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The Political Implications of China's Social Future: Complacency, Scorn, and the Forlorn

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Big Bluffer Ye [the Party boss of a Nanjing district] was chauffeured everywhere—to business meetings, Party confabs, his equestrian club, the Party's exclusive tennis courts in his black Audi 6. . . . I was at the gate waiting when the Audi swerved up the street, blaring its horn in the rush-hour traffic. . . . As the car sped up to me, cutting into the bicycle lane, Ye reached over to open the door. The door smacked an old man on a bicycle, sending him face-forward onto the asphalt. "Don't worry about him," Ye shouted from inside the car as it screeched to halt. "Get in." . . . "Hey . . ." the old man shouted, as he struggled to his feet. The click of the door silenced him in mid-sentence. The motor purred; the air conditioner blasted. Bicyclists glared into the car.

JOHN POMFRET, *Chinese Lessons: Five Classmates and the Story of the New China* (2006)

A pair of poignant themes emerges from John Pomfret's anecdote: the hauteur of China's "haves" toward the poor and the old, and the anger and powerlessness of its "have-nots" in their hardscrabble existence. Not surprisingly, today's China is a society in which a concern for social justice leaps from the lips of more than 90 percent of the people, including some of the country's top politicians, according to one account. To address these concerns, the regime is striving to produce some elements of the rule of law.¹

While protests and labor disputes abound, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) seems to be listening and attempting to alleviate the inequities and inequalities at their roots. To cite a few examples, the central government has planned fee exemptions and subsidies for students in 592 poor counties; allocated increasing amounts of investment to the western, less developed part of

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the country and eliminated the rural tax; recently announced subsistence allowances for rural residents in abject poverty and increased the funds for the rural sector by 15.6 percent a year from 2003; and raised the *dibao* (minimum living guarantee) such that the outlay in 2002 was twentyfold that of 1992.² Although the job market is severely compromised and the majority of workers go without welfare guarantees, the government claims it is giving these problems high priority.³ The results of its efforts remain somewhat clouded, however, by the mixed reviews it has been receiving: some say the numbers of “incidents” and “disturbances” are steadily escalating, others that the reverse is true.⁴ When people have been surveyed directly, a majority claim to be contented, with their incomes climbing year by year.⁵

China's ultimate goal, its leaders state, is to build a “harmonious society,” defined by the *China Daily* in autumn 2006 as “one that respects the rights of people, sticks to the principles of human civilization and abides by the laws of nature.” This would seem a challenging task, given that the poorest 10 percent of the citizenry control a mere 1.4 percent of total income, whereas the top 10 percent own a full 45 percent of China's total assets.⁶ That such information can now be accessed through the official media underscores the leadership's awareness of the urgency of the problem, as too does the government's decision to mete out billions of yuan in order to pull up the income of the indigent and expand the size of the middle class, even as it simultaneously seeks to wipe out corruption and clamp down on what it terms “excessively high salaries.”⁷ Clearly, the political elite are determined to stay atop and ahead of the tides of discontent.

To assess the leadership's chances of making things better, one might look for clues in several social trends and the segments of the population involved: aging and the aged; growing imbalances in sex ratios and their effects on bachelors; urbanization and migrant workers; increasing poverty and unemployment in the cities, with the concomitant birth of an urban underclass; and rising upper- and middle-class incomes, especially those of private entrepreneurs. These trends should also indicate whether China's social structure is undergoing major realignments; at least in the short term, however, there are few signs that they herald the rise of democracy. Instead, the next decade or so is likely to see a progressive advance of the better-off, both in their advisory capacity and in their clout, along with a few gestures (some substantive, others symbolic) to the disadvantaged, whose members will become entrenched as the socially and politically excluded. China's social future thus appears headed for a politics of complacency and sometimes scorn among the better-off, with a persistence of the present status of the forlorn.

Five Trends and Their Associated Groups

The issues surrounding the five social groups I have just identified will undoubtedly leave a large mark on China's coming politics.

