

Paradox in Political Participation and Economic Development—A Study of Congressional Voting in Urban China in 1993 and 2002

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Abstract This paper is interested in the decline of congressional voting in urban China. Classic studies in comparative politics long argue that with economic development, countries would experience increased level of political participation. Employing the 1993 Social Mobility and Social Change Survey and 2002 Asian Barometer Survey, I found congressional voting in urban China declined substantially in the past decade. With the analyses of the Probit Model and Generalized Linear Model, I contributed this decline to the disappearance of sociopolitical institutions that used to serve critical conduits for citizens' participation. I argue that although economic development produces more resources to encourage participation, overall political participation actually declines in urban China and the public opts to withdraw from politics.

Keywords Political Participation · Participation Decline · Economic Development · Urban China · Modernization

This paper is interested in political participation in urban China. The puzzle that this paper intends to solve is the decline of political participation in the rapid economic development in urban China during the past decade.

With steady and accelerating economic development, scholars in comparative politics argue that states will usually experience political liberalization and subsequently increasing political participation. With sufficient economic development, it is expected that citizens are likely to possess more resources to participate in politics, and the state is more likely to accommodate increasing level of participation from citizens in order to adapt to the emerging social cleavages in the society. As argued by Lipset, “perhaps the

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most widespread generalization linking political systems to other aspects of society has been that democracy is related to the state of economic development”.¹ However, in the case of China, as we would examine in the following, the political participation has been found decreasing in the past decade, despite China has been experiencing rapid economic development within this period of time.

The research question that this paper sets to answer is why China would turn out as an anomaly for the modernization theory, that is, why citizens’ participation in politics declined within the economic development in China. The paper also attempts to answer the theoretic question as what an increasingly apathetic population within the economic development means to the state–society relationship in the post-communist China.

Following the data provided by the 1993 Social Mobility and Social Change Survey and the 2002 Asian Barometer Survey, I argue the decline of citizens’ political participation is not resulted from the decline of citizens’ socioeconomic resources or interest in politics but rather from the decline of grassroots socio-economic institutions.

In this paper, I first review the previous literature in the study of the economic development and political participation. Then I discuss the theory and propositions of citizens’ political participation in contemporary urban China. The data sets employed in this paper are the 1993 Social Mobility Survey and Asian Barometer in 2002. I would first discuss the variables, models and methods for the empirical analysis. Then I would report the result of the empirical analysis on the declining congressional voting behavior in 1993 and 2002. Finally I would briefly talk about what this analysis result implies to the state–society relations in China.

Literature Review

Since Deng’s economic reform, China experienced dramatic economic changes in the past three decades. Along her rapid economic development, one important question arises: is Chinese citizens’ political participation going to increase as the economic development processes?

Scholars in comparative politics have long argued that economic development provides an important prerequisite for political liberalization within a state. Lipset argued that certain socioeconomic conditions are essential to the formation and stability of the democracy: “we have an interrelated cluster of economic development, Protestantism, monarchy, gradual political change, legitimacy and democracy; men may argue as to whether any aspect of this cluster is primary, but the cluster of factors and forces hangs together” [1], p 59. Dahl noted that the increasing economic benefits to the masses intensified public demand for democracy, as economic development spreads authority and democratic aspirations across a variety of people, which fosters democracy.² Burkhart and Lewis-Beck employed the pooled time series analysis of 131 nation–states from 1972 to 1989 and tested whether economic development causes democratic development.³ They found that

¹ See [1], p. 75.

² See [2].

³ See [3].

the nation's economic development substantially improves its democratic prospect, with the causal arrow most probably running from economic development to democracy instead of vice versa. According to the literature of liberalization and transition of the regime, the economic development is closely tied to the political liberalization and democratic prospect of a country.

Indeed, as the nation's economy progresses, it is usually accompanied by emerging new social classes, an informed and active civil society, the opening-up of political space to alternative ideologies and ideals. The new class divisions and growing requests from the civil society are likely to result in changes in political configuration, leading toward the direction of political liberalization or even democratization.

One important dimension for political liberalization of a society is the increased level in political participation. Studies of political liberalization argue that the economic development provide important impetus for opening up of the political space of a country and for enhancing citizens' political participation. As a country's economy progresses, citizens are more likely to have higher stakes in the political system, and the government shall play an increasingly important role in distributing interests to the citizenry. In the economic development, it would be critical for the citizens to participate in politics to compete for interests in the decision making process of the government.⁴ Also, economic development is likely to increase socioeconomic resources such as education and income that are essential resources to motivate citizens' political participation. Moreover, within the economic development and the increase of education level of the country, citizens are more likely to transform from subjects of politics to participants of politics, and to become more interested in politics and more informed to participate in politics.⁵

Political participation has been a central topic in political studies since the behavioral revolution that occurred in the 1960s. As political studies diverted their attention from traditional political theorizing toward human behavior, the question of individual citizens' political participation has remained one of the most important topics in the study of politics. Indeed, citizens' political participation occupies a critical place in modern political studies, especially in the study of democratic systems for good and almost apparent reasons: after all, an active and responsive citizenry is critical for the healthy and successful operation of democracy. In the early writings, political participation has largely been a topic of abstract political thought. Since the behavioral revolution in the 1950s, political scientists have been looking closely into how citizens participate in politics and what explains their political behavior. Political scholars have explored widely the contents, variations, significance and motivational mechanisms of citizens' political participation.⁶

The literature advances three major models of political participation in democracies—the socioeconomic model, psychological engagement model and social-contextual model. The socioeconomic model and demographic models examine and explain citizens' political participation at the individual level, and the difference of citizens' political participation is attributed to citizens' different

⁴ See [4].

⁵ See [5].

