Political Culture & Participation
in Urban China

Yang Zhong

New Perspectives on Chinese Politics and Society

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Introduction

One of the most noticeable and significant transformations in China over the past three decades of the reform era is the rapid and massive urbanization of the most populous country in the world. Sprawling is a particularly appropriate word to describe China's urban expansion. Chinese urban governments have rushed to set up new cities by annexing farmland. Over the past thirty years, 45,000 square miles (or 116,500 square kilometers) of farmland, or an area that amounts to half of Great Britain's total landmass, have been turned into urban areas in China.[1] In 1978, the year in which the reforms began, only around 18 percent of Chinese people lived in cities.[2] By 2011, this figure had reached 53.7 percent,[3] not including the hundreds of millions of migrant workers who work and live in Chinese cities without urban *hukou*. The process of urbanization is by no means over. In fact, Premier Li Keqiang has made urbanization one of the key driving forces in furthering China's economic development and has accelerated the urbanization process. It is projected that by 2020 China's urbanization rate will stand at around 60 percent.[4]

Much has been written about the consequences and implications of China's impressive urbanization with regard to different aspects such as economic growth, population movement, pollution, traffic congestion, sustainable development, inequalities, loss of agricultural land, etc. Not enough attention has been paid to the political implications of China's rapid and massive urbanization. Cities, as a result of their unique features,

have historically played an important role in political change around the world. It is no coincidence that most contemporary revolutions, revolts and insurrections, from the French Revolution to the Bolshevik Revolution and from the May 4th Movement in China to the recent "colored revolutions" in the Middle East, have first broken out in the cities. The success of the Chinese communist revolution resulted from the strategy of "encircling the cities from rural areas" was an exception and not the rule. The following factors have made cities the most probable places for political events. First, authorities, including both central and provincial governments, are located in metropolitan areas and they are in the grabbing range of urban populations. Second, urban areas are more densely populated and protests can easily gain momentum. Third, cities tend to have more sophisticated communication means for organizing political events. The fourth factor is the concentration of the urban poor, who can be mobilized easily.

It has been argued that the Chinese government has managed the process of urbanization better than many other developing countries by avoiding some of the typical problems associated with urbanization, such as the existence of urban slums, uneven development within cities, high unemployment rate, high crime rate and a severe lack of social and public services. In fact, some have contended that the relative success of the Chinese government in managing its urbanization process has contributed to regime stability in China over the past thirty years.[5] One of the institutional measures that has been credited for promoting stability in China's urban areas is the rigid *hukou* or household registration system, an urban-biased policy discriminating against rural residents in China. The limitation on the rural population's ability to become urban residents with benefits has prevented the presence of slums and the urban poor in Chinese cities. Migrant workers in Chinese cities are mostly housed at their work site by their work units. Because migrant workers are only temporary residents in the city without social and educational benefits enjoyed by legal and permanent urban dwellers, they usually do not bring their families with them to the city. Therefore, there are no slums in Chinese cities.

According to Samuel Huntington, urbanization inevitably leads to social and political changes.[6] Seymour Martin Lipset argues that urbanization leads to the expansion of interest groups due to close living proximity in the cities which results in increased political competition.[7] Also as a result of close proximity, urban dwellers are said to be more politically tolerant than non-urban dwellers. Size of cities has also been cited as a major factor

contributing to urban government decentralization and democratization.[8] Urbanization is usually accompanied by industrialization and an expansion of the middle class, both of which have political implications. Can China be an exception to these changes? In recent decades, Chinese cities have experienced a proliferation of non-governmental organizations and urban governmental authorities have become more specialized and decentralized. Instead of studying institutional issues, this book, drawing on new survey data, takes a political cultural approach in studying the political implications of urbanization in China. Cities are resided by urban dwellers who are main actors and conduits for any political change and development in urban China. Studying the political attitudes and views of urban residents is a direct way to explain and predict the political trajectory of Chinese cities.

Culture and politics have long been believed to be intertwined. Culture or value as an explanation in the study of political phenomena can be found in the works of Hegel, Kant and Weber. Human beings are products of their cultural environment and their actions are often guided and influenced by their subjective cultural orientations. But the term "political culture" was first introduced into political science only in the early 1960s by Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba in their seminal work *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations.*[9] There are several features associated with the traditional political cultural approach (even though the term "political culture" was not used until Almond and Verba) to study politics. First, it tends to focus on the macro (or aggregate) level of cultural traditions and context. Second, it adopts an idiographic approach in the study of the relationship between culture and politics that emphasizes cultural uniqueness. Yet another feature of traditional cultural approach to the study of politics is its non-empirical nature. *The Civic Culture* broke new ground for the study of political culture. My political cultural approach in this book is in line with Almond and Verba's empirical political cultural study.

The role of culture in shaping political development in China is a factor agreed upon by most China scholars.[10] There is, however, a debate over how to treat political culture or culture in general in China. One school of thought believes that Chinese culture is unique and that it differs radically from cultures elsewhere in the world.[11] The old saying is "China is China is China".[12] Sinologists holding this view argue that China is not just another country and that the unique culture and history of China makes it almost impossible to compare China with another country. Their cultural explanation of Chinese politics is often tautological and non-falsifiable. Why has China had such a long history of authoritarianism? The answer is

because China has an authoritarian culture. How do they prove that China has an authoritarian culture? The proof is the long-lasting history of authoritarianism in China. Another drawback of using cultural traditions to explain contemporary political phenomena in China is the underlining assumption that Chinese culture does not change. Culture is dynamic and does change. Chinese political culture on mainland China has arguably changed significantly, especially after the Cultural Revolution and thirty years of economic reform. The changes have been well documented in survey research findings in recent years.[13] The opposing view contends that Chinese culture does differ from other cultures, but that it is not necessarily unique.[14] "Uniqueness" goes against the rationale of social science research since science implies generalization and comparability. Of course, no two countries have identical culture or political culture. The difference is what scholars are interested in and, often, focal point of academic studies. Cultural difference only means one country may have more of a cultural trait than that of another country. In this sense, China should be studied as a normal country in the context of other countries. Harry Harding used the phrase "academicization of Chinese studies" to describe the "normalization" of Chinese political studies.[15]

Following the positivist tradition of *The Civic Culture*, this book is an empirical study of Chinese urban residents' political attitudes and values based on random surveys conducted in large Chinese cities. Study of Chinese political culture utilizing survey research method has become fairly popular among China scholars[16] for three important reasons. The first important reason is the belief that political culture in general and political attitudes, and values in particular, are better, even though not perfect, predictors of human behavior. This is also true in China. Another important reason for the increasing focus on studying political attitudes in China is the fact that both the central and local governments in China are paying increasing attention to public opinions.[17] Feeling the pressure of improving its political legitimacy, the Chinese government has been more responsive to public sentiments and is more willing to give in to popular demands than many democratic governments in other countries. The Internet and other modern communication means have become main vehicles for expressing public opinions and views. The third, and perhaps the most important reason, for the proliferation of survey research in China is the availability of survey data, which is made possible by the relaxed political control in the reform era in China. It is worth noting that both the World Values Survey and the Asian Barometer Survey have successfully conducted large national surveys over the past twenty years in China.

A number of scholars have published book-length research on political attitudes and values among urbanites in China contributing to the scholarship of political culture in urban China.[18] These works, however, either focus on one city and/or use survey data from the 1980s and the 1990s. A major contribution of this book is that the data for this research come from surveys in multiple cities and were gathered in the 2010s. Specifically, four survey datasets were used in this book: *Social and Political Values of Chinese Urban Residents* (2013), *Environmental Attitudes Among Chinese Urban Residents* (2013), *Religious, Social and Political Values of Chinese Christians* (2011), and *Asian Barometer Survey* (2015). The first two surveys were telephone interviews conducted at the Center for Public Opinion Research of Shanghai Jiao Tong University. The sampling frame includes both stationary and cell phone numbers generated by Computer Assisted Telephone Interview (CATI) system in the surveyed cities. Trained graduate and undergraduate students at Shanghai Jiao Tong University and several other surrounding universities in Shanghai conducted the anonymous surveys. Data on urban Chinese Christians were collected by the author through face-to-face interviews. The Asian Barometer Survey was conducted by face-to-face interviews conducted jointly by ten Chinese research institutions across China (minus Xinjiang and Tibet).

The layout of the book is as follows. After the introductory chapter, Chap. 2 examines level of regime support in urban China. The political system in China has been described as "resilient". The obvious question is to ask why has the Chinese regime successfully maintained its rule or been resilient in the most populous country in the world. Stability in urban China is indispensable to the overall level of stability in China. On a descriptive level, the key question to be answered is: To what degree does the current regime in China enjoy popular diffuse support? On an analytical level, we would like address the question: what factors affect Chinese urban residents' level of support for the current political system in China? Other than the usual socioeconomic and demographic factors such as age, gender, income, education and Communist Party membership, this chapter is particularly interested in exploring the relationships between popular satisfaction with local government performance in specific policy areas (such as education, medical care, housing, the social safety net, employment, public safety, transportation, cultural development, and environment), popular satisfaction with local governmental efficiency, attitudes toward official corruption, trust of central and local governments on the one hand and popular regime support on the other.

Chapter 3 measures the levels of political interest among Chinese urban residents and examines the associated factors. The key descriptive question to be answered in this chapter is: To what degree are Chinese urban residents still interested in politics or state affairs? On an analytical level, the chapter considers the factors affecting Chinese urban residents' levels of political interest. Other than the usual socioeconomic and demographic factors, such as age, gender, income, education and Communist Party membership, the study is especially interested in exploring the relationships between levels of political interest on the one hand and belief in religion, support for the current political system, democratic values, nationalist feelings and general life satisfaction on the other. Even though this study does not cover the whole of China, the findings from this research do shed light on the general levels of political interest at the mass level and who tend to be more interested in politics.

Chapter 4 studies democratic values among Chinese urban residents. There is a popular perception both inside and outside China that Chinese culture is inherently authoritarian and incompatible with modern democratic values. What is the current status of democratic values among Chinese urban residents? How do Chinese urban residents compare with people from other countries, especially neighboring Asian countries, with regard to their democratic values? What factors can possibly affect the support or lack of it for core democratic values among Chinese urbanites? Answers to these questions are crucial in understanding and predicting political developments in China.

The issue of political trust in urban China is explored in Chap. 5. Even though studies on political trust have proliferated in democracies since the late 1960s, such studies in authoritarian countries have been rare. It is probably due to the fact that it is not easy to accurately measure the level of political trust in authoritarian settings whereas people are afraid of telling their true feelings about the authorities in public. Difficulty in measuring the level of political trust in authoritarian settings, however, does not mean that the level of political trust does not exist or is not an important issue in authoritarian countries. Two key questions to be answered in this chapter are: What is the level of political trust among Chinese urban citizens of their government; and what factors affect their level of political trust?

Environmental attitudes and tendency to participate in environment-related street protest are the foci of Chap. 6. Most Chinese cities face serious environmental problems. Unlike some other issues such as land or labor disputes which only concern a small specific group of people,

environmental pollution and degradation have a wide concern to the general population and can arouse widespread societal reaction. Descriptive questions to be answered in this chapter are concerned with Chinese urban residents' environmental awareness and knowledge, their willingness to help improve the environment, their assessment of China's environmental problems, and their satisfaction with government performance in protecting the environment. However, the key analytical question to be answered in this chapter is: why, facing the same issue, do some people choose the option of participating in street protest while others do not? In other words, what motivate people to participate in street protest in urban China?

Chapter 7 taps into the religious, social and political values of Chinese urban Christians. After the disastrous years of the Cultural Revolution, religions have been coming back to China in a significant way. Christianity is one of the fastest-growing religions in China. Given the rapid increase of the Chinese Christian population, it is surprising that contemporary Chinese Christians have received little academic attention, as they are still shrouded in mystery and their religious beliefs and socio-political values are little known to non-Christian Chinese and the outside world. The rapid increase of Christians in China could obviously have far-reaching implications for China's future social and political developments. This chapter will examine the religiosity (i.e., the believing and behaving aspects) of Chinese urban Christians as well as their social and political values, which will be compared with those of Chinese urban non-Christians and American Christians. Still another question to be answered in the chapter is whether religiosity of Chinese urban Christians attending official churches is different from that of unofficial "house church" members.

Chapter 8 concludes the book. In this chapter, other than the concluding remarks, I will compare data from our survey of Chinese urban population with those of the *Asian Barometer Survey* that was conducted across China (except for Xinjiang and Tibet) in 2015. Compared with Chinese urbanites, support for the current political system is even higher in the general Chinese population. In addition, our Chinese urban residents are also much more interested in political affairs than the general population in China. Like the majority of urbanites in our survey of large Chinese cities, most Chinese people favor the direct election of Chinese leaders. Finally, the general Chinese population shows higher level of political trust of the Chinese government than our urban dwellers.

Notes

1. "Megacities: China's Urban Challenge," by Thomas J Campanella, June 21, 2011, BBC News (http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-pacific-13799997, accessed on August 10, 2015).
2. See Fulong Wu, Jiang Xu, and Anthony Gar-On Yeh, *Urban Development in Post-Reform China: State, Market, and Space* (London: Routledge, 2007), p. 3.
3. See *China's New Style Urbanization* published in 2015. http://www.gov.cn/zhengce/2014-03/16/content_2640075.htm (accessed on August 9, 2015).
4. Ibid.
5. Jeremy Wallace, *Cities and Stability: Urbanization, Redistribution and Regime Survival in China* (London: Oxford University Press, 2014).
6. Samuel P. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), pp. 300–301.
7. Seymour M. Lipset, "Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 53, No. 1 (1959), pp. 69–105.
8. Robert M. Anthony, "Urbanization and Political Change in the Developing World: A Cross-National Analysis, 1865–2010," *Urban Affairs Review*, Vol. 50, No. 6 (2014), pp. 743–780.
9. Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba, *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963).
10. See Peter Moody, "Trends in the Study of Chinese Political Culture," *The China Quarterly*, No. 139 (1994).
11. Lucian Pye is one of the most representative scholars in this school of thought. See Andrew Nathan's comments on Lucian Pye's works, "Is Chinese Culture Distinctive? A Review Article," *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 52, No. 4 (1993), p. 933.
12. See Michael Oksenberg, *A Bibliography of Secondary English Language Literature on Contemporary Chinese Politics* (New York: East Asian Institute, Columbia University, 1970), p. iv.
13. See Godwin Chu and Yanan Ju, *The Great Wall in Ruins: Communication and Cultural Change in China* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1993); and Steve Chan, "Chinese Political Attitudes and Values in Comparative Context: Cautionary Remarks on Cultural Attributions," *Journal of Chinese Political Science*, Vol. 13, No. 3 (2008), pp. 225–48.
14. Andrew Nathan, "Is Chinese Culture Distinctive? A Review Article," *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 52, No. 4 (1993).
15. Harry Harding, "The Evolution of American Scholarship on Contemporary China," in David Shambaugh, ed., *American Studies of Contemporary China* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1993), p. 29.

16. See Melanie Manion, "A Survey of Survey Research on Chinese Politics: What Have We Learned?," in *Contemporary Chinese Politics: New Sources, Methods and Field Strategies*, ed. Allen Carlson, Mary Gallagher, Kenneth Lieberthal and Melanie Manion (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 181–200.

17. Former Premier Wen Jiabao, in a speech he gave to students at Nankai High School in Tianjin, stresses the importance of public opinions by saying that the only criterion to measure whether the Chinese government has done its job or not is to see whether public is happy with government policies (see http://news.xinhuanet.com/book/2013-10/31/c_125623414_3.htm, accessed on August 16, 2015). In fact, Alan Liu argues that the various post-Mao economic and political reforms were reactions by the Chinese Communist Party to the general sentiments and demands of the public in China. See Alan Liu, *Mass Politics in the People's Republic: State and Society in Contemporary China* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996), p. 2.

18. See, for example, Tianjian Shi, *Political Participation in Beijing* (Boston, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997); Jie Chen, *Popular Political Support in Urban China* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004); and Wenfang Tang, *Public Opinion and Political Change in China* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005).

Political Support in Chinese Cities

INTRODUCTION

China's phenomenal economic growth since the 1980s is nothing short of a miracle. China has enjoyed close to average double-digit economic growth for three decades, a phenomenon which is unprecedented in contemporary world history. China has now become the second-largest economy in the world and is one of the few relatively bright spots in today's gloomy world economy. Yet, even as China continues its economic rise, many people still question China's long-term political stability and the longevity of the Chinese Communist Party.[1] On the one hand, China has been described as a "fragile" superpower due to its mounting internal political and social problems.[2] Indeed, China's economic growth has slowed down since 2012. On the other hand, China has also been labeled as a "resilient" authoritarian country since it has successfully defied the worldwide wave of democratization, including the "color revolutions" that have covered around the world.[3]

The obvious question is: why has the Chinese Communist Party successfully maintained its rule or remained so resilient in the most populous country in the world? A large number of studies both within and outside China have been devoted to the subject of political legitimacy of the CCP.[4]

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Accelerated economic reform after the Tiananmen events in 1989 and the subsequent impressive economic growth are obvious contributing factors to the CCP remaining in power in China. Rediscovered Chinese nationalism might also have something to do with CCP's legitimacy in China.[5] Institutional adaptive reforms and innovations could be the reasons to explain CCP's survival.[6] For example, the mandatory retirement system of Chinese officials introduced by Deng Xiaoping could have saved the CCP from the fate of the recently overturned regimes in the Middle East. Jiang Zemin's "Three Represents" successfully co-opts the increasingly influential entrepreneur class into the Communist Party, even though the practice of allowing capitalists to join the Communist Party is not consistent with the orthodox Marxist doctrines.[7] Innovations in CCP's cadre management system and local institutional adaptation are also important factors in perpetuating CCP's rule in China.[8]

No political regime could survive for long without some degree of popular support for, or acceptance of, the regime. In general, levels of political support and legitimacy is more readily expressed and measured in democracies than in other forms of political systems. Electoral democracy is also believed to be a more durable political system under socioeconomic stress.[9] Levels of political support and legitimacy are obviously linked to regime stability. In democracies, waning political support for the ruling party or leaders often leads to regime change through an open popular election. Even under authoritarian systems, sufficient popular support can also be an important factor affecting sociopolitical stability. Serious erosion of political support and legitimacy in authoritarian countries may lead to regime change or even violent revolution. We believe this is also the case with the CCP in reformed China.

Using large-scale survey data from *Social and Political Values of Chinese Urban Residents, 2013*, this chapter focuses on the empirical support of the Chinese communist regime at the mass level in urban China. The survey was conducted between October and December 2013, covering 34 large cities throughout China, most of which are provincial capital cities.[10] The cities represent different regions and different levels of economic development. The sample size for each city is around 100 people on average. The relatively small sample size creates a representative error for each city. However, if we treat the sample as a totality, the findings can be regarded as representative of population in the 34 cities. On a descriptive level, the key question to be answered in the study is: To what degree does the current regime in China enjoy popular diffuse support from Chinese

urban residents? On an analytical level, I would like to find out what factors affect Chinese urban residents' level of support for the current political system in China. Other than the usual socioeconomic and demographic factors such as age, gender, income, education and Communist Party membership, the study is especially interested in exploring the relationships between trust of the central government, the evaluation of government performance, democratic election inclination, nationalism, and life satisfaction on the one hand and popular regime support on the other. Even though this study does not cover the whole of the country, findings from this research do shed light on CCP's longevity and China's future political development.

DIFFUSE POLITICAL SUPPORT IN URBAN CHINA

Popular support for a political regime can be divided into two types of support: instrumental support and diffuse (or affective) support. Instrumental support refers to public's support and evaluation of governmental performance and specific policies. This kind of support is often formed over a relatively short period of time and is subject to quick change. Diffuse support refers to generalized emotional attachments and fundamental support that members of a society have for the government and political system in general. Diffuse support, which takes years to form and is influenced by socialization forces, is more entrenched and provides the firm foundation for the stability and viability of a given political system and regime.[11] Diffuse support among urban residents in China is the dependent variable in this study.

Scholars have proposed different ways to operationalize the concept of "diffuse political support" or political legitimacy. For Seymour Martin Lipset, political legitimacy is tied to affect for the prevalent political institutions in a society.[12] David Easton, by contrast, sees diffuse political support as affect for authorities, values and norms of the regime, and for the political community.[13] Combining the two approaches, Muller and Jukam identify three major operational components for the concept of political support or political legitimacy: (1) "affect tied to evaluation of how well political institutions confirm to a person's sense of what is right;" (2) "affect tied to evaluation of how well the system of government upholds basic political values in which a person believes;" and (3) "affect tied to evaluation of how well the authorities conform to a person's sense of what is right and proper behavior."[14]

Not to make things complicated, I measured popular support for China's political regime among Chinese urban residents by asking the respondents a relatively straightforward question on their attitudes toward system change. Our survey respondents were provided with three general statements and were asked to choose one of them to describe their attitude toward the existing system. The three statements are:

1. We have many serious problems in our country and we must fundamentally reform the current system.
2. We indeed have some problems in our country and we should adopt gradual reform measures to improve the current system.
3. Our country is basically good and we should maintain the status quo so that destructive forces cannot harm the current system.

I believe these three skillfully designed statements can detect Chinese urban residents' true attitudes and feelings toward the current political system in China. The first statement implies a serious dissatisfaction with the current system in China and an inclination to make fundamental changes to the system. Respondents choosing this statement tend to be less supportive of the current political regime in the PRC. People choosing the second statement are the moderates who favor gradual and non-revolutionary changes to the system, while people choosing the third statement are most supportive of the political system in China. Respondents were given the option to refuse to answer the question. Survey experience in China tells us that if the questions are too sensitive in the Chinese context, it is problematic to judge whether Chinese respondents do indeed give truthful answers. In other words, any questions in surveys conducted in China cannot be too politically sensitive. I did not use direct questions such as whether they favor supporting or not supporting the CCP or the current government in China, whether China should adopt Western-style multiparty democracy, or whether any particular Chinese leaders should step down, since those questions, in our view, would be too politically sensitive for Chinese respondents to give truthful answers. I believe that the questions are appropriate for the Chinese context and are adequate enough to detect popular support for the current political system in China. In addition, the survey was conducted over telephone (instead of face-to-face) in an anonymous fashion to ensure the respondents to give truthful answers.

Table 2.1   Diffuse political support among Chinese urban residents (%)

We have many serious problems in our society and we must fundamentally reform the current system	24.0
We indeed have some problems in our society and we should adopt gradual reform measures to improve the current system	51.9
Our society is basically good and we should maintain the status quo so that destructive forces cannot harm the current system	1.2
Refuse to answer	23.0
N = 3491	

Source: Social and Political Values of Chinese Urban Residents, 2013

Table 2.1 shows that about one quarter of our respondents chose the first statement, indicating that they support radical change of the current political system in China. However, slightly over 50 percent of our urban residents believe that graduate reform is the right option for China. Very few chose the third statement. These findings show that most people in urban China tend to be moderates who do not wish to bring about fundamental regime change. It should be noted that the percentage of our respondents opting for radical system change is a substantial proportion. I suspect that some people who refused to choose any of the three statements might be in favor of radical system change due to the sensitivity of this question.

These findings do indicate that most people in our survey seem to be in favor of gradual reform of the system instead of revolutionary change of it. People may be concerned that radical changes in the system are likely to bring uncertainties—or even chaos—to their lives. Since 1989, the Chinese government has relentlessly emphasized the importance of political and social stability in developing the country's economy. In the early 1990s, the Chinese media actively cited and reported the bad news coming out of Russia and Eastern European countries that had just gone through fundamental social and political changes, implying that had China taken the path of the former Soviet Union China would have experienced political instability, economic decline, national disintegration, or even civil war.[15] The repeated emphasis on stability by the Chinese government struck a chore in the psyche of many Chinese people who are stigmatized by *luan* or chaos due to centuries of upheavals, rebellions, civil wars and revolutions in contemporary Chinese history. The chaotic ten years of the Cultural Revolution is still fresh in people's minds in China. The perception

that civil liberties and Western-style liberal democracy bring chaos and instability is often reinforced by the experiences of the new democracies in the developing world in the last two decades.

Explaining Political Regime Support in Urban China

It is probably no surprise to find a moderate level of political support among most urban residents in the Chinese cities, given China's impressive socioeconomic developments over the past four decades. It is reasonable to assume that most people do not want to rock the boat when things are going relatively well. A multivariate analysis will provide a better picture of the factors that might have influenced the levels of political support among our urban residents. Specifically, I will look into the following factors: trust of the central government; the evaluation of government performance; an inclination toward democratic elections; nationalist feelings; and life satisfaction. In addition, a number of demographic variables, such as age, gender, level of education, income and CCP membership, will also be included in the multivariate analysis.

Trust of the Central Government

There are many sources for diffuse political regime support. Trust of government is one of them. It is only logical to assume that government trust contributes to diffuse political regime support. I hypothesize that Chinese urban residents who trust the central government tend to be more supportive of the current political system in China. A number of national and regional empirical surveys conducted in the last three decades in China have repeatedly shown that between 70 and 90 percent of Chinese citizens tend to have high levels of trust and confidence in the Chinese central government, even though the questions asked in the surveys concerning political trust were phrased differently.[16] A survey conducted as far back as in 1993 shows that 70 percent of Chinese citizens trusted decisions made by their central government.[18] In fact, the *World Values Survey* findings indicate that the trust in political institutions among Chinese citizens is higher than the world average.[19]

Social and Political Values of Chinese Urban Residents, 2013 measures trust of the central government among Chinese urban residents by asking them to agree or disagree with the following statements: "The central government always tries to do the right things for the people". It is believed that this statement, which is based on a political trust question asked in the

Table 2.2   Trust of the central government among Chinese urban residents (%)

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disgree	Strongly disagree	Hard to say	N
The central government always tries to do the right things for the people	29.4	36.5	19.5	7.5	7.1	3400

Source: Social and Political Values of Chinese Urban Residents, 2013

US National Election Studies (NES),[20] are sufficient to capture the essence of political trust of the central government among Chinese urbanites. As shown in Table 2.2, less than a third (29.4 percent) of the respondents strongly agreed with the statement and another 36.5 percent of them agreed with the statement, indicating majority of Chinese urban residents trust the central government, even though the trust level found here is lower than most of other surveys conducted in China

Evaluation of Government Performance

I believe that there is a positive relationship between government evaluation and regime support among Chinese urban residents. Evaluation of governmental performance can be considered part of the concept "instrumental support". According to David Easton, instrumental support (or specific support, as David Easton calls it) "arises out of the satisfaction that members of a system feel they obtain from the perceived outputs and performance of the political authorities".[21] As mentioned earlier, instrumental support, unlike diffuse or affective support, is formed in a relatively short period of time and is subject to rapid erosion with possible impact on the overall political stability and viability of a regime. A number of scholars have empirically studied the relationships between affective support and instrumental support and their impact upon political stability.[22] Affective support and instrumental support are obviously interrelated. It is found that evaluations of governmental performance and support of political regime are correlated. Studies have suggested that sustained positive evaluations of government performance can increase the level of affective support or regime legitimacy.[23] That is why, according to Macridis and Burg, many non-democratic regimes survive.[24] In a similar fashion, a sustained low level of popular satisfaction with governmental performance can also decrease the public's diffuse regime support.