Aging and the Aged

One striking social trend, confirmed by recent research, is a change in the age structure of the Chinese population. Demographic calculations indicate that from 2007 to about 2015, those aged sixty-five or older will increase from about 7–8 percent of the populace to 15 percent. As soon as 2025, their numbers could amount to a full one-fifth of the population and continue to climb steadily thereafter. As a result, the proportion of working-age people (aged fifteen to sixty-four) is expected to decline steadily from its level of more than 70 percent of the population in 2000, such that the growth rate of the working-age population in the cities is expected to drop from 1.5 percent in 2005 to zero in subsequent years.⁸ Indeed, two leading demographers have predicted that “China will soon enter a long period of decline in labor supply, and will face a rapid increase in the elderly population that cannot be reversed easily and quickly.”⁹

Numerically, the population over the age of 65 is expected to rise from 100 million in 2005 to as many as 329 million in 2050, with their proportion of the total population swelling from 7.6 percent to 23.6 percent over that period. Another estimate, by Zhang Yi, a researcher at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, puts the proportion at 14 percent by 2028.¹⁰ In part, this aging trend is a function of the one-child policy and resulting slowdown in the birth rate over time; it is also an effect of the increase over time in life expectancy, which rose from 35 years in 1950 to over 71.4 years by the time of the 2000 census.¹¹ With the increase in the marriage age and greater numbers of young people extending their years in school, the birth rate is expected to decline even more, further increasing the proportion of elderly citizens in the total population.¹²

What will become of this ever-larger section of the populace? Social scientists do not present an optimistic outlook. While just 8 percent of those aged sixty to sixty-nine are likely to be unable to provide for themselves, 49 percent of those aged eighty-five to eighty-nine will require assistance in caring for themselves. Their offspring, who will be down to just one per generation within coming years, will be under severe strain, even as the “baby boom” generation starts to retire around 2015.¹³ Moreover, certain aspects of China's economic reforms are likely to exacerbate this problem. The demise in the cities of widespread *danwei* (work unit) welfare and the failure, to date, to replace it with an adequate social security or pension system, combined with the decay of collective health care

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systems in the countryside, are likely to make health care for the elderly a popular concern in China in coming years. There was already a serious issue of inadequate welfare provision in the late 1990s, at which time nearly 90 percent of the rural population and 40–50 percent of urbanites were without health care insurance. As a result, the government began to work on constructing new social safety nets in the urban and rural areas, though even now these are not yet fully functional.¹⁴

Two additional aspects of older people's lives give cause for worry. First, the 2000 census revealed a decline in household size in urban China, down to just about three people per household, a development that is related to a growing tendency of the elderly to live by themselves. At that time, 8.4 percent of males and 13.7 percent of females over sixty-five lived alone, while 16.9 percent of men in that age group were residing just with their spouse.¹⁵ Second, as pointed out by recent research, people of lower socioeconomic status age faster than those with higher incomes. These trends suggest that many of those advancing in age are likely to be short on funds.¹⁶

All in all, many elderly may soon be indigent, unhealthy, and living without sufficient support. Their level of satisfaction is already lower than that of other age groups.¹⁷ Research suggests that many in this group, such as the large numbers who protested over unpaid pensions in the late 1990s, may still be tied to the Maoist past, remembering nostalgically all the socioeconomic benefits they received back then.¹⁸ If this is widely the case, they are not apt to become politically active, much less to press for democratization.

Research conducted in the second half of the 1990s shows people over the age of fifty-six having the highest level of support for the political regime of any age group, with those over sixty-five exhibiting the strongest support of any group. Of course, some of these surveys were done in 1995 and 1997, before the most extreme of the market reforms took hold, and thus reflect an attachment to the Maoist system, which granted them pensions, nearly free housing, and health care. But their continuing support for the regime in 1999 could reflect that—again, except for those who protested over nonreceipt of pensions—many were ill-disposed to fight for change of any kind. As the author of the study pointed out, “The relationship between aging and resistance to change is a phenomenon widely observed.”¹⁹

Growing Imbalance in Sex Ratios and Bachelors

Another expanding demographic group that may be even less likely to agitate for democracy consists of multiplying numbers of bachelors, young men unable to find wives, mainly because the one-child policy and China's age-old preference for male offspring has induced many women to abort or abandon female

babies. Reportedly, “since 1995, an average of more than one million females have been ‘missing’ each year from the birth population alone.” Here, “missing” simply means that there is no record of their births, not that they have all died.²⁰ If this trend prevails, by 2020 China should have between 29 million and 33 million “surplus” males in the age group fifteen to thirty-four.²¹ Most of these men will be rural-born, poor, and of low status, making it even more difficult for them to attract female partners. Migrating to the cities will not enhance their chances, since the women there will constitute a sellers’ market, most of them having their choice among young, better-off, urban-registered males.

