

metropolis', in Aihwa Ong and Donald Nonini, eds, *Ungrounded Empires: The Cultural Politics of Modern Chinese Transnationalism*. New York: Routledge, 1997, p. 288.

15 Louisa Schein, 'Of cargo and satellites: imagined cosmopolitanism', *Postcolonial Studies*, vol. 2, no. 3, 1999, pp. 345–75.

16 Armand Mattelart, Xavier Delcourt and Michele Mattelart, 'International image markets', in Simon During, ed., *The Cultural Studies Reader*. London: Routledge, 1993, pp. 435–6.

17 For a range of discussions on elite discourses and alternative modernities, see Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993; Gyan Prakash, *Another Reason: Science and the Imagination of Modern India*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999; Aihwa Ong, 'The geopolitics of cultural knowledge', in Aihwa Ong, *Flexible Citizenship: The Cultural Logics of Transnationality*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999, pp. 29–54; Ralph Litzinger, *Other Chinas: The Yao and the Politics of National Belonging*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000.

18 In a discussion of fashion, Dutton takes issue with the notion that reform in China heralds individualism: 'many consumers in China do not operate with the notion of individuality that underpins even the most mass-produced of fashion products in the West. For these Chinese, fashion is not constructed to mark out one's individuality, but to mark out one's success. Success is made verifiable through the notion of correct choice. Success means choosing a coat that everyone else is wearing, for to see others in the same coat, dress, trousers or shirt is not a sign of social disgrace, but a mark of wisdom and affluence. . . . The Chinese, in this one crucial respect, have never really changed out of their Mao suits. . . . The Mao suit, like Maoism itself may well be simply a more recent refashioning of much deeper, unconscious commitments to a notion of a collective whole', Michael Dutton, *Streetlife China*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, p. 274.

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## Political parties and the prospects for democracy: perspectives from provincial China

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In order to have a better understanding of the process of and the prospects for democratisation in China, there is a need to scrutinise the three kinds of political organisation or 'parties' that have existed in China in recent years. The first is the ruling Chinese Communist Party (CCP), which is still determined to monopolise political power in its own way after over fifty years in power. The second includes the legally sanctioned 'democratic parties', although many would argue that they are neither democratic, nor parties. The third is the opposition party or parties that individuals and groups have attempted to form in recent years. There is no historical precedent for a communist party-state to successfully grow into a democracy without a break in continuity. Nevertheless, when democratic forces grow within a party and increasing domestic and international pressure comes from all directions, a peaceful transformation of a Leninist party is not beyond imagination, as shown by the recent experience in Poland and Hungary. It is both possible and desirable that a workable democracy will come to China through a peaceful and rational interplay of top-down political reform and bottom-up democratic movement. In the event that China muddles through in its transition to democracy, those interested in the project of democratisation and the political future of that country should watch very closely both internal political changes of the CCP and the signs of local democratic movements in Chinese society.

This article is a tentative exploration of, if not speculation on, the current trend of the party system in China, with a special focus on the provincial dimension. Social, economic and cultural diversity among China's provinces (and other provincial-level units) in the reform era has been well documented.<sup>1</sup> Some even go so far as to liken the dynamic of regionalism in China today with the experience of China during the late Qing and the early Republican periods, when

a weakening centre was accompanied by the growing power of regional leaders, particularly from the economically stronger provinces.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, in identifying agents for political change in contemporary China, it will be interesting to see whether there are significant regional variations in the internal change of the CCP and democratic movements.

## The CCP

When it gathers its own momentum, 'socialist reform' proves to be much more demanding than communist parties initially anticipate.<sup>3</sup> Without exception, every communist regime embarking on the project of reform has been forced to face the dilemma of transforming itself completely, voluntarily giving up its right to exist, or being swept away by popular rebellions. Indeed, there are those who predict an imminent institutional collapse of the CCP,<sup>4</sup> and those who argue that democratisation of the communist regime in China is little less than inevitable.<sup>5</sup>

For a moment let us assume that the communist regime in China has to democratise if it wants to avoid collapse. From this perspective, the fact that the CCP has so far survived without democratisation requires China experts to look more carefully for signs of potential change from within the CCP. The CCP is, to some extent rightly, proud of its achievement, comparing its privilege to continue its rule over the world's most populous country with the disintegration of its 'brother parties' in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. On the other hand, the CCP has also developed a sense of extreme insecurity. Even Falungong can provoke it to launch a deadly serious national campaign coupled with mass arrest. No current leaders of the CCP are capable of explaining away the necessity for political reform. The secret weapon for the CCP to manage its survival is definitely not to recycle stale phrases such as 'only the CCP can save China' and 'history has chosen the CCP', but rather the party's amazing skills of accommodation and adaptation, as well as oppression and manipulation.