It is argued here that a correlative relationship between evaluations of governmental performance and regime support also exists in China. As mentioned earlier, CCP's legitimacy base has shifted from Mao's ideology and personal charisma to economic performance in the reform era. An empirical study of Beijing residents in the mid-1990s found a positive relationship between citizens' evaluations of government policy performance and regime legitimacy.[25] Specifically, it is hypothesized that those who give better evaluations of governmental performance tend to be more supportive of the current political system in China.

I measured evaluations of government performance in both political and economic areas. The following question was used to tap into Chinese urban residents' political evaluation of the Chinese government. Urban respondents in our survey were asked to agree or disagree with the statement "Complaints and suggestions made by the people to government agencies are often ignored and not responded to". As shown in Table 2.3, close to 60 percent of urban residents surveyed agree or strongly agree with this statement, indicating a relatively high level of dissatisfaction with government responsiveness to people's concerns. I measured the evaluation of government economic performance by asking the survey respondents what kind of achievement has been made by the Chinese government in the reform era. Table 2.4 indicates that around 50 percent of Chinese urban residents believe that significant achievement has been made and another 35 percent think that some achievement has been made. Overall, Chinese urbanites have a relatively positive evaluation of the economic performance by the Chinese government.

Table 2.3 Political satisfaction (%)

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Hard to say	N
Complaints and suggestions made by the people to government agencies are often ignored and not responded to	26.1	33.8	20.1	11.8	8.2	3491

Source: Social and Political Values of Chinese Urban Residents, 2013

Table 2.4   Evaluation of government economic reform (%)

	Significant achievement	Some achievement	Little achievement	No achievement	Not sure	N
What kind of economic achievement has the Chinese government made in the reform era?	49.5	35.4	5.4	1.7	8.0	3491

Source: Social and Political Values of Chinese Urban Residents, 2013

Table 2.5   Preference for direct election of Chinese central government leaders (%)

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Hard to say	N
It is the best that central government officials be elected by the people directly	33.1	26.7	18.3	10.9	11.0	3491

Source: Social and Political Values of Chinese Urban Residents, 2013

Inclination for Democratic Election

It has been long debated among Chinese intellectuals whether Chinese culture is suitable for democracy, given China's long history of authoritarian tradition. Do Chinese people actually have democratic values? A number of empirical studies have shown that Chinese people in both urban and rural areas do support core democratic values and they are not anti-freedom.[26] I believe that the democratic election of central government leaders is directly related to the support or lack of it for the current political system in China. If people who prefer for direct election of Chinese top leaders tend to be less supportive of the existing political system, we can infer that the authoritarian nature of Chinese political system may well be one of the causes for lack of support for the current political system in China. As shown in Table 2.5, most Chinese urbanites do favor direct popular election of central government leaders in China.

Nationalist Feelings

As China grows into the second-largest economy in the world, Chinese nationalism is also on the rise. Contemporary China has witnessed the development of strong nationalist attitudes. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) came to power riding on nationalism. In the reform era, as the CCP de-ideologed the Chinese society, nationalism has become a major pillar providing political legitimacy for the CCP.[27] Since becoming General Secretary of the CCP, Xi Jinping has clearly abandoned Deng Xiaoping's "staying low" foreign policy by proposing the "big power" dream for China, which has fueled nationalism at the mass level. Clashes over territorial disputes with Japan and Southeast Asian countries such as the Philippines and Vietnam provided further impetus to Chinese nationalism. Nationalism has helped President Xi Jinping to consolidate his political position in China and build his strongman image abroad. Hence, I hypothesize that Chinese urban residents who have strong nationalist feelings tend to be more supportive of the current system in China since they like the fact that Xi Jinping is building China up as a great world power.

Given the rapid rise of nationalism in China, little empirical research has been done on this subject, however. In *Social and Political Values of Chinese Urban Residents*, several questions were used to detect nationalistic feelings among Chinese urban residents. As shown in Tables 2.6 and 2.7, Chinese urban residents demonstrate relatively strong nationalist feelings. Around 55 percent of our respondents support the position that China should play a major role in world affairs, while close to 70 percent of them think China should play a major role in Asian affairs.

Table 2.6   China's role in international affairs (%)

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Hard to say
China should play a major role in world affairs	23.2	32.7	18.0	7.7	18.4
China should play a major role in Asian affairs	33.5	33.2	12.3	4.9	16.1
N = 3491					

Source: Social and Political Values of Chinese Urban Residents, 2013

Table 2.7   Support for China to reclaim *Diaoyu* islands by force (%)

	Support	Not support	Hard to say
Chinese government should take back *Diaoyu* islands by military force even though such an action may risk a war with Japan N = 3491	54.6	29.4	16.0

Source: Social and Political Values of Chinese Urban Residents, 2013

In recent years China has intensified its territorial disputes with Japan over the Diaoyu Islands. China has, on several occasions, sent paramilitary patrol vessels into the 12 nautical miles of these islands to challenge Japanese territorial claims of what Japanese calls *Senkuku* islands and they were confronted by Japanese coastguard vessels. Military skirmishes could have happened if the disputes are not handled properly. When asked whether the Chinese government should take back Diaoyu Islands by military force, even though such an action could spark a war with Japan, 54 percent of our urban residents support such a hawkish action, while close to a third oppose it. It is possible that Chinese nationalistic feelings might be stronger if we include the rural population in our survey. The relationship between nationalist feelings and interest in politics could have important implications for political stability in China.

Life Satisfaction

It is generally recognized that most people tend to be conservative or risk-averse in nature. Especially when people are happy or relatively happy with their life, they do not favor fundamental changes that are likely to disrupt things. Rapid economic growth in China during the reform era has brought an improved life to most Chinese people, especially the urban dwellers. In the survey it is found that nearly 60 percent of urban residents said that they are either happy or very happy with their life (see Table 2.8). A key political strategy of the Chinese Communist Party is to strengthen and maintain its political legitimacy by improving people's living standard and making people happy.[28] Therefore, I hypothesize that people who are happy with their life show more support for the current political system in China

Table 2.8 Life satisfaction (%)

	Very happy	Happy	So so	Not happy	Very unhappy	Hard to say
In general, are you happy with your life? N = 3491	12.1	46.8	33.5	5.6	0.8	1.2

Source: Social and Political Values of Chinese Urban Residents, 2013

Key Demographic Variables

Finally I examine whether and how some key demographic control variables such as age, gender, education and income in multivariate analysis influence my survey respondents' attitudes toward the political system in China. Studies of established democratic, non-democratic countries and transitional countries suggest that these key demographic factors do influence people's attitudes toward the political regime and/or political change.[29] In addition, these demographic factors need to be controlled for to capture the effect of the other independent variables in this study.

Age

In terms of age, a number of studies on the former Soviet Union and China have noted that while older people in those countries tend to be more supportive of the existing political system, younger people are more likely to challenge the authoritarian regime and are more prone to change. In their study of the former Soviet Union, Ada Finifter and Ellen Mickiewicz observed that youth in the former Soviet Union tended to be in the 'modern sector' and were often the active participants of social and political movements for change while the older generation were more resistant to change.[30] The same phenomenon has also been observed in China. For instance, Alfred Chan and Paul Nesbitt-Larking found that the younger respondents in their survey study tended to be more critical of the Chinese government.[31] Therefore, I expect that young respondents in our five-city survey will be less supportive of the current system in China.

Gender

It is hard to predict how gender affects our respondents' attitudes toward the Chinese political system. On the one hand, despite Chairman Mao's efforts and rhetoric in creating gender equality in the new China, inequalities between the sexes have never been eliminated, even during Mao's time.[32] In fact, gender inequalities have widened during the market-reform era in areas such as employment, pay, treatment in the workplace, family role, and sociopolitical status, since the role of the government has been reduced in those areas. On the other hand, however, the Chinese government at all levels still remains the last resort that Chinese women depend on to protect them against discrimination and unequal treatment. In addition, Chinese women tend to be more obedient to political authorities than their male counterparts.[33] Therefore, it remains to be seen whether gender is a factor in system support among Chinese urban residents.

Education

Education has long been cited as a predictor of political attitudes and behaviors. In their study, Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba found that educational level has the most important effect on one's level of civic culture.[34] Education is also found to be related to regime support in the former USSR. Specifically, the better-educated tended to be more critical of the communist regime, despite the official indoctrination at schools.[35] As Brian Silver noted, "Advanced education is likely to be intellectually liberating and to induce a more critical stance toward official dogma."[36] Many China scholars have argued that Chinese intellectuals tend to be regime challengers and have spearheaded many of the social and political movements in the twentieth century, notably the May 4 Movement.[37] Based on these observations and arguments, we hypothesize that the better-educated residents in our surveyed cities would be less supportive of the political system in China.

Income

With regard to income, it is argued that individuals' good socioeconomic conditions contribute to democratic stability in established democracies.[38] Similarly, studies of Chinese politics in recent years find improved regime legitimacy of the CCP among Chinese people due to the significant improvement in living standard and economic conditions in the reform era.

We believe that people with a higher income bracket tend to be politically conservative in their political orientation. Therefore, it is hypothesized that people of higher income tended to be more supportive of the current political system in China.

CCP Membership

The present-day Chinese Communist Party claims a membership of over 80 million. Even though their percentage in the population is still small, Chinese Communist Party members tend to be the brightest and most capable people in the Chinese society. A major reason for many CCP members to join the Party is for career consideration instead of ideological commitment. Nonetheless, CCP members' role in sustaining the current political system is substantial since most, if not all of them, do benefit from the system. As such, it is only logical to suspect that CCP membership is positively related to regime support in China.

Multivariate Analysis

Table 2.9 reports the results of multivariate analysis for system support among Chinese urban residents. Most of the independent variables are significant in explaining the level of affective support for the Chinese political system in urban China. It is found that trust in the government contributes to political regime support. Findings in the study also lend support to the performance-based legitimacy for the CCP. Positive evaluation of government performance in both political and economic areas and life satisfaction are strong predictors of affective support for the exiting political regime in China. These findings confirm the close relationship between instrumental support and affective support. Positive instrumental support strengthens people's affection for the political system.

It is also found, unsurprisingly, that preference for electoral democracy weakens people's support for the current political system in China. This indicates the direction of system change preferred by democracy-oriented Chinese urban residents. It is interesting that multivariate analysis shows that Chinese urbanites with strong nationalist feelings tend to be less supportive of the current Chinese political system. It is possible that in the mind of strong nationalists the Chinese government is not aggressive enough to defend Chinese national interests and project Chinese power overseas. Because of that they may not be happy with the current political

Table 2.9   Multivariate model of regime support in urban China

Independent variables	Unstandardized coefficient	Standardized coefficient	Standardized error
Trust in central government	0.025*	0.044	(0.010)
Evaluation of government performance	0.026***	0.049	(0.009)
Preference for democratic election of leaders	−0.024***	−0.047	(0.009)
Nationalist feelings	−0.011*	−0.038	(0.005)
Life satisfaction	0.028	0.031	(0.015)
Sociodemographic variables			
Age	0.004	0.006	(0.011)
Gender (female = 0, male = 1)	0.037	0.025	(0.026)
Education	−0.119***	−0.156	(0.014)
Income	−0.022***	−0.080	(0.005)
CCP membership (non-CCP membership = 0 CCP membership = 1)	0.073*	0.038	(0.033)
Constant	3.368***		(0.013)
Multiple R		0.225	
R^2		0.050	
Adjusted R^2		0.048	

*$p < 0.05$; **$p < 0.01$; ***$p < 0.000$

system in China. Such a finding indicates that nationalism is indeed a double-edged sword. The Chinese government has to be careful in playing the nationalist card in strengthening its political legitimacy.

Among the demographic factors, neither age nor gender seems to be related to levels of regime support among Chinese urban residents. It is found, however, that education and income are negatively correlated to regime support in urban China. More educated urbanites and people with higher income tend to be less supportive of the current system in China. Finally, CCP members are found to have higher level of regime support in urban China.

CONCLUSION

Popular political support and legitimacy of the Chinese government is always an intriguing question. This chapter attempts to empirically explore the level of support for the current political regime among urban residents

in China. Descriptively, the level of support for the current Chinese political regime registers relatively high in the large Chinese cities surveyed. Most of the respondents in the survey admit that there are some problems in the current Chinese system, but they prefer a policy of gradual reform to improve the system. This finding empirically proves that the current political regime in China does enjoy a certain level of political legitimacy among Chinese urban residents. It is also found in the survey that most Chinese urban residents are not happy with government attention given to public's opinions and suggestions, but they give better evaluation of government performance in the economic realm. In addition, the survey reveals that more than half of Chinese urban residents have strong nationalistic feelings, including supporting Chinese government to use force to take the disputed Diaoyu Islands from Japan.

Analytically, it is found, on the one hand, that trust in government and a good evaluation of government performance contribute to CCP's legitimacy and popular support among Chinese urban residents. It is also found that subjective wellbeing is significantly related to urban residents' support for the Chinese political regime. The findings suggest CCP's strategy of improving its political legitimacy by good governance and improving people's living standard has been working. On the other hand, preference for electoral democracy and nationalism reduce popular support for the current political system in urban China.

Both of our descriptive and analytical findings offer up-to-date empirical evidence (not just impressionistic argument) for CCP's performance-based political legitimacy and explain, in part, CCP's longevity in the face of the worldwide tide of democratization. The good news for the Chinese government is that it does enjoy a certain degree of support from China's urbanites due to popular trust of the central government and government performance. The bad news is that this popular support may be fluid and unsustainable. Since CCP's legitimacy is largely dependent on government performance, bad economic conditions will no doubt seriously erode the legitimacy of the Chinese government. Moreover, as more people accept democratic values, popular dissatisfaction with the current political system in China is more likely to increase. Also, as China becomes a world power, nationalism will surely grow in China. If the Chinese government cannot satisfy or accommodate popular nationalist feelings, regime support will suffer, as our empirical finding suggests.

Notes

1. A representative of this school of thought is Gordon Chang who, famously or infamously, who, in his book *The Coming Collapse of China* (New York: Random House, 2001), predicted that the Chinese Communist Party would collapse within a decade.

2. See Susan Shirk, *China: Fragile Superpower: How China's Internal Politics Could Derail its Peaceful Rise* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

3. See Andrew Nathan, "Authoritarian Resilience," *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (2003), pp. 6–17.

4. On political legitimacy studies inside China, see Bruce Gilley and Heike Holbig, "The Debate on Party Legitimacy in China: A Mixed Quantitative and Qualitative Analysis," *Journal of Contemporary China*, Vol. 18, No. 59 (2009), pp. 338–358. Western literature on this subject includes: Xueliang Ding, *The Decline of Communism in China: Legitimacy Crisis, 1977–1989* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Gungwu Wang and Yongnian Zheng, eds., *Reform, Legitimacy and Dilemmas: China's Politics and* Society (Singapore: World Scientific Press, 2000); Bruce Gilley, *The Right to Rule—How States Win and Lose Legitimacy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009); Thomas Heberer and Gunter Schubert, eds., *Regime Legitimacy in Contemporary China* (London: Routledge Press, 2009); Jie Chen, *Popular Political Support in Urban China* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004); Vivienne Shue, "Legitimacy Crisis in China?", in Peter Hays Gries and Stanley Rosen, eds., *State and Society in 21st-century China* (New York: Routledge Press, 2004), pp. 41–68; Yang Zhong, "Legitimacy Crisis and Legitimization in China," *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, Vol. 26, No. 2 (1996), pp. 201–220; and Andre Laliberte and Marc Lanteigne, eds., *The Chinese Party-state in the 21st Century: Adaptation and the Reinvention of Legitimacy* (London, Routledge Press, 2008).

5. Yongnian Zheng, *Discovering Chinese Nationalism in China* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

6. See, for example, David Shambaugh, *China's Communist Party: Atrophy and Adaptation* (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2008); Bruce Dickson, *Democratization in China and Taiwan: The Adaptability of Leninist Parties* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), and "Dilemmas of Party Adaptation: The CCP's Strategies for Survival," in Peter Hays Gries and Stanley Rosen, eds., *State and Society in 21st-century China*; and Andrew Nathan, "Authoritarian Resilience".

7. On CCP's efforts in recruiting private entrepreneurs in the party, see Bruce Dickson, *Red Capitalists in China: The Party, Private Entrepreneurs, and Prospects for Political Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,

2003); and "Integrating Wealth and Power in China: The Communist Party's Embrace of the Private Sector," *China Quarterly*, No. 192 (December 2007), pp. 827–854.

8. See Pierre F. Landry, *Decentralized Authoritarianism in China: The Communist Party's Control of Local Elites in the Post-Mao Era* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

9. Samuel Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1992), pp. 27–28.

10. The following is the list of the surveyed cities: Beijing, Shanghai, Tianjin, Chongqing, Changchun, Changsha, Chengdu, Dalian, Fuzhou, Guangzhou, Guizhou, Harbin, Haikou, Hangzhou, Hefei, Huhhot, Jinan, Kunming, Lanzhou, Nanchang, Nanjing, Nanning, Ningbo, Qingdao, Shenyang, Shenzhen, Shijiazhuang, Taiyuan, Wuhan, Xian, Xining, Xiamen, Yinchuan, and Zhengzhou.

11. See Roy C. Macridis and Steven L. Burg, *Introduction to Comparative Politics: Regimes and Changes* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1991), pp. 9–10.

12. Seymour Martin Lipset, *Political Man: The Social Bases of Politics* (Garden City, NY: Anchor, 1963).

13. David Easton, *A Systems Analysis of Political Life*; and "A Reassessment of the Concept of Political Support," *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 5 (1975), pp. 435–457.

14. Edward N. Muller and Thomas O. Jukam, "On the Meaning of Political Support," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 71, No. 1 (1977), p. 1566.

15. Yang Zhong, "Legitimacy Crisis and Legitimization in China," p. 214.

16. See, for example, *World Values Survey* (2000), Variable 153, http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org;
   Tianjian Shi, "Cultural Values and Political Trust: A Comparison of the People's Republic of China and Taiwan," *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 33, No. 4 (2001), p. 406; Lianjiang Li, "Political Trust in Rural China," *Modern China*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (2004), pp. 228–258; and *Asian Barometer Survey* (2006), Question 29a, www.asianbarometer.org; and Lianjiang Li, "The Object and Substance of Trust in Central Leaders: Preliminary Evidence from a Pilot Survey" (paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Seattle, Washington (September 1–4, 2011).

17. Tianjian Shi, "Cultural Values and Political Trust: A Comparison of the People's Republic of China and Taiwan," *Comparative Politics,* Vol. 33, No. 3, (2001), pp. 401–419.

18. Yang Qing and Wenfang Tang, "Exploring the Sources of Institutional Trust in China: Culture, Mobilization, or Performance?," *Asian Politics and Policy,* Vol. 2, No. 3, (2010), pp. 415–436.

19. The question asked in the National Election Studies is: "How much of the time do you think you can trust the government in Washington to do what is right?" See Gabriela Catterberg and Alejandro Moreno, "The Individual Bases of Political Trust: Trends in New and Established Democracies," *International Journal of Public Opinion Research,* vol. 18, no. 1, (2005), pp. 31–48.

20. David Easton, "A Reassessment of the Concept of Political Support," p. 437.

21. See, for example, Seymour Martin Lipset, "Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 53, No. 1 (1959), pp. 69–105; Edward N. Muller and Thomas O. Jukam, "On the Meaning of Political Support;" Edward N. Muller and Carol J. Williams, "Dynamics of Political Support-Alienation," *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (1980), pp. 33–59; Edward N. Muller, Thomas O. Jukam and Mitchell A. Seligson, "Defuse Political Support and Antisystem Political Behavior: A Comparative Analysis," *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 26, No. 2 (1982), pp. 240–264; and Steven L. Burg and Michael L. Berbaum, "Community, Integration, and Stability in Multinational Yugoslavia," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 83, No. 1 (1989), pp. 535–554.

22. See Roy C. Macridis and Steven L. Burg, *Introduction to Comparative Politics: Regimes and Changes*; and Steven E. Finkel, Edward N. Muller and Mitchell Seligson, "Economic Crisis, Incumbent Performance and Regime Support: A Comparison of Longitudinal Data from West Germany and Costa Rica," *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 19 (1989), pp. 329–351.

23. Roy C. Macridis and Steven L. Burg, *Introduction to Comparative Politics: Regimes and Changes*, p. 9.

24. Jie Chen, Yang Zhong and Jan William Hillard, "The Level and Sources of Popular Support for China's Current Political Regime," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 1 (1997), p. 59.

25. Jie Chen and Yang Zhong, "Defining the Political System of Post-Deng China: Emerging Public Support for a Democratic Political System," *Problems of Post-Communism*, Vol. 45, No. 1 (1998), pp. 30–42; and Yang Zhong, "Democratic Values among Chinese Peasantry: An Empirical Study," *China: An International Journal*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (2005), pp. 189–211.

26. See Yang Zhong, "Legitimacy Crisis and Legitimization in China," *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, Vol. 26, No. 2 (1996), pp. 201–220.

27. Ibid.
28. See, for example, Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba, *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1963); Robert Dahl, *Polyarchy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971); Ronald Inglehart, "Value Priorities and Socioeconomic Change," in S. H. Barnes and M. Kaase, eds., *Political Action: Mass Participation in Five Western Democracies*, pp. 305–342; Donna Bahry, "Politics, Generations, and Change in the USSR," in James Miller, ed., *Politics, Work, and Daily Life in the USSR: A Survey of Former Soviet Citizens* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 61–99; Brian Silver, "Political Beliefs of the Soviet Citizens: Sources of Support to Regime Norms"; Ada Finifter and Ellen Mickiewicz, "Redefining the Political System of the USSR: Mass Support for Political Change"; James Gibson, Raymond Duch and Kent Tedin, "Democratic Values and the Transformation of the Soviet Union," *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 54, No. 2 (1992), pp. 329–371; Richard Rose and William Mishler, "Mass Reaction to Regime Change in Eastern Europe: Polarization or Leaders and Laggards," *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 24 (1994), pp. 159–181; and Ada Finifter, "Attitudes toward Individual Responsibility and Political Reform in the Former Soviet Union," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 90, No. 1 (1996), pp. 138–161.
29. Ada Finifter and Ellen Mickiewicz, "Redefining the Political System of the USSR: Mass Support for Political Change," p. 864.
30. Alfred Chan and Paul Nesbitt-Larking, "Critical Citizenship and Civil Society in Contemporary China," p. 308.
31. Jean Lock, "The Effect of Ideology in Gender Role Definition: China as a Case Study," *Journal of Asian And African Studies*, Vol. 24, Nos 3–4 (1989), pp. 228–238; and Wen-Lang Li, "Changing Status of Women in the PRC," in Shao-chuan Leng, ed., *Changes in China: Party, State and Society* (New York: University Press of America, 1989), pp. 201–224.
32. See J C. Robinson and K. Parris, "The Chinese Special Economic Zones, Labor and Women".
33. Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba, *The Civic Culture*, pp. 380–384.
34. James Gibson, Raymond Duch and Kent Tedin, "Democratic Values and the Transformation of the Soviet Union"; and Arthur Miller, "In Search of Regime Legitimacy".
35. Brian Silver, "Political Belief of the Soviet Citizen: Source of Support for Regime Norms," in James Miller, ed., *Politics, Work and Daily Life in the USSR: A Survey of Former Soviet Citizens*, p. 1010.
36. See Carol Hamrin, "Conclusion: New Trends under Deng Xiaoping and His Successors," in Merle Goldman, Timothy Cheek and Carol Hamrin, eds., *China's Intellectuals and the State: In Search of a New Relationship*

(Cambridge, MA: Council of East Asian Studies, 1987), pp. 275–311; Merle Goldman, *Sowing the Seeds of Democracy in China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994).

37. Ronald Inglehart, "Values, Objective Needs and Subjective Satisfaction among Western Publics," Comparative Political Studies, Vol. 9 (1977), pp. 429–458; S. H. Barnes, B.G. Farah and F. Heunks, "Personal Satisfaction," in S. H. Barnes and M. Kasse eds., *Political Action: Mass Participation in Five Western Democracies* (Beverly Hill, CA: Sage Publications, 1979); and J.J. Thomassen, "Economic Crisis, Dissatisfaction and Protest," in Kent Jennings, et al. eds., *Continuities in Political Action: A Longitudinal Study of Political Orientation in Three Western Democracies* (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1989), pp. 103–134.

Levels of Political Interest

Introduction

Interest in politics should be an important topic in political science since it is one of the most reliable predictors for political participation in democracies.[1] Interest in politics can be regarded as an aspect of psychological involvement in politics and psychological involvement in politics and public affairs is often believed to be a necessary, if not a sufficient, condition for active political participation.[2] Empirical evidence shows those who were more interested in politics out-participated those who were indifferent toward politics.[3] This is not only true in democracies but also seems to be true in the case of authoritarian countries such as the former Soviet Union, where similar findings have also been reported.[4] In an empirical study of mass political participation in the former USSR conducted by Donna Bahry and Brian Silver, it is found that those who were more interested in politics were more likely to engage in conventional as well as unconventional political activities.[5]

Yet mass level of political interest as a dependent variable has not been the subject of sufficient study by political scientists. It has been treated either as an act of political participation[6] or as an independent variable.[7] For example, we are still unclear why some people are more interested in politics than others and what causes people's interest in politics in the first place.[8] In his work Matthew Holleque summarized three types of possible explanations for people's political interest: demographic explanations;

socialization explanations; and social context explanations.[9] Included in the demographic explanations are gender, age and education. Specifically, women, young people and the less educated tend to be less interested in politics. People's political interest can also be brought about by political socialization. Parents' level of political interest, for example, can have direct influence on their children's interest in politics and public affairs through political discussion at home. Peer influence at schools can also have a socialization effect on political interest among children and young people. Social context or environment could also make people become either more or less interested in politics. Working in the government or a newsroom, for example, is probably more likely to increase one's interest in politics and public affairs. I should also add that one's personal experience may also contribute to one's attention to politics. If someone is mistreated or discriminated against by a government agency or a public official, for example, he/she is likely to become politically attentive.

This chapter is not concerned with explaining why Chinese urbanites are either interested or not interested in politics or state public affairs. Rather, the research attempts to find out the levels of political interest among urban residents in China and who are more likely to be interested in politics and state affairs. It should be noted that political interest in this research is defined as attention to politics or state public affairs and not an act of political participation. Are Chinese urban residents still interested in political affairs or state public affairs after three decades of economic reform? Chinese economic reforms that were started in the late 1970s and the early 1980s followed the tumultuous Cultural Revolution. During the ten years of the Cultural Revolution Chinese official media was filled with political rhetoric and the population was highly politicized. With economic reform, materialism has been prevalent in the Chinese society. Deng Xiaoping's "getting rich is glorious" carries the day. Yet, are Chinese urbanites still attentive to political affairs of the day? Levels of political interest in urban China have implications for political participation and involvement. Finding out who are more interested in politics may give indications on the direction of political participation or non-participation among Chinese urbanites. For example, if the people who are interested in politics happen to be people who do not trust the government and who are dissatisfied with the current political regime in China, it could spell trouble for the government because they may potentially become participants for anti-regime political activities.

Given the importance of the topic, surprisingly few studies have been conducted on the degree and sources of political interest in China. One of the earliest empirical studies finds that, contrary to the popular perception that most Chinese people were only interested in materialism, a relatively high level of political interest still existed among Beijing residents in the mid-1990s.[10] The study further reveals that age, gender, income, political status, political efficacy, and life satisfaction had a significant impact on the levels of political interest among Beijingers. Another study conducted in rural southern Jiangsu province has found similar results.[11] A more recent study based on a survey of urban residents in ten Chinese cities indicates that close to 60 percent of the people surveyed were somewhat or very interested in politics.[12] The more important findings include that people who support democratic values and political reform tend to be more politically attentive. These studies lay the groundwork for the current study.

