Governing the Restless and Young in Contemporary China: in Search for the Chinese Communist Party’s Ruling Logic

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

Political Science
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Abstract

This thesis explores one particular facet of contemporary state-society relationship in China, i.e. state-student relationship. By arguing against the popular observation that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) retreated from Chinese universities as a way of winning students’ support, this thesis claims that the party-state has adopted a “bird cage” strategy in post-Tiananmen university governance. That is to say, the party-state has not only re-established and strengthened its control institutions in universities, but at same time expanded its zone of tolerance and created new outlets for students’ political enthusiasm and participation. A four-city, seven-university field survey was conducted, the result of which supports the view that the CCP’s post-Tiananmen governance strategy has been effective. Respondents agree that party’s governing institutions are resilient and play important roles in students’ life. They also seem to be in agreement with, at least as the survey results indicate, important political ideas promoted by the party-state.
This thesis is dedicated to Kai Liu and Qiang Gu, my parents, for raising me, teaching me and always supporting me.
Acknowledgments

My five-year study at Canada's premier research institution, the University of Toronto, has finally culminated in the writing of this thesis. Far from a testament of my own scholarly achievement, the fruition of this one-year effort would have been impossible without the unremitting support of my Professors, friends and family. Though the finished product and the errors therein are entirely my own, there are numerous people I need to thank.

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My sincerest thanks to Professor Lynette Ong, my supervisor, who is never satisfied with my work, and whose comments are always “mean”.

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I would be remiss if I do not mention my parents, without whom my education both in China and in Canada would have been utterly impossible. This thesis is dedicated to them.
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Part I: The Puzzle, Literature Review and Thesis Argument

Twenty years after the Tiananmen uprising, thousands of university students in China once again marched through the world’s largest public square – not to protest, but to celebrate the Communist regime’s 60th anniversary.¹ China’s socio-economic transformations since Tiananmen are not only dramatic but unimaginable.² One of those ‘unimaginables’ has precisely been the fact that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) whose regime that many Western scholars and observers prophesized to fall after Tiananmen, is still holding its grip on power unflinchingly, and sometimes, quite confidently.

To be sure, despite the fact that the CCP has so far survived the “third wave of democratization”, the debate continues as to how resilient the regime really is. In his recent book “China’s Communist Party: Atrophy and Adaptation”, David Shambaugh surveyed this protracted debate in the Western literature and grouped involved scholars into the “optimist” and “pessimist” camps. The optimists, such as Andrew Nathan, Cheng Li, Bruce Dickson, agree that through critical re-institutionalization, the CCP has been strengthened and adapted itself to new challenges and thus become resilient. In contrast, the “pessimists” – Roderick MacFarquhar, Susan Shirk and Gordon Chang, etc. – see that the Chinese polity has largely atrophied and that its coming collapse might be inevitable.³

Whether the CCP will survive or collapse in the foreseeable future is not the concern of my thesis. Nor is the contested image of the party-state either as an adapted leviathan or

¹ More than 8,000 university students in the pageant celebrate the 60th anniversary of PRC. It is true that students’ participation was organized and orchestrated by the party, it is hard to miss, as I was watching the live coverage of the parade, the genuine celebratory mood of the students and their sense of pride in what has happened in their country.

² This is concurred almost unanimously by Western China scholars, one such recent acknowledgement can be found in Elizabeth J. Perry, “China since Tiananmen: A New Rights Consciousness?” Journal of Democracy 20 (2009): 20.

as an atrophied “fire brigade”. These questions, though unsettled, have been dealt with quite adequately by China scholars. Further, addressing such questions certainly goes beyond the scope of this project and should involve more ambitious and systemic investigations. My goal is much simpler and its scope narrower: I will briefly examine how and how well the CCP has governed university students – leaders of the Tiananmen uprising – since 1989. Through this examination, I attempt to contest and distil, not a diagnosis of the regime’s resilience, but its ruling logic after Tiananmen, and in particular, since Hu Jintao took power. I must also make clear from the outset that the nature of this project is entirely analytical, i.e. it does not make any normative judgement on the legitimacy of the party’s continued rule. Words such as “control” or “authoritarianism” here carry no pejorative connotations and are only analytical categories.

The Puzzle

After “June 4th”, little intellectual attention from the West has been paid to Chinese university students, who have always been at the forefront of socio-political changes and upheavals in modern Chinese history. This is understandable as the students were indeed quiescent politically in the ensuing years of the crackdown. But things had started to change since the late 1990s and particularly in recent years. Students are again projecting their political voices, albeit confining this new projection largely to instances of China’s diplomatic imbroglios: they rallied instantaneously against American imperialism after the NATO bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade in 1999, against Japanese prime minister’s visits to the Yasukuni Shrine in 2004, and against disruptions of the Olympic torch rally and perceived Western bias toward China’s Tibet Policy in 2008. However, the rapid development of student-centered on-line groups such as “renren” has provided university students an imagined safe haven, within which some

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have started to engage in discussions on politically sensitive issues (I will expound on this in some of the following sections of the thesis).

The popular assumption that contemporary Chinese youth do not care about politics is, therefore, untenable. The aforementioned collective actions were signs not only of students’ political awareness (though parochial), but also of their newly developed political efficacy—the use of new Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) to communicate and organize amongst themselves.\(^6\) The puzzle simply is: *if not quiescent anymore and able to organize, why contemporary university students do not openly protest against their own government or engage in other more visible forms of contentious politics as their predecessors in the 1980s did?* This becomes more puzzling when considering, ceteris paribus, the following two points. First, compared with the 1980s, there are even more abundant opportunities—local “collective incidents” (protests and riots), for example, is reaching 100,000 per annum\(^7\) – for students to collaborate and engage in the causes of more disgruntled losers of China’s economic reform. Second, official corruption, one of the primary driving factors that brought students onto the streets in 1989, is also both quantitatively and qualitatively more rampant—even during the immediate following years of Tiananmen.\(^8\)

Today’s Chinese students are indeed very different than their predecessors in the 1980s, because, simply, today’s China is different. Chinese university students now demonstrate many strikingly similar attributes of the so-called “Generation Y” in the United States (i.e. those born between 1980 and 1995).\(^9\) They hold up high, not quite the ideal of Communism, but surely that of individualism; they hanker after personal freedoms; they

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\(^6\) The anti-Japanese demonstrations in 2004 were organized using text-messaging, internet chat rooms, and so forth. See Susan L. Shirk’s book *China a Fragile Superpower.*

\(^7\) Ibid.


have strong penchant for being independent; they have pop singer Jay Chou, not Einstein or Mother Teresa—idols of students in the 80s—to worship; and they have a private life that is unimaginably exuberant and “liberal” than their predecessors—from dating on the Internet to having sex in the alley outside Beijing dance club.\(^\text{10}\)

To explain this tectonic change, Yunxiang Yan, the same scholar who argued for attitudinal and behavioural parallelism between students in China and the U.S., suggests that the change is a manifestation of the pragmatism of—as well as the triumph of materialism over—contemporary Chinese students.\(^\text{11}\) Yan’s conclusion, based on surveys and interviews of his own and others, is to a large extent valid. What he does not tackle is a question of a more fundamental nature: why students have seemingly succumbed to materialism and adopted pragmatism while shunning political idealism? Why are they not as critical as their predecessors of the party-state, or at least not exhibiting their criticalness openly? Yan does not provide an explicit interpretation. Yet, implicitly, he sees that the change might be attributable to much higher pressure of competition in society and much greater exposure to market values.\(^\text{12}\) In any case, the party-state is not shown as a crucial compartment in the train of Yan’s thought.

Is Yan’s analysis sufficient to solve my puzzle? Has the party-state really gone from the private life of young Chinese? Is the party-state still relevant in deciphering the students’ embrace of pragmatism and materialism? It might be inappropriate and problematic to suggest, even implicitly and tentatively, that the CCP—a party that is determined to remain in power by all means necessary—has genuinely retreated from the private life of Chinese students. It is not to deny that there is strong empirical evidence, as those marshalled by Yan in his article, indicting some kind of party retreat; yet the more important issue at stake is to interpret and understand whether the retreat was a reactive move by an atrophied “fire brigade” or as a proactive manoeuvre of an adapted or

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\(^\text{10}\) See CBC documentary \textit{China’s Sexual Revolution}.

\(^\text{11}\) Yan, “Little Emperors.”

\(^\text{12}\) Ibid.
Adapting leviathan. The party-state needs to be brought back into the picture for further analysis. The puzzle remains, at least partially, unsolved.

In Search for the CCP’s Ruling Logic – a Brief Literature Review

Making sense of the aforementioned, perceived party retreat necessitates a search for the party’s ruling logic, i.e. one that guides its approach to managing an increasingly diversified and assertive, if not greatly empowered, Chinese society. This search constitutes the starting point and the purpose of this thesis. Many fruitful attempts have been made by scholars in understanding state-society relationship in China since Tiananmen. The following literature review highlights and compares important observations made by some scholars in this regard; and by doing so, I aim to tease out a coherent ruling logic (vis-à-vis Chinese society) of the CCP, as hitherto understood by China scholars.

Less Intrusive and Arbitrary Party-State

Perhaps many saw the Tiananmen uprising as a clear manifestation of the rise of civil society in China. It was also expected by many China scholars that, at the very moment when troops were called into Beijing, China’s civil society would soon be dead: even the country’s economic reform program was then being questioned by conservative leaders. They saw the Tiananmen uprising as a function of bourgeoisie liberalization, which in turn was a function of economic opening. However, quite counter-intuitively, the exact opposite happened. While understandably maintaining a watchful eye on Tiananmen’s residual impact on a disillusioned and still potentially restless society, the CCP not only accelerated economic development after Deng’s “Southern Tour”, but also seemed to

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13 As many have argued, the advent of the Internet did empower the society to certain extent.

14 China scholars in the West; Chinese scholars rarely engage in research that explores the ruling logic of the party-state.

have reached an intra-party consensus to grant greater freedom to the society. This has been seen as evidence of the CCP trying to reach a *modus vivendi* or a new “social contract” with an increasingly dissatisfied society.\(^\text{16}\)

In his *China’s Democratic Future: How It Will Happen and Where It Will Lead*, Bruce Gilley observes that this new “social contract” was initiated under Deng Xiaoping, who probably remained as the paramount leader of CCP until his death in 1997.\(^\text{17}\) According to Gilley, wider economic and social freedoms were given for political fealty: “The state freed society and decentralized power, retreating to the citadel of uncontested rule.”\(^\text{18}\) In other words, Gilley says, that the “zones of indifference” of the party has been expanded after Tiananmen; only those disharmonious voices and acts that present themselves as imminent and credible threat to the party’s rule would be crushed.\(^\text{19}\) So despite asserting that a genuine democratic political system is to eventually replace the existing one, Gilley still believes that the party responded to the popular pressures of Tiananmen with an even less intrusive and less arbitrary state.\(^\text{20}\)

Also noticing the emergence of a less intrusive and arbitrary state in post-Tiananmen China, Yongnian Zheng and Joseph Fewsmith provide but a different rationale than Gilley’s “social contract” logic for the widening of social space in China. The political logic for the development of a more vibrant society in China—if not a civil society in the Habermasian sense—is the attempt by the party-state to transform itself from a “developmental state” to a public service provider. For example, over the years, the CCP has learned how to adroitly cooperate with such capitalist institutions as the chambers of

\(^{16}\) Despite the term’s appropriateness in characterizing contemporary state-society relationship in China, many Western China scholars have used it.


\(^{18}\) Ibid.

\(^{19}\) Ibid, 22.

\(^{20}\) Ibid, 24.
commerce to accommodate their interests, in order to develop local economies and to “bring order to an unruly sector”.21

Zheng’s and Fewsmith’s interpretation of the rationale for expanded social space is shared by Jean-Philippe Béja, whom in his book chapter “The Changing Aspects of Civil Society in China” dwells specifically on the much relaxed relationship between the state and one small yet crucial segment of society—the intellectuals. For those who are cognizant of modern Chinese history since May 4th, it is not hard to understand the key roles that Chinese intellectuals played in China’s socio-political transformations. Béja argues that after Tiananmen and well into the 21st century, the CCP has successfully wooed the majority of Chinese intellectuals to its side, albeit still silencing and persecuting those remain openly critical of the party.22 Scholars and professors are allowed to take part in symposiums and conferences abroad, to establish links with the international scientific community, and to do research in foreign universities. But, the condition is that they not try to revive the organizations which they had created in the 1980s, whose goal was to push for the transformation of the regime.23

In addition to looking at changes in state-intellectuals relationship, Béja also briefly touches upon the issue of flourishing NGOs in China, which is the primary analytical focus of Yiyi Lu in her “NGOs in China: Development Dynamics and Challenges”. Lu shares with Béja as well as Zheng and Fewsmith in that the rationale for widening social space—in particular for allowing NGOs in exist and grow—is “to transfer to them [NGOs] certain functions which it [the party-state] used to perform itself under the command system”.24 Lu’s statistics shows that the number of NGOs in China has

21 Ibid, 12.


23 Ibid, 78.

exploded since 1978 and particularly since the 1990s. In 1978, the number of NGOs is only about 6000, and the NGOs were tightly controlled or inextricably intertwined with the party-state. In comparison, the figure in 2006 is 186,000, and today’s NGOs enjoy much greater autonomy and serve not only state objectives but also wider societal interests.²⁵

Beyond capitalist institutions, NGOs and the intellectuals, a largely liberalized Chinese media and especially the advent of the Internet are also crucially new elements in contemporary state-society relationship in China. In his chapter “The Internet and Civil Society in China” in China’s Deep Reform, Guobin Yang sees that there is a “co-evolutionary” relationship between the Internet and Chinese civil society. China’s incipient civil society, to use the term coined by Yang, has provided favourable conditions for Internet diffusion in China, and vice versa.²⁶ Although political authorities do not take a “laissez-faire” approach to governing the Internet, they do realize that the price of control is exorbitant and that it is virtually impossible to achieve absolute control.