Some speculate that men living in these conditions could end up like their historical predecessors: often transient and without steady work, undereducated, and easily stirred to conflict, violence, crime, and even rebellion.²² If that turns out to be correct, this subgroup could become active—capable, possibly, of causing mayhem well beyond its numbers—but probably not in politically positive ways. Indeed, to date, there are no data describing them as democracy advocates. It is, of course, possible that the regime, aware of this issue, could attempt to install reforms to address the grievances of these frustrated males. So far, it is not clear what these might turn out to be.

Urbanization and Migrants

According to demographer Judith Banister, China’s urban population increased from 18 percent of the total population in 1978 to 42 percent in 2004.²³ Although the redefinition of some townships and the expansion into the countryside of some urban jurisdictions can account for some of this metamorphosis, a more important force for urbanization has been the massive rural-to-urban migration, which is said to account for “60 percent of all urban population growth during the 1990s.” While the 2000 census tabulated only 80 million as migrants on the move, if people who had lived at their then-current place of residence for less than six months had been included, the total number of temporary dwellers would have been as high as 120 million. In major east coast cities, where the largest concentrations of sojourners are located, one-third or more of the populace is composed of these “outsiders.”²⁴

Migrants often take part in labor protests, especially in the Pearl River Delta, although these actions are, for the most part, little more than cries for unpaid wages.²⁵ At this point, these people are not politically relevant in any “democratic” sense, not only because of the nature of their demands but also because of the barriers imposed by the registration system, which prevents them from remaining in urban areas and does not permit them to take part in elections. As a result, they cannot receive urban benefits such as unemployment insurance, pensions, or medical insurance, though reforms that would offer them some of

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these goods are currently under experimentation. Migrant parents also have to contend with the higher education costs for migrant children should they try to enroll in urban schools.²⁶ Alternatively, they have attempted to create their own schools but have constantly faced obstacles here. In 2006, for instance, sixteen of the schools that migrant parents had set up for their children in Shanghai were shut down, and there have been “scores of closings in China’s big Eastern cities recently . . . [where] most of the nation’s 20 million or more migrant children live. . . . In some instances as few as 10 percent of the students were absorbed into the public school system.”²⁷

Despite recent reforms, the household registration (*hukou*) system continues to exclude most rural migrants from permanent settlement in the cities.²⁸ As a result, “a new urban underclass that includes a significant proportion of temporary migrants has been gradually developing in many Chinese cities.”²⁹ This rigid barrier to urban residency affects not only the migrants themselves but also the children and wives left behind in the countryside. A recent survey in Anhui Province found 74 percent of rural school children living with only one parent, and 31 percent having neither parent at home—a situation that is damaging their schoolwork and entices many into hooliganism.³⁰ According to the official organ *China Daily*, more than 20 million children throughout China have been left in the countryside with either one or no parents.³¹

Although more women have begun moving into towns, reportedly up to 47 million have been at least temporarily abandoned in the countryside, left to care for the land, the young, and the old, and at increased risk of becoming targets of violent crime.³² In late 2006, an officer in the public security bureau of Jiangsu Province noted that authorities were investigating ninety recent sexual attacks in the rural areas, as well as numerous instances of property damage and robbery.³³

The rise in migrant population is likely to accelerate as rural land is appropriated for development use, environmental pollution in the countryside continues unabated, rural wages remain at approximately half of those along the coast, and labor-age urbanites begin to decline. In the next twenty years, demographers predict, as many as 300 million people will leave the countryside and move to urban places.³⁴ Some research suggests that these migrant workers—despite being better educated and better dressed than their parents, more comfortable with modern technology, and more experienced in factory protests—will be “no nearer to gaining a foothold in the city than [their] predecessors were.”³⁵

In the two and a half decades since migrant workers began leaving the farms, concludes demographer Fei Guo, “changes in migrant occupational structure have been insignificant;” too, “migration has not brought significant social transformation to millions of rural migrants . . . who have hardly become an integrated part of [the city].”³⁶ Since central policy seems unable to spark funda-

mental changes in these phenomena, the majority of migrants are likely to remain on the fringes of urban society, scratching out a livelihood and not expressing political inclinations. Neither the emptying out of the countryside into the cities—mostly of young males, who are compelled to subsist there as an unwelcome, unentitled, undervalued, and socially excluded presence—nor the rise of crime back in the rural home, where the victims have no real recourse to justice, suggests that political activism will take hold. Indeed, there has been no sign of any demands for democracy among these groups so far. A rising trend of children dropping out of school in rural areas and a concomitant decline in the percentage of educated rural youth also seem to augur poorly for democracy.³⁷

