Introduction

In the immediate aftermath of Tiananmen, there were widespread predictions among Chinese and foreign observers alike that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) would collapse within a short period. The harsh repression of student-led dissent, not just in Beijing, which was what most of the world watched, but throughout the major cities of China, could not succeed for long, it was thought. The democratic movement was too strong, public disgust with the corruption and authoritarian policies of the government too great, and the world tide against communist governments – exemplified by the collapse of socialism in Eastern Europe later that same year – too profound for China to resist for long. When it was announced that Jiang Zemin, the Party secretary of Shanghai, had been made general secretary of the CCP, it was widely assumed that he would be a transitional figure, not unlike Hua Guofeng, who had served briefly as chairman of the Party following Mao Zedong's death in 1976.[1]

It was also widely thought that if, through the exertion of pure brute strength, the communist government was able to reassert itself against the societal forces that had been arrayed against it, that the cost would be economic reform and growth. Indeed, such predictions seemed to be borne out as the pace of reform stalled and as administrative measures against inflation bit deeply into China's growth rates. By the summer and fall of 1990, China's growth rates were near zero, by far the slowest rate of growth the Chinese economy had experienced since the start of reform in late 1978.

Such predictions, like so many in the China field, were wrong. The CCP did restore its dominance over society remarkably quickly. The deep differences of opinion within the party were muted if not eliminated by the purge of Party head Zhao Ziyang and other top leaders. Rather than being a transitional figure, Jiang Zemin continued to head the CCP until

[1] Michael Weiskopf, "Chief Rose by Following Prevailing Political Winds."

stepping down thirteen years later in 2002, and the Chinese economy not only continued to grow but to stir fears that it had become an unstoppable economic juggernaut as China became the manufacturing center of the world. Whereas per capita income at stood at about $250 in 1989, it had grown to some $1200 by 2006, a remarkable achievement for a country of 1.3 billion people and putting China well on the way toward becoming a middle income country.

Even China's diplomatic pariah status had vanished a decade and a half later as China emerged as an influential presence in world councils, especially in Asia. The change in China's status was strikingly highlighted by the back-to-back appearances of President Bush, who spoke to the Australian parliament 2003, and Chinese president Hu Jintao, who was greeted much more enthusiastically, when he spoke the following day. The conservative Australian paper the *Financial Review* summed up the public mood in its headline: "Bush came, Hu conquered."[2] By 2006, people began talking about China's emerging "soft power."

If it is difficult to make predictions about China, we can at least examine periods of history to better understand the reasons they developed as they did, not only to get a better understanding of the state of Chinese politics and society today but also to raise better questions about its development in the future. That is what this book tries to do. There are at least four essential elements in such an inquiry. The first is politics, particularly elite politics. If Tiananmen reflected a political breakdown, how was the political system put back together? What new understandings of politics emerged to transcend the disputes that had fed into Tiananmen? And how did Jiang Zemin, with little experience in elite political circles and none in military, manage to prevail? The second is changing intellectual concerns. Intellectuals were critics of the state in the 1980s, but by the 1990s and beyond many of them were far more accepting of the state and indeed espousing nationalism in one form or another. How does one explain this change? Third, not only did intellectuals change, but so did the relationship between the state and intellectuals. This relationship became much more complex as both the nature of the state and the intellectual community were changing. And fourth, social change, which has affected the way people have thought about their society and has forced the state to modify its agenda. Not only did new social issues force their way onto the agenda, but the interests that had grown up in the 1990s complicated the state's ability to respond. International relations are not a focus of this book, but,

[2] Jane Perlez, "A visitor from China Eclipses Bush's Stop in Australia."

as we will see, China's relations with other countries, particularly the United States, have affected the way people view China's domestic issues, just as those domestic issues influence the way people have seen international relations.