In fact, the Chinese government has allowed certain degree of freedom for the Internet to flourish, and has turned itself into an active user and participant. This is a “shooting two birds with one stone” strategy: the party could in this way demonstrate its openness and at the same time monitor on-line public opinion more accurately. The following remarks made by Chinese Premier would certainly befuddle those bombarded by news about the “Great Fire Wall” in China. When meeting the press after the conclusion of the 2007 annual National People’s Congress, the Premier said the following as his opening remark:

“…Over one million questions are posted for me on the Internet, which have been read by over 26 million people... I also read a news story on the Internet that a CPPCC member has put forward a proposal for four years in a row calling for the

²⁵ Ibid.

establishment of medical insurance for children. I took his proposal very seriously
and immediately gave written instructions that we need to handle matters
concerning children's health on a priority basis and that the competent
government authorities should take steps to address this issue.”

During the same occasion the following year, the Premier again highlighted the
Internet at the outset of his press conference:

“... I took some time to surf the Internet. Many Internet users raised questions and
made recommendations to me, and many wanted to share my burden. There were
several million responses, and perhaps over 100 million people were
involved...When I was surfing the Internet, a few lines came to mind: what people
are concerned about is what preoccupies my mind and what preoccupies the
minds of the people is what I need to address. Our people spent so much time and
energy to raise questions and make recommendations on the Internet because they
want the government to solve problems.”

Although it would be foolhardy to suggest that the CCP is now entirely Internet-
friendly, it might well be reasonable to argue that the party has become increasingly
open-minded (a forced state of being, perhaps) in terms of managing the Internet,
which can be indicative of the party’s increasing tolerance vis-à-vis a more assertive
society. Tolerance, however, might well be a function of confidence in enhanced
ability to control.

Weakened State, Strengthened Society?

Examples above conspicuously show that a nascent, quasi-civil society has developed
in China. “Nascent”, because this kind of society was non-existent in Mao’s
totalitarian China; “Quasi-“, because it still lacks significant elements of a genuine
civil society, whose intellectual locus classicus resides in Jürgen Habermas’ notion of
the public sphere. According to Habermas, the modern public sphere is one in which
the private people would come together at new social institutions (e.g. Coffee

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27 The English version of the 2007 press conference can be retrieved at
http://jm.chineseembassy.org/eng/xw/1305194.htm

28 The English version of the 2008 press conference can be retrieved at
http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2008-03/18/content_7812091.htm
houses), and through the public use of their rational-critical reasoning, checking on state power for the preservation of their property.\(^{29}\)

Despite the fact that there are sporadic cases where some rational and/or critical individuals have displayed their legal and civil consciousness, it might be too early to say that it has become the ethos of the Chinese society. John Hall’s conceptualization of Western civil society further shows that China’s has yet to come: “civil society must depend upon the ability to escape any particular cage; membership of autonomous groups needs to be both voluntary and overlapping if society is to become civil.”\(^{30}\)

While acknowledging the fact that Chinese society is transforming in unprecedented ways, China scholars – such as those I have so far cited – generally hold that “stronger society leads to weaker state” kind of logic does not hold in China. In fact, how “strong” the society truly is remains contestable. The powerful CCP still runs the show. Although social space has been substantially expanded in post-Tiananmen China, that does not mean free society if freedom implies “being free from the very possibility [my emphasis] of arbitrary state interference”.\(^{31}\) The state can choose to interfere less, Gilley argues, but it dominates just as before.\(^{32}\)

Indeed, a genuine civil society is an independent space between the state and the market, rather than one whose survival still depends on the state. While pointing out that state-society relationship is transforming and Chinese society is becoming more assertive and open, Zheng and Fewsmith also explicitly argue that the current Chinese


\(^{31}\) Gilley, 46.

\(^{32}\) Ibid.
leadership continues to be hardline on the political front, fearing that relinquishing control over society might cause a “national prairie fire” of protests.\(^3^3\) This is an observation also shared by Béja. Despite holding that the intellectuals are now having a greater say in the policy making process, the party-intelligentsia relationship remains consultative. Further, for Béja, new social developments such as the growth of NGOs in today’s China should not be used as yardsticks for measuring the growth of civil society. The so-called civil society in China has been but growing within the space designed by the CCP, and it does not enjoy any kind of legal guarantees that would provide for its institutionalization.\(^3^4\)

The social functions of China’s many NGOs are also quite different from those in the West; namely, China’s NGOs are reluctant to involve in issues that are politically sensitive. In fact, there are parallels between contemporary NGOs and those local organizations created by the gentries in the Qing dynasty: both are sanctioned by political authorities and both are “problem-solving” rather than “problem-creating” agencies that put checks on the state. Mussolini’s corporatist way of governing exists in China; the state decides which social categories, e.g. NGOs, can exist and be represented.\(^3^5\)

State dominance over NGOs can be seen from several aspects. First and foremost, the state has been proactive in preventing the emergence of potentially anti-regime NGOs by enacting laws and regulations. This was primarily a response to the besieging of Zhongnanhai by 10,000-strong Falungong practitioners in 1999.\(^3^6\) Second, state policy regarding the formation of social groups prohibits NGOs from establishing regional branches. NGOs carrying out the same activities can exist simultaneously at all the different administrative levels, but they must remain separate organizations.

\(^3^3\) Zheng & Fewsmith, 3.

\(^3^4\) Béja, 78.

\(^3^5\) Ibid, 83.

\(^3^6\) Lu, 91.
Hence, the possibility of horizontal collaboration across different geographical locales is minimal, if not entirely impossible. Third, NGOs in China depend heavily on the party-state not only for legitimacy, but more crucially, for financial resource.\textsuperscript{37}

The media sector has also witnessed continued preponderance of state power amidst gradual liberalization. In 2001, the editor-in-chief of Southern Weekly was sacked for allowing the publishing of articles that were “deleterious to good governance”; in Mar 2003, the 21st Century World Herald was closed; and in Mar 2004, staff at the Southern Metropolitan Post were subjected to official investigation. This litany could continue \textit{ad nauseum}.\textsuperscript{38} To be sure, this is not to suggest that the media are still serving as the “mouth piece” of the party-state in the same ways as they did in the Mao era. Rather, whatever changes they are undergoing, they “must be part of the political system” as former Chinese President Jiang Zemin stated unambiguously.

The Internet, whatever its anti-regime potential, has also developed under the auspices of the CCP. Michel Hocks is correct when he says that Internet censorship “does not necessarily confront Chinese writers and reader with an unfamiliar situation. Censorship is the norm, rather than the exception.”\textsuperscript{39} Hence, it is clear enough that the Party is not to abandon control over the media especially the Internet. In authoritarian Spain, for example, “the primary result of media control was to secure the passive acquiescence of the Spanish population rather than to re-socialize the citizenry into active participatory roles”.\textsuperscript{40} The media play the same role in China.

\textsuperscript{37} Ibid, 93.

\textsuperscript{38} Gary, D. Rawnsley, ”The Media, Internet and Governance in China,” in \textit{China’s Opening Society}, 118.


Media censorship has not abated, rather it has increased with the government tightening its grip over newspapers and television stations in often innovative ways.\textsuperscript{41}

**The “Bird Cage” Model**

What the preceding literature review has presented is a confusing picture of the party-state’s simultaneously loosening and strengthening of its grip on society. To further justify the validity of such a picture, and to crystallize it into a finer analytical framework, i.e. the party-state’s ruling logic, it is important to move further from secondary sources.

It should not be forgotten that the CCP itself was also in a constant search for a new ruling logic in the post-Mao era; and this has thus left some traces behind. For example, since the early 1980s, the party-state has been continually sending party and government delegations to Singapore to learn the People’s Action Party’s (PAP) ruling logic. Successions of Chinese delegation members were particularly intrigued by the PAP’s reconciling of its low-key presence in the Singaporean society and its ability to maintain strong control.\textsuperscript{42} To use the words of Lee Kuan Yew – modern Singapore’s founding father—the Chinese were primarily interested in that “the PAP isn’t seen, but is everywhere.”\textsuperscript{43} This indicates strongly that the CCP does not want to retreat; any perceived retreat must have been accompanied by the strengthening of party control somewhere else to maintain political equilibrium.

In addition to Singapore, many other success cases of single-party rule have also been studied carefully by the CCP since the beginning of reform and after 1989 in particular.\textsuperscript{44} However, it is less clear about and hard to know the party’s internal debate and

\textsuperscript{41} Rawnsley, 124.

\textsuperscript{42} Editing Group, *Xingshuai Zhilu* (The Rode to Rise and Decline) (Beijing: Dangdai shijie chubanshe he Zhonggong Zhongyang dangxiao [Central Party School] chubanshe, 2002), 224-29.

\textsuperscript{43} Shambaugh, 93.

\textsuperscript{44} Ibid.
discussion on how to adopt and adapt exogenous experiences in the Chinese context. Does this mean that a search for the party’s ruling logic will inevitably be empirically groundless and thus ultimately end in vain? Perhaps not. If we shift our focus from high politics, i.e. the party’s approach to ruling the society, to other arenas such as economic policy debate, we might shed some valuable light on high politics: those who make ultimate, vital economic decisions are the same individuals who make decisions on high politics.

It is hardly a secret that China’s economic reform in the post-Mao era was marked by political cleavages in the CCP central leadership, i.e. that between reformers who pushed single-mindedly market economic reform, and the conservatives who saw planned economy as the only right recipe for China. One of the specific competing alternatives to market economic reform was the “bird cage” model (“Niao long jing ji lun”) proposed by Chen Yun, a very influential party elder both in the Mao era and Deng era, and one of the few individuals who had profound knowledge in economics in the first two generations of party leadership.

For Chen, whose ‘bird cage” theory was supported by conservative leaders for variegated reasons, managing the economy is analogous to raising a bird: the bird should not be held too tightly lest suffocation, nor shall control be jettisoned *in toto* or the bird would fly away; the optimal solution thus is to raise it in a cage. So the gist of Chen’s “bird cage” model is controlled market reform. The “bird” is the market and the “cage” central planning. The market has certain freedom but only within the boundaries of central planning, i.e. the party-state. Of course, with the benefit of hindsight, we know that this model did not emerge as the dominant economic development logic for China— thanks to Deng Xiaoping’ surprising decision not to halt market economic reform but to expedite it after the Tiananmen uprising.

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Nevertheless, what is particularly intriguing about this “bird cage” model is that it speaks vividly to the reform and governing mindset—logic—of some of the most senior party leaders. Although liberalism has so far triumphed over conservatism in the economic realm, but it has perhaps continued to dominate in the political realm after Tiananmen. The more interesting question now arises: has the “bird cage” logic, though abandoned in the economic realm, survived well intact in the political realm, i.e. in the party’s approach to ruling Chinese society, after Mao and until now? I argue that it has survived—and even thrived—in the political realm, and that the “bird cage” could be a very useful analytical metaphor in understanding the CCP’s ruling logic. Indeed, it is the ruling. What the party has been doing after Tiananmen is to expand the cage by granting more personal freedoms and opportunities. The perceived state retreat after Tiananmen is by design rather than by default. In other words, the party-state has not retreated willy-nilly. It has been pro-active. Retreat is advance.

Taking advantage of Chen Yun’s “bird cage” analogy, I here put forth my thesis argument: the party-state has, after the Tiananmen uprising, attempted to govern university students through a “bird cage” strategy; and such attempt is becoming increasingly manifest. Students are given certain freedoms, but freedoms within strengthened bars of the party-state’s cage. Part II of the thesis will provide a systemic overview of the party-state’s cage over students, which is both institutional as well as ideational. In part III, I will present a short quantitative examination of the “effectiveness” of the party’s cage. Such questions as the extent to which students concur with contemporary official ideologies – not necessarily orthodox Communist ideologies – will be examined.

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46 This can be seen from the preceding section of literature review.

47 Although my original thought on the “Bird Cage” analogy came from the intra-party economic debate, it is important to draw my readers’ attention to the op-ed by Lijia Zhang, which also made a brief, similar “cage” analogy in terms of the CCP ruling strategy.
Part II Caging the Students after the “Turmoil”

Strengthening the Institutional Cage

Clearly, there is a plethora of scholarly works on the causes of rising Chinese university student political activism in the 1980s in general, and the causes of the 1989 student movement in particular. Most of these works, however, focus primarily on the larger pictures of socio-economic changes and the incremental political changes in post-Mao China. In other words, attention has very often been paid to the primary causes than the many proximate causes of the Tiananmen uprising. With the benefit of hindsight, it has become clear to some China scholars that one of those proximate causes was the decline of institutionalized political control on Chinese university campuses.

It is not to say that had campus political control been strong enough Tiananmen would not have happened; rather, the decline of such control facilitated the formation of a, perhaps, precocious student movement. Political control on Chinese university campuses, according to Dingxin Zhao, relied heavily in the reform era on political thought workers (Sixiang zhengzhi gongzuozhe) and student leaders, especially the former, and on the cooperation between the two.\(^\text{48}\) Also according to Zhao, decline of political control on campuses was concomitant with the decline of the legitimacy of Marxist-Leninist state ideology: monitoring the students was no longer moral or profitable for political thought workers.\(^\text{49}\) In fact, before and during the Tiananmen episode, some political thought workers even collaborated with student activists to capture campus control institutions to spread “heretical” political ideas.\(^\text{50}\) In other words, the institutional structure for control in many Chinese universities before Tiananmen became defunct, and perhaps, even “anti-revolutionary”.


\(^\text{49}\) Ibid.

\(^\text{50}\) Ibid.
After the crackdown, therefore, the party-state immediately engaged itself with re-capturing and resuscitating control institutions in universities. And the party started with re-establishing a viable and effective team of political thought workers. On December 5, 1989, the National Education Committee (Guojia jiaoyu weiyuanhui/ NEC) issued a nation-wide notice “Regarding Several Questions of Admission of Undergraduate Students in the Program of Political Thought Education”. The notice orders that local high schools and vocational schools should recommend excellent students and student leaders be “baosonged” (admitted early and unconditionally) to major programs of political thought education in universities. And “there [was] no limit on the number of students that [could] be “baosonged”, provided that they [met] admission standards”.