Urban Poverty, Unemployment, and the New Underclass

Just how much poverty is there in China's cities today? This is a subject for various sorts of calculation and speculation, complicated by changing prices over time, differing definitions and standards (whether according to consumption or income), and regional variation. According to the China Human Development Report of 2005, prepared under UN auspices, 300 million to 400 million Chinese were living on the margins in rural areas that year. Another estimate around the same time, arrived at in a World Bank study using the norm of US\$1 a day to divide the poor from the rest, put the number of poor in all of China at just 130 million.³⁸ However, the World Bank's Development Report, as cited in the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences' 2006 Blue Book of Social Development, put the total at 200 million, while the Asian Development Bank, using expenditure data, found a mere 37 million poor living in the cities.

Using the Chinese government's preferred standard—namely, an annual per capita income of less than ¥683 (about US\$85)—the State Council found only 23.65 million rural residents living in abject poverty at the end of 2005.³⁹ When measured by farmers' net incomes and urbanites' disposable incomes reported in the China Statistical Yearbook for 2004, the rural figure rises to 64.3 million, with another 27.15 million in the cities, for a total of 91.45 million poor in China.⁴⁰ For the urban areas alone, estimates for the early 2000s range from a low of 14 million to a high of 37 million.⁴¹

Whatever the actual figures, they are being fanned by China's worsening unemployment. The government had aimed to keep the official urban unemployment rate under 4.6 percent for 2006, but that goal was apparently not reached, as the target figure was subsequently revised to "below 5 percent" for the years 2007 through 2010.⁴² A researcher at Beijing University's China Center for Economic Research recently estimated the true rate of unemployment to be 10–15 percent and rising, while another scholar found it to be even higher, citing a rate of 16.36 percent.⁴³ Meanwhile, roughly 10 million new workers are

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entering the labor market each year, even as the manufacturing sector's ability to absorb labor is on the decline.⁴⁴

A particularly worrisome development is the mounting number of unemployed college graduates. In 2006 a reported 1 million applicants competed for a mere 10,000 posts in the national examination for civil servants, and three of every five new university graduates were likely to be jobless. In 2007 the number of young people in search of jobs was expected to rise by 22 percent over the previous year, while the positions available were down by more than 20 percent.⁴⁵ Clearly concerned, the government is making an effort to alleviate the situation, but it will be difficult, if even possible, to find a solution. Yet these sorts of exigencies do not seem to have affected the political process or produced any political demands for greater inclusion or representation. Protests by baccalaureates have been narrowly focused on the demand for jobs rather than pleas for systemic political change, while neither the poor nor the unemployed have gone to the streets demanding democratic transformation.⁴⁶

The CCP's efforts to bring the excluded into the political process have not been encouraging. What has been occurring is that worker and farmer representation in the party has dropped markedly, from nearly two-thirds of the CCP membership in 1994 to less than half by the end of 2003.⁴⁷ Figures for workers and farmers in the National People's Congress (NPC) suggest that by the late 1990s their representation had fallen to just 11 percent and 8 percent, respectively, after a high of 27 percent and 21 percent in the early 1980s. Further symbolizing the marginality of the lower classes in the NPC, migrant laborers were not represented at all.⁴⁸

Rising Incomes, the Middle Class, and Private Entrepreneurs

In the words of the *China Daily Business Weekly*, "A substantial middle class has taken shape in China and is likely to keep growing given the country's galloping economic growth and the government's efforts to expand their ranks in a bid to maintain social harmony." The *Weekly* goes on to define the middle class as "a couple with one child, an urban apartment, no pets, and one car mainly used for weekend getaways." Other defining characteristics of this group would be its educational levels, good careers, and high social standing. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), the annual income of such a family in 2004 would have been between ¥60,000 and ¥600,000 (or US\$7,500 to \$75,000). Members of this stratum are civil servants, company managers, technicians, or private business owners—in other words, professional white-collar workers as well as private entrepreneurs.⁴⁹

Because the boundaries of this division of the population are so indeterminate, estimates of its numbers vary considerably. Some put its total at about 65

million in 2005 (which would be 5.04 percent of the population) and expect the figure to reach perhaps 750 million (45 percent) by 2020.⁵⁰ Others calculate that the “middle stratum” had already reached about 260 million in 2003 (20 percent of the population) and will be close to 633 million (38 percent of the total population) by 2020.⁵¹

Despite the wide range of these predictions, the upward trend is unmistakable, but the figures must be considered alongside China's 100 million aged population, its 150 million migrants, and the 90 million to 440 million people living in poverty.⁵² Each of these population segments is likely to continue growing steadily as well (along with the unemployed and the bachelors making up the broader category of “the poor”).

