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Gendered labour market in post Mao China: Political ramifications

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Abstract
The gendered labour market and the increase in the female labour migration have evolved out of a correlation of diverse factors that includes ideological, structural, economic, institutional and cultural changes in the post-Mao China. The co-ordinated development of urban areas and associated industries, since the economic reforms of the late 1970s, has led to large-scale rural-urban migration, mostly rural female workers, who are in-cooperated largely into the electronic and toy manufacturing industries. Developments in information and transportation technologies during this period have made spatial mobility cheaper and safer to access. A large educated youth, the result of the socialist education strategies of the Mao's period, along with the structural reforms, such as the relaxation of *Hukou System* (the government system of household registration) has accelerated internal migration, leading to a phenomena that is often referred to as 'floating population,' in contemporary China. It is often suggested that more than 300 million people migrated to urban centers in the last forty years, leading to a significant transformation of the tastes, sensibilities and aspirations of a large section of Chinese people, particularly, its young rural population. These developments actually have multiple ramifications on the state, state policies and the state-society relations. In an environment of liberalisation and privatisation, they have significantly altered the nature and processes of interest articulation, opening spaces for categories and concepts such as class, gender, social capital and ethnicity to co-exist. For the migrant female workers, spatial mobility is not just a freedom from the gaze of a patriarchal family order, but also an opportunity to encounter within themselves the vivacity and simulations of the modern urban spaces. Their association with urban spaces implants within them modern values, images, believes and aspirations. Internal migration, in this sense, has introduced modern ways of life to a large section of population. However, the unfolding concerns differ along the social strata. In the urban centres, the migrant workers have been subjected to new forms of disciplinary power in the factory floors. The rural women in China's textile and electronic industries may worry more about the wages and the working conditions. The middle-class women, on the other hand, are largely integrated and therefore equipped to utilise the social and geographical core-periphery relations within the evolving socio-economic formation. Greater economic autonomy and political freedom consequently may attract their attention. Within the evolving socio-political dispositions, the univocal voice of the 'national woman' (*funu*) lacks the old revolutionary spirit and rigour and it plunges into a region of cacophony.

Keywords: radiation characteristics, polarized, microstrip triangular patch array antenna

Introduction
The gendered labour market and the increase in the female labour migration are dynamic processes. These processes have evolved out of a correlation of diverse factors that includes ideological, structural, economic, institutional and cultural changes in the post-Mao China. Developments in information and transportation technologies during this period have made spatial mobility cheaper and safer to access. These changes in the attitude and environment have not ably transformed the tastes, sensibilities and aspirations of the people, particularly, young rural population. These developments actually have multiple ramifications on the state, state policies and the state-society relations. They significantly alter the nature and processes of interest articulation along class, gender, social capital and ethnicity, with simultaneous repressive and liberating effects in an environment of liberalisation and privatisation. For the migrant female workers, spatial mobility is not just a freedom from the gaze of a patriarchal family order and an introduction to a different disciplinary regime at the factory floor, but they also began to encounter within themselves the vivacity and simulations of the modern urban spaces. Their associate with those spaces implants with in them modern values, images, believes and aspirations. Internal migration, in this sense, has introduced modern ways of life to a large section of population. However, the concerns differ along the social strata. The rural women in China's textile and electronic industries may worry more about the wages and the working conditions. The middle-class women are connected and thus equipped to utilise the social and geographical core-periphery relations within the evolving socio-economic formation. Greater economic autonomy and political freedom may attract their attention. Within the evolving socio-political dispositions, the univocal voice of the 'national woman' (*funu*) lacks the old revolutionary spirit and rigour and it plunges into a region of cacophony.

The partial retreat of the state from several forms of welfare

programmes for labourers, on the other hand, has affected all sections of labour force. The increasing gap between the rural and the urban living standards and the resultant influx of rural residents, mostly young men and women, to urban spaces has added force to general lawlessness in cities, a phenomenon that Taciana Fisac has termed as "social anomie" [1]. This has strengthened popular dissatisfaction among urban dwellers to different state politics on internal migration. The development of a gendered labour market, consequently, has augmented diverse strains of grassroots struggle, which are putting pressure on state and its policies. The present paper, with a bottom-up approach to the Chinese polity, examines the impertinent representation of women in political discourse, the new pattern of interest articulation in post-Mao Chinese society, and the political ramifications of the discernible grassroots resistance on state and its policies.

Post-Mao Chinese Polity: A Reading

The UNDP in its report of 1995 argues that even after the emergence of the market forces, when compared to many other countries of third world, the gender equality in China has more or less sustained. The report suggests that by 1995 China ranked 111 in the UN human development index (HDI), but it ranked 71 on the gender-related development index (GDI) and as high as 23 on the gender empowerment measure (GEM) [2]. Yet, the Chinese women, especially rural unskilled women, are at disadvantageous position in the society. On the one hand, Chinese women have shared with men the benefits brought by the reforms such as better economic and career opportunities, higher living standards and more desirable life styles. On the other hand, many women have found themselves at a disadvantageous position in the labour market and face a more insecure future.