Also worth noticing is the fact that aside from targeting would-be political thought workers in high schools, the notice also mentioned that qualified university students in other programs could transfer to the political thought education program (transferring from one program to another was not allowed at the time). More important, with NEC’s permission, universities could set up a two-year B.A. program in political thought education for local party cadres. Admitted cadres would not have to pay miscellaneous school fees and could continue to receive payrolls from their work units while in school.

If the 1989 “December 5” notice (in addition to the immediately renewed “Code of Conduct for Students of Higher Education”) was merely a contingent response to the

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51 National Education Committee, “Guojia Jiaoyu Weiyuanhui Guanyu Sixiang Zhengzhi Jiaoyu Zhuanye Benke Zhaosheng Gongzuo Jige Wenti de Tongzhi” (Notice of the National Education Committee Regarding Several Questions of Admission of Undergraduate Students in the Program of Political Thought Education) (Beijing: author, 1989); the Political Thought Education program is like any other university undergraduate degree program. Students graduating from the program enter the team of political thought workers, not only in universities, but in other sectors of society and party cells.

52 Ibid.

53 Ibid.

54 Ibid.
decline of political control in universities, it was followed by a number of more meticulously crafted party documents issued successively well into the middle of the 1990s, until the Party turned its attention—in terms of political thought work in university—toward the “Patriotic Education Campaign”, the promotion of the then newly canonized “Deng Xiaoping Theories” and the fin-de-siècle struggle against the *Falungong* cult. Before the official launching of the “Patriotic Education Campaign” in 1994, from 1990 to 1993, the party-state issued 15 documents with regard to training political thought workers, party building, strengthening the Communist Youth League (CYL) in universities. In more succinct terms, after Tiananmen, the Party drew up a systemic plan aimed at revitalizing key components of control institutions in universities—the people, the party and the league.

The People

Choosing the “right people” was the *sine quo none* for re-installing institutional control.\(^{55}\) The recruitment of more competent political thought workers seemed to have been the priority over party and league building on campus, given, perhaps, that the workers were integral parts of party and league branches in university. Echoing and supplementing its “December 5” notice, on January 24, 1990, the NEC issued a more authoritatively toned notice on the training of political thought workers.\(^{56}\) The first sentence of the notice clearly elevated the issue to a strategic status that “under the current circumstance [in light of Tiananmen], building a viable team of political thought workers is vital for political thought education in universities, and, for ensuring the proper nurturing of successors of the socialist cause”.\(^{57}\) The notice ordered that the training of political thought workers be long-term and comprehensive; that political thought workers be

\(^{55}\) National Education Committee, *Guojiao Jiaoyu Weiyuanhui Guanyu Jiaqiang Gaodeng Xuexiao Zhuanzhi Xixiang Zhengzhi Gozuozhe Zhenggui Peixun de Tongzhi* (A Notice of the National Education Committee Regarding the Strengthening of Formal Trainings of Political Though Workers for Higher Education). (Beijing: author, 1990). The notice reveals that before Tiananmen, the effectiveness of political thought education team was declining, given that many unqualified individuals, e.g. science students who had no formal training in Marxist theories or Mao Tse-tong Thoughts, joined the team.

\(^{56}\) Ibid.

\(^{57}\) Ibid.
young and professional; that an M.A. program in political thought education be created; and that students in such programs—undergraduate or graduate—be given special care and attention from university leaders.\(^{58}\)

University leaders were also instructed to take, or to be accurate, re-take the revolutionary “mass-line” approach to campus governance, especially to interacting with the students. One year after the issuance of the “January 24” notice, the NEC distributed another document entitled “Several Suggestions From the Dangzu [Party Group] of the NEC on University Leaders’ Close Interactions with Teachers and Students”. University leaders, both party cadres and administrative officials, were ordered to incorporate constant interactions with students into the core of their work agenda: talking to students, visiting their dorms, eating at student cafeteria and “making friends” with them.\(^{59}\) Above all, this interaction was not meant to be temporary, but long-term and “institutionalized” through such initiatives as “Principal’s Mail Box”, “Principal’s Phone”, and “Campus Press Conference”, etc.\(^{60}\)

The Party

If the general understanding has been that the party became less intrusive and arbitrary after Tiananmen in terms of its managing of state-society relationship, then the case of university management is surely sui generis. The CCP emerged from Tiananmen determined to have a stronger institutionalized party presence in universities. This determination was, in the early 1990s, based on the party’s unequivocal belief that universities had become a “major battle ground” to resist “bourgeois liberalization” and

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\(^{58}\) Ibid.

\(^{59}\) National Education Committee, *guojia jiaoyu weiyuanhui dangzu guanyu gaodeng xueyuan dangzheng lingdao ganbu shenru shisheng zuohao gongzuo de jidian yijian* (Several Suggestions from the Party Group of the NEC on University Leaders' Close Interactions with Teachers and Students) (Beijing: author, 1991).

\(^{60}\) Ibid.
“peaceful evolution”. University leadership “must be grasped in the hands of Marxists”, the party maintained.

First and foremost, what remained intact at the very top of power hierarchy in any Chinese university is the university party committee. Its major political and administrative responsibilities include such tasks as implementing the party’s policies and directives, selecting and managing party cadres on campus, and overseeing daily activities of the CYL and the student union, etc. Under the direct leadership of the party committee is the principal, whose primary role, besides being in charge of teaching and research, is simply to coordinate the implementation of new decisions made by the university party committee. If the principal is not a party member, he or she has no say whatsoever in the making of important university policies, but will merely be “invited” to “seat” with, and “hear” discussions by, members of the university party committee. It might be the case that this was made so to prevent another university principal like Fang Lizhi from emerging.

Second, party branches of university professors and students were required by the CCP central leadership in a 1990 directive to “remain sturdy” and play the role of “fortifications” on the battleground of resisting bourgeois liberalization and peaceful evolution. In collaboration with professional political thought workers, professor and student party members would help propagate party policies and regulations and implement university party committee’s new decisions. More important, these low-echelon party branches were now endowed with the task of “analyzing new trends of

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62 Ibid.

63 Ibid.

development in students’ thought” and “reporting” them to the university party committee.\textsuperscript{65} These explicit surveillance measures were, of course, common practices in Leninist political system in which party tentacles are supposed to be encompassing, reaching far and deep into society.\textsuperscript{66}

Third, the CCP needed new blood and was actively in search for it to reinvigorate itself after Tiananmen; the university party organ was of no exception. In fact, the CCP Central Committee saw universities as the most important venues for new membership expansion. But how the party fared in its recruitment effort in the immediate aftermath of Tiananmen and ensuing years is another question; it is likely that it was not as successful as it is in recent years when many of the best and brightest in universities are proactively seeking for party membership.\textsuperscript{67}

After the “revolt” or “storm” in 1989 in which many participants were in fact university party members, the CCP Central Committee instructed its university branches to rectify their previous misconducts of “only paying attention to students’ academic performance while overlooking their political performance” when it comes to granting party membership.\textsuperscript{68} Therefore, while in search for more and better party members from the student body, university party committees worked even harder after 1989 in preventing “those who do not uphold the Four Cardinal Principles, who yielded in the struggle against bourgeois liberalization, and who have insidious and subversive motives” from joining the party.\textsuperscript{69} Of course, to be effective at “gate keeping”, university party committees have to work closely with the CYL, the Chinese Communist Youth League.

\textsuperscript{65} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{66} See Lü Xiaobo & Elizabeth J. Perry, ed., \textit{Danwei: the Chinese Workplace in Historical and Comparative Perspective} (New York: M.E.Sharpe).

\textsuperscript{67} In her video-taped session with Harry Kreisler, June 28, 2007, Susan Shirk openly acknowledged that many China scholars, herself included, are indeed puzzled by contemporary Chinese university students competing for party membership, when many work for foreign-invested companies.

\textsuperscript{68} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{69} Ibid.
The League

The CYL is the Chinese Communist Party’s “assistant and reserve army”. Its primary mission hence is to build a vast human resource pool from which the party can draw; most from that pool are students from either high school or university. After Tiananmen, the CCP realized that a similar problem existed in league member recruitment as it did in party member recruitment, i.e. many league branches in high schools did not play well the role of “gate keeper”: students with only decent academic records but not necessarily reliable political backgrounds were given league membership. Once moved to university, these less-qualified league members would certainly affect the ideological purity and coordinating capacity of the CYL on campuses. Therefore, in a 1991 jointly issued directive, the CYL central committee and the NEC ordered that local CYL branches “examine and rectify” the recruitment problem, and that university CYL branches must supervise the development of CYL branches at local high schools.71

The directive, in addition to putting tremendous emphasis on “gate keeping”, also stresses the importance of the university CYL helping students with “concrete difficulties arising from study and life on campus”.72 This emphasis is particularly noteworthy because many of the triggers of student demonstrations throughout the 1980s were exactly such concrete grievances as lacking hot water during shower.73 Indeed, the primary role of university CYL branches has gradually yet substantially shifted from “gate keeper” to

70 See “The Charter of the Chinese Communist Youth League”


72 Ibid.

“service provider”—a term which has been explicitly coined by the CYL central committee and the NEC in a 2005 jointly issued directive.74

I have so far provided some evidence indicating the party’s strong determination to re-strengthen its institutional control mechanisms immediately after the turmoil in 1989. The question that is of more relevance and significance is whether there is new evidence suggesting that the party has intended to be less intrusive and to gradually loosen its institutional controls in universities, as it has ostensibly did with other sectors of Chinese society. I would argue that the party has not attempted loosening; what it has focused on since the 1990s and until now is to transform coercive and disciplinary institutional control into cooptive institutional control. The party is more than determined to maintain the viability of its institutional control measures on university campuses—its political thought workers, party committees and CYL branches, and this has not changed in the 21st century amidst talks about party retreat from university students’ life.75 The party-state is expanding its institutional cage, sometimes through co-opting the students, but at the same time making sure that the bars of the cage remain sturdy and firm.

The party itself admits unambiguously in a 2000 party document, issued again through the NEC, that political thought workers remain an “indispensable force” for ensuring the “socialist direction of university education”, the implementation of the party’s education policies, and the cultivating of “builders and successors of the socialist cause”.76 This sounds strikingly similar to the party document by NEC ten years ago in 1990 concerning

74 Central Committee of the Communist Youth League & Ministry of Education, Gongqingtuan zhongyang, jiaoyubu guanyu jinyibu jiaqiang he gaijin gaodeng xuexiao gongqingtuan jianshe de yijian (Suggestions of the Communist Youth League Central Committee and the Ministry of Education on the Strengthening and Improving the Building of Communist Youth League Branch in Universities) (Beijing: author, 2005).

75 Tu-Weiming, a distinguished Confucian scholar, mentioned in a video-taped session how the party had relaxed its control on universities, as could be seen from the tearing down of most Mao’s statues in Chinese universities. But the spectre of Mao and of the party, I argue, has hardly disappeared. Tu’s session can be viewed at: http://fora.tv/2007/07/03/China_and_the_World_of_Ideas.

76 CCP Committee of the Ministry of Education, Zhonggong jiaoyubu dangzu guanyu jinyibu jiaqiang gaodeng xuexiao xuesheng sixiang zhengzhii gongzuo duihu jianshe de ruogan yijian (Several Suggestions of the CCP Committee of the Ministry of Education Regarding the Further Strengthening of the Team of Political Thought Workers in Universities) (Beijing: author, 2000).
The same issue. In fact, a brief examination of the two party documents in their entirety indeed reveals numerous similarities as if they were two versions of the same document drafted at the same time.

The only conspicuous difference is that, in 2000, thanks to another ten years of economic growth and wealth accumulation, the party was able to provide more incentives and benefits for political thought workers. For instance, the party aimed to provide political thought workers with salaries that university instructors were receiving. Further, some of more competent political thought workers would be promoted to leadership positions in universities and even local governments. These incentives were reassured in a 2005 party document, in which the party also reiterated that political thought workers must “be unswervingly consistent with the party central committee on important political issues, protect the party’s and nation’s interests, and maintain stability in universities”.

Party building in universities is also strengthened and deepened in the new century. This strengthening and deepening, however, are built upon allowing student party members to play a greater role in student governance: from political thought education to daily activities and from dormitory management to intranet monitoring. Although the extent to which student party members can influence university politics—given the absolute authority of the campus party committee—remains unclear, what the party has done might well have provided a greater sense of political participation and even democratic governance among the politically active segment of the student body, and a kind of

77 Ibid.

78 Ministry of Education, Jiaoyubu guanyu jiaqiang gaodeng xuexiao fudaoyuan banzhuren duiwu jianshe de yijian (Several Suggestions of the Ministry of Education Concerning the Further Strengthening the Team Building of Political Thought Workers) (Beijing: author, 2005).

79 The General Office of the CCP Central Committee, the Organization Department of the CCP, the Party Group of the Ministry of Education & the Central Committee of the Communist Youth League, Zhonggong zhongyang bangongting zhuanfa "Zhonggong zhongyang zuzhibu, zhonggong jiaoyubudangzu, gongqingtuan zhongyang guanyu jiaqiang he gaijin zai daxuesheng zhong fazhan dangyuan gongzuo he daxuesheng dangzhibu jianshe de yijian" de tongzhi (A Notice from the General Official of the CCP Central Committee on Transmiting the Document Entitled "Several Suggestions from the CCP Organization Department, the Party Group of the Ministry of Education, the Central Committee of the Commist Youth League on Strengthening and Improving the Work of Party Member Recruitment and Party Branch Development in Universities) (Beijing: author, 2005).
control buffer zone between the university administration and student. Moreover, while the CCP has spared no time in recent years building its lower echelons in new sectors of Chinese society, such as private business, it has also sought to reach its tentacles deeper in university. In every class in which three students are party members, a formal party branch will now be established immediately to become the leading force for students in general, and for political thought education in the class in particular.\textsuperscript{80}

The CCP also continues to rely on its “assistant and reserve army” – the CYL – as a significant instrument for university governance, because the majority of university students are members of the league not the party. Yet the idiosyncrasy of contemporary CYL building in university is that its emphasis has been placed explicitly on “enhancing the league’s service capacity”.\textsuperscript{81} Helping students overcome economic difficulties, search for jobs and alleviate their psychological stress, etc., now constitutes the primary responsibilities of the CYL.\textsuperscript{82} In other words, university league branches have officially taken on a dualist role: they are the party’s gate keepers on one hand, but are more of service providers on the other.

