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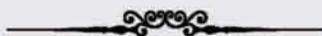
# REVIEW

Issue 3 ❖ August 2009



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## THE INTERNET AND POLITICAL REFORM



The Internet and State Media: The 4.5 Estate

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The Role of the Internet in State-Society Relations

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How China’s Angry Youth Use the Internet to Magnify  
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Editorial office:  
453 Freedom Parkway  
Atlanta, Georgia 30307  
United States  
Editorial telephone:  
(404)420-3867

Subscriptions, manuscripts and reprint requests can be sent to [cc.chinascope@gmail.com](mailto:cc.chinascope@gmail.com)

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**Dear Readers:**

As China Elections and Governance ([www.chinaelections.org](http://www.chinaelections.org)) enters its 8<sup>th</sup> year as a popular online portal for social and political issues in China, the CEG editors pose a few existential questions: Is it possible for an online platform to facilitate reform in the deliberative process between China and her citizens? What role can the Internet play in providing an outlet for China's people to voice concerns and express public opinion? Indeed, what is the valid governance potential of the Internet, and what are its limitations? This third installment of the *China Elections and Governance Review* therefore focuses on a theme very close to home for the CEG editors: the relationship between the Internet and political reform.

In this quarter's *Review*, featured contributors Evelyn Chan, Samuel Verran and Robert O'Brien take the Internet's potential implications on political reform as a point of departure to deliberate on Chinese "netizens." "Netizens" are seen as a force mobilizing on issues, shaping Chinese domestic media, contributing to political discourse, and influencing Chinese public and international policy. While many of their conclusions may be sobering to optimistic Internet enthusiasts, the *Review* is not a comprehensive or authoritative statement, but rather brings light to some of the trends and challenges the Internet faces in China today. CEG editors have also juxtaposed two important voices from inside China, the noted journalist Xiao Shu and *People's Daily* editor Fan Zhengwei. Their pieces, translated by Heather Saul and Sean Ding, represent divergent views on the emerging role of the Internet in Chinese governance.

We welcome feedback, comments, and concerns to this edition and look forward to contributions to our next quarterly installment of the *China Elections and Governance Review*, which will focus on mass incidents and government disclosure of information. Please send comments, concerns, and future contributions by October 15, 2009 to [cc.chinascope@gmail.com](mailto:cc.chinascope@gmail.com).

# The Internet and State Media:

## The 4.5 Estate

By Evelyn Chan and Chenggeng Bi



As the large popular protests in Iran in June 2009 demonstrated, authoritarian regimes are up against a new medium that is widespread, accessible and rapid. The advent of web 2.0 technology, which has given ordinary users the ability to easily disseminate information via the Internet through sites like Twitter, Facebook and YouTube has transformed ordinary citizens into journalists. In the case of Iran, cell phones became cameras, and tweets replaced news feeds.

The dilemma that authoritarian regimes face is that the imperative to promote economic development, which becomes essential for parties to shore up popular legitimacy, clashes with the imperative to control information flow (See Daniel Lynch). Authoritarian states that seek to develop their economies inevitably face the challenge that globalization and new

technology brings with economic modernization.

This is not news for Chinese leaders, who have long recognized the threat globalization poses on their ability to control *thought work* and the *cultural market* (Lynch 1999, 173). China therefore walks a careful line balancing the promotion of market rationality with the goal of managing information flow. China's Great Fire Wall has successfully blocked websites of particular organizations like the Falun Gong and access to Hotmail and Facebook during particular sensitive events, like the anniversary of the Tiananmen protests. Nevertheless the sheer volume of blogs, internet forums, and websites signals an interesting dynamic in China. Over the years China's economic growth model and shift away from Communist ideology has translated into greater individual freedoms.

A key question is whether the expansion in individual freedoms and pluralism in public opinion on the Internet has an inherently destabilizing effect for the regime. This linear postulation between the rise of the Internet and a liberalizing outcome is at the heart of several of this issue's contributions. Sam Verran for instance examines the relationship between online and offline protests. The spread of ideas in the blogosphere, giving a platform for dissident voices, has the potential to translate into vocal protests outside of the virtual world.

Another dimension in examining the political implications of the Internet is whether China's ability to manage *thought work* is also challenged by way of a more autonomous and critical press corps. The link between media and democracy is that the former helps foster the political norms and civic culture necessary to sustain a democracy. The exchange of free ideas and criticism is embodied in a free and independent press.

The media in China is an interesting case study precisely because like in other communist regimes, it has traditionally served as a mouthpiece and transmission belt for the Party. Media in China has since undergone significant change with the introduction of Deng Xiaoping's economic reforms. The commercialization of media organization and introduction of

market principles have introduced competitive pressures, forcing media outlets to repackage the news, catering to audience demands and advertisers. Similar to the debate on the commercialization of Chinese media, the discussion concerning the impact of the Internet and the rise of citizen journalism on state media also posits a liberalizing effect. Just as the introduction of market principles has made the media more accountable to the people, bloggers and netizens serve as another competitive force. In essence citizen-reporting would force state-sanctioned media to report the people line over the Party. They therefore *watch the watchdogs* (See Cooper).

*Media in China has since undergone significant change with the introduction of Deng Xiaoping's economic reforms*

This paper seeks to analyze the effect of the internet and rise of citizen journalism on state-sanctioned media. The interplay of the two realms, the official media and non-official reporting online may be creating a more participatory and deliberative public sphere in China, signaling a gradual liberal evolution. A logical hypothesis posits that the rise of internet activity and spread of information creates a competitive pressure on state-media, forcing a shift away from the Party-line and towards a more people-centered approach to reporting. This move away from the Party's control signals a liberalizing effect in China's political and economic development. This article explores three case studies that occurred in 2008 and 2009, the Sichuan Earthquake, the Sanlu Milk Scandal

and the Weng'an and Shishou riots to analyze whether a causal relationship exists between the rise of netizen reporting and state-official media. Furthermore, it offers an evaluation based on these cases of the prospects of liberalization in China.

### **Media and Blogging: The Fourth and Fifth Estate:**

Journalism in the West is under similar scrutiny and examination as the academic discussion in China, specifically concerning its autonomy and commitment to the public. Similar questions concerning media conglomeration, marketization and political influence have undermined the legitimacy of the press in the West (See Bourdieu and Champagne). The traditional normative role of media acting as the *Fourth Estate* that is informing the public, providing a forum for an exchange of ideas and holding the state accountable is increasingly under fire (Tumber 2001, 96).

The literature on communication studies identify a *crisis in journalism*, which stems from both market pressures and the rise of the blogosphere (Tumber 2001, 104). There is an increasing gap that places traditional journalism further away from the public sphere (Tumber 2001, 105). In the first instance, media conglomeration and the competition for higher ratings to secure dominance in the market undercut the journalist's commitment to inform citizens (Tumber 2001, 96). Critical perspectives of mass media emphasize how the dominant liberal economic ideology acts as a hegemonic order that constantly threatens journalists' autonomy (Cham-

pagne 2005, 49). In this perspective, journalists struggle to assert an objective view and tend to favor one group, the elites and the dominant ideology, the economic-liberal order (Atton 2008, 215, Champagne 2005, 54). Contrary to political censorship under an authoritarian regime, market pressures work in such a way that covertly changes the values and profession of journalism. According to Champagne, "The journalist ideally wants to be a stalwart servant of the truth at any price, but he belongs to a paper that bears a price and is situated within an economic enterprise with its own exigencies, which are not all of the mind" (2005, 51).

It is this need to challenge the mass media's dominance in news production and frame-setting that has allowed the Internet to give rise to an alternative form of journalism. Some authors have coined this as the emergence of the *Fifth Estate* (See Cooper and Atton). Challenging the dominant discourse in mainstream media, activism on the net serves as a form of public oversight on State media. Bloggers *watch the watchdogs*. The proliferation of blogs, online forums and web 2.0 technology has given ordinary citizens the capacity to become media producers, transforming their previous role as the passive audience (Atton 2008, 215). The new form of journalism or the public journalism movement enhances democracy as it empowers citizens, fosters greater discussion and participation and forges online communities among citizens (Tumber 2001, 101; Atton 2008, 217). A famous case that has given rise to the normative

view of the blogosphere is the RATHERGATE scandal. Bloggers successfully uncovered CBS News' use of forged documents for a report on George W. Bush military record. CBS was forced to issue a formal apology as a result of the netizen activity (Woan, 2008 115).

Concerns over the integrity of journalism in the West are equally applicable to China's case. An essential difference however is that the empowering and democracy-enhancing effect of the *Fifth Estate* has greater far-reaching consequences for the Chinese polity. A more deliberative public space and participatory citizenry spurred by the interplay of the official and non-official media may in fact challenge the official line of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

A second difference lies in the effect of media conglomeration and commercialization. In the West, marketization and the reduction in media ownership by way of conglomeration has shifted the media away from public commitment. In contrast, the centralization of media in China has greater political implications. In China, conglomeration in the 1990s has meant greater state control and monitoring of media activity. There are no officially independent media outlets, which must be registered under a sponsored publisher or organization (Hassid 2008, 419). Furthermore the consolidation of media organizations in the hands of a few large state-

owned firms has provided another source to strengthen China's patronage and nomenklatura system (Brady 2008). With increasing advertising revenue, the media industry has become tremendously profitable, thereby creating vested interests that tie the media and the Party closer together, as well as co-opting journalists (Zhao, 2000, 15). Therefore when Chinese bloggers challenge the pro-market bias in the mainstream media, they are also challenging the Party and its market-oriented reform. In the same way that netizen activity in the West seeks to counter market hegemony, Chinese bloggers counter Party hegemony. Both Internet forces in the

East and West are pushing for a more people-centered approach in their own right.