Furthermore, at least at first sight, women's political status hasn't improved much. Since the introduction of reforms, there has been a decline in the proportion of women's representation in the National People's Congress (NPC) and other political institutions. For instance, women constituted 21 percent of Standing Committee members at the Fourth NPC in January 1978, but have come down to 9 percent at the Sixth NPC in January 1983 [3]. However, with gender relations in China generally improving over the last fifty years, as women shed many of the shackles of an old patriarchal system through entering into almost all walks of life and creating one of the highest female employment rates in the world, the number of Chinese women holding leading positions has been increasing over the past few years. Women accounted for 16.8 percent of the total number of representatives in the 15th Congress of the Chinese Communist Party, 21.8% in the ninth National People's Congress, and 15.5 percent in the ninth Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference [4]. This does not mean, however, that women have gained an equal right of participation with their male counterparts. In fact, the rate of elected women officials is still low, and most of them serve in lower-level positions. And in the higher politics, there are only a few women officials, a phenomenon known as "pyramid-shaped distribution of women in leadership."

Women in China experience low political participation at all levels of state apparatuses, especially at the village and township level as a result of, among other things, gender based discrimination and early retirement, whereas, their participation in grassroots politics, especially in NGO politics, has considerably increased over the period. Along with this development, the rise in women's oriented NGO politics in China is often seen as important for the growth of an embryonic civil society. Academic studies, those interested in representing women's interests in the evolving civil society, for instance, have started to provide detailed descriptions of history, organisational structure and work focus of selected women's organisations and networks such as the Women's Research Institute and the *Jinglun* Family Centre. However, citing civil society [5] as a space for female empowerment in China has its own problems, since the civil society based women's organisations and NGOs are inclusive in their basic characteristic, they in effect contain every form of women's political assertion. These non-governmental organisations, developed with the neoliberal social and cultural setting, moreover, are incapable of addressing the growing gendered inequalities and exploitations at a time of unprecedented transformation.

Large-scale urbanisation, developments in information and transportation technologies, internet, trade and global linkages, on the other hand, have reoriented the circulation of desire and aspirations of the people, and this has a significantly impact on the nature of labour unrest in China today. Therefore, this study rather identifies relatively violent gendered labour movements, polemic attacks and different forms of cultural resistances as new patterns of female affirmation in post-Mao Chinese political order. For instance, Aihwa Ong argues that the advance of these forms of resistance can engender a new self and community, potentially challenging the construction of civil society. The increasing marginalisation of women from political spaces has placed them as one among the subaltern subjects along with the ethnic minorities and Muslims, who have different of interests with the Han male-dominated party-state. The labour resistances, proliferated since the introduction of the reforms, are mostly directed against discriminatory state policies, patriarchal order and the working of global capital.

Another factor in the whole struggle for power is that the centrality of economic development has effectively marginalised much of the women's issues from dominant political debates. For insistence, the dominant political debates were primarily organised between the reformists' and the revisionists' camps in the early stages of the reforms, and since the 1990s between a group of divergent left political thinkers and activists, on the one hand, and the official think tanks, on the other [6]. The revisionists argued for developing state's social security system and the revitalisation of Mao's mass organisation. The reformers under Deng Xiaoping who above all stood for developing the production forces argued for maintaining social and political differences among the population and the regions, a strategy for the modernisation of the country. The socialism with Chinese characteristics, a proposed policy document that Deng was supposed to present at the Third Plenum, XIth Central Committee, held in Beijing from 18-22 December 1978 appeared as the inaugural discourse of the XIth Party Congress held in September 1982.This document, which stresses the material development, rejects class struggle as the fundamental dynamics of social

change. Central to the ascendancy of the reformers in China's discursive and practical spheres is the marginalisation of concerns over democracy and social justice. In social movements of the late 80s were responses to the phenomenon. Wang Hui traces the genealogy of neoliberal policies in the massive state repressions of student's and worker's movement in 1989 in Beijing [7]. The demands of workers and intellectuals, during the Beijing Movement, were political democracy, media freedom and freedom of speech and association as well as the establishment of the rule of law [8].

After the suppression of social movements of the 80s, many of the intellectuals and politicians belonging to the state apparatuses have concluded that radicalism has come to an end. The neoliberal arguments that have received greater circulation in the state's political discourse in the early 90s indeed have started to celebrate the gradual development of civil society from the market economy. For them, the market is nation would produce a new middle class that could provide the basis for social association and the resultant civil society would then blossom into a democracy. Their concern, therefore, is not democracy as such but market, whereas, followers of New Left argue for political democracy [9]. The democracy that people want is, for them, not just a legal framework to protect the rights of the citizen rather it is a comprehensive social value [10].