Twenty years of visible stability in Chinese universities since 1989 suggest that the party’s control institutions are well and alive. But it would certainly be foolhardy to argue that these institutions themselves are sufficient for winning students’ complacency with, if not total support for, the party-state. And the party knows that too. As what it did to maintain control over other sectors of Chinese society after Tiananmen, the party has also applied its cooptive control methods in governing university students. The so-called “Daxuesheng cunguan jihuna” or University Student Village Official Program (USVO

\begin{footnotesize}
\footnote{Ibid.}
\footnote{Central Committee of the Communist Youth League & Ministry of Education, \textit{Gongqingtuan zhongyang, jiaoyu guanyu jinyibu jiaqiang he gaijin gaodeng xueyuan gongqingtuan jianshe de yijian} (Suggestions of the Communist Youth League Central Committee and the Ministry of Education on the Strengthening and Improving the Building of Communist Youth League Branch in Universities) (Beijing: author, 2005).}
\footnote{Ibid.}
\end{footnotesize}
program hereafter) – now a strategic national project as defined by the head of the CCP’s Organization Department – might be the best example for illustration.

The CCP was certainly not inexperienced with sending university students to the countryside, as it did to hundreds of thousands of them during the Great Proletariat Cultural Revolution. The USVO program aims to do exactly the same but with a completely different purpose: students are now sent down not to learn from the peasants, but to govern them and to develop local economies. Although the official launching of the USVO program at the national level happened in early 2008, which some in China saw as an expedient solution to the looming unemployment problem, the CCP had experimented with the idea at provincial and municipal levels for quite some years. The first experiment started in 1999 in Hainan.83 The municipal government of Beijing also launched its own USVO program back in 2005. By the end of 2007, more than 5,000 university graduates from universities in Beijing were sent to villages across the country upon graduation, becoming, first, assistants and secretaries to village party cadres, and then cadres and leaders themselves.84

Three years after local experimentation, during the annual National People’s Congress, Li Yuanchao – the head of the party’s Organization Department – openly discussed a potential national USVO project for the first time with the congress participants. Li’s vision was simple yet ambitious: sending Chinese villages 100,000 fresh university graduates from 2008 to 2012.85 A year after Li made the remark, in May 2009, a formal party document on the national USVO project was jointly issued by twelve party

83 I am thankful to Professor Elizabeth J. Perry, who pointed me to the fact that Hainan was the first to start USVO in China.


departments – Organization Department, Propaganda Department, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Public Security, Ministry of Human Resource and Social Security, etc.\(^86\)

The document is incentives-loaded. First, selected student officials will be paid at roughly the same rate of local party cadres and officials. Second, they will be provided with constant trainings on leadership skills while working in villages. Third, for those who are willing to work in the barren “Da xibei” (the Great Northwest) and other economically impoverished frontier areas, their student loans will be paid – either partially or entirely – by the Ministry of Finance. Further, daily expenditures would be negligible for student officials, because they have access to free residence and to local party cadre cafeteria. The list goes on.

Given the socio-economic circumstances under which this national project was initiated, speculation that the project was a contingent solution for rising unemployment is reasonable. The financial crisis undoubtedly facilitated the birth of the national project; yet, as mentioned, the party has had experimentation at the local level for several years. In other words, the project would be carried out with or without the financial crisis, because it has significant political implications.

Such political implications, I argue, are primarily twofold. The first, which has been made clear by the party itself, is that the USVO project is to ensure that the party finds its qualified successors in the future. The party seeks to produce a reservoir of experienced cadres on call through USVO, as Li Yuanchao said: “letting university graduates to work as village cadres is a strategic decision made by the CCP Central Committee…to ensure the succession of the socialist cause.”\(^87\) Second, and more important, this national project

\(^86\) CCP Organization Department, Guanyu yinfa "guanyu jianli xuanpin gaoxiao biyesheng daocun renzhi gongzuo changxiao jizhi de yijian" (Notice on the Distribution of "Suggestions about Establishing Long Term Mechanisms of Hiring University Graduates to Work in Villages) (Beijing: author, 2009).

would create a considerable larger space within which the politically ambitious young Chinese might obtain a real sense of political participation and relevance. For example, party bosses in villages were asked by the Central Committee to take a “hands-off” attitude and allow freedom for student officials to “innovate boldly”. Also, promising student officials would be invited to formal party conferences at the county and township levels. In succinct terms, the party is indeed trying to co-op, and to provide greater political opportunities for, educated and ambitious students.

Crisis Management – Institutional Responsiveness and Cohesiveness

University governance is of course not only an intra-campus activity; it requires coordination of key state institutions that normally do not meddle with university governance. And this is especially true at moment of crises.

In 2009, while the global financial tsunami left perhaps millions of Chinese migrant workers jobless, new graduates from universities across China – including elite universities such as Beida and Tsinghua – also met unprecedented challenges finding jobs. In summer 2009 alone, around six million university students graduated, looking for jobs. In combination with the remaining jobless one million graduates from summer 2008, the total number of increasingly disgruntled Chinese was approximately seven million. Thus, the spectre of increasing unemployment – one of the driving factors for the 1989 Tiananmen uprising – was again looming large. The CCP, while unable to instantaneously create enough jobs for young graduates, did not stand idly by. The party state, again, is proved to be capable of mediating and mitigating discontent and thus preventing crisis. Like 1989, the party turned again to its own army for help; but unlike two decades ago, this time the PLA was not ordered to attack but to absorb: more than

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88 CCP Organization Department, “Guanyu yinfa” (Notice on the Distribution of “Suggestions”).

130,000 new university graduates joined the army in 2009—a stunning number sixty times larger than that in 2008.\(^9^0\)

Perhaps, most from the 13,000-strong young graduates did not at first see the PLA as the final destination of their arduous job hunting. But it is no doubt that the party state was proactive in offering this option and intentionally drew students’ attention to the army—the ultimate vanguard of the party’s ruling cage. This offering was not the outcome of a simple ‘ordering and obeying’ process between the party and its army; it was a fast and effective coordination among several key party state institutions: Ministry of National Defence, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Education, and the Department of Public Security, etc.\(^9^1\) Each of these departments offered individually and collectively preferential policies and incentives for students to join the PLA.

Eight major incentives-oriented policies resulted from these departments’ coordination under the central party leadership:

1. University graduates are given priority in recruitment; the recruitment of university graduates takes place several months prior to recruitment of those from other sectors of society;

2. Students joining the army will be given a maximum of 24,000 RMB each—which in essence means, in the words of a spokesperson from the Ministry of Education, that “they go to college for free”;\(^9^2\)

3. While serving the army, student soldiers will be given priority in terms of promotion and higher military school application;

4. Students holding a B.A. in relevant fields, having decent performance in university and meeting “political standards” of the army will not start as a Private but a Sergeant directly;

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\(^9^1\) Ministry of Education of the People’s Republic of China, “Guojia gulli gaoxiao biyesheng yingzheng ruwu fu yiwu bingyi,” (The state encourages the conscription of university graduates), http://www.moe.edu.cn/edoas/website18/46/info1244707272647846.htm

5. After service, student soldiers will be given priorities in terms of admission to specific programs at law schools and schools of administration; 

6. After service, student soldiers holding degrees from vocational schools and colleges can participate in B.A. programs for adults for free; some might also, after passing qualification tests, start B.A. programs in universities for free;

7. After service, those who will be writing an MA/MS entrance exam will automatically be given a 10-points bonus mark;

8. Those awarded Merit Citation Class II or above while in service will be recommended for and enrol in MA/MS programs in university for free after service.

Arrestingly attractive policies. But beyond their attractiveness to the graduates, the making of these policies conspicuously demonstrate that the party-state is paying unparalleled attention to university students during the economic downturn, and that the CCP has enormous institutional resources – from financial to administrative – at its disposal to govern the young and potentially restless Chinese. Giving every student soldier approximately 20,000 RMB means an extra 2.4 billion expenditure from the treasure vault of the party-state; and coordinating eight party-state ministries to get these comprehensive policies in place and implement them within a year reminds us of the institutional cohesiveness, responsiveness and effectiveness of the Chinese political regime.

Aside from coordinating among key state organizations at the national level, the central party leadership also orchestrated a nation-wide recruitment campaign by mobilizing local party committees and governments. Local cadres and officials, whose promotion in a Leninist cadre management system depends primarily, if not entirely, on meeting party

93 These specific programs are all part and parcel of a national program – “Dingxiang Gangwei Zhaosheng” (“Fixed Job Posts Recruitment”) – coordinated by law schools and schools of administration, and the Department of Public Security, the Chinese Supreme Court and the Chinese Procuratorate. Admitted students to this national program at various schools will be sent to hinterland and other economically backward places to work in local courts, police systems and the procuratorate systems.

94 Ministry of Education of the People’s Republic of China, “Guojia guli”.
state objectives – from the growth rate of GDP to acres of re-claimed land – have been expectedly active in this campaign. While implementing the center’s eight preferential policies, local party committees and governments also introduced and promoted their own alluring incentives.

This is understandable because, again, local leaders were given specific quotas; and they must achieve them if simply for egoistic purpose. To achieve its own quota, Fujian province decided to slightly expand the target scope of provincial recruitment campaign. Students in Fujian who had completed university courses but had not written a thesis for graduation were also welcome to join the army. For these students, they could write their thesis while in service and could receive their degree – without having to attend a formal thesis defence which they would otherwise – upon completing their theses. In the same vein, some universities in Hei Longjiang province created new scholarships as incentives for would-be student soldiers. For instance, in addition to the 24,000 RMB given by the central government, an extra 2,500 RMB would be provided by the Harbin Institute of Technology on an annual basis to their students wishing to continue school after military service.

Of course, a Leninist party-state would never miss the opportunity to showcase its propaganda expertise in any revolutionary-style mobilization and promotion. Hence, the Chinese media, though largely liberalized, continued to play a key role in this recruitment campaign. Take Shan Dong province – an important PLA recruitment source historically – as an example. When interviewed by local media, the Political Commissar of Jinan Garrison Command said the following:

“Our provincial leaders – Provincial Party General Secretary Jiang YiKang, Provincial Governor Jiang Daming [unrelated], Mayor of Jinan Zhang Jianguo and Vice Mayor Qi Jianzhong...all have experience...

95 Government of Hunan made it explicit that the province would recruit “at least” 7,000 university graduates. http://hn.rednet.cn/c/2009/06/01/1769340.htm
serving in the PLA. According to statistics provided by relevant department, at least one fifth of party and government leaders in the province have experience serving in the army. Student soldiers of today will perhaps become army generals of tomorrow, or become the backbones of our regime at various levels...”

For those who are cognizant of Chinese culture, it is clear that the Political Commissar was invoking the traditional notion of “Guan benwei”, which entails that officials are the foundation of society, that becoming an official is the ultimate aim of education, and that becoming an official brings pride and glory to one’s family and ancestry. The link between joining the army and the potential to become an official is tenuous at best; it is doubtful whether this argument would sell among the students. However, what is clear is that local party officials are employing whatever strategies possible to get job-searching graduates to join the PLA.

To echo the Political Commissar, a number of party cadres and government officials in the province also passionately shared their views with the same news agency on new graduates joining the army. The mayor of Qing Dao even made it explicit that implementing this comprehensive, nation-wide program with celerity, in light of the global economic downturn, indicates that the country is “prosperous and strong”.

The mayor was expressing a sense of pride at the financial and institutional strength of his party-state.

Revamping the Ideational Cage

On the day of the 60th anniversary of the founding of the PRC, the party staged a lavish evening gala at Tiananmen Square. Covering the show live, a CCTV narrator at the background uttered the following emotional words to hundreds and millions of Chinese TV viewers: “the Chinese people have reached a great historical consensus of building

99 Ibid.
socialism with Chinese characteristics!" Indeed, many believe that the party has abandoned political indoctrination and adopted consensus building – i.e. the consensus of the very necessity of maintaining political stability and thus one party rule – as the means through which to re-establish its ideological legitimacy after Tiananmen.\textsuperscript{101}

However, in the case of education, especially university education, Chinese Marxism is not dead, regardless of all the cynical observations on the ostensible irrelevance of party doctrines in today’s China, especially among young Chinese. While re-invoking Chinese nationalism to win university students’ support, the party has not allowed every bit of its core ideology to rot beyond recognition.\textsuperscript{102} In other words, the party has attempted relentlessly to fortify its ideational cage over the students.

