



Griffin Cousins

The middle class is already demanding quality of life—not just more income; they want China to become “a normal country,” with the global norm now being democratic capitalism.

# Challenges and Opportunities in China's Turbulent Future

Carol Lee Hamrin

The system-wide transformation already well underway in China will bring rapid change over the next decade—in society and culture and eventually in politics also. As WTO-related reforms are introduced, the process of change will be highly complex, even chaotic at times. We need to look beyond the superficial headlines about China as a threat to U.S. interests and see both the sober challenges faced by its government as well as the needs of the people.

## WTO as China's Next Revolution

China has been trying for one hundred years to “catch up” with the modern West and Japan and, more recently, with its fast-developing neighbors in Asia. However, the target keeps moving no matter how much progress is made. For example, during the past two decades, China's economy has been growing at 10 percent while others, including the US's, grew much more slowly. Nevertheless, the net growth in China was still less than that in the developed economies due to the differing base for growth. Only in 1993

did China's share of world trade reach the level it held prior to the 1940s decade of war.

Today, China faces an external environment of fierce competition as the entire world undergoes a restructuring of institutions to accommodate “globalization.” This term constitutes a shorthand for a historic process involving the spread of new technologies, a new level of economic integration across borders, and an unprecedented speed of change. The global turbulence it produces affects China unevenly and unpredictably. In addition, there is growing turbulence inside China. The reform process has a hybrid quality whereby rapid economic restructuring from a socialist to a market economy produces uncoordinated social change while the government resists political change. This causes an uneven distribution of economic benefits and risks as well as an explosion of new social groups with more mobility (both economically and geographically). The result is disequilibrium of the whole system. How to manage all the problems as change continues to occur, and still keep making progress, is the challenge facing not only the Chinese government and citizenry but the entire world.

The Chinese government's decision to join the

WTO (World Trade Organization)—thus accepting new international limits on PRC sovereignty as well as influence over its economy—came out of recognition that this is the only option for a positive future for either the regime or the nation. It also sets a precedent for further integration of China into non-economic international regimes, from nonproliferation to human rights.

China's new Five Year Plan (2001-2005) and Ten Year Plan (to 2010) are intended to support phased compliance with the conditions of WTO membership. They mark the start of another peaceful revolution, like the opening of China twenty years ago. This next wave of reform will fully open up not just the economy but the whole of society.

### What Will Be New Over the Next Decade?

Given all the complexities of change underway, there will be inevitable failures in predicting specific events, but we can identify some of the drivers and parameters of change.

**Population pressure on resources drives reform.** The central imperative that is driving change in China is the need for jobs. The government's legitimacy rests heavily on its ability to produce continued economic gains. However, the population pressure on resources of all kinds is nearly intolerable. Ponder the statistics: the population will grow from 1.3 billion in 2000 to at least 1.6 billion by 2050—300 million more mouths to feed. Every year, there are more than 20 million urban jobseekers, 80 million migrant workers and another 120 million surplus rural workers, most of whom want to head for the big cities.

China will experience the greatest



Ken Benintendi

**China will experience the greatest migration in world history as 300 million people move to the cities over the next ten years.**

migration in world history as 300 million people move to the cities over the next ten years. Over half the population will be urban by 2030, rising rapidly from just 30 percent in 2000. The expansion of social services to meet their needs in education, housing and health services must come through private enterprise and nonprofit organizations. The financial and banking sector will be overhauled to serve the private sector and build consumer and investor confidence.

**Slower growth brings challenges.** Chinese leaders are having to rethink economic and social policies as the economic growth rate has been slowing (6–7 percent/year after 20 years of 10 percent annual growth); 6 percent is the minimum required to match population growth. Rural incomes have been dropping for several years. Grievances

over inequality of income and opportunity were manageable when the economic pie was growing rapidly, but now rural and urban labor unrest, as well as tensions involving ethnic and religious groups, are surfacing in spontaneous mass protests, riots and sabotage.

The government has seen the limits of state-guided capitalism and dependence on foreign investment (80 percent from overseas Chinese) and now is looking more to domestic consumption as the main engine of sustainable growth. That has prompted a massive government investment program in nation-wide transportation and communication infrastructure, which will produce a fully integrated national economy for the first time. The new development strategy will also require more rapid growth of the private sector, as well as a change in the long standing anti-migration policy to allow farmers to move to the cities, both to boost consumption and mitigate rural unrest. The new Five Year Plan aims to entice foreign investment to develop poverty-stricken west China, both to dampen separatist sentiment and to localize labor migration and urbanization so everyone does not move to the coast.

**Public opinion and action have impact.** Positive social change by 2010 will include rapid growth of China's urban middle class as an educated, creative work force is developed. China plans to boost high-tech knowledge-based industries, quickly create an information highway and expand its higher education system, partly through private schooling. Internet usage (now around 23 million) doubles twice each year. This middle class is already demanding quality of life—not just more income;

Brent Fulton, Editor • Julia Grosser, Managing Editor • Dona Diehl, Layout and Design

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they want China to become “a normal country,” with the global norm now being democratic capitalism.

More worrisome social change includes growing inequity whereby the poorest segment of society is losing not only income but all means of subsistence, while the political and economic elites are increasingly corrupt, diverting state assets to line their own pockets. In the 1990s, the richest Chinese expanded their share of the economic pie from 25 percent to almost 40 percent. New waves of job losses in industry and agriculture may overwhelm retraining and education for the new service jobs.

**Cultural competition is spurred by a search for meaning.** China’s new openness is creating a market of ideas as well as of goods and services. In the swirl of competition and corruption, people need hope for the future and a loving community. Often, they are finding these in religious faith along with practical help such as healing of illnesses for which medical help is too expensive. A plurality of beliefs is emerging with four main competitors to fill the spiritual vacuum: commercial pop culture from Taiwan and Hong Kong; Western secular democratic and scientific values; traditional philosophies and folk religion; and the global wave of evangelical/charismatic Christianity. Despite the interest in Western values, including Christianity, there is widespread resentment of American attempts to impose human rights values. People believe these efforts reflect U.S. political interests more than genuine concern for the Chinese people.

**Social and political reform is inevitable.** Economic growth and government legitimacy both require more efficient, honest and accountable government—and this is widely recognized in China. In 1998, a goal was set to create “small government; big society” through downsizing government at all levels by 50 percent and developing a more autonomous Third Sector (nonprofit social organizations) to help take up the burden of social services that governments no longer can or will perform. Well over 200,000 nonprofit organiza-

## China’s Achievements Prior to the 10th Five-Year Plan (2001-2005)

### GDP

- \* Annual growth rate: 8.3%
- \* GDP by 2000: 8.9404 trillion yuan
- \* Ratio of GDP to residents’ consumption: 45-50% (as opposed to 60-65% in developed countries)

### Profits

- \* Profits state-owned industrial enterprises and industrialized enterprises with a controlling share held by the state reached by 2000: 239.2 billion yuan (a 190% increase over the 1997 figure)

### Unemployment

- \* Unemployment rate in 2000: 3.1%#

### Trade

- \* Imports and exports volume in 2000: US\$474.3 billion (69% rise over 1995 figures)
- \* Trade value during period of 9th Five-Year Plan: US \$1.7 trillion (an increase of 74.9%)

- \* Dependency of national economy on trade in 2000: 43.9% (up from 40.2% in 1995)
- \* Exports: US\$249.2 billion (67% rise over 1995 figures)

### Foreign Exchange

- \* Reserves at the end of 2000: US\$165.6 billion (US\$92 billion more than 1995)

### Living Standards

- \* Per capita net income of rural residents in 2000: 2,253 yuan (US\$272)(4.7% annual increase)
- \* Per capita disposable income by urban residents in 2000: 6,280 yuan (US\$759)(5.7% annual increase)
- \* Average annual increase in volume of retail sales: 10.6%

### Information Technology

- \* Spending on IT products in 2000: US\$19.9 billion (US citizens spent US\$561 billion on same products)
- \* Telephone users: 215 million
- \* Internet users: 22.5 million

### Projected Goals for the 10th Five-Year Plan

#### Economic Growth

- \* Annual average: 7%

#### Agriculture

- \* Number of farmers transferred to non-agricultural industries: 40 million

#### Unemployment

- \* Rate at which China will try to maintain unemployment: 5%

#This is the official rate.