When contextualising women issues within the political debate, one can find two important features of Post-Mao Chinese politics: one, political process in China involve the interplay of diverse form of social resistance at different levels of the existing social and economic order; two, the centrality of economic development in these debates has consistently marginalised women's issues from the discursive fields. However, the proliferation of female labour market and the resultant increase in the female labour migration has opened up new spaces for them to manoeuvre. As these female migrant labourers are relatively out of the direct patriarchal family control and are enjoying more economic and personal autonomy in the distant industrial centres, sections of them have managed to develop their own individuality, which was unachievable during the Maoist period. Obvious evidence is the changing pattern of their political demands. The political rights and questions they demand and sought for answering respectively are of diverse in nature, they include representation at different levels of state's apparatuses, great economic and personal autonomy, better wages, improved work conditions, equal status in personal relations, etc. As these demands are relatively new, none of the state corporatist institutions in China, whether it is the Women's Federation (WF or *Fulian*) or the All-China Federation of Trade Union (ACFTU), are equipped to address their concernsadequately. These contradictions are visible even in the representation of women in Chinese political discourse.

The representation of women in the political discourse when seen in the context of female labour market and migration has two major characteristics. One is discursive formation of a (national women) disseminated mainly through state corporatist institutions WF and ACFTU and that which is primarily coming from the academic circles. From a genealogical analytical perspective, these conflicting discursive constructions of women may explicitly involve the diverse theoretical debate and political positions over the gender relations in Post-Mao China. Tani E. Barlow, for instance, has identified three discursive subjects- *funu*, *nuxing* and *nuren*- each with long, complex histories and specific efficacy as a position that allows women to engage in purposeful actions in socio-political life [11].

The restoration of the *funu* protocol in the late 1970s begins with the discussion of women's federation (*fulian*) to document women's gains under communism. Behind this move is to assign *fulian* the role of protecting the interests of a section of political subjects which Chinese Communist Party Central Committee identified as *funu*: national women. Therefore, as an arm of the government, *fulian* is reorganised to heed the central committee's call to reinstate *funu*- an old ideological subject of the Mao's China- as the agent of Post-Mao's modernisation. The advance of *funu* protocol has its origin in Mao's powerful propaganda campaign during the years of the party's guerrilla war. The new formulation pitched *funu*- the national female subject- up against feudalism, imperialism, bureaucratism, individualism, the West, and the bourgeoisie feminism [12].

Similar strategies for the construction of a pan-national subjectivity for the Chinese women can be identified in the post-reform China. For instance, *fulian* made the momentous decision in 1980s to establish archives and research centres at counties and urban units and to encourage amateurs to write local histories of Chinese women's movements. This has arise criticism among Chinese and Westerns scholars as these writings primarily are intended for the reestablishment of the inextricable relations between proletarian national revolution and Communist women's liberation. Moreover, critics time and again cite the numerous divergent local tendencies of women's struggles to show exclusionary nature of these *fulian* documents.

Much of the state initiatives for the empowerment of women are implemented through *Fulian* during the period. Especially after the National Women's Congress meeting in the 1978, *Fulian* started to recover resources that it had lost during the Cultural Revolution. There is a reasonable increase in the investment in developing local branches at municipal levels as well as both in state and private sector enterprises. For instance, concerns about the impact of the post-80s reforms are reflected in the efforts made by the *Fulian* to increase women's quotas in politics and economy at every level. Shang Xiaoyuan quotes an interviewee, a local cadre of the *Fulian*, joking about their effort: "Our WF required quotas for everything except prisoners" [13]. The federation's campaigns for women's quotas have generated heated social debates on the topic. A great many documents, articles and speeches have been published and the journal of *Women China* even had organised an interesting discussion on "women and power in 1992 [14].

Even after these efforts, Chinese women's participation in mass organisations- *Fulian* and All China federation of Trade Union- in the post-Mao period, for many reasons, has registered a constant decline. Much of the studies maintain that discrimination against women, both in the process of selecting cadres or representatives as well as in the society as a whole as the reason for this decline. Some of them blame the patriarchal nature of the society, and others argue that the

insufficient quality of *funu* to compete with men is the true cause of the decline in female political participation in China. But more fundamental to this phenomenon is the insufficiency of these mass organisations to represent the diverging interests of Chinese women in the post-80s social and economic settings. Many critics of *fulian* are open to argue that federation is not competent to handle new problem confronting *funu* during this period. For instance, privatisation of domestic relations, retreat of the state from social justice, tacit consent to retrograde beliefs about women's intellectual inferiority, and a coalition of those who would expel women out of politics (the widely accepted "back to the kitchen" phenomenon), all are effects of reformers that could potentially demoralise women since they can foreclose women's access to the influential spheres of Chinese political and economic power [15].

Furthermore, *funu* isa hegemonic subject position that has been constructed mainly under mutually reinforcing discursive and bureaucratic arrangement, and *fulian*is a mass organisation for national women, their very nature have failed to represent the divergent subject positions of modern Chinese women consolidated with the evolving social and economic conditions of the post-Mao China. *Fulian* also has a basic problem. Tani E. Barlow points out that the federation sees itself as "an institution of social administration, when it ought to be representing [*daibiao*] women". The federation's dependency on the state means that it "lacks an independent will" and, therefore, it is not in a position to represent anymore [16]. Besides, since *fulian*, is an institution that functions vertically, as it is placed under strict central control, it could actually block any horizontal networking of female interests outside its purview [17].