This research differs from the previous studies in two ways. First, unlike the previous studies, this study is based on a much larger-scale survey (*Social and Political Values of Chinese Urban Residents, 2013*) that covers 34 Chinese cities. In other words, this survey sample is more representative of the Chinese urban population. Second, this research employs independent variables such as regime support that tap directly into the relationship between level of political interest and attitudes toward the current political regime and government in China among Chinese urban residents.

Levels of Political Interest Among Chinese Urbanites

China has experienced a tumultuous political history since the late nineteenth century. People were constantly drawn to and pushed away from politics. Generally speaking, mass political interest in politics can be divided into three discrete periods. The first period was prior to the establishment of the People's Republic of China when most Chinese seemed to be politically apathetic and ignorant.[13] This period was also characterized as a period of "popular isolation from politics".[14] The situation with regard to mass political interest has changed significantly since the founding of the People's Republic in 1949. The second period between the 1950s and 1970s was marked by a "participation explosion" resulting from Chairman Mao's constant political campaigns and mobilization efforts that resulted

in unprecedentedly high levels of popular interest in political events and public affairs that culminated during the ten years of the Cultural Revolution when all of the nation's attention centered around politics.[15] Between 1966 and 1976, the Chinese society was highly politicized and politics penetrated into every aspect of people's lives.

The third period covers most of the post-Mao reform period and continues to the present. A popular perception among China observers is that the Chinese people are by and large consumed with material goods and making money and have become politically indifferent.[16] Deng Xiaoping's slogan "getting rich is glorious" carries the day in modern China. A major consequence of the reforms is the significant depoliticization of Chinese society. One China scholar claimed that there has been an antipolitical tendency in the Chinese society which is tacitly endorsed by the Chinese government.[17] Have Chinese people become indifferent to politics and state affairs? Anecdotal evidence shows that Chinese people still pay attention to politics and national public affairs. It is not uncommon that people talk about politics and national/international events in public places such as restaurants, parks, and train stations. Political postings and comments proliferate on Chinese websites and social media. Regional survey findings mentioned earlier do show that people in China still care about politics and state affairs. Unlike my previous studies that are based on either a single city or a few cities or regions, this current study surveys 34 Chinese cities. Descriptive findings on the levels of political interest from this study are much more representative of Chinese urban population.

Political interest in this chapter is defined as an individual's degree of interest in and concern with politics. Defined as such, political interest is thus different from political participation, even though the two concepts are somewhat related. Political interest is the psychological involvement for political and public affairs, while political participation is about pattern of action or inaction in politics and public affairs.[18] Studies do find that those who are more interested in politics are more likely to participate in politics. However, concern for political affairs does not always translate into actual political participation due to a variety of reasons including institutional constraints and lack of resources. Even in a democracy, as Robert Dahl has noted, it is considerably easier to be merely interested in politics than to be actually active in politics; interest costs little in terms of physical energy and time; and activity demands much more.[19]

I used one straightforward question to measure the level of political interest among our urban residents: "Are you interested in politics?" My operationalization and measurement of political interest is derived from Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba's seminal study of civic political culture. According to Almond and Verba, political interest means "following governmental and political affairs and paying attention to politics", which "represent the cognitive component of the civic orientation."[20] In their study Almond and Verba used two straightforward indicators to measure civic cognition: (1) attention to political and governmental affairs in general[21]; and (2) attention to major political events/activities such as a campaign in a democratic system.[22]

Survey findings show that majority of urban residents in the 34 Chinese cities still care for politics. Specifically, as Table 3.1 shows, around 10 percent of our urban respondents were very interested and another 52 percent of them were interested in politics. Put together, over 60 percent of Chinese urban residents in the surveyed cities showed interest in politics. This combined figure is very close to the results of the ten Chinese city survey conducted in 2012 and somewhat lower than that found in urban Beijing in the 1990s. This latter finding is perhaps unsurprising since Beijing is the political center of the country and the city's residents are historically more interested in politics than the rest of the country.[23] It is also found that 35 percent of the respondents did not care about politics. In fact, the level of political interest among our surveyed urban Chinese residents is comparable to or higher than those found in some other countries (see Table 3.2). For example, our respondents showed a higher level of political interest than those found in South Korea, Taiwan, Mexico and South Africa and on a par with the United States, Germany and Japan. It is unsurprising that most Chinese urbanites are still interested in politics due to the many issues they face: high housing prices, pollution, official

Table 3.1 Level of political interest among Chinese urban residents (%)

	No interest at all	Not interested	Interested	Very interested	Hard to say
Are you interested in politics? N = 3491	6.6	29.2	52.6	9.9	1.8

Source: *Social and Political Values of Chinese Urban Residents, 2013*

Table 3.2 Levels of political interest in the USA, the UK, Hong Kong, Taiwan, South Korea, Japan, Mexico and South Africa (%)

	USA	UK	Hong Kong	Taiwan	South Korea	Japan	Mexico	South Africa
Respondents saying they are "somewhat" or "very interested" in politics	59	44	14	28	41	64	34	44

Source: *World Value Survey* (5th Wave), U.S.A. (2006), UK (2006), Hong Kong (2005), Taiwan (2006), South Korea (2005), Japan (2005), Mexico (2005), South Africa (2007). The actual question in the survey is: "How interested would you say you are in politics?" See http://www.wvsevsdb.com/wvs/WVSAnalizeStudy.jsp

Table 3.3 Discussion of politics with others (%)

	Whenever we see each other	Often	Not often	Never	Hard to say
How often do you discuss politics with others? N = 3491	0.7	21.0	63.4	14.0	0.9

Source: *Social and Political Values of Chinese Urban Residents, 2013*

corruption and the widening gap between rich and poor. Widespread access to the Internet has facilitated and fueled the interest and discussion of national and local political issues.

Even though most people surveyed expressed interest in politics, few of them liked to talk about politics. When asked how often they discuss or talk about politics with other people, only about 20 percent said they do so often, over 60 percent of them do not talk about politics often and 14 percent of Chinese urban residents never talk about politics with others (see Table 3.3). This is probably due to the fact that China is still not a liberal and open society whereas many people may feel comfortable in discussing political issues with other people. *Motan guoshi* (or "not talking about state affairs") has a long tradition in China. Reluctance in sharing thoughts, especially political thoughts, with others may also be a factor in preventing Chinese people from talking about politics with others.

WHO TEND TO BE MORE POLITICALLY INTERESTED?

It is shown in the previous section that urban residents in China still exhibit relatively high levels of political interest. The more interesting and important question is, however, who are more interested in politics due to its political implications if we assume that there is a relationship between the level of political interest and the potential for political action. The relationship between socioeconomic and political factors and levels of political interest is well established in Western political science literature.[24] A number of studies have indicated that political factors contribute to people's interest in political and state affairs.[25] For example, research findings reveal that both the desire for democracy and political change and poor evaluation of government performance among both urban residents and rural peasants are positively related to interest in politics. Drawing upon previous studies on this subject conducted in China and other countries, this chapter focuses on some new factors in addition to the ones mentioned above. Specifically, the following sociopolitical factors will be examined as having possible association with an individual level of political interest among urban dwellers in China: belief in religion, political support (including both diffuse and specific regime support), belief in democratic values, nationalist feelings, belief in Marxism (the official ideology) and life satisfaction. All these factors carry potential political implications for a person who is interested in politics and public affairs. In addition, I have also included some usual demographic control variables such as age, gender, political status and education in the multivariate analysis.

Religious Belief and Political Interest

Religion and politics have been closely related from time immemorial. Religion, for example, plays a durable role in the domestic politics in the United States, the oldest democracy in modern era in the world.[26] Political interventions by religious forces, especially evangelical Christianity, have been well-documented in Asia, Africa and Latin America.[27] Christianity played a prominent role in the Third Wave of democratization throughout the world.[28] Three factors have been cited to explain the intricate relationship between religion and politics: religious creed, religion as an institution, and social/cultural group of believers.[29] Religious creed here refers to fundamental religious beliefs, values and ethical codes that inevitably influence

religious believers' value systems and behaviors in non-religious realms such as politics. Religion, as an institution, also has its own institutional interests that may clash with governmental policies. Religious forces often have to act to protect their religious interests against the state. Religions are also social groups. Members of religious groups interact with each other and tend to form a "group" orientation and attitude toward politics and public affairs. Due to the close relationship between religion and politics, it is only natural to assume that religious people do pay attention to politics since political leaders and government can make decisions that may impact religious life and affairs.

However, do Chinese religious believers care about politics since the Chinese government strictly enforces the separation between church and state? Whether religious believers in China pay more attention or less attention to politics carries important political implications. Our survey found that only about 16 percent of Chinese urban residents in the 34 cities have religious beliefs while overwhelming majority of Chinese urban residents are still atheists. Our survey further found that among Chinese urban religious believers 66 percent are Buddhists, 5 percent are Taoists, close to 20 percent are Christians (17 percent Protestants and 2 percent Catholics), and around 7 percent are Muslims (see Table 3.4).

Table 3.5 reveals that there is little difference between religious believers and non-religious believers with regard to levels of political interest. In fact, slightly more religious believers said that they are either interested or very interested in political affairs. It does not seem that religious belief is a factor affecting people's attention paid to politics. However, it is still beneficial to put religious belief as an independent variable in the multivariate analysis to examine its relative influence on individual level of political interest.

Table 3.4 Major religious beliefs among Chinese urban residents (%)

Buddhism	66.2
Taoism	5.0
Protestantism	17.5
Catholism	1.9
Islam	6.9
Others	2.6
N = 3491	

Source: *Social and Political Values of Chinese Urban Residents, 2013*

Table 3.5 Believers/non believers vs. political interest (%)

	No interest at all	Not interested	Interested	Very interested	Hard to say
Religious believers	5.5	24.7	54.6	14.1	1.0
Non religious believers	6.8	30.0	52.2	9.1	1.9

Source: *Social and Political Values of Chinese Urban Residents, 2013*

Political Support

How is political support related to levels of political interest? Are people who are supportive of the current political regime more or less interested in political affairs? The associational relationship between the two, whichever way it goes, carries political implications. If supporters of the regime tend to be more interested in politics and state affairs, the Chinese government may not have too much to worry about. It means that more political interest may not lead to political actions against the government. If the opposite is true, however, it may not be good news for the government since it may mean that those dissatisfied with the regime with high levels of political interest have the potential to translate their interest into political actions. The variable of political regime support and how it was measured were explained in Chap. 2 (see Table 2.1).

Belief in Democratic Values

One major characteristic of Chinese reform since the late 1970s has been the adoption of market mechanisms while retaining the core of the authoritarian political system. There have been some political reforms during this period but most of them fall into the category of administrative and bureaucratic reforms. Even though most China scholars have recognized that China in the reform era has been transformed from a Maoist-style totalitarian system to a more relaxed authoritarian system,[30] some fundamentals of the communist political system have remained: (1) the exclusive one-party rule; (2) absolute political power of the CCP in governmental affairs; (3) strict control of party and governmental personnel by the CCP; and (4) complete or near complete official control of the media.

Two questions One were used in our survey to detect our respondents' belief in democratic values. The first question asked our respondents

to either agree or disagree with the statement whether Chinese state leaders should be directly elected by the people. The second question asked whether people need to be involved in decision—making process even if leaders are capable and have the trust of the people. Answers to these two questions can tell whether a respondent is for democracy or not. As shown in Table 2.5 in the previous chapter, it is found that close to 60 percent of our respondents agree or strongly agree that Chinese state leaders should be directly democratically elected by the population. Even more people (more than two third) insist on participating in decision-making process even if they think their leaders are capable leaders that they trust. In other words, most Chinese urban residents do want to have democracy. It is worthwhile to find out whether these people are more or less interested in politics.

Nationalist Feelings

As mentioned in Chap. 2, Chinese nationalism has been on the rise because China has become a major power in the world economically, militarily and diplomatically. Strong nationalist feelings were detected in the *Social and Political Values of Chinese Urban Residents* survey among our urban residents. As reported in Chap. 2, the majority of urban residents in our survey believe that China should play a major role in world affairs as well as in Asian affairs. More than half of the surveyed even support the Chinese government to use force to take the disputed Diaoyu Islands from the Japanese hands even though such an action may trigger a war with Japan and even the United States (see Tables 2.6 and 2.7). The relationship between nationalist feelings and interest in politics could have important implications for political stability in China.

Belief in Marxism

Marxism is still the official ideology in China, even though the country has been engaged in market-driven reform for over three decades and many of the reform measures are not compatible with orthodox Marxist doctrines. Marxism (together with Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought) is taught as a required course from middle school to college in China. Students have to take an examination on the subject of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought if they decide to enter college as an undergraduate or a graduate student. Applicants for civil service jobs also have to take a similar exam.

Marxism is still a strong presence in Chinese official media. It should be pointed out that Marxism as an ideology has been re-emphasized since the Hu Jingtao administration. One symbol of this trend is the establishment of School of Marxism on Chinese university campuses, as required by the Chinese Ministry of Education. Marxism is currently treated as one of the most important subject fields in state-provided funding for social sciences and humanities. However, it is interesting to find out how many people in China actually believe in Marxism. It is even more interesting to know how belief in Marxism is related to people's interest in politics and state affairs. In the survey we asked our respondents to answer the following question: "There are many isms in the world and Marxism is one of them. Do you believe in Marxism?" About one-third (30 percent) of the respondents said that they believe in Marxism; 40 percent do not believe in Marxism and another 30 percent are not sure. It is logical to hypothesize that belief in Marxism is positively related to interest and attention to politics since politics in China is dominated with official state affairs.

Life Satisfaction

Following Maslow's theory of the hierarchy of human needs, we should assume that one's interest in politics and public affairs is positively related to his or her economic conditions. It is suggested in voting studies that people of higher economic standing tend to be more active in election participation. Verba and his associates hinted another reason why economically better-off people are more likely to be involved in politics and public affairs: they have greater stakes, i.e., vested economic interest, in politics.[31] However, there is another argument suggesting that people with higher income are less interested in politics due to the fact that they are too busy making money.[32] This is probably especially true in the case of China. Many China watchers observe that Chinese people with higher incomes are preoccupied with grabbing financial and business opportunities and they are less interested in politics and public affairs.[33] Another possible reason why people with a lower income might be more interested in politics and public affairs is that they have more problems and complaints about their poor economic conditions and hope that the government will address their concerns.

In their study of Beijing residents, Chen and Zhong did find that the level of political interest was positively related to one's financial conditions.[34] Therefore, I hypothesize that Chinese urbanites with a higher

income and a higher level of life satisfaction tend to pay more attention to politics and state affairs. Descriptive findings of life satisfaction among Chinese urban residents were reported in Table 2.8.

Socio-Demographic Variables

Level of political interest is often associated with certain demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of a population. For example, Chen and Zhong in their study of mass political interest in Beijing found that middle-aged males and communist party members tended to pay more attention to politics.[35] I also include a number of demographic and socioeconomic factors such as age, gender, educational level and communist party membership as control variables in the multivariate analysis.

Age

In Western political science literature, a prevailing argument on the relationship between age and political interest is that young people tend to show less political interest than the old due to their preoccupation with other things in life, such as establishing their career and forming a family.[36] Therefore, I hypothesize that age influences levels of political interest among our Chinese urban residents in a positive way, i.e., older people tend to pay more attention to politics and state affairs.

Gender

It is also well documented in Western political science literature that there is a gender gap with regard to level of political interest and participation. Kent Jennings once noted, "a raft of research around the world has demonstrated that, by most standards, men are more politically active than women," and such a gap is narrower in more advanced societies and among people of higher socioeconomic strata.[37] This gap is in part due to the traditional value of women's role in society and the perception that politics is a "man's business".[38] As mentioned in Chap. 2, promoting gender equality has been an official policy in the PRC since the 1950s. Chairman Mao was most vocal in creating equality between men and women. During Mao's era, both men and women were mobilized equally to participate in the various political campaigns and activities. However, gender equality was never completely achieved during Mao's years due in part to deep-rooted traditional values that favored men over women and

encouraged women to be socially passive. This situation has not changed in the post-Mao era. Women's roles in Chinese society are still perceived as taking care of children and family. Chen and Zhong's survey found that women were less attentive to politics than men in Beijing.[39] I hypothesize, therefore, that among Chinese urban residents men are more interested than women in political and state affairs.

Education

Like age and gender, education is often considered a major factor in affecting one's level of political interest and participation.[40] People with a higher level of education tend to show higher levels of political interest. There are a number of reasons for this positive relationship. For one thing, education equips a person with the cognitive capability to receive and digest political information. Education also increases one's capacity to understand personal implications of political events and affairs and one's confidence in his or her ability to influence politics if given the opportunity. Empirical studies conducted in China show that education does indeed have an impact on individuals' levels of political interest.[41] Hence it is hypothesized in this study that levels of education positively contribute to one's level of political interest among China's urban residents.

Political Status

Claiming a membership of over 80 million, the Chinese Communist Party is undoubtedly the world's largest political party. One of the requirements for joining the CCP is that his or her political consciousness or level of attention paid to current political affairs. CCP members are periodically organized in meetings and informed about party and government policies and in discussing political issues. In addition, CCP members are mostly elites with better education in the Chinese society. Thus, I expect the CCP members are more interested in politics and state affairs among our urban Chinese residents.

Analytical Findings and Conclusion

Table 3.6 displays the multivariate regression results of political interest in urban China. First of all, religious belief is positively related to levels of political interest in urban China. In other words, urban dwellers who profess religious faith tend to be more interested in politics and states affairs,

Table 3.6   Multivariate model of political interest in urban China

Independent variables	Unstandardized coefficient	Standardized coefficient	Standardized error
Religious belief (0 = no, 1 = yes)	0.159**	0.050	(0.051)
Political support	−0.175***	−0.107	(0.027)
Democratic values	0.017*	0.038	(0.007)
Nationalist feelings	0.044***	0.091	(0.008)
Belief in Marxism (0 = no, 1 = yes)	0.251***	0.179	(0.024)
Subjective well-being	0.052*	0.035	(0.024)
Sociodemographic variables			
Age	0.051***	0.049	(0.018)
Gender (female = 0, male = 1)	0.277***	0.115	(0.040)
Education	0.091***	0.073	(0.022)
Income	−0.013	0.030	(0.008)
CCP membership (non-CCP membership = 0 CCP membership = 1)	0.308***	0.099	(0.053)
Constant	0.888***		(0.215)
Multiple R		0.348	
R^2		0.121	
Adjusted R^2			0.118

*$p < 0.05$; **$p < 0.01$; ***$p < 0.000$

even though their number is small. Second, it is also shown that urban residents who want more fundamental system change in China tend to be more attuned to politics. Third, it is found that people with more of democratic values are more attentive to politics and national affairs. Fourth, as the analysis shows, people with nationalistic feelings are more attentive to politics and state affairs. Moreover, Chinese urbanites who believe in the official doctrine of Marxism pay more attention to politics. Finally, personal wellbeing is positively related to levels of political interest.

Most of the sociodemographic factors do matter in urban residents' levels of political interest in China. Specifically, older people are more interested in politics than the younger; men tend to pay more attention to politics than women; and people with more education show more interest in politics than the less educated. These findings are consistent with evidence with regard to political interest and participation found in other studies in China and other countries.[42] As was expected, communist party members pay more attention to politics and state affairs. As mentioned earlier, CCP members are required to pay attention political events and

state affairs, not to mention that many CCP members are party and government officials whose job is politicking and who also have greater stakes in politics and state affairs. Interestingly, income does not show up as a significant factor in affecting levels of political interest in this study. Taken together, the independent variables explain about 11 percent variance in the regression model.

What do these findings mean politically? Contrary to the popular perception that Chinese people are now too preoccupied with improving their economic conditions and materialism that they are indifferent to political issues and state public affairs, our descriptive findings show that over 60 percent of our Chinese urban respondents are still either interested or very interested in politics and state affairs. This figure is comparable to those found in other countries. It is apparent that economic growth and the pursuit of materialism in the reform era have not completely diverted most Chinese urbanites' attention away from politics. If level of political interest is an indicator for people's potential for political activity, the finding of relatively high levels of political interest from this study may imply a great potential for mass political participation and activities in urban China.

It is more interesting to find who tend to be more interested in politics and state affairs among Chinese urbanites since these findings may carry important implications for China's political development. First of all, it is worth noting that the analytical findings from this study show that Chinese urban residents are no different from people in other parts of the world as far as the relationships between level of political interest and some demographic factors such as age, gender and education are concerned. Second and more importantly, it is found that people who show more interest in politics in urban China tend to be people who are less supportive of the current political system and who are more democratic-oriented. In other words, the Chinese urban residents who are more interested in politics tend to be people who might challenge the current political system in China. The implication is that, if given the opportunity, the anti-regime people are more likely to participate in conventional and unconventional political activities. Third, potential political activists also include people with religious belief since they also show more interest in politics. Finally, it should be worrisome for the Chinese authorities that people with strong nationalist feelings are more attuned to politics and national affairs since these people have participated in anti-Japanese and anti-American protests in urban China in the past and are less tolerant of possible weak Chinese foreign policy stands in the future.

Notes

1. Sidney Verba, Kay Lehman Schlozman, and Henry E. Brady, *Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995).
2. See, for example, Sidney Verba, Norman Nie and Jae-on Kim, *The Modes of Democratic Participation: A Cross-national Study* (Beverly Hills, CA: Cambridge University Press, 1971); Samuel Huntington and Joan Nelson, *No Easy Choice: Political Participation in Developing Countries* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976); Curtis Gans, "The Empty Ballot Box: Reflections on Nonvoters in America," *Public Opinion*, Vol. 1 (1978), pp. 54–57; Arthur Hadley, *The Empty Polling Booth* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1978); Sidney Verba, Norman Nie and Jae-on Kim, *Participation and Political Equality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978); Stephen Bennett, *Apathy in America, 1960–1984: Causes and Consequences of Citizen Political Indifference* (Dobbs Ferry, NY: Transnational Publishers, 1986); Tom DeLuca, *The Two Faces of Political Apathy* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1995).
3. Verba, Nie and Kim, *Participation and Political Equality*, p. 71.
4. Donna Bahry, "Politics, Generations, and Change in the USSR," in James Miller, ed., *Politics, Works, and Daily Life in the USSR: A Survey of Former Soviet Citizens* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Donna Bahry and Brian Silver, "Soviet Citizens Participation on the Eve of Democratization," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 84, No. 3 (1990), pp. 821–847; and Cynthia Kaplan, "New Forms of Political Participation," in Arthur Miller, William Riesinger and Vicki Hesli, eds., *Public Opinion and Regime Change: New Politics of Post-Soviet Societies* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1993), pp. 153–167.
5. Donna Bahry and Brian Silver, "Soviet Citizens Participation on the Eve of Democratization."
6. See Jianhua Zhu, Xinshu Zhao and Hairong Li, "Public Political Consciousness in China," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 30, No. 10 (1990), pp. 992–1006.
7. Tianjian Shi, *Political Participation in Beijing* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997).
8. Markus Prior, "Either You've Got It or You Don't: The Stability of Political Interest over the Life Cycle," *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 72, No. 3 (2010), p. 747.
9. Matthew Holleque, "Rethinking the Stability of Political Interest," http://users.polisci.wisc.edu/behavior/papers/holleque_stability_04_08_11.pdf (accessed on August 27, 2015).

10. Jie Chen and Yang Zhong, "Mass Political Interest: Apathy in Urban China," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, Vol. 32 (1999), pp. 281–303.

11. Yang Zhong and Junghyoun Kim, "Political Interest in Rural Southern Jiangsu Province in China," *Journal of Chinese Political Science*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (2005), pp. 1–20.

12. Yang Zhong and Wei Hu, "Mass Political Interest in Urban China: An Empirical Study," *China: An International Journal*, Vol. 11, No. 3 (2013), p. 93.

13. See Jianhua Zhu, Xinshu Zhao and Hairong Li, "Public Political Consciousness in China," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 30, No. 10 (1990), p. 992.

14. James Townsend, *Political Participation in Communist China* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1967), pp. 10–20.

15. Ibid.

16. For this perception, see Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn, *China Wakes: The Struggle for the Soul of a Rising Power* (New York, NY: Time Books, 1994); and Arthur Rosenbaum, *State and Society in China: The Consequences of Reform* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1992), p. 19.

17. Peter Moody, "The Antipolitical Tendency in Contemporary Chinese Political Thinking," in Shiping Hua, ed., *Chinese Political Culture: 1989–2000* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2001), p. 162.

18. Stephen Bennett, *Apathy in America, 1960–1984: Causes and Consequences of Citizen Political Indifference* (Dobbs Ferry, NY: Transnational Publishers, 1986), p. 33.

19. Robert Dahl, *Who Governs? Democracy and Power in an American City* (New Haven, CONN: Yale University Press, 1961), p. 281.

20. Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba, *Civic Culture: Political Attitudes in Five Nations* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1963), p. 88.

21. The actual question for this indicator is: "Do you follow the accounts of political and governmental affairs? Would you say you follow them regularly, from time to time, or never?" See ibid., p. 89.

22. The actual question for this indicator is: "What about the campaigning that goes on at the time of a national election—do you pay much attention to what goes on, just a little, or none at all?" Ibid.

23. On the ten Chinese cities survey, see Yang Zhong and Wei Hu, "Mass Political Interest in Urban China: An Empirical Study," p. 93. On the two Beijing surveys, see Yang Zhong, Jie Chen and John Scheb, "Mass Political Culture in Beijing: Findings from Two Public Opinion Surveys," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 38, No. 8 (1998), pp. 763–783.

24. Almond and Verba, *Civic Culture: Political Attitudes in Five Nations*; Norman Nie and Jae-on Kim, *The Modes of Democratic Participation: A Cross-national Study*; Sidney Verba, Norman Nie and Jae-on Kim,

Participation and Political Equality; Stephen Bennett, *Apathy in America, 1960–1984: Causes and Consequences of Citizen Political Indifference*; and Tom DeLuca, *The Two Faces of Political Apathy*.

25. See Jie Chen and Yang Zhong, "Mass Political Interest: Apathy in Urban China"; and Yang Zhong and Junghyoun Kim, "Political Interest in Rural Southern Jiangsu Province in China".

26. Kenneth D. Wald, *Religion and Politics in the United States* (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 1992).

27. Robert D. Woodberry and Timothy S. Shah, "The Pioneering Protestants." *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 15, No. 2 (2004), pp. 47–61.

28. David Lumsaine, *Evangelical Christianity and Democracy in Asia* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2009).

29. Kenneth D. Wald, *Religion and Politics in the United States*.

30. See Yang Zhong, *Local Government and Politics in China: Challenges from Below* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2003), pp. 4–7.

31. Verba, Nie and Kim, *The Modes of Democratic Participation*, p. 126.

32. Walter Lippmann, *Men of Destiny* (New York: NY: The Macmillan Co., 1927).

33. Kristof and WuDunn, *China Wakes: The Struggle for the Soul of a Rising Power*.

34. Chen and Zhong, "Mass Political I interest: Apathy in Urban China."

35. Ibid.

36. See, for example, Kent Jennings and Richard Niemi, *Generations and Politics: A Panel Study of Young Adults and Their Parents* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981); and Bennett, *Apathy in America, 1960–1984*.