While it is imperative to observe whether China's official media is taking the role of the Fourth Estate, institutionally they are very much tied to the

Party apparatus. This is a fundamental difference that makes it difficult to apply a normative standard on China's media. Nevertheless, it is a valuable endeavor to identify the parameters where official media do act independently and critical of the Party. Evidence of a more critical voice firstly signals a liberalizing tendency, and identifying the potential causes can shed light on the larger impact of the Internet as a medium.

*A more deliberative public space and participatory citizenry may in fact challenge the official line of the Chinese Communist Party.*

## China's Journalists: Wearing Many Hats

Since the launch of economic reforms and China's transformation from a totalitarian state to an authoritarian one, China's media has oscillated between many competing roles, serving the *Party line*, the *bottom line* and the *people line*. With the launch of Deng's reform and a period of brief liberalization, the media experimented with its limited freedom and developed a more critical and autonomous voice. Disbanded publications were revived and local regions were encouraged to develop their own newspapers, leading to a decentralization of the media and proliferation of publications and outlets (Esarey 2005, 39). Competition led to a more people-approach, giving rise to the introduction of *investigative journalism*, human interest pieces and reports on corruption (Esarey 2005, 52).

The Tiananmen Square protests and the decisive victory of the Party's more conservative wing however signaled an end to the journalism reform movement. The media's involvement during the Tiananmen protests signaled two important developments. Firstly, despite Beijing's effort to restrict the media's coverage, their defiance signaled a shift towards the interest of the masses. Secondly their eventual participation demonstrated the media's desire for greater autonomy from the Party (Lee, 39). The Tiananmen incident highlighted a key conflict for journalists between serving the Party and serving the people (Lee, 39).

The media in the post-1989 period underwent serious restructuring and rectification that reverted the media back to its pre-reform status. Newspapers were closed, editors were replaced, reporters were arrested and existing outlets were subject to a re-registration process that recentralized Beijing's control (Lee 38). Licensing was tightened and managed from the top, along with mandatory annual reviews and certification for editors and journalists (Zhao 2000, 14). The post-1989 restructuring process ultimately absorbed the media into a corporatist institution, tying the journalists closer to the Party's ideological program and propaganda bureaucracy.

Deng's 1992 *Southern Tour* and push for rapid market acceleration was another decisive point in the media's post 1989 transformation (Zhao 2007, 2). Given the political climate and critical blow to the media's reform movement, the prevailing mood was if *journalists couldn't beat 'em, join 'em*. The process of media conglomeration and the end to the media's financial dependence on the state shifted the media towards a pro-market ideology. Media managers, editors and journalists profited from state-led development and marketization (Zhao 2007, 4). The value of the press corps changed to champion market ideology, and therefore support the Party's role in *modernizing* China (Zhao 2007, 4).

These developments shape the three dominant paradigms for China's journalists that mark an ambivalence and heterogene-

ity in the current state of media as journalists vacillate between the *Party line*, *bottom line*, and the *people-line*.

#### *The Party Line*

In this paradigm, journalists conform to the Party's directive and the approved story, transmitted by the national official agency, Xinhua News (Zhao 2008, 25). Either by direct coercion or through self-censorship, the media in China can be largely acquiescent. A principle reason for this complacent role lies in China's post-facto censorship, meaning that journalists and organizations are usually reprimanded after the release of a sensitive news story

...the livelihood of journalists and editors are contingent on how far they deviate from the Party Line

(Hassid 2008, 420). The Party line is not clearly defined, but situational-based (Zhao 2008, 25). Although journalists are aware that taboo topics like Tiananmen Square, ethnic clashes and mass incidents are off-limits; this level of uncertainty over what is acceptable induces self-censorship (Hassid 2008, 422).

Secondly, through Beijing's corporatist institutions, the media lacks any associational and institutional autonomy. The power of the Central Propaganda Department to authorize the firing and hiring of media personnel means that the livelihood of journalists and editors are contingent on how far they deviate from the Party Line (Esarey 2005, 58). The same goes for upward mobility within the profession. When reports are censored, jour-

nalists do not receive pay and risk losing performance bonuses (Esarey 2005, 58). This is a fundamental difference between bloggers and journalists in state media. For bloggers, their livelihood is not dependent on reporting and they are therefore more willing to broach forbidden topics (Esarey 2008b, 754).

Commercialization has created extremely profitable media conglomerates. Journalists are enticed by the economic incentives to maintain quiescent on politically sensitive issues. There are far greater rewards to report on neutral topics than to push the boundaries (Brady 2006, 65). As a result of the market transformation, journalists have become a part of the emerging middle class. They are therefore a beneficiary of Deng's economic reforms. In this framework, there is a common bond between the Party and the media elite to maintain the current status quo, which signals the Party's co-optation of the media and an end to its *watchdog* role (Zhao 2007, 21).

#### *The Bottom Line*

With the rise of the middle class, the media has begun to cater to the wealthy urban elites, who are advertisers' key target demographic (Zhao 2007, 10). Entertainment news and business-oriented topics, issues which were politically neutral have become lucrative stories. Once the media was no longer dependent on the state for subsidies, advertising revenue has been the central life line for media organizations. The post-reform media therefore is

driven by profit and seek to increase readership and ratings.

The discussion on the commercialization of the media has placed market forces and Party demands at odds with each other. Catering to the interests of the audience, so as to increase advertising revenue would signal a shift away from the Party. However this dichotomy is not always true. If anything it has introduced another line of fissure, namely the interests of the business class and the people (Yu 2009). The drive for advertising revenue has made media a lapdog of big businesses (Yu 2009, 91). They are therefore willing to “soften negative news of major advertisers” (Zhao 2007, 8). Furthermore in the post-reform culture of profit and money making, journalists have been susceptible to bribes and gifts in exchange for air time and publicity (Zhao 2007, 8).

This alignment with the interests of the economic elite also acts to erode the *watchdog* role of the media and shifts it significantly away from serving the public good. Furthermore given the close and in many cases collusive relationship between China’s business sector and the state, the media’s tight relationship with the business class also has the effect of strengthening the economic base of the Party.

#### *The People Line and the Effect of China’s Netizens*

In this paradigm, the media acts as a mediator between state and society. A more people-centered approach to state-sanctioned media provides a vehicle for

the state to hear public opinion and to adjust unpopular policies accordingly (Yu 2009, 81). Furthermore the state has recognized the media’s role as a pressure valve to channel and address social problems before it descends into a popular uprising or a more antagonistic movement.

The Tiananmen incident and participation of journalists marked a clear defiance against the Party line and the CCP’s position on the media’s role in society. In the post-reform era, there has been a growth in *investigative journalism* and more robust reporting on corruption and malfeasance by state officials. The concept of the “citizen’s right to know” and “right to speak” has developed alongside a compliant and pro-market culture within China’s media (Yu 2009, 9)

The idea of a *citizen’s right to know* is largely the result of the social consequences of China’s rapid economic growth, which has created significant economic disparities both intra-regionally and inter-regionally and high levels of corruption. Contrary to the previous two paradigms, reporters of the *investigative journalism strand* laud themselves for addressing social injustice and giving a voice to the marginalized (Yu 2009, 96). Its development very much coincides with the Jiang Zemin’s *Three Represents* theory, which recognizes the interests of the masses as one of the three pillars in society and the Hu-Wen administration’s *harmonious society*, which seeks to redress the problems of poverty and inequality (Brendebach 2003, 33).

However there are limits to the development of *investigative journalism*. While major outlets like the Central Chinese Television (CCTV) network have caught onto the trend with two major investigative reporting programs, *News Probe* and *News Focus*, this people-approach to reporting is not a bottom-up phenomenon but is more a top-down process. The state still retains the final say on the type of stories reporters can investigate. Investigative journalism is criticized for only attacking low-level officials and the *small fish* of the Party apparatus (Brady 2006, 66). There is little monitoring or scrutiny concerning the policy-making process at the top (Zhao 2007, 14). Next, they are careful not to report too many cases of corruption and illegal activities by officials, which would signal a pervasive, systemic problem in the Chinese political system.

There are a few major cases that demonstrate how netizen journalism has shifted mainstream reporting towards the interests of the people. The SARS outbreak in 2003 was a particular watershed, highlighting the impact of the internet both on state-media reporting and on government response. During the early stages of the SARS outbreak, more investigative pieces were muzzled and reporters were reprimanded. Reports of cases surfaced in November and by February the Propaganda department ordered a halt to official reporting. The public turned to the Internet for more information (Esarey 2005, 74). Wang Jianshuo, an engineer for Microsoft in Shanghai became famous for his daily blog post on the SARS situation

(Mackinnon 2008, 36). Mainstream media later developed a more critical voice concerning the state efforts to contain the outbreak. The firing of Health Minister Zhangwenkang and Beijing Mayor Men Xuenong ushered in a flood of coverage on SARS, signaling an air of transparency concerning the state's handling of the affair (Esarey 2005, 77).

The discussion above concerning the multiple roles of China's media demonstrates constant vacillation and ambivalence. The key question is whether the rise of the internet and proliferation of blogs have had the effect of minimizing the vacillation and incoherence towards a fourth estate. The cases below took place in 2008 and 2009 and use the three dominant paradigms above as a central framework to evaluate this question.

