China's Social Governance in Transition: Achievements and Experiences

Xiaobin Cai Assistant Professor, Institute of Social Development Research, China (hsiaopin@163.com)

Section I Positive Effects of Social Governance in China

I. Achievements of Community Governance

First, the number of social organizations is growing rapidly. Since the reform and opening up, the Chinese government has retreated from the past "totalistic" (Tsou, 1994) management strategy, gradually withdrawn the government's antenna, restricted the scope of government management, and handed over many functions to the society. Under that background, social organizations have gradually gained space for development, filling in the power vacuum after the retreat of the government. Social governance is playing an increasingly active role. Table 1 shows that there were 4 thousand social organizations in China in 1988 but the number is 762 thousand in 2017. Before 1999, when private non-enterprise social organizations were included, China's social organizations only referred to social groups. After 1999, this kind of social organization began to develop rapidly, from less than 0.6 thousand at the beginning to 400 thousand in 2017. In 2003, foundations[1] were included as social organizations, which also developed rapidly, from 892 in 2003 to 6307 in 2017.

Table 1. Number of Social Organizations in China after Reform and Opening-Up

Year	Total Number of Social Organizations (thousand)	Number of Social Groups (thousand)	Number of Social Foundations	Number of private non-enterprise social organizations (thousand)
1988	4	4		
1990	11	11		
1996	185	185		
1999	143	137		6
2003	289	153	892	135

[1] In China, a foundation refers to a non-profit legal person established in accordance with the provisions brief relative regulations by utilizing the property donated by natural persons, legal persons or other organizations for the purpose of engaging in public welfare undertakings.
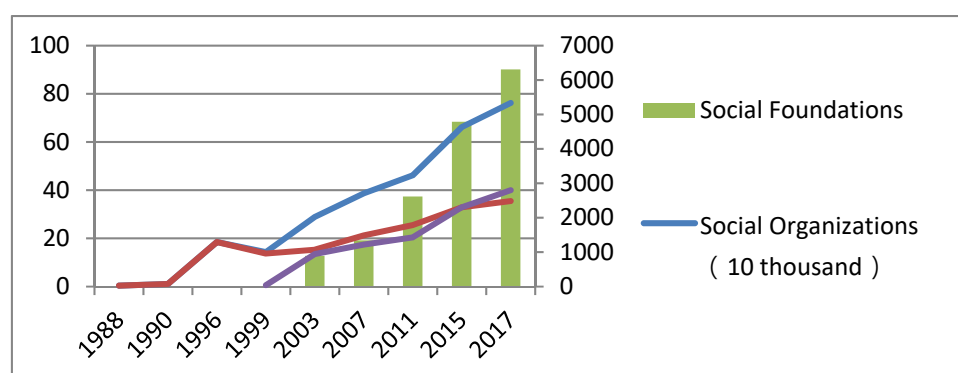
2007	387	212	1340	174
2011	462	255	2614	204
2015	662	329	4784	329
2017	762	355	6307	400

Source: China Statistical Yearbook and Statistical Bulletin on the Development of Social Services in China

Generally speaking, after the reform and opening up, the development of social organizations in China presents a typical "wave"-like development trend. After the initial rapid development, it entered a slow decline period, and then entered a stage of rapid development, as shown in Figure 1. The rapid development of various types of social organizations not only means that they played a more active role in social governance, but also that the government has constantly abandoned the previous "all-embracing" style, giving full power to social organizations to play the role in terms of social governance. The emergence and rapid growth of social organizations is one of the important manifestations of the modernization of the state's social governance. The healthy development of social organizations itself shows that China has achieved remarkable social governance since the reform and opening up.

Figure 1. Trend of Social Organizations in China after Reform and Opening Up

Sources: China Statistical Yearbook and Statistical Bulletin on the Development of Social Services in China

Second, community service institutions[2] are developing vigorously. After the reform and opening up, China has changed its social management system, from the domination of a "unit system"[3] (Lu, 1989) to a dual-track social management system of "unit system + community system."[4] The community has gradually taken on the social management functions which were previously undertaken by the unit. This trend has become more obvious after the

2 Community service institutions refer to community service guidance centers, community service centers, community service stations and other community service institutions. These carry out the functions of commodity delivery, medical care, household cleaning, day care and accompanying services for the elderly and their families. They are also in charge of maintaining Party member activity rooms, employment security network, community health service station, cultural activity room, library, benevolent supermarket, community donation receiving station, police station (room), elderly activity room, minor cultural activity venue and other institutions with comprehensive service functions.