At first glance, the CCP is hopeless. According to some, it deliberately rejects vital feedback from society, excludes alternative voices (even from within its ranks), and therefore blocks the breakthrough to democracy via responsive adaptation.<sup>6</sup> The party also simply rejects the 'institutional guarantees' long regarded by many as essential for a transition to democracy, such as freedom to form and join organisations, freedom of expression, alternative sources of information, and the right of political leaders to openly compete for support.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, it is hard to deny that some positive changes have taken place within the CCP during the process of reform. At least there is little doubt that the CCP will not survive as a traditional monolithic Leninist party, organisationally or spatially, in spite of its rhetorical emphasis on unity and stability. Actually, it is precisely internal diversity, if not divisions, that allows the party to survive in an adverse environment, by applying alternate strategies of oppression and accommodation, manipulation and adaptation, according to different circumstances.

Over the twenty years of reform, the CCP has adjusted not only its goals and policies away from traditional state socialism, but also, to a lesser extent, its organisational structure and its relationship with the state and society. Although it is by no means clear that all of these changes can be characterised as liberalisation or democratisation, some of them are arguably conducive to democracy. Most notable among these changes are the abandonment of the system of lifelong tenure for cadres, the granting of greater scope for policy consultation and debates, including wider participation in political affairs by individuals and groups beyond the party-state bureaucracy, greater zones of indifference and tolerance, the greater role of elections and people's congresses, greater emphasis on legality, and greater recognition of human rights.<sup>8</sup>

These changes are of course not equally distributed among different localities under communist rule in China. When battles are fought between conservatives and reformers, moderates and radicals, and hard-liners and soft-liners, there are quite different situations at different levels of the hierarchy and at different localities. The perspective of examining China at the provincial level may shed new light on our study of the possible transformation of the CCP from within. Concretely, several areas deserve closer attention.

First, there has been change in the social base of the CCP. We all agree that the general trend of communist recruitment in China since the 1980s has been a shift away from workers and peasants, in favour of new social elites with higher levels of education and sophisticated skills, or in Chinese terms, a trend to emphasise 'expertise' over 'redness'.<sup>9</sup> This kind of change of course has important implications for the nature of the CCP. What we also need to emphasise is that in those provinces with a stronger tradition of communist revolution, such as Shaanxi, Shanxi and Jiangxi, political criteria and class background of workers and peasants still carry great weight in party recruitment; whereas in those provinces at the forefront of economic reform, such as Guangdong and Fujian, more emphasis has been put on recruiting the emerging intellectual and business elite. Again, in the process of reversing the trend after the Tiananmen Square incident, it was those inland provinces with the strongest tradition of communist revolution that went furthest in restoring the importance of political 'redness'.<sup>10</sup>

Second, there has been change in the formation of local leadership. Previous studies on China's provinces have identified provincial leadership as one of the key factors contributing to the origins of economic reforms and shaping economic outcomes in individual provinces.<sup>11</sup> But studies on democratisation in formal communist countries and elsewhere have also indicated that personnel turnover, and generational change in particular, plays a vital role in the transition to democracy.<sup>12</sup> Following the party line of 'four modernisations of cadres' – namely 'zhishihua, zhuan'yehua, nianqinghua, geminghua' ('better educated, more professional, younger, and more revolutionary') – a campaign to upgrade China's cadre force toward a meritocracy has swept China since the early 1980s. But that does not mean that the same objective criteria for the selection, assignment and promotion of cadres have been applied everywhere. The reality is that

from one locality to another emphasis is very different among these four criteria. And, perhaps more importantly, interpretation of the meaning of 'revolutionary' differs greatly in different provinces, variously referring to loyalty to the party and orthodox Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong thought, zeal in fighting against bourgeois liberalism and hostile forces, or better service to social and economic development. The end result is that the composition of the cadre force varies, with some cadres more open-minded in some localities than in others. Local leadership in those provinces more open to the outside world, such as Guangdong and Fujian, has been very fast in acquiring the skills to adapt itself to the new social and economic demands of its constituency. What is surprising is that we have not seen any democratic reformers at the provincial level (except Xu Jiatusun in Jiangsu, who later held a unique position in Hong Kong and escaped to the West after the June 4th incidents), although we have seen many provincial leaders, such as Ren Zhongyi and Xiang Nan, with a new vision of economic reform and development.<sup>13</sup>

