Xing Ying

# A Study of the Stability of Contemporary Rural Chinese Society

Xing Ying

# A Study of the Stability of Contemporary Rural Chinese Society

常州大学山书馆
藏书章

SSAP

Springer

Xing Ying
Department of Sociology
China University of Political Science and Law
Beijing, China, People's Republic

ISBN 978-3-642-36399-3 ISBN 978-3-642-36400-6 (eBook)
DOI 10.1007/978-3-642-36400-6
Springer Heidelberg New York Dordrecht London

Library of Congress Control Number: 2013933343

© Springer-Verlag Berlin Heidelberg 2013
This work is subject to copyright. All rights are reserved by the Publisher, whether the whole or part of the material is concerned, specifically the rights of translation, reprinting, reuse of illustrations, recitation, broadcasting, reproduction on microfilms or in any other physical way, and transmission or information storage and retrieval, electronic adaptation, computer software, or by similar or dissimilar methodology now known or hereafter developed. Exempted from this legal reservation are brief excerpts in connection with reviews or scholarly analysis or material supplied specifically for the purpose of being entered and executed on a computer system, for exclusive use by the purchaser of the work. Duplication of this publication or parts thereof is permitted only under the provisions of the Copyright Law of the Publisher's location, in its current version, and permission for use must always be obtained from Springer. Permissions for use may be obtained through RightsLink at the Copyright Clearance Center. Violations are liable to prosecution under the respective Copyright Law.
The use of general descriptive names, registered names, trademarks, service marks, etc. in this publication does not imply, even in the absence of a specific statement, that such names are exempt from the relevant protective laws and regulations and therefore free for general use.
While the advice and information in this book are believed to be true and accurate at the date of publication, neither the authors nor the editors nor the publisher can accept any legal responsibility for any errors or omissions that may be made. The publisher makes no warranty, express or implied, with respect to the material contained herein.

Printed on acid-free paper

Springer is part of Springer Science+Business Media (www.springer.com)

# A Study of the Stability of Contemporary Rural Chinese Society

# Acknowledgements

Since I chose Chinese rural politics as the topic of my dissertation, I have been researching this subject for a decade. The three books that I completed during this period reflect my special perspective on Chinese rural politics over the last 60 years. Due to the controversial nature of my research and findings, it was extremely difficult for me to collect data and have my books published. Strong courage is required to face such severe and intractable questions directly. Bravery is necessary but not sufficient. It is possible that some may misinterpret these pursuits as instigation of pseudoscience, Weber's "romanticism with mere knowledge," or a new form of political speculation. With this publication, I hope to follow Weber's academic ethics and try to demonstrate facts that neither side of the dispute is comfortable presenting. That being said, it can be challenging to be sensible and honest in this type of discourse. This has been a major challenge in conducting my research. I expect my readers' criticism and thank all the people that offered support during the time when I was experiencing difficulty at every step of the process.

I need to thank Professor Isabelle Thireau from School for the Advanced Studies in the Social Sciences in France, Ms. King Ming Hung from the Chinese University of Hong Kong, Professor Manuel Castells from the Open University of Catalonia in Spain, and Professor You-Tien Hsing and Professor Xin Liu from UC Berkeley. It was their support that offered me opportunities to visit and present my work, allowed me to collect information overseas and communicate with researchers on Chinese studies.

I have been working with Dr. Qinghua Wang from the China University of Political Science and Law on the field survey of Water City in North China. I have been a fortunate beneficiary of our collaboration. Parts of Chap. 7 in this book originate from a paper I coauthored with him. My field experiment in Tianxian County in Southwest China is due to the help of Ms. Yan Zhou, a Ph.D. candidate in Sociology in the Chinese University of Hong Kong. In addition, I need to thank Professor Kin-man Chan and Professor Lin Tao from the Chinese University of Hong Kong for beneficial discussions during our field experiments.