3 "unit system" refers to "单位制"

4 "Community system" refers to "街居制"

14th National Congress of the CPC in 1992. Since 1993, community service institutions have entered the official statistics. Since then, the number of such institutions has increased rapidly, with the total number of community service institutions in China reaching 407 thousand by 2017, as shown in Table 2.

**Table 2. Number of Community Service Institutions and Coverage Rate after Reform and Opening Up**

Year	1993	1998	2003	2008	2013	2016	2017
Community Service Institutions（thousand）	92	154	203	162	251	386	407
Coverage Rate（%）	8.3	16.2	27.5	23.7	18.8	24.4	25.5

Source: China Statistical Yearbook and Statistical Bulletin on the Development of Social Services in China

As shown in Figure 2, after the reform and opening up, China's community service institutions have experienced a change from rapid development to slow development and then to rapid expansion in quantity, which means that the Chinese government has paid more attention to the construction of community service institutions and the role of community service institutions in social governance. On the other hand, the efficiency of the Chinese government in promoting social governance through community service institutions has been improving, as the coverage rate of community service institutions has been increasing from 8.3% in 1993 to 27.5% in 2003. Although the coverage rate of community service institutions has declined since 2003, it has basically remained around 20%, much higher than the level in 1993. This shows that the service efficiency of community service institutions has been greatly improved, which further means that China's social governance has achieved positive results.

Figure 2. Trend of Community Service Institutions and Coverage Rate in China after Reform and Opening Up
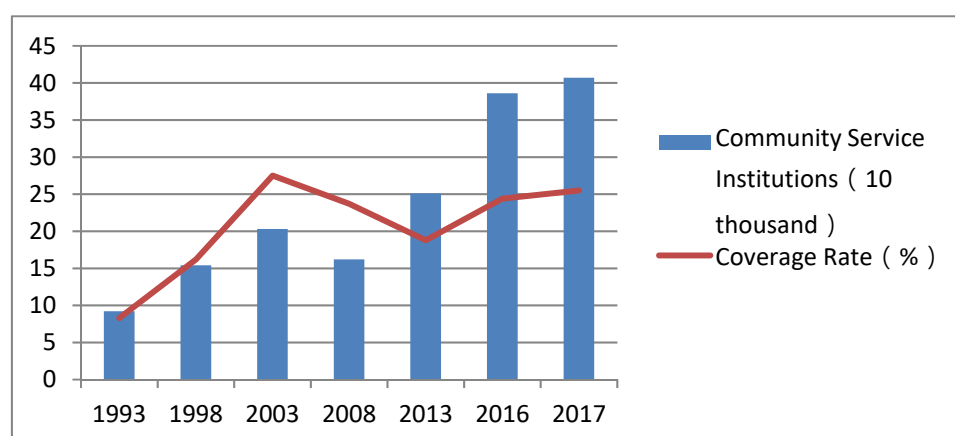
Source: China Statistical Yearbook and Statistical Bulletin on the Development of Social Services in China

Third, social service institutions[5] are on the rise. In Figure 3, we can see that the number of social service institutions and workers has shown a sustained growth trend. The number of social service institutions has increased from 1.195 million in 2008 to 1.821 million in 2017. The number of employees in social service institutions has increased from 9.673 million in 2008 to 13.551 million in 2017. The number is very big, and has been maintaining a growth trend.

Table 3. Number of Social Service Institutions and Their Employees after Reform and Opening Up

Year	2008	2010	2012	2014	2016	2017
Number of Social Service Institutions (million)	1.195	1.268	1.366	1.668	1.745	1.821
Employees of Social Service Institutions (million)	9.673	11.384	11.447	12.510	12.393	13.551

Source: China Statistical Yearbook and Statistical Bulletin on the Development of Social Services in China

Generally speaking, the continuous growth of social service institutions means that social forces play an increasingly important role in social governance in China, assuming more functions of social governance and providing more social services. The participation of social forces in social affairs itself is an important manifestation of the modernization of social governance. Both the number of social service institutions and their employees show that the participation of social forces in China's social governance has continuously increased. Seen from this perspective, China's social governance has again achieved positive results.