⁶ Among others, see [6–12].

income, education, life-stage, partisanship and citizens' varied interest and psychological engagement in politics.⁷ For example, classics of participation studies in democracies by Almond and Verba, Wolfinger and Rosenstone and Brady, Verba and Schlotzman have all long noted the importance of individual socioeconomic status, such as education, income and individual civic engagement, in motivating citizens to participate in political affairs.⁸ Studies by Campbell et al., Verba and Nie and Verba, Burns and Schlotzman also have pointed out the critical linkage between citizens' political participation and individual partisanship, political interest, political knowledge and efficacy in politics.⁹

The socio-contextual model asserts the difference in the level of individual citizens' political participation results from the social organizations and social institutions that citizens are immersed within every day. Such line of theory seeks to explain individual citizens' political participation difference with the everyday surrounding context. The differences in these social contexts are believed to contribute to the different level of individuals' acts of political participation.¹⁰ Huckfeldt argued that social contexts are important connecting ties between individual social status and political participation.¹¹ Rosenstone and Hansen point out that mobilization plays a critical role in shaping people's voting behavior and emphasize the importance of social networks in engaging citizens into politics, as the organizational memberships provide critical networking opportunities to involve individuals into political affairs.¹²

The three major models in participation research, the socioeconomic model, psychological engagement model and social-contextual model have achieved remarkable fruits in studying political participation and have significantly contributed to the current understanding of political participation. It is found that political participation, especially political participation in democracies, can be explained by individuals' characteristics such as income, education, age and political interest, political efficacy and by social contexts and environment, such as family background and workplace.

The study of citizens' political participation in non-democratic systems is relatively recent. Not until late 1960s did political scientists start to devote their attention to political participation of non-democratic societies. Research on political participation in non-democracies has proved to be a challenging yet worthy field of study. Since the 1970s, political scholars have made remarkable progress in discovering and analyzing political participation in non-democratic countries. The research shed light on the state-society relations of the non-democracies and on political behavior in general.¹³

In examining participation in Chinese local industrial firms, Tang found that socioeconomic development has an important and mixed impact on citizens'

⁷ Among others, see [6, 9, 11, 13–17, 19].

⁸ See [6, 9, 11, 19].

⁹ See [7, 13, 17].

¹⁰ See [18–22].

¹¹ See [18].

¹² See [10].

¹³ Among others, see [23–30].

political participation.¹⁴ In *Political Participation in Beijing*, Tianjian Shi clarifies various types of political participation, and discovers the motivational mechanism of Chinese participation.¹⁵ He found that socioeconomic resources and demographic factors, such as education, economic status and being middle-aged, all significantly contribute to urban political participation. Shi also examined the variable “age” (generation) in accounting for the differences in both resources of participation (education) and actual political behavior.¹⁶ In Jennings’s study of citizens’ political participation in Chinese countryside, the author explored the determinants of citizens’ political participation in the countryside.¹⁷ Jennings’s analysis of data from four-county survey conducted in 1990 found conventional resources that significantly enhance participation include the year of schooling and having a second vocation (for both status significance and material benefits) and party membership and political efficacy have a significant positive effect.¹⁸ Jennings investigated the gender differences in political participation in rural China, and reported a persistent and strong gender gap in political participation in the rural areas. Jennings emphasized that women profit enormously from having a second occupation and considerably more so than do men, which “clearly moves her out of a traditional role” [33], p. 964. Chen in his study of *Popular Political Support in Urban China* explored the relationship between citizens’ political participation level and the psychological political engagement. Employing the longitudinal survey data of China, Chen reported beyond the individual resources, such as income and education, Chinese urban citizens’ psychological engagement—i.e., political interest and support for the political regime—plays an important role in predicting citizens’ political participation.¹⁹

In studying and theorizing the state–society relationship in non-democracies, political scholars have long been noting the existence of the strong state control and the totalitarian mobilization of political participation in non-democracies.²⁰ In these studies, citizens were portrayed as being manipulated or coerced into excessive support of the policies of the self-appointed leaders who are impervious to public opinion.²¹ In Walder’s influential book, *Work and Authority in Chinese Industry*, he noted the key role of the workplace in Chinese political systems.²² He asserted that the workplace is the most important sociopolitical cornerstone in the Communist China, and workplaces, especially state institutions and enterprises, have a strong control over the sociopolitical life of Chinese citizens. Suggesting that working units are the “fundamental link” between the Communist state and the society, Lieberthal pointed out that work units are important sociopolitical organizations of Chinese society, which are

¹⁴ See [31].

¹⁵ See [27].

¹⁶ See [32].

¹⁷ See [28].

¹⁸ See [33], pp. 954–973.

¹⁹ See [34].

²⁰ See [35, 36].

²¹ See [36].

²² See [37].

“engaged in purely political tasks”.²³ When economic reforms significantly altered the work unit system by encouraging the development of collective, joint-venture and privately owned enterprises, the author lamented the economic reforms are “eroding the fundamental link the Maoist system created to handle the relationship between the state and society” [38], p. 185.

It is worth noting that despite of critical importance in Chinese urban life, the configuration of Chinese workplaces has been changing rapidly during the recent decades. Before China’s economic reform in late 1970s, most Chinese citizens worked for the government organizations or state-owned enterprises, and the national economy was mainly a state economy. Ever since China initiated massive economic reforms in the early 1980s, more and more private and foreign enterprises have taken off in urban China, and the emphasis of the national economy has shifted from retaining the homogeneity of state economy to achieving effective and rapid economic development. With favorable economic policies, private and foreign enterprises are developing steadily in urban China, and these non-state enterprises have begun to provide considerable employment opportunities to Chinese citizens. At the same time, state enterprises, which used to be the major component of the national economy now have dropped to about 50%, and the employment scale of the state enterprises and state economy has also diminished significantly.²⁴

Propositions

Following the literature review and theory development above, I would like to raise and test the following hypotheses on political participation in contemporary China:

- Propositions I: Economic development is likely to encourage broadened political participation in contemporary China.
- Propositions II: Economic development is likely to enhance the resources, such as education and income that are important to citizens’ political participation.
- Propositions III: Economic development is likely to enhance citizens’ psychological engagement that is important to citizens’ political participation.
- Propositions IV: Economic development is likely to change the sociopolitical context that is important to citizens’ political participation in contemporary China.