Alternative Discourse on Women and Labour

Under politically relaxed and economically liberal times there has often been a greater scope of transmitting the grass-root discontents against different forms of social and political control. In post-Mao China, the forms of social and political changes have opened new spaces for the interplay of some fundamental human instinct: the desire for the expansion of power. With the relative development of female personality since the proliferation of labour market, reflections of this can easily be identified in the discursive and political spheres. If one follows what Nietzsche called "will to power," the post-Mao discourses on "women" can be analysed by exploring the conflicting interests that segregates women alone class, gender and ethnicity.

Lack of legal support for migrant female workers has further destabilised the ideological state apparatuses. This has undermined the functioning of the entire apparatuses that would have brought women to be aware of their own mass subjectivity [*funu*]. Further, the women's history projects conducted for the construction of 'national women' by Women's Federation in the 1980s had opened new waves of debate on gender, communist revolution and women's struggles. The improvement in Chinese women's economic and personal freedom since the proliferation of female labour market has further generated theories that could eventually relocate categorical "women" beyond *fulian's* compass altogether.

In Chinese politics, trade unions and women federation are defined as mass organisations under the leadership of the Communist party. Studies on Chinese politics, both of the Maoist and the early years of post-Mao periods, describe them as an integral part of the state apparatus. However, since the reforms, these mass organisations have undergone significant changes. For instance, many of the trade unions in China, during the period, have transformed themselves from official trade unions to independent labour organisations. Many of these mass organisations failed to represent the diverging interests of their specific constituencies. Sectoral interests, under the changing state-society relations in the post-Mao China, are articulated primarily through a complex social process that involves cultural struggles and societal corporations.

A historical reading of Chinese labour conflicts could actually contextualise the late 1980s social movements within the changes in the state-society relations. Anita Chan, for instance, through identifying five undisturbed phases, where workers had turned upon the party-state in protest, has concluded that the lack of knowledge about these worker's struggles among Chinese in general and above all among the younger generations illustrates how successful the party-state is in obliterating any collective memory of the earlier confrontations [18]. This reading explicitly reveals the incompatible conveyance of sectoral interests, in the public consciousness, that are explicitly involved in the unadulterated interplay of forces, which mould the course of Chinese polity.

Primarily, conflict in these five undisturbed phases was between the sporadic popular affirmations of difference- economic, political, and cultural etc – vis-a-vis the intransigent pan-nationalist interpretation of interests by political elites. For example, when students and intellectuals fought in the late 1980s social movements for democracy and freedom of speech, the workers- caught in a repressive reality developed with the economic liberalisation and the retreat of state from welfare programmes- fought for social justice [19]. These struggles, especially of the late 1980s, are targeted primarily on state and its policies. Yet, diverging from the previous four upheavals, the 1989 workers' movements were composed of two parts, and it reflects the mutations that have undergone in Chinese society in the 1990s: one, All-China Federation of Trade Union's institutional agitation from above; two, independent spontaneous protest from below [20].

Interest Articulation in Post-Mao China

Like other communist states, representation of sectoral interests in Chinese political process too is done through creating vertical mass institutions functioning under state control. Since the introduction of communist rule, ACFTU and WF (*Fulian*)- through modified several times in 1950s, 1980s and 1990s- have served as the institutions of 'functional corporatist representation.' According to Leninist 'transmission belt' imagery, these institutions have a dual function: together with the top-down transmission of natural interests- for example, mobilisation of workers for labour production on behalf of nation's collective good- to the particular sections of population they have to protect the peculiar interest of their constituencies, through bottom-up transmission. But this dual characteristic has inherent

contradictions, as the bottom-up transmission has always been suppressed by the strong state apparatus [21].

For example, studies on worker's participation in the 1980s upheaval have categorically rejected any significant ACFTU involvement in the episode. The liberal wing of ACFTU in particular was engaged in mandatory role between the hard-line party elites and rebellious workers, though some union cadres were engaged in organising workers to stage protest actions [22]. But the workers who were caught in a hopeless situation in the second half of the 80s- with an erosion of fringe state benefits and more importantly a volatile job security- were the vital forces in organising grass-root struggles. Clearly, this noticeable dynamics of communist 'state corporatism' operating along with cyclical episodes of workers' explosion and suppression is the key to explore the probable future trajectories of China's political development.

As Daniel Chirot has pointed out the existing state corporatist institutions play crucial role in controlling the maturation of horizontal interest articulation in China [23]. The state political campaign and violence- the crack-down on the Democracy Wall Movement (1980-81), the Anti Spiritual Pollution Campaign (1983-84), and the Beijing massacre of 1889- moreover have disbanded any form of sectoral interests in post-MaoChina [24]. Yet, the 'social Darwinism' that is associated with economic liberalism, over time, has proliferated public anger [25], which these state corporatist institutions couldn't appropriate totally. Elizabeth Perry and Mark Selden, for instance, argue that this proliferation of a wide-ranging patterns of resistance and pressures have ramifications on popular consciousness and state-society relations [26]. For instance, the development of a relatively open discursive sphere, with a diversity of sectoral interest, is a crucial outcome.