Figure 3. Trend of Social Service Institutions and Their Employees in China after Reform and Opening Up
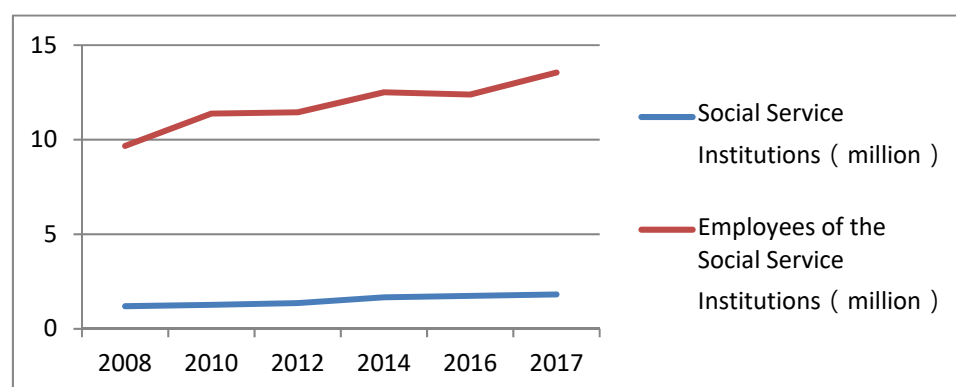
Source: China Statistical Yearbook and Statistical Bulletin on the Development of Social Services in China

---

5 〝Social service institutions" refer to all different kinds of institutions that have the function of social service, encompassing much more than just the "community service institutions" which mainly serve the local communities.

II. Achievements of Social Security

First, the number of crime cases per 10,000 people has continued to decrease. After the reform and opening up, crime related to social security has shown a downward trend, which is manifested in the continuous decrease of the number of cases per 10 thousand. For example,

the number of Defiance and Affray Crime[5] cases accepted by the courts declined from 10 per 1,000 people in 2006 to 6 per 1,000 people in 2016. The number of cases of prostitution accepted by the courts declined from 8 per 1,000 people in 2006 to 6 per 1,000 people in 2016. The number of the cases of gambling accepted by the courts also declined from 29 per 1,000 people in 2006 to 22 per 1,000 people in 2016, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Total Number of Social Security-related Cases after Reform and Opening Up

Year	2006	2008	2010	2012	2014	2016
Defiance and Affray Cases (per thousand)	10	12	11	9	6	6
Prostitution Cases (per thousand)	8	7	8	7	6	6
Gambling Cases (per thousand)	29	26	29	3.	27	22

Source: China Statistical Yearbook

Generally speaking, according to the changing trend of the number of Defiance and Affray Crime cases, prostitution cases and gambling cases over the past years, the social security situation in China has gradually improved since the reform and opening up. According to the

above-mentioned indexes, which are closely related to the social living of the people, the number of cases per 10,000 people is decreasing, which not only reflects to a certain extent that China has achieved positive results in social security, but also reflects that China's social governance is getting better and better after the reform and opening up.

Figure 4. Trend of Social Security-related Cases per 10 Thousand People in China after Reform and Opening Up
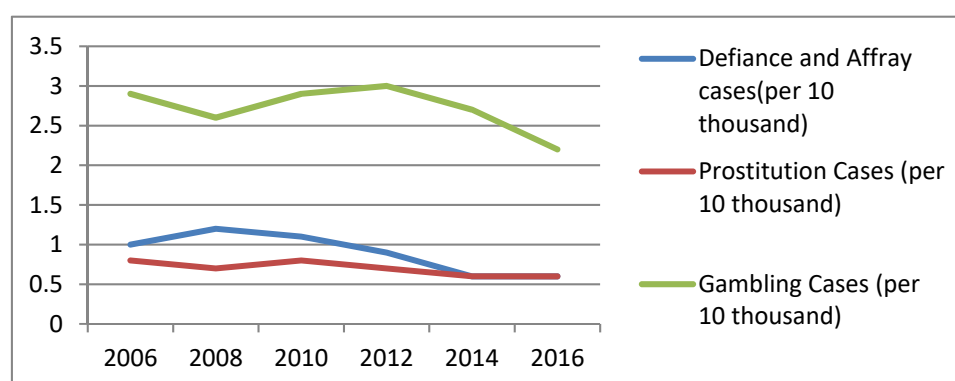
Source: China Statistical Yearbook

6 Defiance and Affray Crime refers to the crime of provoking willfully, beating or harassing others at will, or destroying or occupying public or private property arbitrarily, or causing riots in public places, which seriously undermines social order.