Source: “NPC Statistics: Big-Picture Statistics of Today and Tomorrow’s China,” People’s Daily Website, <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/features/lianghui/all.html>, March 30, 2001. Compiled by Josh Snyder. (NPC=National People’s Congress)

tions are up and running. Meanwhile, other incremental improvements to increase efficiency and honesty in government continue, such as hot lines and T.V. talk shows that reveal corruption cases. Pragmatic younger, better-educated officials, who are moving into positions of influence in all sectors, will further promote such changes in coming years.

This positive momentum has met with a major setback since mid-1999 as the government has over-reacted to the rapid growth of the Falungong (FLG) spiritual movement. The government banned FLG, put a freeze on political reform and established highly restrictive policies for the non-profit sector and religious organizations. Nonetheless, more liberal social policies and political transition to a post-communist authoritarianism are very likely to re-surface by the second half of the decade, though democratic and cultural institutions will take much more time to build.

**An internationalist foreign policy will prevail.** For twenty years, Chinese lead-

ers have pursued a real-politik approach to foreign policy, convinced that the ideological confrontation of the Cold War only left China poor and marginalized. Pragmatism in a globalist era has meant the gradual opening up of China to multi-layered interactions of all types with the outside world. This opening will speed up under WTO-related reforms and with the active support of younger generations who have had a positive exposure to the personal and national gains possible through the open policy.

This trend will be inhibited mainly by great sensitivity to perceived unequal, unfair treatment of China, especially by U.S. political actors. U.S. dominance of global institutions will spur Chinese alignments with other international actors to try to counter dependence and vulnerability to U.S. pressure. Any Chinese government, communist or democratic, will react strongly to outside support of separatist movements, especially in Taiwan.

# Challenges Facing China's Church Leaders Today

Samuel E. Chiang

**F**ast-paced changes pulverizing the Chinese culture, economy and education system are having a significant effect on the church in China. The unabated steamrolling of globalization in China is displacing communities and minorities. The continuous return of those who have studied overseas, importing Christian and secular Western philosophies and values, is expanding and reshaping the Chinese worldview. The church outside of China is carving up the nation's indigenous church structures by creating suzerain relationships that may rival those of imperial times. Thus, the typical church worker, found in either a rural or city setting, is facing unprecedented challenges.

## Plugged-in Youth

In the last decade of the 20th century, electricity brought some irreversible changes into village life in China. The progression of this change is astounding in rural minority and Han Chinese villages.<sup>1</sup> Ten years ago, a typical night would involve a family sitting around a fire telling stories and maybe listening to a radio. However, with even the most remote village now having a fairly reliable hydroelectric power supply for at least 4-6 hours per day, the form of nightly entertainment has changed from oral traditions to media driven events.<sup>2</sup> The young watch television—in some rural areas that have satellite dishes there is a plethora of programming available.<sup>3</sup> With the widespread availability of electrical power, televisions, stereos and other imported forms of entertainment are rapidly replacing traditional forms such as story telling, singing and dancing. As a result, this rural younger generation is having its worldview shaped differently.

China has the world's largest con-

centration of youth: 631 million are under the age of 24.<sup>4</sup> Out of this group, nearly 400 million are below the age of 18. This generation of "little emperors" are cherished and indulged by their parents who have a common goal—"a good education for my child(ren)." With the income of average Chinese families having quadrupled over the last two decades, they are destined to attain "middle income" status in the next two decades.<sup>5</sup> Thus, plugging in electronic entertainment devices—a trend that is not slowing—has become the norm.

After America, China has the world's largest computer market. Urged on by the government to help transform their nation into a hi-tech society and anxious to give their children every advantage, parents are buying the latest power-hungry, speed-demon desktops for their children. These changes have huge implications for church planters or leaders working in either rural or city settings.

These changes may appear to make ministry among minorities easier—no longer will workers have to learn a mi-

## China has the world's largest concentration of youth.

nority language since the young people all tend to speak Mandarin—as trained by the media. But will this truly be effective in planting churches? Will short-circuiting the process by not learning the heart language bring a community—already divided between the young and the old—a Gospel that the elderly will not accept? Might this impede any church planting effort in a minority setting where often, if the older generation accepts the Gospel, the entire vil-

lage will convert—indeed a possible movement may commence?

With the entertainment domain now centered on television, music and computer games, a church planter's ministry is far different from that of his or her forebears even ten years ago. The ministry models they have seen may not work for them in a changing society. In the last two decades, economic advances combined with disillusionment with communist ideology created a keen sense of spiritual vacuum that produced openness to the Gospel message. Today, however, that message is being challenged or crowded out by materialism and the ambition to succeed.

Thus, a re-tooling of approaches and strategies is in order for church planters and leaders, and the challenges confronting them are daunting. But, are they aware of this? Or, will they continue to cling to the only way they know? Not only must they make the Gospel message relevant in a rapidly changing society, they must have several approaches to communicate the message to a digital crowd whose domain of entertainment drowns out the voice of the Gospel.



Graham Couzens

## Adults and Iron Rice Bowls

While technology and Western entertainment are colliding with traditional culture, the very ascendancy of youth in China is also challenging a social infrastructure with profound consequences. Job-for-life normalcy at state-run enterprises is giving way to digital entrepreneurs who are under thirty. Putting a premium on new skills, job available signs often impose an upper age limit of 30, displacing the aged who would have to unlearn the old economy “iron rice bowl” ways.<sup>6</sup> Collective enterprises are being tossed out—the assigned jobs and living areas, promotions based on party loyalty and the untouchable reverence for age. The question for China, then, is not about their youth, but, rather, what to do about the older workers who increasingly find themselves without a place in the new economy and unable to cling to the promised “iron rice bowl—from cradle to grave” security.

Graying assemblies of middle-aged men and women along with retired employees of state-owned enterprises (SOEs) are facing a bleak future. Promotions are now based on merit rather than party loyalty—leaving them out in the cold. SOEs, stuck with debts from “command economy” days, are also worrying about rising pension costs. China is seeing its citizenry live longer, with an average life span exceeding 70 years.<sup>7</sup> Who will support these seniors? The national development that is occurring carries with it a double edge.

Indigenous church planters, then, must complement their skills to allow them to focus not only on the youth, but also on the crowd they grew up with as well as those who are their elders. Certainly this scenario is similar to that in many parts of the world—except that in China, many of these people, if more than 30 years old, are not really wanted in the job market. How is a church planter to counsel these displaced individuals? What do they say to someone who cannot receive retraining for a new position? How do they face massive numbers of people in their late 40s and early 50s who are angry with the government

and want to demonstrate against it? With limited skills and a junior high to high school education, many church planters and leaders may lose heart for their calling.

Morgan Stanley estimates that China’s entry into WTO will cost the country 40 million jobs.<sup>8</sup> The Chinese government estimate is 60 to 80 million unemployed in urban areas with another 80 to 100 million underemployed in rural areas. Moreover, with the central government insisting on 50 percent urbanization by the year 2010, China is moving 300 million people into the cities during this decade.<sup>9</sup> With the current number of cities, about 700, needing to expand in capacity, the challenge is immense. (At present, 400 cities each have about 300,000 people. The goal is to increase each city to at least one million people by the end of this decade.) Every city will be required to stretch its educational, housing, health and social services. Serving these huge numbers of city newcomers will be another challenge for church planters and leaders.