In the context of China, the type of political participation that I am going to specifically focus on in this paper is citizens’ voting behavior in congressional elections.

The reason that I am going to focus on congressional voting behavior in this paper is three-fold. First, congressional voting is the most important political participation type endorsed by the CCP government as citizens’ formal participation in politics, and voting behavior is still the one of the most studied political participation in democracies and in non-democracies. Second, as China has been undergoing dramatic socioeconomic transformation in the past decades, many

²³ See [38], p. 184.

²⁴ See 2001 National Statistic Yearbook of China.

sociopolitical scenarios have been undergoing dramatic changes at the same time. Within the era of dramatic transformation, congressional voting provides a systemic and valid mode of participation that would enable researchers to compare citizens' political participation meaningfully over time. Finally, within the limited scope of this paper, citizens' voting behavior in congressional is probably the most important and warranted type of participation that we should examine.

Model

There are three models I would like to examine in this paper. In Model 1, I shall examine 1993 congressional voting individually and in Model 2 I examine 2002 congressional voting respectively and analyze how citizens decided to participate in congressional voting in 2002. In Model 3 I combine the 1993 and 2002 voting behavior and examine congressional voting across time.

Let X denote the vector of all the independent variables. The dependent variable is citizens' voting behavior in congressional elections. The following are the three models to be estimated in the paper:

1. Analysis of 1993 Congressional Voting

$$1993 \text{ Congressional Voting} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X + \varepsilon$$

2. Analysis of 2002 Congressional Voting

$$2002 \text{ Congressional Voting} = \beta_0 + \beta_2 X + \varepsilon$$

3. Comparative Analysis of 1993 and 2002 Congressional Voting

$$\text{Congressional Voting} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{year } 1993 + \beta_2 \text{year } 1993 \times X + \beta_3 \text{year } 2002 \times X + \varepsilon$$

Data Sets and Methods

I shall use the following two data sets for analysis in the paper, the 1993 Chinese Social Mobility and Social Change Survey and the 2002 Asian Barometer Survey.²⁵

The 1993 Survey of Chinese Social Mobility and Social Change was collected in August 1993 by the Social Survey Center at People's University in Beijing across China.

²⁵ While the data collected in the 1993 and 2002 data sets contain information on both urban and rural China, the data employed in the empirical analysis focus on the urban section. There is a division along the rural and urban Chinese studies for long, which probably originates from the vastly different socioeconomic conditions existent in rural and urban China, such as residents' employment type, village lineage, migration and residents' way of living. These differences are real and substantial, which is regarded as one of the main reasons that lead to the general division between the rural and urban Chinese studies theoretically and empirically. Even in the 2000s, the majority of Chinese population still resides in rural areas, who makes everyday living as peasants as the major occupation, and in urban China, to be employed by a certain type of workplace, or a certain type of work unit, is how most urban residents make a living. Acknowledging the above differences, and the empirical data analysis of this study focuses on the urban part of China along with the discussion of implications.

The data set is designed to be representative of the adult population over 18 years old in China, residing in family households at the time, excluding those living in the Tibetan Autonomous region.²⁶ A stratified multistage area sampling procedure was employed to select the sample. The primary sampling units (PSUs) were selected 85 cities, and the secondly sampling units were districts (qu) or streets (jiedao), and the third stages were committees (juweihui). Households were used at the fourth stage of sampling. This survey recorded Chinese citizens' political participation, political attitudes and beliefs along with the demographic information such as residence, region, education, income, work and family background. The total sample of the urban population is 1,070.

The other data set that I use in this study is the Asian Barometer Survey, specifically the Mainland China section. Currently the data set is stored in the Asian Barometer Survey Project Office in the National Taiwan University and is available to the public for academic research upon individual request.²⁷ For more information about the data set, please refer to the website of <http://www.asiabarometer.com>.

The survey is composed of series questions concerning both political attitudes and political behavior of the individual respondent.²⁸ The 2002 Asian Barometer is a cross-national survey sample, and the data set emphasizes on the individuals' political attitude and perception along with batteries of citizens' political participation questions.²⁹

Despite different names, the 1993 and 2002 surveys contained identical survey items, and both data sets collected information regarding respondents' political behavior, political attitudes and demographic characteristics. Both data sets are national samples. These two data sets provide an ideal ground to enable comparing citizens' participation across time.

Dependent Variable

The dependent variable is citizens' voting behavior in local congressional elections in 1993 and 2002 respectively.

Table 1 reports the level of citizens' voting behavior in the past decade. The data show that while the majority of Chinese citizens participated in politics in 1993 (at

²⁶ A large proportion of Tibetans do not speak Chinese. Also, at the time of survey, transportation in Tibet was difficult due to inefficient railroad and highway system.

²⁷ The data set was collected by the East Asia Barometer Project (2000–2004), which was co-directed by Professors Fu Hu and Yun-han Chu and received funding support from Taiwan's Ministry of Education, Academia Sinica and National Taiwan University. The Asian Barometer Project Office is solely responsible for the data distribution, and I appreciate the assistance in providing data by the institutes and individuals aforementioned.

²⁸ The Mainland China Asian Barometer data come from the survey conducted in China between March 2002 and August 2002 in cooperation with the Institute of Sociology of Chinese Social Science Academy. The sample represents the adult population over 18 years of age residing in family households at the time of the survey excluding those residing in the Tibetan Autonomous Region. A stratified multistage area sampling procedure with probabilities proportional to size measures (PPS) was employed to select the sample.