Second, social accidents are gradually decreasing. The number of traffic accidents in China was incorporated into the national statistical index system in 1990. In 1990, there were 250.24 thousand traffic accidents in China. In 2002, the number of accidents reached a peak at 773.13 thousand accidents, after which it continued to decrease. In 2016 there were a total of 212.85 thousand accidents. In terms of the fire occurrence rate, the earliest data was 3.1 per 100,000 people in 1996, which continued to rise before peaking at 20.6 per 100,000 people in 2002. Since then, the fire occurrence rate has declined steadily, reaching 9.25 per 100,000 people in 2011, as shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Total Number of Traffic Accidents and Fire Occurrence Rate after Reform and Opening Up

Year	Traffic Accidents (thousand)	Fire Occurrence Rate (per 100 thousand people)
1990	250.24	
1993	240.62	
1996	287.69	3.1
1999	412.86	14.8
2002	773.13	20.6
2005	450.25	18.57
2008	265.20	10.36
2011	210.81	9.25
2014	196.81	
2016	212.85	

Source: China Statistical Yearbook

Generally speaking, although the total number of traffic accidents in China continued to increase from 1990 to 2002, it has been declining since 2002, and has since fell below the level of 1990. Under the background of sustained population growth, it is not easy for the total number of traffic accidents to continue to decrease. To a certain extent, this decline reflects the improvement of social security in China, which means that China has achieved positive results in social security. In terms of the fire occurrence rate, although the fire occurrence rate showed a continuous growth trend from 1996 to 2002, this situation has been reversed and the incidence has fallen since 2002. By 2011, the fire occurrence rate fell to only 9.25 per 100,000 people, which is lower than the majority of previous years on record, as shown in Figure 5.

Figure 5. Trend of Traffic Accidents and Fire Occurrence Rate in China after Reform and Opening Up
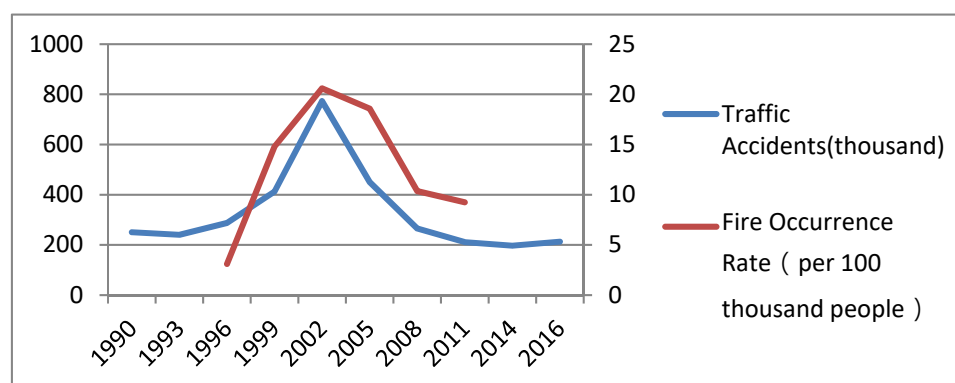
Source: China Statistical Yearbook

Third, the number of cases related to court or procuratorate is showing a decreasing trend. In terms of the number of cases filed by the prouratorate, there has been a significant change since the reform and opening up. The number of cases has basically shown a continuous decline since 1998, from 108.83 thousand in 1998 to 49.04 thousand in 2013, although there was a slight recovery. But the general trend is downward overall. In regard to criminal cases where criminals were tried in people's courts, the number of juvenile delinquents first increased and then decreased, from 208.08 thousand in 1998 to 316.30 thousand in 2007, and finally to 204.66 thousand in 2016, as shown in Table 6.