Third, there has been a degree of separation of the party from the state (*dangzheng fenkai*). On the one hand, although separating the party from the government has been on the agenda of the CCP since the emergence of Dengist leadership in the late 1970s, not much has been done in renovating the obsolete party-state institutions in China. On the other hand, changes in the international environment and domestic socioeconomic environment have posed an increasingly serious challenge for the Chinese communist regime, which is forced to make up for its institutional deficiencies through some measure of functional separation between the party and the government. Perhaps the political risk is too big for the current leadership to contemplate a fundamental change in party/state relations. 'After the collapse of the Communist regimes in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union', observed a researcher, 'the last thing that the CCP leaders wanted was the emergence of an independent organisational force, military or civilian.'<sup>14</sup> However, the structural corruption and inefficiency of the communist bureaucracy have become so serious, and the establishment of a competent civil service is so essential to economic modernisation, that, when assuming his position as premier in March 1998, Zhu Rongji launched the 'seventh revolution' – yet another in a series of 'revolutions' to restructure the Chinese government.<sup>15</sup> Restrained by its insistence on party leadership, the CCP has not yet found a viable solution to the tensions between the party boss and the administrative head at every level of the bureaucracy. Under the current arrangement of dual emphasis – where the party boss puts emphasis on his or her 'leadership' and the administrative head on his or her 'responsibility' – tension appears to be inevitable. In recent years at the provincial level, we have seen fierce personal conflicts between Rui Xingwen and Jiang Zemin in Shanghai, Li Ximing and Chen Xitong in Beijing, Tang Shaowen and Nie Bichu in Tianjin, Yang Rudai and Zhao Haoruo in Sichuan, Hou Zongbin and Li Changchun in Henan, Deng Hongxun and Liu Jiangfeng in Hainan, and Wang Maolin and Hu Fuguo in Shanxi. Although we do not know to what extent their conflicts are structural and to what extent personal, it is obvious that economic

reform so far has created new ambiguities, called into question the old-style party leadership, and eased the accumulation of demands for institutional innovations. The CCP has not yet contemplated what will be left for the party if the government runs the country according to the constitution and other laws made by the people's congress. It is left to both the party and the state bureaucracy at each level to find out the proper demarcations between their respective spheres of influence. There are indications that in some provinces – Guangdong and Hainan, for example – one definite innovation has been made by establishing a 'system of public servants', which is a big step in making the civil service a neutral regulator.

### 'Democratic parties' and mass organisations

'The system of multiparty cooperation under the leadership of the Communist Party' has been praised by the CCP as a major advantage of its self-styled 'socialist system', a view rarely shared by anyone outside China. The CCP pretends to believe that, in running the country, it is cooperating closely with eight other 'democratic parties', namely the Revolutionary Committee of the Guomindang, the Chinese Democratic League, the Association for Construction of Democracy, the Association for Promotion of Democracy, the Chinese Democratic Party of Workers and Peasants, the Chinese Party for Achievement of Justice (exclusively recruiting patriotic, returned overseas Chinese), the Third of September Society (in commemoration of victory in the War of Resistance against Japan on 3 September 1945), and the Alliance for Autonomy and Democracy of Taiwan. However, even to most members of the CCP and these 'democratic parties', these minor parties are nothing but 'political flower vases' of the CCP.

To be fair, the name 'democratic parties' was originally quite meaningful, not so much because most of these parties had the word 'democracy' in their names, but because these parties rallied with the CCP to fight for a genuine democratic cause against the Nationalist dictatorship. When the People's Republic was first founded, these parties were rewarded with real political power, often more than they expected. At the first People's Political Consultative Conference (the then-functional parliament in China), held in September 1949, members of the 'democratic parties' and public figures without party affiliation took 56 per cent of the seats. They also took 31 of the 63 seats of the first Central Committee of the People's Government, including 3 of the 6 vice-chairmanships, 2 of the 4 vice-premierships, 11 of the 24 State Council memberships, and 49 of the 109 minister and deputy minister positions. By 1956, the membership of these parties had grown to 100,000.<sup>16</sup> Everything changed in 1957 when the best elements of these parties were purged (along with their democratic aspirations) by the Anti-Rightist Campaign. Under the pressure of the Red Guards, these parties disbanded themselves in August 1966, and did not resume their activities until 1978.