*There are a few major cases that demonstrate how netizen journalism has shifted mainstream reporting*

### **Empirical Analysis: Three Case Studies**

#### *Case 1: Sichuan Earthquake*

A magnitude 7.9 earthquake hit Sichuan province on May 12, 2008, which resulted in the death of more than 80,000 people and thousands more missing. Particularly, a great many classrooms collapsed in the earthquake, which killed thousands of students. The official news agency was quick to report the event so as to diffuse rumors and alleviate public fears. Minutes after the Sichuan earthquake, the China Bureau of Earthquakes publicized the epicenter and magnitude of this quake on its

official website. Sichuan province released the initial death toll. The event also led to the first news conference by the military branch to publish the progress of rescue efforts (Magnier June 5, 2008).

The plight of those trapped and heroic rescue attempts became part of a round-the-clock media blitz. Sympathy poured in from all over the country as the eyes of the nation watched the news unravel. The human interest element of the story was clearly the major selling point. The media also had a field day with Premier Wen Jiabao's visit to the disaster site and eager villagers stood waiting to shake his hand. The initial coverage therefore signaled a shift towards a 'people approach'. The media was active on the scene, covering heroic stories of courage and the triumph of survivors and rescuers.

It can be concluded that the Chinese state media's reporting was fast and effective concerning information dissemination. Secondly, the tremendous attention given to the individual stories of heroism and loss was particularly *people-centered*. However, when it comes to the reasons for the collapse of so many school buildings, the most controversial aspect of the quake, the state media kept silent under the guidance of the Chinese government. There was thus a significant turning point in the event of the earthquake that led to an important shift in the state's permission of media coverage and the media's pursuit of the story. Concerning the cause of the event, the media shifted to the *Party line*.

In the earthquake area, thousands of classrooms fell down but the neighborhood and government buildings remained standing, which implied that serious quality problems existed in the construction of the schools. It has been widely accepted by netizens that the school buildings were "tofu" or shoddy constructions, which were the result of government corruption (Si, April 23, 2009). Parents marched and demanded answers and that Beijing punish corrupt local officials who benefitted from the shady building contracts. This change in tone from the individual heroism of survivors to local corruption therefore shifted how the event was to be portrayed in the mainstream media. Media access to the site of the earthquake was tightened by June 2008, silencing parents' stories in mainstream media (Associated Foreign Press, 2008)

Netizens responded to the lack of intervention by Beijing. The most well-known example of citizen journalism was the work by Ai Weiwei, the well-known artists who designed the Bird's Nest stadium for the Olympic Games. Out of frustration with the lack of government transparency, Ai Weiwei set out to document the number of student deaths, and investigated the scene and interviewed parents with a team of volunteers. Their ongoing work is posted on Ai Weiwei's blog, which has been sporadically shut down.

One year later, authorities have restricted the foreign media's access to the site and the official number of deaths has not been officially reported. Ai Weiwei's work and

ongoing netizen activity therefore demonstrates the emergence of alternative journalism when official media fails. Online activity however has not generated into sufficient pressure for the state to hold local officials accountable. When the event focused on the natural disaster, the story's human interest angle allowed for unfettered media coverage. Media investigation, however, into the *cause* of the quake and the grievances of parents demonstrates the limits of the *people-centered* reporting. The case aptly shows how investigative reporting must be politically neutral.

*Case 2: Sanlu Milk Scandal*

Sanlu, located in Hebei province, is a national brand of milk powder in China. The infamous Milk scandal unraveled and appeared in mainstream media after the Beijing Olympics. Based on the investigation by the Chinese government in September 2008, there were 6244 diagnosed babies who suffered major health problems due to the tainted Sanlu milk powder (Yu and Zhang, ) Of these, 158 suffered from acute renal failure. In this case, China's state media failed to fulfill its social responsibilities, since as early as March 2008, complaints about the quality of Sanlu milk powder had been reported to some media outlets. They did not publish the name of Sanlu until September.

It was the Lanzhou Morning Post that published the first article to reveal that 14

infants had suffered from kidney stones from drinking an unknown brand of milk powder on September 9, 2008 (Shen, 2008). Then Xinhua Net reproduced this article. Though the article did not point to this brand as "Sanlu", it attracted the attention of all domestic media organizations and netizens discussed the incident on community forums. Several days later, the Office of the State Council announced the safety problem was caused by Sanlu milk powder.

There are two reasons for the slow response by mainstream media. One is that Sanlu offered bribes to the state media for

*Today, the reporters are trapped under the general trend towards a market economy and also subjected to various news restrictions*

sealing information through advertising deals (Fu April 23, 2009). For instance, Baidu, a leading Chinese search engine is accused to have been paid by Sanlu to prevent *bad press* from surfacing online (ChinaSmack, 2008). In a blog, the author of the original article in Lanzhou Morning Post explains that journalists were reluctant to publish the name of the milk company precisely because of the pressures against defaming a corporation. "Today, the reporters are trapped under the general trend towards a market economy and also subjected to various news restrictions... They find themselves as the 'little reporter guys' that the big corporations could order about or else send to the defendant's seat in court." (Fu, September 14, 2008). Secondly, the local government in Hebei prevented the reports of the

author of the original article in Lanzhou Morning Post explains that journalists were reluctant to publish the name of the milk company precisely because of the pressures against defaming a corporation. "Today, the reporters are trapped under the general trend towards a market economy and also subjected to various news restrictions... They find themselves as the 'little reporter guys' that the big corporations could order about or else send to the defendant's seat in court." (Fu, September 14, 2008). Secondly, the local government in Hebei prevented the reports of the

tainted Sanlu milk powder to protect its own economic interest. As a major enterprise in Hebei, Sanlu contributed huge tax revenues to the local government. While complaints about Sanlu surfaced in early August, the Sanlu group asked the Hebei government to assert pressure on the media to avoid information leaking out to the press (Lei, October 3, 2008). Furthermore the media was pressured by authorities to report *positive news* in the weeks leading up to the Olympics. In the end, twenty-one members of the Sanlu Group were sentenced for the contamination, including the Chairperson of the company, Tian Wenhua who is to serve life imprisonment. However no local officials in Hebei have been held responsible.

The milk scandal case is a clear example of how the media are affected by the *bottom line*. It was in fact through BBS forums that copies of letters concerning Baidu's involvement in the case first surfaced. Netizens have also warned citizens of other cases of food contamination after news of the melamine contamination (China Digital Times, 2008). In this example, online activities did not spur mainstream media attention but they served as an alternative source of information in light of citizen distrust of mainstream media as well as a space for critical evaluation against the media. A liberalizing effect is minimal in this case, as the government attempted to present the incident as a corporate irresponsibility with Sanlu as the main culprit.

*Case 3: Reporting Mass Incidents – Weng'an and Shibohu*

A teenage girl in Weng'an County died in June, 2008. Local residents believed that she was raped and killed by someone who had close connections with the county government. Local residents and the girl's family then attacked the police station and set fire to government buildings. This event became a national focus through the Internet very quickly. The governor in Guizhou province rushed to the scene and criticized the local government. Under his guidance, the cause of the death was determined to be drowning. Though no citizens believed this explanation, they could not change the official statement and the riot ceased.

Unlike the natural disaster in Sichuan, the Weng'an riot marked public dissatisfaction in the CCP's authority directly, so any information on the Weng'an riot would be very sensitive. However, Xinhua news covered the reports of the Weng'an event just one day after the riot occurred. In addition, "Weng'an" was not blocked on the Internet by the Great Firewall. It should be noted, however, that this is not a reflection of China's information openness but a typical method for the Chinese government to manage the media directly during the process of mass incidents. Therefore in addition to censorship and suppression, the Chinese government will intervene to frame the official story.

After the riot, the related posts with Weng'an in major websites were deleted as quickly as possible. For instance, at Tianya Forum, it was estimated that a Weng'an-related post had an average life-

time of 15 seconds before being deleted by the administrators. Pictures and video of the rioting on the Internet were also deleted quickly. In addition, the Chinese government employed web commentators to write pro-government comments on major websites. For instance, more than a dozen teachers were selected by the Weng'an government as Internet commentators to guide Internet discussion. These commentators worked with Xinhua news reporters to publish timely information.

In addition, local officials realized that netizens were not satisfied with their control over media, so they arranged for the China News Weekly, a state-run paper based outside the province media outlet, to interview officials. However, this was just a ploy to placate angry citizens, since the media was also in collusion with the government.

In June, 2009, a similar event occurred in Shishou, in Hubei province, where riots emerged after the mysterious death of a hotel cook. Protestors rejected claims he committed suicide and rumors surfaced about drug-cartels operating in the hotel in cooperation with local officials. Contrary to the Weng'an government's persuasion strategy to the media, the Shishou government tried to block the information about the riots. They disconnected the Internet and even the electricity. However,

*...the Chinese government employed web commentators to write pro-government comments on major websites*

because of technology such as video-phones and Twitter, people could obtain immediate information from the ground. The Shishou government's information blocking not only failed to achieve its aim but also deepened the local people's dissatisfaction and exacerbated the riots. In June, a surprising editorial was written by the People's Daily which cited that the government's failure to provide sufficient transparency contributed to the escalation of violence and rioting. While the editorial signals a significant shift in the mindset of the state-press, it is noted that mainstream

media including the People's Daily has not commented on the allegations of collusion and maintains the suicide story (Ren-hou, July 2, 2009).