²⁹ The Tibet Autonomous region was excluded in the survey the following reasons: first, many Tibetans do not speak Chinese; second, transportation in Tibet is extremely difficult since there is no railroad and the highway system is not well developed, and thirdly, it is difficult to find qualified interviewers who can work there effectively. It should be noted that the Tibet Autonomous Region was excluded in the 1993 Social Mobility and Social Change data set due to similar reasons.

Table 1 Comparison of congressional voting in urban China in 1993 and 2002 (in percentage)

Political participation	No	Yes	Chi square
Congressional voting in 1993	18.17	81.83	0.000
Congressional voting in 2002	47.85	52.15	

above 80%), only slightly more than half of all the respondents reported that they have participated in the 2002 congressional election. The difference between the participation among these two elections is remarkable, and the difference between these elections is significant at the 0.001 level in chi square statistics.

Figure 1 reports the difference in congressional voting in graph.

Independent Variables

The independent variables included in the Models are the following: workplace type, political study inside the work unit, position in the workplace, socioeconomic status, self-perceived socioeconomic status, gender, age, marital status, party membership, political interest, political knowledge, political efficacy (internal political efficacy and external political efficacy), one’s attitude toward the government and faith in other people.

The measurements of the independent variables are recorded in the [Appendix](#).

Social Contexts

Workplace Type The workplace type is the key independent variable in this paper. I argue there are five types of the workplaces in urban China in accordance with their connection with the state, with 5 denoting work units that are closest to the state, the party organizations, and 1 denoting work units that are furthest away from the work units, the foreign and private enterprises.

Table 2 reports the different type of work unit in urban China in 1993 and 2002 and the data show that while the state owned enterprises decreased significantly in 2002, foreign and private enterprises increased substantially in 2002.

Fig. 1 Comparison of congressional voting in urban China in 1993 and 2002 (in percentage)

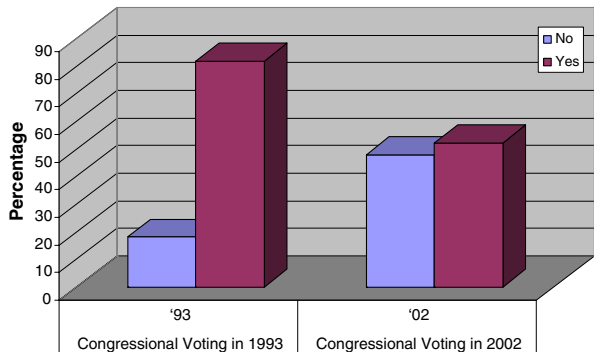


Table 2 Comparison of distribution of work units in urban China in 1993 and 2002 (in percentage)

	Year 1993	Year 2002
Party organizations	3.8	5.4
State institutions	19.35	19.16
State enterprises	52.72	40.08
Collective enterprises	17.39	14.3
Private/foreign enterprises	6.74	21.05

Figure 2 reports the different type of work unit in urban China in 1993 and 2002 in graph.

Political Organization Inside the Workplace The variable of political organization is measured by the availability of the political study inside the workplace. Please be noted that in 2002 data set, the existence of the political study is not recorded as the political studies have largely disappeared by 2002.

Socioeconomic Resources

Position in the Workplace I theorize that the positions held by citizens in the workplace may have a considerable impact on citizens' political participation.

Socioeconomic Status (Income and Education) As previous studies on political participation indicated, socioeconomic status has a resilient influence upon both citizens' resources and capabilities to participate in politics. I argue while the income disparity in urban China during Mao's reign was insignificant, it becomes increasingly substantial since the economic reform.

Tables 3 and 4 report citizens' average education and income level in 1993 and 2002 respectively. The data show that the average education level increased from 1993 to 2002 in urban China, and citizens' average income almost doubled in absolute number.

Figures 3 and 4 report different levels of education and income in graph.

Fig. 2 Comparison of distribution of work units in urban China in 1993 and 2002 (in percentage)

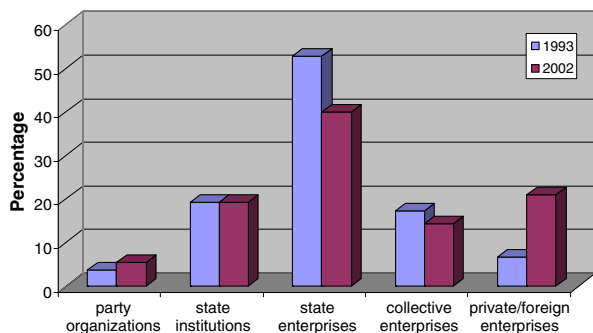


Table 3 Comparison of distribution of education in urban China in 1993 and 2002 (in percentage)

	Year 1993	Year 2002
Primary school	17.95	12.19
Junior high school	34.89	33.4
Senior high school/vocational school	33.44	34.52
Evening, TV, correspondence college	4.57	7.38
Full-time college	8.92	11.79
Graduate school	0.22	0.72

Self-Perceived Socioeconomic Status Besides the objective measurement of the effect of citizens' education and income in motivating citizens to participate in politics, I also include citizens' self-perceived socioeconomic status. I expect that the perception of one's socioeconomic status, or comparative socioeconomic status, can be as important if not more important than the actual socioeconomic status (education and income).

I further include citizens' gender, age, age squared, marital status for controlling purpose in the analysis.

Psychological Engagement

Party Membership The Chinese Communist Party membership is found to have a significant influence on citizens' political participation in China, due to the political status, information and protection that party membership offers.³⁰

Table 5 reports citizens' party membership in urban China in 1993 and 2002 respectively, and compared to 1993, there is a slight increase in party membership in urban China.