I am very grateful to my advisor, Professor Liping Sun, for his keen sense of conscious, deep sense of reality, and broad vision which have great influence on my



此为试读,需要完整PDF请访问: www.ertongbook.com

research. Professor Sun and the social development research group that he recently founded in the Department of Sociology in Tsing-hua University inspired many of the conclusions in this book. Some ideas on the stability issue are originated from a study published by this research group. I have benefited greatly from frequent consultation with Professor Sun, Professor Yuan Shen, Professor Yuhua Guo, Dr. Jun Jin, Dr. Xiangyang Bi, and Dr. Feizou Zhou. I also need to express my special thanks to all the altruistic support, in both research and professional development from Professor Yuan Shen who is both a teacher and a friend of mine.

I am deeply thankful to my other advisor Professor Qizheng Ye from Taiwan. Professor Ye is a role model to me, both as a person and as an educator. I have been sincerely moved by his personality and his solicitude to me over the past years. His unique insights towards sociology have directly affected this book's adoption of the concept of "Vigor".

I also need to acknowledge Professor Dingxin Zhao, Professor Jingjun Li, Professor Lianjiang Li, Professor Yu Fan, Professor Guangnai Shan, Professor Nianqun Yang, Professor Jianrong Yu, and Lin Luo, the associate editor for the inspiration during our conversation.

In the current fickle academic environment, I have been fortunate to work in a community that places great value on true academic research for over 10 years. This community has helped me achieve academic success and improve my moral quality. In particular, I have learned a great deal working with Jingdong Qu, Feizhou Zhou, Meng Li, Liang Mao, Fei Wu, Zengding Wu, and Wei Shu.

I also need to thank all the graduate students who participate in the weekly seminar. It is always amazing how much I learn from them. In particular, part of Chap. 9 in this book was prompted by Changqing Wu's Master's thesis in 2007.

I would also like to thank my wife Nanning He. She is not only perfect in taking care of the family but also my academic assistant and provided a lot of technical help in the completion of this book.

Portions of this book were published in *Sociological Studies, Chinese Journal of Law*, *Journal of Legal and Economic Studies, Leaders, Tribune of Political Science and LAW*, and *Open Times*. I am very thankful to these journals.

# Contents


**1 Introduction** ..... 1
1.1 Preliminary ..... 1
1.1.1 Part 1 ..... 1
1.1.2 Part 2 ..... 2
1.2 Prominent Social Stability Problems ..... 2
1.2.1 As the Poverty Gap Becomes Larger, Society Starts to Become Segregated and Unbalanced ..... 3
1.2.2 Prominent Antagonistic Psychology Between the Rich and the Poor, and Between Cadres and the People ..... 4
1.2.3 The Escalation in the Size and Intensity of Collective Petitions and Group Incidents ..... 4
1.3 Existing Literature ..... 7
1.4 The Perspective of This Book ..... 13
1.5 The Categories of Contentious Politics ..... 14
1.6 Methodology and Resource ..... 17
1.7 The Organization of This Book ..... 19

**2 "Vigor" in the Scope of Social Conduct: From Traditional China to Contemporary China** ..... 21
2.1 Vigor in Traditional Chinese Culture ..... 24
2.1.1 Three Meanings in Vigor ..... 24
2.1.2 Vigor and Aspiration ..... 25
2.1.3 Summary ..... 26
2.2 Temper Resistance Through Perseverance, and Establishing Virtue Through Vigor: Vigor in Daily Life ..... 26
2.2.1 Temper Resistance Through Perseverance ..... 27
2.2.2 Establishing Virtue Through Vigor ..... 31
2.3 Fight as Vigor Suggests: The Vigor in Contentious Politics ..... 36
2.3.1 The Local Characteristics of Vigor ..... 36
2.3.2 The Aggressiveness of Vigor ..... 38
2.3.3 The Ethicality of Vigor ..... 39

2.4 The Change of Vigor in Contemporary China ..... 40
2.4.1 The Transition in Social Structure ..... 40
2.4.2 The Unification of Revolutionary Ethics ..... 41
2.4.3 The Rise of the Demand for Equality ..... 42
2.4.4 The Increase in the Consciousness of Rights ..... 42
2.4.5 Summary ..... 42
2.5 Vigor and Related Concepts: A Comparison Study of Chinese and Western Societies ..... 43
2.5.1 The Transformation of the Meaning of Spiritedness from Ancient to Modern Society ..... 43
2.5.2 Vigor, Spiritedness, Passions, and Emotions ..... 47

