive way. Contentions are records of people's tribulation and part of it. At last mighty mercy, love and hope should come from the tribulation, affliction, trial, distress, or suffering and then transform them.

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Glossary of Chinese characters in pinyin

关系 *guanxi* (interpersonal network), *25*

权利 *quanli* (right), 30

单位 *danwei* (work unit), 33

爱国主义 *aiguozhuyi* (patroism), 72

民族主义 *minzuzhuyi* (nationalism), 72

户口 *Hukou* (household registration system), 99

跳楼秀 *tiao lou xiu* (jumping off buildings to show), 99

收容站 *shourongzhan* (detention centre), 100

暂住证 *zanzhuzheng* (The temporary residence permits), 100

老乡会 *Laoxianghui* (township-based community groups), 102

老乡 *laoxiang* (people with native ties), 103

维权 *Weiquan* (defending rights), 103

老百姓 *laobaixing* (common people), 106

上访 *shangfang* (Petitions to the higher administrative level), 109

文化衫 *wenhua shan* (cultural shirts), 123

人肉搜索引擎 *Renrou sousuo yinqing* (human flesh search engine), 112

风水 *Fengshui* (Geomancy), *130*

易经 *Yi Ching* (Book of Changes), *130*

迷信 *mixin* (superstition), *130*

河殇 *He Shang* (Yellow River Elegy), *133*

文化热 *Wenhua Re* (cultural fever), *133*

终极关怀 *zhongji guanhuai* (ultimate concern), *133*

神州 *Shen Zhou* (China's Confession, literally the Land of God), 133

十字架在中国 *Shizijia zai Zhongguo* (The Cross – Jesus in China), 135

中信 *Zhong Xin* (Chinese Today Magazine), *135*

海外校园 *Haiwai Xiaoyuan* (Overseas Campus Magazine), *135*

法轮 *Falun* (Wheel of the Dharma, 'Law Wheel' in some other translation versions), 139

功 *Gong* (refers to the partly Taoist-inspired practice), 139

气功 *Qigong* (a Chinese healing art with a range of physical/spiritual exercises and meditative components), 139

邪教 *Xiejiao* (evil cult), 141