Concomitant with the institutional strengthening of control in universities, the ideological fortification also happened right after Tiananmen. Reflecting on 1989 and preceding years, the party admitted that university students were not “attaching any importance to the study of Marxism”, and that Marxist theoretical education had been “detached from reality”.\textsuperscript{103} To increase teaching effectiveness, the party first required university instructors of Marxism to improve on the “persuasiveness” and “attractiveness” of their teaching methods, of which were to be shared through national and local teaching conferences.\textsuperscript{104} Second, the party established numerous \textit{Lilun jiaoxue shijian jidi} (Theory Education Practice Bases) where students would learn on spot, for example, how to

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\begin{enumerate}
\item China’s CCTV live coverage of the show.
\item Anne-Marie Brady, \textit{Marketing Dictatorship} (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2008).
\item Once again, I will not dwell upon the issue of promoting nationalism, or “Patriotic Education” in this thesis, as it has been dealt with widely by China scholars, and also as it requires in-depth investigation.
\item National Education Committee, \textit{Guojia jiaoyu weiyuanhui guanyu jiaqiang he gaijin gaodeng xuejiao makesizhuyi lilun jiaoyu de ruogan yijian} (Several Suggestions from the National Education Committee Regarding the Strengthening and Improving of Marxism Education in Universities) (Beijing: author, 1991).
\item Ibid.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
understand concrete social problems through Marxist theories. Further, theory instructors were required to actively take advantage of whatever new technologies available to enhance teaching effectiveness. Last, and certainly not the least, students’ graduation and application to graduate school would be more heavily dependent on their performance in their Marxism courses – which occupy roughly 300 hours of their undergraduate study.\textsuperscript{105}

These party instructions, made in the immediate aftermath of Tiananmen, have not been abandoned or loosened since then, but might actually have been strengthened in light of further reform and opening. Briefly searching relevant Chinese websites today shows that local governments and party committees are still designating new theory education bases. In 2004, Hu Jintao summoned a party meeting regarding political thought education of university students, which was attended by all members of the party Central Committee. Parts of the released meeting document are worth quoting at length:

\begin{quote}
“Our country now has around 20 million university students...they will be the backbone for building socialism with Chinese characteristics...[most of them] love the party, love the country, love the people, love socialism, and support the party’s theories and policies...and have confidence in building a well-off society...However, under the circumstance of socialist market economy and opening to the outside, [which caused] a competition of different thoughts and cultures, some university students have had some serious thought problems: they have ambiguous political faith and ideal...and some have succumbed to materialism and individualism. We must be clearly aware of that the ideological realm has always been a battleground between hostile forces and us. Under the current international and domestic situation, the struggle between hostile forces and us over our next generation remains intense and complicated. They want to eventually achieve the political objective of subverting the leadership of the CCP and Chinese socialism by disseminating Western bourgeois political viewpoints, values, ways of life to our university students, so as to subtly and indirectly influence our students to accept Western political system in toto. We must not lose our vigilance...Western hostile forces are trying whatever means possible to westernize and dismember China.”\textsuperscript{106}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{105} Ibid.

In terms of its wording, this document can be easily mistaken as one drafted before the reform era, or, immediately after Tiananmen when Sino-Western relations reached a new freezing point. Indeed, almost twenty years after Tiananmen, the way in which the CCP framed the issue of political thought education of university students, and the perceived pernicious impact and subversive intent of the West, remains very well intact. For many in the West, this might create a somewhat befuddling juxtaposition between a China that is poised to further integrate into and accept the West-dominated international system, and a China that continues to be extremely rigid and dogmatic on ideological terms vis-à-vis the West. China often accuses the West of maintaining a “Cold War mentality”, but it does just the same when it comes to education.

Although I will deal with the issue of efficacy, i.e. how effective the party’s institutional and ideational renewal has been in the next section of the thesis, I do feel compelled to make a cursory foray into this issue here, given that the prevailing view has been that university students are very much estranged from ideologies of the CCP. It seems that, however determined, the party is holding onto its ideational cage in vain. Marxism is, after all, dead. Of course, this would certainly be true if Chinese Marxism is only the equivalent of Maoist utopianism, and finds its daily relevance only in the extinct communes. It would also be true if Chinese Marxism still openly claims Communism as its ultimate goal and designs as such every move of the body politic and that of the people within. However, if we break down a totalized and teleological Marxism into pieces of interwoven beliefs with which the Chinese, especially university students, identify strongly, then it might be reasonable to tentatively entertain the idea that the CCP has been effective in maintaining its ideational cage.

Take the “economic base versus political superstructure” logic of Marxism – which is taught ad nauseum in China – as an example. When asked by a Yale student about the prospect of Chinese democracy, visiting Chinese President Hu responded with an indirect yet clear answer: “I am a Marxist materialist; I believe that the development of political
superstructure must be compatible with the development of the economic base.”

Implicitly then, a China that only has a $1,700 per capital GDP – a figure that the President also cited during the same occasion – should still preoccupy itself with the degree of government not the form of it. The CCP should remain in power.

Is this a self-defending assertion of a recalcitrant leader or leadership that defies public opinion? How would Chinese university students think about Hu’s answer? Would they buy his Marxist belief that democracy should be postponed for the lack of a sufficient economic base? According to an on-line survey of mine, when asked “[w]hat is the most important thing for China to do in the next decade?”, 80% of the 219 respondents selected either “economic development” or “faster development of urban and rural areas” as the country’s number one priority, while only 13% suggested that “allowing people to have more say in politics” instead. This survey result conspicuously demonstrates that the “economic base versus political superstructure” Marxist logic, which is conducive to legitimizing CCP rule, not only still resonates strongly with the party leadership, but also with university students and perhaps the general public at large (In the China section of World Value Survey 2001, a similar question received roughly the same percentile in response). Of course, this resonance is no function of fortuitous and natural confluence of viewpoints between the CCP and the students; it is, rather, a product of continued “manufacturing” of public opinion in the post-Tiananmen era – manufacturing selectively on the basis of orthodox Chinese Marxism. It is hence too early to dismiss the relevance and significance of Marxist ideas in today’s China: ideas students endorse.

While maintaining and strengthening its ideational cage, the party has also been trying to expand it; the socially conscious students are clearly given a greater degree of freedom to

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108 Y. Liu, "Weilai shinian dui zhongguo zui zhongyao de shiqing shi? (What is the Most Important Thing for China in the Next Decade?)," An on-line Survey (Xiaonei [now re-named to Renren], July 25, 2008).

109 Elaboration of the CCP’s manufacturing of public consent based on the revolutionary past can be found in Anne-Marie Brady’s Marketing Dictatorship.
express dissenting views and make insinuations on sensitive topics. For example, in August 2008, when thousands of photos taken from the magnificent Olympic opening ceremony were circulated on a particular university student cyber community, others depicting the horrible living conditions of migrant workers – those that built the Olympic facilities but were forced to leave the city before the Games – also appeared in the same on-line group. One set of such photos that I shared in August 2008 was seen, by mid-October of the year, by 80,891 students and elicited 2,531 sympathetic and cynical comments, some of which were fairly radical: “This might be counter-revolutionary, but everything is just a show-off project by and for the Communist Party”; “What harmonious society?!”; “State leaders, party cadres, CEOs, and celebrities are enjoying all the Olympic glory but the migrant workers are downtrodden; this is no fair!”

Further, the level of tolerance of the party-state with regard to some students’ explicit expression of dissenting political views is, for the lack of a better word, amazing. For example, the clichéd observation holds that the picture of the “tank man”—the iconic person who stopped PLA tanks near Tiananmen Square in 1989—is strictly forbidden on the Internet in China. This observation is not entirely consistent with what is happening in university student cyber communities. For instance, in the cyber community through which I conducted the aforementioned survey, a “twisted” version of the “tank man” (a giant man confronting a queue of tiny tanks) was disseminated by a student whose online user name is “the Mother of the Green Dam” – an obvious insinuated castigation of the government’s “Green Dam” censorship program. The picture was uploaded, according to my on-line conversation with the student, in May 2009, and was not taken down by the website’s management team in December 2009 until some students started to post comments in direct relation to what happened in 1989 and when some even talked about sharing the documentary “The Tank Man”. Yet, a cartoonized version of the tank man can still be found in that student’s blog.

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110 My on-line conversation with the student took place in an on-line group named “renrenwang xiaonei”, December 22, 2009.
Why the party has expanded its zone of tolerance in the ideational, if not ideological, realm is beyond the scope of this thesis, but let me digress briefly to suggest two possibilities. First, as some scholars have indicated, the CCP might have learned a great deal from the social psychology theory – “cognitive dissonance” – to enhance its control in the ideological realm: that is, allowing the right amount of cognitive dissonance or dissenting views to compete with the dominant ones could very likely be conductive to upholding the supremacy of discourses of the party-state.\footnote{Anthony R. Pratkanis and Elliott Aronson, \textit{Age of Propaganda: The Everyday Use and Abuse of Persuasion} (New York: W. H. Freeman and Co, 1991), p. 35.} Second, university students and most of Chinese netizens have become very well aware of the “bottom-lines” of the CCP. They also know, when engaging themselves in on-line discussions of present-day politics, that there always exists the possibility of being monitored. Michael Foucault’s notion of “panopticism” might be a useful analytical tool for further understanding how the party has largely successfully induced in the students—and most other Chinese netizens—“a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power.”\footnote{Michel Foucault, \textit{Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison} (New York: Random House Inc., 1977), p. 201.}

Perhaps, for contemporary university students, the party-state has not lost its ideational appeal, which I would like to coin as “CCPism”. It is neither pure fervent “developmentalism” nor incendiary nationalism; it is neither a full revival of Confucianism nor moral nihilism; and it is neither pure socialism nor full-fledged capitalism. And, it is hardly contingent, unstable eclecticism either. Rather, it is a hodgepodge of everything. Yet, it is not a disorderly and disoriented hodgepodge: the genius of the party-state lies in its ability to constantly expand, re-shape and re-arrange the repertoire of the party’s “big” political thoughts and ideas—in line with new socioeconomic developments, and to adroitly justify and rationalize those newest ideational expansions, re-shaping and re-arrangements on the very grounds of orthodox Marxist thoughts. The CCP does not need to worry if young Chinese read the Communist Manifesto any longer (it is indeed questionable how many of the Communist leaders and
older party members have actually read that), as long as they buy the dynamic, ever-renewing “CCPism”.

**Leadership Mediation – Between the Cage and the Student**

To better understand university students’ relative complacency with CCP rule, it is imperative to go beyond the party’s simultaneous strengthening and expanding of its cage – both institutional and ideational. That is to understand the role played by individual party leaders. For students, the party is an abstract idea, but the party’s leaders are not; they can be heard, seen and loved. Historically, since the founding of the PRC, there have always been certain individuals in every generation of party leadership who either had direct impact – intentionally or inadvertently – on student politics, or had enjoyed extraordinary popularity among students for their wisdom and/or charisma. Mao mobilized millions of university students for his Cultural Revolution; Zhou Enlai remains a perennially canonized sage-like figure; Deng Xiaoping’s reform were whole-heartedly supported by students in the early 1980s and today; Hu Yaobang’s death triggered the 1989 student uprising; and Zhong Rongji’s wisdom, and his iron-fist policy on corruption and Taiwan, are still openly admired by today’s university students.

The core of the present generation of leadership – President Hu and Premier Wen – continues to earn credits for the legitimacy of their party through their, I would call, populist charisma. China is still a leader-friendly country, to use the term coined by Harvard Professor Roderick MacFarquhar. And because the country is still leader-friendly, probably due to a kind of cultural proclivity of respecting authorities and the elderly (and Chinese leaders are both), it creates a tremendous psychological impact on the Chinese people – and the students – when they see President Hu and Premier Wen shaking hands with SARS patients, bowing to families of fallen rescuers in the Sichuan earthquake, bowing to teachers of mentally retarded children, and eating dumplings and

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chatting for hours with mine workers 400 meters underground on the very day of Chinese Spring Festival. These might seem to be common election campaign activities to anyone in the West or any democratic society, but these activities and images are unprecedented in a country where two millennia absolute monarchism has just ended for only 98 years.

The leaders have also proactively projected their pingmin (populist) charisma to university students. Since Tiananmen, and especially after the Hu-Wen administration took office, Chinese leaders would always visit university campuses to interact with students during such politically important and relevant anniversaries as the “May 4th”. During the “May 4th” anniversary, 2009, Hu and Wen went to Beijing Agriculture University and Tsinghua University respectively. At Beijing Agriculture University, Hu toured the campus and was warmly received by the students. Several girls shouted: “General Secretary, I love you!” It would be impossible for the cynical in the West to have cognitive resonance with such students that support the so-called “Communist dictators”. But I do. Yet, I still have to come to grips with this issue in a scholarly fashion. Let me spell out here a kind of confession or mea culpa: as someone who has studied in the West for five years, someone who has been exposed to all major Western political philosophies and democratic systems around the world, and someone who wrote best papers for Western political science courses in which criticalness toward the CCP is self-evident, I cannot extricate myself from thinking Hu and Wen – the top CCP leaders – as wise, capable, respectable and legitimate leaders of China. The Chinese people are fortunate to have them as the country’s leaders.

Party leaders’ internal “charm offence” – to borrow the term coined to describe China’s soft diplomacy in recent years – has certainly conquered the vast majority of Chinese university students, like myself. For instance, there is a great number of online complimentary videos edited by young Chinese dedicated to Hu and Wen. A brief examination of comments posted in response to the videos – very often watched and

114 CCTV, Hujintao zongshuji tong zhongguo nongye daxue shisheng gongying wusiqingnianjie (General Secretary Hu Jintao Celebrate the May 4th Youth Festival with Teachers and Students at China Agriculture University), May 4, 2009, http://v.youku.com/v_show/id_XODg3MzQzMjQ=.html (accessed December 21, 2009).
shared by millions of student netizens – easily reveals the enviable popularity, support and love enjoyed by Hu and Wen, the latter of whom immediately went to Beijing university to eat with and console the students when SARS emptied Beijing streets in 2003. One student from Hangzhou wrote in response to one such video: “Grandpa Hu works tirelessly for the country and people; looking at those images I cannot help but cry. China is fortunate to have him.”\textsuperscript{115} And comments like this are not the exceptions but the commons.

In sum, Chinese leaders are not “faceless” Machiavellian power holders as often presented and perceived in the West but are, or at least have been projected by the Chinese media as, warm-hearted, upright and wise leaders whose images resonate with those of the mingjun (wise emperors) and haoguan (good officials) in Chinese history textbooks and the abundant history TV dramas. Even Chinese villagers who engage in contentious politics at the grassroots level—i.e. villagers who are critical of the local governments and engage in protests regularly—explicitly compare Hu Jintao to “wise emperors.”\textsuperscript{116} Central leaders [Zhongyang lingdao] are the finest men in all of China, the policies they make...are very good indeed.”\textsuperscript{117}

\textsuperscript{115} Rudongdehouzi (pseudonym), 101 ge yangzi - Huzhuxi MV (101 Images - President Hu's MV, June 2009, http://v.youku.com/v_show/id_XOTc0ODg5MDQ=.html (accessed November 6, 2009).