**3 The Structural Background of Contemporary China's Contentious Politics: The Cohesion of Vigor** ..... 51
3.1 The Changes in the Governance Pattern and Interest Structure in Chinese Society Since the Mid-1990s ..... 52
3.1.1 The Governance Foundation for China's Sustained Economic Growth ..... 52
3.1.2 The Governing Issues Behind Chinese Economic Growth ..... 58
3.2 Blind Developments and the Prominent Problem of Migration ..... 65

**4 A Narration of the Legal Contention Process** ..... 69
4.1 The Collective Petitions of Shanyang Migrants ..... 69
4.1.1 From Letters and Visits to the Beginning of Collective Petitions: October 1997 to March 2000 ..... 71
4.1.2 The Upgrade of Contentious Gatherings and Collective Petitions: March 2000 to March 2001 ..... 72
4.1.3 Imprisonment: From March 2001 to March 2004 ..... 74
4.1.4 A One-Way Petition Trip: March 2004 to November 2010 ..... 75
4.2 The Contentious Gathering in Silver River ..... 75
4.2.1 NGOs' Mobilization (June to October 2004) ..... 77
4.2.2 Local Mobilization (From October 2004 to March 2006) ..... 78
4.2.3 A Mobilization Without Grassroots Leaders ("3 · 21 Incident" in 2006) ..... 79
4.2.4 The Stalemate Between Grassroots Activities and the Local Government (Post "3 · 21 Incident" in 2006) ..... 79

4.3 The Group Administrative Litigation in Water City's Qingshan Village ..... 79
4.3.1 Prevent Soil Extraction and Seek Compensation Through Petitions and Contentious Gathering (From December 1999 to December 2000) ..... 80
4.3.2 Attempt to Obtain the Village Committee's Power and Prevent Second Plowing (From December 2000 to May 2001) ..... 81
4.3.3 815 Villagers' Joint Lawsuit with the County Government (From May 2001 to November 2001) ..... 81
4.3.4 Re-election of Village Committees, the Integrated Use of Collective Litigations and Administrative Reconsiderations (From November 2001 to November 2003) ..... 82

**5 The Initial Release of Vigor and the Formation of Grassroots Leaders** ..... 85
5.1 The Local Factors in the Initial Release of Vigor ..... 86
5.1.1 The Pressure of the Living Environment ..... 86
5.1.2 Triggered by Moral Shocks ..... 86
5.1.3 The Continuation of the Historical Traditions ..... 87
5.1.4 The Import of External Resource ..... 87
5.1.5 The Emergence of Grassroots Leaders ..... 88
5.2 The Grassroots Mobilization and Grassroots Leaders ..... 88
5.2.1 The Origin and Meaning of Grassroots Mobilization ..... 88
5.2.2 The Relationship Between Grassroots Leaders and the Outbreak of Contentious Activities ..... 90
5.2.3 The Rise of Grassroots Leaders from the Features ..... 91
5.2.4 The Social Interpretation of the Rise of Grassroots Leaders ..... 94

**6 The Intensification of Vigor and the Grassroots Participants' Organizational Strategies** ..... 97
6.1 "Suppress-Bounce" Mode and the Intensification of Vigor ..... 98
6.1.1 The System Logic of the Suppression of Contentious Activities by Local Governments ..... 98
6.1.2 Attack and Pull ..... 101
6.1.3 "Suppress-Bounce" Mode and the Intensification of Vigor ..... 103
6.2 The Structural Conditions for Grassroots Mobilization ..... 104
6.2.1 An Incentive System from Top to Bottom ..... 104
6.2.2 A Non-institutional Constraint from the Lower to Higher Class ..... 113
6.2.3 Recognition in the Grassroots Participant Community ..... 114

6.3 The Organizational Strategy of Grassroots Mobilization ..... 116
6.3.1 The Organizational Requirements for Contentious Activities ..... 116
6.3.2 The Organization of the Grassroots Participant Community ..... 118
6.3.3 A Comparison of the Organization of the Grassroots Participant Community Before and After the 1990s ..... 124

