

**“SOCIAL MANAGEMENT”:  
CHINA GOES BEYOND MAINTAINING  
SOCIAL STABILITY**

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## Executive Summary

1. To ensure a smooth leadership transition in the Fall of 2012, the Chinese Communist Party has been struggling to maintain regime stability with a recently developed strategy of “social management.”
2. This new strategy is a reflection of the government’s concern for domestic social problems due to the changing society and rising protests, and the fear of the contagion effects of the Jasmine Revolution in 2011. It is also a modification of the existing “maintaining stability (维稳)” system which has turned out to be incompetent and socioeconomically costly.
3. What makes the social management policy significantly different from the old “maintaining stability” system is that the new policy gives a crucial role to economic development and social services, the first time Beijing combines economy and social services with stability.
4. There are several new mechanisms of social control. First, the government-centered system is being replaced by a multi-player centered system with social organizations and even private companies playing a more active role in managing the society.
5. Second, besides administrative commands from the government, there are various means to exercise control over the society, including economic co-option, deliberation, and negotiation. Finally, the focus of control is being shifted from suppression to prevention.
6. Four major policies have been promoted. At the center is a multi-level gridiron system of social control and services. Grass-roots communities are divided into squared cells and each cell is manned by administrative staff in charge of reporting and resolving any dissatisfaction, disputes, protests, and unrest.

7. Another major policy is the more flexible and diverse way to manage social organizations. For political and religious organizations, the government maintains firm control. Others such as industrial, charitable, and service-oriented organizations are encouraged to provide social services.
8. Next is the negotiation mechanism of labour-management disagreement. Business owners and employees need to deliberate any issues related to wage and salary together. The government “supervises and gives incentive to” entrepreneurs to make sure they accommodate workers’ opinions and needs in the bargaining process.
9. Finally, the government seeks to take a proactive role in “guiding” online opinions. Online commentators have been employed to participate in discussions in microblogs, chat rooms, online forums, and so forth, to influence public opinions in favour of the government.
10. This new system of social management aims to deal with problems without making substantial political reform. As the state-society relation in China is in rapid change, to what extent this system is able to resolve social unrest and facilitate regime stability remains unclear.