\textsuperscript{116} Kevin J. O’Brien and Lianjiang Li, Rightful Resistance in Rural China (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 40.

\textsuperscript{117} Ibid.
Part III Measuring the Effectiveness of the Party’s Cage

So far, I have argued that the CCP has attempted relentlessly to revitalize declining institutional and ideational controls over universities and their students in post-Tiananmen China. This section of the thesis aims to measure the extent to which the party-state has been successful – or not – in that regard. To do so, I have conducted a field survey in seven Chinese universities located in four cities (Shanghai, Changchun, Beijing and Jinzhou). Both the cities and universities are of varying size: from nationally renowned universities found in the country’s metropolitan centers, to less famous ones built in considerably smaller coastal cities and in the interior of the industrial Northeast.118 Five hundred and twelve students were randomly selected for the survey, which contains questions specifically designed to measure the effectiveness of party-state control and governance in both institutional, but primarily, ideational terms.119

The survey questionnaire (see appendix 1) is consisted of two major parts. The first (question 1-9) is simply one that collects students’ basic background information, e.g. their party membership, their parents’ party membership, their hometown location, etc. The second part (question 10-19) asks some hard questions about Chinese politics, e.g. about the suitability of establishing multi-party, parliamentary democracy in China. Such a survey – one that is quite similar to the China section in the World Value Survey and in the East Asia Barometer, but one that is focused exclusively on contemporary Chinese university students – has never been attempted by scholars in the West. Moreover, unlike other general political value surveys on China, this survey covers virtually every single province in China – even including Tibet and Xinjiang – as students in the universities come from across the country.

118 The seven universities are: Shanghai Maritime University, Shanghai Jiaotong University, Beijing Normal University, Jilin University, Changchun Ligong University, Dongbei Normal University (located in the city of Changchun) and Bohai University (located in the city of Jinzhou, Liaoning province).

119 Of the 512 students randomly selected, 49 are first year, 115 second year, 223 third year, 57 fourth year, 50 MA and 14 PhD.
Following is a detailed presentation of the survey results. I first provide a summary of the students’ political views – which either directly or indirectly speaks to party control efficacy or a lack of it – by discussing and analyzing questions in the second part of the survey (about politics). The second part this presentation is a cursory foray into further explaining why students responded to certain questions in the way that they did, i.e. do students’ economic status, their time spent in university, their parents’ party membership, their own party membership and the location of their hometown (urban vs. rural) etc., influence how they approach certain questions? Statistical tests are conducted to establish/disestablish perceived correlations. The conclusions I make are meant to be tentative and provocative, given the limitations of this particular field research.

**Survey Results**

- **Institutional Strength of Party Branches and Official Student Organizations**

In the first part of the thesis, I suggested, primarily through a close examination of post-Tiananmen party documents, that the CCP has made tremendous efforts in resuscitating moribund control institutions on university campuses – the university party committee, party branches of professors and of students at various levels, the Communist Youth League branches, and official student unions and other student organizations approved of by the party-state. Has the party-state succeeded? More than twenty years since Tiananmen, it seems – from the very perspective of many contemporary university students themselves – that the party-state has so far and by large succeeded in shaking up its atrophying control institutions.

Intended to measure the effectiveness/relevance of party organizations and official student organizations, question 14 in the survey asked respondents to evaluate the following statement “The CCP and CCYL branches play significant roles in campus governance and student life”. Five hundred and nine students answered the question. Of all the respondents, 56 answered “strongly agree” and 257 “agree”; this makes the total number of students in agreement with the statement accounting for 61.5 % of the total respondents. The remaining 38.5 % of the respondents do not all disagree. In fact, the majority of them (21.6 %) selected “uncertain” as their answer. Causes of this uncertainty
are not clear. It is unlikely that students chose “uncertain” because the nature of the question is politically sensitive, for it is not. For example, one student (case 80) from Shanghai Maritime University answered “uncertain” to this question, but he/she strongly disagreed that parliamentary and multi-party political system is not suitable for China (survey question 15). The latter question on democracy is for sure much more sensitive than the former. Hence, it is more likely that students who selected “uncertain” are genuinely ambivalent about the institutional strength of party branches and official student organizations. This ambivalence could arise from fewer interactions with these political organizations, from a lack of involvement with student politics, or just from sheer indifference.

It is still noteworthy that 36 students disagreed and 50 students strongly disagreed with the statement. Of these 86 students (16.9% of total respondents) who thought party branches and official student organizations do not play important roles in campus governance, more than half (46; 53.5%) are students from programs in the natural sciences, the rest are from social sciences and humanities (30; 34.5%), business (9; 1.2%) and fine arts (1). This distribution is fairly consistent with the overall distribution of students’ academic backgrounds in the survey.\(^{120}\) Thus it would be inappropriate to conclude that students in natural sciences are more inclined to see party weakness on

\(^{120}\) In terms of the entire respondent population, 309 students are in natural science programs (60.4); 150 students in the social sciences or humanities (29.3); 47 (9.2%) students in the business; and only 3 (0.6%) in fine arts.
campus; it just happened that more students in natural sciences programs were surveyed. Reasons for disagreement remain unclear.

- Ideational Dominance of the Party-State

Measuring how successful the party-state has been in maintaining its ideational dominance among post-Tiananmen university students is unavoidably a tricky business.121 How to frame the questions so that they can be politically “surveyable” without distorting the substance of the intended inquiry, and whether students can answer politically sensitive questions with a maximum degree of honesty, will both greatly influence the value and results of the survey. In my survey, I have refrained from using words which could be taken as critical insinuation against the Chinese government and opted for neural ones. I have also used ideas taken directly from important party documents or CCP leaders’ speeches as survey questions. These are not only entirely politically acceptable, as they are derived from the party’s own documents and speeches, but are the best litmus test for the party’s ideational dominance.

One could argue that political fear could still be an important factor influencing survey research in China; asking students to evaluate key party ideas/assertions is exceedingly sensitive and will thus elicit untruthful response. This concern is legitimate. Yet, as Shi Tianjian has shown statistically in the China section of the East Asian Barometer project, political fear did not exert much of an influence on his respondents at all.122 My own living and research experience in China also convince me that political fear has substantially diminished among Chinese citizens in general, and young educated Chinese in particular (Students in Beijing are a conspicuous anomaly in this regard). Nevertheless, for questions that might be considered as politically sensitive, I created the “do not want to answer” category. I argue that one who chooses “do not want to answer” to sensitive

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121 I do not mean Communist ideologies but ideas needed and promoted to justify sustained single-party rule.

questions has already expressed subtly yet forcefully a counter-hegemonic idea. This will also ensure that those who choose “uncertain” might indeed have no clear answer to the question posed.

I should also make very clear that, by “ideational dominance”, I do not mean – in fact I cannot ascertain – that the CCP still shapes the thinking of Chinese citizens through incessant political indoctrination amidst selective media liberalization. Rather, as long as key political ideas endorsed and promoted by the party-state are supported by the Chinese people (whether as a result of indoctrination, or independent rational thinking, or a mixture of both), the party-state maintains its ideational dominance.

On Multi-Party, Parliamentary Democracy

Despite the CCP has openly claimed that “[w]ithout democracy, China’s modernization drive would not succeed”, and that many top Chinese leaders have constantly put “democracy” on their lips, it is no secret that the party-state still entirely rejects western multi-party, parliamentary democracy. China’s top legislator Wu Bangguo said during the latest NPC session that “China will never adopt western multi-party, parliamentary democracy” [my emphasis].123 Clearly, the CCP – or rather I should say liberal leaders of the party – wants to venture into a new path of building democracy with Chinese characteristics, as it did with building the Chinese economy since Deng. Yet so far the party has been far less successful in the political realm than in the economic.

Although still unable to clearly delineate the blueprint of future Chinese democracy, the party has never stopped promoting the idea that whatever political reforms are needed, western multi-party, parliamentary style democracy is not a choice. In fact, it would be a harmful choice that could turn China again into a “sheet of loose sand”.124 Following is the students’ evaluation on the party’s claim that “western parliamentary, multi-party political system is unsuitable for China” (survey question 17).


124 “Yi pan san sha” or “A sheet of loose sand” is a common metaphor used by many ordinary Chinese who fear that democracy would turn China into a chaotic, disintegrated country.
The majority (61.3%) of the students surveyed agree with the party’s claim: 79 of them strongly agreed and 233 agreed. The party has in this case a majority, but not an overwhelming one. There are 56 students (10.9) who selected the “disagree” category and 22 (4.3%) “strongly disagree”. Moreover, 39 students went with the “do not want to answer” category, which, again, I take as an indirect rejection to the party’s assertion. Adding the “disagree”, “strongly disagree” and “do not want to answer” categories together, the total number of “dissidents” amounts to 117 (23.7%) – a fairly large percentage given the sensitive nature of the question.

But real world political differences are not nearly as neat as survey categories; the categories are precarious not permanent. Nor would survey answers necessarily translate into political actions or inactions; the answers are indicative not predictive. In other words, for example, perhaps even some of the 22 most “radical” student dissidents – those that strongly disagreed with the party’s assertion – would not openly challenge the CCP during political crises for personal, family and other unpredictable reasons. Also, it would be foolhardy to suggest that the 312 students who are temporarily in agreement with the party-state would never demand ending the CCP’s single-party rule. One student (case 285) from a rural area of Jilin province commented on question 17 that “[t]here is nothing wrong with a multi-party system; progress necessitates competition. It is just that the Chinese national situation [guoqing] is not compatible [with adopting such political system].” What if the national situation changes? How would the same student answer the same question given changed or perceived changes in national situation? Similarly,
another student (case 261) wrote on his/her questionnaire that “it [parliamentary, multi-party democracy] is not suitable at least for now.” Another student (case 17) also concurred, indicating that he chose “agree” at present. The future remains uncertain for the students, as it is for the party-state that is trying to “muddle through” the democratic challenge.

Is there any association between students’ view of liberal democracy and their perception of “the West”? This is the question to which I now briefly turn.

On “The West”

For the CCP, the image of “the West” that attempts to subvert CCP leadership and convert China to a liberal democracy is well and alive. This subversion and conversion are allegedly to be achieved through the so-called “peaceful evolution” of young Chinese. So the party continues to hold that the major battleground to resist this evolution, as I discussed in part one of the thesis, is in Chinese universities. Again, as Hu Jintao said during the 2004 Central Committee meeting regarding university Marxism theory education, that “We [the party] must not lose our vigilance…Western hostile forces are trying whatever means possible to westernize and dismember China…the party [must continue to work] on effectively equipping university students’ minds with Marxism…”125 It is quite ironic, in fact shocking, that leaders of today’s China – an inalienable, most dynamic member of the global capitalist economy now – still hold and promote such negative views of the Western world.

Question 13 uses two buzz words – “westernize” and “dismember” – from Hu’s remarks, it asks students if they agree that “western countries have never changed their scheme of westernizing and dismembering China”. Results show that the party won a majority (I do

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not, again, claim a tight causal relationship between party education and students’ response; I show only that the party’s view is shared by the students). Among the 509 respondents, 227 students agreed – and 122 strongly agreed – with the statement; this is almost 70% of total valid respondents. In comparison, students who chose “disagree” and “strongly disagree” account for 18.9%. The remaining 64 respondents (12.6%) are uncertain about the intent of “the West”.

Table 3 Western countries have never changed their scheme of westernizing and dismembering China. Do you agree?

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<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
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<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>strongly agree</td>
<td>122</td>
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<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
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<td>44.3</td>
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<td>16.9</td>
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<td>Total</td>
<td>509</td>
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Has students’ perception of “the West” influenced their evaluation of the feasibility of parliamentary, multi-party democracy – i.e. Western democracy – in China? Statistical test shows that there indeed is a statistically significant association between the two, albeit the strength of that association is relatively weak (Chi-Square=101.589; P=0.000<0.05; Cramer’s V=0.223).

Not only the calculated numbers here suggest that students’ perception of Western intent vis-à-vis China somehow relates to their rating of liberal democracy, so does modern Chinese history. For example, in 1919, before Western powers transferred German rights in China’s Shandong province to the Japanese through the Treaty of Versailles, university students and other thinking Chinese at the time saw Western democracy as the best and only way through which China could achieve national salvation.\footnote{Erez Manela, Imagining Woodrow Wilson in Asia: Dreams of East-West Harmony and the Revolt against Empire in 1919, The American Historical Review 111, no.5 (2006): 1337- 1340.} Students in Beijing even took it to the street to celebrate the victory of Western democracies in the Great War, and specifically demanded the Chinese government to emulate Western – especially
American – democratic political system. But the Treaty of Versailles effected a “U-turn” in the students’ perception of the West as well as their evaluation of Western democracy. As John Dewy has put it while observing the unfolding of the Paris Conference, that Western democracy as practiced at home was distorted in China by the Western “self-interest and hidden groups”.

Today’s international relations and Sino-Western relations are of course characteristically different from those at the outset of the 20th century. But as long as Chinese perception of Western self-interest vis-à-vis China remains negative, it remains plausible that Chinese evaluation of democracy could well be similarly negative.

On Territorial Integrity, Sovereignty and Human Rights

Why so many students today still maintain, as their Communist leaders do, such a negative view of “the West” – which is, perhaps, a largely imagined single entity. What has “the West” done that has alienated and agitated so many young Chinese? Arguably, Tibet, Xinjiang, and to a lesser extent now, Taiwan, play an important role here. If this is true, i.e. many students still perceive the West as supporters of separatism in China, we can hypothesize that a similarly large proportion of students should also maintain a very tough stance toward separatists in the two volatile minority regions and the “renegade”, autonomous island. And survey results show that the above hypothesis is true. In evaluating the statement “China must use force resolutely to deal with separatists in Tibet, Xinjiang and even Taiwan” (question 18), 346 students out of the 509 valid respondents (68.0%) agreed with the statement, with 121 strongly agreed. What is particularly interesting to note is that the percentage distribution of this question resembles to a very large extent with that of the previous question – “Western countries have never changed their scheme of westernizing and dismembering China”. Below is a comparison of the two percentage distributions.