Political Interest, Political Knowledge and Political Efficacy In the current participation studies within different regime types, one's psychological engagement with politics, such as political interests, political knowledge and political efficacy have widely been acknowledged as important factors to motivate participation.³¹

Previous participation literature indicates there are two basic types of political efficacy: the internal political efficacy and external political efficacy. Internal efficacy refers to the perception on one's competence to understand and participate in politics, and external efficacy denotes one's belief about the responsiveness of governmental authorities to demands made by citizens.³² In this paper, I expect that political interests, knowledge and efficacy will have a positive effect on citizens' virtual political participation.

³⁰ See [27, 32, 37].

³¹ Among others, see [7, 8, 16, 26, 27, 32, 39, 40].

³² See [39, 41, 42].

Table 4 Comparison of distribution of income in urban China in 1993 and 2002

	Year 1993	Year 2002
Average monthly income (Yuan)	702.88	1,364.47

Tables 6 and 7 report citizens' political knowledge and political efficacy in 1993 and in 2002 respectively. The tables indicated that compared to 1993, there is an increase in political knowledge and internal political efficacy possessed by urban citizens in 2002.

Figure 5 report citizens' political efficacy in 1993 and in 2002 in graph.

Government Attitude By political attitude, I mean how much people identify with the traditional value and regular functioning of the government, and I propose that the more citizens identify with the fundamental values and regular functioning of the government, the more likely they are going to participate in politics.

Faith in People Based upon previous participation studies, individuals who have more faith in other people are more likely to be engaged in political activities, as they are more likely to be able to cooperate and count on others' support.³³

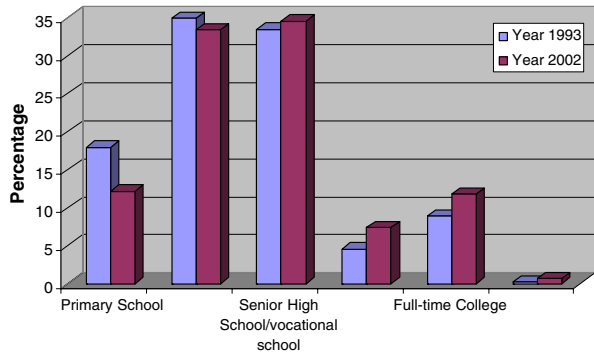
Method

In Model 1 and Model 2, I analyze congressional voting in 1993 and 2002 respectively. The congressional voting is recorded as a dichotomous variable in both 1993 and 2002 data sets, and I used the probit model to analyze the voting behavior.

Model 3 analyzed the 1993 and 2002 congressional voting across time comparatively. In Model 3, I combine the 1993 and 2002 data, and I used a dichotomous variable to denote the year of 1993 in the analysis. Then I interacted the dichotomous variable of year with every independent variable in the model. The objective in this analysis is to show how the changes in predictors cause the change in the level of congressional voting, and I employed the Generalized Linear Model (GLM) to control covariates and covariates interaction in the analysis, which would allow us to examine and differentiate the influence of individual independent variable and the interaction between the variables. If the result showed no interaction is significant between the dummy variable of year and the independent variables, we would be able to proclaim that the change in the congressional voting behavior should not be attributed to the changes in the contextual, socioeconomic and psychological engagement variables in Model 3. If the result revealed that there were the interactive effect of the independent variable and the dichotomous variable of the year, we shall be able to infer the change in citizens' congressional voting would be resulted from the change of an independent variable.

³³ Among others, see [6, 19, 26].

Fig. 3 Comparison of distribution of education in urban China in 1993 and 2002 (in percentage)



Analysis

First, I conducted the statistical analysis for Model 1 and Model 2, which examined citizens' congressional voting behavior in 1993 and 2002 respectively. The results are reported in Tables 8 and 9.

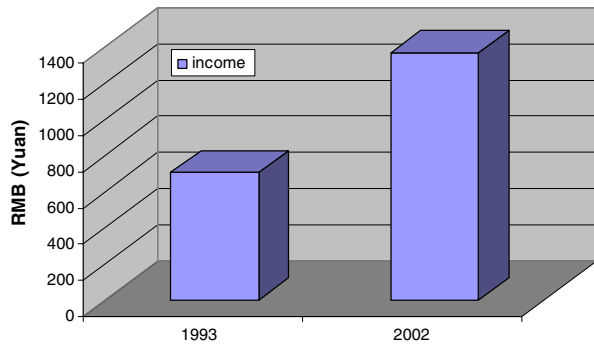
The above analysis shows that citizens' congressional voting is significantly correlated with different types of the work unit in 1993. That is, the more closely the work unit is attached with the state in 1993, the more likely citizens who belong to this work unit is going to vote in congressional elections. This empirical result probably should not be held as surprising, as a significant proportion of congressional elections were held with the work units in 1993, especially in work units that are closely related to the work unit, such as state institutions and state enterprises. Although the work unit is also significant in 2002 analysis, the magnitude is minor.³⁴ I also tried to further differentiate the effect of different work units in the following GLM analysis.

Besides different type of the work unit, another variable that is significant in correlation with citizens' congressional voting in 1993 is the political organization, measured by the weekly political study session inside the work unit. The Probit analysis shows that citizens who belong to a work unit that has regular political study session are more likely to participate in congressional voting. From this result, I argue that with the mobilizing influence of the political organization inside the work unit, citizens would be more likely to participate in congressional voting in 1993. The variable of the political organization is not reported in the analysis of 2002 as shown, as most of the political study sessions have disappeared from work units in the setting of urban China by 2002.

Besides the difference in contextual variables, another important difference between the 1993 and 2002 analyses is that citizens with more income are more likely to participate in congressional voting in 2002. While citizens in 2002 generally possess more income as compared to 1993, the empirical analysis also reveals that

³⁴ We further conducted probit analysis to analyze the relationship between congressional voting and distinctive type of work unit, but only found none of the work unit is significantly correlated with voting.