37. Kent Jennings, "Political Participation in the Chinese Countryside," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 91, No. 2 (1997), p. 367.

38. Robert Lane, *Political Life: Why and How People Get Involved in Politics* (New York, NY: Times Books, 1965), pp. 210–214; and Bennett, *Apathy in America, 1960–1984*, pp. 69–70.

39. Jie Chen and Yang Zhong, "Mass Political Interest: Apathy in Urban China."

40. Almond and Verba, *Civic Culture*, p. 381; Hans Kingemann, "The Background of Ideological Conceptualization," in Samuel Barnes, ed., *Political Action: Mass Participation in Five Western Democracies* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1979), pp. 255–277; and Ronald Inglehart, *Modernization and Postmodernization*, p. 307.

41. Jianhua Zhu, Xinshu Zhao and Hairong Li, "Public Political Consciousness in China"; Andrew Nathan and Tianjian Shi, "Cultural Requisites for Democracy in China: Findings from a Survey," *Daedalus*, Vol. 139 (1994), pp. 95–123; and Jennings, "Political Participation in the Chinese

Countryside"; and Jie Chen and Yang Zhong, "Mass Political Interest: Apathy in Urban China."

42. Robert Lane, *Political Life: Why and How People Get Involved in Politics*; Jennings and Niemi, *Generations and Politics: A Panel Study of Young Adults and Their Parents*; Bennett, *Apathy in America, 1960–1984*; and Jennings, "Political Participation in the Chinese Countryside."

Democratic Values

INTRODUCTION

After three waves of democratization, the debate whether a country should be democratic or not has stopped in many parts of the world. Most countries in the world, according to Freedom House, are electoral democracies, even though democracy is under stress in some corners of the world.[1] The debate about whether China should become a Western-style multiparty parliamentary democracy is not over. The Chinese Communist Party has officially rejected the model of parliamentary and multiparty democracy and, instead, is promoting "socialist democracy". The official explanation is that the Western-style parliamentary multiparty democracy was tried in Chinese history and it did not work. More importantly, the Chinese government claims that this model will not work in China in future. Witnessing problems in new democracies and fearing societal chaos and national disintegration that a democratic system could bring to China, increasing number of Chinese scholars do not support or advocate electoral democracy in China, at least for now.

Despite the fact that democracy seems to be a remote possibility in China in the foreseeable future, it is still important to study democratic political culture in urban China for two main reasons. First, it is worthwhile to find out what ordinary urban residents in China feel about democracy and what democratic values they hold. A popular view among democracy doubters in China is that China is not ready for democracy

because Chinese people do not have a democratic culture after centuries of authoritarian rule and traditions. But is that perception true? Second, even though China may not become a Western-style liberal democracy any time soon, some kind of democratic reform is not totally out of the question. When that happens, will the Chinese people be ready for living in such a democratic system and make it work? In general, it is assumed that "the development of a stable and effective democratic government depends upon the orientations that people have to the political process-upon the political culture."[2] As Gibson and Duch point out, "Democratization is more than the simple imposition of formally democratic institutions on a polity"; and people's beliefs can either constrain or promote a "structural process of democratization."[3]

This chapter will give a description of urban Chinese political culture with regard to democracy and democratic values. More importantly, I will also focus on the factors that possibly affect the support or the lack of it for core democratic values among urbanites in China, such as religious belief, support for market reform, political satisfaction, social trust, personal well-being, nationalist feelings, and some key sociodemographic factors.

DEMOCRATIC VALUES OF CHINESE URBAN CITIZENS

In the debate about democracy in China it is important to know whether Chinese people want democracy in the first place. Also, as mentioned above, it is assumed that the development of stable and effective democratic institutions depends heavily upon citizens' support of core democratic values. It is hard to imagine how democratic institutions will survive in a political culture where there is serious lack of support for some key democratic values. Over the years, scholars of political science have identified the following core democratic values: political tolerance, appreciation of liberties and freedoms, consciousness of civic/political rights, and support for competitive electoral politics.[4]

Table 4.1 summarizes findings regarding democratic values held by Chinese urban residents. It is shown that overwhelming majority of urban residents in this study endorse freedom of expression or tolerance for free speech, an essential element of democratic values. Close to 90 percent of our respondents strongly agree or agree that people should be able to express their views freely regardless of their political beliefs. A smaller percentage of urban citizens in China show tolerance for assemblies and demonstrations. When asked whether assemblies and demonstrations

Table 4.1   Key democratic values (%)

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Hard to say	N
Regardless of one's political beliefs, he or she is entitled to freely express his or her views	59.2	29.0	6.9	2.4	2.4	3491
Assemblies and demonstrations can cause social chaos, therefore they should be banned	18.0	24.4	34.4	16.7	6.4	3491
It is the best that central government officials be elected by the people directly	33.1	26.7	18.3	10.9	11.0	3491
There is no need for people to get involved in the decision-making process if leaders are capable and trusted by the people	6.6	16.0	34.1	38.3	5.0	3491

Source: *Social and Political Values of Chinese Urban Residents, 2013*

should be banned if they could cause chaos, a small majority (51.1 percent) of our urban residents disagree with this statement while about 44.4 percent agree. It is probably because many Chinese are concerned with social instability or *luan* due to centuries of revolutions and revolts in contemporary Chinese history and instabilities in some democratic countries (including some of Chinese neighbors). However, still more than 50 percent of our respondents want to retain the right of assemblies and demonstrations. In fact, even though there are restrictions on open demonstrations in China, protest activities (*quntixing shijian*) are happening on a daily basis in the country. The most cited official figure of social protests in China was 87,000 that occurred in 2005.[5] According to a *Wall Street Journal* report, the figure reached 180,000 in 2010.[6] Because of the frequent occurrences of street protests, the Chinese government has made maintaining stability (*weiwen*) a top priority for all levels of government in China.

Our survey findings also reveal that nearly 70 percent of urban Chinese residents support the direct election of Chinese central government officials by the population, even though current Chinese central officials are primarily appointed to their positions. In other words, it does seem that majority of Chinese urbanites are in favor of electoral democracy, a key element in any democratic system. The concept or meaning of democracy is often the subject of heated debate in Chinese intellectual circles. One

argument is that the concept of democracy held by ordinary Chinese is different from that held by people of Western countries. Chinese often equate democracy with government effectiveness, equality and satisfying popular needs, rather than democratic procedures. Regardless, it is indicated in this survey that Chinese urban dwellers do value and support procedural electoral democracy.

Moreover, there is also a strong sense of popular participation among Chinese urban residents. Over 70 percent of the respondents do not believe that people should disengage themselves from the decision-making process if leaders are capable and trusted by the people. These descriptive findings show that most Chinese urban citizens do hold key democratic values, defying the conventional wisdom that Chinese people are conservative with regard to democratic political culture or even anti-democratic. Answers to the above questions were combined and tallied to form an additive index to capture a collective profile of a respondent's level of support for core democratic values. This index is used as the dependent variable in the multivariate analysis below.

Factors Influencing Democratic Values

Many factors affect one's belief in core democratic values. I have chosen the following factors in the analysis of Chinese urban residents' belief or non-belief in core democratic values: religious belief, support for market reform, life satisfaction, political satisfaction, social trust, nationalist feelings, belief in Marxism, and some key socio-demographic factors. I believe these factors more important in the Chinese context.

Religious Belief and Core Democratic Values

Simply looking around the world, we know that religion and politics usually go together. Many of the conflicts in the world and domestic politics have religious components in them. However, the relationship between religion and democracy or religious values and democratic values remains ambiguous. A major issue in studying the relationship between religiosity and democratic values is that not all religions are the same. Many have argued that Islam is not quite compatible with modern democratic values and is, hence, a major obstacle for Muslim countries to establish functioning democracies.[7] It is obvious to observe that some elements that are common to all or most religions are not conceivably compatible with

liberal democratic values. For example, in almost all religions there is a super being to which religious believers have to answer. In other words, sovereignty in religion resides in such "god" figures. In democracy, however, sovereignty resides in people. It is hard to imagine that a functioning democracy can be established in a complete theocracy. Tolerance might be another incompatible issue between religion and democratic values since hardcore religious believers are not known for tolerating other religious beliefs.

Religious belief has not been used much in studying Chinese political culture, especially democratic culture. In the Chinese context, I hypothesize that religion might be a positive factor in influencing individuals' belief in core democratic values. In other words, it is likely that Chinese religious believers tend to hold stronger democratic value than non-religious believers. My main reason for this hypothesis is that Chinese religious believers are somewhat suppressed, both politically and socially. First of all, China's official ideology is Marxism that discourages religious beliefs. For political and ideological reasons, the Chinese government is still watchful of religious practices and put some restrictions on Islam and Christianity in particular. Second, China is primarily an atheist country (with only 16 percent of urban residents in our survey claiming religious beliefs).Therefore, Chinese religious believers have to practice their religion in an uncomfortable environment. As a result, I suspect that they are more in favor of a democratic and tolerant environment.

Support for Market Reform

It has been long argued by many scholars that the free market system goes hand in hand with democracy.[8] This has been borne out by the fact that almost all democracies in the world have, by and large, a free market economic system (even though not all market-driven economies are democratic). These two systems have at least one thing in common: free choice. Democracies follow the same logic that exists in a market economy. Political parties or candidates are like producers in a free market. Their party platforms or proposed policies are products in a free market. Citizens or voters are consumers. After comparing different policies citizens choose, freely, the policies they like in an electoral setting. Hence, free market values are similar to democratic values and they are connected at an individual level.[9] Hence I hypothesize that support for market economy is positively related to support for core democratic values among Chinese urbanites.

There is little doubt that the Chinese market-driven economic reforms have significantly improved the country's economic standing the world. China has been one of the fastest-growing economies in the world with an annual economic growth rate of 10 percent between 1979 (the year China officially launched its economic reform) and 2014.[10] China's economic reform has greatly improved Chinese people's living standard since the late 1970s. China's GDP per capita was only $154 in 1978, and it reached $6807 in 2013, an almost fortyfold increase.[11] However, market-driven reform has also brought some hardships and negative consequences such as inflation, economic insecurity, corruption, and a widening gap between the rich and the poor to the population. Findings from two surveys conducted in Beijing in the 1990s show that there was lukewarm support for the adoption of a complete or predominantly market economy and even less support for a predominantly private ownership economic system.[12] Only 38 percent of Beijing urban residents were in favor of a predominantly free market economy and only about 20 percent supported a mixed economic ownership system.[13] The seemingly low level of support for complete free market economy and private economic ownership system could be due to the fact that people did not fully enjoy the fruits of economic reform.

Have things changed after twenty years? I did not ask the same questions that were asked of Beijing residents in the mid-1990s. However, from the answers to the questions that were asked in this survey, it is indicated that the support for a market-driven economy is strong among urban residents in China. Over 80 percent of our urban respondents strongly agree or agree that China should have more private businesses (see Table 4.2). Answers to this question are used as support for private market economy in the multivariate analysis later. Private businesses have

Table 4.2 Support for private market economy (%)

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Hard to say	N
China should have more private businesses	49.5	35.4	5.4	1.7	8.0	3491
Chinese government should set an income cap to prevent further income inequality	9.2	11.8	29.1	43.8	6.1	3491

Source: *Social and Political Values of Chinese Urban Residents, 2013*

flourished during the era. According a recent study by Nicolas Lardy, a well-known economist specializing in the Chinese economy, 75 percent of China's industrial output was produced by the private sector in 2013, even though the state sector still plays a dominant role in some sectors such as oil, gas, banking and telecommunications.[14] The service industry and the new Internet economy are predominantly run by the private sector.

In common with many other economies, income inequality has become a serious problem in China. In fact, according to a study by the Institute for Social Research, income inequality in China has surpassed that of the United States with the Gini coefficient of around 0.55 (compared to 0.45 in the USA).[15] A 2012 nationwide survey found that economic inequality was rated the most severe problem, topping corruption and unemployment.[16] However, over 70 percent of urban respondents in our survey do not support the government in adopting the extreme measure of setting an income cap to improve income inequality in China (see Table 4.2). In addition, over 80 percent of the urban residents surveyed believe that China has achieved either significant or significant success in the reform era (see Table 2.4). With regard to the pace of economic reform, our urban respondents were split in their answers. Around 40 percent of the respondents feel the economic reform has been moving fast or too fast (see Table 4.3). One third of them seem to be satisfied with the current pace of economic reform. Close to 20 percent believe the economic reform has been slow or too slow.

Life Satisfaction

Studies have shown that individual life satisfaction is positively associated with the maintenance of the democratic system.[17] It is also found that people who were more satisfied with their socioeconomic conditions in the former Soviet Union, an authoritarian country, were not in favor of democratic change.[18] The logic is probably the same. If things are going

Table 4.3 Satisfaction with the speed of economic reform (%)

	Too fast	*Fast*	*Appropriate*	*Slow*	*Too slow*	*Not sure*	*N*
How do you feel about the pace of economic reform?	9.6	31.0	30.0	14.8	2.5	12.1	3491

Source: *Social and Political Values of Chinese Urban Residents, 2013*

well for you, why do you want to rock the boat? In other words, people who are happy with their current situation are more likely to prefer the status quo instead of change. In fact, improving people's living conditions and making people happy are exactly the strategy of the Chinese government to legitimize the Chinese Communist Party's rule in China for the last thirty years.[19] Deng Xiaoping claimed that development is the "hard truth", and that nothing else is as important. Hence, I suspect that life satisfaction is negatively associated with core democratic values on an individual basis in urban China. Therefore, I hypothesize that Chinese urban residents who feel happy with their life (see Table 2.8) are less supportive of the core democratic values that could lead to a potentially drastic political change, i.e., democratization.

Political Satisfaction

Political satisfaction can be used as yet another independent variable to account for the support or lack of core democratic values. Political satisfaction here refers to one's satisfaction with government performance. The logic that explains the relationship between life satisfaction and support for core democratic values can be applied in the relationship between political satisfaction and support for core democratic values among Chinese urban residents. If people are satisfied with government performance, they are less likely to support core democratic values that challenge the status quo. In the meantime, people who are unsatisfied with the government performance in urban China are more likely to support those regime-changing democratic values. As reported in Chap. 2 (see Table 2.4), urban Chinese residents register high level of dissatisfaction with government responsiveness to people's concerns.

Social Trust

Even though trust is a highly valued personal trait, it is hard to achieve in real life. Generalized social trust (part of what Robert Putnam calls "social capital") is a necessary condition that facilitates democracy.[20] It is argued that generalized trust contributes to engagement in democratic politics or political participation.[21] For most citizens in a society, politicians and government officials are mostly strangers. If there is a fundamental lack of trust of governmental officials and institutions, it is hard to imagine how a democratic system can function. Eric Uslaner made a special distinction

between generalized trust and particular trust (trust of your own kind) and how particular trust actually harms civic life by the examples of the Ku Klux Klan and some other social groups that are based on a particular trust that do not produce social capital.[22]

Even though the relationship between social capital/generalized trust and democratic values has been amply studied in democratic countries, such a relationship is still insufficiently researched in authoritarian countries. One school of thought is that there is an inherent positive relationship between generalized trust and support for democracy and the relationship exists across the board in all types of political systems.[23] The main reason for this relationship is that trust produces cooperativeness which further bridges cleavages and promotes commitment to community. However, a study by Amaney Jamal and Irfan Nooruddin found that institutions matter more in explaining the utility of trust.[24] Trust reinforces democratic governance in established democracies because citizens in democracies are protected by democratic institutions and they place higher trust of these institutions. In a similar vein, people in non-democratic settings who are protected by the authoritarian institutions tend to be more trusting of others and the authoritarian institutions. Therefore, levels of trust themselves are not inherently related to support for democracy. The positive relationship between generalized social trust and democratic values or support for democracy does not exist across the globe. In authoritarian countries, social trust may actually end up supporting the authoritarian system and values.

I intend to find out what the relationship between generalized social trust and democratic values is among China's urban residents. Since Jamal and Nooruddin found that trusting governmental institutions is a key medium between generalized social trust and democratic values, the hypothesis in the case of China should be that generalized trust and democratic values are not positively associated since China is not a democracy. However, the relationship depends on the trust of governmental institutions. In the survey our respondents were asked whether they trust the Chinese central government always does the right things for the people. It turns out most people (nearly 70 percent) in the survey do trust the Chinese government to do the right things for the people (see Table 2.2). However, bivariate correlation between trust of the central government and democratic values shows a negative relationship between the two (-0.45). In other words, people with democratic orientation tend to trust the government less. In light of this finding, I hypothesize a positive

relationship between generalized social trust and support for democracy among Chinese urban residents.

I use one straightforward question to tap into levels of generalized social trust among Chinese urbanites: "Do you agree or disagree with the statement that in general people can be trusted in our society?" Around 15 percent of the respondents strongly agree and 50 percent of them agree with this statement (see Table 4.4). About a third of the urban residents either disagree or strongly disagree with this statement. These findings put a question mark on a conventional wisdom that most people in China do not trust each other. Findings from two other questions in the survey also reflect urban Chinese social trust levels. Close to 80 percent of the respondents are willing to help people they do not know (see Table 4.4). In addition, around 50 percent of the surveyed claim that they occasionally talk to strangers on the Internet (see Table 4.5).

Nationalist Feelings

As China has been rising both as a world economic power and military power, so has Chinese nationalism, as described and explained in Chap. 2 (also see Tables 2.8 and 2.9). What is the relationship between nationalism and democracy? Some argue that there is an inherent positive relationship

Table 4.4   Social trust (%)

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Hard to say	N
In general people can trust each other in our society	14.8	50.0	24.2	7.6	3.5	3491
I am only willing to help with people that I know	5.2	13.8	38.1	40.2	2.6	3491

Source: *Social and Political Values of Chinese Urban Residents, 2013*

Table 4.5   Talking to strangers on the internet (%)

	Never	Occasionally	Very often	N
How often do you talk to strangers on the Internet?	37.0	52.5	10.5	3491

Source: *Social and Political Values of Chinese Urban Residents, 2013*

between the two if we trace the origin of nationalism as a desire for free-dom and equality, both of which are complementary to democratic rule.[25] It is also claimed that a democracy cannot function or even exist in a country whereas there is no common national identity and cultural homo-geneity.[26] Others have contended that nationalism and democracy are inherently contradictory to each other since nationalism implies exclusive-ness while democracy is based on inclusivity.[27] In reality, nationalism and democracy are probably both complimentary and contradictory to each other. It depends on what type of nationalism: benign civic nationalism or aggressive ethnic nationalism.

Similar arguments about the relationship between nationalism and democracy are also found in the case of China. Whether the relationship between the two are compatible or nor depends on how we understand nationalism (or patriotism, as some people in China would like to call it) in today's China. Some scholars see Chinese nationalism, promoted by the Chinese government to provide political legitimacy for Chinese Communist Party rule, as aggressive and chauvinistic, therefore a threat to both demo-cratic development at home and in the outside world.[28] The opposite school of thought views Chinese nationalism in a more positive light, believing that it is, by and large, benign, non-aggressive and defensive.[29] It is interesting to find out what the relationship between nationalist feel-ings and democracy values among Chinese urban residents turns out in multivariate analysis.

Belief in Marxism

Marxism can be understood from at least three levels or perspectives: the scholarly perspective, the ideological perspective and the practical perspec-tive. Marxism as a school of thought or a philosophy and as an ideology does not reject democracy out of hand. In fact, democracy is a centerpiece in Marxist doctrine, except that Marxism differentiates democracy into different types based on the concept of class. According to Marxism, eco-nomic base determines superstructure (including political system). The economic systems from slavery to capitalism are dominated by private ownership of means of production. That is why all the economic and social systems prior to socialism do not produce genuine democracy. According to Marxism, the parliamentary and electoral systems found in Western countries are sham democracies that only serve the interest of the ruling bourgeois class. Marxism believes that meaningful democracy can be

possible only in socialist and communist systems whereas public owner-ship of means of production exists. It is curious to find out whether Chinese urban residents who are believers of Marxism are supporters of democratic values. As reported in Chap. 3, about one-third (30 percent) of the surveyed urban respondents claim that they believe in Marxism, 40 percent do not believe in Marxism and another 30 percent are not sure.

Key Socio-Demographic Factors

A rich literature exists to link key sociodemographic factors to support for democratic values. Drawing upon previous studies, I expect that the fol-lowing sociodemographic factors influence Chinese urban residents' core democratic values: age, gender, education, income and party membership.

Age

In their study of the former Soviet Union, Finifter and Mickiewicz found stronger support for democratization among youth in that country.[30] They believe such a relationship is due to the fact that the young people in the former communist country were more likely to be associated with "modern" ideas and were more open-minded than the older people. Similar findings were also found in China.[31] For example, Chan and Nesbitt-Larking argued that youth in China tended to be more critical of the government and more protective of their individual rights.[32] Based on these observations I hypothesize that younger people in Chinese cities are more supportive of core democratic values and norms.

Gender

Evidence from the former Soviet Union suggests that there is a connec-tion between gender and attitudes toward democratic values and democ-ratization.[33] Specifically, women were found to be less supportive of democratic values due to their female traditional roles in society.[34] Even though gender equality has been the official policy in the PRC, women in China have yet achieved equal status with men. In fact, as was mentioned before, one can argue that women's social status has declined in the reform era due to the market-oriented reforms. Chinese women are still often given traditional jobs such as secretaries, waitresses, teachers and nurses. It is reasonable to assume that Chinese women tend to be more traditional

in values and culture and are more obedient to authorities. Therefore, it is hypothesized that female respondents in the survey are less supportive of core democratic values than men.

Education

Education has long been considered as a predictor of people's political attitudes. A major finding by Almond and Verba in their seminal work *The Civic Culture* is that "educational attainment appears to have the most important demographic effect on political attitudes" and that the more educated one is, the more he or she is inclined to possess "civic culture".[35] Gibson and Duch explain the positive relationship between education and support for democratic values by arguing that "education broadens perspectives, increases stores of information, and … contributes to respect for diversity and difference",[36] a key component of democratic values. It can be easily observed that intellectuals and students always stood at the forefront of liberal and democratic movements in twentieth-century China. A survey conducted in 1990 in China also shows that education had a positive impact on political tolerance.[37] Thus, I expect that better-educated people in urban China tend to be more in favor of core democratic values.

Income

Income is closely related to the variable of life satisfaction. Income has long been studied in democracies as an impact factor in predicting political behavior (especially voting behavior) and political cultural orientation. It is often argued that people in higher income brackets tend to be conservative in political orientation and prefer the status quo due to vested economic interest in the existing system. Following the same logic on the relationship between life satisfaction and support for democratic values, I hypothesize that urban Chinese residents with higher income are less in favor of core democratic values that might lead to drastic social and political changes in China.

Party Membership

Not all members of the Chinese Communist Party think alike. There is much diversity inside the CCP, even with regard to their ideology and political values. Almost all governmental positions are filled with CCP

members. Therefore, collectively CCP membership is more likely a better predictor for preserving the status quo. As a result, I hypothesize that CCP members in the survey tend to be less supportive of the core democratic values.

MULTIVARIATE ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION

Table 4.6 displays the results of multivariate analysis of democratic values and associated factors among Chinese urban residents. Some of the hypotheses raised above are confirmed and some others are not. First of all, I hypothesized that religious belief is positively associated with democratic values. The results show a positive relationship between the two, but the relationship is not statistically significant. One possible explanation might be that not all the religions are the same. Most of religious people in China are Buddhists and Taoists who are usually much more tolerated by the Chinese authorities these days. For Chinese Christians it might be

Table 4.6 Multivariate model of democratic values in urban China

Independent variables	Unstandardized coefficient	Standardized coefficient	Standardized error
Religious belief (0 = no, 1 = yes)	0.178	0.024	(0.121)
Support for market economy	0.321***	0.111	(0.050)
Life satisfaction	−0.223***	−0.065	(0.058)
Political satisfaction	−0.144***	−0.037	(033)
Social trust	0.020	0.009	(037)
Nationalist feelings	0.030	0.027	(0.019)
Belief in Marxism (0 = no, 1 = yes)	0.037	0.011	(0.057)
Sociodemographic variables			
Age	−0.270***	−0.111	(0.044)
Gender (female = 0, male = 1)	−0.202*	−0.036	(0.097)
Education	0.277***	0.094	(0.053)
Income	−0.003	−0.003	(0.018)
CCP membership (non-CCP membership = 0 CCP membership = 1)	−0.402**	−0.056	(0.125)
Constant	8.173***	(0.447)	
Multiple R		0.241	
R^2		0.058	
Adjusted R^2		0.055	

*$p < 0.05$; **$p < 0.01$; ***$p < 0.000$

a different story. Second, my hypothesis on the positive relationship between preference for a market-driven economy and support for core democratic values is confirmed by the multivariate findings. In other words, China is no different from other countries in this regard.[38] This finding also means that China's continued market economic reform is more likely to increase political democratization in China in the future.

Third, as was hypothesized, personal wellbeing or life satisfaction is negatively associated with holding democratic values. The more urban Chinese feel happy with their lives, the less supportive they are of democratic values. This finding is in line with what was found in the former Soviet Union, i.e., people who were satisfied with their personal life are reluctant to support values that might lead to drastic change of the political system. Chinese urbanites who are happy with their personal life are probably afraid of the process of changing the current political system to a democracy which may cause social and political instability and uncertainty. This finding partially indicates that the CCP's strategy of legitimizing its rule by making people happy is probably working. Similarly, the multivariate analysis shows that Chinese urban residents who are politically satisfied with the government are also less supportive of core democratic values favoring electing central government leaders directly by the population. Fourth, the factor of social trust, as indicated in Table 4.6, is not statistically significantly related to belief in core democratic values even though the direction of association is as predicted. Next, neither nationalist feelings nor belief in Marxism are meaningfully associated with core democratic values.

Finally, most of the sociodemographic factors are relevant in influencing Chinese urbanites' belief in core democratic values. As predicted, young and better-educated urban Chinese tend to be more supportive of democratic values. Also, as hypothesized, Communist Party members in Chinese cities appear less supportive of democratic values. However, contrary to what was hypothesized, women are stronger believers of democratic values than man in urban China. Income does not seem to be factor in the analysis.

In conclusion, descriptively, through our survey findings, we found that the majority of urban residents in China are indeed in favor of core democratic values with regard to freedom of expression, right to demonstrate and direct election of central government leaders. These findings are contrary to the perception that Chinese people have mostly authoritarian political culture and do not long for democracy. It is also found that most

Chinese urbanites are also in favor of more private businesses in China and do not support capping people's income, even in face of mounting income inequalities in this socialist country. In addition, even though most people are happy with their life, they also believe that the government is not unresponsive to their concerns, showing lack of political satisfaction. Moreover, generally speaking, most Chinese urban residents have higher levels of social trust and governmental trust.

The analytical analyses point to both positive and negative aspects of future democratization in China. The fact that young and better-educated urbanites in China are more in favor of democratic values is good news for brighter democratic future in China since the young people are the future of the country and it is highly likely that more people will receive higher education in China down the road. One of our findings also casts doubt on democratization in China. The Chinese government's strategy of eudemonism, of improving political legitimacy by raising people's living standard and making people happy with their life, might be working. How long well-to-do Chinese urban residents will be reluctant to support democratic change remains to be seen.