It should be noted that for a variety of reasons these parties do have some appeal among Chinese intellectuals and have succeeded in recruiting thousands of young intellectuals in the reform era. After the June 4th Tiananmen Square incident, in order to repair the damage done by the crackdown and overcome its legitimacy crisis, the CCP made some concessions to these minor parties, as reflected in the 'Opinions of the Central Committee of the CCP Regarding Preservation and Improvement of the System of Multiparty Cooperation under the Leadership of the Communist Party and the System of Political Consultation', issued in late 1989. This document laid down the principles: that an annual conference would be organised for both leaders of the 'democratic parties' and public figures without party affiliation to voice their opinions before major policies are made by the Central Committee of the CCP; that a forum should be organised once every two months for the CCP and the 'democratic parties' to exchange their opinions on major policy issues; that major leaders of the CCP should constantly seek opinions from the leaders of the 'democratic parties' and the public figures without party affiliation; that the 'democratic parties' would supervise the enforcement of the Constitution and other laws and regulations, the implementation of plans for economic and social development, and the performance of public servants; and that the proportion of representatives of the 'democratic parties' would be increased in people's congresses and the Political Consultative Conference, as well as at all levels of government including the judiciary. Many intellectuals who felt too embarrassed to join the CCP after the June 4th incident have instead joined these 'democratic parties' to realise their political ambitions. In 1997, the appointment of members of the 'democratic parties' to important government positions included seven deputy presidents of the state and deputy chairmen of the National People's Congress. At the local level, 39 deputy governors, assistant governors, deputy mayors and assistant mayors, 171 deputy mayors and assistant mayors of deputy prefectural rank, 181 bureau heads or deputy bureau heads, and 6,274 section heads or deputy section heads were appointed.<sup>17</sup> Again it appears that the 'democratic parties' are playing more active roles in provinces and cities more open to the outside world, such as Guangdong, Fujian, Shanghai, Jiangsu and Zhejiang, where bolder appointments have been made for non-communists to head the administration of state firms, universities and administrative units. It is also worth noting that the influence of each of these 'democratic parties' is also conditioned by its historical and social base in different localities, as shown by the fact that the Chinese Democratic League is relatively stronger in Shanghai, the traditional stronghold of that party, and the Chinese Party for Achievement of Justice is more influential in Guangdong and Fujian, native places for most overseas Chinese.

Apart from these 'democratic parties', there are thousands of mass organisations in China. By the end of 1992, the All-China Federation of Trade Unions had 610,000 branches at the enterprise level and 3,000 organisations at provincial, prefectural, city and county levels; the All China Women's Federation had more than one million organisations at various levels; and the Chinese Youth

League had 2.7 million branches and more than 3,000 organisations at provincial, prefectural, city and county levels. Furthermore, by September 1995, there were more than 1,800 national associations and more than 200,000 local associations of a professional, social and political nature in China.<sup>18</sup> The June 4th crackdown on autonomous associations of students, workers and intellectuals clearly indicates that these 'mass organisations' are something less than the autonomous social organisations constituting 'civil society' in the West. As a matter of fact, like the 'democratic parties', the 'mass organisations' continue to be funded and directly controlled and run by the party-state. Even those associations 'run by the people' are required to affiliate with a unit of the party-state. However, there are also clear indications that these 'mass organisations' and associations play increasingly important roles in defending and advancing the interests of their constituencies, simply because they have become more autonomous financially in the recent government reform process. Of course, the degree of 'autonomy' and the roles played by the 'mass organisations' vary from one province to another, as the political culture, the financial constraints, and the government-streamlining imperative to encourage the 'autonomy' of the 'mass organisations' also vary greatly among provinces.