ELITE POLITICS

Elite politics have been contentious at best throughout the twentieth century. Neither of Mao Zedong's first two designated successors, Liu Shaoqi or Lin Biao, was successful in replacing Mao. Only Hua Guofeng, chosen as Mao was nearing death, was able to succeed, but he was too junior in the informal political hierarchy to survive for long. And neither Hu Yaobang nor Zhao Ziyang, the heir apparents to Deng Xiaoping, was able to take his place. Such failures manifested a winner-take-all mode of political contestation in which power is conceived of as "monistic, unitary and indivisible."[3] Such a tradition, rooted in the imperial past, but reinforced and indeed heightened by the political struggles of the twentieth century, has undermined the creation of political institutions and the emergence of more pluralistic understandings of politics. The structure of Leninist systems also makes political succession difficult. Overcoming such legacies is not easy, though the creation of institutions, both formal and informal, suggests a possible course of transition to more stable politics.

The history of political contestation in twentieth-century China in general and the heritage of Leninism in particular make it difficult for both institution building and pluralist understandings of political power. The historical record to date suggests that Leninist systems do have difficulty reforming politically. Those in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe imploded, while those in Cuba and North Korea have resisted reform; China and Vietnam have reformed economically but political reform has been limited (though recently Vietnam has made important strides). Can China chart a path that might lead to liberalization and perhaps to democratization? Can political reform follow the same, incremental path of "crossing the river while feeling the stones" as the economic reforms?

If the rules of political struggle in the twentieth century have been dominated by the perception that actors were in a game to win all, it is nevertheless true that the inauguration of reform has posed a significant challenge to this perception. Indeed, one of the major thrusts of reform was to curtail

[3] Tang Tsou, "Prolegomenon to the Study of Informal Groups in CCP Politics," p. 99; and Zou Dang [Tsou Tang], *Ershi shiji Zhongguo zengzhi*, p. 244.

the abuses of authority that had been associated with Mao's rule, particularly during the Cultural Revolution.[4] It was widely believed among the veteran cadres who returned to power in the late 1970s that "normal" Party life had been badly disrupted and was in urgent need of restoration. The mantra of the day was "collective leadership," meaning both that decisions should be made after inner Party discussions in which views could be freely expressed and that those who disagreed with the resulting decision should be allowed to retain their views as long as they agreed to implement the decision. The norm of democratic centralism also contained a sense that there were procedures to be followed in convening Party meetings so that one person could not arbitrarily impose his or her will on the Party or its management – including, for example, such issues as recruitment, evaluation, and promotion of cadres. Although such norms have never been fully adhered to, they continued to exert a moral force. It was toward that end that the Party passed in 1980 the Guiding Rules on Inner Party Life and adopted a new Party constitution two years later. In this way, the reaction of the CCP as an organization paralleled that of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union following Stalin's death in 1953.

Though Deng did not always adhere to the norms of collective leadership – his position as the "core" of the Party connoting something more than simply first among equals – he nevertheless advocated it in principle. Deng voiced the need to create sound political institutions in his famous 1980 speech on reforming the Party and state systems: "If these [leadership] systems are sound, they can place restraints on the actions of bad people; if they are unsound, they can hamper the efforts of good people or indeed, in certain cases, may push them in the wrong direction." It was in deference to these emerging norms of collective leadership that Deng played down the role of personality cult, though it should be noted that he was not above pushing his ideas in a cultlike fashion at critical junctures.[5]

While these inner Party norms were being developed, Chinese society, economy, and culture became far more complex and more integrated with the world. Not only has the Chinese economy more than quadrupled in size since 1978, state control has also retreated significantly from direct management of the economy. Even as late as 1998, there were 64,737, state-owned enterprises (SOEs), employing 110 million workers. By year-end 2005, the number of SOEs had fallen by two-thirds, to 27,477, and the number of workers employed in SOEs had fallen by 40 percent to

[4] Joseph Fewsmith, "The Impact of Reform on Elite Politics."
[5] For instance, the 1983 publication of Deng's *Selected Works* preceded the adoption of the critical Decision on Economic Structural Reform.

64 million. In the same period, the number of private enterprises had grown from 10,667, employing 9.7 million people, to 123,820, employing over 34.5 million workers.