In the first case of Weng'an, the government's media management was praised by the

People's Daily, the news organ of the CCP (Lu June 24, 2009). It said that the public doubts were adequately addressed by the timely news published by the media and the information transparency was the most important reason that the Weng'an riot subsided quickly. However, Shishou's information blocking was criticized, since it was futile and counterproductive.

In the cases of mass incidents, it is certain that the media will toe the *Party Line*. Rioting and protests are sensitive issues that force a heavy-hand by the State. In the Shishou case, while mainstream media

were complacent to question the suicide story, the Weng'an case demonstrates further subservience of the state media as the Party actively shaped the discourse both in the press and online.

### **Evaluation: A Conditional Approach to People-Centered Reporting**

The discussion above of three major cases in 2008 and 2009 demonstrate that Chinese media is still torn by competing roles.

The Fourth Estate is still far from being achieved in any de-facto sense. The important task therefore is to determine under what circumstances can the media take a more autonomous and critical approach. From the cases above it can be concluded that a bottom-up, liberalizing process between the internet and state-media is not present. In the cases where official media is more vocal, it is contingent

*...a bottom-up, liberalizing process between the internet and state-media is not present*

upon the will and approval by the Party. In the three cases, citizen-journalism had little effect in liberalizing the position of state media. The state remained resolute in its position on Sichuan, the Milk Scandal and the Weng'an and Shishou riots. Media reporting did not launch sufficient criticism to challenge the State's stance. While there lacked a liberalizing outcome and sufficient change on the part of the government, this does not mean that the Blogosphere is a futile endeavor or that it fails to act as the Fifth Estate. As long as a corporatist institution exists to tie the me-

dia to the Party and the central propaganda apparatus is able to maintain its carrot and stick approach to control media, it is unlikely for state-media to develop into a Fourth Estate regardless of the rise of netizen activity. However such a conclusion should not negate the tremendous contribution new technology has afforded ordinary Chinese citizens. While they may not significantly alter mainstream media, they provide a forum to produce a counter-hegemonic discourse. Rather than acting to alter the state of China's official media, they provide an alternative source for public deliberation and information flow. When state media fails to take a people-approach, citizens have the internet for recourse. Ai Weiwei's blog is a key example of civil society developing on the web as a result of state failure and complicity by official media. A simple causal relationship to determine a liberalizing outcome therefore does not exist between a rise in netizen activity and more autonomous media. Rather both the liberalization of media and the liberalization of society will most likely occur in tandem and more expeditiously through a split at the top and a deliberate decision to liberalize.



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# The Role of the Internet in State-society Relations and the Consequences for Popular Protests

*By Samuel Verran*



The rise of an online civil society in China presents an informative point of focus in assessing the impact that popular Internet access can have on authoritarian rule. When compared to the crisis that Eastern European communist states experienced in the 1990s, the Chinese ruling party appears anomalous in its ability to retain power while liberalizing its rule, developing the economy, and relaxing control over social and economic relationships. Due to deliberate government attempts to broaden Internet access over the past decades of reform, Internet use has expanded at a drastic rate. This has occurred, however, without a serious threat to government security and the Internet has not risen as an obvious catalyst for change.

As outlined by David Shambaugh in *China's Communist Party: Atrophy and Adaptation*, the ability of the Chinese government to develop from a totalitarian state, based on mass mobilization and Leninist ideology, to a market based soft-authoritarian state,

has been based in part on its adaptability and on three central pillars of economic development, selective repression and nationalism. On top of this, the Government has learned from the mistakes of the Soviet states and has worked to reduce the impact of systemic problems such as corruption, lack of unifying ideology, rising public protests, and increasing irrelevance of the Party in people's lives.

The Chinese government's ability to adapt to changing circumstances is nowhere more evident than in the CCP's handling of the Internet. Like broader economic and social reforms, the Chinese government in its development of the Internet has granted greater freedom and autonomy to its citizens, while still defining the outer limits of the public exercise of such freedoms. It is the purpose of this essay to outline how government controls over the public use of the Internet have effectively neutralized the threat that public discourse and networking on the Internet presents. Ultimately the government has managed

to use the internet to reinforce its rule, dealing swiftly with any threat to its power, while permitting benign forms of protest and channeling people's discontent towards its own aims.

Extending Internet coverage for the purpose of improving business, education, and information exchange has become an important task for the Chinese government. According to the China Internet Network Information Center: "By the end of 2008, the total of netizens in China had increased to 298 million, with an annual growth rate of 41.9%. The Internet penetration rate reached 22.6%, slightly higher than the average level in the world (21.9 %)". As a major economy in the international market the Chinese government, has perceived the Internet as an essential tool for developing the economy, particularly since the country's inception into the World Trade Organization.

*By the end of 2008, the total of netizens in China had increased to 298 million, with an annual growth rate of 41.9%*

Two points of view on the potential impact of the Internet on Chinese authoritarian rule have been summarized by Rebecca Mackinnon in a talk hosted by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace as: cyber-tarianism, which describes a situation where internet use reinforces authoritarian government rule; and cyber-ocracy, in which the Internet is seen as having a more revolutionary impact, where public discourse online reduces the state's grasp on power and leads to the development of an organized opposition.

### Cyber-ocracy

Institutional means of dividing and isolating different sectors of the population, such as the strict form of Hukou registration and the segmentation of society that occurred under the planned economy have been abandoned with reforms, and the increased development of the nation's economy and transportation and communication sectors have reduced the obstacles for political mobilization. This more integrated society poses an increasing threat to the government's ability to deal with organized opposition.

Citizens' increased ability to network online has developed alongside increased freedom of expression. According to Ashley Esarey and Xiao Qiang in their article "Political Expression in the Chinese blogosphere", blogs in China have reduced the government's ability to act as gatekeepers regarding whose voice can be heard, and what opinion can be expressed. Online bloggers are often able, through careful wording, to push the boundaries of acceptable discourse and express commonly held frustration over government rule. An estimated 30-50 million bloggers post online in China, a potential human resource pool from which the country's next revolutionary leader may arise.

To insure that online discourse does not threaten government rule, the Chinese

government operates an extensive hierarchical system of censorship. Censorship in China operates at the state, business, and individual level. At the macro level, access to the World Wide Web in China is channeled through 6 licensed interconnecting networks, over which the government has considerable control. The government is able to not only block access to websites that it does not approve of, but also block specific content on accessible websites, limiting negative information. Culpability for online infractions operates at the business and individual level. In an article by Tamara Renee Shie titled *The Tangled Web: does the Internet offer promise or peril for the Chinese Communist Party?*, one of the greatest tools of censorship that the government possesses is its ability to solicit self-censorship through fear of persecution. If online content moves beyond what censors permit, government enforcement agencies work well in combating such threats to CCP power.

Thus though the Internet does pose new challenges for the Chinese government, due to the effectiveness of the system outlined above, combined with China's impressive enforcement capacity, political organization online has been minimal. The government's ability to head off organized unrest, effectively neutralize potential leadership, and discourage individuals from risking government repression, has proven effective. Shanthi Kalathil and Taylor C. Boas in their book *Open Networks, Closed Regimes: The Impact of the Internet on Authoritarian Rule* write that the Chinese government is winning the battle

in defining interactions on the Internet, and while it cannot control all that occurs online and in the blogosphere, it can set the outer limits of what is and is not acceptable. While free to discuss political events to a degree unimaginable 30 years ago, citizens understand the danger they face if discourse crosses the line. Internet censorship in China is constantly adjusting to the social-political environment, ensuring the ability for citizens to communicate, but stopping short of allowing them to organize or spread discontent.

Government crackdown on the Charter 08 initiative illustrates the government's ability to limit public mobilization. Charter 08 has been portrayed in the news media as the most substantial threat to the Chinese government in recent history. In reaction against government authoritarian rule, disregard for the constitution, and the lack of rule of law in China, Charter 08 calls for increased social and political freedoms including freedom of speech, freedom of press, freedom of assembly, institution of a republican and democratic government, and broad commitment and adherence to the principle of Human rights. The western news media has covered the Charter '08 story with enthusiasm and rare optimism. For example, according to a report by the *Christian Science Monitor*, while similar calls for systematic changes have occurred before, Charter 08 marks a new and significant threat to CCP rule. This is due to two main reasons; first, thousands of individuals from different social, economic, and political lines have all supported the proposal. Also, the role

of the Internet in extending the reach of the initiative, despite the lack of a central organization, makes it a particularly unique threat to the CCP, which predominantly focuses its attention on organized opposition. The government's fear of mobilization across social boundaries, particularly for such an overtly anti-establishment cause, explains the tough government crackdown.

While Charter 08 certainly shows public anti CCP sentiment, and the potential for the Internet to help dissidents network, it also illustrates the government's continuing repressive capacity and the problems that leaderless protest movements face. While participation is certainly impressive, 8,000 signatures is by no means revolutionary. Police have detained and interrogated numerous signers, confiscated property, and kept key dissidents under surveillance. The most prominent example is Liu Xiaobo, one of China's most prominent Human Rights activists who achieved great notoriety for his part in the 1989 student protests in Tiananmen and recently for his role as one of the original signers of Charter 08, was detained 4 days before the document was published and remains in custody today. The Government has also limited news coverage of the publication, and while support continues to grow for the proposal, it has slowed to a crawl. Though the lack of leadership is cited above as illustrative of the potential for

*The Chinese government is potentially able to use the Internet as a way to enable citizens to engage more*

the internet to serve as an organizing tool in helping to network a diverse group of individuals and coordinate action, without strong individual leadership it will be difficult for the Charter to be anything more than a powerless call for change, successfully repressed by the government.