At least partly due to the active role played by the 'democratic parties' and 'mass organisations', recent years have witnessed a remarkable change in voting behaviour in the people's congresses and political consultative conferences, with substantial abstentions and dissenting votes – a long way from the days of 'rubber stamp' voting, especially at the provincial and lower levels. The provincial people's congress in Zhejiang even voted the Governor Ge Hongsheng (the only candidate nominated by the central Organisation Department of the CCP) out of office in January 1993.<sup>19</sup> Even at the central level, dissenting voices from the 'democratic parties' have become so salient that in the last two years Li Ruihuan, the Chairman of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, has repeatedly urged the members of the Conference 'to perform duties but not to act in excess of authority; to help but not to create troubles; and to be realistic rather than superficial' (*jinzhi bu yuwei, bangmang bu tianluan, qieshi bu biao mian*).<sup>20</sup> New developments in this regard remind us of the late Qing experience when a constitutional movement in the provinces led to the establishment of the first Parliament in China, and the experience of the Republican period when local elites played a very important role in local as well as national politics.

### Towards opposition parties

With some qualifications, a genuine political opposition in the history of the People's Republic of China can be dated back to the Democracy Wall Movement from 1978 to 1979.<sup>21</sup> It has become a habit for the CCP to label anticommunist activities of any scale as 'having a program, conspiracy and organisation' (*you gangling, you yumou, you zuzhi*). However, the fatal weakness of the democratic

movement in China, from the Democracy Wall in 1978 to the Beijing Spring in 1989, is exactly the lack of a coherent organisation and a political program.<sup>22</sup>

Most studies on the democratic movement have focused on Beijing, leaving out activities elsewhere. The Democracy Wall Movement was a nationwide movement, with centres outside Beijing, each usually with at least one unofficial or underground journal as an outlet for their opinions. Apart from *Siwu Luntan* (*April 5th Forum*) and *Tansuo* (*Exploration*) in Beijing, the most notable journals elsewhere included *Remin zhi lu* (*People's Road*) and *Renmin zhi sheng* (*Voice of the People*) in Guangzhou, *Minzhu zhi sheng* (*Voice of Democracy*) and *Zeren* (*Duty*) in Shanghai, *Qimeng* (*Enlightenment*) in Guiyang and *Fengfan* (*Boat's Sail*) in Taiyuan.<sup>23</sup>

The student demonstrations for democracy and freedom in December 1986 did not even start in Beijing, but in Hefei, due to the personal influence of Fang Lizhi, who was vice-president of the Chinese University of Science and Technology located in Hefei. The demonstrations then quickly spread to Shanghai, Beijing, Wuhan, Guangzhou and other major cities.

As for the pro-democracy protest movement in 1989, while the themes were set by organisers in the capital and efficient mass media allowed localities across China to follow the pattern of demonstrations in Beijing, the movement witnessed some significant regional differences in terms of demands, intensity, style, tactics and other aspects. The provincial dimension of the Beijing Spring was partly picked up by *The Pro-Democracy Protests in China: Reports from the Provinces*, edited by Jonathan Unger. Accounts in this volume show that the protest movement was mild in its tactics and demands in the southern coastal provinces of Guangdong and Fujian, but violent in the interior provinces of Shaanxi and Hunan. It might not be a coincidence, as observed by Unger, that the movement was relatively mild in provinces that had been favoured by the reform process and had reaped the lion's share of benefits from the economic boom, and relatively violent in provinces that had been somehow left out of the economic reform and development of the 1980s.<sup>24</sup>

From the Democracy Wall Movement in 1978 to student demonstrations in 1986 through to the Beijing Spring in 1989, there were of course various autonomous groups involved and linking up with each other, forming communication networks and disseminating information. Surprisingly, the attempt to organise a political party was none the less not made until 1998. Partly encouraged by Jiang Zemin's unusual talk on democracy at the 15th Congress of the CCP in 1997 and the communist regime's unusual move to sign the major international documents on human rights, including *The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*, and partly frustrated with the slow pace of democratisation in China, some democracy activists in China suddenly decided to officially organise the China Democracy Party in late 1998.

The sudden rise and fall of the China Democracy Party in late 1998 has every reason to intrigue those concerned with the provincial dimension of political development in China. Initial discussions about forming the China Democracy Party took place among democratic activists in June 1998. Then in

August–September, applications for official registration of the party were lodged by local democracy activists in many cities and provinces, including Helongjiang, Jilin, Liaoning, Shandong, Zhejiang, Hubei, Sichuan, Shanghai and Beijing. The responses from local authorities varied. In Beijing and Shanghai, democratic activists met immediate arrest; in Zhejiang they were detained, but released soon after; in Hubei their application was accepted for consideration; and in Shandong they were asked to prepare a fuller application with personal details of the leaders and proof of party funds of at least 50,000 yuan, a membership of 50 people or more, and a party office.<sup>25</sup> A cautious optimism was in the air that after fifty years of communist rule the political tolerance for a genuine democratic party might come to China at long last.