These economic changes, which have been paralleled by social changes less easy to capture with statistics, have forced the Chinese government increasingly to adopt indirect ways of managing the economy, thus changing in important ways the state–society relationship. They have also fostered the growth of law. Since the revival of the National People's Congress (NPC) in the late 1970s, the process of law-making has become more institutionalized and rationalized – though there is still a long way to go.[6]

In addition, the 1978 reform decision to turn from class struggle to economic modernization has gone further than anyone could have predicted at the time. With the emphasis on economic growth has come a change in the basis of the regime's legitimacy. Although the Party still claims legitimacy on the basis of Marxism-Leninism and this claim has important consequences for the political system, everyone is aware that performance legitimacy has become far more important than ideology in justifying the government's continued rule. This was true during the 1980s but has become even more important in the years since 1989, in large part because the Tiananmen Square tragedy destroyed what little belief in Marxism-Leninism was left.

The change in the role of Party ideology, the reassertion of Party norms and the emergence and growth of new norms, the increasing complexity of the society and economy, the growing integration of the Chinese economy into the world economy, the growing body of laws and lawyers, and the increasing role played by quasi-representative organs such as the NPC have all been justly heralded as charting a path of gradual political transition. At the same time, however, it should be recognized that these emerging norms and institutions stand in tension with rule by a Leninist party and the traditional game of winner-take-all politics. Whereas the former trends point to a growing pluralization of Chinese society and governance, the latter suggest a continuing institutional and cultural rejection of pluralism.[7] Although the Jiang Zemin era saw considerable efforts to reconcile these conflicting aspects of the political system, particularly with Jiang's enunciation of the "Three Represents," which permitted entrepreneurs to join the CCP, there has been a surprising re-emphasis on ideology, not to mention a tightened control over media and crackdown on those who pursue rights

[6] Murray Scott Tanner, *The Politics of Lawmaking in China*; Stanley Lubman, *Bird in a Cage*.
[7] Thomas A. Metzger, *A Cloud Across the Pacific*.

even within the framework of the Chinese legal system, in the first years of the Hu Jintao era.[8]

In short, one should not assume that changes observed in the social and economic realms will necessarily be reflected in the Chinese political system; certainly there will not be a one-to-one correspondence. Political systems confronted by socioeconomic change can respond in a variety of ways, not all of which are "rational" from the perspective of enhancing the overall performance of the system. Political systems can simply ignore socioeconomic change, leading to stagnation (both economic and political) and collapse. Individual actors in the political system may also seek personal financial benefit from such changes and so drive what economists call "rent seeking" to new heights, hobbling the emergence of more effective administration. However, political systems can also respond positively, generating more efficient public bureaucracies and more democratic political systems.

How political systems respond depends on a variety of factors, including the perceived threat that socioeconomic changes pose to the political system as well as to individual leaders within that system. Individual leaders will command varying resources and thus respond differently to the challenges confronting the system. Some leaders will resist change while others will seek to respond positively, hoping they can ride such changes to continued or greater success within the political system. In the course of responding to such change, individual leaders are responding within the political culture of the regime – in China's case, within the contours of the CCP and within the context of the winner-take-all rules of the game – even if they are trying to change the system.

There are reasons to believe that over time Chinese politics have become more institutionalized and that conflict among leaders is better contained. But succession in Leninist systems is never easy, and, as we will see, the succession from Jiang Zemin to Hu Jintao, while it has gone better than most, has not been without its tensions. And it is not clear that Hu will be able to pass power on to a successor in a smooth and institutionalized manner.

INTELLECTUAL CONCERNS

The second area that needs to be investigated is that of the changing intellectual attitudes and concerns in the years following Tiananmen. This is

[8] Amnesty International, "China: The Olympics Countdown – Failing to Keep Human Rights Promises."

the story most at odds with Western (particularly American) expectations of China, particularly in the first few years after Tiananmen. The student demonstrations in 1989 raised such expectations that it took a long time for Western politicians, editorial writers, and journalists to understand that China was not on the cusp of democratic transition. China may eventually emerge as a democratic nation, but, if so, its path will be longer and more complicated than was so widely assumed in the early 1990s.[9] Contrary to those Western hopes, a significant number of intellectuals in China came to have different comprehensions of their society and the international order than their Western counterparts assumed they had. The story of intellectual development in the 1980s was one of critical self-examination (how could the Cultural Revolution have occurred?), of a cosmopolitan opening to the world, and of democratic hope and aspiration (though a serious investigation of these attitudes needs to include a critical analysis of underlying assumptions about democracy).[10] By the 1990s, many intellectuals were more supportive of their own government and more critical of the West than at any time since the May Fourth Movement of 1919.