127 Ibid.
129 Ibid.
This makes it all the more revealing why outrageous Chinese students poured themselves into the streets of major Western cities in 2008, when “the West” was seen as supporter of the Tibetan riot. With a majority of students, perhaps a majority of Chinese citizens, holding ferociously nationalistic/chauvinistic views toward minorities seeking self-determination, it is not hard to understand why the party-state has been relatively carefree in using force. Needless to say, what re-ignited contemporary Chinese nationalism was very likely heightened patriotic education and propaganda after Tiananmen. However, the party-state has become more and more worried about this increasingly unbridled nationalism, for it has sporadically blown back at the party-state itself, now chiefly through the cyber space. If the students’ temporary rejection of liberal democracy and their continued suspicion of “the West” are conducive to the party’s rule, contemporary nationalism – which was cultivated within the party’s ideational cage but which has largely freed itself from the cage – could well metamorphose into multi-faceted, far-reaching challenges to the party-state.

The biggest challenge of all, I would contend, is the possibility of this sovereignty-, national pride-oriented nationalism metamorphosing to one which sees individual rights, and the protection of them, as the basis of a strong and respectable modern nation. This is a not an unreasonable contention. Question 19 of the survey asked students to evaluate

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the statement “Without sovereignty there would be no human rights; sovereignty is above human rights” – the very assertion that the CCP promoted quite fiercely at the end of the 20th century, after the NATO bombing of the Chinese embassy in Yugoslavia. Unlike questions addressed above, where the party-state’s views are shared by nearly 70% of the respondents, only slightly more than half of the students chose either “agree” (187; 36.7%) or “strongly agree” (82; 16.1%) in this case. In comparison, 133 students disagreed and 22 strongly disagreed, compositing a 31% strong “opposition party”. Note, in the previous questions analyzed, the proportions of student dissidents are either around or far below 20%.

Perhaps two competing explanations should be given consideration. First, the data above demonstrate that the discourse of human rights/individual rights are getting hold among university students in China, and that Sun Yat-sun’s notion “sovereignty belongs to the people” is reviving amidst the proliferation of the rights discourse. If this is the case, this would be a bad news for the CCP, at least the conservatives of the party, which has resisted for years the notion of popular sovereignty. A significant crack on the party’s ideational cage. Or, second, despite the data, the party-state still enjoys ideational dominance in this specific regard. The CCP itself has taken on the human rights challenge from the West by adopting the very concept and re-engineering it in ways acceptable by the ruling party, e.g. emphasizing disproportionately economic rights. In 2004, the party explicitly enshrined the protection of human rights into the PRC constitution. What kind of “human rights” the students had in mind when answering the question is not known: if Western human rights which categorically prioritize civil and political rights in western terms, then the party’s ideational dominance faces challenge; but if CCP’s version, ideational dominance of the party-state is perhaps reassured and unchallenged.

On China’s Future Development

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Also important in testing CCP’s ideational dominance – and perhaps even the security of its future ruling status – is to see if the party’s own vision of China’s future is shared by the students. Two questions in the survey tap specifically into this issue. One question (question 10), taken directly from the World Value Survey, asked students to choose the most important thing that China should pursue in the next ten years. The respondent could choose one from five items: (a) fast and sustained economic development; (b) build a stronger army; (c) claim leadership in the international arena; (d) achieve social equality and justice; and (e) allow people to have more say in politics. Items a, b, c and e were also items for selection in the World Value Survey, and I added item d – social equality and justice – as they have been forcefully catapulted in recent years to the center of CCP official rhetoric.

Table 6 What’s the most important thing for China in the next ten years?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Valid</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>fast and sustained economic development</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>43.0</td>
<td>43.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>build a stronger army</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>52.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>claim leadership in the international arena</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>58.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>achieve social equity and justice</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>83.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>let people have more say in politics</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>507</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Two items received most votes: “fast and sustained economic development” (43.4%) and “achieve social equality and justice” (25.2%). Economic development – despite its changing emphases and directions since liberal market reform – has always been at very center of the CCP’s work and, concomitantly, of its education and propaganda; social equity and justice has also been gradually put by the Hu-Wen administration on a par with economic development, and has even to a certain extent dictated the latter (e.g. the party’s shift of emphasis from “fast and good” economic development to “good and fast” economic development, the latter of which stresses more equitable distribution of
economic development benefits among the entire Chinese population). These results, therefore, again confirm that big ideas championed by the party-state are also endorsed by most university students, and perhaps, as the 2001 World Value Survey suggests, by most average Chinese (I am, again, merely presenting an empirical fact rather than claiming causality).

Ranking immediately after economic development and social equity, but receiving considerably fewer votes, is the item “let people have more say in politics” (83; 16.4%). This confirms again, as I briefly demonstrated in part one of this thesis, that the Marxist logic of “economic base versus political superstructure” is still resilient among university students in China; most of them continue to see China’s economic base, constrained by China guoqing (national conditions), as still being incompatible with multi-party competitive democracy. Also, the corollary inferred from the data should hardly be that these 83 students could be potential democratizers in the Huntingtonian sense. It should not be forgotten that the CCP has also been paying lip service to “rang renmin you gengduo de canzhengquan” or “allow people to have more participatory power in politics”. So, how many of the 83 respondents were following the party-line, or were being rules-conscious rather than rights-conscious?

Very few students chose “build a stronger army” (44; 8.7%) and even fewer considered “claim leadership in the international arena” (32; 6.3%) as their country’s priority. Possibly, this suggests that students’ growing nationalism/chauvinism is mediated and tempered by rational thinking, e.g. genuine concern with development and stability, and that the proportion of “fenqing” (“angry youth”, the ultra-nationalists) is quite small in university students in China. Thus the concern with contemporary Chinese nationalism

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transforming into an aggressive force might be, at least in terms of educated young Chinese, ill-founded.\textsuperscript{134}

In fact, the students’ level of pragmatism is surprising. For many, it has become an established belief that China will surpass the United States and achieve “zhonghuaminzu de weida fuxing” (the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation) in the foreseeable future; the Chinese people are proud and confident. Yet this perceived self-confidence widely reported on by the Western media, especially during the Beijing Olympics, does not seem to display itself manifestly among university students in China. In response to the question “Will China surpass the US in comprehensive national strength in the next 30-50 years and achieve its great national rejuvenation”, only 34% of the 509 valid respondents said “yes”.\textsuperscript{135} Another 23.5% of the respondents showed cautious optimism, agreeing that China would achieve the goal but only given longer time. However, more than 22% of the respondents answered no, and about 20% uncertain, to the question. Quite unexpected – particularly given that the category “yes but needs longer time” is also available.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{graph3.png}
\caption{Will China surpass the US in comprehensive national strength in 30-50 years and achieve its great national rejuvenation?}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{134} See Suisheng Zhao’s discussion on Edward Friedman’ interpretation of contemporary Chinese nationalism, Suisheng Zhao, “A Discussion of Edward Friedman’s Chinese Nationalism” (paper presented at the conference Backward Toward Revolution: A Festschrift to Celebrate the Scholarship of Professor Edward Friedman, Toronto, Canada, October, 2009).

\textsuperscript{135} “Comprehensive national strength”, or “zonghe guoli” in Chinese, is a nomenclature commonly used in China when discussing China’s position vis-à-vis others in the international community.
Therefore, most students’ perception of national priority is consistent with that of the party-state: China should continue to focus on promoting economic development and social equity. However, many of the surveyed also seem to be quite pragmatic about China’s future development. Rather than seeing this pragmatism as a function of pessimism, I see this again as being in favor the party-state: the lower the expectation, the higher the likelihood of regime survival, if James C. Davies’ “J-curve” thesis is correct.\textsuperscript{136}

On Incumbent Chinese Leaders

As suggested in the second part of the thesis, the Hu-Wen administration – especially the very two individuals themselves – enjoys enviable popularity among young Chinese. Their popularity perhaps earns the regime that they are presiding over more legitimacy. In spite of the fact that certain conservative elements in party rule became even more salient after the Jiang Zemin administration, e.g. media control, the unprecedented populist sentiments (or images) and practices characteristic of “Hu wen xinzheng” still mark an important difference – if not a total break – from the past. Ceteris paribus, this difference has been the basis of strong support for the Hu-Wen administration. In fact, after seeing my survey question on the leaders (question 15), a friend of mine, who is also a Chinese student studying in Canada, asked seriously: “Will anyone say no to this question [rate unfavorably of the leaders]?” Like my friend, I was also convinced that the leaders’ popularity was unquestionable, but I inserted the question nonetheless because the popularity has never been tested empirically.

The survey question was stated as “Hu Jintao and Wen Jiabao are great leaders who care for the people; the Chinese people are indeed fortunate to have them leading China into

\textsuperscript{136} Davies holds that revolutions, i.e. the overthrow of an existing government or regime type, are often followed by sharp economic downturn. As a country’s economy continues to grow, people’s expectations of continued growth also increase concomitantly. Therefore, when a country’s economy enters downturn – while people’s expectations do not – this “intolerable gap” between reality and expectation is likely to produce social upheavals and even violent revolutions. See Howard Handelman, \textit{The Challenge of Third World Development} (Upper Saddle River: Pearson Education, Inc., 2006), 205-206.
the future”. The results of the test are hardly surprising; the leaders were rated overwhelmingly favorably. Almost 80% of the students (395; 77.6%) either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. Thirty-nine students (7.7%) are uncertain, and only 33 (6.5%) expressed open disagreement and 42 (8.3%) chose not to answer. Again, political fear here should not have influenced survey results at all. Fearful respondents could choose “do not want to answer”. Or, simply leave the question blank, as three respondents did.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Valid</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>strongly agree</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>23.2</td>
<td>23.4</td>
<td>23.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>agree</td>
<td>276</td>
<td>53.9</td>
<td>54.2</td>
<td>77.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>disagree</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>82.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>strongly disagree</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>84.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uncertain</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>91.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>do not want to answer</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>509</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Certainly, of more interest and importance is testing whether support for the top leaders necessarily translates into support for existing regime type, or, in other words, into temporary aversion to multi-party, parliamentary democracy. Probing this question, I compared the results of question 15 (on Hu and Wen) and question 17 (on the suitability of Western democracy) to see if there is any statistically significant association between the two variables. Among the 427 students who have explicitly expressed their evaluation of incumbent Chinese leaders (the rest chose either “do not want to answer” or “uncertain”), most of the students who support the leaders also believe that Western style

Note, the second part of the question – the Chinese are fortunate to have them leading China into the future – is the same quote taken from a Chinese blogger which I used in the previous part of the thesis.

For achieving parsimony, I re-grouped the subcategories in question 15 into two simple categories – “agreement” and “disagreement”, i.e. students are grouped as either in support or not in support of current leaders. Uncertain students are excluded from this comparison. I have also excluded those who have chosen the “do not want to answer”, for the reasoning behind the choosing process can only be inferred but not ascertained.
democracy is incompatible with contemporary China; and similarly, most students that rated the leaders poorly also hold that multi-party, parliamentary democracy can be practiced in China (Chi-Square = 59.462; P = 0.000<0.005). To put it pithily, students’ support for the leaders does translate into support for, or at least, contentment with the existing regime type. It is therefore not unreasonable to suggest that the top Chinese leaders, at least Hu and Wen, are earning their regime many legitimacy credits.

A Closer Look at the Results

The survey results discussed thus far reveal that the majority of the student respondents share important political views with the CCP-led state: Western democracy does not fit China well at the moment; Western countries are still in essence hostile to China; there is no problem with using force in dealing with separatist groups (in many cases, the so-called “separatist groups” are perhaps just minorities that collectively and peacefully express anti-hegemonic/totalizing ideas); China should, as the party insists, focus on continued economic development and improved social equity, not on building democracy nor on claiming world leadership (this is perhaps why many of the respondents are less optimistic about China overtaking the U.S. as the strongest nation on earth in any foreseeable future). The students also hold that the CCP still plays significant roles in campus governance and student life, and that the party’s core leaders – Hu and Wen – are doing tremendously well serving the country and the people. All are good news for the party’s continued monopoly of political power. With one exception, however, many students seem to start unequivocally valuing human rights over sovereignty and territorial integrity. But what kind of human rights remain unexplored in this survey.

Dissecting and digesting the results a little further, I probe into the following: what factors have influenced the students when answering a specific question? For example, who is more likely to say that China is not ready for democracy? A party member? A student leader? Someone from a prosperous coastal province? Someone whose parents are both party members? I now re-consider the survey results analyzed above by factoring in students’ background information collected through questions in the first part
of the survey (Here, I will only consider questions dealing with the party’s ideational dominance).

In measuring the party’s ideational dominance, the first question I discussed above is the suitability of multi-party, parliamentary democracy in China. Most of the students (61.3%; n=509) concur with the party-state that Western democracy should not be practiced in today’s China. Nonetheless, more than one hundred students (23.7%; n=509) either explicitly or implicitly expressed their disagreement. Accounting for this difference among the students, the factor of where students were born and raised (whether rural or urban) does not seem to play a statistically significant role here (Chi-Square=8.15; P=0.148>0.05). In other words, urban and rural students perhaps largely share the same view on bringing Western democracy to China. Similarly, students’ academic backgrounds (Chi-Square=7.540; P=0.941>0.05), their party membership (Chi-Square=9.699; P=0.084>0.05), their parents’ party membership (Chi-Square=29.702; P=0.075>0.05), and their positions in official student organizations (as student leader or not) (Chi-Square=4.412; P=0.492>0.05) do not contribute to their evaluation of having Western democracy established in China.