NOTES

1. See https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world-2015/discarding-democracy-return-iron-fist (accessed on January 20, 2016).
2. Gabriel A. Almond and Sidney Verba, *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), p. 498.
3. James L. Gibson and Raymond M. Duch, "Emerging Democratic Values in Soviet Political Culture," in Arthur H. Miller, William M. Reisinger, and Vicki L. Hesli, eds., *Public Opinion and Regime Change: The New Politics of Post-Soviet Societies* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1993), p. 72.
4. See Robert Dahl, *Polyarchy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971); and James Gibson, Raymond M. Duch, and Kent L. Tedin, "Democratic Values and the Transformation of the Soviet Union," *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 54, No. 2 (1992), pp. 329–371.
5. See Zhao Peng, et al. "The Warning Signal of 'Typical Social Protests'", *Outlook Weekly*, No. 36, September 8, 2008, p. 1. The Chinese government stopped publishing statistics with regard to street protests after 2006.
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7. Alon Ben-Meir, "Is Islam Compatible with Democracy", http://www.huffingtonpost.com/alon-benmeir/is-islam-compatible-with_b_3562579.html (accessed on January 24, 2016).

8. See Gabriel Almond, "Capitalism and Democracy," *PS: Political Science and Politics*, Vol. 24, No. 3 (1991), pp. 467–474; Charles Lindblom, *Politics and Markets* (New York: Basic Books, 1977); Josheph Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1942); and Barrington Moore, *The Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy* (New York: Beacon, 1966).

9. James L. Gibson and Raymond Duch, "Emerging Democratic Values in Soviet Political Culture," in Arthur H. Miller, William M. Reisinger and Vicki L. Hesli, eds., *Public Opinion and Regime Change: The New Politics of Post-Soviet Societies* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1993), pp. 69–94.

10. See a Congressional Research Service report by Wayne M. Morrison, "China Economic Rise: History, Trends, Challenges, and Implications for the United States," https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL33534.pdf (accessed on January 25, 2016).

11. http://data.worldbank.org/country/china.

12. Yang Zhong, Jie Chen, and John Scheb, "Mass Political Culture in Beijing: Findings from Two Public Opinion Surveys," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 38, No. 8 (1998), pp. 763–783.

13. Ibid., p. 733.

14. Nicholas Lardy, *Markets over Mao: The Rise of Private Business in China* (Washington, DC: Peterson Institute for International Economics, 2014).

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27. David Beetham and Kevin Boyle, *Introducing Democracy: 80 Questions and Answers* (London: Polity, 1995).

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29. Wang Shaoguang, "Nationalism and Democracy: Second Thoughts," *China Public Administration Review*, Vol. 1 (2004), pp. 83–99.

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36. James L. Gibson and Raymond M. Duch, "Emerging Democratic Values in Soviet Political Culture," in Arthur H. Miller, William M. Reisinger, and Vicki L. Hesli, eds., *Public Opinion and Regime Change: The New Politics of Post-Soviet Societies* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1993) p. 355.

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Political Trust in Urban China

Introduction

Studies of political trust have proliferated since the 1960s. Most of the studies, however, are focused on democratic countries. There has been a shortage of such studies in authoritarian countries for two main reasons. First, it is not easy to obtain an accurate measure of the level of political trust in authoritarian settings where people are afraid to openly expressing their true feelings about the authorities. Second, there are no periodic democratic elections that can give an accurate reflection of the level of public trust in the government and office holders. Difficulties in measuring the level of political trust in authoritarian settings does not mean, however, that the level of political trust cannot be measured or that it is not an important issue in authoritarian countries. If political trust is defined as a basic evaluative orientation toward the government[1] and evaluative orientation as part of political culture exists in all polities,[2] it is only logical that we assume that different levels of political trust can also be found in authoritarian countries, even though they may not be easily measured.

Political trust is often said to be related directly to institutional political support and legitimacy.[3] Even in non-Western-style democratic systems, sufficient political trust can be an important factor affecting sociopolitical stability. A healthy level of political trust provides the regimes in non-Western-style democratic countries breathing space in times of economic

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difficulty. The serious erosion of political trust in these countries, on the other hand, may lead to regime change or even violent revolution. This is also the case with the reformed China. Even though China is not a Western-style democracy, it does appear that the Chinese leaders do care about and are sensitive to public trust in the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the Chinese government.[4] The reputation of the CCP has been seriously damaged by, among other things, the widespread levels of official corruption, especially the high-profile corruption cases such as that of Bo Xilai in 2012. It is not hard to imagine that such serious erosion of political trust affects political legitimacy of the CCP and therefore regime stability in China.

The focus of this chapter is on political trust in the Chinese central government among Chinese urban residents. Bearing this in mind, this chapter will focus on two key questions: To what extent Chinese urban residents politically trust their central government? and what factors affect Chinese urban residents' level of political trust? Other than the usual socioeconomic and demographic factors, such as age, gender, income, education and Communist Party membership, this chapter is especially interested in exploring the relationships between political trust on the one hand and general social trust, religious belief, democratic values, nationalism, levels of political interest, perception of governmental performance and life satisfaction on the other.

There have been several previous empirical studies on the issue of political trust in China. Utilizing survey data collected in both China and Taiwan in the early 1990s, Tianjian Shi conducted one of the first studies on popular political trust in China. By comparing China and Taiwan, both of them Chinese societies albeit with very different political systems, Shi demonstrated that sources of political trust in democratizing Taiwan came more from government performance while political trust in authoritarian China was shaped more by traditional values (even though political culture also played a role in affecting levels of political trust in Taiwan).[5] Shi argued that differences in individual value orientation cause people to respond to institutional stimuli in different ways. Contrary to Shi's findings, another survey study on political trust, carried out by Yang Qing and Wenfang Tang, found that the level of institutional political trust among Chinese citizens is contingent more upon institutional performance rather than traditional values (attitudes toward hierarchy and personal trust).[6] Yet another study by Zhengxu Wang found a strong positive relationship between perceived personal economic conditions and the levels of political

trust in China.[7] In addition, Lianjiang Li has done extensive work on political trust in rural China. Even given the existence of these studies, there has still been a lack of systematic studies into the issue of political trust and based on large-scale public opinion surveys.[8] This chapter offers another contribution to the literature. The study finds relatively high levels of popular political trust of the Chinese central government. Analytically, it is found that general social trust, aggressive nationalism, perceived government economic performance, and levels of political interest play strong roles in contributing to Chinese urban residents' political trust in Chinese central government. In addition, older people, more educated people and those with higher income tend to have less trust in the Chinese government.

Levels of Government Trust in Urban China

A number of surveys done in China over the last two decades have shown that levels of political trust among Chinese citizens toward the Chinese government and institutions are relatively high, even taking into account that the surveys worded such questions very differently.[9] A survey conducted as far back as in 1993, for example, shows that 70 percent of Chinese citizens trusted decisions made by their central government.[10] Some other surveys (such as the *World Values Survey* and the *Asian Barometer Survey*) have shown even higher trust levels toward the central government expressed by the Chinese general population.[11] In fact, the *World Values Survey* shows that trust in political institutions among Chinese citizens is higher than world averages.[12] The reported high levels of political trust among Chinese citizens led to one scholar's suspicion that the global and generic measures of political trust used in other countries may not prove valid or accurate in capturing the true levels of political trust in China.[13]

In the survey of *Social and Political Values of Chinese Urban Residents, 2013* respondents were asked to agree or disagree with one relatively straightforward statement on political trust: "The Chinese central government always tries to do the right things for the people." The author believes this statement is sufficient to capture the essence of political trust of the central government among Chinese urbanites.[14] As displayed in Table 2.2, close to 30 percent of the respondents strongly agreed and 36.5 percent agreed that they trusted the central government to do the right things for the people. Over one-third of the urban population (including

those who were not sure) does not seem to trust the central government. It should be pointed out that the levels of political trust we detected in our survey are substantially lower than those found in some other surveys in China. Two possible reasons could be advanced to explain this difference. It is possible that levels of political trust in China have dropped over the years since our data are more recent. It is also possible that our survey was done among urban residents in large Chinese cities who tend to have higher levels of education and political efficacy. Even given the reduced level of political trust among our Chinese urban residents, the figures reported are still higher than the levels of political trust found in many other countries. Political trust is often associated with political legitimacy and (either specific or diffuse) political support.[15] Higher levels of political trust reinforce political support.

EXPLAINING POLITICAL TRUST IN URBAN CHINA

How do we explain the surprisingly high levels of political trust found in urban China? There has always been a debate about the sources of political trust. There are primarily two schools of thought about what contributes to the building of political trust. The institutional school of thought, or what Mishler and Rose termed the "endogenous" approach, argues that institutional performance is the key to the generation of political trust.[16] In other words, people's political trust is dependent on their perceptions of the behavior of governmental institutions and leaders. People's political trust in their governmental institutions and leaders will be greatly strengthened if the latter can bring people the desirable outcomes, especially in the area of policy performance. The cultural school of thought (or what Mishler and Rose label the "endogenous" approach) believes that people's political trust derives more from cultural norms which lie outside the institutional realm. In other words, according to this approach whether or not people trust their government has more to do with people's cultural dispositions and less to do with governmental performance.[17] For example, a person's political trust of governmental institutions and leaders may be an extension of his general or diffuse interpersonal trust or the result of their early life socialization. The higher a person's general trust level, the more likely he or she will place greater political trust on governmental institutions and leaders.

This study focuses on broadly defined cultural factors. One unique feature of this study is that it includes independent variables that have not been used in the study of political trust or government trust in

China, such as general social trust, religious belief, and nationalism, in addition to democratic orientation, the level of political interest and life satisfaction. Some of these factors and variables have been used, in one way or another, in studies on political trust in other countries.

General Social Trust

One of the most significant factors cited by scholars in influencing governmental trust or political trust is social capital. Of the two key components of social capital, general social trust or interpersonal trust seems to have a direct impact of political trust while the impact of participation in volunteer organizations is questionable.[18] The connection between general social trust and political trust revolves around the very concept of trust.[19] The sociopsychological view on this relationship is that people who have a higher level of general social trust of strangers also tend to be more trustful of other things and people in society, including governmental institutions and political leaders. In other words, those people who are optimistic by nature are most likely to possess a positive worldview, which contributes to their higher level of political trust.[20] However, it is also argued that general social trust or interpersonal trust does not have a deterministic role in impacting political trust. Political trust is undoubtedly significantly influenced by governmental or institutional performance.[21] For example, a generally trusting person with an optimistic worldview may not have a high level of political trust if he or she has been mistreated by governmental authorities or is very dissatisfied with governmental performance.

We measure the general social trust of Chinese urban residents by asking them to agree or disagree with the following statements in our survey: "There exists a basic trust among people in our society" and "I only want to help people that I know". Table 5.1 displays the descriptive results with regard to these questions. Answers to these two questions are combined to form the variable for social trust.

Religious Belief

Even though there are abundant studies on the relationship between a person's religious belief and his or her political orientation, insufficient scholarly attention has been paid to the relationship between religion and political trust. The difficulty in studying the relationship between

Table 5.1   General level of social trust among Chinese urban residents (%)

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Hard to say	N
There exists a basic level of trust among people in our society	29.4	36.5	19.5	7.5	7.1	3491
I only want to help people that I know	5.2	13.8	38.1	40.2	2.6	3491

Source: *Social and Political Values of Chinese Urban Residents, 2013*

religious beliefs and political trust or trust in general lies in the doctrinal differences and practices both within an individual particular religion and across different religions. For example, members of a closed religious sect may trust their fellow members much more than people outside their group. It is found that members of fundamentalist religious groups tend to have separatist tendencies and are, therefore, less trustful of outsiders and, on the other hand, that moderate and liberal protestant groups tend to be more inclusive and trusting of others.[22] Robert Putnam has always argued that the Roman Catholic Church in Italy tends to discourage cooperation and trust.[23] However, others have argued that this is not the case among Catholics in the United States and Canada, who tend to be more trusting than other groups, such as Evangelical Protestants.[24] It is also possible that religious believers tend to place a higher level of trust on political leaders and political regimes that share their values and ideology.

Is religious belief a factor in influencing political trust among Chinese urban residents? Thus far, there has been no study on this relationship in China. However, if we follow the logic of Putnam's "volunteer association" argument, namely that participation in volunteer associations increases people's trust level, we should expect Chinese religious believers, especially Chinese Christians, to have higher levels of political trust due to their higher levels of general social trust. On the other hand, however, it is also likely that Chinese urban religious believers tend to trust the Chinese government less because there is a lack of religious freedom in China. A third possibility is that religion is not a factor in influencing political trust among Chinese urban residents.

Nationalism

Western literature shows that nationalism is an impacting factor on political trust by way of national identity, one form of nationalism.[25] National identity here refers to identifying with a sovereign state, rather not sub-national identity. In both state-building theories and democratic stability theories, a common national identity is essential for a modern state or democracy to function. Stronger national identity means that a person will subjugate his or her ethnicity, sub-national identity or class identification to the national one. For the majority of the population in an effective modern state or a stable democracy, national homogeneous identity has to override sub-national identities. A higher level of national identity strengthens political trust in the national political system or institutions. In one of the few empirical studies on the relationship between national identity and political trust, Berg and Hjerm found that civic national identity contributes to higher levels of political trust while ethnic national identity weakens political trust.[26]

The questions regarding nationalist feelings in my survey of Chinese urban residents were not around national identity, but rather about feelings toward the outside world or outward nationalism: the role that China should play in Asia and the world and whether China should use force to take the Diaoyu Islands back from Japan, even though such an action could trigger a war with Japan. As mentioned before, Chinese nationalism is on the rise with rapid economic growth and increasing Chinese assertiveness in international affairs. In China as in other countries, foreign policy is still the dominant responsibility of the central government. People who have strong outward nationalist feelings have to place higher levels of political trust in the central government to implement more effective and aggressive foreign policy. Therefore, I hypothesize that strong nationalistic feelings strengthens political trust among Chinese urbanites.

Democratic Orientation

How does political culture such as democratic orientation play a role in shaping political trust? A study by Gabriela Catterberg and Alejandro Moreno found that individuals' democratic attitudes (preferring democracy over authoritarianism) tend to have higher levels of political trust on democratic political institutions in both established and new democracies.[27] This congruence between democratic values and trust in democratic

institutions makes logical sense in democracies. However, since China is not a multiparty parliamentary democracy, I would argue that the opposite relationship between democratic orientation and political trust exists in China. Specifically, I hypothesize that those Chinese urbanites with a preference for democracy tend to have a lower degree of trust in the Chinese government which may not be perceived to be trustworthy by democracy-oriented urbanites in China. The variable of democratic orientation is the same as that used in the previous chapters.

Level of Political Interest

In their seminal work *The Civic Culture*, Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba classify three dimensions of political culture: cognition, affect and evaluation, and paying attention to politics or political interest is an important aspect of cognitive orientation.[28] The importance of political interest as psychological involvement in politics and public affairs has been widely observed and documented by Western scholarship.[29] Psychological involvement in politics and public affairs is often believed to be a necessary, if not sufficient, condition for active political participation. Two hypotheses have been proposed regarding the relationship between level of political interest and political trust.[30] One view believes that the more people learn and know about politics, the more they are cynical and disgusted with politics and that, therefore, they become less trustful of government and politics. The opposing view argues that "individuals' interest is selective, and they tend to hold favorable views about the areas of their interest".[31] One study of democratic countries points to a positive relationship between individuals' political interest and political trust.[32] Considering that media and information are still significantly controlled by the Chinese government, it means that a higher level of political interest means more exposure to mostly positive information about the government disseminated by the official media. Hence I hypothesize that a higher level of Chinese urban residents' political interest leads to a higher level of political trust in the Chinese central government. I use the same variable for level of political interest that I used in the previous chapters.

Governmental Performance

Governmental performance, especially in the economic realm, has been cited extensively as a major factor contributing to the increase or decline of political trust.[33] It is only logical to assume that good governmental

performance is positively related to people's trust of government and political institutions. This should be particularly true in China where there are no nationwide democratic elections and governmental political legitimacy primarily relies on its economic performance. The question is how strongly governmental performance affects Chinese urban residents' governmental trust in a multivariate analysis when other factors are taken into consideration. Evaluation of governmental economic performance was measured in the survey by asking the respondents what kind of economic achievements have been made by the Chinese government in the reform era. Table 2.4 in Chap. 2 shows that around half of Chinese urban residents believe that significant achievements have been made and another 35 percent think that some achievements have been made. Overall, Chinese urbanites have relatively positive evaluation of the economic performance by the Chinese government.

Subjective Wellbeing

Subjective wellbeing, often referred to as happiness or life satisfaction, is defined as one's cognitive and emotional evaluations of his or her life.[34] I use the same variable for subjective wellbeing that I used in the previous chapters. In previous studies, life satisfaction has been measured in association with trust. Studies have shown that trust in others leads to higher levels of life satisfaction.[35] In other words, people living in a trusting environment tend to live a happier life and are less likely to experience sadness or loneliness. Of course, it can certainly be argued that the causal relationship between subjective wellbeing and trust can be reversed. That is, higher levels of life satisfaction can also strengthen trustworthiness. Since my central focus in this chapter is on political trust or governmental trust, I would argue that life satisfaction is a causal factor impacting levels of political trust among Chinese urban residents. The main reason is that people who feel happier with their life in China are more likely to give the government a pass or they are more satisfied with government performance and that, therefore, they are more likely to place more trust in the government.

Sociodemographic Factors

As usual, this research also includes sociodemographic control variables such as gender, age, education and income in the study of political trust in urban China. Literature on the relationship between gender and trust is divided. According to Croson and Gneezy, out of 17 studies on the

relationship, nine found that men are more trusting than women, two showed the opposite results and six of them found no relationship at all.[36] With regard to the relationship between gender and political trust, one study shows that gender is significantly associated with levels of political trust and that women have higher levels of political trust than men.[37] Descriptive findings from our survey, though, show that men and women are basically equally trusting of strangers and the central government. Age has been cited as a positive factor contributing to both generalized trust and inter-personal trust.[38] A comparative study of political trust in Ukraine and Poland, two transforming societies, indicates that older people tend to place more trust in political institutions.[39] Based on the prior literature it is expected that older Chinese urbanites are more likely to trust the Chinese central government than are younger urbanites. While an increased level of education may increase one's social trust,[40] it may also reduce people's political trust.[41] One explanation is that people with higher education are more likely to possess more analytical skills and have more sophisticated views of politics and political institutions. This is probably particularly true of more educated Chinese urban residents since China is not a Western-style liberal democracy and Chinese intellectuals may have lower levels of trust of the political system in China. There is a growing literature on the negative relationship between income inequality on the one hand and generalized trust and political trust on the other.[42] People with few resources are less likely to participate in the political process and may come to expect less from the political system, due partly to the lack of trust of the system. It is interesting to find out whether this is also true in the Chinese cities.

Analytical Results

As displayed in Table 5.2, general social trust is positively related to governmental trust. Chinese urban residents who have higher levels of general social trust tend to more trust in the Chinese government. This finding is consistent with those from studies carried out in other countries. It is also found that Chinese urbanites with more nationalistic feelings are more likely to trust the Chinese government. This finding confirms my prior hypothesis. It is probably because aggressive Chinese nationalists have to rely upon the central government to advance assertive outward nationalist goals. It is also confirmed that Chinese urbanites who pay more attention to politics or state affairs have higher levels of political trust among the

Table 5.2   Multivariate model of governmental trust in urban China

Independent variables	Unstandardized coefficient	Standardized coefficient	Standardized error
General social trust	0.120***	0.113	(0.017)
Religious belief (0 = no, 1 = yes)	−0.084	−0.024	(0.056)
Nationalism	0.059***	0.111	(0.009)
Democratic orientation	−0.007	−0.014	(0.008)
Levels of political interest	0.063**	0.057	(0.018)
Perception of governmental performance	0.216***	0.168	(0.021)
Subjective wellbeing	0.128***	0.079	(0.027)
Socio-demographic variables			
Age	−0.104***	0.090	(0.020)
Gender (female = 0, male = 1)	0.017	0.006	(0.045)
Education	−0.167**	−0.118	(0.024)
Income	−0.022***	−0.080	(0.005)
CCP membership (non-CCP membership = 0 CCP membership = 1)	0.076	0.022	(0.057)
Constant	1.178***		(0.213)
Multiple R		0.336	
R^2		0.113	
Adjusted R^2		0.110	

$**p < 0.005$; $***p < 0.000$

Chinese central government, because media are still predominantly controlled and censored by the government. In addition, it is unsurprising that perception of government economic performance is closely associated with higher levels of governmental trust. Also, as predicted, Chinese urban residents who feel more satisfied with their personal life tend to trust the government more. However, two hypotheses are not confirmed in the multivariate results. Religious belief has no significant relationship with levels of political trust. Furthermore, democratic orientation does not seem to be a factor in influencing Chinese urbanites' trust toward the Chinese government.

Several sociodemographic factors are significantly related to levels of political trust (see Table 5.2). It is found in the study that, contrary to what was found in some other countries, older people in Chinese cities are less trustful of the Chinese government than younger people. This is probably because older people have had longer time experiencing drastic

changes of Chinese government policies over the past thirty years. Education level does seem to be a strong predictor of political trust among our urban residents. People with more formal education tend not to trust the Chinese central governments. Personal income is not a factor in explaining political trust in urban China. The more affluent people actually have less political trust in the Chinese government. Finally, gender and Communist Party membership turn out to be insignificant factors in impacting levels of political trust in Chinese urban population.

Conclusion

Political trust concerns stability not only in democracies but also in non-Western liberal countries like China. In this chapter, I first intend to find out, descriptively, the levels of popular political trust of the Chinese government among Chinese urbanites. This study finds that Chinese urban residents demonstrate a relatively high degree of political trust, compared with some other countries (including Western democracies). Close to 70 percent of our urban respondents either agree or strongly agree with the statement that the Chinese central government always tries to do the right things for the people. High levels of political trust can partially explain relative political stability in China over the past three decades. It should be pointed out, however, that the trust level detected in this survey is lower than was found in some other surveys conducted in China over the past two decades.

Next, I explore the sources of governmental trust among the Chinese urban population. Factors studied include: general social trust, religious belief, democratic values, nationalism, levels of political interest, perception of governmental performance and life satisfaction, in addition to sociodemographic factors such as age, gender, education, income and Communist Party membership. As expected, general social trust, nationalistic feelings, levels of political interest and perception of governmental economic performance are positively related to governmental trust. In addition, it is also found that older people and urban residents with higher education and incomes tend to have less trust in the government.

We can derive several implications from these findings. First of all, political trust levels in Chinese cities are relatively high, explaining, in part, the level of political stability in China. Given the levels of governmental trust, we can expect that political and social stability will continue in the near future. Second, the finding that governmental economic performance

enhances political trust among Chinese urban residents means that the Chinese government's strategy of performance-based political legitimacy is working. The Chinese government is likely to continue to cultivate political trust by improving people's living standards and maintaining economic growth. The danger of such a strategy, however, is that no country can sustain economic growth forever. If economic growth slows down, as it has over the past few years, or if there is an economic meltdown, the risk of political instability is high and is likely to provide unavoidable. Nationalism is another double-edged sword. The newly found assertive Chinese nationalism is likely to continue as there is an increase in Chinese economic and military power in the world. The Chinese government will face popular pressure to be aggressive toward the United States and also toward China's neighbors, who have territorial disputes with China (such as Japan, Vietnam and the Philippines). If the nationalists perceive the Chinese government to be weak internationally, this will prove detrimental to the political trust in the Chinese government among Chinese nationalists.

In addition, the findings also show that people with more education and income tend to trust the government less. These may not be good news for the Chinese government. It can be expected that more Chinese people will have higher education in the future and people's income will continue to rise. Both trends will likely reduce levels of political trust among Chinese urbanites.

NOTES

1. See Donald E. Stokes, "Popular Evaluations of Government: An Empirical Assessment," in Harlan Cleveland and Harold D. Lasswell, eds., *Ethics and Bigness: Scientific, Academic, Religious, Political, and Military* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1962), pp. 61–72.
2. Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba, *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1989).
3. David Easton, "A Re-Assessment of the Concept of Political Support," *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 5, No. 4 (1975), pp. 435–457.
4. In a speech made at a Central Disciplinary Commission meeting, Party General Secretary Xi Jinping once again emphasized the importance of winning people's trust and stressed that popular support is the key to determining the fate of the Chinese Communist Party and the Chinese government. See http://news.163.com/13/0201/10/8MKEV4PD0001124J.html (accessed on February 1, 2013).

5. Tianjian Shi, "Cultural Values and Political Trust: A Comparison of the People's Republic China and Taiwan," *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 33, No. 4 (2001), pp. 401–419.

6. Yang Qing and Wenfang Tang, "Exploring the Sources of Institutional Trust in China: Culture, Mobilization, or Performance?" *Asian Politics and Policy*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (2010), pp. 415–436.

7. Zhenxu Wang, "Before the Emergence of Critical Citizens: Economic Development and Political Trust in China." *International Review of Sociology*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (2005), pp. 155–171.

8. Lianjiang Li, "Political Trust in Rural China." *Modern China*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (2004), pp. 228–258; and "Political Trust and Petitioning in the Chinese Countryside," *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 40, No. 2 (2008), pp. 209–226.

9. Lianjiang Li, "The Object and Substance of Trust in Central Leaders: Preliminary Evidence from a Pilot Survey," paper delivered at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Seattle, Washington, USA, September 1–4, 2011.

10. See Tianjian Shi, "Cultural Values and Political Trust: A Comparison of the People's Republic China and Taiwan".

11. World Value Survey 2000, http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org; and Asian Barometer Survey 2002, www.asianbarometer.org.

12. Yang Qing and Wenfang Tang, "Exploring the Sources of Institutional Trust in China: Culture, Mobilization, or Performance?"

13. Lianjiang Li, "The Object and Substance of Trust in Central Leaders: Preliminary Evidence from a Pilot Survey."

14. It is always a fair question to be asked that whether survey respondents in authoritarian countries give truthful answers. Survey experience in China tells us that if the questions are too sensitive in the Chinese context, it is problematic to judge whether Chinese respondents do indeed give truthful answers. In other words, questions in surveys conducted in China cannot be too sensitive. However, we do not believe that our two statements are too sensitive to be asked in the current relaxed political atmosphere in China. We did not ask, for example, whether or not they trust particular national leaders or local government officials, each of which could be deemed sensitive questions. Several empirical studies on political trust in China have ruled out the fear factor. In addition, the survey was conducted over telephone (instead of face-to-face) in an anonymous fashion in order to ensure the respondents could give truthful answers. Moreover, the respondents were given the options of remaining neutral or refusing to answer the questions if they were reluctant to agree or disagreed with the statements for whatever reason.

15. See Jack Citrin, "Comment: The Political Relevance of Trust in Government," *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 68, No. 3

(1974), pp. 973–998; and Arthur Miller, "Political Issues and Trust in Government: 1964–1970," *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 68, No. 3 (1974), pp. 951–972.

