

As noted in Chapter One there are many important questions about China's future. In this study, we have considered only one of them. What are the major challenges, fault lines, and potential adversities that confront China in its efforts to sustain a high rate of economic growth in the coming decades? Our analysis of these fault lines underscores their scale and complexity, and it also suggests that their ramifications will extend into all levels of China's society, government, and party structure.

An important but debatable proposition can be inferred from this analysis: To mitigate the stresses engendered by these fault lines will demand an enormous and continuing array of consultations, negotiations, and transactions among China's central and provincial governments and the Communist Party apparatus. This demanding process is likely to preoccupy China's new collective leadership during the next decade, predisposing it to avoid external distractions and to maintain equitable relations with the United States.

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