Sectoral interest in the Chinese society, since the introduction of reforms in 1980s, according to Anita Chan, could broadly be of three kinds, revolving around the issues of industrialization and modernization. The *technocratic-managerial social engineers*, a group of enthusiastic economic reformers that include enterprise manager's, economists, well known academics, high level intellectuals, writers, journalists etc. Being the leading interest group, their economic doctrine is the driving force behind the Chinese economic modernisation. And they in fact even have lambasted workers privately for being lazy by nature and being consumed by a dysfunctional egalitarianism. Their economic strategies are aimed to empower the managers at the expense of the party bureaucrats and, vis-à-vis the workers to employ scientific management and thereby aiming to project the economic phase as 'liberal' and 'democratic'. On the contrary, the *conservative social engineers of the nomenclatural*, predominantly, the victims of Mao's attack on 'revisionism' are more conformist in their language on reform, yet critical of Maoism. This group wants to maintain the state corporatist institutions and more precisely for averting any popular upheaval, they may demand for two- way traffic through corporatist channels. Peng Zhen, for instance, has been a major exponent of this line. The third group, the labouring classes and their allies in her construction includes industrial workers, mostly white- collar workers. They are of course less educated than technocrats and party nomenclature, and have severely limited access to political power. In the people's congress structure and indeed in the CPPCC, they are contemptibly underrepresented. Of the 2,970 delegates to the 7th National people's congress (NPC), the 'workers' and peasants' 'representatives together comprised only 23 percent [27].

These workers nevertheless have other supports and self-imposed allies, who predominantly are intellectuals working on industrial workers and trade unions. They include 'intellectuals who work for *Gongren Ribao* (The Workers Dally) or for the magazine *Shidai* (The Times), the ACFTU's journal during the 1980s, academicians who undertake research on workers, and teachers and students of the *Gongyun Xueyuan* (The workers' Movement college), which trains trade- union cadres' [28]. They fight together with workers for attaining their cause. If put theoretically, the increasing grassroots struggles of these social actors have actually led to the 'structuration' [29] of a variety of political and social structures since the reforms. An analysis of violence in the Chinese society would elucidate precisely how individual personalities and historical contingencies have played a decisive role in transformation. The growing gap between the greater and lesser beneficiaries of the reforms indeed has generated plenty of dissatisfaction in contemporary China. Moreover, under the condition of economic liberalization and political decentralization, living and working condition of different groups of Chinese citizens have become increasingly heterogeneous and therefore their demands to the state and the market may diverge. Facing very different dilemmas, these diverse interest groups would frame diverging strategies that can rarely be confined to consolidated political categories – class, gender, regionalism nationality etc. Considering the growth in grassroots struggles, state since the 80s has taken a relatively liberal position by legitimizing the popular protests directed towards local officials and private capital as integral part of the normative processes.

Further, four laws, particularly relevant to workers living conditions were passed: the Enterprise Law, the Bankruptcy law, the Trade Union Law and Labour Law. Under pressure from different interest groups in the Chinese society, ACFTU tried to interpose different views. One of the more important structural developments since the late 1980s is the emergence of autonomous trade unions in China. The Beijing Autonomous Workers Federation is an example of well organised and well-staffed autonomous trade union. But these structural changes have little implication in a transition period of Chinese labour regime as defined by Ching Kwan Lee as a change from 'organised despotism' to disorganised despotism' [30]. For instance, even though the subordination of trade unions to the Party in China's Special Economic Zones has been weakening, in all most all cases, this has been effectively replaced, overtime, by managerial domination or despotism under hegemony of market and state. And more important is the fact that none of the popular debates-mainly on the issue of laid-off workers-have seriously taken up the women's issues [31]. The predominance of male administrators and staff in much of the trade unions further marginalised women's interests from state corporatist politics [32].

Much of the women's problems in post-Mao China, moreover, are means for the society to resolve, like excess labour, labour

productivity and so on may contradict the state modernisation projects. The curbing of the women's social benefits, salary, employment opportunities, and promotions, associated with enterprise self-management, discretionary hiring and contract systems, for instance, are aimed to maximise profitability in a market economy [33]. Shang Xiaoyuan argues that Chinese women, especially educated urban women, dissatisfied with these institutionalised discrimination, are increasingly oriented towards non-governmental organisations for registering their discontent. There is a consistent decline in women's participation in ACFTU and WF politics in post-Mao China, but at the same time Shang's field study verifies a consistent increase in Chinese women's participation in grassroots politics [34].