**7 The Action Strategies of Legal Contentions: The Guidance by Vigor** ..... 127
7.1 The Construction of Legal Discourse ..... 128
7.2 The Choice of Action Path ..... 132
7.2.1 Analytical Framing ..... 132
7.2.2 A Comparative Case Study ..... 133
7.2.3 A Comparison on Petition and Litigation as Contention Means ..... 142
7.2.4 The Political Science in Litigation ..... 147
7.2.5 The Dual Rationality in Legal Contentious Activities ..... 150
7.3 The Intertexture of Emotions, Reasonging and Law ..... 153

**8 Group Incidents: From Vigor to "Field"** ..... 157
8.1 A Narration of the Process of Group Incidents ..... 158
8.1.1 A Group Incident with Interest Unrelated People as Objects: The "10·18 Incident" in the Xiazhou District ..... 158
8.1.2 A Group Incident with Interest Related People as Objects: The "3·21 Incident" in Silver River ..... 159
8.2 The Six Stage Distribution of Field ..... 160
8.3 A Comparison Between the Two Group Incidents ..... 166
8.4 Summary ..... 168

**9 The Impact of Contemporary Chinese Contentious Politics** ..... 171
9.1 The Social Impact of Contentious Politics ..... 172
9.1.1 The Impact of Contentious Politics on Policies ..... 172
9.1.2 The Impact of Contentious Politics on Social Stability ..... 173
9.1.3 The Double Impact of Contentious Politics on Political Democracy and Political Opportunism ..... 177
9.2 The Impact of Contentious Politics on Contention Participants ..... 178
9.2.1 The Impact of Contentious Politics on Grassroots Participants ..... 178
9.2.2 The Impact of Contentious Politics on Other Farmers ..... 182

**10 Summary and Discussion** ..... 185
10.1 The Significance of Vigor in Understanding the Contemporary Chinese Rural Contentious Politics ..... 185
10.1.1 The Significance of Vigor in Understanding the Nature of Contentious Politics ..... 186
10.1.2 Understanding the Process and System of Contentious Politics with the Perspective of Vigor ..... 186
10.2 The Change in Rural Social Stability Problems Since the 1990s ..... 187
10.2.1 The Change in Rural Contentious Politics ..... 188
10.2.2 The Change in the Government's Work on Maintaining Stability ..... 190
10.3 Extended Discussion ..... 192

**References** ..... 193

此为试读,需要完整PDF请访问: www.ertongbook.com

# Chapter 1
# Introduction

*It's always a matter of experience to what extent the social conflicts obey the pursuit of the interests and to what extent they obey the moral reaction. Nevertheless, the sociology theories are rooted out of the interests groups, which completely obscured our understanding of moral sentiments. Therefore, the research on the theory of conflict recognition not only requires extension but also possible correction.*

—Axel Honneth *The Struggle for Recognition*

*In traditional Chinese society, farmers' engagement in litigation was not always for pecuniary purposes or for the subject matter itself, nor were they fighting for the universal rights as argued by Rudolf von Jhering in The Struggle for law. They fight for the position between ritual and virtual governance, and for their self-respect.*

—Xing Ying *The Story of the Dahe Dam*

## 1.1 Preliminary

### *1.1.1 Part 1*

In 1994, the 18 tortuous years of Dahe Hydropower Station migrants' collective petition in Shanyang Town in Southwest China finally came to an end.

However, only 3 years later, Shanyang Town was again in turmoil. Shanyang Town is the heart for the rural migrants from the Three Gorges Project. Due to the increasing dissatisfaction caused by multiple problems in the Three Gorges Project, these migrants started a new collective petition. Thus far, this petition has been ongoing for 13 years, and yet many of the problems remain unresolved.

X. Ying, *A Study of the Stability of Contemporary Rural Chinese Society*,
DOI 10.1007/978-3-642-36400-6_1, © Springer-Verlag Berlin Heidelberg 2013

The current representatives of Three Gorges migrants are mostly different than the original group at the Dahe Power Station. In addition, those representatives of the Three Gorges migrants have frequently changed over the last 10 years. From 1997 to 2001, there were four main representatives for Shanyang including Kewang Zhou. In 2001, Kewang Zhou and the other three were sentenced to prison by the County Court for "disturbing the social order." Since then, nine other petitioners have been sent to jail and hundreds of migrants have had their houses dismantled. However, the migrant petition from Shanyang has not ceased. Thousands of people submitted letters to Beijing and many more have made their displeasure known verbally. We were confused: why were the petitioners so stubborn? Why did the representative migrants not learn a lesson after their release, but continue to submit another petition? Why were they willing to come to the forefront of the fight?