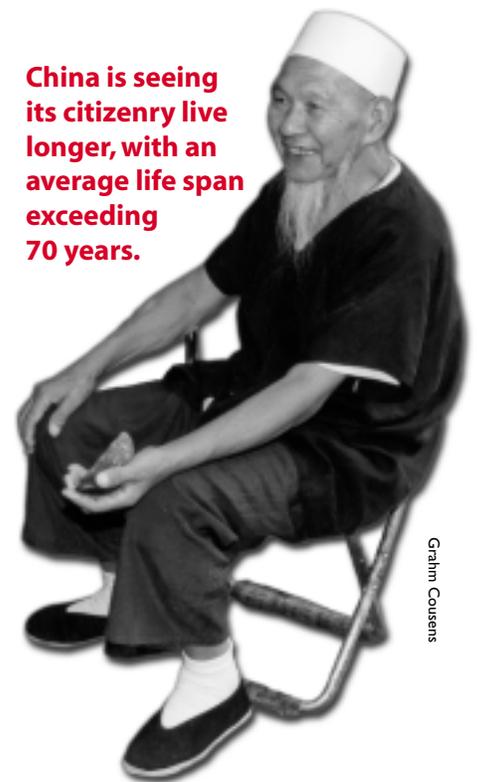
Not only are there the challenges of youth, the despairing aged and urbanizing cities, but also that of a developing middle class. This stratum of society is quickly becoming informed through debates taking place over an Internet that supplies quick feedback.<sup>10</sup> They would like to see China become a “normal country”—with the global norm now being democracy.

Societal forces will dictate how church planters and leaders serve. The scope and pattern of ministry will be forced upon them. Some, with less education, will not be able to serve in the major cities (or maybe not even second tier cities). Others, with more education, will be able to minister in larger cities, but if they are not willing learners, they may struggle constantly with relevancy. The fast learners, in the cities, may actually engage the digital crowd and be blessed with a niche ministry. Some who have the ability may even lead in providing holistic means of serving in cities, communities and villages.

## Theology and Meaning

China is undergoing a significant rebirthing experience and is on the cusp of an economic liberation, especially when the prized entry to WTO is realized. China is no longer China. Communism as a national motivating goal and belief system has little credibility. Children of leaders are sent to the U.S. to gain new values as well as advanced degrees. Confusion, corruption, and the need for hope and loving communities are pushing people to look along religious lines. However, there is

**China is seeing its citizenry live longer, with an average life span exceeding 70 years.**



Graham Cousens

significant competition for filling the spiritual vacuum. Commercial pop culture from Japan, Taiwan and Hong Kong, and Western secular democratic and scientific values are just a few of the many competitors.

Just as the nation is looking for a “model” to govern, the church is trying to find “ministry philosophies” and strategies to serve the people. Some in the official state church are trying to shove both “universalism” and “social-cultural gospel” down the throats of their homegrown church leaders. Thankfully, many who are in church

leadership are strong enough to withstand this or dismiss it as unbiblical.

Not so fortunate is the unofficial church, as well as some registered churches that have not joined the TSPM, and some TSPM churches—all of which see themselves as part of China's house church. They too are searching for "ministry philosophies" and strategies, but are bombarded with external theological pluralism ranging from the "ultra conservative" to the "expressive emotional crowds." This is splitting churches across China.

While the West may look askance at church splitting in China, it is not without guilt in this matter (more on this later). Of greater interest to the body of Christ is that China is developing her own sense of "theology," "systems," and renewed "denominations." There is no shame in this. The West, after all, has had two millennia to contemplate Christ, to crusade in his name—and to make their mistakes and then some. Surely a budding church in China should be encouraged to develop her expressions of faith, love, and hope in Christ without prying eyes peering unapprovingly.

### Money and Tyranny

Unlike America, China does not have Christian roots underpinning the laws and constitution of the nation, and is only starting to think about the "third" sector—the not-for-profits—and certainly not in a Christian way. Hence, the care of church planters and leaders is thoroughly lacking.

Jesus' comment, "...a prophet is not without honor except in his own country and in his own house," rings true throughout hamlets, villages, counties and cities in China. In fact, it is practiced extremely well within Christian circles. Many church planters and leaders can dress well because some factory boss has donated suits and shoes, but they may not have a penny in their pockets. The brothers and sisters in the congregation, not knowing this and being very human, think their leaders are well taken care of; hence, they see no further need to make improvements in the physical living conditions of their

church leaders. In truth, these leaders are really living in poverty!

In China, the per capita GDP growth has been sluggish, and the gap between well-off urbanites and their countryside compatriots has continually widened, producing an inequality that is huge and very noticeable. Social tensions are producing spontaneous mass protests, riots and sabotage. Some consultancies see the urban income as an optimistic \$4,000 per year for about 250,000,000 people. Compare that with the interior, where yearly average income is a maximum of \$500 with many subsisting on only \$100 per year. Yet, the bulk of China's people are still in the interior. Thus, the greatest challenge is to increase rural income.

With pastoral care lacking and the cost of living rising, church planters and leaders, with an honest desire to spread the Gospel, are very human and may succumb to accepting well-intended funding. To put it forthrightly, the West has often bought off church planters and leaders; it has introduced theological differences by dangling its "dollars;" it has viciously dismantled indigenous denominations by creating its own "small k" kingdom work.

The West has frequently allowed and encouraged a lack of transparency and accountability in the name of "utter secrecy." The West has also intensified the "house church's" persecution by foisting the issue upon China's government so that religious matters have become political. Why? Persecution raises funds! For whom are the funds really raised? Often, it is not for the churches in China but for the survival of the organization. A heightened publicity of persecution may increase governmental pressure on the house churches resulting in more persecution stories that can then be used for fund-raising.

The consequences of these types of actions are already being felt across China. Some groups who were working to achieve "unity" are no longer united.<sup>11</sup> Some of the larger denominations have disintegrated into many smaller "theological," "personality-led" kingdoms. Some house church de-

nominations are so afraid of these matters they have overreacted and secluded themselves from all foreigners lest they become entangled in financial kingdom building.

### Considerations

Truly, the challenges facing church planters and leaders are immense: energetic youths (both the poor and the digitally capable); despondent adults; large numbers of angry unemployed; newly forming cities; technologies; a search for ministry philosophies and strategies; funding with conditions—the list is not exhaustive.

Those wishing to come alongside church planters and leaders in China need to reflect on the following.

1. Are we serving the church planters and leaders, or are we hiring them? Either option necessitates that we care for them and not build kingdoms—either theirs or ours.

2. Are we helping the witness of the church and its leadership to move forward, or are we impeding it? The plethora of complexities facing indigenous church planters and leaders are enough to sink any missions executive. We need to choose, consciously, to appreciate their God-given vision.

3. Are we wise enough to avoid being used by the indigenous church? It is only human that undercurrents of manipulation, lack of transparency and boasting of work occur from time to time. We need to sensitively think and pray through some matters so that we are not the causes of stumbling in the body of Christ.

4. Are we prepared to provide skills training, operational modeling and holistic introductions to the "third sector"—that of Christian not-for-profit entities—so that indigenous church planters and leaders will have the necessary tools to engage in ministry? Sometimes it is necessary to provide hands-on training to a "turn-key" operation in the "third sector." This takes huge amounts of time, energy and resources—but this can work in China.

5. Are we willing to hold back our theological persuasions for the benefit of a growing church in China? Can we

stop “doing,” and just “be”—living out Christ day by day? Can we allow the indigenous church planters and leaders to struggle and arrive at their own expressions of love for Christ?

China and the church in China are undergoing painful and necessary change. The church outside of China must not only pray for them, but also invite the church in China, as an equal, to the global table of Kingdom servants for evangelism and mission—giving her both *time* and *space*.