Table 6. Total Number of Procuratorate Filed Cases and Juvenile Delinquents after Reform and Opening Up

Year	1998	2001	2004	2007	2010	2013	2016
Procuratorate Filed Cases (thousand)	108.83	97.24	68.81	53.98	49.97	49.04	65.04
Juvenile Delinquents (thousand)	208.08	253.47	248.83	316.30	287.98	265.44	204.66

Source: China Statistical Yearbook

Generally speaking, according to the data of the procuratorate, the number of cases directly filed by the procuratorate has been declining, which indicates that social security is improving, as shown in Figure 6. This situation is not easily achieved under the background of sustained population growth. It reflects the effective improvement of social security in China, which undoubtedly manifests the positive effect of social governance in China.

Figure 6. Trend of Procuratorate-filed Cases and Juvenile Delinquents after Reform and Opening Up
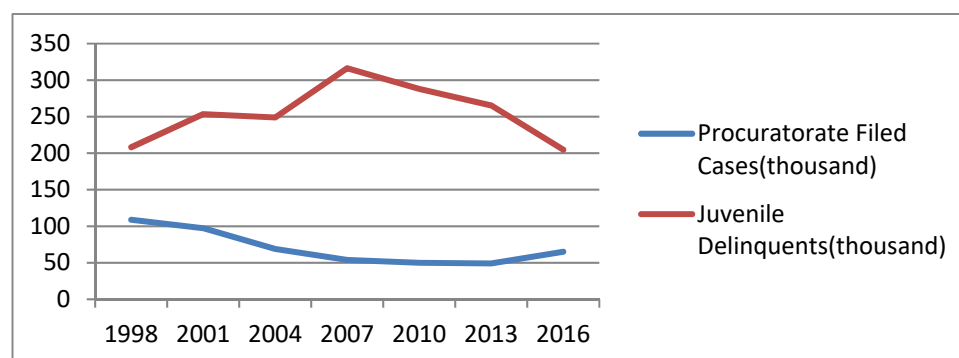
Source: China Statistical Yearbook

Section II: China's Experience in Social Governance

So, what experiences can we learn from China's social governance? In other words, how did China succeed in its social governance? What contributed to the success of China's social governance? Obviously, it is the result of the dynamic interaction of different strategies. Generally speaking, the following four points contributed to the success of the social governance in China.

I. Rebalance of State and Society

First, the success of social governance in China has benefited from the strategy of rebalancing the state and society. China has been a typical strong state but weak society country. In this type of country, state power is absolutely dominant, and social power is subordinate. The whole society is embedded in the state and operates under the state (Huang, 2008; Shue, 1988). Within the framework of strong state and weak society, controlling all aspects of politics, economy, society and culture, all affairs are constructed around the state power. It is no exaggeration to say that society is embedded in the state.

Since the reform and opening up, China has made great progress in rebalancing the state and society. The Chinese government fully recognizes the limitations of the government and gradually narrows the boundaries of the government at the same time. It puts great importance to the role of social forces, actively introduces market forces, and vigorously promotes the construction of socialist market economy in the country. Major adjustments have been made in regard to the state-society relation, with social forces gradually being released, encouraged and developed. The rebalancing of state and society promotes the transformation of China's state-society relations from a strong state and weak society type to a strong state and strong society type. There is a relative contraction of state power and a rapid rise of social forces which take an active part in the governance of social affairs. The rise of the social forces not only lightens the burden of the government, but also realizes the value of the participation of social forces. It has played a positive role in promoting the overall transformation of social governance in China. As a result, China's social governance has achieved positive results in the gradual change of the relationship between the state and society.

II. Cooperative Relationship between Political Parties and Governments

The success of social governance in China is also closely related to the pattern of the Party-Government Relationship in China. The relationship between political parties and the government in China is a cooperative one, making it very different from the competitive Party-Government Relationship in the West. In the Western world, there is a competitive relationship between political parties. Different political parties gain power by winning elections. The party winning the election has the right to form a cabinet, while the parties that lose in the election become the opponent parties and supervise the ruling party. In such a system, there is a competitive relationship between the government and the opponent party. Under such a competitive party-government relationship, any policy proposals by the government will be constrained by the opponent party, and the executive power of the government will be greatly impeded by the opponent party, resulting in long-term inefficiency of the government.