### *1.1.2 Part 2*

Inhabitants and students from the Miao Autonomous Region in Guizhou Province gathered at the Weng'an County Public Security Bureau and presented the county government with a petition on June 21st, 2008. This submission stemmed from the discontent regarding the public security's forensic examination into a high school girl's death. In the afternoon of June 28th, the crowd of people swelled to more than 20,000. A small number of individuals took the opportunity to incite an uproar and even became brazenly engaged in vandalism. During the demonstration, over 100 public and government offices were burned, 55 vehicles were destroyed, dozens of office computers were looted, and many documents were destroyed. The protests resulted in over 150 individuals being treated for various injuries. This is the "6.28 Incident" that shocked the entire nation and is doomed to be recorded in history (Zifu Liu 2009).

The question remains: how could the results of a forensic examination into a girl's death evolve into such a vicious and violent mass incident? It is surprising that thousands of people, completely unrelated to the young student involved, would flock to join the protest. If they were simply curious, why were they involved in the riot of June 28th? We must ask ourselves whether there were other factors involved, beyond the actions of a handful of violent individuals.

## 1.2 Prominent Social Stability Problems

Since the mid-1990s, China has been developing rapidly with sustained GDP growth and vertical market-oriented reform. At the same time, serious social conflicts, particularly the social stability problem, have accumulated and been exposed. The problem is evident in the following three aspects.

### 1.2.1 *As the Poverty Gap Becomes Larger, Society Starts to Become Segregated and Unbalanced*

Even though the economic reform of the 1980s hurt some interest groups, it was beneficial to a majority of people in China. But since the 1990s and especially in the twenty-first century, the market-oriented reform greatly contributed to the social poverty gap. We can clearly see the significant change over the past 30 years from the most important social equality indicator, the Gini coefficient. During the beginning of the economic reform in 1980, the Gini coefficient for per capita income was 0.33; in 1988, the Gini coefficient increased to 0.382; in 1995, the coefficient reached 0.4577. This Gini coefficient exceeds the internationally recognized warning level – 0.4. By 2002, the Gini coefficient had reached 0.47 (The World Bank 2006; Renwei Zhao 1994, 1999; Shi Li 2008). Due to the existence of hidden benefits and illegal abnormal income for some groups of people, some experts have suggested that the actual Gini coefficient in China in early 2000 actually surpassed 0.5 (Zongsheng Chen et al. 2001). In addition, the gap between urban and rural areas and the gap between regions are widening. From an income distribution standpoint, China has become one of the most unbalanced countries in the world.

While most of the wealth in China is possessed by a small fraction of the population, urban workers (including migrant workers) and farmers have become the two most vulnerable groups. During the 1990s, workers at urban state-owned and collective enterprises faced major layoffs and unemployment. From 1995 to 2002, these enterprises cut their labor forces by roughly 60 million employees (Xiaowu Song 2006). During this period, the main difficulties that farmers faced were falling agricultural prices, slow growth in income, and an increase in taxation. According to government data, agricultural workers faced a total tax burden of 135.9 billion Yuan. Compared to figures from 1990, the tax burden had increased 1.89 times, while the per capita amount increased 2.01 times. Taxes and fees made up of about 7–12 % of farmers' total income. In fact, some experts have estimated that the amount of taxation farmers bore in 2000 could be up to between 180.9 billion and 217.1 billion Yuan (Xiwen Chen 2005).