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Environmental Views of the Chinese Urbanites

Introduction

Over the past four decades, rapid industrialization, modernization and urbanization have brought significant environmental degradation and even environmental crisis to China. China is currently the largest emitter of greenhouse gases in the world, having surpassed the United States in 2007.[1] According to an official report by China's Ministry of Environmental Protection, 57.3 percent of groundwater in 198 Chinese cities was described as either 'bad' or 'extremely bad', 30 percent of the country's major rivers were polluted or seriously polluted, and over 85 percent of Chinese key cities did not meet air quality standards in 2012.[2] Pollution issues have caused direct severe health problems for the people of China. For example, it is reported that people living in northern part of China where air pollution is particularly bad, live an average of 5.5 years less than people living in southern part of the country.[3]

As a result of the damaging effects on people's health, environmental problems in China have now become a political issue. For instance, environment-related protests have experienced an annual increase of close to 30 percent since the mid-1990s in China,[4] This manifestation of protest is worthy of our attention for the following reasons. First, unlike land or labor dispute issues, which are of concern to only a small and specific group of people, environmental problems have drawn by far the

largest crowds of protesters in China in recent years because environmental pollution and degradation are of broader concern to the general population and can arouse widespread societal reaction. For example, the planned construction of polluting chemical and power plants in Xiamen in 2007, Dalian in 2011 and Kuming in 2013 brought tens of thousands of urban protesters onto the streets. Second, unlike rural land conflicts and urban labor disputes, environmental protests tend to attract urban middle-class participants.[5] The urban environmental movement is probably the most vigorous civil societal force in China.[6] One scholar claims that urban environmental movement is the style of the new citizen activism in China.[7] Third, environmental protests seem to be more successful in terms of achieving their goals due to the large number of participants (resulting in part from the use of new social media technologies to mobilize protesters) and the wider appeal to the general population. A number of high-profile environmental protests have led to either the shutdown of existing polluting factories or the cancellation of proposed environmentally hazardous facilities.[8]

Given the severity of environmental problems and the potential social instability they may bring to China, it is important to learn about the attitudes of Chinese citizens, especially Chinese urban residents, toward environmental issues. Data for this research were collected in a random telephone survey covering 34 large cities throughout China, most of which are provincial capital cities.[9] The cities represent different regions and different levels of economic development. The survey was carried out between April and May of 2013 by Center for Public Opinion Research of Shanghai Jiao Tong University. The sample size for each city is around 100 people. This relatively small sample size creates a representative error for each city. However, if we treat the sample as a totality, the findings are representative of the population in the 34 cities in our survey. The sampling frame includes both stationary and cell phone numbers in these cities. A Computer Assisted Telephone Interview (CATI) system generated random telephone numbers and trained graduate and undergraduate students at Shanghai Jiao Tong University and several other surrounding universities in Shanghai conducted the anonymous survey. It should be pointed out that such a survey of Chinese citizens' environmental attitudes is rarely undertaken in China.

Environmental Awareness, Knowledge and Assessment

Environmental problems are worldwide problems that have now pose a considerable threat to human survival. The first key step in solving environmental problems is to recognize these problems and realize their dangers. What are the levels of public awareness and knowledge of environmental issues among Chinese urban residents? Table 6.1 displays answers to the first three questions concerning their knowledge about environmental problems. It seems that most people claim to know something about the causes of environmental pollution and fewer people said they know something about global warming. Fine particulate matter or PM 2.5, a pollutant that is small enough to penetrate into the human blood cell, is a major cause for air pollution in most Chinese cities and a major concern for people's health in China. However, most people in our survey have little knowledge of the pollutants (see Table 6.1). How does the Chinese urban population compare with people in other countries with regard to their knowledge of environmental issues? A study conducted by the British Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs in 2011 found that 44 percent of the British people had a lot of knowledge of climate change and another 44 percent claimed they had some knowledge of climate change.[10] Another study conducted in the United States revealed that 26 percent of Americans were very well informed about global warming and 32 percent of them were very informed about air pollution.[11] Even though these two cases are not perfect comparisons with the case of Chinese urban residents, it does seem that more people in the West know about environmental issues than urban residents in China.

Table 6.1 Environmental knowledge I (%)

	A lot	Some	Not much	Very little	Hard to say
How much do you know about the causes of environmental pollution?	5.5	78.1	12.91.0	2.6	
How much do you know about global warming?	3.6	71.7	20.0	1.5	3.2
How much do you know about PM 2.5? N = 3400	2.2	42.9	45.1	4.2	5.5

Source: *Survey of Chinese Urban Residents' Environmental Attitudes and Behavior, 2013*

Next we asked our respondents about their more specific knowledge of clean energy and whether their daily personal behavior affects our environment. About two-thirds of them could identify solar energy as the most environment-friendly power-generating source and the only renewable energy (see Table 6.2). However, a lower percentage of our respondents could not see how their personal behavior contributes to global warming. In other words, they could not make the connection between their daily activities and their impact upon the surrounding environment. In reality, though, our daily behavior absolutely does have an effect on the environment. We could, for example, choose to travel more on mass public transportation or use less electricity at home, which should help to improve our deteriorating environment.

We also want to know Chinese urban residents' assessment of the severity of environmental problems in the world. Most scientists agree that global warming is real and that we have experienced abnormal weather patterns over the past decade. Our Chinese urbanites seem to be split in their opinion about whether or not the weather in their city was normal over the past five years. Around 50 percent believed it was abnormal, while 40 percent thought it was normal (see Table 6.3). The next question we asked concerns the impact of environmental problems in their city upon their personal health. Survey results show that most people (68 percent) felt that pollution in their city had caused harm to their personal health

Table 6.2 Environmental knowledge II (%)

	Solar	Coal	Nuclear	Water hydraulic	Do not know
What is the most environment-friendly source for generating power?	69.6	0.8	5.2	16.6	7.8

	Petroliam	Natural gas	Coal	Solar energy	Do not know
Which of the following is a renewable energy?	2.7	7.5	3.8	70.1	15.9

	A lot	Some	Little	Not at all	Do not know
How much do your daily personal activities contribute to global warming? N = 3400	3.6	55.5	34.0	3.4	3.4

Source: *Survey of Chinese Urban Residents' Environmental Attitudes and Behavior, 2013*

and that fewer than 30 percent thought otherwise (see Table 6.3). How concerned are Chinese urban residents about the prospect of environmental damage to the world? With rapid industrialization and development in emerging populous economic powers such as China, India and Brazil, there is a popular view that the limited resources on this planet can no longer support sustained development of the world. We found that about one-third of our Chinese urban residents held this view, 43 percent of them reject this view and the rest remained neutral (see Table 6.4). Another popular view is that we are facing an environmental catastrophe caused by environmental degradation and that it is questionable whether

Table 6.3   Environmental assessment I (%)

	Significant harm	Some harm	Not much harm	No harm	Hard to say
How much harm has pollution in your city brought to your personal health?	16.6	51.4	23.3	4.8	4.1

	Very normal	Normal	Abnormal	Very abnormal	Hard to say
How do you think about the weather in your city in the past five years? N = 3400	1.3	40.3	45.0	4.9	8.5

Source: *Survey of Chinese Urban Residents' Environmental Attitudes and Behavior, 2013*

Table 6.4   Environmental assessment II (%)

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Do you agree with the saying that resources on this planet can no longer support sustainable development in this world?	1.9	31.5	23.4	42.3	1.0
Do you agree with the view that any talk of environmental catastrophe is an exaggeration? N = 3400	1.5	32.4	28.7	36.6	0.8

Source: *Survey of Chinese Urban Residents' Environmental Attitudes and Behavior, 2013*

humankind will survive the catastrophe. Yet other people believe that any talk of worldwide environmental catastrophe is an exaggeration. Our urban Chinese residents seem to be split in terms of their assessment of environmental problems. A little over one-third of the respondents did not believe the environmental catastrophe talk was an exaggeration while another one-third of them held the opposite view (see Table 6.4).

ASSESSMENT OF LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS AND GOVERNMENTAL PERFORMANCE

As mentioned earlier, pollution in all areas, such as air, water and land, have worsened in China over the past few decades. How do Chinese urban residents assess their local environmental conditions and problems?

A somewhat lower percentage of them are willing to bring their own shopping bag for grocery shopping in order to save the environment. Close to 80 percent are willing to volunteer for environmental causes. A lower percentage (63.5 percent) of Chinese urban residents are willing to make financial donations to environmental causes and less than half (47.6 percent) of the people surveyed are willing to participate in environment-related protest activities. The questions were asked in ascending order of action intensity with sorting out garbage as the easiest act and participation in environmental protests as the most difficult and risky act. Survey results show that as there is an increase in possible action costs, people's willingness to help environmental causes begin to drop (Table 6.5).

Table 6.5   Willingness to help with environmental causes (%)

	Very willing	Willing	Unwilling	Very unwilling	Hard to say
Sorting out garbage	15.5	76.9	3.7	0.3	3.6
Bringing own shopping bag for grocery shopping	16.1	71.0	8.6	0.3	4.0
Volunteering for environmental causes	4.5	72.6	13.3	0.4	9.2
Donating for environmental causes	2.7	60.8	18.2	1.3	17.0
N = 3400					

Source: *Survey of Chinese Urban Residents' Environmental Attitudes and Behavior, 2013*

Indeed, making personal sacrifices can make a considerable contribution to environmental protection. But it is also hard for people to do, for reasons of inconvenience. The use of electricity and gas is a major contributor to environmental degradation and contributes to global warming. We asked our urban residents whether or not they are likely to reduce the use of electricity and gas which are the major power sources for Chinese urban households to protect the environment. The survey results show that the majority of the respondents claimed that it was either likely or very likely for them to lower their electricity and gas bills in the coming year (see Table 6.6). Next we proposed a scenario in which we asked our respondents whether or not they would be willing to pay out of their own pocket for improving their city's water quality if needed and how much they would be willing to pay. As it turns out, two-thirds of them were willing to pay and one-third were unwilling to pay for the water treatment (see Table 6.7). Table 6.8 further reveals how much people were willing to pay to improve the condition of water in their city. As shown, among the people who said they would be willing to pay, a plurality majority (32.4 percent) of them chose between 50 and 100 yuan, which is a meaningful amount given the average salary of Chinese wage earners (see Table 6.8). A little over 10

Table 6.6　Likelihood of making personal sacrifices to save the environment (%)

	Very likely	Likely	Unlikely	Very unlikely	Hard to say
Is it likely that you will reduce the use of electricity and gas in your household in the coming year to help to protect the environment N = 3400	16.5	69.9	9.5	1.0	3.1

Source: *Survey of Chinese Urban Residents' Environmental Attitudes and Behavior, 2013*

Table 6.7　Willingness to pay for water improvement (%)

	Willing	Unwilling
If your municipal government plans to spend money for water treatment and the money has to come from the residents, are you will to pay for the expense? N = 3400	67	33

Source: *Survey of Chinese Urban Residents' Environmental Attitudes and Behavior, 2013*

Table 6.8 Amount of money to pay for water treatment

Amount (Chinese yuan)	Percentage
10	9.0
15	0.8
20	4.9
25	0.8
30	3.3
35	0.3
40	0.7
50	10.4
70	0.1
100	21.9
150	0.5
200	3.6
300	1.6
500	2.9
1000	2.6
Above 1000	1.4
Do not know	34.3
$N = 2279$	

Source: *Survey of Chinese Urban Residents' Environmental Attitudes and Behavior, 2013*

percent were willing to pay more than 100 Chinese yuan to improve water quality in their cities. It should be pointed out that more than a third (34.3 percent) did not know what amount of money they would be willing to pay, even though they expressed their willingness to pay to the previous question. That seems to indicate that they would not be willing to pay when pressed for the specific amount of the possible payment. With regard to the way in which they were willing to pay the money, 50 percent preferred donations; 31.5 percent would like to pay through a new tax; and 18.5 percent favored an increase in the water fee.

The rapid economic growth we have witnessed in China over the past four decades is, in large part, due to the Chinese government policy of placing economic development above everything else to improve the political legitimacy of the Chinese Communist Party. During the reform era, Deng Xiaoping's famous saying that "[economic] development is the hard truth" has been the guiding principle for all the Party's' work and economic development, especially measured by GDP growth rate, and has served as the gold standard for evaluating government officials' performance at all levels. One main downside of such a development strategy, of

course, has been the severe environmental degradation in China. There is evidence, however, that in recent years the Chinese government is seriously reconsidering its national development strategy and tries to balance between economic growth and environmental protection. Environmental protection has been added as additional criterion for governmental officials' performance evaluation. Has the public changed its priority in national development? When asked which is more important, economic growth or protection of the environment, 77.2 percent of Chinese urban residents placed environmental protection ahead of economic growth and only 11.2 percent of them expressed the opposite view (see Table 6.9). If the same question were asked three decades ago, it is possible that the answers would be completely the opposite.

Additional evidence that Chinese public's sentiment toward the environment has shifted is found in Tables 6.10 and 6.11. At present, there are dire needs for public housing, medical care and many other areas for government funding in China (as in many other countries). What would the Chinese urban residents want to spend if the government has a budgetary

Table 6.9   Economic development vs. environmental protection (%)

	Economic development	*Environmental protection*	*Do not know*
Which is more important for our country: economic development or environmental protection? N = 3400	11.2	77.2	11.6

Source: *Survey of Chinese Urban Residents' Environmental Attitudes and Behavior, 2013*

Table 6.10   Preference for environmental protection (%)

If the government has an excess amount of money, what would you like the government to spend the money on?

Building more low-income housing	9.0
Improving the medical care system	28.0
Speeding up economic development	4.9
Bettering the environment	48.3
Hard to say	9.8
N = 3400	

Source: *Survey of Chinese Urban Residents' Environmental Attitudes and Behavior, 2013*

surplus? Surprisingly, close to 50 percent of our urban Chinese preferred the money to be spent on improving the environment (see Table 6.10). Lightening firecrackers during the Chinese New Year is a long-held Chinese tradition. The loud sound of firecrackers is meant to scare away the devils. Firecrackers, however, cause major air pollution during the Chinese New Year period. As a result, some Chinese cities, such as Beijing and Shanghai, have either put limitations on the practice of shooting off firecrackers or banned the practice altogether during the period. How do Chinese urban residents feel about this? Table 6.11 shows that 60 percent of our respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that the Chinese government should ban firecrackers during the Chinese New Year period to prevent air pollution and only around 10 percent of them disagreed with this ban. Moreover, an even higher percentage (72.3 percent) of Chinese urban residents promised that they would not engage in lightening up firecrackers during Chinese New Year (see Table 6.11) and, again, only about10 percent refused to make such a promise.

Not in My Backyard (NIMBY) Sentiment

One major source for environment-related protests in China is due to the "not in my backyard" sentiment against building of potentially health-damaging facilities such as chemical factories, battery factories, nuclear

Table 6.11 Attitudes toward shooting off firecrackers during Chinese New Year (%)

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Chinese government should ban firecrackers during the Chinese New Year to prevent air pollution	14.2	51	22.5	11.5	0.9
	Extremely willing	Willing	Neutral	Unwilling	Extremely unwilling
Are you willing to forgo firecrackers during the Chinese New Year celebration in the coming year? N = 3,400	16.3	55.9	16	11.1	0.6

Source: *Survey of Chinese Urban Residents' Environmental Attitudes and Behavior, 2013*

facilities and waste incineration facilities. *Linbi* (sound after NIMBY) movements, as these types of environmental protests are often called in China, have only become intensified in the past decade. Reasons that have been cited to explain the upsurge of NIMBY protests in recent years include heightened environmental awareness and civil rights awareness among the public, lack of trust toward the Chinese government, especially Chinese local government and growing social tensions.[12] It is also said that Chinese NIMBY protests tend to be more confrontational or even more violent than those found in some other countries.[13]

What are the attitudes of urban Chinese residents in our surveyed areas toward NIMBY issues? When asked whether or not they would participate in any petition or protest activities if a chemical facility with potential environmental risk is built near their neighborhood, close to 80 percent of our urban residents claimed that they would, for sure, take part in the petition or protest activities to stop the project and only less than 10 percent said they would take no action (see Table 6.12). When probed further on what specific actions they would consider taking first if a pollution accident happens near their neighborhood, close to half said they would try to mobilize their neighbors to contact local government officials while around 20 percent of them wanted to take to the street in protest right away, which is surprising, to say the least (see Table 6.13).

Obviously, this does not mean that people who say they would participate in street protest will actually do so in reality. However, it is logical to assume that those who say they would take part in street protest are more likely to do so in reality than those who do not choose street protest as their first option. Even though most people in our survey did not choose

Table 6.12 Likelihood to participate in petition or protest activities against a potential damaging chemical facility (%)

	Absolutely would	Would	Maybe	Would not	Absolutely would not
If a potential environmentally dangerous chemical facility is built near your neighborhood, would you participate in partition or protest activities? *N* = 3400	40.1	38.0	14.8	6.3	0.8

Source: *Survey of Chinese Urban Residents' Environmental Attitudes and Behavior, 2013*

Table 6.13   Actions to take in case of a pollution accident (%)

	Do nothing	Contacting local people's congress deputies	Contacting local gov't officials	Mobilizing neighbors to contact local gov't officials	Participating in street protest	Other options
If a polluting accident happens near your neighborhood, what would be your first choice of action? N = 3400	4.1	4.9	16.3	48.3	19.8	6.6

Source: *Survey of Chinese Urban Residents' Environmental Attitudes and Behavior, 2013*

street protest as their first option to deal with a pollution problem, it is still significant that one-fifth of our surveyed urban residents did. For a mega city like Shanghai, which has over 23 million residents, this means that more than four million of them are willing to, or have the propensity to, participate in street protest. Even if a small fraction of those people do actually participate in real street demonstrations over environmental issues, the impact or consequence can be significant. It should be noted that, even though most street protests are tolerated by the Chinese authorities,[14] this form of contentious political activity is still considered unconventional and carries some political risk in China. For example, participants of street protest may be blacklisted as 'trouble makers', which will affect their career, especially for those who work in the state sectors (government, universities, hospitals, state-owned enterprises, etc.). In addition, it is still possible that participants of street protest may be detained or arrested if the authorities decide to crack down on the demonstration, especially when the protest turns less civil or even violent. Local government, which is in charge of handling most street protests, is less tolerant than the central government in China.[15] Moreover, it is much harder for people in authoritarian countries to organize protest activities.[16] The sheer percentage of people who expressed their willingness to protest on the street indicates that there is a deep dissatisfaction with the official channels of interest articulation among Chinese urban residents.

ANALYSIS OF ENVIRONMENTALISM AMONG CHINESE URBAN RESIDENTS

Who, among our Chinese urban residents, are more likely to be environmentalists who are willing to devote time, resources and energy to protect the environment? Surveys and studies have consistently shown that women, young people and those with a higher level of education tend to be more concerned with environmental problems and more willing to help out with environmental causes.[17] Is this also true of Chinese urbanites? In the following statistical analysis, I will try to identify who among our Chinese urban residents are more willing to contribute to better the environment. Specifically, the dependent variable is an additive index of answers to the four questions shown in Table 6.5, i.e., the willingness to sort out garbage, to bring their own shopping bag for grocery shopping, and to do volunteer work for and donate money to environmental causes. In addition to the usual demographic factors, I also include, in the multivariate analysis, factors such as environmental knowledge, assessment of local environmental conditions, environmental harm to personal health, and subjective wellbeing.

Statistical results in Table 6.14 show that gender and education are influencing factors for why some people care more for the environment,

Table 6.14 Multivariate model of willingness to contribute to environment

Independent variables	Unstandardized coefficient	Standardized coefficient	Standardized error
Age	0.002	0.003	(0.015)
Gender (female = 0, male = 1)	−0.263***	−0.006	(0.033)
Education	0.049*	0.034	(0.028)
CCP membership (non-CCP membership = 0 CCP membership = 1)	0.076**	0.030	(0.045)
Assessment of local pollution	0.011*	0.030	(0.006)
Pollution causing personal harm	0.023	0.020	(0.026)
Knowledge of PM 2.5	0.104***	0.075	(0.025)
Environmental knowledge	0.195***	0.114	(0.031)
Subjective wellbeing	0.096***	0.080	(0.020)
Constant	1.965***		(0.144)
Multiple R		0.336	
R^2		0.065	
Adjusted R^2		0.062	

*$p < 0.100$, **$p < 0.005$, ***$p < 0.001$

even though age is proven a non-factor. Women and people with higher education are more willing to help with environmental causes. It is also found that people who have a worse assessment of their city's pollution situation and believe that environmental pollution has caused harm to their personal health are more ready to take action to protect the environment. In addition, knowledge of causes of environmental pollution and PM 2.5 pollutants are also associated with Chinese urban residents' willingness to improve the environment. Finally, people who feel happy in their life tend to care about the environment more than would otherwise be the case. These findings show a promising picture of environmental protection in China in the future. As more people become better educated, more knowledgeable about environmental pollution and feel more at risk from the effects of pollution, more people are likely to take actions to protect the environment.

Conclusion

After decades of environmental neglect by the Chinese government and the general public, statistics show that China is facing with ever-deteriorating environmental conditions and challenges. Realizing that environmental problems are not only threatening China's sustainable development, but are also becoming political issues that could potentially destabilize the political system in China, the Chinese government has heightened its attention to environmental issues and has taken serious steps to improve and protect the environment. Citizens and their way of life play a crucial role in combating the worsening pollution around the world. Our survey shows that a large percentage of Chinese urban residents are fairly knowledgeable about the causes of pollution and global warming, even though a lower percentage of them know much about PM 2.5, a major source of air pollution in Chinese cities, the most environmentally-friendly way of generating and renewable energy. Most people also have a negative assessment of their local environmental conditions and believe that their local environmental problems cause harm to their personal health. Yet most people do not have a pessimistic view of the overall sustainable development in the world and do not think the world is facing an environmental catastrophe.

More importantly, it is found that a majority of the Chinese urban residents claim that they are willing to take actions to improve the environment such as sorting out garbage, bringing their own shopping bags to

grocery shopping, and volunteering for environmental work. Most of them are also ready to make personal sacrifices such as reducing the use of electricity, abandoning the lighting of firecrackers during the Chinese New Year, and financially contributing to better the environment (e.g., by making donation and paying a surcharge for environmental cleanup). Like that of the Chinese government, it seems that Chinese urbanites' attitude toward the environment has also shifted. When faced with the two choices most of our urban respondents in the survey chose environmental protection over economic development. Survey findings show that the "not in my backyard" (NIMBY) mentality is also growing among Chinese urbanites. Most of them said they would take actions if an environmentally risky facility is built near their neighborhood. About a quarter of our urban respondents even chose street protest as their first option in reaction to an environmental pollution accident near their neighborhood. This is bad news for the Chinese government and shows the explosive nature of environmental protests in China.

What motivates Chinese urban residents to take actions to protect the environment or behave as environmentalists? Is it the deteriorating environmental conditions in China or the post-modern values (to use Ronald Inglehart's term) among Chinese urbanites? Our multivariate analysis seems to indicate that both factors might have affected Chinese urban residents' environmental activism. Assessment of local pollution situation and knowledge about pollution are strongly related to the willingness to take actions to protect the environment among Chinese urbanites. More educated people who are more likely to hold post-modern values are also more likely to become environmentalists. All of the findings above seem to point to a brighter future for China's environmental improvement as Chinse people have become more conscientious and active about environmental protection.

NOTES

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3. See Eleanor Albert and Beina Xu, "China's Environmental Crisis".
4. See "China Experiences 23% Annual Increase in Environment-Related Protests and the Chinese Court Refuses to Litigate These Cases Due to Their Sensitivity," http://news.163.com/12/1028/02/8ESBJE2B00014AED.html (accessed on 27 October 2012).
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7. Yang, Guobin Yang, *The Power of the Internet in China: Citizen Activism Online* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009).
8. The most well-known cases were the cancellation of the planned PX chemical factory in Xiamen in 2007 and the closure of the PX chemical factory in Dalian in 2011 due to large-scale popular street protest.
9. The following is the list of the surveyed cities: Beijing, Shanghai, Tianjin, Chongqing, Changchun, Changsha, Chengdu, Dalian, Fuzhou, Guangzhou, Guizhou, Harbin, Haikou, Hangzhou, Hefei, Huhhot, Jinan, Kunming, Lanzhou, Nanchang, Nanjing, Nanning, Ningbo, Qingdao, Shenyang, Shenzhen, Shijiazhuang, Taiyuan, Wuhan, Xian, Xining, Xiamen, Yinchuan, and Zhengzhou.
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12. See "Internal Causes and Solutions to Environment "NIMBY Movement" in China," by Yu Hai and Zhang Yongliang at http://www.prcee.org/upload/Attach/mrbj/2529916207.pdf (accessed on August 24, 2016).
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Empirical Study of Religious, Social and Political Values of Urban Chinese Christians

INTRODUCTION

To say that religion is coming back to China after the Cultural Revolution is an understatement. In fact, religion is returning to China with a vengeance. A survey by the Pew Global Attitudes Project found that close to 60 percent of the Chinese public considers religion to be very or somewhat important in their lives.[1] Christianity is one of the fastest-growing religions in China. An extensive survey study conducted by the Institute of World Religions (IWR) of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences put the Chinese Protestant Christian population at 23 million, or 1.8 percent of the total population in China (in addition to 5.7 million Catholics).[2] Another empirical study conducted by a research team from East China Normal University in Shanghai estimated that the Chinese Christian population has reached 40 million.[3] Still another estimate claims that Chinese Christian population reached 130 million, far exceeding the number of Chinese Communist Party members.[4] Even if we take the lower estimates, China has become a major Christian country when we consider the absolute number of Christians in China. How many Christian-dominated

countries in the world have more than 30 or 40 million people? Even though these numbers cannot be independently confirmed, evidence does indicate that the Chinese Christian population has been increasing exponentially.

Given the rapid increase in the Chinese Christian population, it is surprising that contemporary Chinese Christians are seriously insufficiently studied, as they are still shrouded in mystery and their religious beliefs and sociopolitical values are little known to non-Christian Chinese and the outside world. The rapid increase of Christians in China could obviously have far-reaching implications for China's future social and political developments. The limited studies of Chinese Christians have focused on the history of Christianity in China,[5] organizational structure of Chinese Christianity,[6] and cultural clashes between Christian identity and traditional Chinese values among Chinese Christians.[7] Little empirical research has been done, either inside or outside China, on the social values and political culture of Chinese Christians. Two main reasons may be given for the lack of such studies. The first is probably due to the sensitivity of this issue. Another relates to the methodological feasibility of empirically studying the values and political culture of Chinese Christians. However, such a topic is too important to be neglected. This research is an empirical study of the religious, social and political values of Chinese Christians who live in urban China and how these people's religiosity affects their social and political values by using data from questionnaires and interviews. Specifically, this study taps into urban Chinese Christians' religiosity (their ways of believing and behaving), social values regarding issues such as abortion, homosexuality, divorce, and euthanasia; and political values and attitudes concerning democracy, civil liberties, political efficacy, political interest, political participation. Findings from this research are also compared with those from the United States and non-Christian Chinese.

There are a number of important reasons why we should be concerned with Chinese Christians' religious, social and political values. First, it is interesting to find out empirically the religious values of Chinese Christians (the believing aspect of Chinese Christians' religiosity) and how Chinese Christians practice their religion (the behaving aspect of Chinese Christians' religiosity). Second, it is theoretically important to apply social science theories in order to offer a possible explanation of the attitudes and behavior of Chinese Christians, especially with regard to the impact of religiosity on their social and political values. Third, it is crucial to find out whether Chinese Christians have developed a separate set of

cultural values that are different from those of the non-Christian Chinese population and whether the value differences will lead to a "culture war" between Chinese Christians and non-Christian Chinese. Finally, Chinese Christians, especially those who are members of unofficially sanctioned "house churches", constitute an important segment of the non-state sector. The findings from this study will shed some light on whether Chinese Christians could become potentially an influencing force in the development of civil society in China.