Fig. 4 Comparison of distribution of income in urban China in 1993 and 2002



household income as a critical type of socioeconomic resource is more likely to mobilize citizens to participate in congressional voting in 2002.

The Probit analysis also reveals that middle-aged citizens and citizens who are interested in politics are more likely to participate in congressional voting in 1993 and 2002, and urban citizens who have more external political efficacy in 1993 and those who have more internal political efficacy in 2002 are more likely to participate in voting.

The probit analysis reported in Tables 8 and 9 reveals how congressional voting is correlated with different independent variables in 1993 and 2002 respectively, as it seems that socioeconomic resources, such as income becomes an increasingly important predictor in explaining citizens' congressional voting behavior in 2002.

The next empirical question that follows the above analysis is how we would be able to distinguish how the change in different independent variable contributes toward the change in congressional voting, the dependent variable.

In the following, I conducted the comparative empirical analysis of congressional voting in 1993 and 2002 with the Generalized Lineal analysis for Model 3. After combining the 1993 and 2002 data for the Generalized Lineal Model, I used a dichotomous variable to denote the year of 1993 in the analysis. If the analysis shows that there is an interactive influence between the independent variable and the dichotomous variable of the year, it is inferred the change of citizens' congressional voting was resulted from the change of a certain independent variable.

In the GLM analysis, as reported in Table 10 the dichotomous year variable 1993 is found to be significantly correlated with congressional voting. Among all the predictors in the GLM analysis, dichotomous variable year 1993 was found to be the most important variable in predicting citizens' voting behavior across time with the highest coefficient. This result reveals that besides the rest of the independent variables controlled for in the model, citizens in 2002 are far more likely to participate in congressional voting than 1993.

Secondly, the work unit in the 1993 analysis is found to be significantly correlated with citizens' voting behavior. Although the work unit is also found to be

Table 5 Comparison of distribution of CCP membership in urban China in 1993 and 2002

	Year 1993	Year 2002
CCP membership percentage	18.28	19.3

Table 6 Comparison of the distribution of political knowledge in urban China in 1993 and 2002 (in percentage)

	Year 1993	Year 2002
Not politically knowledgeable	61.03	28.73
Politically knowledgeable	38.97	71.27

significantly correlated with congressional voting in 2002, the magnitude of such correlation has been reduced substantially.

The result supports our proposition that with the change of socioeconomic context in urban China along with economic development, the work unit is less likely to be the critical mobilizing context for citizens' political behavior.

The most important substantial distinction between the 1993 and 2002 analysis of congressional voting is perhaps the role of socioeconomic resources and how they would mobilize citizens' voting behavior. Particularly in 2002, the analysis reveals that citizens in urban China who possess better education and more income are more likely to participate in congressional voting. This result is compliant with our theoretical proposition that with sustained economic development, citizens are more likely to be endowed with socioeconomic resources, such as education and income, which sequentially are likely to mobilize citizens' to participate in politics.

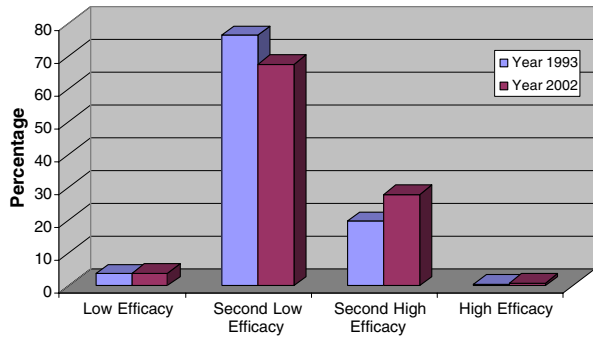
Last but not the least, the GLM analysis found that psychological engagement factors turn out to explain a significant difference in citizens' congressional voting in 1993 and 2002. Except for political interest, citizens' political knowledge and political efficacy are especially important to mobilize citizens to participate in politics in 2002 than in 1993. As citizens possess more political efficacy and become more knowledgeable in politics, they are more likely to participate in congressional voting.

The GLM analysis largely confirms our proposition that as modernization continues and accelerates within a nation, the socioeconomic resources are going to increase among the citizenry and these resources are more likely mobilize citizens to participate in politics. Despite the increase of the socioeconomic resources along with citizens' interest and political efficacy in politics, however, citizens' political participation in congressional voting in urban China actually declined. I argue that the decline of the political participation is not resulted from the decline of citizens' socioeconomic resources or interest in politics, but rather from the decline of critical socioeconomic institutions. The lessening of the grip on citizens' political participation from the grassroots institutions explains at least partially the anomaly of the declined political participation in urban China amidst economic development and modernization.

Table 7 Comparison of the distribution of political efficacy in urban China in 1993 and 2002 (in percentage)

	Year 1993	Year 2002
Low efficacy	3.58	3.86
Second low efficacy	76.32	67.54
Second high efficacy	19.7	27.89
High efficacy	0.4	0.71

Fig. 5 Comparison of the distribution of political efficacy in urban China in 1993 and 2002 (in percentage)



Discussion

Before the economic reforms and modernization efforts, Chinese government had acted as the major distributor of the economic necessities to the public in urban China. Except for very special cases most Chinese urban residents were heavily dependent upon the state for their monthly salary, housing, health benefits, pension, etc. The