One of the newer categories, private entrepreneurs, is also on the rise. The owners of businesses who belong to this group have an average of ¥1.31 million of registered capital, and numbered 3.65 million in 2004, after increasing at the rate of 810,000 a year since 1995.⁵³ The category could also be viewed as people participating in China's 2.44 million privately operated firms, and if so its numbers rise to 34 million for 2002 (or 4.62 percent of the employed population); of this total, 6.23 million were investors. Another 6.43 percent small proprietors, small traders, and individual entrepreneurs (*getihu*).⁵⁴ Again, it is difficult to draw hard conclusions from this set of disparate data, except to note that this stratum is quickly expanding and attracting much attention.

The activities of the richer segment of the populace clearly demonstrate its elitism. Upper-income women are enrolling in classes on image-designing, adult ballet, social etiquette, and communication skills (“only women with decent incomes have such demands and can afford such costs,” remarked the president of a Women's Training Club). At the same time, private education in Beijing can cost as much as ¥14,500 (US \$1,788) a year for primary school students, while wealthy parents might well lay out another ¥800 a month for dance, music, and English classes. In Shenzhen, the Zuanyuan (Diamond Affinity) Information Company offers courses to prepare young women to attract rich bachelors at a cost of ¥20,000 to ¥50,000 per course, while their prospective mates are willing to put out ¥60,000 to ¥1 million for such matchmaking services.⁵⁵ The costs for the activities of those on the rise in China's urban consumer society—bowling, disco dancing, purchasing luxury housing apartments, and buying bridal gowns—surpass the purchasing power of those who are not already members of the “middle class.”⁵⁶ One particularly striking indication of the growth in personal income is the competition for parking on many college campuses because growing numbers of students drive their personal cars to school. In the past few years, Xiamen University, seeking to cater to the changing tastes of the nouveau riche, was planning to offer classes in golf, mandatory for some majors, and a

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Beijing businessman was putting ¥12 million into the construction of polo grounds specifically targeted at a new generation of Chinese elites.⁵⁷ The wealthiest of its individuals cluster mainly in the large, modern cities along the eastern coast and are apt to have foreign contacts. These brushes with Western bourgeoisie, one might surmise, could dispose them to dream of democracy, but the evidence shows no clear trajectory leading to this outcome.

Politically, most indications are that the middle class and even more so the wealthy are wedded to, and benefit from, the current status quo. True, these people are sometimes willing to engage in resistance, but so far only in defense of their homes. In any case, the record of success in “pushing back” is not promising,⁵⁸ and these people are not inclined to pursue any fundamental political change.⁵⁹ Perhaps as a consequence—and also out of the leaders’ own hopes—the regime takes these people as its supporters, to judge from official intentions as expressed in the media. Recently, for instance, the party has been making much of the “new social classes,” meaning private businesspeople and self-employed intellectuals, who numbered some 20 million as of 2006. Such elites are publicly praised for their tremendous contribution to both the economic and social progress of the country. In the words of a *China Daily* article, “The Party says it will give reverence, assistance and guidance” to these people, as they “set the trends for the young generation.”⁶⁰

The party-state is obviously keen to co-opt persons of this type, no doubt in the interest of stabilizing society, calling them the future “backbone of Chinese society.”⁶¹ Quite unlike those in the lower sections of society, who are becoming increasingly marginalized, many from these new social classes have been incorporated into urban-level branches of the Federation of Industry and Commerce, local people’s congresses, and people’s consultative conferences. As of late 2006, 38 of the top 100 business tycoons in the latest edition of China’s version of the *Forbes* list were members of the top organs of the state: 19 were deputies to the National People’s Congress (a doubling of such individuals in that body in just one year), with the rest belonging to the National Committee of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference. On top of that, more than 200 members of the legislature—or nearly 7 percent—were private entrepreneurs.⁶² The Sixth Plenum of the Sixteenth Party Congress even *required* that the provinces pick a certain number of party members from this segment of society to serve as deputies to the Seventeenth Party Congress.⁶³