#### End Notes

1. For example, in one of the most poor, remote, and nationally recognized places in Guangxi province, roads began to be built in 1998. Now all 187 administrative villages have road infrastructure and electricity.

2. Taken from my travels and interviews with various government officials and church leaders in China. Of good reading is Jasper Becker's book, *The Chinese*, Free Press, 2000, which takes a sociological/economic approach to society.

3. In some of the poorest areas, government officials would often boast that 80 percent of the villages have satellite dishes (personal counting often verified this claim). To achieve this the government officials would put up 50 percent of the money and the local villagers would put up the other half. The signal is distributed to the entire village (or subgroups based on geographical distribution) through a central reception site within the village. This method is one of the best ways for the subtle encouragement of learning Mandarin and ideology.

4. *Time Asia*, October 2000.

5. Various reports gives different assessments. This estimate is through *Business China*, “Economic Intelligence Unit” reports. *The Economist*, March 2001, gives the most recent figure.

6. *The Economist*, December 23, 2000.

7. Chinese newspapers and reports indicated this achievement in 1999.

8. Various reports in *South China Morning Post*, *Business Asia*, *Asia Week*, *The Economist* and *China Daily* give similar and different numbers throughout 2000 and the first quarter of 2001.

9. *China Daily*, throughout 2000.

10. Two hot debates are currently “discouraged” and “promoted” in society. One, the recent firecracker blast in a school, was hotly reported, talked about in Internet chat rooms but soon “cleansed” when the government decided to “discourage” it. The other, the rising divorce rate—over 20 percent in the cities—is being actively promoted. The government hopes via this discussion to “gauge the temperature of the waters,” and may actually promulgate some new laws as a result of it. Sadly, there is deafening silence when it comes to Christian views and voices on the subject.

11. Interviews conducted with various church leaders in Inner Mongolia, Xinjiang, Henan, Yunnan, Jiangsu, Anhui, Hunan, Sichuan, Guangdong, Guangxi, and Zhejiang.

*Rev. Samuel E. Chiang is the East Asia area director for Partners International.* ☞

# Demystifying China's New Leaders

Cheng Li

Once again China is in the midst of political succession. A new generation of Chinese leaders, known as the “fourth generation,” is poised to take the helm of power in the country. Within a couple of years, members of this new generation will occupy some of the most important posts in the country such as secretary-general of the Party, president and premier of the PRC.

For China watchers, no issue has generated more anxiety and confusion than the question concerning the characteristics of Jiang Zemin's successors. While there is little doubt that this generation will rule China for most of this decade and beyond, foreign observers'

The second myth reasons that since some fourth generation leaders were trained in the West, especially in the United States, they may form a pro-American force in China's policy-making circles. With the recent arrival of China's new ambassador to the United States, Yang Jiechi, a man educated at the London School of Economics and with many years experience in Washington, there has been a surge of optimistic thinking in the West. According to this view, leaders in Taiwan and the United States anticipate dealing with new PRC leaders who share backgrounds similar to theirs. The hope is that distrust and misunderstanding will be replaced by mutual respect and cooperation in the relations across the

## 2 myths are prevalent among China watchers in the West.

**1** The perception that Chinese Communist leaders are ineffective, incompetent, politically-rigid, and narrow-minded.

**2** Since some fourth generation leaders were trained in the West, especially in the United States, they may form a pro-American force in China's policy-making circles.

knowledge of the political attitudes and policy orientation of new Chinese leaders is astonishingly limited. There are more myths, rumors and wishful thinking than thoughtful analysis and well-grounded assessment.

Two myths are prevalent among China watchers in the West. One is the perception that Chinese Communist leaders, including the members of the fourth generation, are ineffective, incompetent, politically-rigid and narrow-minded. According to this view, new leaders have come to power largely because of nepotism, and they are currently involved in a vicious power struggle, which may lead to a major internal crisis.

Taiwan Strait—and across the Pacific Ocean.

Both myths—one based on ill-informed cynicism and the other on equally ill-informed optimism—are detrimental. If our perceptions of Chinese political succession are distorted, our assessment of China's future will be too. The “coming of age” of the “fourth generation” cannot be truly understood until we demystify China's new leaders.

Negative views of new Chinese leaders are not surprising—they reflect the demonization of China in the Western media after the Tiananmen incident. Yet ironically, under these “ineffective” and “incompetent” Chinese leaders,

China has sustained remarkable economic growth and has maintained social stability, despite all the odds against the country.

Most Chinese leaders are quite competent. Collectively the fourth generation is arguably the least dogmatic and most capable among all political elite generations in PRC history. This can largely be attributed to the fact that this generation grew up during the Cultural Revolution—an era characterized by idealism, collectivism and radicalism. They were taught to sacrifice themselves for socialism. But as time passed, their faith was eroded and their dream was shattered.

In fact, members of this generation experienced ideological disillusionment twice. The first time was with Marx's communism and Mao's socialism. The second time was with Adam Smith's "invisible hands." In the early

runners of the fourth generation, were sent to remote areas where they spent over a decade. Enormous physical hardship and an ever-changing political environment nurtured within them some valuable traits such as adaptability, endurance and political sophistication.

It is true that nepotism in various forms (such as school ties, blood ties and patron-client ties) has played a very important role in the recruitment of new Chinese leaders. But at the same time, there has been a strong effort by the political establishment to curtail such nepotism. In recent years, a number of institutional mechanisms have been adopted explicitly to prevent various forms of favoritism. These mechanisms include elections within the Party, term limits, age limits for retirement and regular reshuffling of both provincial and military leaders.

pel this perception. Some members in the fourth generation studied in the West, but their overall presence on both the national and provincial levels of leadership is still marginal. Although it is expected that more Western-trained Chinese leaders like Ambassador Yang will enter the top leadership, they will still be a minority in the foreseeable future and they will be especially cautious to avoid being seen as pro-West or pro-America.

Furthermore, those who studied in the West may not have a favorable view of the Western political and economic system. In recent years, the harshest condemnation against the U.S. policy toward China came from a few members of Chinese think tanks who recently received Ph.Ds in political science from American universities. The centuries-long victim mentality inflicted on the Chinese people by foreign powers remains strong among the new generation of leaders.

Because of recent troubling events (e.g. the U.S.-led effort to block Beijing's bid to host the 2008 Olympics, the U.S. plan to include Taiwan in its Theatre Missile Defence program and the collision of airplanes near Hainan island), Chinese nationalism is rising. China's new leaders are cynical about the moral superiority of the U.S., resentful of American arrogance, and doubtful about the total adoption of a Western economic and political system. Yet, even during crises, such as the tragic incident in Belgrade, they understand the need for cooperation instead of confrontation. Their policies toward the U.S. will be firm, but not aggressive. New Chinese leaders all see reunification with Taiwan as a matter of sovereignty, territorial integrity and national security.

In terms of China's domestic politics, I believe that, because of their generational characteristics, the new leaders will accelerate China's political reform, but modify the pace and emphasis of economic reforms. It is likely that they will consolidate China's legal system; institutionalize the so-called "inner Party democracy;" and redefine

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**In many ways,** fourth generation leaders are probably more capable than their predecessors in dealing with the tough issues that China faces.

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1980s, many prominent members of the fourth generation were very enthusiastic about Western liberal economic theories. However, important events in the 1990s had a strong impact on them—for example, undesirable side-effects resulting from China's market reform; Russia's shock therapy that led to only shock, but no therapy; and the East Asian financial crisis. Some have wondered if Adam Smith might have been as wrong as Karl Marx, although the consequences of their errors have been profoundly different. As a result, new leaders are far more interested in discussing issues than defending "isms."

