

**THE YOUNG GENERATIONS IN CHINA:
VALUES CHANGES AND POLITICAL
IMPLICATIONS**

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Executive Summary

1. The post-1980/1990 generations born after China's economic reform and the one-child policy are poised to take leadership roles in all trades and professions in the country. Social and political values of these cohorts are important for observers to understand China's political future.
2. National public opinions surveys provide a comprehensive profile of the post-1980/1990 cohorts: their individualistic orientations, attitudes towards authority and political behaviours.
3. Data analysis reveals significant differences between the post-1980s/1990s and older cohorts. The youths are less deferential to authority, more likely to place individual interests before national interests and give higher priority to self-expression.
4. Such value changes lead to changes in political attitudes. The younger cohorts feel more confident of participating in public issues, while they are more sceptical of the central government.
5. However, surprisingly to some, they are less likely to prefer democracy or to believe that democracy is capable of resolving social problems.
6. Two prominent groups among the younger generations that took political actions and established group identities in recent years are the "Little Pinks" and the "Young Marxists". The former is nationalistic and the latter upholds Marxism.
7. Future Chinese leaders of the post-1980s/90s grew up in an entirely different social environment from that of the current and previous leaderships. They will have to face a society with the post-1980s/1990s as the mainstay. The popular political pursuits and demands will be shifting, which will require new ways of social governance.

8. China's political future depends on how the Party adapts itself to social changes brought about by the post-1980/1990 cohorts, or how the Party guides, coopts and controls the younger generations to ensure compliance.