In a related development, in the party’s late 2005 statement celebrating its building of democracy, the section on “the system of multi-party cooperation and political consultation under the leadership of the CPC” preceded the one on grassroots democracy, making much of the nine “democratic” political parties that purport to represent wealthy businesspeople, and with which the Com-

unist Party allegedly “collaborates.” If that document is any indication, inner-party cooperation and consultation are becoming institutionalized and standardized, and thus more important. Equally telling are the important roles that entrepreneurs are playing in people’s congresses. They also hold leading positions in government and judicial organs and exercise democratic supervision over the party and the state.⁶⁴ It is these personages, in particular, whom the party approaches for advice on constructing its “harmonious society.”⁶⁵

Conclusion

Clues to China’s near-term political future can be found not only in the overt political behavior of its population but also in the composition and activities of select social groups whose numbers are increasing. These factors suggest that change, when it comes, is more apt to be initiated by the top political decision-makers than by the popular strata within society. Furthermore, the discontented segments of the populace, those with the potential to become activists—ranging from members of nongovernmental organizations, netizens, intellectuals, and artists to peasants rioting over pollution or against the dispossession of their land, people newly conscious of their rights, and those enraged by official corruption—are too geographically dispersed to create broadly based influential movements. Thus there seems to be little potential for organizational success, since many social barriers separate the members of these groups. Besides, perilous risks await anyone who would aspire to lead these groups in demanding sociopolitical change.

Therefore instead of predicting change to issue from any of these groups, I looked at the place of each of them within society and their near-term prospects, along with the regime’s stances toward each of them. The government appears set to concentrate on building its “harmonious society,” in part through the new alliance with the upper strata of the population. At the same time, it will likely use a growing portion of the state’s coffers to quiet those at the base—to keep them minimally satisfied but still politically excluded. As a result, the Chinese polity appears to be moving not toward democratization, in which numbers count, but toward elitism. This, then, is a politics of complacency and scorn among those in the social strata who matter, and a politics of the forlorn for those who do not.

Notes

1. Mary E. Gallagher, “Mobilizing the Law in China: ‘Informed Disenchantment’ and the Development of Legal Consciousness,” *Law and Society Review* 40, no. 4 (2006): 783–816. The regime’s public stance is referenced in note 4.

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2. *China Daily*, March 21, 2005, p. 6.; Gu Wen and Yang Yiyong, "2005–2006 Nan: Zhongguo shourur fenpei wenti yu zhanwang" (2005–2006: The issue of Chinese income distribution and the outlook), in *Shehui lanpishu: 2006 nian* (Social blue book: 2006), edited by Ru Xin, Lu Xueyi, and Li Peilin (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe (Social science documents company, 2006), p. 277; Zhao Huanxin, "Subsidy Net to Cover All Rural Poor in China," *China Daily*, December 25, 2007; and Tang Jun, "Zhongguo chengshi jumin zuidi shenghuo baozhang zhidu de 'tiaoyueshi' fazhan" (The leap forward style of development of Chinese urban residents' minimum livelihood guarantee), in *Shehui lanpishu: 2003 nian: Zhongguo shehui xingshi fenxi yu yuce* (Social blue book: 2003: Analysis and predictions of China's social situation), edited by Ru Xin, Lu Xueyi, and Li Peilin (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 2003), pp. 243–45.

3. "Social Formula of Hope," *China Daily*, October 12, 2006, states that the Sixth Plenum of the Communist Party in October 2006 promised "guarantees of civil rights under a framework of law," a "reasonable and orderly income distribution system," "decent job supply and a social security network" for city and rural residents, plus improved public administration and services.

4. Guan Xiaofeng, "Labor Disputes Threaten Stability," *China Daily*, January 30, 2007, states that worker altercations are increasing (the 314,000 cases of 2005 were a 20 percent rise over the number in 2004). But see Zhao Huanxin, "Farmers' Protests Decline Sharply," *China Daily*, January 31, 2007. Zhao claims that since the State Council called on local governments to raise compensation payments to farmers whose land was taken over for development projects and to provide job training and reemployment assistance plus social security for them, protests in the countryside declined by the same 20 percent.

5. Satisfaction rose between 2000 and 2005, with a peak in 2004: also, 70 percent of the respondents expressed satisfaction toward their overall situation in 2002, while 73.7 percent felt optimistic about their own future livelihood in 2005. See Yuan Yue and Zeng Huizhao, "2002 nian Zhongguo jumin shenghuo zhiliang diaocha" (An investigation of Chinese urban residents' quality of life in 2002), in *Shehui lanpishu: 2003 nian*, edited by Ru and others, pp. 140–50; and Zhang Hui and Yuan Yue, "2005 nian Zhongguo jumin shenghuo zhiliang diaocha baogao" (Report of an investigation of Chinese urban residents' quality of life in 2005), in *Shehui lanpishu: 2006 nian*, edited by Ru and others, pp. 52–66). On incomes, see Zhu Qingfang, "Jumin shenghuo he xiaofei jiegou de xin bianhua" (New changes in residents' livelihood and consumption structure), in *Shehui lanpishu: 2006 nian*, edited by Ru and others, pp. 85–86.