In many ways, fourth generation leaders are probably more capable than their predecessors in dealing with the tough issues that China faces. This is related to their experiences during the Cultural Revolution. Many, including Hu Jintao and Wen Jiabao, two front

As a result of these institutional developments, no faction, no institution, no region and no individual can dominate power. Everyone has to compromise, and those who are skillful in coalition building are often favored. Of course, factional politics was, is, and will be a key part of the Chinese political process. But what is most evident in Chinese politics today is the broad shift from an all-powerful single leader, such as Mao or Deng, to a greater collective leadership, which is now characteristic of the Jiang era. The fourth generation will rely even more on power sharing, negotiation, consultation and consensus building if they wish to govern effectively. If the above analysis is valid, China's political succession will not be as abrupt and violent as some China watchers predict.

As for the second and more optimistic myth, evidence thus far tends to dis-

# Chinese Students in the West and China's Future

Daniel Su

Ever since China reopened its door under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping, a great number of Mainland Chinese have come to the West for academic degrees, training and research. Many of them have returned to China, and yet more have stayed in the West. Such Chinese studying overseas may be a small group compared to the 1.3 billion people in China, but they are destined by cultural, historical and contemporary factors to play a disproportionately large role in China's future. Their influence should not be measured by their academic and professional expertise alone, but also by how they interpret their experiences, especially the new values they encounter in the West, including the Christian message and its outlook on life. As for the church here in the West, how we reach out to these Chinese will also have significant ramifications.

## A Cultural Perspective

Confucian values constitute the greatest influence on the mainstream of traditional Chinese culture, and this is especially true in the governing of



the state. Confucius put great emphasis on learning even to the point of showing contempt for the unschooled; hence, his saying, "all undertakings are base, learning alone is dignified." (*Wan Ban Jie Xia Pin, Wei You Du Shu Gao.*) Ironically, but consequently, Chinese people as a whole, have aspired to be scholars and have shown great respect for them throughout the ages—with the exception of the Cultural Revolution period under Mao. Chinese rulers have relied on learned scholars in governing the state and included them in their ruling elite, which has, in turn, enhanced the rulers' credibility in the eyes of the Chinese populace. The educated and intellectuals have seen themselves as responsible for the well-being of the country, which, in today's terms, also includes defending China's interests in international affairs. So, the educated will continue their leadership role in China. Those returning from the West with higher degrees will have obvious advantages over their colleagues who did not get further training in the West.

## A Historical Perspective

China is a nation that takes pride in its rich heritage, as most other nations do. But its pride is mostly built on its ancient past—its long history, philosophy, literature, inventions and so on. In contrast, China's modern history has been a painful period of humiliation ever since British gunboats literally blew open its door in 1840 and brought China to its knees. That wounded pride has since driven the Chinese nation in its quest to restore its position and glory among the nations.

The Chinese have concluded that they were defeated primarily because of their outdated ideas and technology. So, one of their key strategies has been to send their brightest young people overseas for study so that they can bring home new ideas and the latest technology to build China into a strong nation



again.

Many Chinese have gone overseas in waves. Among them were those who later became key government leaders in China: Deng Xiaoping and Zhou En-Lai (to France), Li Peng (to Russia), and Zhu De (to Germany) who later became a top Chinese general. They embraced communism—a very popular idea in Europe back then—and with it came the Chinese Communist Party, which has turned China into a radically different country.

When Deng Xiaoping came to power in the late 70s at the end of the disastrous Cultural Revolution, he reopened China's door to the West by seeking economic reform and sending its students to study overseas again. Thus, hundreds of thousands of students left China in a new wave, and currently there are about 30,000 of them studying or doing research in America alone.

## Current Update

Statistics show a steady increase in the number of Chinese students returning to China after their study in the West. With the growth of China's economy, more Mainland Chinese in the West are attracted by the economic opportunities in their home country. At the same time, the Chinese govern-

ment is trying to upgrade its economy by putting more emphasis on technology rather than cheap labor. That emphasis has stimulated the recruiting of well-educated Chinese graduates or professionals to return to China by offering attractive incentives and preferential treatment.

Chinese who have chosen to stay in the West, tend to work in areas having to do with China (China studies, China ministries, imports and exports, investment, academic and cultural exchanges and so on.), and in that way their influence is still felt in China.

Returnees are playing an increasingly important role in China's society today in all walks of life—in Chinese and foreign-owned companies, in profit-making and in nonprofit sectors, in private ventures and in government think tanks. With Western educated Chinese as advisors and researchers, the Chinese government today is becoming much more sophisticated in handling international issues and dealing with foreign governments.

### Chinese Students and the Gospel

Today, Chinese students are still very open to the Gospel. However, their interest in the Gospel peaked in the early 90s following their disillusionment after the bloody end of the 1989 pro-democracy movement.

What is it about Christianity that appeals to the educated Chinese today? It is the observable, practical aspects of Christian life: a caring Christian community, strong Christian families, hospitality, sincerity and Christian character, meaning and joy in Christians' lives.

What about Christianity turns them off? One factor is its close identification with the West, which is increasingly perceived as aggressive and greedy. Another relates to the God of the Old Testament who is often viewed as angry, cruel and unreasonable. Still another is the perceived conflict between science and Christianity. The way many Christians present the Gospel can be seen as "narrowly" focusing on one's "personal" salvation in the af-

terlife. This makes the Gospel appear irrelevant to our world and life today, focusing on self-interest with nothing to offer the greater society, China, or mankind as a whole. Also offensive is the evangelical's exclusive claim of revelation and the view that those without Christ will be tormented in hell for eternity. To these claims the Chinese would typically respond: How about my deceased grandparents? How about people in remote areas who never hear the Gospel?

In light of these challenges, Christians in the West first need to figure out the essence of their Christian faith. They need to be more sensitive in their approach and more willing to contextualize the Christian message. They must make a conscious effort to present the Christian worldview as well as to see people saved, and they must be more honest in acknowledging and addressing relevant questions squarely and sincerely.

With China's growing might and changing geopolitical situations, China has become increasingly assertive in world affairs, running into tensions with Western countries and with the US in particular. One of the issues many Chinese believers face is their double identity—they are both Chinese and Christian. With nationalistic feeling running high among the Chinese in general, what does it mean to be a Chinese Christian? And what does it mean to be a Christian Chinese? How should a Christian properly love his or her country? Should Christians defend their own national interests? How are national interests defined? These are among the real questions that need to be addressed openly and directly.

It is encouraging that many Chinese students have received Christ here in the West and some have returned to China; it can also be discouraging when discipling these new Christians is hard and imparting to them a vision for China is even harder. A good percentage of new believers do not stay in the church for long. Those who choose to stay in America after completing their degrees soon find themselves facing all the demands and ex-

pectations of a typical middle class American family—success, raising children and paying mortgages, car loans and credit card bills.

Churches in the West are not positioned to give these new Chinese Christians a burden for China. In fact, many churches themselves do not have a burden for missions in general. If a church encourages them to return to China, it runs the risk of being misunderstood as saying Mainland Chinese are not welcome in America. The majority of churches seem to be content having these Mainland Chinese believers added to their congregations. In fact, many churches have encouraged the Chinese students to find jobs locally and stay in their churches. Churches in the West, perceived as materialistic and with shallow commitments to their faith, have not been good role models for these Chinese believers.

It seems that the best settings for challenging Chinese believers are special conferences and retreats that are normally done by para-church organizations that have a vision and burden for China. To help them catch a vision for China, it takes more than sermons, discipleship materials, Bible study groups or other programs. It requires the touch of God. It needs to come from inspiring role models of men and women who are living a dedicated life serving the Chinese people.

### Conclusion

Only God knows what would have happened if the church in Europe had reached out to Chinese students like Deng Xiaoping, Zhou Enlai and Zhu De. Would they have returned to China with something totally different than communism? It seems that in his providence, God has given the church today another chance to impact China for the sake of the Gospel. China's future leaders are right here on our campuses. Will the church miss this opportunity again?