State/Society Antagonism and the Ramification on State and its Policies

There pressive as well as exploitative labour relations in these labour markets open up diverse forms of labour resistance in China, along with that the partial retreat of the state from many welfare projects, as part of its overall liberalisation and privatisation strategies, has emboldened people to express their discontents. When migrant labours in the post-Mao social hierarchy demand novel forms of economic and political rights, the new middle class, which is a creation of the growing social and geographical core-periphery relations, is demanding for greater political freedom. Caught in problems of growing inequality and exploitation, Chinese women also have started to demand greater personal and economic autonomy both within and outside work place. The relaxation of the political control on many spheres of life, after the introduction of reforms in the late 70s, further has enlarged the space for the popular unrest these unprecedented post-reforms social changes and the resultant changes in the nature of the state and governance have generated confusion, both in China and abroad, on the possible trajectory of Chinese political development [35].

Nevertheless, in the view of increasing factional conflicts in the top state and party apparatuses, especially after the increase in popular dissident movements in the early 1980s, there has been a qualitative change in the academic attitude towards the role of society in the political processes. For instance, Wang Hui writes: "already we can see signs of various forces waiting for the opportunity to attack their opponents... [Exactly in the way] as the old Chinese saying puts it: 'Fire at the castle gate means trouble for fish in the moat" [36].

Most of the literatures on the Chinese polity detail political and military elites primarily because they are critical in maintaining a system or to change its direction. This approach would also enable writers to analysis the different ways in which these elite groups may deal within dependent social forces, for example, by incorporating sectoral interests, by repressing them, or by carrying on dialogue with them. Yet it would besome where impracticable to argue that even the most democratic political power is absolutely incapable of forcing people into a particular form of political system that requires social self-mobilization, unless the people in question have significant social and cultural capacity to do so [37]. The studies on structural changes of polity therefore should inevitably be a view from below.

The demonstrations of 1989 were quite unique in the post-Mao China, as it involves a coalition of different interests - students, blue-collar workers and government employees etc., [38]. This unconventional congruence of their interests must be seen within the context of the profound structural changes in the society since the introduction of reforms. First and the foremost is the uneven distribution of benefits both along geographical and social terrains. For instance, many urban residents in the coastal regions have prospered as they have sufficient land under household responsibility system. However, only a portion of rural population obtained land, and the growth in job further has not been sufficient to absorb all of the existing urban labour force. And more specifically, the labour market has increasingly become stratified and with job allocation being profoundly determined by official corruption and favouritism *(guanxi).* Thus, the crowding in the labour market along with official corruption created distinct sets of grievances for workers and for students. Yet, both groups came to see their grievances as having a common source and a common remedy: "democracy" [39].

Since the brutal state repression of the social movements especially after the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre, there has been a consistent increase in the diverse form of popular dissident movements in contemporary China [40]. The official trade union statistics, for instance, registered somewhat 1,620 incidents of arbitrated labour disputes that involved some 37,470 workers in 1990. Incidents of collective sit-ins, slowdowns, strikes, protests, and filing of complaints increased consistently at a rate of 80 to 90percent in the following years. Ching Kwan Lee cites a local daily report *(Far Eastern Economic Review, 16 June 1994:32)* in 1993 that among the 12, 358 cases of labour disputes more than half of the total has been accounted to public enterprises [41]. But, in the coastal and southern cities, labour militancy concentrates primarily in foreign-owned enterprises and mostly involves migrant workers. For instance, in the period 1993-94, 90 percent of the 1,100 labour disputes in Shenzhen occurred in foreign-owned enterprises [42]. And the most strikingly visible feature of these popular movements, one can identify, is that all of them are aimed for a greater emancipatory social and political order.

The most important ramification of these grassroots struggles is the advancement of the concept of 'democracy' in Chinese political rhetoric. Ever since late 1980s, there has been a consistent effort on the part of the Beijing government to democratise the grassroots politics for· the absorption of the diverse local interests. Regular local elections at the village and municipal levels eventually have become a common feature of Chinese polity [43]. Therefore, it could be argued that the structural changes after the introduction of reforms have led to the transformation of party state's mass-line politics, at least in the local levels, which in turn was aimed to absorb or repress them.

The changing structure of state, under mounting societal pressure, has multiple ramifications on its internal and external policies. In the domestic sphere, state under pressure from growing female labour unrest has sporadically acted in support of women's rights in the family and workplace. During the period, it implemented more liberal marriage laws

in1980s and in 1990s [44]. In 1992, a law for protecting women's rights and interests was adopted. In the 90s, laws were implemented to legitimize the role of the Party and trade unions in joint venture enterprises. Under external compulsions from Western governments and Human Rights watchers, more labour friendly laws have been introduced. The Beijing government in 1995 took initiative in conducting fourth UN conference on women in Beijing. Though most delegates accused of public boorishness and deliberate sabotage, some observers have suggested that conducting an international conference in Beijing itself demonstrated the courage of the Party- state to expose the country to potentially enormous criticism about the way Chinese women are treated. In 2002 under the compulsion of China's WTO entry, a *White Paper on Labor and Social Security* that intends to reform the legal and social security systems was issued.