6. Qin Xiaoying, "Harmonious Society to Be a Model for the World," *China Daily*, October 13, 2006 (www.chinadaily.com.cn/bizchina/2006-10/13/content_707731.htm). Statistics are from the *Hindu*, December 27, 2006, citing an investigation published by the NBS in June 2006.

7. From July 1, 2006, the central government would spend ¥34.7 billion for these purposes. See "China Strives to Narrow Yawning Income Gap for Social Equality," Xinhua News Agency, October 1, 2006 (www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2006-10/01/content_700784.htm).

8. Barry Naughton, *The Chinese Economy: Transitions and Growth* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2007), pp. 17–76.

9. Wang Feng and Andrew Mason, "The Demographic Factor in China's Transition," in *China's Economic Transitions: Origins, Mechanisms, and Consequences*, edited by Loren Brant and Thomas Rawski (Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 32.

10. Zhongwei Zhao and Fei Guo, "Introduction," in *Transition and Challenge: China's Population at the Beginning of the 21st Century*, edited by Zhongwei Zhao and Fei Guo (Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 8; Zhang Yi, "13 yi zhihou Zhongguo renkou de xin tezheng" (New characteristics of China's population after 1.3 billion), in *Shehui lanpishu: 2006 nian*, edited by Ru and others, p. 104. Judith Banister, "Poverty, Progress, and Rising Life Expectancy," in *Transition and Challenge*, edited by Zhao and Guo, pp. 140–59, also addresses this.

11. Zhang, "13 yi," pp. 97–98, 101, states that between 1978 and 2004 the birth rate fell from 18.25 per thousand to 12.29 per thousand.

12. *Ibid.*, pp. 102, 106–07.

13. Naughton, *The Chinese Economy*, p. 175.

14. Zhao and Guo, "Introduction," p. 8; Banister, "Poverty, Progress," p. 143.

15. Wang and Mason, "The Demographic Factor," p. 13.

16. "Poor Are Worse Off in Aging Process," *China Daily*, July 21, 2006 (www.chinadaily.com.cn/cndy/2006-7/21/content_645867.htm).

17. Raymond Chou, "Folks, Are You Happy with Your Lot?" *China Daily*, December 16, 2004.

18. William Hurst and Kevin J. O'Brien, "China's Contentious Pensioners," *China Quarterly*, no. 170 (June 2002): 345–60. Other accounts of the nostalgia for Maoism among members of the older population are in Ching Kwan Lee, "The 'Revenge of History': Collective Memories and Labor Protests in Northeastern China," *Ethnography* 1, no. 2 (2000): 217–37; and Eva P. W. Hung and Stephen W. K. Chiu, "The Lost Generation," *Modern China* 29 (April 2003): 204–36.

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22. Hudson and den Boer, *Bare Branches*, chap. 5.

23. Banister, "Poverty, Progress," p. 157. Lu Xueyi, "Tiaozheng shehui jiegou, goujian shehui zhuyi hexie shehui" (Adjust the social structure, construct a harmonious socialist society), in *Shehui lanpishu: 2006 nian*, edited by Ru and others, p. 197, concurs (he cites 41.8 percent).

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Wang Zhuqiong, "Female Migrants Suffering at Work," *China Daily*, November 30, 2006; "Migrant Workers Earn Monthly Income of 120 Dollars," *China Daily*, October 23, 2006 (www.chinadaily.com.cn/language_tips/2006-10/23/content_714825.htm); Fei Guo, "The Impact of Temporary Migration on Migrant Communities," in *Transition and Challenge*, edited by Zhao and Guo, pp. 216–50; and Wang Chunguang, "Nongmingong qunti de shehui liudong" (The social mobility of the peasant worker mass), in *Dangdai Zhongguo shehui liudong* (Social mobility in contemporary China), edited by Lu Xueyi (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 2004), chap. 10.

27. Howard W. French, "China Strains to Fit Migrants into Mainstream Classes," *New York Times*, January 25, 2007. In an NBS survey of 5,065 migrants who brought children with them to cities, 49.2 percent had to pay an average registration fee of ¥1,226 in addition to their regular tuition fees; see "Migrant Workers Earn Monthly Income of 120 Dollars."