CHRISTIANITY IN CHINA

Historical evidence indicates that Christianity was first brought to China in the seventh century. However, it was not until almost a thousand years later (in the late sixteenth century) that Christianity, mainly Catholicism of different denominations, became popular in certain coastal regions of China. The introduction of Christianity into China faced many obstacles from both Chinese authorities and the population. Historically, Chinese emperors were always worried that they would lose control over the Chinese Christian population to foreign authorities, especially the Vatican. At the grassroots level, many Chinese felt that Christianity posed a threat to traditional Chinese culture and Chinese cultural identity since the Christianization of China meant replacing Chinese religions with a Western one.[8] The bringing of Christianity to China was further complicated by the fact that it was accompanied by the introduction of Western colonial forces into China. The hatred toward Christianity and foreign influence culminated in the Boxers' Rebellion in China in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which killed thousands of Chinese Christians as well as international missionaries.

However, religious prosecution did not stop the spread of Christianity in China in the first half of the twentieth century until 1949 when the Chinese Communists took control of China. By the late 1940s, there were about three million Catholic believers and 700,000 Protestant Christians in China.[9] Even though the new Chinese Communist government did not ban Christianity in China after 1949, Chinese Protestant Christians were organized to join the government-sanctioned and religiously liberal *Three-Self Patriotic Movement* (self-governing, self-supporting, and self-propagation, or TSPM) and Chinese Catholics had to sever their ties with the Vatican and join the *Chinese Catholic Patriotic Movement* churches. Chinese Christians who refused to join the officially sanctioned churches

had to form their own "house churches", which were operated illegally under official regulations. All religions were disbanded during the Cultural Revolution between 1966 and 1976. Even the government-sanctioned TSPM churches were also closed. However, it was discovered later that many Chinese Christians had secret religious meetings at private homes even during the height of the Cultural Revolution.[10]

The death of Chairman Mao in 1976 led to the gradual resurgence of Christianity in China in the late 1970s and the rapid increase of the Chinese Christian population since the 1980s. In fact, both Christian population as well as Christian churches in China have exploded. As mentioned earlier, China's Christian population is estimated at between 28 and 130 million. It is often said that there are four *mosts* (*si duo*) among Chinese Christians: most Chinese Christians are women (about 70 percent reported by the IWR study), most Chinese Christians are peasants, most Chinese Christians are less educated, and most Chinese Christians are older people. However, the situation is changing. Indications do show that more urban, better-educated, young and white-collar office workers are attracted to Christianity. Anybody who has visited Christian congregations in Chinese cities should notice that both the TSPM and unregistered house churches there offer multiple services on Sundays, with every service packed with parishioners. Numbers aside, it has also been noted that Chinese Christians are becoming a more active social and civil group in the Chinese society.[11] Chinese Christians, especially house church members, played a prominent role in the rescue and rebuilding efforts in the aftermath of the Sichuan earthquake in 2008.

It should be noted that it is not easy in the first place for a Chinese to believe in Christianity. First of all, Marxism, the official Chinese ideology, promotes secular and atheistic beliefs and values that are taught throughout the Chinese education system and permeated in the dominant official Chinese media. Second, a Chinese Christian often has to reconcile his or her Christian belief with his or her Chinese cultural identity. Christianity is still popularly considered a foreign religion among most Chinese. Chinese may find indigenous religions such as Daoism, ancestral worship or even Buddhism (which originally came from India and has been significantly indigenized) much more culturally acceptable. For a Chinese to become a Christian, it means a certain degree of cultural transformation. For example, he or she has to give up the practice of idol worshiping such as worshiping Chinese historical figures and ancestral worship that are popular among Chinese. A saying in China is "one more Christian, one fewer

Chinese".[12] My survey findings partly confirm that for a Chinese becoming a Christian means losing part of his or her Chinese cultural identity. More than two-thirds of my Chinese Christian respondents claim that they do not believe in Chinese ancestral worshiping. What is probably even more shocking to many nationalistic Chinese is that close to 80 percent of my Chinese Christian respondents first and foremost identify themselves as Christians rather than Chinese. This certainly does not mean that they reject their Chinese identity. However, it does show that their first identity belongs to their Christian faith. This finding should not bode well for the nationalistic Chinese or the Chinese government. Chinese Christians often struggle with ways of celebrating many traditional Chinese holidays (such as *Qing Ming* memorial day) that are related to Chinese folk stories or legends that can be interpreted as idol worshiping.[13] Unlike Western Christian believers, a Chinese living in China has to overcome many barriers, including inhospitable cultural and political environments, to believe in Christianity. Indeed, they have to choose to believe against many odds. This probably explains the strong religious commitment among Chinese Christians that is displayed later.

Data

The ideal type of methodology for this study is a large-scale random survey of all Chinese citizens, including Christians, in China so that the Christian believers and non-Christians can be compared. However, it is almost impossible for such a methodology to be employed in this study due to political, technical and financial reasons. It is also impossible to conduct a random survey of all Chinese Christians since the Christian population cannot precisely be identified. The only feasible method I have chosen for this research is the referral technique to identify Chinese Christians for my study.[14] With the help of Chinese Christians I could approach a number of Christian churches and their members for in-depth interviews of the identified Chinese Christians based on a uniformed questionnaire. I strategically chose different locations to make the interviewees as diverse and the research findings as representative as possible. The interview data were collected from the following cities between January and December of 2011: Beijing and Jilin in the north, Shanghai, Shandong and Jiangsu in the east, Shenzhen and Guangzhou in the south, and Chengdu in the western part of China. Both unofficially registered house church members (44 percent) and the officially sanctioned

Three Self church members (38 percent) were included in the interviews.[15] A total of 544 valid questionnaires were collected. Due to lack of access, Chinese Catholics (who are a minority group among Chinese Christians) are not included.

The following is a profile of the Chinese Christians in my study. As shown in Table 7.1, close to 50 percent of the Christians in my study have only been a Christian believer within the last five years and one-third of them became believers only three years ago. It is an indication that the rapid increase of Christian believers in China is a recent phenomenon and is on the rise. Close to two-thirds of the Christians in my study are women[16]; they are predominantly Han Chinese (94.5 percent); and most of them (66.5 percent) have formal urban residency status. Chinese Christians in my study also tend to be younger (with an average age of 33) and better educated (about 70 percent with post-high school degrees). Given the fact that the research is *not* based on a scientific random sample, descriptive findings from this study cannot be statistically generalized to the whole Christian population in China. However, analytical findings from this study can be heuristic and potentially be applied to the rest of the Christian population in China. Overall, my findings offer a glimpse of religiosity and sociopolitical values of Chinese Christians, and how these two are related with each other.

RELIGIOSITY OF CHINESE CHRISTIANS

Religiosity involves behaving and believing aspects of one's religious life. Behaving refers to the way one practices his or her religion, such as participation in religious activities. Believing involves religious preferences and values. The two are often closely related with each other and reinforce each other. Religious participation strengthens one's religious beliefs and

Table 7.1 How long have you been a Christian? (%)

1–3 years	30.0
4–5 years	19.2
6–9 years	22.5
10–15 years	11.0
16–20 years	8.8
21–25 years	4.1
26–30 years	1.9
Over 30 years	2.6
N	537

vice versa. Religiosity, in turn, is expected to have an impact on one's social and political values. What is the religiosity of Chinese Christians? My interview data do indicate that Chinese urban Christians tend to be very committed and devoted to their religion (the behaving aspect of religiosity), probably more so than their counterparts in the West. Over 90 percent of the Chinese Christians in my study attend church services on a regular basis. In the IWR study 57.8 percent of the Chinese Christians reported that they participated in religious activities frequently.[17]

More than two-thirds of the Chinese Christians in my study attend church activities more than once a week (see Table 7.2). Other than the Sunday service, most of the Chinese Christians in my study apparently also attend Bible study sessions during the week (usually on Wednesdays or Fridays).

Furthermore, more than two-thirds of them pray more than once a day (see Table 7.3). It seems that Chinese Christians also read the Bible much more often than American Christians (see Table 7.4). About 60 percent of the Chinese Christians in my study report that they read the Bible at least once a day. Also, more than two-thirds of them consider God to be most important in their life, compared to 56 percent of people believing so in the United States (see Table 7.5). The overwhelming majority (93.5 percent) of the Chinese Christians in my study claim that they have spread the

Table 7.2 Church attendance (%)

More than once a week	71.4
Once a week	23.7
Once a month	1.5
Only during religious holidays	0.4
Not often	2.7
Rarely go	0.4
N	528

Table 7.3 How often do you pray? (%)

Multiple times a day	70.8
Once a day	12.8
Several times a week	11.5
Once a week	0.7
Once a month	0.2
Rarely pray	3.5
N	538

Table 7.4 How often do you read the Bible? (%)[a]

Multiple times a day	34.1
	(2.6)
Once a day	27.4
	(8.1)
Multiple times a week	25.9
	(10.0)
Once a week	3.9
	(9.2)
Once a month	1.3
	(28.3)
Rarely do	7.3
	(41.9)
N	536

Note: [a]Percentiles in parentheses are combined data from *US General Social Survey* of 1988–91, 1993–96, 2006 and 2008

Table 7.5 Importance of God in your life? (%)[a]

Least important						*Most important*				
1	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*	*8*	*9*	*10*	*N*
3.7		0.6	0.4	1.1	3.4	3.4	6.4	6.5	74.6	535
(5.3)	(1.5)	(2.3)	(2.4)	(5.8)	(5.6)	(4.7)	(6.9)	(7.6)	(57.8)	

Note: [a]Percentiles in parentheses are data from *World Values Survey* data bank (US) of 2006

gospel to their family members, relatives, friends and colleagues. In comparison, only 44 percent of American Christians said they have done so.[18] Active proselytization by Chinese Christians is a major factor in the rapid increase of the Christian population in China. Among the married Chinese Christians in my study, close to two-thirds reported that their spouse is a Christian and half of the interviewed also indicated that their parents or one of their parents are also Christians, resulted, in part, from proselytization among family members. According to the IWR study, 44 percent of the Chinese Christians became Christian believers as a result of proselytization by other family members.[19] In fact, it is not uncommon that Chinese house churches organize "gospel" trips to proselytize in rural and minority areas of China. Some have even ventured outside China to proselytize, especially in Southeast Asian countries (such as Thailand).[20]

Table 7.6 displays Chinese Christians' answers to a wide range of religious and religion-related questions (the believing aspect of religiosity). Close to 80 percent of my Christian respondents strongly believe that Christians should apply Christian values to all aspects of their life. More than half of the respondents strongly agree with the statement that disobeying God invites God's punishment, compared to only 16 percent of Americans believing so. Over 85 percent strongly believe that God decides everything in this world and what are written in the Bible are true words from God. Close to 90 percent of the respondents in my study strongly believe that it is their obligation as a Christian to spread the gospel to others. About half of the respondents tend to be non-materialistic. What is really interesting and thought-provoking is that over two-thirds of the Chinese Christians in my study do not believe in the theory of evolution.

Table 7.6 Religious values of Chinese Christians (%)[a]

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Hard to say
Spreading gospel is every Christian's obligation	86.8	10.7	1.3		1.2
China will be better off if more Chinese officials are Christians	76.0	17.5	2.9	0.4	3.3
A Christian should apply Christian values to all aspects of his life	79.3	18.1	1.2	0.6	0.8
You will be punished if you disobey God	53.1 (16.4)	19.9 (30.1)	17.4 (27.9)	4.7 (20.0)	4.9 (5.6)
Right and wrong are not like black and white since the world is so complicated	28.7 (42.7)	27.3 (38.6)	19.4 (9.2)	16.6 (7.0)	8.1 (2.4)
Christianity is the only true religion in the world and other religions are not necessary	33.1	17.5	30.9	11.0	7.4
God decides everything in the world	85.6	9.4	3.3		1.7
What are in the Bible are true words from God	89.1	8.6	1.2	0.2	1.0
Evolution does not make any sense	56.0	17.1	14.9	4.6	7.4
Making money is only a means for living and making too much money is not quite necessary	27.6	24.2	31.5	11.0	5.7
Only money can reflect one's worth in life	3.5	4.3	29.7	55.3	7.2

Note: [a]Percentiles in parentheses are combined data from *US General Social Survey* of 1988–91, 1993–96, 2006 and 2008

Many of my Christian interviewees told me that they taught Creationist theory and belief to their children at home and in Sunday school. In disputing the theory of evolution, many Christians in my study repeatedly told me the story that Darwin himself became a Christian later in his life. It should be noted that evolutionary theory is taught throughout the Chinese education system and is considered standard scientific theory in the Chinese society at large. Does this mean Chinese Christians may more vigorously challenge the school curriculum regarding evolutionary theory? What is worrisome is that more Chinese Christians (close to half) in my study believe that Christianity is the only true religious faith and that other religions are not necessary.[21] This finding raises the question of religious tolerance among many Chinese Christians. Will there be religious conflicts between Chinese Christian believers and believers of other religions such as Buddhism and Islam if Christianity does become a more popular religion in China? In addition, the overwhelming majority of the Chinese Christians in my study either strongly agree or agree that China would be better off if more Chinese officials were Christians. Overall, Chinese Christians seem to take their faith quite seriously and tend to have higher level of religiosity than Christians in the United States. Their religiosity can probably be compared to that of American evangelicals or Christian fundamentalists.

SOCIAL VALUES OF CHINESE CHRISTIANS

Many scholars have argued that there is a "spillover effect" in the relationship between religious teachings and social issues.[22] Many religious doctrines and moral beliefs have relevancy for social issues. For example, religious Christians in the United States often cite writings in the Bible to oppose abortion and homosexual behavior. What are the attitudes of Chinese Christians toward some of the "hot button" social issues that are often debated in the West? How are their attitudes compared to those exhibited among the general Chinese public and mostly Christian public in the United States? Table 7.7 displays my Chinese Christian respondents' positions on a number of social issues and comparisons with survey findings from the general Chinese population and general public in the United States. All of the issues are explicitly mentioned or implicitly implicated in the Bible and Christian teachings. All the questions on my questionnaire were asked of the general Chinese public and US public in *World Values Surveys* so that we may put our Chinese Christians' attitudes in a

Table 7.7 Chinese Christians' social values(%)[a]

	Completely unacceptable					Completely acceptable				
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Riding bus without buying bus fare	73.0	10.5	4.2	2.5	6.5	1.0	0.6	0.2	0.6	1.0
	(63.6)	(17.7)	(6.3)	(2.9)	(2.4)	(1.9)	(0.8)	(1.3)	(0.5)	(2.8)
	(50.0)	(12.0)	(8.9)	(5.1)	(14.9)	(4.8)	(1.8)	(0.8)	(0.2)	(1.5)
Homosexuality	83.1	3.4	2.3	0.9	3.0	0.4	0.4	1.7	0.4	4.4
	(78.1)	(9.6)	(3.7)	(1.9)	(2.4)	(1.3)	(0.6)	(0.4)	(0.4)	(1.5)
	(32.5)	(4.0)	(4.8)	(3.5)	(24.0)	(4.6)	(4.9)	(3.7)	(3.2)	(14.8)
Bribing officials	82.7	5.5	4.8	1.7	2.9		0.4	0.6	0.2	1.3
	(73.0)	(13.8)	(3.7)	(1.9)	(2.7)	(1.7)	(0.7)	(0.6)	(0.5)	(1.5)
	(77.0)	(7.4)	(3.7)	(1.5)	(6.4)	(2.0)	(0.5)	(0.3)	(0.2)	(1.1)
Prostitution	90.5	3.4	1.7	0.4	1.5	0.4	0.2	0.6		1.7
	(83.8)	(8.6)	(2.1)	(1.1)	(1.1)	(1.3)	(0.3)	(0.3)	(0.1)	(1.2)
	(43.2)	(7.6)	(7.6)	(6.3)	(19.1)	(5.0)	(4.0)	(2.8)	(1.4)	(3.0)
Abortion	76.7	7.8	5.5	1.9	3.3	0.8	0.6	1.5	0.4	1.5
	(68.0)	(9.3)	(5.1)	(3.1)	(4.7)	(3.3)	(1.7)	(1.9)	(0.9)	(2.0)
	(25.5)	(7.4)	(6.0)	(4.3)	(26.4)	(6.8)	(6.4)	(7.0)	(3.2)	(7.1)
Suicide	85.7	4.8	2.7	1.0	2.5	0.8	0.8	0.6	0.2	1.1
	(69.4)	(14.6)	(4.2)	(2.8)	(3.0)	(2.3)	(0.9)	(0.7)	(0.5)	(1.6)
	(49.9)	(12.0)	(6.3)	(3.6)	(14.2)	(4.7)	(2.3)	(2.5)	(1.9)	(2.4)
Wife beating	82.0	7.5	3.5	2.5	2.9				0.2	1.9
	(75.2)	(11.8)	(4.0)	(1.8)	(2.1)	(1.7)	(1.1)	(0.6)	(0.3)	(1.4)
	(85.0)	(5.2)	(1.6)	(1.0)	(4.5)	(1.3)	(0.2)	(0.1)		(1.1)
Euthanasia	64.5	8.5	4.7	1.7	7.4	1.0	2.1	2.7	1.7	5.6
	(54.6)	(9.5)	(4.0)	(1.7)	(5.4)	(5.1)	(2.2)	(4.3)	(3.8)	(9.4)
	(22.3)	(6.6)	(6.1)	(3.8)	(21.6)	(7.4)	(9.4)	(9.4)	(5.8)	(7.6)
Divorce	59.3	9.9	7.5	4.0	12.0	1.1	1.7	0.6	1.3	2.5
	(56.6)	(11.9)	(4.5)	(3.3)	(6.1)	(6.0)	(3.0)	(2.9)	(1.8)	(1.9)
	(5.8)	(3.8)	(6.2)	(5.7)	(34.3)	(8.5)	(9.3)	(9.9)	(4.2)	(12.4)

Note: [a]Percentiles in the first parenthesis row are data from *World Values Survey China 2007* and percentiles in the second parenthesis row are data from the *World Values Survey* data bank (US) 2006

somewhat comparative setting (even though the comparisons may not be completely accurate due to the fact that my study is not based on scientific random survey of Chinese Christians).

It seems that the Chinese Christians in my study have low tolerance level for all of the behaviors in the table. Respondents in the "completely unacceptable" category range from 59.3 percent on divorce to 90 percent on prostitution. On average, Chinese Christians in the "completely unacceptable" category are almost 10 percentages higher than people in

the same category in the survey of the general Chinese public. In comparison, the largely Christian public in the United States tends to be much more tolerant on most of the social issues than the Chinese Christians in my study.

Specifically, Christian respondents in my study feel particularly strong against homosexual behavior, bribing officials, prostitution, committing suicide and wife-beating. Around 83 percent of the Chinese Christian respondents find homosexual behavior completely unacceptable, compared to 78 percent among the general Chinese public and 32 percent of Americans. Lv Liping, a well-known Chinese actress and a high-profile celebrity Christian figure in China, caused a considerable stir in summer of 2011 after she commented in her blog that homosexuality was a sinful behavior and that homosexuals should be ashamed of themselves. Even though Lv was criticized and even condemned for showing intolerance toward homosexuals in the press (including the official Chinese press), she received strong support from the Chinese Christian community for her comments.

Findings on the issue of abortion are also quite interesting. Even though abortion is legal in the United States, many American Christians are strongly objectionable to the practice. According to the *World Values Survey* conducted in the United States in 2006, about a quarter of Americans found abortion completely unacceptable. However, in China whereas abortion is completely legal and is used routinely as a measure of population control by the government, close to 80 percent of my Christian respondents find the practice completely unacceptable. It certainly remains to be seen whether Chinese Christians may act on their belief by challenging the practice of abortion in China in the future. It should be pointed out that 68 percent of Chinese respondents in the *World Values Survey* in 2007 also found abortion completely unacceptable. The tolerance level among my Chinese Christian respondents is a bit higher toward euthanasia and divorce. Once again, it seems that Chinese Christians' religious belief and social values may resemble those of evangelicals or born-again fundamentalist Christians in the West.

A major divide in the Chinese Christian community is between Three Self church members and unregistered house church (sometimes referred to as "underground" church) members.[23] As mentioned earlier, the Three Self churches are the officially sanctioned Christian churches in China and they enjoy some privileges (including some funding) from the government. House churches, which flourished during the reform era (even

though they already existed in China between the 1950s and the 1970s) and which most Chinese Christians attend today, are the unregistered churches without legal status and much government ties. House churches are attractive to Chinese Christians for a number of reasons. First, there are simply not enough official Three Self churches to accommodate the increasing Christian population in China. In Beijing, for example, there is only one official Three Self church in each urban district (with over one million residents). Therefore, Christians have to set up their own churches to meet their spiritual need. Second, house churches offer intimate settings for church goers who can easily establish close relationship with fellow worshippers and pastors. House churches also hold more Bible study sessions, fellowships, and social events than the official Three Self churches. Third, there are major doctrinal differences between the Three Self church and house churches[24] The former carries a liberal Christian tradition (including a liberal interpretation of the Bible), while the latter tends to be conservative and traditional in its interpretation of the Bible. For example, the Three Self church does not emphasize some aspects of Christianity, such as the miracles performed by Jesus in the New Testament, the Second Coming of Christ, and the Final Judgment Day. Because of these absences, many house church members question whether Three Self churches are authentic Christian churches and also whether Three Self church members are true Christian believers. In addition, many house church goers feel that Three Self church pastors are often constrained in their preaching of the Gospel and often have to be careful about what they say to their parishioners. Finally, many house church members do not feel comfortable about the ties that Three Self churches have with the Chinese government which officially holds an atheist position toward religion. On the other hand, many official Three Self church officials, if not regular members, tend to think that many house churches are cult organizations and their members are not taught of proper Christian doctrines.[25]

Do members of the two churches have different levels of religiosity and hold different religious and social values? I conducted T-tests to compare the two groups of Christians with regard to their levels of religious commitment (frequency of church attendance, prayer and Bible reading and importance of God in life), religious values (see Table 7.6), and social values (see Table 7.7). As T-test results presented in Table 7.8 show, there are some moderate differences between Three Self church members and house church members as far as their religious commitment and religious and social values are concerned. House church members seem to show

Table 7.8 Religious value differences between Three Self church members and house church members

Religious commitment	Mean	Standard deviation	Significance level
Three Self church members	27.34	3.99	0.049
House church members	28.10	3.93	
Religious values			
Three Self church members	36.61	4.18	0.037
House church members	37.60	3.42	
Social values			
Three Self church members	17.59	13.78	0.057
House church members	14.43	8.75	

slightly higher levels of religious commitment and religious values and take less tolerant positions on the social and moral issues in the survey. In other words, it is likely that China's house church members are more religiously and socially conservative than Three Self church members.

POLITICAL CULTURE OF CHINESE CHRISTIANS

What do Chinese Christians believe politically? Is Chinese Christians' political culture different from that of the general population? Religion and politics are closely related from time immemorial. Religion, for example, plays a durable role in the domestic politics in the United States, the oldest democracy in the world.[26] An abundance of literature indicates that religion plays increasingly important role in the political life of the world.[27] Political interventions by religious forces, especially evangelical Christianity, have been well-documented in Asia, Africa and Latin America.[28] Christianity played a prominent role in the Third Wave of democratization throughout the world.[29] Three factors have been cited to explain the intricate relationship between religion and politics: religious creed, religion as an institution, and social/cultural group of believers.[30] Religious creed here refers to fundamental religious beliefs, values and ethical codes that inevitably influence religious believers' value systems and behaviors in non-religious realms such as politics. Religion, as an institution, also has its own institutional interests that may clash with governmental policies. Religious forces often have to act to protect their religious interests against the state. Religions are also social groups. Members of religious groups interact with each other and tend to form "group" orientation and attitude

toward politics and public affairs. An uneasy relationship between Christianity and politics was also found in Chinese history. Chinese emperors were always leery about the spread of Christianity in China due to Christian church's competing loyalty among Chinese believers.[31] The famous Taiping Rebellion in the nineteenth century was waged in the name of Christianity. The infamous Boxers' Rebellion left a permanent scare on the heart of Chinese Christians.

First, I want to look into the level of political interest among Chinese Christians. As shown in Table 7.9, over 75 percent of my Chinese Christian respondents indicate that they are either interested or very interested in both national politics and local public affairs. This figure is comparable to random survey data collected from rural southern Jiangsu province and urban Beijing.[32] Compared to rural residents of southern Jiangsu province and Beijingers, slightly higher percent of my Christian respondents (over 60 percent), however, do not like to talk about either national or local politics with others (see Table 7.9). Due to the nature of the Chinese political system, Chinese citizens do not have a lot of options for political

Table 7.9 Chinese Christians' interest in politics (%)[a]

	Very interested	*Interested*	*Not quite interested*	*No interest at all*	*Hard to say*
Are you interested in national politics?	21.9	55.7	19.5	1.3	1.5
	(12.6)	(55.7)	(22.3)	(5.4)	
	(14.1)	(60.0)	(19.5)	(1.4)	(3.8)
Are you interested in local politics?	17.8	59.5	18.7	2.1	1.9
	(6.0)	(56.7)	(27.1)	(4.3)	
	(22.1)	(64.9)	(14.9)	(1.1)	(5.8)

	Every time when I meet with other people	*Very often*	*Not often*	*Never*	*Hard to say*
Do you often talk about national politics with other people?	3.4	37.3	54.5	4.2	0.6
	(2.5)	(41.8)	(47.8)	(5.7)	(2.8)
	(2.4)	(42.9)	(51.1)	(2.9)	(0.7)
Do you often talk about local politics with other people?	4.8	32.5	57.0	4.6	1.1
	(2.5)	(38.2)	(48.8)	(7.1)	(3.3)

Note: [a]Percentiles in the first parenthesis row are data from random survey of rural southern Jiangsu province in 2000 and percentiles in the second parenthesis row are combined data from random surveys conducted in Beijing in 1995 and 1997

participation. One of the options is participation in the election of local people's congress, a legislative body at county, urban district and town/township levels. The election, which is held every three years, is open to all Chinese citizens over 18 years old. However, because the election and functions of the local people's congress are considerably constrained and limited, most people in China are not motivated to participate in the election.[33] Voters in China do have the choice of not participating in the election of local people's congress without being punished, even though the Chinese local government usually adopts mobilization measures to pressure people to vote in this nominal election. Table 7.10 shows that only 5 percent of the Chinese Christians in my study voted in the last election of local people's congress, a figure much lower than that found in southern rural Jiangsu province and Beijing. About 65 percent of them indicate that they have no interest in local people's congress elections. It seems that Chinese Christians are even more detached or alienated from the Chinese political system than non-Christian Chinese.

