

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN QUEENSLAND

**THE EMERGENCE OF THE “JIANG ZEMIN ERA”: LEGITIMACY AND THE
DEVELOPMENT OF THE POLITICAL THEORY OF “NEO-CONSERVATISM” –
1989-1995**

A Dissertation submitted by

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ABSTRACT

This research addresses the establishment of the “Jiang Zemin Era” whereby Jiang Zemin, and the Chinese Communist Party, have attempted to re-legitimise the Party and have attempted to make the Party meaningful to the Chinese populace. What is fundamental to this research is how Jiang Zemin, as the “core leader” of the third generational leadership, incorporated the political thought of neo-conservatism (*xin baoshouzhuyi*) into the framework of Marxist-Leninist-Mao Zedong Thought (MLM) ideology in order to re-legitimise the CCP. The timeframe within the research is from Jiang’s appointment as the General Secretary of the CCP in 1989 until 1995. It is important that this was a time period whereby Jiang had to consolidate, and therefore legitimise, his “core leadership”, and provide a theoretical platform in order to bring forth his own “era”.

The research is predominantly a historiographical narrative, utilising both primary and secondary sources, that examines the mechanisms Jiang utilised in order to create a strong government, with himself as the “core”, which pursued increased levels of marketisation.

Indeed, after being appointed General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party in 1989, Jiang Zemin had to achieve two goals in order to sustain and legitimate his position as “*the core of the third generational leadership*”. First, he had to secure his position as “the core” through the creation of secured networks and alliances as well as legitimise of his “informal”

and “formal” positions in the CCP hierarchy. In order to achieve this, Jiang had to first create a sustainable power base in order to retain, and therefore legitimise, his formalized positions as General Secretary of the CCP, Chairman of the Chinese Military Commission and the Presidency. In addition, he needed to be able to create alliances with both allies and protégés as well as differing power factions, be they conservative/elder or reformist, and with other leading figures like Li Peng and Zhu Rongji. Second, in order to further reinforce and legitimize his position as “the core”, Jiang had to develop his own “theoretical framework” for governing the country – much as Mao and Deng had done previously.

Therefore, the research also examines Jiang’s usage of the neo-conservatism as a means of not only legitimising the CCP’s ideological framework but also as a means of providing his own “guiding thought”, thus enabling him to establish his own “era”. Indeed, after establishing himself as the “core” through the aforementioned processes, Jiang had to develop such a theoretical framework that complimented Deng’s economic reforms, especially as he was designated by Deng, yet one that retained a smattering of Mao Zedong’s “Thoughts” that could be applied pragmatically during the 1990s.

It can be seen that Jiang Zemin successfully incorporated the political thought of “neo-conservatism” within his platform in order to achieve these ends – including the establishment of a “Jiang Zemin Era”. This political thought, a

successor to the political theory of “neo-authoritarianism”, already had several adherents within the higher echelons of the CCP. Indeed, it would be Jiang’s 1995 speech, entitled “Stressing Politics”, that would signify the incorporation of neo-conservatism within Jiang’s platform of (self) legitimation that would initiate the successful implementation of a “Jiang Zemin Era”.

CERTIFICATE OF DISSERTATION

I certify that the ideas, experimental work, results, analyses, software and conclusions reported in this dissertation are entirely my own effort, except where otherwise acknowledged. I also certify that the work is original and has not been previously submitted for any other award, except where otherwise acknowledged.

Signature of Candidate

Date

ENDORSEMENT

Signature of Supervisor

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