Changes in the attitude can also be identified in the state's external policies. For instance, during Chinese primer's visit to India, a significant episode in the post-war Sino-Indian bonhomie, he explained the fundamental political goal of Chinese government as the 'governance of population' rather· than real politicks. The white papers on labour and social security, and the one on democracy have been released in 2002 and 2005 respectively. The *White Paper on Labor and Social Security* argues to expand cooperation and exchange with other countries, so as to promote the role of legal and social security systems in international labour affairs. On the other hand, the white paper on democracy aims for the construction of a relatively liberal democratic order under central party control. Moreover, human rights have become a key issue in China's diplomatic relations with much of the advanced world, as it started new rounds of talks on social security. In October 25, 2005 Chinese vice minister on labour and social security, Wang Dong-j in for instance has signed a memorandum of understanding with union labour and employment secretary of India, K M Sahani to broaden cooperation on 'exchange in employment and vocational training and social security for an another three years. All this reflects the changing attitude of the Chinese government towards grassroots level labour struggles in the changing domestic and international scenario after the 1980s.

Conclusion

It could be easily argued that the development of the labour market and the resultant increase in the female labour migration, two among the vivid changes introduced since the beginning of reforms, have multiple ramifications on state and its policies in the changing Chinese state-society relations. As these changes set off conflicting effects on different categories of Chinese citizens, they together with other post-Mao changes have increased societal demands and expectations from political processes, and therefore have exerted pressure on the state and state policies for more political freedom and emancipatory economic order. Even though limited, the proliferation of different forms of grassroots struggles in the period, which includes labour movements, feminist movements, different strains of nationalist movements and a multiplicity of cultural and polemic struggles conducted both within and outside the work place are examples for this societal ascendancy. For instance, labour and women's movement, which are central to this study, in most cases are channelled through nongovernmental and societal co-operations, and these societal struggles play an important role in putting pressure on the state corporatist institutions to take relevant steps. The development of a relatively independent space, especially after the development of autonomous labour unions in the late 1980s, therefore, is an important change in the Chinese polity. For example, in the academic studies on women, there is a substantial increase in theories, which place women as an independent subject outside the political and social powers of inherently patriarchal Chinese state and family respectively. The proliferation of an independent labour market, moreover, has restructured female subjectivity and personality of at least a section of middle class women, who managed to gain out of the current geographic and social core-periphery relations.

Reference

1. "Social anomie" for Taciana Fisac is a general lawlessness, created out of the uncontrolled movement of peoples, commodities and images across the social spaces. Taciana Fisac, "Social Anomie and Political Discourses in Contemporary China" in Taciana Fisac and Leila Fernandez-Stem bridge (eds.), *China Today: Economic Reforms, Social Cohesion and Collective Identities* (London and New York: Rout hedge Curzon. 2003, 150.
2. UNDP, Human Development Report 1995 (Oxford University Press, 1995.
3. Shang Xiaoyuan. "Women and the Public Sphere: Education, NGO Affiliation and Political Participation" in Jackie West *et al.,* (eds.) *Women of China: Economic and Social Transformation* (New York: St Martin's Press, INC, 1999), 195-96.
4. National Population and Family Planning Commission of China, "Gender Equity and Women's Empowerment," In http://www.npfpc.gov.cnengenderpro.htm, Accessed on 03-10-2005.
5. Antonio Gramsci in his prison notebooks, for instance, has categorically rejected any non-dialectical separation of state and civil society. For him, civil society is a space through which the political elites attain an ideological hegemony. And therefore he stresses that "in concrete reality, civil society and state are one and the *same."* See, Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci* (New York: International Publishers. 1971, 207-208.
6. Wang Hui. "Fire at the Castle Gate" *New Left Review.* 2000; 6:74-79
7. Wang Hui. *China's New Order: Society, Politics, and Economy in Transition* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003, 46-64.
8. Ibid, 63.
9. New left, a political label developed in 1997-98, according to Wang Hui, has its first appearance in a short article in *Beijing Youth Daily.* Prominent academicians like Gan Yang and Cui Zhiyuan, who have been members of the camp, have conducted academic seminars and public appearances during the period. Central to this political position is whether a balance should be kept

between central and local governments, market and planning principles. For that it chooses a nexus between market and state: that is, more precisely, it chooses for relations between interest groups and power structures, economic forms and political systems. See, Wang Hui, op. dt.no. 9:74-79.