### Cyber-tarianism

The Internet also influences state society relations in China by way of Cyber-tarianism. The Internet in China has the potential to strengthen the government's control as it makes it easier for the gov-

ernment to address citizens concerns, increasing the Party's legitimacy. A system of E-governance that includes online mechanisms for citizen feedback, complaints and suggestions, enables the government to make small concessions through improving the "service" as-

pect of governance and reduce discontent without resorting to electoral or representative governance. According to Rebecca Mackinnon: "The Chinese government is potentially able to use the Internet as a way to enable citizens to engage more with the government, feel more engaged, feel like they have more recourse without having to resort to multi-party elections and democratic institutions."

Daniel Drezner, professor of international politics at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University, points to a tendency among scholars to focus on the

impact of the Internet in lowering transaction costs between members in civil society, by increasing their organizational power vis-à-vis the government. However, he claims that it is important to remember that the Internet also reduces government transaction costs, by increasing its ability to monitor and govern the population. The Chinese government's impressive censorship capacity, as well as its beneficial use of the Internet in improving governance, is an example of this principle.

*The ability of citizens to express discontent also alerts the central government of local malfeasance*

The ability of citizens to express discontent also alerts the central government of local malfeasance and important instances of civil unrest. This can be seen in the resolution of a few high profile cases, including the Deng Yujiao case of May 2009. While cases such as Deng Yujiao's are often portrayed as illustrative of the power of

the internet to give voice to public grievances and increase the volume of opposition to the government, they also serve to help alert the Center of public discontent, helping identify and neutralize the source of such outbursts and placate discontented communities. Without the opportunity for citizens to voice their grievances, the Central government would be in many cases blind to such instances of discontent until substantial opposition developed.

Such interactions between the government and citizens echoes what He Baogang and Mark E. Warren have termed

*authoritarian deliberation*, where authoritarian governments seek to facilitate public discourse and input, while maintaining strict authoritarian rule, as a means of increasing effectiveness and legitimacy of governance. According to He and Warren: "authoritarian deliberation... can be understood as an elite response to problems of governance within increasing complex, multi-actor, high-information, high-resistance environments." Besides the existence of formal institutionalized means of deliberative mechanisms in China, E-governance and the government's response to online social movements reflects the government's use of deliberative-style public input to reinforce its own power and avoid commitment to more formal democratic institutions. He and Warren write: the "deliberative mechanism may serve to *channel and contain political demand* by mobilizing popular participation, civilizing power, improving administrative capacities, reducing and controlling conflict...".

The second component to the theory of Cybertarianism is the idea that the Internet also diffuses discontent by allowing citizens to let off steam in a non-threatening manner. According to MacKinnon, by loosening permissible political discourse but retaining a strong bottom line, the government allows individuals to vent grievances to diffuse discontent, while still insuring that free expression does not lead to citizens organizing and mobilizing.

## Broader Social Trends

This ability of the government to channel citizens' discontent into constructive avenues of expression and to head off organized opposition is reflective of broader contemporary and historic socio-political dynamics in China. While the CCP's rule is by all accounts relatively stable, extreme inequality and increased levels of corruption have stressed social stability and at times undermined central government control. In order to understand protest movements online, the dynamic of social movements in general need to be examined. Decentralization, implemented to benefit economic development, has reduced the Central government's ability to police local government actions. Central government attempts to implement beneficial tax and legal reforms aimed at reducing civil discontent have often been thwarted by local government corruption. This continues to cause much localized civil unrest and conflict between local populations and local governments.

As Peter Lorentzen details in his article *Regularized Rioting: The Strategic Toleration of Public Protest in China*, while a viable and organized opposition movement has yet to be realized, civil unrest and public demonstrations of anger against local government corruption are increasingly common in rural and urban China. A large portion of Western discourse on protests in China focuses on this juxtaposition of increasing social unrest with the stark lack of organized anti-establishment movements. At the same time that Western

news sources detail rising levels of discontent in China, the same networks clamor to explain the perceived apathy in Chinese society, particularly during the recent anniversary of the Tiananmen Square incident.

According to Elizabeth Perry in her article *Challenging the Mandate of Heaven: Popular Protests in Modern China*, Chinese leaders have historically been accepting of mass public movements in a manner distinct from most totalitarian states. From dynastic acceptance of localized, economic protests, to Mao era promotion of "continuous revolution", even modern CCP tolerance of rural protests and nationalist movements, the history of popular movements in China stands in contrast to many other regimes worldwide. Protests and social movements in China receive widely varied government reactions depending on their scope and aim. Protests over specific regional economic grievances have historically received a much greater degree of tolerance from Central leaders than protests that are thought to represent a diverse set of interests or challenge the Central government's rule.

The need to address social discontent and identify and reduce local corruption explains the government's tolerance of certain forms of protest. As detailed by Kevin O'Brien and Lianjiang Li in their book *Rightful Resistance in Rural China*, Rightful Resistance describes a contemporary social-political dynamic in which the government is, to some extent, supportive of popular protests. Rightful Resistance de-

tails a dynamic in which protestors use the language of central government laws, directives, and principles, to protest local government corruption, aligning themselves with the Center and calling upon Beijing for redress. For their part, the Central government deals relatively favorably with such protests, sometimes meeting protestors' demands and addressing the cause of public unrest. This degree of tolerance is shown to rightful resisters as it ultimately aids the Chinese government in identifying and dealing with discontent, and combating official corruption that it would otherwise be unaware of.

This form of social movement helps reinforce government legitimacy and control. In essence, the Central government has tipped the balance of power away from local governments, towards local residents without resorting to institutionalize public oversight. This reflects deliberative policies outlined above. Others have described this as a central component of an unspoken pact, whereby the government insures economic development, stability, and tackles corruption, while citizens are able to vent their frustrations, and in return do not challenge the rule of the CCP.

An example of this dynamic can be seen in workers protests in Jiamusi in 2002, when a state-owned textile factory that had reneged on paying its employees' redundancy benefits, filed for bankruptcy.

Thousands of workers protested, staging a sit-in on the city's main railway tracks. Even though the sizes of the protests were impressive, and their actions severely disrupted the city's economy, the government arrested only a few key leaders and agreed to pay the workers stipends.

Protests that do not fit squarely within this dynamic, those that offer little or no information regarding corruption, organized protests which represent diverse class or regional interests, or those that directly challenge CCP rule, are typically dealt with swiftly and ruthlessly by the Central government. The leaders of such protests are detained, information of the event is suppressed, and police force is

*...citizens are able to vent their frustrations, and in return do not challenge the rule of the CCP*

often dispatched to suppress any physical gathering. Over the last 20 years the CCP and security organizations such as local police, the People's Armed Police, the legions of 'reported' Internet police, and even the People's Liberation Army have become adept at combating organized opposition. Like government attempts to limit online political organization, the government has taken great pains to limit any and all organized groups in society that might challenge its rule. The ability to suppress public protests that are harmful to the legitimacy of the CCP is pivotal if the Chinese government is to allow some forms of unrest, while retaining control over the limits to which discontent can be expressed.

## Evidence of the Impact of the Internet

By many measures government online censorship appears to be working. According to [MacKinnon](#) the vast majority of Chinese bloggers are a-political, and survey results indicate the number of individuals using proxy servers to access sensitive information is dwindling. Growing up in a time of prosperity, many Chinese youths prefer not to risk contemporary social freedoms and economic advantages for the pursuit of greater political rights. This underscores Chinese resentment of western portrayal of Chinese citizens as oppressed by the government and blindly obedient to its command. Many see the freedoms that they have online as substantial. MacKinnon also maintains that: “Chinese bloggers and blog-hosting businesses themselves have generally viewed censorship as part of the necessary tradeoff for online speech...”

It is also important to note that most netizens are the urban educated and wealthy elite. This group has benefited the most from CCP rule and has the most vested in the continuation of the status quo. According to [China Internet Network Information Center](#): “71.6% of netizens are urban residents. 28.4% are rural residents”. This demographic represents the winners of China’s years of reform, and the least likely to risk all the freedoms and economic success they have gained under the CCP.

In [Evan Osnos](#) article, “Angry Youth” for the *New Yorker*, a strong nationalist movement has also developed online,

boosting government support. Flooded with positive information about the regime and negative information about foreign powers, nationalism has found fertile grounds online. The government has supported Han nationalism in part as a unifying ideology to replace socialism. Since the very early days, a strong nationalist movement, particularly among the younger generations in China, has developed rapidly. A long list of political incidents, including perceived prejudicial coverage of the Atlanta Olympics, the bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade in 1998, followed more recently by Western news coverage of the riots in Lhasa and the turmoil surrounding the Olympic torch relay, has further stoked nationalist fires. A popular belief that China is a victim of the West attempting to limit its rise, has exploded onto online blogs, BBS, and a host of other networking tools.