Since joining the WTO in the twenty-first century, China's employment situation has improved, but the labor problem has become increasingly prominent in the metropolitan areas. The labor dispute arbitration committee received a total of 38,000 labor dispute cases involving 12.2 million people. Of these cases, 2,588 were about collective labor disputes, involving 77,000 people. In 2004, the total number of labor dispute cases accepted nationwide went up by 15.2 %, reaching a total of 260,000 and involving over 765,000 people. Among these, the collective labor dispute cases rose by over 72.7 % compared to 2003, arriving at a number of 19,000 and involving 478,000 people.[1] Some experts have estimated that the "Scissors"

[1]NBS: China Labor Statistics Yearbook, China Statistics Press, 1996, 2005.

prices in agricultural products during the Planned Economy have caused the farmers to incur a cost of 600 billion to 800 billion Yuan. Since the economic reform, especially since the late 1990s, the low cost expropriation of farmers' land has caused losses of at least 2 trillion Yuan for farmers (Chen 2001).

Liping Sun (2003) suggested that China has formed a new society since the 1990s: the expansion of the poverty gap has grown out of control. With resource accumulation, the society has become polarized. The upper classes tend to be oligopolistic, while the vulnerable groups are fragmented, hierarchizing the society.

### *1.2.2 Prominent Antagonistic Psychology Between the Rich and the Poor, and Between Cadres and the People*

It is not surprising that the market system led to a differentiation in income and wealth. However, the prominent issue of restructuring the Chinese market is associated with corruption, which can lead to a high degree of resource accumulation by a minority group of people. According to incomplete statistics, since the mid-1990s the four major categories of corruption – rent-seeking, underground transactions, tax loss, and public investment – have caused an economic loss of 13.3–16.9 % of the annual GDP (Hu 2001).

The severity of corruption adds a considerable degree of moral ambiguity concerning the poverty gap and causes an imbalance in the social attitude to the lower class. According to the Social Blue Book, published by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, from 1997 to 2000 citizens regarded corruption as the most concerning social issue (Ru et al. 2001, 2002). According to a national survey conducted in 2006, 50.75 % of respondents consider the poverty gap to be most striking, while 28.3 % respondents believed that conflicts arise most frequently between the cadres and people. This is how they generate wealth. The survey shows that 71.4 % of people think that the national cadres are the major beneficiaries of the reforms of the past 10 years; 51.2 % of those who considered themselves poor believe "making money with improper means" is the source of wealth for the rich, while 49.8 % select "hard work" (Wang 2006). Thus, people at the bottom of society believe, economically speaking, that there is a positive relationship between the poverty gap and corruption. People's strong dissatisfaction with the inequality of society is reflected in their resistance to the cadres' corruption and their performance, especially those cadres working in grassroots departments.

### *1.2.3 The Escalation in the Size and Intensity of Collective Petitions and Group Incidents*

More importantly, people's dissatisfaction with the imbalance in income distribution and social injustice is not just a social mentality. Social problems, such as unequal incomes, unfair distribution, corruption, and increased unemployment, are becoming

more severe. Since 1990, these problems have led to social stability problems with the characteristics of "peak petition" and "frequent group incidents."

Reportedly, the number of collective petitions nationwide rose for 13 consecutive years, beginning in 1992 and continuing until 2004. In 1995, government entities above the county level accepted 4.79 million petition cases. In 2000, the total number of petitioners exceeded 10 million for the first time, reaching a high of 10.24 million. Among them, the collective petitions reached 245,800, encompassing 5.65 million people in 2000. These numbers are 2.8 times and 2.6 times the number in 1995, respectively. The central petition agency received 586,400 petition cases in 2000, which was 1.46 times that in 1995 (Zhou 2001c). Since 2000, the total number of petitions has surged with increases of 8.7, 2.9, and 13.4 % in 2001, 2002, and 2004, respectively. The hierarchy of the petitioners was described as an "upside down pyramid." In 2003, the State Bureau for Petitionsawa 14 % increase in the number of petitions, the province level bureau experienced an increase of only 0.1 %, the city level saw an increase of 0.3 %, and the county level experienced a decrease of 2.4 %. Among these, the number of collective petitions submitted in Beijing rose rapidly, with an increase of 41 % in the number of cases and a 44.8 % increase in the number of people involved .A considerable portion of the petitions involved the acquisition of rural land and legal proceedings (Zhang 2007). According to an authoritative analysis, cases concerning politics, economics, and life (such as the burden of farmers, land disputes, workers being laid off, compensation for house demolition) are not only the center of the issues, but also the reason for the rapid increase in the number of collective petitions in recent years (Zhou 2001b).