*Rev. Daniel Su works for China Outreach Ministries ([www.ChinaOutreach.org](http://www.ChinaOutreach.org)), which focuses on strategic campus ministry.*

# What we Chinese fear today

*In this issue, Huo Shui takes a rather tongue-in-cheek approach to the myriad challenges confronting China today. Beneath the humor is a candid look at the very serious concerns that are on the minds of many Chinese. His conclusion does not provide any immediate answers but serves as a challenge to the Chinese church and to all who would seek to share a message of true peace within the Chinese context. —Editor*

People have said the twenty-first century is the Chinese century. According to the *People's Daily*, China's GDP is US \$1 trillion for the year 2000—1/8th that of Americas. China's foreign reserves are the largest in Asia and her economy is growing at an annual rate of 7 percent. However, China's people do not seem impressed by these numbers. To the contrary, although we may have more money than before, we also have more fear within ourselves.

What do we fear? Is it the invasion of imperialists? Not at all. China is a major nuclear power. Though it does not possess a large stock of A-bombs, it does have a dozen or so. Do we fear the former Soviets who have attempted to destroy China? No. Russia is busy dealing with its own internal troubles—the old “big brother” has become very poor. (That's a good thing—we Chinese do not have to study the demanding Russian language any more!) Do we fear that Taiwan will declare her independence? No. China has missiles and a large military force. Idleness is no great virtue; soldiers do not mind going to war when China is in trouble.

Do we fear poverty? No. Though there are millions of Chinese struggling on the poverty level, many Chinese have so much money in the bank they don't know how to invest it. With piles of goods in shops begging for attention, people no longer greet each other by asking, “Have you eaten yet?” While beggars are present during the day, it is said that they beg to make a fortune and enjoy a good restaurant meal in the evening. By all means, everyone has been freed from the fear of starvation.

Do we fear being unable to find a spouse? No. Match-making agencies, scattered around like corner stores, are enjoying a growing business as they try to find that perfect complement for pairing people up. Do we fear being unable to find an apartment? No. With ads all over the place, real estate agents are always eager to help—they just want to kick themselves for not being able to sell us the whole building!

Do we fear we will be unable to find a job? No. Job fairs

are held several times a month while online job fairs are available all the time. As long as one is willing to work, there must be something for a person to do. It is a different situation if an individual is not willing to work certain jobs. Some time ago, when a large group of workers was laid off, it was of great concern to many people. Interestingly, now that more factories have gone bankrupt and more workers have been laid off, fewer people are seen idle.

Do we fear being lonely? No. Nightclubs and bars are all over the place with women ready to chat, dance and drink with their customers. Cell phones, beepers, IC and IP cards make communication unavoidable.

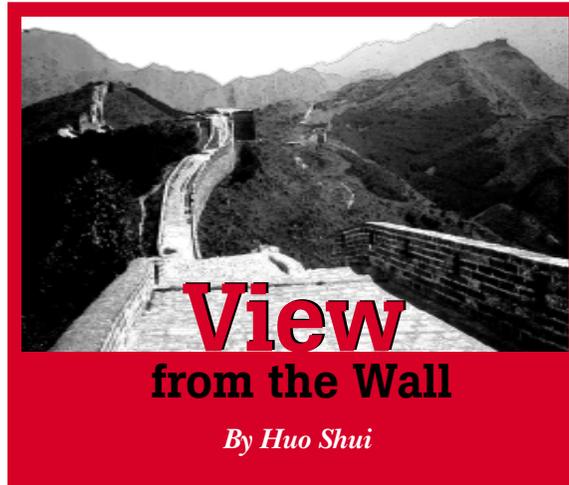
Suddenly everything—good or bad, old or new, necessary or unnecessary—has popped up in China to help fulfill people's desires; but something is still missing. That something is peace in the heart.

It's understandable that people do not have peace: the Chinese have been like that since ancient times. As a proverb says: “To worry is to live, to be care free is to die.” No wonder then, that whenever we Chinese meet for an important occasion, we all stand up together and sing, “The Chinese race is at the most dangerous moment....” Being Chinese, we keep our worries inside ourselves and never reveal them to others. We care too much about our image to let others look into our inner struggles and fears. That's why, when two of us meet and greet each other with “How have you been

lately?” the answer has to be “Everything's great!” despite the fact that we all know that can't be true. How can one declare “everything's great” while living in China?

The truth is every Chinese person has something to bother him or her. The average person and an official will worry about totally different things. While I am not sure what officials nowadays worry about, I am sure of what they do not fret about. They do not worry about political corruption, commodity pirating, smuggling, murders, illegal investing, land-deprived peasants, brain drains, factory closures, the Mafia, collapse of bridges, gas explosions, floods, environmental pollution, the extinction of species, erosion, smog, Falungong followers, prostitutes, heroin addiction or foot and mouth disease. In a word, the Communist Party is so great it does not yield to any kind of fear. The average person, however, does not have this level of control. The term *laobaixing* meaning “good old populous folks” has a new meaning today: “constant (*lao*) frustration (*bai*) spirit (*xing*).” People have enough to eat now, but as soon as they leave their homes, they are confronted by tons of trouble.

The first kind of trouble they encounter are things that have been “faked.” There are more imitation items now



## View from the Wall

By Huo Shui

## Peoples of China

# Pray for China's Leaders

Jim Nickel

Some time ago I had the opportunity to read an issue of *Beijing Review* which contained detailed reports from the National People's Congress (NPC) in China. It contained an extended section devoted to profiles of the government leaders elected at the NPC.

As I read these profiles, I was reminded of the Scripture passage to the right. One of our goals at ChinaSource is to alert Christians around the world to the needs of unreached Chinese peoples. Historically, we (along with many others) have focused on the minorities of China, and we rejoice that interest in taking the gospel to these needy people groups has begun to grow. More recently, we have been stirred by the needs of unreached peoples among the Han majority, many of them defined by socio-cultural rather than ethno-linguistic factors. The leaders of the government of China constitute one such group.

Note the instruction given us in 1 Timothy 2 to pray for such people. We are urged to communicate with God in four different ways concerning these leaders: 1) to make requests for them, 2) to offer up prayers on their behalf, 3) to intercede for them, and 4) to give thanks for them. This flies in the face of our natural tendency in the current political climate, especially for those of us who are Americans. We tend to see these individuals as our enemies, especially when we hear of the persecution of Christians in China. We tend to react to God's instruction to pray for them like Jonah did when he was called to take the gospel to the Ninevites: we go the opposite way.

The Scripture does not ignore our concerns. The first specific outcome we

are to seek through our prayers relates to persecution: *"that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness"* (v.2). We ought to be concerned about the suffering of our brothers and sisters in China. However, the biblical prescription for dealing with such problems is not to strive to correct the

*Urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone—for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men—the ransom given at its proper time.—1 Timothy 2:1-6*

situation through political action, but to pray.

The Scriptures remind us that *"Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms"* (Eph. 6:11-12). Our enemies are not the human leaders of China, even those who are directly responsible for persecution of Christians. No, our enemies are the evil spiritual beings assigned by Satan to oppose the work of God in China. God wants the leaders of China, too, to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. He sent His only Son to die for them.

It is easier for us to have compassion on the little girls in the dying rooms of

China's orphanages than on those who cause their suffering, but that reflects our human emotions, not God's heart. He does care for those who suffer — deeply. But His grace and mercy are so great that they also extend to those who cause their suffering.

That is not to say that God will overlook the sins of those who cause others to suffer. His wrath is being justly stored up against those who perpetrate abuses upon others. If they are to escape the judgement that awaits them, they must repent and humbly put their trust in Jesus Christ. And of course, to believe in Him, they must hear of Him.