*While the public discourse on the Internet will not directly challenge CCP rule, it may complicate governance*

## Long Term and Short Term Consequences

While the public discourse on the Internet will not directly challenge CCP rule, it may complicate governance. The scale of public protests over official corruption is likely to be increased by public use of the Internet. This can be seen in the recent cases in Shishou, where already smoldering public resentment against local officials was ignited by the death of a 24 year old resident named Tu Yuangao. Local residents and the family of Tu Yuangao’s consi-

dered his death suspicious, and rumors of police and government coverage sparked public protests. News and images of the event, transmitted online via Twitter postings and pictures, helped ignite public protests and precipitate much greater public participation than would have been possible without the Internet. It is reported that 40,000 protestors took to the streets, smashing police cars and fire trucks and setting the hotel alight. The government responded by sending in 10,000-armed military police. What this incident shows is that widespread discontent can be easily influenced by information online, and while it may not lead to an organized political opposition, it can increase government costs in maintaining order.

Finally looking at a longer time frame the Internet may also aid in the development of civil society and bolster public policy discourse, leading to acute pressure for an increasingly participatory form of governance. As detailed by [Yang Guobin](#) in his article *The Internet and Civil Society in China: a preliminary assessment*, reforms in China have resulted in the emergence of a timid civil society as social organizations have proliferated, social organizations and individuals enjoy more autonomy, and a genuine public sphere has emerged. The Internet has played a central party in this development, creating greater space for public discourse. Despite challenges and weakness in each of these achievements, this overall trend increases the development of a freer civil society and strengthens deliberative mechanisms.

## Conclusion

The introduction and development of the Internet in China will not in and of itself lead to a revolution. So far the Chinese government has been able to perpetuate the same socio-political dynamic online as it has offline, whereby citizen mobilization is diverted into state approved channels reinforcing government rule. The Chinese government has been effective in providing enough freedom and economic development to minimize widespread anti-system discontent while also providing constructive outlets for peoples' anger, and by making an example of those that challenge its rule, insuring citizens do not express their discontent through anti-system mobilization. Thus, lacking the will or the ability to form organized opposition offline, a revolutionary movement has yet to arise online. As Drezner states: "In societies that value liberal norms—democracies—the Internet clearly empowers non-state actors to influence the government. In arenas where liberal norms are not widely accepted—interstate negotiations and totalitarian governments—the Internet has no appreciable effect". The Chinese government has thus far handled the development of the Internet well, benefiting from the economic opportunities it presents, while controlling civil use of the Internet and reinforcing its hold on power.



## “ASK THE PREMIER” IS A BURDEN THE INTERNET CANNOT BEAR

By Xiaoshu, translated by Heather Saul



[About the author: Xiao Shu is a journalist for the Southern Weekend. He graduated in 1984 from Zhongshan University with a degree in history. He is well-known in China for his definitive biography of Liu Wencai and his historical analysis of China's perceptions of democracy in the 1940's: *The Harbinger in History--the Solemn Commitments Half a Century Ago*. The original article in Chinese can be found at .]

Before the national *Lianghui*, or “two sessions,” has even begun, netizens have already parted the curtains for the opening of the “E-lianghui.” The traditional topic of conversation, “I have a question to ask the Premier,” has become a staple for major websites. Discussion and comments flood online forums as the *Lianghui* attracts a craze of internet users anxious to discuss the upcoming decisions of the National People's Congress and the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference.

This is actually a cause for celebration. It proves that the Chinese people are not complacent about politics. Yet it also leads us to ask an inevitable question: “If the *Lianghui* representatives are truly performing their duties effectively and carrying

out their work, why does everyone feel the need to rush to the internet to voice their opinions?” Why does the “E-Lianghui” encounter such an explosion every year?

Clearly the Internet, as an already widely accepted communication platform in China, has had undeniable benefits. However, this does not mean that the Internet is infallible. If there is no corresponding system to connect Internet dialogue with actual dialogue, no matter how wonderful the Internet may be, it is often just a mirage in the desert that will ultimately fade away. The expectation that the Internet can be a major medium through which to push for reforms is a burden the Internet cannot bear.



[Wen Jiabao interacting with netizens]

The establishment of a systematic method by which popular will can be voiced vs. the Internet is much like the main course vs. the dessert. The dessert may be very delicious but it cannot substitute for the main course. Just as the health and development of people depends on the nutrition of the main course, the health and development of a society depends on the perfection of the system. For example,

every year during the *Lianghui* there is bubbling public opinion and classic Internet-style discussions and proposals. Yet this is not equal to *Lianghui* representative committee members actually carrying out their duties. When all is said and done, *Lianghui* representative committee members have a set of established procedures they can rely on. As long as they earnestly pursue their work, the proposals of the representatives will not fall by the wayside and will come to effect change in the promotion of reforms. Internet public opinion is basically disorganized—not only are opinions expressed in a disorderly manner, but responses to comments posted on the web are even more scattered. As these responses can be summoned at any time, they can also be dismissed for any reason. So-called Internet public opinion is always fluctuating, and moreover often differs greatly from actual public opinion.

So-called public opinion is not "whoever yells the loudest" determines what is true; public opinion is a science with strict qualifications and conditions. Public opinion must be in the hands of the people otherwise it will only be a cobra dancing to the tune of the snake charmer's flute. This is not real public opinion; determining public opinion and popular will requires a set of established procedures, standards and protections. Those comments that are instantaneous, frivolous, and fragmented are not real public opinion either.

*The fairy tale of the Internet is continuously perpetuated and is a burden the Internet cannot bear*

To properly determine and extract public opinion requires passing through the firewall security barriers. On the one hand, there must be refusal of the misuse of political power, thus eliminating the perversion of public opinion. On the other hand, there must be a rejection of populism, reducing the likelihood of a bubble in public opinion. This is actually an already well-developed and mature mechanism throughout the world. Democratically elected representative government, freedom in the media, referendum decisions by vote, the public hearing system and so on have already become separate mechanisms, effective for several hundred years, which make up an essential part of the collective civilization of mankind. At least our current system of the National People's Congress has to a large degree taken these consensus mechanisms as a model. It is therefore possible to pave a smooth avenue for public opinion using the current system, and there is no need to romanticize the Internet.

The fairy tale of the Internet is continuously perpetuated and is a burden the Internet cannot bear. In fact, it serves as a foil to the inadequacies of the current system. One small voice on the Internet is a mighty force that can turn into a torrential rain. If conventional channels were interconnected, if public sentiment and public opinion were usually ascertained promptly, we would not be in this situation. Moreo-

ver, this is cause for alarm and is worth our attention and dedication.

There is truly no need for everyone to ask the Premier a question. Modern society is built on the division of labor and every person has his/her own role. For example we already have an oversight body for foodstuffs (i.e FDA). There is no need for everyone to become a specialist in food safety, only that people learn common sense. Similarly, we already have mechanisms for public safety in our society. There is obviously no need for everyone to become a policeman, but rather for people to adopt common sense when it comes to safety. Likewise, since we have the National People's Congress and People's representatives, there is no harm in letting our representatives pose questions to the Premier. Of course, there must be preparations and this means People's representatives that are fully competent and committed. This in turn requires that the People's representatives follow the necessary principle of protecting popular choice and accepting public oversight. Also, they must be replaceable by the people at any time, as Carl Marx said. Only in this way can one faithfully entrust responsibility to the People's representatives so that they may carry out their duties effectively.

The rights of our citizens are the foundation of our country. Only when looking from the perspective of establishing civil rights can a country establish its basic institutions. This work is arduous and requires everyday attention and coordinated

effort. It cannot be motivated out of self-interest or be biased in any way. The magical Internet may assist and promote change, but it cannot replace the reality of change. The transformation of China indeed depends on netizens, but netizens are citizens at their core. Without legal civil rights, netizens are nothing, the Internet is nothing. Therefore, the right path includes the adoption of a realistic approach, namely from the perspective of legal civil rights, and requires improving the system, and normalizing the role of the Internet.



## HU JINTAO CALLS FOR USE OF THE INTERNET AS A TOOL OF DEMOCRACY

*By Fan Zhengwei, translated by Sean Ding*



*[Fan Zhengwei is the deputy director of the People's Daily's department of commentary and a senior editor of the People's Daily Online web site. The original Chinese commentary can be found at <http://www.chinaelections.org/NewsInfo.asp?NewsID=150810>]*

A year ago, on June 20, 2008, Hu Jintao visited the People's Daily Online and interacted with netizens through an online forum. This visit has been an unforgettable memory and opened a new chapter in China's internet development.

During the past year, the internet has become a new channel for an increasing number of officials to understand public opinion, and a new platform for providing public service. For instance, public officials have themselves engaged in online debates, obtaining "folk wisdom" on public affairs from online forums; political leaders such as provincial Party secretaries "opened their hearts" by communicating directly with netizens; deputies of the People's Congress and members of the People's Political Consultative Conference posted their proposals online for public scrutiny; government official briefings were broadcasted live through the internet; many draft laws and regulations were also published on the internet before coming into effect in order to encourage public feedback.



[Hu Jintao visiting People's Daily Online]

While officials proactively use the Internet as a governance and policy tool, the Internet itself is playing a significant and powerful role in disseminating social thoughts and amplifying public opinion. Hundreds of millions of candid expressions, vibrant discussions and heated debates flourish on personal blogs and news websites. For example, throughout the past year, many local incidents have received national attention due to the netizens' persistence in discovering the truth. A few examples include: the dam collapsing in Loufan, Shanxin Province; a prisoner's mysterious death in Yunnan (the "hide and seek" incident); the Nanjing bureau chief's expensive cigarettes, the cross-provincial police pursuit of an online forum poster in Henan; and the conviction of Deng Yujiao, a young waitress who stabbed a drunk official during a rape attempt. All these incidents have led people to believe that the significance of the Internet has reached far beyond technology; rather, it reinforces media supervision and has become a salient political force that would nurture socialist democracy.