Unfortunately, a legalised political opposition proved to be too much for the central CCP leadership. On 21–22 December 1998, with decisions made at the central level, the local authorities handed down lengthy prison sentences to three political activists who had tried to register the China Democracy Party in opposition to the CCP: 13 years for Xu Wenli in Beijing, 12 years for Qin Yongmin in Wuhan, and 11 years for Wang Youcai in Hangzhou, each for the crime of subversion.<sup>26</sup> According to one source, the Chinese authorities took that resolute measure to prevent the formation of the China Democracy Party as a national organisation, as on 10 November 1998 the Zhejiang branch had been entrusted to sponsor a conference for the national preparatory committee involving political dissidents from twelve provinces and cities – Helongjiang, Jilin, Liaoning, Shandong, Henan, Beijing, Shanghai, Zhejiang, Hubei, Hunan, Sichuan and Guizhou.<sup>27</sup> The arrests led to an unprecedented protest by several hundred people outside the Intermediate People's Court in Hangzhou on 17 December 1998, and a relay hunger strike for 100 days by 214 political dissidents from 15 provinces and cities between 24 December 1998 and 11 January 1999.<sup>28</sup> Except for the factor of personalities, we know little about why the democratic movement was more active in some localities than others.

## Conclusion

It might be naïve to expect an immediate realisation of a multi-party system in China, but it is foolish to imagine the maintenance of one-party rule long beyond the political life of the first-generation revolutionaries and their appointed successors. While neither transformation of the 'democratic parties' into genuine political parties nor legalisation of political opposition is yet in sight, the CCP, fully aware of the fact that erosion of its legitimacy has reached an alarming level, is desperately searching for a viable way to get out of its predicament. Seemingly every small move made by the CCP in political liberalisation in the reform era was immediately picked up by the 'democratic parties' and democracy activists, who more often than not attempted a subtle twisting of what had been allowed by the party, to advance their cause.

Surprisingly, political modernisation towards multi-party democracy in

China remains to be effectively blocked by the party-state, not only at the national level but also at local levels. The party-state continues to play the winner-takes-all game, to ban any political opposition, to monopolise political organisations, and to ensure political uniformity throughout the country. However, given the significant diversity in social, economic and cultural developments among China's provinces, some of which are more conducive to democratisation than others due to higher levels of economic development, the emergence of stronger liberal forces and more liberal tendencies in political culture, incremental institutional developments and organisational changes regarding the parties of all colours at provincial and lower levels may be no trifling matter in the political transformation of that country, which, according to Lucian Pye, has a great tradition of muddling through with a host of contradictions.<sup>29</sup>

## Notes

- 1 For example, See David S.G. Goodman, ed., *China Deconstructs: Politics, Trade and Regionalism*. London: Routledge, 1994; David S.G. Goodman, ed., *China's Provinces in Reform: Class, Community and Political Culture*. London: Routledge, 1997; Peter Cheung, Jae Ho Chung and Zhimin Lin, eds, *Provincial Strategies of Economic Reform in Post-Mao China: Leadership, Politics and Implementation*. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1998; and Hans Hendrischke and Feng Chongyi, eds, *Political Economy of China's Provinces: Comparative and Competitive Advantage*. London: Routledge, 1999.
- 2 Merle Goldman and Roderick MacFarquhar, 'Dynamic economy, declining party-state', in Merle Goldman and Roderick MacFarquhar, eds, *The Paradox of China's Post-Mao Reforms*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999, pp. 3–29.
- 3 See David S.G. Goodman, 'The Chinese political order after Mao: "socialist democracy" and the exercise of state power', *Political Studies*, vol. 33, no. 2, June 1985, pp. 23–42.
- 4 For examples, see Pei Minxin, *From Reform to Revolution: The Demise of Communism in China and the Soviet Union*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994; and Zheng Shiping, *Party vs. State in Post-1949 China: The Institutional Dilemma*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.
- 5 Edward Friedman, *National Identity and Democratic Prospects in Socialist China*. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1995.
- 6 Bruce J. Dickson, *Democratization in China and Taiwan: The Adaptability of Leninist Parties*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.
- 7 Robert A. Dahl, *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971.
- 8 For a useful summary, see John P. Burns, 'The People's Republic of China at 50: national political reform', *The China Quarterly*, vol. 159, September 1999, pp. 580–94.
- 9 Li Cheng and Lynn T. White, 'Elite transformation and modern change in mainland China and Taiwan: empirical data and the theory of technocracy', *The China Quarterly*, vol. 121, March 1990; Hong Yung Lee, *From Revolutionary Cadres to Party Technocrats in Socialist China*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991.
- 10 For the new conservative trend in this regard, see 'Gongchandangyuan duiwu zai gaige kaifang zhong buduan fazhan zhuangda' ('Party membership constantly expands during the reform and opening'), *Renmin Ribao*, 31 May 1991; Dong Wanmin, 'Yan'ge anzhaobiao zhun fazhan dangyuan' ('Recruit party members strictly according to standards'), *Henan Ribao*, 7 January 1991.