Table 8 Probit analysis of congressional voting in 1993

Independent variables	1993 congressional voting
Workplace	0.16* (0.10)
Political organization	0.32** (0.16)
Socioeconomic resources	
Position	-0.12 (0.10)
Income $\times 10^{-4}$	-0.12 (0.09)
Education	-0.05 (0.08)
Self-regarded economic status	-0.12 (0.11)
Self-regarded social status	0.03 (0.10)
Male	-0.03 (0.16)
Age	0.13*** (0.04)
Age-squared $\times 10^{-4}$	-13* (3.7)
Marital status	-0.10(0.22)
Psychological engagement	
Party membership	0.06 (0.21)
Political interest	0.10 (0.12)
Political knowledge	-0.14 (0.16)
Internal political efficacy	0.11 (0.17)
External political efficacy	0.24* (0.14)
Government attitude	-0.11 (0.17)
Faith in people	0.006 (0.15)
Constant	-2.34** (1.08)
Number of observations	515
Log likelihood	-202.56694
Prob>chi square/Prob>F	0.002

Entries are unstandardized regression coefficients; standard errors appear in parenthesis

* $P < 0.10$; ** $P < 0.05$;

*** $P < 0.01$

Table 9 Probit analysis of congressional voting in 2002

Independent variables	2002 congressional voting
Workplace	0.08** (0.04)
Socioeconomic resources	
Position	0.06 (0.05)
Income $\times 10^{-4}$	0.06* (0.03)
Education	0.06 (0.04)
Self-regarded economic status	-0.03 (0.07)
Self-regarded social status	-0.07 (0.07)
Male	-0.01 (0.1)
Age	0.11*** (0.02)
Age-squared $\times 10^{-4}$	0.1*** (0.02)
Marital status	-0.04 (0.22)
Psychological engagement	
Party membership	0.13 (0.11)
Political interest	0.10* (0.06)
Political knowledge	0.16 (0.11)
Internal political efficacy	0.15* (0.09)
External political efficacy	0.03 (0.07)
Government attitude	0.004 (0.08)
Faith in people	0.14 (0.09)
Constant	-3.73*** (0.57)
Number of observations	987
Log likelihood	-624.46301
Prob > chi square / Prob > F	~0

Entries are unstandardized regression coefficients; standard errors appear in parenthesis
 * $P < 0.10$; ** $P < 0.05$;
 *** $P < 0.01$

primary institution that controlled and distributed economic goods on behalf of the state was the work units that urban residents belonged to, especially state organizations and state-owned enterprises. At the preliminary stage of the economic reform, Walder in his classic observation of the function and labor relationship termed the economic dependence of the workers on the workplace as the reward of the authoritarian government to citizens who were loyal to the regimes.³⁵ In practice, the regime's control over citizens extended far beyond the economic realm. Most state workplaces, such as government organizations and state-owned enterprises would hold weekly sessions of "political studies" to educate the workers on government policies and governmental stand on current issues. Workers were required to attend political study sessions as part of the evaluation of their "performance" in the workplace, and it is not unusual that workers were asked to comment on the political issues and policies of the state and avow their allegiance to the party government. Political study provided a potent tool for the state to supervise and control urban citizens psychologically.

With the economic development and efforts in improving the living standard, markets gradually replace the government as the major distributor of economic resources, citizens' dependence on the state is reduced significantly and they are

³⁵ See [37].

Table 10 GLM analysis of congressional voting

Independent variables	Congressional voting
Year 1993	3.49* (1.93)
Workplace 1993	0.44** (0.18)
Workplace 2002	0.15** (0.06)
Socioeconomic resources	
Position 1993	-0.12 (0.18)
Position 2002	0.10 (0.07)
Income 1993	-0.23* (0.13)
Income 2002	0.10* (0.06)
Education 1993	-0.25 (0.16)
Education 2002	0.12* (0.07)
Self-regarded economic status 1993	-0.30 (0.27)
Self-regarded economic status 2002	-0.04 (0.09)
Self-regarded social status 1993	0.008 (0.24)
Self-regarded social status 2002	-0.12 (0.09)
Male 1993	0.05 (0.33)
Male 2002	-0.04 (0.14)
Age 1993	0.02 (0.02)
Age 2002	0.03*** (0.007)
Marital status 1993	0.15 (0.38)
Marital status 2002	0.35 (0.29)
Psychological engagement	
Party membership 1993	0.26 (0.57)
Party membership 2002	0.20 (0.17)
Political interest 1993	0.32** (0.14)
Political interest 2002	0.15* (0.09)
Political knowledge 1993	-0.09 (0.33)
Political knowledge 2002	0.28* (0.16)
Internal political efficacy 1993	0.23 (0.36)
Internal political efficacy 2002	0.29** (0.13)
External political efficacy 1993	0.28 (0.32)
External political efficacy 2002	0.06 (0.10)
Government attitude 1993	-0.17 (0.32)
Government attitude 2002	-0.01 (0.12)
Faith in people 1993	-0.13 (0.30)
Faith in people 2002	0.19 (0.13)
Constant	-3.35*** (0.61)
Number of observations	1,534
Log likelihood	-900.2011451

Entries are unstandardized regression coefficients; standard errors appear in parentheses

* $P < 0.10$; ** $P < 0.05$;

*** $P < 0.01$

provided with more autonomy and liberty at the societal level. At the same time, the control of the government on individual citizens is also much weakened. Citizens depend less on the states for everyday living material and their bargaining and interactions with the state for socioeconomic resources decline sequentially as well. I

suggest that the observed decline in political participation may result from the lessening of the grip of the state on individual citizens, and citizens are thus less mobilized to participate in politics; at the same time, while the government shifts its role from market distributor to market regulator, citizens are less compelled to participate in politics to compete for low-end interests.

From the analysis above we see that with the deepening of the economic reform in contemporary China, the economic reform itself has reached other areas of the Chinese society and changed the relationship between the state and society. In urban China, workplaces are no longer the vital economic and political grassroots institution in 2002 as compared to 1993, and Chinese citizens are measurably less compelled to participate in voting through the mobilization of the work unit. At the same time, citizens' political participation in urban China is increasingly more dependent upon socioeconomic resources of individual citizens, as citizens' income, education, political efficacy and political knowledge turn out be critical variable that would motivate them to participate in politics.