Several concepts delineated in the 17<sup>th</sup> Party Congress may help one understand the implications of the internet: "people's democracy is the essence of socialist democracy, developing socialist democratic politics is our Party's unswerving goal"; "we must improve the institutions of democracy, enrich its means, and broaden its channels; we must implement democratic elections, democratic decision-making, democratic management and supervision according to the laws in order to ensure

people's right to know, right to participate, and right of expression and supervision". Indeed, understanding public opinion through the Internet is precisely a demonstration of "enriched means" and "broadened channels" of democracy.

Technology is an important factor that supports the development of democracy. As Carl Marx once said, "Steam, electricity, powered machinery were revolutionists of a rather more dangerous character than even citizens Barbes, Raspail and Blanqui". Since the dawn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, technological advancements such as the evolution from newspaper to radio and television have contributed profoundly to the process of democracy. Nowadays, with the internet becoming the most convenient, widely used and fair media of communication, its impact on democratic politics and public life cannot be underestimated.

The ways and extent to which the modern technology of communication affects democratic politics are related to the behavior of the owner of the technology and the response from the political sector. With regards to China, the significance of the Internet in the development of democracy is enormous. While gauging public opinion through the web is on the rise, netizens are becoming increasingly passionate about political participation. Furthermore, examples such as Hu Jintao and Wen Jiabao interacting with netizens and

governors asking netizens for critiques successfully illustrate the close attention the Party and the government pays to public opinion on the web. With the synergy created by the passion of over 300 million netizens and the efforts of the government, the practice of socialist democracy will be undoubtedly advanced, and the development of China's democratic politics will be further promoted.

*With regards to China, the significance of the Internet in the development of democracy is enormous*

Certainly, while the internet has a great impact on democratic development, we must see that netizens alone cannot represent the entire citizenry. At the current moment, it is necessary for us to enhance the netizens' capability of discussing and participating in political affairs. We must also be alarmed that the Internet is a double-edged sword, because it may create a "digital gap", resulting in deepened inequality and greater information asymmetry. In order for "Democracy 2.0" to fully blossom in China, we cannot rely solely on the internet. Instead, the impetus of democratic development needs to be unearthed from the socio-economic life itself, and democratic life needs to be practiced within an institutionalized path.



# Loud and Clear: How China's Angry Youth Use the Internet to Magnify Their Voices and Impact International Relations

*By Robert D. O'Brien*



The Internet has proven to be one of the most transformative forces in modern history, streamlining information, increasing communication both within and between countries, and changing the face of nearly every major facet of society. China, whose 300 million netizens constitute the largest such population in the world, has hardly been exempt from such changes. Indeed, it was the introduction of the Internet to the mainland in 1994 that pried ajar the doors of a Chinese state that was rhetorically open to the world but in reality still tightly restricted in its interactions with the international community. As a result, PRC citizens today are far more informed about and integrated into the world around them than they were fifteen years ago.

Though the Internet has expanded rapidly on the mainland, such expansion has been far from seamless. Debates over how the Web is to be used have frequently left the government at odds with foreign officials and businesses as well as domestic members of civil society and individual citizens. The fact that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has allowed significant space for the development of many different types of websites, including blogs and social networking platforms, is irrefutable. It remains equally true, though, that the government does not hesitate to restrict access to these sites when it deems necessary and still limits the publication of politically or otherwise “inappropriate” material. As a result, many liberal groups, based both within China and abroad, have had their websites “harmonized” (*he xie*), the Chinese euphemism for blocked. In

recent months, several popular international communication platforms have been added to the list of those who have fallen victim to government censorship. Youtube, Facebook, Twitter, and at times, even Google have been inaccessible without the use of a proxy or international VPN client. Not all groups, however, have been stifled in their development. Those that seem to serve the interests of the Party have been allowed to thrive. Among them, few have become more prominent than the angry youth (*fen qing*).

Though some mock the *fen qing*, sardonically noting that retaining the same pronunciation while changing the first Chinese character in the word changes its meaning to “shit youth,” the young men and women who occupy the movement’s ranks have grown to be a formidable force in modern international society. Born out of a combination of social conditions and the advent of the Internet, these ardent nationalists, well-educated but often quite simplistic in their worldviews, burst onto the scene in 1996 and have consistently had a significant impact on China’s foreign affairs. Though they lack the ability to elect their leaders, they have found a way to influence them, leaving their mark on Chinese relations with countries such as the United States, Japan and France. In doing so, they have necessitated that any serious assessment of China’s current and future diplomatic

posture include an analysis of their own movement.

### The Origins of the Angry Youth

The rise of China’s angry youth was neither sudden nor mysterious. Rather, it was the natural result of a confluence of factors – the implementation of the One Child Policy in 1979-1980, China’s ever-increasing importance in international relations since the advent of reform and opening, and, most importantly, the introduction of the Internet to the mainland in the mid-1990s.

*The rise of China’s angry youth was the natural result of the implementation of the One Child Policy in 1979-1980*

Though the world still awaits the definitive scholarly work on how the One Child Policy has affected the personalities of those born since its enactment in 1979-1980, certain characterizations of the post-1980 generation have come to be

widely accepted. Among these characterizations, the most prominent focus on the overabundance of attention they receive. The Chinese commonly refer to them as *xiao huangdi*, or little emperors, a reference to how spoiled they are. Founding Google China President Li Kaifu used the status difference between two well-known animals to describe them, noting that “before 1980, the kids were raised like pigs; after 1980, the kids were raised like Pandas.”<sup>1</sup>

Not every individual born since 1980 fits these characterizations. Many, in fact, are not even only children, a testament to the

policy's many loopholes as well as the widespread failure of local officials to ensure its enforcement. On the whole, however, the post-1980 generation is undoubtedly used to getting what they want, when they want it. More importantly, they have no qualms about loudly voicing their dissatisfaction when confronted with something that does not please them. This attribute, when combined with the nationalist values inculcated in them through China's Patriotic Education Campaign, has led them to be much more active in criticizing the West than the Tiananmen Generation that preceded them.

The PRC's phenomenal domestic development and rapid rise in international economic and political circles has further inflated the one child generation's already latent sense of pride in Chinese history and civilization. Since the implementation of reform and opening in the closing months of 1978, China has known little more than success. Its GDP has skyrocketed, military conflict has largely been avoided, and it has become increasingly prominent in world affairs. Unlike previous generations, whose love of state and civilization was humbled and confused by government created disasters such as the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution, those born after reform and opening have had relatively few reasons to question the trajectory of their nation or the wisdom of its leadership. The one major instance of man-made calamity that

*Since the implementation of reform and opening in the closing months of 1978, China has known little more than success*

did occur during their lifetime, the Tiananmen Square Incident, was over before most of them were politically conscious and was subsequently erased from the public memory. The result is a generation of Chinese youth whose pride in their country is almost completely untempered in nature.

The propensity of the one child generation to voice their dissatisfaction coupled with the tremendous amount of pride they take in China's historical and contempo-

rary successes has led many of them to react loudly and often bellicose to Western criticisms of the PRC. Indictments of the CCP in the Western press and foreign governments' calls for the protection of human rights, distinct processes that are viewed

by some among China's youth as two components of a larger Western plot to undermine Chinese growth and sovereignty, inspire irritation amongst the *fen qing*. Though the agitation such action incites often recedes rather quickly, it does not entirely disappear and has been known to boil over in the wake of international crises.

Though the effect of the One Child Policy and China's post-1978 success created fertile conditions for the development of a class of angry youth in the PRC, it was the Internet that gave this group their voice. The World Wide Web has provided the *fen qing* with the opportunity to organize, dis-

seminate information and share their thoughts with both each other and the outside world. Their stance on any given issue may represent neither the urban Chinese mainstream nor the sentiments of the country's hundreds of millions of rural denizens. Their access to and expert use of the Internet, however, has allowed them to magnify their voice, optimizing their impact on the creation and implementation of Chinese public policy. With or without the Internet, China would have angry youth. Without the Internet, however, the angry youth movement would be nowhere near as large or influential as it is today.

### Who are the Angry Youth?

Though the angry youth vary in the extremity of their nationalist ardor and often occupy a diverse array of different occupational and social theaters, they share several defining characteristics. Broadly speaking, the term "angry youth" refers to young men and women born after reform and opening who are intensely proud of Chinese civilization's history and recent success, but dissatisfied with its place in the current international political and economic order. As a movement, the angry youth is made up of more males than females, is largely urban, features predominantly individuals in their mid-to-late twenties, and has well-educated adherents. In its actions, it tends to be more reactive than proactive, responding to crises rather than identifying problems and producing solutions.<sup>2</sup>

Some have tried to characterize the angry youth as a government directed group. Such claims, though, prove frivolous. While there have been reports of Chinese web-monitors, known as "The Fifty Cent Party" (they receive half a yuan for every pro-government chat room post), inflating the presence of the CCP on blogs and in chat rooms,<sup>3</sup> the angry youth movement is irrefutably a social phenomenon, not a government initiative. To be sure, the government has at times provoked some of the *fen qing's* anger and harnessed the resulting energy, but the volume of their Internet comments, their real-life actions, and informal or formal meetings with those who identify themselves as angry youth all speak to the independence of the movement.