11 Goodman, ed., *China Deconstructs*; Goodman, ed., *China's Provinces in Reform*; Cheung, Jae Ho Chung and Zhimin Lin, eds, *Provincial Strategies of Economic Reform*; Lynn T. White, III, *Unstately Power: Local Causes of China's Economic Reforms*. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1998; Hendrischke and Feng, eds, *Political Economy of China's Provinces*. It is worth mentioning that most authors differ from Lynn T. White's idea that there is no 'local state'. Even if the state is defined as a 'unified organisation', as White defines it in his introduction to the book, it is wrong to regard provincial and other levels of local government as a part of society rather than the local state. The priority and power of the local bureaucracy rest firmly with the state, and the strategic articulation and defence of local interests for career advancement within the bureaucratic hierarchy are not to be confused with representing the interests of society to the state.

12 Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe Schmitter, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Vol. 4, Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986; Bruce J. Dickson, *Democratization in China and Taiwan: The Adaptability of Leninist Parties*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.

13 Admittedly, the case of Fang Jue might indicate that there is an army of communist democrats at the lower levels. For a discussion of Fang Jue and the impact of his 'Xuyao xin de zhuanbian: minzhu pai de gangling xing yijian' ('The need for a new transformation: programmatic opinion of the democratic faction'), see Luo Bing 'Jing guan minzhu gangling de zhenkan' ('The shock of the democratic program by a Beijing official'), Cheng Ming, February 1998. For the latest development of democratic culture within the CCP, see Dong Yuyu and Shi Bianhai, eds, *Zhengzhi zhongguo: mianxiang xin tizhi xuanze de shidai* (Political China: facing an age of choices for a new system). Beijing: Jinri Zhongguo chubanshe, 1998.

14 Shiping Zheng, *Party vs. State in Post-1949 China*, p. 214.

15 For details, see Liu Zhifeng, ed., *Diqici Geming: 1998 zhongguo zhengfu jigou gaige beimanglu* (The Seventh Revolution: memorandum of the Chinese government restructuring in 1998). Beijing: Jingji Ribao chubanshe, 1998.

16 Hou Shaowen, *Anquan Tongdao: zhongguo zhengzhi fazhan xinluxiang* (Safe passage: new direction for political development in China). Beijing: Zhonggong zhongyang dangxiao chubanshe, 1998, pp. 137–8.

17 Wu Daying et al., *You zhongguo tese de shehui zhuyi minzhu zhengzhi* (Socialist democratic polity with Chinese characteristics). Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 1999, pp. 108–9.

18 Wang Zhongtian, *Xin de bi-an: zouxiang 21 shiji de zhongguo minzhu* (A new horizon: Chinese democracy in the 21st century). Beijing: Zhonggong zhongyang dangxiao chubanshe, 1998, pp. 217–18.

19 Keith Forster, 'Zhejiang: paradoxes of restoration, reinvigoration and renewal', in Goodman, ed., *China's Provinces in Reform*, p. 263.

20 Li Ruihuan, 'Zai Zhonggong renmin zhengzhi xieshang huiyi dijiu jie quanguo weiyuanhui di'er shi huiyi bimuhui shang de jianghua' ('Speech at the concluding session of the second plenary of the fifth Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference'), *Renmin Ribao*, 12 March 1999.