Conclusion

This paper is interested in the decline of political participation in contemporary China from 1993 to 2002 during the rapid economic development.

Different from the predictions of classic studies in comparative politics, which argue that with the development of economy and liberalization in politics, a country would experience a surge of participation in politics, political participation in urban China in the past decade has exhibited a pattern of general decline. This paper intends to inquire why there existed a tendency of decline in citizens' political participation in urban China. At the same time, this paper is interested in what this declined participation means to the state–society relations in contemporary urban China.

I hypothesize the accelerating economic development is likely to provide for increased socioeconomic resources for the population and I argue that the increased resources are going to play an increasingly important role in facilitating political participation in China. Moreover, I argue as a part of the political liberalization process, political participation in urban China would be on the upward trend along with the economic development that the country experiences.

The theoretical framework that I employed to understand to the mechanism of political participation in urban China originates from the studies on participation in democracies and non-democracies. We model that socioeconomic resources, psychological engagement and sociopolitical contexts should all contribute significantly to citizens' political participation, congressional voting in particular.

I employed the 1993 Social Mobility Survey and 2002 Asian Barometer Survey data sets to test the theories, and political participation I examined in this paper is citizens' voting in congressional elections.

I found that citizens' voting in congressional elections in urban China has been increasingly dependent on individual resources, and the absolute values of individual resources are rising along with economic development. However, urban political participation overall is on decline. Our theoretical expectation received mixed support—while individual resources are becoming more and more important in mobilizing

participation, and citizens' socioeconomic resources and psychological engagement in politics are on the rise, the actual participating level is decreasing.

One critical variable missing in the 2002 analysis is the existence of political study or political organization in the work unit, which played a key role in mobilizing urban citizens' congressional voting in 1993. With the deepening economic reform, political studies or formal political organizations were disappearing in Chinese society since the late 1990s. The empirical analysis in the General Linear Model revealed that although economic development did positively foster political participation by increasing the average individual resources and making resources more effective to motivate participation, it did not make up for the negative effect brought by the dismantling of sociopolitical structure in urban China during the economic reform.

Despite dramatic economic development, China's urban political participation is declining substantially over the past decade. Although the economic development did produce more resources among citizenry to encourage broadened political participation, the overall citizens' political participation is actually shrinking, and I argue that this outcome is resulted largely from the disappearance of sociopolitical institutions that used to serve as critical conduits for citizens' political participation. Although the economic development did produce more resources among citizenry to encourage broadened political participation, the overall citizens' political participation is actually declining in breadth.

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Appendix: Measurements of Variables

1. Congressional Voting

Dichotomous variable: have you participated in the most recent congressional election?

2. Workplace type

I measured the workplace variable both as the ordinal variable from 1 to 5 in their connection with the state, and the binary variable for each specific type of the work unit.

3. Political organization inside the workplace

The variable of political organization is measured by the availability of the political study inside the workplace.

Socioeconomic Resources

1. Position in the workplace

“What is your profession?”

I coded this variable according to the given answer according to the following scheme: senior professionals and private enterprises' owners hold the highest

position 4, professionals and managers in the work units hold the secondary position 3, white-collar workers and staff hold the lower position 2, Manual workers hold the lowest 1, and unemployed and housewives are 0.

2. Socioeconomic status

(a) Income

In this paper, I shall use the reported household income level as the socioeconomic status indicator, which is measured by the actual number of dollars of the respondents' total household earns.

“What was your family's total income last month?” (Including salaries, bonuses, various subsidies, allowances, retirement pensions, living expense grants, alimony, second jobs, and from other income sources?)

(b) Education

The education variable is measured as an ordinal variable, with 6 being the highest degree level and 1 being the lowest. 1 is the elementary school graduate, 2 lower middle school graduate, 3 upper middle school, vocational school, or technical school graduate, 4 evening college TV college, correspondence college graduate, 5 fulltime college or technical college graduate, 6 graduate school degree.

3. Self-perceived socioeconomic status

“Compared to other families, which category do you feel your family's economic situation fits in? —Lower, lower middle, middle, upper-middle, upper”

“What do you feel is your family's social position now? —Lower, lower middle, middle, upper-middle, upper.”

4. Gender: dichotomous variable, and the male is coded as 1 and female as 0.

5. Age

In order to capture the parabolic effect of age, I include two age variables in the model. One is the respondent's natural age, and the other is the age squared. If the natural age is positively correlated with the dependent variable with significance while the age square is negative correlated with the dependent variable with significance, the curvilinear age effect should be supported. Please note the age square is dropped from the GLM analysis.

6. Marital status

Dichotomous variable. Being married while without being divorced, separated or widowed is coded as 1 and the rest 0.

Psychological Engagement

1. Party membership

Party membership is a dichotomous variable. The communist party member is coded as “1” and the rest “0”.

2. Political interest

“How interested would you say you are in politics? —Very interested, somewhat interested, not very interested, not at all interested.”

3. Political knowledge

Political knowledge is measured by the political information that citizens possess. In the data set, political knowledge is measured by the following question.

“Do you know who the chairman of the People’s Congress is?”

4. Political efficacy

Citizens’ political efficacy is differentiated into the internal political efficacy and external political efficacy.

(a) Internal political efficacy

“I consider myself very capable in participating in politics—strongly disagree, disagree, agree, strongly agree.”

(b) External political efficacy

“In our country, people have many ways effectively to influence the government’s decisions—strongly disagree, disagree, agree, strongly agree.”

5. Government attitude

With government attitude, I intend to gauge how much the respondents identify with the traditional value and daily functioning of the government.

“Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with the following statements: I should trust and obey the government and shall comply with the decision of the government—strongly disagree, disagree, agree, strongly agree.”

6. Faith in people

“Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you can’t be too careful in dealing with people? —most people can be trusted or can’t be too careful in dealing with people.”

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