In this connection, I was struck with

the fact that almost all of these leaders studied at foreign universities at some point in their lives. In the past, those universities were primarily in Russia. Today, most of them are in America, though they are also scattered throughout the world. As we pray for the current leaders of China, let's not forget the future leaders of China, many of whom are studying at universities right next door to us. Let's pray that God will thrust forth laborers into the harvest field they represent (Matt. 9:38). A suggestion: pray this prayer with your eyes open, in front of a mirror! Contact International Students, Inc (PO Box C, Colorado Springs, CO 80901) for information on how you can be part of the answer to your prayers.

We see also an application to the larger issue of discipling *panta ta ethne* of China. There are hundreds of ethno-linguistic peoples, and thousands of socio-cultural people groups in China, the vast majority of which are still unreached with the gospel of Jesus Christ. The leadership of China is a factor that determines, to some extent, the church's ability to fulfill our Lord's commission to disciple these peoples.

These leaders' power, of course, is limited. God said to the Pharaoh who enslaved the Israelites, "*I have raised you up for this very purpose, that I might show you my power and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth*" (Exodus 9:16). Like the rulers of China, Pharaoh refused to give God's people freedom to fully do God's will. He was willing to let them worship, within severely proscribed parameters, but he insisted on maintaining ultimate control over them (see Exo. 9:28).

Through many and severe plagues God showed this arrogant ruler that He, not Pharaoh, was God, and persuaded him to let His people go.

In like manner, God can show the rulers of China that Jesus Christ is Lord of all, and persuade them to give the church freedom to do God's will. That freedom includes more than worshipping in designated places at designated times under the oversight of designated officials. It includes, among other things, permission to take the gospel to the multitudes in China who have never heard the name of Jesus.

I wonder, as I read of the floods, economic crises, earthquakes and other catastrophes in China, if God is not dealing with China much as He dealt with Egypt in days of old. Of course, the same could be said of many nations, including the United States. Such events, wherever and whenever they occur, should serve as reminders to all of us of the coming judgment of God upon all nations, and motivate us to repent of our sins and pray for the leaders of our own nation.

The problems facing the government of China are overwhelming. The key, of course, to ungodly people seeing God's hand in the events that affect

them, is having a spokesman for God to interpret these events. May God raise up men and women who will speak to the leaders of China (and other nations as well), as Moses did to the Pharaoh.

Let's pray for the leaders of China, both current and future, that they will come to acknowledge the sovereignty of the true God over China, and that many among them will come to know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Let's ask God to give them wisdom to govern well, and to restrain or remove those who oppose His will, that a climate favorable to the advance of the kingdom of God in China might be created.

*Jim Nickel is the international vice president of ChinaSource.*

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#### **Demystifying China's New Leaders** Continued from page 8

the Chinese Communist Party to include more intellectuals, entrepreneurs and technical specialists. The new leaders will be more likely to rely on government policies to reduce growing disparities between coastal and inland regions, between urban and rural areas, between non-state and state-owned firms. The establishment of the social safety net will be a priority.

What are the implications of all these factors for the U.S.? What, if anything, can Americans do to affect the dynamics of China's political development, including its leadership succession? How will the watching world and its various regions be affected by the US-China relationship? These are not easy questions. Our answers depend not only on our knowledge of China's past, our understanding of its present and our assessment of its future, but also on our own worldviews.

Three words, however, come to mind: wisdom, patience and humility. Karl Rove, senior advisor to President Bush, recently used these words to describe the way in which the new administration should act. I believe that the exact same words—wisdom, patience and humility—are also essential to our policymakers in dealing with China's

political succession and the future of US-China relations.

We need wisdom at this crucial time in US-China relations as both sides struggle to find the right policies toward each other. It is naive to assume that new Chinese leaders, especially those who were trained in the West, will provide opportunities for the U.S. to remold China in the line of American interests. But it is even more dangerous to assume that a so-called "China threat" is imminent, and that a major conflict between China and the U.S. is inevitable. For China, a radical and xenophobic foreign policy probably requires a charismatic and xenophobic Chinese leader, but no such leader exists now nor in the foreseeable future.

We need patience if we really want China to move in the direction we prefer. At present, Chinese leaders face many perplexing economic and socio-political challenges at home and daunting policy choices abroad. China's road to a more open and liberal state will not be smooth. Similarly, the progression of Sino-US relations has never been linear. Its twists and turns have taught us to be patient.

Finally, we need a sense of humility. Two realities should make our policy makers humble. First, U.S. influence over China's domestic politics, including its political succession, is very limited. And second, global peace and prosperity in the 21st century requires a cooperative and responsible China. Our humility will lead us to seek a constructive relationship with China's new leaders. Humility is always a sign of strength, not weakness.

China is undergoing rapid economic and socio-political changes. Greater changes seem inevitable as this more energetic, more committed and less dogmatic generation of leaders aggressively rises to power in this most populous country of the world.

*Cheng Li is professor of government at Hamilton College in Clinton, New York. His new book, China's Leaders: The New Generation (Rowman & Littlefield, 2001) discusses these issues in more detail.*

## Book Review

# The Fourth Generation

*China's New Leaders: the New Generation* by Cheng Li, Rowman and Littlefield, Lanham, Maryland, 2001, 256 pages. ISBN 0847694976 (paperback). Cost: US\$22.95.

A review by Greg Moore

Cheng Li's new book is a welcome addition to the literature on Chinese politics and its new generation of leaders, for it will undoubtedly be a member of this new cohort of leaders who will take the mantle from President Jiang Zemin when he steps down in the fall of 2002 at the 16th Party Congress. The book takes an elite-based, generational approach to understanding China's political scene, because for Cheng, change in China has traditionally come with the passing and ascendancy of generations to and from power. The cover of his book is illustrative of his approach. From top to bottom are photos of generations one through four—Mao Zedong at the top, followed by second generation leaders Deng Xiaoping and Chen Yun, then the third generation's Jiang Zemin, Zhu Rongji, and Li Peng, followed by the fourth generation's Hu Jintao, Zeng Qinghong, Wen Jiabo, and Li Changchun. Cheng sees the last four as the top contenders for major leadership roles in the coming decades, and Hu Jintao as the most likely candidate to succeed Jiang Zemin.

Generally born between 1941 and 1956, the fourth generation is characterized as having particular traits which make it distinct from the previous three, and which, Cheng argues, make it likely to lead differently. First, it is a generation of technocrats like the third (most are engineers), though many members were trained in the West rather than in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. Cheng maintains

that technocrats tend to see the advance of science and technology as all-important, defining progress in these terms, and makes an interesting argument that engineers are likely to run a country in a very different way than would, say, lawyers. The number of university graduates in this new generation of leaders is much higher than in the previous three (rising from 23 percent to 92 percent among Politburo members between 1978 and 1998). As in previous generations, most are males, but



This generation “benefited from neither Maoist revolution nor Dengist reform,” as its members were too young to become leaders under Mao and were exploited as Red Guards during the CR. By missing ten years of education while most schools were closed during the CR, most were cheated out of progress made during the Dengist

economic reforms, making them the most likely candidates for *xia gang* (unemployment) in recent years (p. 179). According to Cheng, what this fourth generation learned from the CR was to distrust ideology and idealism, to be skeptical about both centrally-planned and market-driven economies for many missed out on the fruits of both. They also learned to be independent

thinkers, since they'd been disappointed so many times by “orthodoxy,” and to better understand and sympathize with the poor in the countryside. Having seen the chaos of the CR, they

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**For anyone interested in attempting to gauge China's political trajectory and succession politics over the course of the next few years, this book will prove a handy tool.**

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the number of female members of the top leadership pool Cheng sampled was higher than in previous years. China also has a disproportionate number of top leaders from a handful of top universities, indicating that networks (*guanxi*) are still an important factor in Chinese politics.

The single most important characteristic of the fourth generation of Chinese leaders, according to Cheng Li, is that they are all survivors of the Cultural Revolution (CR). Most were “sent down” to the countryside for up to ten years to “learn from the peasants.”

have concluded that social stability is the key ingredient for growth and prosperity (p. 181-191).