10. Ibid, 79.
11. Funu a popular word for "women" in Chinese can also be understood to mean "female subject in Maoist state discourse." In post-Mao China funu protocols and powers are both an effect and a constituent part of Mao's once powerful state rhetoric. Nuxing, on the other hand, refers "women as sexed subject and the other of humanist Man." In everyday language nuren has ordinary role as a signifier to women as a category: a correspondent to "women" with a small "w." See, Tani E. Barlow, "Politics and Protocols of Funu: (Un) Making National Women", In Christina K. Gilmartin *et al.*, (eds.) *Engendering China: Women, Culture, and the State* (London: Harvard University Press, 1994), 339-341.
12. Ibid, 345.
13. Shang Xiaoyuan, op. cit. no. 3, 209.
14. Ibid, 196.
15. Tani E. Barlow, op. cit. no. 14:342.
16. Ibid, 346-47.
17. Anita Chan. "Revolution or Corporatism? Workers and Trade Unions in Post Mao China", Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs. 1993; 29:35-36.
18. According to Anita Chan, the first conflict occurred immediately after Liberation, when the Communist trade unions lost out in a struggle for independence from the party. The second conflict erupted in 1956-57 during the Hundred Flowers period. It ended with the imprisonment of workers and union activists and the fall of Lai Ruoyu, the new chairman of the ACFfU. The third round of confrontation, accompanied by violence on a massive scale, occurred during the Cultural Revolution (1966 - 69). In terms of the number of people involved, the duration of the struggle, and the number of workers ultimately jailed or killed, it greatly surpassed the 1989 workers' movement. The fourth period of political confrontation arose when groups of workers took to Tiananmen Square in 1976 to commemorate Zhou Enlai's death. The activities of these workers were subsequently recorded in official histories, but the incident itself was interpreted as a popular rebellion against the tyranny of the Gang of Four, rather than as a movement that had any working-class content. The fifth cycle of confrontation occurred, of course, with the popular protest movement of 1989.21 Yet once again the role of the workers (and the trade unions) became subordinated in public consciousness to the high profile of the students. The government this time sought to condemn worker participants as unemployed vagrants and hooligans. See, Anita Chan, op. cit. 20, 33-35.
19. James C. F. Wang, *Contemporary Chinese Politics: An Introduction* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1990), 6-8.
20. Jeanne L Wilson. "Labour Policy in China: Reform and Retrogression", *Problems of Communism.* 1990; 39(5):44-65.
21. Anita Chan, op. cit. no. 20, 37.
22. Daniel Chirot, "The Corporatist Model and Socialism", *Theory and* Society. 1980; 9:363-81.
23. James CF. Wang, op. cit. no. 28, 7.
24. Wang Hui, op. cit. no. 10.
25. Elizabeth J. Perry and Mark Selden, "Introduction: Reform and Resistance in Contemporary China", in Elizabeth J. Perry and Mark Selden (eds.), *Chinese Society: Changes, Conflict and Resistance* (London and New York: Routledge. 1999, 7-16.
26. Anita Chan, op. cit. no. 20, 46-49.
27. Ibid, 48-49.
28. Unlike many of the French thinkers who have undertaken researches on social power, Anthony Giddens's concept of 'structuration 'asserts social actors as active agents, playing a vital role in the transformation of consolidated social and political structures. See, Anthony Goddens, *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1984), 29.
29. Ching Kwan Lee, *Gender and the South China Miracle: Two Worlds of Factory Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 169-70.
30. Ibid, 166.
31. Shang Xiaoyuan, op. cit. no. 3, 197-98.
32. Li Xiaojiang. "Economic Reform and the Awakening of Chinese Women's Collective Consciousness", In Jackie West *et al* (eds.), *Women of China: Economic and Social Transformation* (New York: St Martin's Press, INC. 1999; 364-366
33. Shang Xiaoyuan, op. cit. no. 3, 200-208.
34. Two major schools and a few variants currently dominate the debates: if in the first instance, as the latest success of an Asian-style authoritarianism, China is strictly put outside the realm of Western liberal values; the other witnesses the triumph of marketcapitalism and the end of Maoism as the harbinger of a basically universal liberal social political and economic order. But none of these two major movements in the studies on Chinese politics - as when the Asian-style of authoritarianism argues for authoritarian state, the liberals on the contrary have celebrated emancipatory potential of market - have seriously taken the role that the society has played in shaping the nature of polity since the reforms. See, Wang Hui, op. cit. no. 9, 69-99.
35. Wang Hui, op. cit. no. 9, 99.
36. Robert P. Weller, *Alternate Civilities: Democracy and Culture in China and Taiwan* (Colorado: West view Press, 1999), 136-38.
37. Wang Hui, op. cit. no. 10, 46-77.
38. David Mason T. "Modernization and its Discontents Revisited: The Political Economy of Urban Unrest in the People's Republic of China" The Journal of Politics. 1994; 56(2):400-424.
39. Andrew G Walder, Xiaoxia Gong. "Workers in the Tiananmen Protests: The Politics of the Beijing Workers' Autonomous Federation". Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs. 1993; 29:1-29.
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41. Chih-Yu Shih. *Collective Democracy: Political and Legal Reforms in China* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1999), 192.
42. Christopher J. Smith, *China and the Post-utopian Age* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd,1996), 299-301.
43. Fatima Entesham Siddiqi and Sarala Ranganathan, "Beijing Declaration and Plan of Action" In Fatima Entesham Siddiqi and Sarala Ranganathan (eds.), *Handbook on Women and Human Rights: A Guide for Social Action Part 1* (New Delhi: Ramishka Publishers, 2000).
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