As the leading party, the Communist Party of China has maintained friendly and cooperative relationships with other political parties. In this situation, the Chinese government led by the Communist Party is very efficient compared to the Western governments in terms of policy agenda setting and policy implementation. Good party-government relations, in the minimum, will not impede the decision-making pro-

cess, and in the maximum, will promote cooperation between the parties and the government in dealing with social affairs. Under such a cooperative relationship between political parties and the government, China vigorously promotes the gradual adjustment of the state and the society, actively introduces social forces, and provides an important institutional framework for the improvement of social governance.

III. Flexible Combination of Effective Management and Moderate Development

The success of China's social governance could not be realized without flexible policy instruments. During the past decades, the Chinese government has made full use of the dual policy tools of management and development, successfully guided the social forces, and enabled them to operate in a manner consistent with the government's policy objectives, which led to a win-win situation for both the government and the society. It is difficult for government to realize effective management under an authoritative system (Zhou, 2011); when it comes to the governance of social affairs, the situation is much the same, because an authoritative system usually leads to obedience and rigidity. To realize effective management, the Chinese government develops the social forces, and especially social organizations, by giving them more autonomy and allowing them to carry out multiple explorations in order to achieve effective governance. Actually, the strategies that the government adopts to manage social organizations usually depend on the game between the development demand and the management demand in the preference structure of the government (Tian, 2016).

To sum up, in order to break through the dilemma of coexistence of authoritative system and effective governance, the Chinese government has adopted a more flexible attitude to deal with the issue and implemented a "dual track" strategy that emphasizes both management and development, which creates a loosely coupling weak relationship between government and social forces. The loosely coupling relationship realizes both the goal of governmental management and social force development. Using this strategy, the Chinese government has mobilized social forces extensively to help promote social governance. It is the government's strategy of paying equal attention to both management needs and development needs that promotes the orderly realization of social governance in China.

IV. Flexible Combination of Conventional Governance and Campaign-style Governance

The success of China's social governance also benefits from the flexible combination of conventional governance with campaign-style governance. Campaign-style governance has manifested itself in varying degrees in the long historical process of China. Campaign-style governance is a coping mechanism developed by bureaucracies when faced with internal contradictions, which is used to deal with organizational failures and crises (Zhou, 2012). In regard of its essence, Campaign-style governance can be used as a supplement and improvement to conventional governance. When conventional governance cannot achieve the established policy objectives, Campaign-style governance can be applied since Campaign-style governance can usually achieve the effect that

conventional governance cannot achieve.

There is no doubt that the success of China's social governance could not be realized without the use of Campaign-style governance. The Chinese government takes a flexible attitude, flexibly combining conventional governance with Campaign-style governance, and the flexible combination of conventional governance and Campaign-style governance effectively handles the contradiction between high-level and low-level within the government system. Thus, no matter what the internal relationship of the government system is, China has corresponding strategies to implement high-level governance policies and achieve their governance intentions. It is also under the combined effect of this multiple governance strategy that China's social governance can succeed. **KIEP**

References

Huang, Z. 2008, "Central Minimalism: China's Grass-roots Semi-formal Administration with Quasi-officials as the Mainly Dispute Resolution Enforcers". Open Times, No. 1.

Lu, F. 1989. "Unit: A Special Form of Social Organization". Social Sciences in China, No. 1.

Shue, V. 1988. *The Reach of the State: Sketches of the Chinese Body Politic*. California: Stanford University Press.

Tian, K. 2016, "Between Development and Control: Strategic Changes of the Chinese Government in Regard of Social Organizations Management". Hebei Academic Journal, No. 2.

Tsou, T. 1994. *Chinese Politics in 20th Century: View From the Perspective of Macro-history and Micro-action*. Hongkong: Cambridge Press.

Zhou, X. 2011, "Authoritative System and Effective Governance: Institutional Logic of Contemporary Chinese National Governance", Open Times, No. 4.

_____. 2012, "Mechanism of Campaign-style Governance: Revisit the Institutional Logic of Contemporary Chinese National Governance". Open Times, No. 4.