Cheng's conclusion is that China's fourth generation of leaders “will rely more on power sharing, negotiation, consultation, and consensus building than their predecessors” (p. 235). This is because of the fourth generation's lack of the “legendary backgrounds” of their predecessors, which afforded them mythical legitimacy and a lack of political solidarity (presumably because of the lack of an ideological orthodoxy). It is also due to reform-era de-

velopments that inhibit leaders from amassing power and influence as in the past, the growing importance of public opinion, and the simultaneity of ideology's decline and pragmatism's rise.

Cheng also makes the case that the fourth generation will likely move China toward a more representative and democratic political system. He correctly notes that there is an increasing awareness among the leadership that greater political reform is needed, evidenced by China's overtures toward building a rule of law. China has now, and is currently training, far more lawyers than ever in its history,<sup>1</sup> and its legislature is setting new records every year for the number of new laws passed. As technocrats rather than ideologues, the fourth generation is more likely to employ "rational" methods to solve China's social, political, economic and legal problems, which Cheng believes can only come about by greater reliance on think tanks, consultative bodies and pluralistic processes. Another promising factor mentioned by Cheng is that nepotism has come under increasing attack, which means political players will have to survive more on "what they know" than "who they know."

Yet there is one important factor that Cheng Li has left out—one of the strongest reasons to believe he is right about a trend toward political reform despite things such as the continuing crackdown on the Falungong. The Chinese government has in recent years been gradually introducing grassroots level democracy in China's villages, including village elections, which has been monitored by Western observers under the auspices of the Carter Center, including Stanford's Larry Diamond. Professor Diamond, an expert on democratic transitions, had this to say about his experiences in Jilin Province in March, 1998.

What we have seen here shows that China is in the process of changing politically, and village elections are an important part of that....We have only seen a few examples, nevertheless what we have seen is significant and I think more Americans should be aware of the fact that there are

the beginnings of a democratic process at the village level in China.<sup>2</sup>

A great deal of additional research corroborates Diamond's statement. Moreover, the Carter Center has also reached an agreement with China's Ministry of Civil Affairs on a project that includes "exchanges and visits for training in election management procedures and work with the ministry to develop civic education programmes in China." Included in this are plans for Chinese delegates to observe primary elections in the US state of Georgia.<sup>3</sup> All of this bodes well for Cheng's notion that political reform is likely to expand in China.

Overall I liked the book, although it is quite academic. It fills an important gap in the English language literature on the new generation of leadership rising through the ranks of the Chinese government. For anyone interested in attempting to gauge China's political trajectory and succession politics over the course of the next few years, this book will prove a handy tool. One pointed criticism of the book might be that its strength is also its weakness. By focusing on a generational theory of politics in China, it doesn't account for the potential of dissident groups in China (e.g., the Falungong), or factors "outside" of China (e.g., Taiwan), to rock the Chinese ship of state, bringing changes in the political landscape that might look very different than the picture Cheng Li has so skillfully painted. Yet I must say that barring any of these more unpredictable events, I find Cheng Li's account a compelling one.

#### ENDNOTES

1. In the early 1980's China had 3000 lawyers, whereas in 2001 it had 150,000 (Cheng, p. 238).

2. As quoted in an interview in Liang, Chao, "Election Process Still Improving, US Visitors Say," *China Daily*, Thursday, March 12, 1998, p. 3, *China's daily*, official English-language newspaper.

3. Liang, Chao, "China, US Agree on Grass-Roots Election Data Bank," *China Daily*, Monday, March 16, 1998, p. 3.

*Greg Moore is a doctoral candidate and assistant director of the Center for China-United States Cooperation at the University of Denver. He has taught and studied in China for four and a half years.*

#### Challenges and Opportunities

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#### Our Response to Uneven Change in China

The prospect of a fully open Chinese economy and society ten years from now abounds with opportunities for both the Chinese and the West if the transition is managed well. Nevertheless, it will come through the zigs and zags of competing "sunset" and "sunrise" forces in all sectors of Chinese society. I believe it is foolish for Americans to overreact to each wave of change in China out of an exaggerated sense of the power of American influence and a spirit of fear that China will use its growing economy to challenge U.S. strategic dominance in Asia. While there will continue to be episodes of competition or even confrontation, these should be managed realistically with a view to the long term.

We need to see the truth beneath surface appearances: China's economic prosperity is fragile and has a weak moral and social base. We need to have a sense of solidarity with this needy nation of people who must struggle with a wrenching, confusing "future shock" for which they are not prepared.

It is profoundly important that China's next revolution be a peaceful one, without internal violence and regional military conflict. We need to be patient regarding the timeframe needed for social and political change and pay attention to Chinese opinion. The majority of Chinese—including democrats and Christians on the mainland, in Hong Kong and Taiwan—know that only peaceful, gradual change through socio-economic progress—not political revolution—will bring about more democratic governance in China.

*Carol Hamrin, Ph.D., is an independent researcher and consultant serving with the Institute of Global Engagement and as a senior associate with ChinaSource. Currently an affiliate professor at George Mason University, she was the senior China research specialist at the Department of State for 25 years.*

**View from the Wall**

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than real ones! We have wines, liquors, cigarettes, and cars locally made that are marketed as brand name products; there are underground factories with their “look-alike” products; there is imitation jewelry, poor quality electronics, suits of poor quality fabric sold as if they were of the best. Not to be overlooked are forged diplomas, forged receipts, counterfeit *renminbi* bills—even fraudulent police and armed forces. Newspapers tirelessly warn people of water-injected beef and watermelons, turtle meat that has been boosted with “morning after pills,” bottled mineral water that is actually directly from city faucets, leather shoes made of paper, sulphur-smoked “wood-ear” mushrooms, flour mixed with plaster of Paris and corn starch-based Viagra. Buying books? There are plenty of stolen ones to choose from. Want to see a movie? Try a pirated copy.

The second type of trouble the Chinese encounter is a state of disorder and lawlessness. Things can be fine until one leaves his or her home. Outside are those wielding a knife threatening you for money, those wearing official uniforms just looking for reasons to fine you,

and those set up to trap people. It would be better to stay at home—just so gas doesn’t leak in your apartment or bombs don’t explode in the building. One never knows when the next explosion will be!

If a person becomes sick from all these worries, he does not dare see a doctor. A cold will cost a few hundred *yuan*, a surgery over 10,000. If one complains about the expense, he will be told he is not invited to the hospital. If he dares to go to court with a lawsuit, he will become exhausted.

People are starting to think the only safe place to be in China is in jail. They prefer immediate pleasures such as alcohol and playing the lotto to escape from the present. They show no interest in ideologies or future planning; they have no concerns over ethics or morals—they believe those are the business of government officials. Instead, they believe in one truth: ordinary people must work their way up to buy bread to feed their family; then they must have energy to worry about having a happy family life.

What if they cannot survive like this? They may choose to keep themselves clean from worldly filth to preserve peace of heart. However, they

will get into greater trouble because the government will find fault with them—they will be called cultists.

An old saying goes: one ceases to worry when debts are too overwhelming. Ordinary people figure that to live well they need to hang on tightly to their money when they go out, keep their doors at home locked securely and resolutely distrust everyone. For those who want to remain good at heart, there is not much to do except dream that one day a good emperor (in today’s parlance a communist party secretary) will come take care of them.

Is this twenty-first century China? You diligent, brave, smart and kind Chinese, where are you? You hard-working, resilient, optimistic and joyful Chinese, where are you? You honest, righteous, modest and polite Chinese, where are you? Chinese people, when will you speak out your fears? When will you unveil the mask on your face? When will you live up to the good virtues of your ancestors? When will you have true peace in your hearts?

*Huo Shui* is a former government political analyst who writes from outside China. Translation is by Ping Dong. 呼

**Brent Fulton is travelling. His editorial will resume with the next issue.**

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