Over the past century Chinese intellectuals have worked to create a more open and liberal society, though they have often submerged that quest into what they believed was a broader and more urgent quest for national sovereignty.[11] Nonetheless, whenever international and domestic tensions have relaxed, intellectuals have resumed their efforts to bring greater rationality to the political process, normalize the state–society relationship, and integrate China more fully into the international order. This was certainly the case following the Cultural Revolution. When Mao's death in 1976 brought that cataclysm to an end, intellectuals once again resumed their "proper" role in Chinese society.

Nothing expressed more vividly the hopes for a new era than Deng Xiaoping's humble statement in 1978 that he wished to serve as the "director of support services" for China's scientists and technicians so that they could devote themselves wholeheartedly to their work and to China's modernization.[12] But simple expressions of good wishes could hardly change fundamentally the relationship that had grown up between the Party and intellectuals since the Yan'an era. Mao had made it clear in his 1942 speech to the Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art that intellectuals must overcome

[9] In this judgment, I differ from Bruce Gilley, who believes democratic transformation much more imminent. See his *China's Democratic Future*.
[10] Merle Goldman, *Sowing the Seeds of Democracy in China*.
[11] Vera Schwarcz, *The Chinese Enlightenment*.
[12] Deng Xiaoping, "Speech at the Opening Ceremony of the National Conference on Science."

their natural petty bourgeois nature by self-consciously "integrating" themselves with the "masses" – with the Party as judge of how successfully they had done so.[13] With the perspective of thirty years of persecution, intellectuals naturally were critics of the Party/state even when they served it. Indeed, some of the most prominent and outspoken of the liberal intelligentsia worked for the state, often in high places, and their self-assigned mission was to change the state from within. Drawing primarily from the liberal tradition in Marxism and sometimes on Western liberalism, they sought to build a state that placed unprecedented emphasis on human beings – and that meant creating a more liberal, democratic order.

Even as high-ranking cadres, then, such liberal intellectuals were critics of the state and constituted what X. L. Ding termed a "counterelite."[14] As critics, they inevitably turned to the May Fourth tradition for moral inspiration – particularly its emphasis on science, democracy, cosmopolitanism, and the leading role for intellectuals as societal conscience. The May Fourth Movement (1919) was part of a broader New Culture Movement (1915–20), which drew inspiration from the European Enlightenment and hence was dubbed the "Chinese Enlightenment." Accordingly, liberal intellectuals in the 1980s were often referred to (and saw themselves) as "enlightenment intellectuals"; indeed, one of the liberal journals founded in the late 1980s was known as *The New Enlightenment* (*Xin qimeng*).

As the 1980s wore on, China's intellectual establishment diversified. Anticipating trends that would continue, albeit with significantly different content, in the 1990s, intellectuals with only minimal attachment to the state started to become active. The most important of these groups were gathered around book series and journals: the *Toward the Future* (*Zouxiang weilai congshu*) book series, created by Jin Guantao and Bao Zunxin; the Academy of Chinese Culture, organized by Tang Yijie, Li Zhonghua, and Wang Shucang; and the *Culture: China and the World* (*Wenhua: Zhongguo yu shijie congshu*) book series, started by Gan Yang and Liu Xiaofeng. These groups fueled the "cultural fever" (*wenhua re*) of the late 1980s, epitomized by the film *River Elegy* (*He Shang*).[15] The self-assigned mission of these groups was to carve out a "public space" that was independent of the state; it was a mission that assumed a common discourse based on Enlightenment ideals.

[13] Mao Tse-tung [Mao Zedong], "The Yenan Forum on Literature and Art."
[14] X. L. Ding, *The Decline of Communism in China*.
[15] The best discussion of these trends is Chen Fong-ching and Jin Guantao, *From Youthful Manuscripts to River Elegy*.