More remarkably, as a sensitive signal for the severe social conflicts, group incidents have grown in number, size, intention in behavior, involvement, and confrontation. The number of group incidents across the country has increased from 10,000 cases in 1993 to 74,000 in 2004, with an annual growth rate of 17 %. The number of participants increased from roughly 730,000 people to around 3.76 million, a growth of 12 %. Among these incidents, cases involving over 100 people increased from 1,400 to around 7,000. In 2005, the number of group incidents decreased. However in 2006, the total number again rose to approximately 60,000, while in 2007, the number reached 80,000, culminating in 2008 with the group incident in the Miao Autonomous Region in Guizhou Province that shocked the whole country (Li et al. 2008; Wang et al. 2004).

Scholars have categorized the social conflicts into three forms: "round table politics," which includes petition, mediation, labor dispute, civil litigation, and administrative litigation resolved within legal means; "night politics," which includes illegal and criminal activities, such as cases of public order, crime, and corruption; and "gathering politics," which are incidents on the margin between legal and illegal protests. Scholars have conducted quantitative analyses to examine these social conflicts more closely. Looking at the period spanning 1994–2004, scholars came to two important conclusions. On one hand, the total number of "round table politics," "night politics," and "gathering politics" had risen constantly. On the other hand, social conflicts had undergone important changes accordingly. The proportion of "round table politics" had decreased from 79.19 to 70.62 %, but the proportion

of "night politics" had increased from 20.77 to 29.19 %, while "gathering politics" jumped from 0.04 to 0.19 %. These findings reflect the fact that social conflicts are not only exacerbated by quantity but also by intensity. Meanwhile, as indicators for social instability, the "round table politics" index, the "night politics" index, and the "gathering politics" index have gone up from 100 in 1994 to 469.5, 455.4, and 443.6 in 2004, respectively. These increases come as a result of average annual growth rates of 16.7, 16.4, and 16.1 %, respectively. The increase in the aggregate social instability index remained between 14.0 and 16.7 %, while the annual GDP growth rate stayed at 8.7 % (Hu et al. 2009: pp. 26–66). This means that since 1994, social instability has quickly deteriorated and has become an overarching problem, impacting the transformation of Chinese society.

One point that should be stressed is that social stability and political stability are not the same concept. Even though China is currently experiencing prominent social conflicts, politics remain relatively stable. This is mainly because of the following factors. First, the sustained economic growth and national military strength equip the government with a strong capability to address emergencies. Second, the existence of the urban-rural dual structure creates flexibility to resolve social conflicts. Third, since the mid-1990s, the political, economic, and cultural elites have formed an alliance that controls most of the social resources that influence government decision making and public opinion. Finally, the market system leads to a decentralization of social conflicts because the pursuits of various social groups differ (Sun 2004). Multiple social conflicts are not likely to occur at the same time. Such an event would cause society to collapse. All these factors contribute to a social structure with great flexibility, which makes political instability in China very unlikely. Hence, it is not wise to overestimate the effect of current social instability. In particular, it is wrong to directly equate social instability to political instability. Our study has shown that rigidity and suppression often fall into a "stability cycle" – the more spenton maintaining stability, the greater the social contradictions and conflicts. Thus, "maintaining stability" is, in and of itself, a source of instability (Sun et al. 2010).

Of course, if social stability problems are not handled properly, they may transform into political stability problems. Both the social stability problem and the political problems could potentially arise because of social instability, which are great concerns of the Chinese Communist Party. Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, the country has made multiple strategic adjustments in governance.

The scientific development concept "People-Oriented, Overall Consideration" was first proposed in 2003. A strategic ideology, "Building a Harmonious Society," was put forward in 2004, and the government started to deal with the massive petition cases and group incidents as a result. In August, the central government convened a joint meeting to handle prominent petitions and group incidents. In November, the General Office of the CPC Central Committee and State Council issued the "On Properly Preventing and Handling Group Incidents" document and held a teleconference about preventing and handling such incidents. In May 2005, the State Council promulgated the newly revised "Petition Regulations," and public

此为试读,需要完整PDF请访问: www.ertongbook.com