21 All activists of the Democracy Wall Movement, including Wei Jingsheng, started as loyalists to the communist regime and thought and acted within a Marxist-Leninist framework.

22 Lack of coherent organisation and program continues to be a salient feature of the Chinese democracy movement abroad today, as indicated by the experience of the sad infighting between Minzhu Zhenxian and Minzhu Lianhe Zhenxian.

23 For a wonderful introduction and selected articles from these journals, see Gregor Benton, ed., *Wild Lilies, Poisonous Weeds: Dissident Voices from People's China*. London: Pluto Press, 1982. Some of these journals were actually once available in some university libraries from 1979 to 1980.

24 Jonathan Unger, ed., *The Pro-Democracy Protests in China: Reports from the Provinces*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1991, pp. 2–3.

25 Jin Zhong. 'Tizhi neiwai de shuangchong yali: cong dalu mian zuo zhang chao kan zhonggong zhenggai xingshi' ('Double pressure from within and without: a glance at the situation of political reform by the CCP through the tide of forming political parties in mainland China'), *Kaifang Zazhi* (Open Magazine), no. 26, October 1998.

26 Xu Wenli, 55, is a veteran political dissident who was sentenced to prison for twelve years for his involvement in the Democracy Wall Movement in 1978–9. He declared the establishment of the Beijing-Tianjin Branch of the China Democracy Party in early November 1998. Qin Yongmin, 44, is another veteran political dissident who was sentenced to prison for eight years for his involvement in the Democracy Wall Movement. After his release he was again sentenced to reform through labour for two years for his involvement in drafting 'The Peace Charter'. Later he organised a 'Human Rights Watch' in Wuhan and declared the establishment of the Hubei Branch of the China Democracy Party on 26 November 1998. Wang Youcai, 32, was a postgraduate at Beijing University and served as the secretary general of the 'Autonomous Students Association of Higher Education Institutions' during the Beijing Spring in 1989. He was listed as one of the twenty-one most wanted people after the June 4th Incident and was later jailed for three years. He declared the formation of the China Democracy Party in Hangzhou on 25 June 1998 during US President Clinton's formal visit to China. For details, see Jing Feng, 'Zhongguo minzhudang zudang jishi' ('A report on the establishment of the China Democracy Party'), *Beijing Zhichun* (Beijing Spring), February 1999.

27 Ironic as it is, these democrats were actually trying to copy the experience of the CCP in establishing provincial branches before establishing the national organisation.

28 One plausible explanation for the harsh crackdown is that the humiliating downfall of the Suharto regime in Indonesia scared the CCP authorities into following the strategy of 'nipping in the bud' to prevent a possible coalition of dissidents and laid-off workers during 1999, the year of sensitive anniversaries: the 80th anniversary of the May 4th Movement, the 10th anniversary of the June 4th Movement and the 50th anniversary of the People's Republic.

29 Lucian Pye, 'An overview of 50 years of the People's Republic of China: some progress, but big problems remain', *The China Quarterly*, vol. 159, September 1999.

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## Field report

# Local poverty-alleviation efforts in a central province in China: the case of Guangxi

Joseph Y.S. Cheng

### I Introduction

The Chinese leadership has been aware that the policy of economic reform and opening up to the outside world since 1979 has led to growing regional differences. According to Hu Angang, Wang Shaoguang and Kang Xiaoguang, China's regional differences were more serious than those of the former Yugoslavia and India, both of which were in the front ranks among countries with significant regional differences. In 1993, the overall regional per capita GDP differential coefficient in China amounted to 70.9 per cent, while that in the former Yugoslavia in 1988 was 53.6 per cent, and in India in 1980 it was 36.4 per cent. On a weighted basis, adjusting to regional population figures, the coefficient in China in 1991 was 46.3 per cent, still higher than the historical peaks of most developed countries – for example, 42.4 per cent in Norway in 1939, 41 per cent in the United States in 1932, and 38.4 per cent in Italy in 1952.

Excessive regional disparities obviously damage the interests of the less developed regions. They will also result in higher rates of inflation and unemployment. They are even more unpalatable in a socialist country, which takes pride in reducing the gap between the rich and the poor. Serious regional disparities bring social and political instability and may even generate demands for regional autonomy. This is an important concern for Chinese leaders who understand that, in a huge country like China, central–regional relations must always be handled with care. It is significant that China still adopts a unitary system of government, highly exceptional for its size.