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## Breach of Trust as Fuel for Protest: Tiananmen Demonstrations and the Erosion of State-Society Relations in 1980s China



Cheng's thesis explores the 1989 Tiananmen Square demonstrators' motivations for choosing "Nothing to My Name" (Cui Jian, 1986) as their protest anthem, in tension with their relative socioeconomic privilege. Through analyzing topics of post-reform educational policy changes, the 1983 Anti-Spiritual Pollution Campaign, and dissemination of corruption as "crisis" within 1980s China, it argues that there was one major theme which contributed to and eventually drove Chinese students to the stark conclusion that they had "nothing." The erosion of the relationship between the Chinese Communist Party and Chinese students which occurred throughout the course of the 1980s.

At the larger level, this thesis highlights how the immense social changes which swept post-1978 reform China not only molded Chinese society as a whole, but shook the Chinese government to its very core. Utilizing originally conducted simple surveys, oral history accounts, and interdisciplinary sociological-historical analysis, this thesis contributes an alternative framework for understanding the 1989 Tiananmen Square Protests, as a site through which students attempted to negotiate and grapple with their loss of trust in the Party, privileged political voice, and faith in society—the loss of "everything"—that they experienced throughout the 1980s. Ultimately, this thesis concludes that the Party played an unintentionally cataclysmic role in the 1989 Tiananmen Protests through its usage of often-oversimplifying messaging to address complex social problems—a trend which continues into today, with uncertain effects.