

**PORTRAYING REGIME SUPPORTERS
AND SCEPTICS IN CHINA**

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Executive Summary

1. With substantial economic slowdown and halting progress in pushing in-depth reform, whether the Chinese Communist rule has been close to breaking point has been spotlighted among China observers the world over. An important indicator is regime support from its people.
2. A nationwide survey asked Chinese respondents how much support they have for their government. The data show that the Communist regime is still popular among the people, albeit with challenges in the long term.
3. Chinese citizens can be generally divided into three categories according to their patterns of regime support. Those who trust every institution in the party-state system constitute the “loyalists”.
4. Those who have confidence in the central leadership, but have reservations about other party-state institutions (for instance, local governments) can be labelled as the “central follower”. The last group of citizens does not trust any of the institutions in the party-state. They are the “sceptics”.
5. Loyalists constitute 45.6% of the respondents, central followers 46.2% and sceptics 8.2%. Combining the first two groups, the central leadership in Beijing has the support of over 90% of Chinese citizens.
6. The existence of central followers provides a great “safety valve” for the regime. A citizen may be unsatisfied with governmental performance and has lost confidence in a certain party-state institution, and yet remains loyal to the central government.
7. Both cultural values and government performance contribute to regime support. A short-term poor performance of the government will not undermine the cultural foundation of regime support.

8. The sceptics become suspicious of the party-state not because they are economically unsatisfied, but because of their pro-democratic values and demands for political accountability. Beijing's endeavour in economic growth cannot buy off its critics.
9. In the long run, as the Chinese economy has departed from high-speed growth and the group size of sceptics is expanding, Chinese leaders may have to push for profound political reform to accommodate changes in the social landscape.