Many scholars, especially Chinese scholars, often blame the absence of democracy in China on the lack of democratic culture and traditions in the country. Empirical survey findings, however, suggest that political culture at the popular level is not hostile to democratic principles and values. In fact, most Chinese citizens are supportive of key liberal democratic values and principles.[34] The findings presented in Table 7.11 show Chinese

Table 7.10 On local national people's congress (%)[a]

	Yes	No	I was not eligible to vote	Don't remember
Did you vote in the most recent district or county people's congress election?	4.9 (34.0) (58.5)	85.5 (55.4) (40.1)	2.4 (3.6)	7.3 (6.6) (1.4)

	Significant interest	Some interest	Not quite interested	No interest at all	Hard to say
Do you have much interest in district or county people's congress elections?	8.0 (3.7)	18.9 (29.0)	46.1 (42.5)	19.3 (15.0)	7.4 (9.4)

Note: [a]Percentiles in the first parenthesis row are data from random survey of rural southern Jiangsu province in 2000 and percentiles in the second parenthesis row are combined data from random surveys conducted in Beijing in 1995 and 1997

Table 7.11 Liberal democratic values of Chinese Christians (%)[a]

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Hard to say
Regardless of one's political beliefs, he or she is entitled to freely express his or her views	71.9 (57.6) (40.8)	23.3 (32.0) (45.5)	3.8 (5.1) (11.9)	0.6 (0.4) (1.8)	0.4 (4.4)
We should not tolerate minority opinions in society	7.6 (15.3)	11.7 (30,0)	31.5 (31.7)	38.0 (12.8)	11.2 (10.1)
Non-official media should be allowed to co-exist with official state media	62.1 (32.1)	27.6 (43.1)	3.1 (7.0)	0.8 (2.0)	6.4 (14.3)
The press should be given more freedom to expose wrong doings such as official corruption	64.7 (62.5) (66.7)	27.5 (28.4) (26.5)	4.5 (3.5) (6.0)	0.2 (0.3) (0.7)	3.1 (5.1)
Assemblies and demonstrations tend to create chaos, therefore they should be banned	8.2 (14.8)	15.0 (24.8)	42.3 (35.0)	26.2 (15.1)	8.3 (9.9)
It would not be necessary for ordinary people to be involved in the decision-making process if the officials were capable and trusted by the masses	4.7 (17.9)	9.4 (33.1)	37.9 (30.6)	41.8 (9.3)	6.1 (8.5)
Chinese local government officials should be elected directly by the people	44.5 (60.0)	29.7 (33.2)	13.8 (2.6)	1.6 (1.4)	10.4 (3.3)
Elections should be abandoned if they create chaos and instability	10.7 (9.9)	12.8 (22.3)	37.3 (36.9)	29.0 (20.1)	10.3 (10.4)

Note: [a]Percentiles in the first parenthesis row are data from random survey of rural southern Jiangsu province in 2000 and percentiles in the second parenthesis row are combined data from random surveys conducted in Beijing in 1995 and 1997

Christians' attitudes toward key civil liberal principles and values. As indicated in the table, my Chinese Christian respondents show strong support for civil liberties and respect for minority views. 70 percent of my respondents strongly agree that regardless of one's political beliefs, he or she is entitled to freely express his or her views. This figure is much higher than those found in southern Jiangsu province and Beijing. Another 24 percent agree with the statement. Close to 70 percent either disagree or strongly disagree with the statement that we should not tolerate minority opinions in society. The strong feelings in support of individual freedom of expression and minority views among my respondents are probably due to their

minority status in China. Over 40 percent of the Chinese Christians in my study attend house churches only and another 18 percent attend both the official Three Self churches and house churches. Since house churches still do not have legal status in China, they are always under the watchful eyes of the Chinese authorities and often harassed by the police. Even those Chinese Christians who only attend the official churches are constantly reminded of their minority status by their surroundings and the general non-Christian cultural environment in China.

My findings also show that Chinese Christians are just as supportive of freedom of the press as non-Christian Chinese in southern Jiangsu province and Beijing. An overwhelming majority (over 90 percent) of my Christian respondents are in favor of more freedom of the press to expose wrongdoings such as official corruption (see Table 7.11). In fact, more of my Chinese Christian respondents strongly support the existence of independent media alongside the official one. Moreover, a resounding 70 percent of Chinese Christians in my study (vs. 50 percent in the survey of southern Jiangsu province) either disagree or strongly disagree with the statement that assemblies and demonstrations tend to create chaos, therefore they should be banned (see Table 7.11). Some Chinese Christians have held protests, often in the form of silent prayers in public places, against Chinese government's suppression of house church activities.

Popular democratic election of public officials is a key trademark of modern democracies. China has not adopted a popular election system. The only public officials that are popularly elected in China are village cadres who happen to be not governmental officials on state payroll since village government is not a formal level of government administration. My Chinese Christian interviewees are also supportive of democratic elections. Over 70 percent of the respondents endorse the idea of direct popular election of local Chinese government officials who are currently not elected by the general public (see Table 7.11). Another 65 percent of them either disagree or strongly disagree that elections should be abandoned if they create chaos and instability. Majority of my Christian respondents are also supportive of allowing ordinary citizens to be involved in the decision-making process. Close to 80 percent of the Christians in my study disagree or strongly disagree with the statement that it would not be necessary for ordinary people to be involved in the decision-making process if the officials were capable and trusted by the masses. Answers to these questions are added to form an additive index to be used as the dependent variable for "liberal democratic values".

ANALYTICAL FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

What kind of impact do religious and socioeconomic factors have on Chinese Christians' social and political values? Even though the study is not based on scientific random survey, I still intend to generate some hypotheses with my limited dataset. First, I hypothesize that Chinese Christians' social values are related to their religious commitment and religious values (or religiosity). Specifically, more religious Chinese Christians tend to be more conservative with their social values. As displayed in Table 7.12, this hypothesis seems to be confirmed in the regression analyses of Chinese Christians' social values. More religiously committed Chinese Christians with more conservative religious values tend to hold more conservative social values (since the sign is negative). It also seems that house church members tend to be more socially conservative than members of the Three Self churches, even though the association is not statistically significant. None of the demographic control variables (gender, age and education) seem to be influencing factors.

Second, I also hypothesize that Chinese Christians' religiosity (religious commitment and religious values) is positively related to their support for more democracy and civil liberties in China because of the fact that Chinese Christians are a religious minority and they still face certain degrees of discrimination in China. Regression findings presented in

Table 7.12 Multivariate (OLS)analysis of social values of Chinese Christians

Independent variables	Social values of Chinese Christians	
	Unstandardized Coefficients	Standard Errors
Gender (male = 1, female = 2)	−0.933	1.656
Age	0.019	0.082
Education (no schooling = 1 primary school = 2 middle school = 3 high school = 4 college = 5)	1.682	1.201
Church affiliation (Three Self church = 0 House church = 1)	−1.082	1.672
Religiosity	−0.839*	0.133
Constant	65.858*	11.763
Multiple R		0.486
R squared		0.236
Adjusted R squared		0.216

*$p < 0.001$

Table 7.13 seem to confirm this hypothesis. It is found that Chinese Christians with higher levels of religiosity tend to be more supportive of civil liberties and democratic values. It is also found that older Chinese Christians and house church members tend to have stronger civil and democratic values. These analytical analyses are meant to be hypothesis-generating exercises and are not conclusive generalizations due to the limitations of the data.

The unprecedented explosive expansion of the Christian population in China should be of immense interest for social scientists studying China due to the intricate relationship between religion and politics. Based on questionnaires of an imperfect sample, this study attempts to shed some empirical and comparative light on the religiosity, social values and political culture on Chinese Christians who have been insufficiently studied thus far. My study reveals that Chinese Christians have a relatively high level of religiosity in both behaving and believing aspects. Chinese Christians in my study are seriously committed Christians in terms of church attendance, prayer and Bible reading. They read the Bible much more often than Christians in the United States. It is also found that a large majority of the Christian respondents in my study hold quite conservative religious views with regard to proselytizing Christianity, living a

Table 7.13 Multivariate (OLS) analysis of democratic values of Chinese Christians

	Democratic values of Chinese Christians	
Independent variables	*Unstandardized Coefficients*	*Standard Errors*
Gender (male = 1, female = 2)	−0.604	0.407
Age	0.062*	0.020
Education (no schooling = 1 primary school = 2 middle school = 3 high school = 4 college = 5)	−0.127	0.317
Church affiliation (Three Self church = 0 House church = 1)	1.794*	0.415
Religiosity	0.121*	0.033
Constant	15.766*	3.104
Multiple *R*		0.619
R squared		0.383
Adjusted *R* squared		0.364

*$p < 0.001$

Christian life, interpretation of the Bible, evolutionary theory and attitudes toward to other religions. Over 80 percent of the Chinese Christians in my study identify foremost as Christians than Chinese and more than two thirds of them claim they do not believe in ancestral worshiping, a popular indigenous belief system and cultural practice among Chinese.

Chinese Christians in my study also turn out to be rather conservative in their social values with regard to homosexuality, abortion, bribery, prostitution, suicide and euthanasia, more so than the general population in China and the United States. It seems that Chinese house church members are more socially conservative than Three Self church members. In terms of their political culture, Chinese Christians in my study show a lot of interest in both national and local politics, even though they do not often talk about politics. Overwhelming majority of them are disengaged in the officially sanctioned election of local people's congress. However, the majority of the Chinese Christians in my study are strong supporters of democratic values and civil liberties. They feel particularly strong in their support for freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, and the need for more political reform, all of which are related to the practice of their religion. It is unsurprising that Chinese Christians in my study hold strong democratic values given the fact that Christian believers have played a significant role in democratization in Latin America (liberation theology), Eastern Europe (especially in Poland) and Asia (such as the Philippines and South Korea).[35] Multivariate analyses show that religiosity (religious commitment and religious values) is a contributing factor to Chinese Christians' conservative social values as well as their support for civil liberties and democratic values.

Findings from the study are quite revealing and carry implications for civil society development in China. The Christian church in China is becoming a training ground for civic education since church members (including the Three Self churches) run their own church business. There is no doubt that the rapidly increasing Chinese Christian population with strong religious and sociopolitical values is a potential societal force that the Chinese government has to reckon with. The Chinese government is facing a dilemma with regard to the flourishing Christian population in China. On the one hand, it is not ready to grant complete religious freedom to Chinese Christian churches due to the fear that this segment of the population may be out of its reach. On the other, it is impossible for the Chinese government to completely "regulate" or control the Christian churches at this point due to the social and political costs of the extreme

measure. Thus far, the Chinese Christians are not political activists as long as they are given reasonable freedom to practice their religious faith. However, they have the potential to become an important political force if their faith and religious values are attacked.

NOTES

1. http://pewforum.org/Importance-of-Religion/Religion-in-China-on-the-Eve-of-the-2008-Beijing-Olympics.aspx.
2. See "An In-House Questionnaire Survey on Christianity in China," in Jin Ze and Qiu Yonghui, eds., *Annual Report on China's Religions* (Beijing, China: Social Sciences Academic Press, 2010), p. 191.
3. The same study also reported that over three hundred million Chinese citizens have a religious belief system. http://www.sxytcz.com/html/?240.html (accessed on March 14, 2012).
4. http://www.christiantoday.com/article/over.23.million.christians.in.china.official.survey.shows/26488.htm (accessed on March 14, 2012).
5. See, for example, Ryan Dunch, *Fuzhou Protestants and the Making of a Modern China* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001); Pui-lan Kwok, *Chinese Women and Christianity, 1860–1927* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1992); Lars Peter Laamann, *Christian Heretics in Late Imperial China: Christian Inculturation and the State Control, 1720–1850* (New York: Routledge Press, 2006); Daniel H. Bays, *Christianity in China: From the Eighteenth Century to the Present* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996); Jean Charbonnier, *Christians in China: A.D.600 to 2000* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2007); and Alan Richard Sweeten, *Christianity in Rural China: Conflict and Accommodation in Jiangxi Province, 1860–1900* (Ann Arbor, MI: Center for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan, 2001).
6. See Thomas Brown, *Christianity in the People's Republic of China* (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1983).
7. See, for example, Jacques Gernet, *China and the Christian Impact: A Conflict of Cultures* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Yijie Tang, *Confucianism, Buddhism, Daoism, Christianity, and Chinese Culture* (Peking: Peking University Press, 1991); and Fenggang Yang, *Chinese Christians in America: Conversion, Assimilation, and Adhesive Identities* (University Park, PA: Penn State Press, 1999).
8. See Wayne Flynt and Gerald W. Berkley, *Taking Christianity to China: Alabama Missionaries in the Middle Kingdom 1850–1950* (Tuscaloosa, AL: The University of Alabama Press, 1997), p. 3.

9. See Michael Suman, *The Church in China: One Lord Two Systems* (Bangalore, India: Saicas Press, 2006), p. 153.

10. Philip Wickeri, *Reconstructing Christianity in China* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2007), p. 2.

11. Haibo Huang, "Toward Constructing a Civil Society: Reflections on the Responsibilities of Chinese Christians in 2010," in Jin Ze and Qiu Yonghui, eds., *Annual Report on Religions in China (2011)* (Beijing, China: Social Sciences Academic Press, 2011).

12. See Suman, *The Church in China: One Lord Two Systems*, p. 134.

13. See a discussion on this on a Chinese Christian website at http://christian-times.cn/?action=View&id=2354.

14. Fortunately, I found a helping hand in a Chinese Christian website network which has extensive connection with different Christian churches in China. With their help, I was able to visit many churches and conduct my interviews of Chinese Christians.

15. Another 18 percent attend both churches on regular basis.

16. The IWR study, which is supposed to be nationwide (including rural parts of China), found that 69.9 percent of Chinese Christians are women. See Jin and Qiu, p. 196.

17. Ibid., p. 202.

18. This figure is an average percentage from US General Social Survey of 1988–91, 1993–96, 2006 and 2008.

19. See Jin and Qiu, p. 200.

20. Author's personal interview data 20110703.

21. According to the IWR study, 47.5 percent of Chinese Christians do not believe that other religions are as good as Christianity (Jin and Qiu 2010, p. 206).

22. See, for example, Andrew Greeley, "Protestant and Catholics: Is the Analogical Imagination Extinct?" *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 54, No. 4 (1989), pp. 485–502; and David Gutterman and Andrew Murphy, *Religion, Politics, and American Identity: New Directions, New Controversies* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2006).

23. For more on the relationship between the two churches, see Suman, *The Church in China: One Lord Two Systems*.

24. See an article written by Sun Yi at http://www.xhjournal.cn.

25. This view was expressed to me by Pastor Hong of Muyang Church in Beijing's Changping District in my interview with him on July 7, 2011.

26. Kenneth D. Wald, *Religion and Politics in the United States* (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 1992).

27. See, for example, Jose Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994); Gilles Kepel, *The Revenge of God: The Resurgence of Islam, Christianity and Judaism in the Modern*

World (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994); Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996); Peter L. Berger, *The Desecularization of the World* (Washington, DC: Ethics and Public Policy Center, 1999); and Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

28. Robert D. Woodberry and Timothy S. Shah, "The Pioneering Protestants," *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 15, No. 2 (2004), pp. 47–61.

29. David Lumsaine, *Evangelical Christianity and Democracy in Asia* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2009).

30. Wald, *Religion and Politics in the United States.*

31. Jacques Gernet, *China and the Christian Impact: A Conflict of Cultures* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

32. On the survey of rural southern Jiangsu province, see Yang Zhong 2004; and on the two Beijing surveys, see Yang Zhong, Jie Chen, and John Scheb 1998.

33. Jie Chen and Yang Zhong, "Why Do People Vote in Semicompetitive Elections in China?," *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 64, No. 1 (2002), pp. 178–197.

34. Jie Chen and Yang Zhong, "Defining the Political System of Post-Deng China: Emerging Public Support for a Democratic Political System," *Problems of Post-Communism*, Vol. 45, No. 1 (1998), pp. 3–42; and Yang Zhong "Democratic Culture among Chinese Peasantry: An Empirical Study," *China: An International Journal*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (2005), pp. 189–211.

35. David Lumsaine, *Evangelical Christianity and Democracy in Asia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

Conclusions

Political culture has a significant influence over people's political behavior. This is not only true of Western-style democracies whereas people's voting behavior can be explained by their political beliefs. But it is also true of people living in non-democratic countries. Studying political culture in non-democratic countries helps us to understand and predict, in part, political events and regime stability or regime change in those countries. Studying political culture among Chinese urbanites is even more important in understanding and predicting where China is going politically since the majority of the Chinese people, for the first time in history, live in cities. If the experience of modernization and urbanization in other countries is any guide, we should expect that the political culture of Chinese urbanites is different from its rural population and that there has been a general political cultural shift in China. One unique feature of this study is the fact that it draws on two large-scale random surveys and one non-random survey to tap into Chinese urban residents' political and social views. The data are relatively new. This book takes a scientific and empirical, instead of a nomothetic, approach in the study of Chinese political culture. The study covers various aspects of political culture such as political regime support, political interest, democratic values, political trust, and environmental attitudes and the subpolitical culture of Chinese urban Christians.

It is found that the Chinese political regime enjoys a relatively high degree of support from the Chinese urban population. Most of the surveyed Chinese urbanites would prefer not a fundamental regime change but rather gradual reform to solve social and political problems in China. It is further found, on the one hand, that regime support among Chinese urban residents is strongly tied to Chinese urban residents' subjective evaluation of Chinese government performance and subjective wellbeing, indicating that Chinese government's political legitimacy is performance-based. What is also good news for the Chinese government is that political trust in the central government among Chinese urban residents is relatively high. Furthermore, evaluation of government economic performance reinforces people's political trust, indicating that Chinese government's political legitimacy is likely performance-based. On the other hand, however, it is also revealed that increased educational level, a preference for electoral democracy and strong nationalism reduce the level of regime support among Chinese urbanites, implying that political legitimacy of the Chinese government may be fluid and unpredictable in the future.

With regard to levels of political interest, contrary to the popular perception that Chinese people are preoccupied with material gains and have less interest in politics, our survey findings show that the majority of Chinese urban residents do still pay sufficient attention to political and state affairs. What could be of concern to the authorities is that people who are less supportive of the current political regime and more supportive of democratic values tend to pay more attention to politics, indicating a potential force for political activism if they are given the opportunities. Findings about democratic values among urban Chinese also carry implications for China's future. The majority of Chinese urbanites in our study are indeed in favor of core democratic values. More importantly, in common with people in many other countries, better-educated and younger people in Chinese cities tend to be more supportive of democratic values. However, it is also found that Chinese urbanites who have higher levels of life satisfaction are less supportive of core democratic values, indicating that the Chinese government's legitimization strategy of eudemonism has, to a certain degree, worked among the Chinese urban population.

This book also taps into the environmental attitudes of the Chinese urban population, an area that has not received much attention and has not been studied sufficiently in an empirical fashion. Given the deteriorating environmental conditions in China and the population's growing concern

with environmental problems, it is worthwhile to find out what urban Chinese think about environmental issues. Our survey of Chinese urban residents with regard to their attitudes and behavior toward the environment shows that most of the Chinese urbanites are knowledgeable about environmental issues and problems and are concerned with the harm of environmental problems to their health. Probably because of this, most Chinese urban residents are quite willing to contribute to environmental causes, such as sorting out their garbage, bringing their own shopping bags to grocery shopping, volunteering for environmental work, and even making personal sacrifices to improve the environment in China. Our survey also shows that a large percentage of Chinese urbanites hold strong NIMBY attitudes and that they are ready to take to the street to prevent environmental risky facilities from being built near their neighborhood. Multivariate analysis shows that both environmental concerns and postmodern values contribute to their environmental activism.

This book also includes a chapter on the political culture and value orientations of a minority group in China who have formerly received relatively little scholarly attention: urban Chinese Christians. It is found that overwhelming majority of Chinese urban Christians have a high level of religiosity in both believing and behaving aspects, compared to their counterparts in the United States. It is also found that the majority of Chinese urban Christians are more socially conservative than the general population in China as a whole and also that house church members tend to be more socially conservative than Three Self church members. What is more interesting is the political culture of Chinese urban Christians. They are much less active in terms of their participation in the officially organized elections of local people's congress, even though the majority of them do pay attention to national politics and state affairs. Moreover, the majority of the Chinese Christians tend to be strong supporters of democratic values and civil liberties. They have, in particular, strong feelings about freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, and the need for more political reform, all of which are related to the practice of their religion. Whether or not Chinese Christians will be a potential social force for political change in China remains to be seen.

How is the political culture in the major Chinese cities different from that of the general population? Findings from a recent nationwide survey (except for the regions of Tibet and Xinjiang) provide the answers. According to 4th Wave of the *Asian Barometer Survey* (ABS) conducted in China in 2015, a similar question with regard to regime support in the

2015 ABS survey shows that only 6.2 percent of Chinese people wish for a fundamental change in the current system in China, 3.8 percent want to see significant change in the system while 51.5 percent prefer either no change or small adjustment of the current political system in China (see Table 8.1). In answering a related question, close to 70 percent of the Chinese general population believe that the current political system is capable of solving major problems that China faces (see Table 8.2). In the survey of Chinese urban residents, 24 percent of the respondents prefer fundamental political system change in China, whereas 51.9 percent are in favor of moderate political change (see Table 2.1). In other words, support for the current political regime is even higher among the Chinese general population than the urban population in China.

With regard to levels of political interest, our survey of urban cities shows that over 60 percent of urban residents show an interest in politics

Table 8.1   Does our political system need any adjustment? (%)

Our political system functions well and there is no need for any adjustment	9.2
Our current political system only needs small adjustment	42.3
Our current political system needs major adjustment	13.8
Our current political system needs fundamental adjustment	6.2
Do not understand the question	9.7
Do not know	17.1
Refuse to answer	1.7
N = 4068	

Source: *Asian Barometer Survey, 2015*

Table 8.2   Diffuse political support for the Chinese political system among Chinese people (%)

	Strongly	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Do not understand the question	Do not know	Refuse to answer	N
Our current political system is capable of solving China's problems	7.2	56.2	11.2	0.6	11.8	11.7	1.3	4068

Source: *Asian Barometer Survey 2015*

(see Table 3.1). However, the nationwide survey indicates that significantly fewer Chinese people show interest in politics. Only 36.9 percent of the overall Chinese population stated they were interested in politics and as high as 62.5 percent of Chinese people have no political interest (see Table 8.3). Regarding the discussion of politics, there also seem to be significant differences. Around a fifth of Chinese urban residents often discuss politics with others, while most urbanites seldom or never engage in political discussion with others (see Table 3.3). In comparison, only 6.6 percent of the general Chinese population often discuss political issues with family members and friends, 39.5 percent of them only discuss politics occasionally and more than half (52.5 percent) never discuss politics (see Table 8.4).

How do our urban residents fare in comparison with the general population with regard to democratic values? The *Asian Barometer Survey* asks some similar questions that were asked in our survey of Chinese urban residents on democratic preferences and values. As the findings indicate, the majority or plurality majority of Chinese citizens, like Chinese urban dwellers, are in favor of democracy and hold democratic values. Most Chinese people (67 percent) prefer their leaders elected by the people in

Table 8.3 Levels of political interest among Chinese people (%)

	No interest at all	Not Interested	Interested	Very interested	Refuse to answer
Are you interested in knowing things about politics? N = 4068	24.4	38.1	28.3	6.6	2.7

Source: *Asian Barometer Survey, 2015*

Table 8.4 Discussion of politics with others among Chinese people (%)

	Often	Occasionally	Never	Refuse to answer
How often do you discuss politics with others? N = 4068	6.6	39.5	52.5	1.5

Source: *Asian Barometer Survey, 2015*

Table 8.5   Which of the following statements do you agree with? (%)

Government officials should be appointed based on their character and ability. Elections are not necessary	15.8
Government officials should be elected by the people through competitive elections	67.0
Do not know	12.9
Refuse to answer	4.3
N = 4068	

Source: *Asian Barometer Survey, 2015*

Table 8.6   Which of the following two statements do you agree with? (%)

Democracy can solve China's social problems	57.1
Democracy cannot solve China's social problems	17.1
Do not know	24.1
Refuse to answer	1.6
N = 4068	

Source: *Asian Barometer Survey, 2015*

competitive elections (see Table 8.5), compared to 59 percent of Chinese urban residents who favor Chinese central government leaders be elected directly by the population (see Table 4.1). Furthermore, close to 60 percent of Chinese respondents in ABS have confidence that democracy can solve China's problems (see Table 8.6) and a plurality majority (41 percent) of the people on the survey believes that democracy is a better political system compared to other types of political systems (see Table 8.7). Slightly more people (46.2 percent vs. 41.4 percent) in the *Asian Barometer Survey*, however, hold the view that people should let leaders who have morals decide everything (see Table 8.8). In our survey of Chinese urban residents, 72.4 percent disagree with the statement that there is no need for people to get involved in decision-making process if leaders are capable and trusted by the people (see Table 4.1).

Does the Chinese general population trust the government more than the Chinese urbanites? More of our Chinese urban residents seem to distrust the Chinese central government than the Chinese general population (even though the wordings of the questions in the two surveys are not exactly the same). As high as 86.6 percent of the people in the *Asian Barometer Survey* place their trust of the Chinese central

Table 8.7   Which of the following statements do you agree with? (%)

Regardless, democracy is always the best political system	41.3
Under certain circumstances, an authoritarian political system is better	11.0
Democracy and authoritarian political systems are the same	19.8
Do not know	26.3
Refuse to answer	1.7
N = 4068	

Source: *Asian Barometer Survey, 2015*

Table 8.8   Let leaders decide everything (%)

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Do not understand the question	Do not know	Refuse to answer	N
If leaders have morals, we should let them decide everything	8.8	37.4	36.7	4.7	4.2	7.0	1.4	4068

Source: *Asian Barometer Survey, 2015*

government while 65.9 percent of Chinese trust their central government leaders always try to do the right things for the people (see Table 8.9 and Table 2.2). Regarding levels of social trust, it appears that Chinese urban residents have higher levels of trust for strangers than the general population in China. Only 41.1 percent of the Chinese general population say that most people can be trusted (see Table 8.10), while 65.9 percent of Chinese urbanites either agree or strongly agree with the statement that there exists a basic level of trust among people in society (see Table 5.1).

Overall, as the comparisons reveal, there are differences between opinions of Chinese urban residents and the general population of China with regard to regime support, levels of political interest and trust in the central government. Also, as indicated in the main findings of the previous chapters, the picture of urban Chinese political culture is mixed. On the one hand, the culture among Chinese urban residents tends to be conservative in the sense that most people do not support fundamental political change and have high levels of political trust in the Chinese government. On the other hand, however, most Chinese urbanites do hold democratic

Table 8.9 Trust of central government by Chinese people (%)

Completely untrustworthy	0.4
Mostly untrustworthy	0.7
Somewhat untrustworthy	3.0
Somewhat trustworthy	15.0
Mostly trustworthy	36.1
Completely trustworthy	35.5
Do not understand the meaning of the question	1.8
Do not know	6.7
Refuse to answer	0.7
N = 4068	

Source: *Asian Barometer Survey, 2015*

Table 8.10 Can most people be trusted or do we have to be careful when dealing with other people (%)

Majority of the people can be trusted	41.4
We should be careful when dealing with other people	51.2
It depends on the situation	3.9
Do not know	3.1
Refuse to answer	0.4
N = 4068	

Source: *Asian Barometer Survey, 2015*

values and favor the election of Chinese government officials. They are also supportive of civil liberties. On all these points, Chinese urban residents' political culture is not so different from that of the general population in China. Even though most Chinese urbanites do hold fundamental democratic values, it is questionable whether they will be a force to push for political change in China. This is not to say, however, that they will never become politically active. I believe that Chinese urban residents may become politically active under the following three scenarios. The first scenario is that their living standard suffers a significant drop due to an economic slowdown or economic crisis in China. The second scenario is that environmental pollution becomes unbearable and causes a serious health crisis. The third scenario is that Chinese urban residents do not feel physically safe as a result of either social chaos or a serious breakdown in the rule of law. Indeed, whether and when Chinese urbanites will become a viable force for political change in China remain to be seen.

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