28. Kenneth Roberts, "The Changing Profile of Labor Migration," in *Transition and Challenge*, edited by Zhao and Guo, p. 242.

29. Guo, "The Impact," p. 217.

30. Roberts, "The Changing Profile," p. 243.

31. Zhao Xiaolu, "Rural Women Left to Hold the Fort at Home," *China Daily*, December 23, 2006.

32. Roberts, "The Changing Profile," pp. 246–47; Zhao, "Rural Women." The statistic comes from research by Bai Nansheng, professor at the School of Agricultural Economics and Rural Development at Renmin University.

33. Zhao, "Rural Women Left."

34. Macartney, "China Faces Population Imbalance Crisis," citing the report from the State Population and Family Commission mentioned earlier.

35. See Cheng Li, "Hu's Policy Shift and the Tuanpai's Coming-of-Age," *China Leadership Monitor*, no. 15, p. 6, from *Zhongguo xinwen zhoukan* (China News Weekly), December 28, 2004, p. 1. Wang Chunguang notes that perhaps 80 percent of the 150 million migrants at work in cities belong to this category ("Peripheral citizens—The 2nd generation of migrant workers" [www.chinadaily.com.cn/english/doc/2005-12/27/content_507066.htm]).

36. Guo, "The Impact," pp. 231, 232.

37. A recent survey conducted by the Central Committee of China Association for Promoting Democracy found that nearly 40 percent of junior high students in the countryside have dropped out of school, about half of whom stayed at home to farm; "China Experiences Rising School Dropout Rate," Xinhua News Agency, March 4, 2005 (www.chinadaily.com.cn/english/doc/2005-03/04/content_421618.htm). See also Shi Xiuying and Li Wei, "Zhongguo zhiye jiegou de qu gaojihua ji yuanyin fensi" (Analysis of the tendency toward a rise in quality of China's professional structure and the reasons), in *Dangdai Zhongguo*, edited by Lu, pp. 90–92, 197–200. Shi and Li discuss the unfairness in educational opportunity and the lower chances for rural children to go on to higher levels of education. Lu, "Tiaozheng shehui," p. 202, states that less than 70 percent graduate from primary schools in large parts of seven poor provinces. The government announced that in 2007, tuition fees would be waived for all 150 million rural children eligible for the nine-year compulsory schooling requirement, and that the fees for 50 million of these were exempted in 2006 (news.xinhuanet.com/politics/2006/19/content_5507946.htm).

38. Xin Dingding, "Rich-Poor Divide Serious, Study Finds," *China Daily*, December 26, 2006.

39. State Council Leading Group of Office of Poverty Alleviation and Development” (bbs.chinadaily.com.cn/viewthread.php?tid=547282&extra=page). Zhu, “Jumin shenghuo,” p. 92, notes that the NBS counted a total low-income population in the countryside of 75.87 million in 2004.

40. For farmers, the standard was ¥1,000 per capita net annual income; for urbanites, a daily average income of ¥6.4. Zhu, “Jumin shenghuo,” p. 93.

41. He Xuesong, *Shehuixue shiyexia de Zhongguo shehui* (Chinese society in sociological perspective) (Shanghai: Huadong ligong daxue chubanshe [East China Science and Engineering College Publishing Co.], 2002), pp. 168–69, cites 15 million to 31 million. Mo Rong, “Jiuye: Zai tiaozhanzong guanzhu kunnan qunti” (Employment: In challenge, pay close attention to the masses in difficulty), in *Shehui lanpishu: 2003 nian*, edited by Ru and others, p. 40, cites Asian Development Bank data of 37 million. See also Li Peilin, “Dangqian Zhongguo shehui fazhan de rogan wenti he xin qushi” (Some issues and new trends in contemporary China’s social development), in *Shehui lanpishu: 2003 nian*, edited by Ru and others, p. 23.

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48. Li, “Hu’s Policy Shift,” p. 5.

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51. Lu, “Tiaozheng shehui,” p. 204.

52. Zhang Houyi, “Siying qiyezhuzhijeceng chengzhang de xin jieduan” (The new stage of the growth of private entrepreneurs), in *Shehui lanpishu: 2003 nian*, edited by Ru and others, p. 341. Zhang puts the number of registered private entrepreneurs at 55.65 million in mid-2005, an increase of nearly 20 percent over the year before.

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