The ideals and hopes of these and other intellectuals were shattered by Tiananmen. Some lost their positions (indeed, many had lost them in the course of political battles during the 1980s), some were jailed for various periods of time, and others went abroad. Yet neither political suppression nor exile (voluntary or otherwise) can fully account for the change in intellectual atmosphere in the 1990s or for the changed relationship between the state and intellectuals that began to emerge in the years after Tiananmen. Indeed, the single most important change in China's intellectual scene since then is that the common discourse that had given vitality to discussions in the 1980s has disintegrated as Enlightenment ideals have – for the first time since the May Fourth Movement – been questioned or rejected by a substantial portion of intellectuals. At the start of the new century, liberalism still exists and has even shown signs of vigor at the local level, but it is no longer the common faith of intellectuals. Indeed, it has been subjected to withering criticism by intellectuals, politicians, and popular forces who reject liberalism and the "neoliberal" economics they associate with it. Ironically, even as China entered the WTO, a significant intellectual opposition to capitalism and globalization has emerged. And this critique has grown in the first years of the new century.

As will be discussed in the chapters that follow, some intellectuals changed their minds while others emerged with new ideas. The political atmosphere and concerns changed. Enlightenment intellectuals came increasingly under fire. Just as important, the professionalization of the bureaucracy turned some intellectuals into technocrats; others turned to academic specializations, giving up to some extent the traditional role of social critic. At the same time, the commercialization of culture challenged traditional understandings of the role of intellectuals from below.[16]

The new mood of the 1990s generated a mixture of traditionalism, conservatism, utopianism, and nationalism.[17] The new mix has not extinguished liberalism; indeed, a new generation of liberal intellectuals is emerging to replenish the voices of the 1980s that were silenced by politics or exile. However, for much of the 1990s (except in the economic realm, where liberal ideas continued to receive a good hearing), liberal thinking was largely marginalized in public discourse. Liberal writings continued to be published, though when and to what extent depended very much on the political atmosphere, and some liberals remained optimistic about the

[16] Xu Jilin, *Ling yizhong qimeng*, pp. 8–15.
[17] The best compendium of intellectual debates in the 1990s is Zhang Ming and Li Shitao (eds.), *Zhishi fenzi lichang*.

future – though others felt very much besieged. The government encouraged nationalistic feelings through its campaign of patriotic education and generally discouraged writing about the "black spots" in its history.[18] This campaign no doubt encouraged the conservative mood, and to a certain extent the rise of nationalism redounded to the benefit of the government, restoring some of the legitimacy lost in June 1989. But nationalism and utopian strains of thought (which have emerged simultaneously) are clearly double-edged swords, of which the government is very much aware. So even if the decline of Enlightenment thinking has ameliorated some of the alienation between state and society that evolved in the 1990s, the new trends are hardly reassuring in the long run.

The trends in the first years of the new century are no more encouraging. Although most intellectuals remain liberal in their basic orientation, their ability to influence public discourse remains limited. The emergence of the Internet has, of course, allowed much broader circulation of ideas, but the government has fought back vigorously. What is most notable is that the government has become much better at "framing" issues, that is setting out an interpretation of events, whether SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) or China's place in the world, and persuading people to accept at least the rough outlines of the government's views. Of course, the burgeoning economy – contrasted with the difficulties in Russia and many other places – has helped the government make its case.

Probing new intellectual currents and the reasons they have emerged can tell us much about contemporary China, the social problems the state faces, the way social critics see the state, and the issues that arouse political passion and provoke engagement. That alone can clear away some of the gross generalizations that have been made and so give us a more nuanced understanding of present-day China. But intellectual currents and the relationship between intellectuals and the state are also part of the broader problem of institution building. Whether the state can explain its efforts to deal with the problems society faces and secure the acceptance of intellectuals for emerging institutional arrangements are important factors in building legitimacy. To the extent that intellectual currents support state efforts and "public opinion" is mollified, the odds of repeating a Tiananmen-type situation are reduced. Conversely, extreme alienation exacerbates political tensions, while cynicism undermines the effectiveness of nascent institutions. It is open to question whether the turn away from the Enlightenment

[18] Suisheng Zhao, "Chinese Intellectuals' Quest for National Greatness and Nationalistic Writing in the 1990s."