Two variables seem to have had a larger influence on students’ response to the democracy question: years spent in university (Chi-Square=57.585; P=0.000<0.05) and dependence on government loans (Chi-Square=30.032; P=0.001<0.05). The latter is perhaps understandable; students receiving government loans for university tend to provide politically correct answers. But the former is a bit puzzling: there is a general trend that the longer students stayed at their universities, the less likely that they would provide an anti-hegemonic idea (in this case Western democracy is good for China). For example, 37.4% of the second-year students surveyed either clearly or covertly opposed the party’s anti-democratic claim. The percentage for third-year, fourth-year, masters and PhD students are 21.5%, 14.0%, 12.0% and 0.0% – all of the fourteen PhD students surveyed openly rejected Western democracy and almost 80% of the MA students (n=50) followed suit. This is thoroughly contrary to the conventional wisdom that people with higher education are inclined to demand greater political participation.
Yet, we should not readily claim that political indoctrination permeates universities in China, and brain-washing becomes more manifest for those having longer exposure to party propaganda. There is always a limit to how much numbers can tell about human behaviors; it is also possible that students with higher education know better how to hide their real political ideas, and the importance of showing political loyalty and allegiance. In any event, falling victim to political indoctrination or shrewdly hiding true ideas, the students invite us to acknowledge the presence of a powerful Chinese party-state.

The case of perceived Western hostility is much simpler and straightforward. Most of the variables mentioned above – rural/urban difference, economic status, party membership, etc. – do not seem to have had a major impact on the result. But once again, “years spent in university” stands out as one variable that has a statistically significant association with the result (Chi-Square=37.934; P=0.009<0.05), yet the strength of the association is weak (Cramer’s V=0.137). As it is with the previous case, PhD, MA and fourth-year students exhibited stronger hostility toward “the West” than other students did. All fourteen PhD students, 88% of the MA students and 83.7% of the fourth-year students “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that “the West” is still attempting to westernize and dismember China. Nevertheless, what remains clear is that, the majority of Chinese students, regardless of how to categorize/classify them, hold very negative views vis-à-vis “the West”.

“Years spent in university” continues to be the only variable that wields noticeable influence on the next question – “sovereignty vs. human rights”. Results show that people with higher education tend to view, as the party-state vociferously promoted after the NATO bombing of Chinese embassy in 1999, that sovereignty is more important than human rights (Chi-Square=41.361; P=0.003<0.05). In other words, this what I call the “illiberal progression” of the students is still relevant when it comes to evaluating the relative significance of sovereignty and human rights. Only about 50% of first year respondents agreed with the 1999 party line, followed by 55.2% in second year, by 66% in fourth year and by 74% and 85.7% in MA and PhD students.
On the question of choosing China’s ten-year national priority, party membership is the only variable that is of more interest for analysis. (Other variables are not. For example, statistical test shows that students with different academic backgrounds tend to choose similarly on the question). In the case of choosing ten-year national priority, students with CCP party membership selected somewhat differently than those with no membership. Fifty percent of the party members (n=100) selected sustained economic development, consistent with mainstream party line; in comparison, only about 40% of the non-member students (n=407) selected the same. Another conspicuous difference lies in that only 8% of party members considered more democracy as national priority, while about 18% of non-members thought so. Once recruited into the party, the students become contented with what they have in terms of political participation?

In regard to the other question on China’s future, i.e. the possibility of China overtaking the U.S. as the strongest nation on earth in 30-50 years, students’ political status on campus (serving/not serving as student leader in official student organizations) plays a comparatively significant role. Student leaders in party-created/party-sanctioned student organizations seem to be more optimistic about China overtaking the U.S. within the given period (43%; n=154); others who do not hold leadership positions are far less optimistic (30.1%; n=352). What explains this difference is not clear. Perhaps, student leaders tend to be more nationalistic than those who are not, or they tend to buy party propaganda to which they have a greater exposure.

Unlike all the questions dissected and digested thus far, none of the variables used above seem to have any explanatory value for the question on Chinese leaders. It is not the case that students with higher education are more likely to support the leaders; nor is it that student leaders tend to support their counterpart at the national level; nor that richer students are more supportive of the leaders than the rest are. Hu and Wen are supported by the majority of students from all kinds of groups – whether the groups exist in actuality (e.g. party members vs. non-members) or in analytical terms (e.g. rich vs. poor according to my monthly “lingyongqian” framework).
Conclusion

Chen Yun’s “bird cage” logic has survived and thrived in the realm of post-Tiananmen university governance: the party-state simultaneously strengthened its control measures and expanded the zone of political opportunity and tolerance.\textsuperscript{139} For example, the re-establishment of control institutions on campus is accompanied by the creation of new outlets such as the USVO program for political participation, and heightened internet monitoring is parallel with greater toleration of subtle anti-hegemonic political expressions. Furthermore, unprecedented economic development since 1989 has allowed the party-state to be ever more responsive to, and effective in managing, potential crises which could trigger student unrest. The CCP is also, to use the word of many students, “fortunate” to have such leaders as Hu and Wen, who are capable of utilizing the media to mediate psychologically between the party’s not-so-desirable control measures and an increasingly informed and self-centered generation of university students.

More than twenty years of relative tranquility in Chinese universities, with several instantaneous but well-managed bursts of nationalistic sentiments, might well suggest that the party’s cage—both institutional and ideational—is well and alive. And it really seems to be so, according to some university students themselves. The four-city, seven-university survey shows that the majority of the student respondents believe that the party’s institutions are still playing significant roles in campus governance and student life. It also unequivocally suggests that “big political ideas” promoted by the party are perhaps genuinely endorsed by the majority of the student respondents (with political fear being ruled out through statistical test).

Of course, as stated at the very outset, this thesis examines only one particular aspect in contemporary state-society relationship in China, which contains a patchwork of numerous, variegated aspects and elements. Yet, I hope, by examining the state-student relationship in relative detail, that I have shed a provocative new light on the ways of looking at the overall state-society relationship. In 2007, Yu Keping—one of President

\textsuperscript{139} Gilley, p. 21.
Hu’s key advisors, at least allegedly—wrote his famous article “Democracy is a Good Thing”, in which he argues that the party must achieve “dynamic stability” rather than “static stability” of the society, the former of which refers to channelling people’s desires and dissents, and the latter constraining them. In the case of governing university students, the CCP has undoubtedly experimented with both constraining and channelling. And this might become increasingly manifest in the party’s overall approach to governing Chinese society—an approach that combines both “static control” and “dynamic control”, and an approach that increasingly resembles an ever growing “bird cage”.

Like most Chinese state-society relations scholarship, my focused diagnosis of China’s party-state resilience is to a very large extent speculative and not solidly grounded. In other words, I am looking at the Chinese state through party documents that are publically available, as well as through the eyes of the society, i.e. through the students. Similar problems are also quite manifest in the emerging contentious politics literature, in which China scholars dissect the “anthropology of the Chinese state” largely with the scalpel provided by protesters and other actors of the society. However difficult and tricky, a more scientific and accurate examination of the resilient, and indeed puzzling, Chinese state requires having direct, faithful and long-term dialogue and interaction with state agents in China, a task which must require collaboration between Chinese and Western scholars.


141 In his study of Chinese police, Tanner finds that the Chinese police system has increasingly sought to minimize popular anger through more moderate policing of protests, and to rely on containment and management rather than deterrence and quick suppression. See Tanner, Murray Scot, “China rethinks unrest,” Washington Quarterly, 27(3), 137-56.

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Appendix 1 Survey Questionnaire (English translation follows)

一份针对当代中国大学生的问卷调查

调研员：刘遥（加拿大多伦多大学政治学和亚太学硕士生）

1. 您现在是大几的学生？
   a. 大一
   b. 大二
   c. 大三
   d. 大四
   e. 研究生
   d. 博士生（或博士后）

2. 您的家乡在？（哪个省和市；如果来自县级市或乡、镇、村也请您具体填写）

3. 您父母从事什么样的职业？（政府公务员，私营企业者，教师，工人，等等）

4. 您每个月的零用钱平均有多少？（除去学杂费和其他租用费后）
   a. 5,000以上
   b. 3,000和5,000之间
   c. 2,000左右
   d. 1000左右
   e. 500左右或更少

5. 您有政府提供的助学贷款吗？
   a. 有
   b. 没有

6. 您的学科领域是？
   a. 人文、社会科学（经济，政治，公共管理等）
   b. 商业（会计，金融等）
   c. 自然科学（物理，生物，化学，机械工程等）

7. 您是中共党员或团员吗？
   a. 党员
   b. 团员
   c. 都不是

8. 您是学生会或团委的学生干部吗？
   a. 是
   b. 不是
9. 您父母是党员吗？
   a. 两个都是
   b. 一个是
   c. 都不是

10. 您认为对中国未来十年最重要的事情是？
   a. 持续快速的经济发展
   b. 建设一支强大的国防力量
   c. 在国际舞台扮演领导角色
   d. 实现社会平等正义
   e. 让人民对政治有更多的话语权

11. 您认为一个政府（不仅仅是中国）有责任管理互联网吗？
   a. 有
   b. 没有
   c. 不确定
   d. 不想回答

12. 您认为中国在未来 30 ～ 50 年内在综合国力方面超过美国，实现中华民族的伟大复兴吗？
   a. 会的
   b. 不会的
   c. 不确定
   d. 会，但需更长时间

13. “西方国家从来没有停止它们西化、分裂中国的图谋” 你同意这个陈述吗？
   a. 强烈同意
   b. 同意
   c. 不同意
   d. 强烈不同意
   e. 不确定

14. “校园党组织和共青团组织在校园管理和学生生活等方面扮演着重要角色”
   你同意这个陈述吗？
   a. 强烈同意
   b. 同意
   c. 不同意
   d. 强烈不同意
   e. 不确定

15. “胡锦涛主席和温家宝总理是卓越的，心系百姓的领导者：中国人民庆幸有他们带领中国走向未来” 你同意这个陈述吗？
   a. 强烈同意
b. 同意

16. “人各有命；成为国家主席还是街头乞丐从很大程度上讲都是命中注定”
你同意这个陈述吗？
a. 强烈同意
b. 同意
c. 不同意
d. 强烈不同意
e. 不确定
f. 不想回答

17. “西方式的议会制、多党制不适合中国” 你同意这个陈述吗？
a. 强烈同意
b. 同意
c. 不同意
d. 强烈不同意
e. 不确定
f. 不想回答

18. “中国必须坚决用武力打击分裂势力，如疆独、藏独分子，或出现重大台独事变”
你同意这个陈述吗？
a. 强烈同意
b. 同意
c. 不同意
d. 强烈不同意
e. 不确定

19. “没有主权就没有人权；主权高于人权” 你同意这个陈述吗？
a. 强烈同意
b. 同意
c. 不同意
d. 强烈不同意
e. 不确定

如果对此调查问卷有建议或对任何上述 问题进行详解，请写在背面。谢谢！
A Survey Questionnaire about Chinese University Students

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(For multiple choice questions, please circle the one best answer to each question.)

1. Which academic year are you in?
   a. 1st
   b. 2nd
   c. 3rd
   d. 4th
   e. MA
   f. PhD (or post-doc)

2. Which part of China are you from? (Please print village, township, county, city and province name).

3. What’s your parents’ occupation (e.g. public servants, private entrepreneurs, teachers, etc.)?
   Father:
   Mather:

4. How much “lingyongqian” is at your disposal every month (excluding rents and tuition fees)?
   a. More than 5,000 RMB
   b. More than 3,000 RMB but less than 5,000 RMB
   c. Around 2,000 RMB
   d. Around 1,000 RMB
   e. Around 500 RMB or less

5. Do you have student loans provided by the government?
   a. Yes
   b. No
6. What is your discipline background?
   a. Social Sciences or Humanities
   b. Business (finance, accounting, etc.)
   c. Natural Sciences (e.g. Math, Physics)

7. Are you a member of the CCP or of the CCYL?
   a. Party member
   b. League member
   c. None of the above

8. Do you hold leadership positions in official student organizations such as the student union?
   a. Yes
   b. No

9. Are your parents party members?
   a. One of them is
   b. Both are
   c. None

10. What do you think is the most important thing for China in the next decade?
    a. Continued and fast economic development
    b. Build a stronger army
    c. Claim leadership in the international community
    d. Achieve greater social equality and justice
    e. Allowing people to have more say in government policy making

11. Do you think that the government has the responsibility to manage the Internet?
    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. Uncertain
    d. Don’t want to answer

12. Are you confident that China will achieve its great national rejuvenation and surpass the USA in terms of comprehensive national strength in the next 30-50 years?
    a. Yes
    b. No
c. Uncertain

d. Yes, but needs longer time

13. Do you agree with the following statement “Western countries have never stopped attempting to ‘westernize’ and ‘dismember’ China”?
   a. Strongly agree
   b. Agree
   c. Disagree
   d. Strongly disagree
   e. Uncertain

14. Do you agree with the following statement “Party Branches and the Communist Youth League plays a significant role in campus governance and student life”? Provide some explanations if necessary.
   a. Strongly agree
   b. Agree
   c. Disagree
   d. Strongly disagree
   e. Uncertain

15. Would you agree with the following statement “President Hu and Premier Wen are great leaders; the Chinese people are indeed fortunate to have such individuals leading China into the future”?
   a. Strongly agree
   b. Agree
   c. Disagree
   d. Strongly disagree
   e. Uncertain
   f. Do not want to answer

16. Would you agree with the following statement “People have their fate; either becoming the country’s president or a street beggar is predestined”?
   a. Strongly agree
   b. Agree
   c. Disagree
   d. Strongly disagree
   e. Uncertain
   f. Do not want to answer
17. Would you agree with the following statement “Western parliamentary, multi-party democracy is not suitable for China”?
   a. Strongly agree
   b. Agree
   c. Disagree
   d. Strongly disagree
   e. Uncertain
   f. Do not want to answer

18. Do you agree with the following statement “China must use force resolutely to crack down on any separatist movements in Tibet, Xinjiang or Taiwan”?
   a. Strongly agree
   b. Agree
   c. Disagree
   d. Strongly disagree
   e. Uncertain
   f. Do not want to answer

19. Sovereignty is above human rights; without sovereignty there is no human rights. Do you agree?
   a. Strongly agree
   b. Agree
   c. Disagree
   d. Strongly disagree
   e. Uncertain
   f. Do not want to answer

*If you have comments on the survey or would like to explicate one any of the issues raised, please feel free to print them at the back. Thank you!