### How the Angry Youth Use the Internet to Influence Chinese Foreign Policy

Through the promulgation of their unique brand of Chinese nationalism, the angry youth have made a name for themselves both inside and outside of the PRC. Their reputation, though, is that of a socio-cultural phenomenon, one that is entertaining, maybe even moderately frightening, but not to be taken too seriously. The aforementioned moniker "shit youth," frequently used to describe the group, speaks to how many outside observers view the movement's value to and impact on society. There is substantial evidence, however, suggesting that the angry youth have more of an in-

*the government has at times provoked some of the fen qing's anger and harnessed the resulting energy*

fluence on foreign policy decision-making than previously thought. Numerous CCP officials, including President Hu Jintao, Premier Wen Jiabao, and former Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing have admitted to browsing the Internet to gauge public opinion, specifically mentioning visiting several nationalist-run sites. In addition, it is widely known that the State Council Information Office and the Information Department of the Foreign Ministry regularly summarize Internet news and discussions, two realms where the angry youth reign supreme, for quick consumption by Chinese diplomats and civil servants.<sup>4</sup> In addition to the movement's influence on the day-to-day practice of international relations, the *fen qing* have been known to have a major impact on Chinese diplomacy in the wake of significant international incidents. In recent years, their strength has been on display most prominently in the midst of crises in China's bilateral relationships with the United States, Japan and France.

There is a perception in the West that the angry youth, through their overt displays of nationalism, provide the Chinese government with the support it needs domestically to play a strong hand on the international scene. While this characterization of the situation is not entirely flawed, it is also not perfectly accurate. Though the actions of the angry youth often do offer the government the political capital necessary to press its case diplomatically, they have also been known to plunge the CCP into awkward and potentially volatile situations with key economic and political

strategic partners. Such a state of affairs has been particularly true in the case of China's bilateral relationships with the United States and Japan.

In the spring of 1999, U.S. led NATO forces bombed and destroyed China's embassy in Belgrade, killing several Chinese nationals. In the days that followed, college forums (BBS) and large Internet web portals across the mainland were awash in anti-American sentiment. With President Clinton stating that the bombing was accidental, the result of outdated maps, young Chinese hackers, incredulous as to the veracity of Clinton's claims, waged a cyber war against the U.S., defacing numerous American government websites and shutting down [www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov) for three days.<sup>5</sup> Meanwhile, the Chinese government, bolstered by street protests organized on the internet by the *fen qing*, engaged in diplomatic warfare with their American colleagues, postponing high-level military contacts with the U.S. and canceling all bilateral discussions of human rights, the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, and international security.<sup>6</sup> China's rage was made even more explicit in the U.N. Security Council, where PRC representative Qin Huasun referred to U.S. actions as "barbaric" and issued the strongest possible protest, labeling the bombing a clear violation of Chinese sovereignty and a blatant transgression of international law.<sup>7</sup> Two years later, when an American EP-3 spy plane collided with a Chinese fighter jet, killing the People's Liberation Army pilot, a similar series of events unfolded –

the commencement of a U.S-China cyber war and strong condemnations of America by the Chinese government, though this time students were kept from protesting.<sup>8</sup>

In both cases, the Chinese government's position was strengthened by domestic public support. With large protests, led by the angry youth, making clear the will of the Chinese masses, the CCP minced no words in criticizing American actions while asking for compensation as well as a formal apology. There have also been instances, however, where the vitriolic words of the angry youth have, in the eyes of the Chinese government, unnecessarily threatened the continuance of positive relations between the U.S. and China. After the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks, several *fen qing* posted messages indicating that the tragedy was comeuppance for America's heavy-handed approach to international relations. When the American government and media picked up on the statements, the CCP ordered all web portals not to publish such inflammatory comments.<sup>9</sup> Ultimately, the chat room postings had little to no impact on the maintenance of Sino-American relations. The very fact that the Chinese government was forced to silence the angry youth, however, spoke to the dangers they posed to China's most important bilateral relationship.

*Ultimately, the chat room postings had little to no impact on the maintenance of Sino-American relations*

The scope and scale of the angry youth's influence on Sino-American relations, though significant, pales in comparison to their impact on the relationship between China and Japan. At times, their actions present the CCP with support in dealing with the Japanese. Other times, they needlessly instigate trouble, forcing the Chinese government find a measured and clever diplomatic solution to the problem.

In the spring of 2005, two separate events mobilized the angry youth. In April, mass anti-Japanese protests erupted across China after it became clear that Japan's new middle school textbooks glossed over wartime atrocities such as the Nanjing Massacre. Organized online by the young nationalists, they lasted three weeks before being systematically brought to a close by the Chinese government.<sup>10</sup> During roughly the same period of time, patriotic Chinese netizens, both at home and abroad, turned out in the millions to sign a petition demanding that Japan not be given a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council. On June 30, the petition, signed by between 41 and 42 million people, was presented to Secretary General Kofi Annan at the UN headquarters in New York.<sup>11</sup> In both cases, Chinese grassroots activism, stimulated by the angry youth and the websites they ran, drew the world's attention to Japan's failure to apologize for its past violations of human rights, giving the CCP the perceived moral

high ground in pushing the Japanese government to take responsibility for its World War II-era atrocities.

Some angry youth instigated incidents, however, have placed the Chinese government squarely between a rock and a hard place, forcing them to walk a fine line between supporting domestic nationalism and not needlessly damaging relations with Japan. In the mid-1990s, the decades old Sino-Japanese dispute over the Diaoyu Islands spilled over onto the Internet, with citizens in both countries using the Web to organize expeditions to the islands. In 1996, a patriotic Japanese group sailed to the islands, where they erected a buoy and brazenly claimed Japan's sovereignty over the territory. The mission immediately led to outbursts of anger on the Chinese blogosphere, especially campus BBS sites. Looking to avoid direct confrontation with the Japanese over the issue, the CCP shut down student blackboards and blocked access to numerous Western websites.<sup>12</sup> The initial intensity of the angry youth's reaction would fade, but it did not entirely dissipate. In 2003, a group of young Chinese men and women used a nationalist web site to organize their own expedition to the islands and landed themselves in the custody of Japanese officials. Forced to respond to the detainment of these activists, the CCP sent a carefully worded letter to Japan's government demanding the safe return of the voyagers while avoiding any incendiary remarks about who was the rightful owner of the islands.<sup>13</sup> In an era that was already characterized by the con-

trast between the amazingly hot Sino-Japanese economic relationship and the quite cold Sino-Japanese political relationship, the angry youth's actions proved excessively threatening to bilateral relations, re-hashing an issue that had been purposefully put on the diplomatic side burner by the Far East's two great powers.

In the Sino-American and Sino-Japanese relationships, the angry youth's presence and activism has been both a blessing and a curse, sometimes aiding the Chinese government as it seeks to advance its interests and sometimes endangering the continuation of positive relations. In the case of France, the angry youth's impact has not been as schizophrenic.

Though French support for the Dalai Lama has long irritated the *fen qing*, their anger and subsequent wrath have intensified greatly in the last 16 months. In the wake of the March 2008 Tibetan unrest, the Olympic Torch's visit to Paris was marked by large-scale protests. As French President Nicolas Sarkozy considered boycotting the opening ceremonies of the Games in order to protest China's treatment of Tibet, the angry youth roared to life, organizing groups to protect the torch throughout the remainder of its world tour and calling for a boycott of Carrefour, a French-owned retail giant.<sup>14</sup> The passing of the Olympics failed to bring a cessation in hostilities: the Chinese government canceled its visit to a Euro-

*the angry youth's presence and activism has been both a blessing and a curse*

pean summit after Sarkozy met with the Dalai Lama in the fall of 2008, and Premier Wen Jiabao conspicuously skipped Paris while visiting several prominent European nations in early 2009.<sup>15</sup> More recently, the battles continued; in response to the Parisian mayor naming the Dalai Lama an honorary resident of the city, over 95 percent of participants in an Internet poll conducted by China's *Global Times* stated that Paris lacked the qualifications to be a friend to Beijing.<sup>16</sup>

It goes without saying that the relationship between China and France is not nearly as important as the Sino-American and Sino-Japanese relationships in guaranteeing the PRC's development and security. Nevertheless, its souring provides another clear example of how the angry youth, with the Internet at their fingertips, can impact international relations at the government-to-government and not just people-to-people level.

### **The Angry Youth's Future Impact on International Relations**

The continued growth of the Internet in China coupled with increases in the PRC's comprehensive national power will inevitably lead to the expansion of the angry youth movement. With the *fen qing* already having a definitive impact on Chinese foreign policy, the swelling of their ranks

begs the question of how they will influence international relations in the future.

Over the course of the last thirteen years, the angry youth have made a name for themselves via ostentatious displays of hyper-nationalism. Since the incident of unrest in Tibet last year, they have been particularly vocal, hypersensitive to any media reports or government proclamations that emanate from the West and call Chinese policy into question. In the wake of the July 5<sup>th</sup> riots in Xinjiang, they were loud and clear in their response, proclaim-

*...the angry youth  
have made a name for  
themselves via ostentatious displays of hyper-nationalism*

ing that Xinjiang is and always will be a part of China, vilifying "outside forces" for instigating the uprising, and castigating the West for its reaction to the violence; this all before major Western governments or media outlets had even levied any serious criticism upon

the CCP for its handling of the event.<sup>17</sup> If such sensitivity remains pervasive, a serious international incident on the scale of the 1999 Belgrade bombing, the 2001 EP-3 Incident, or the 2005 Japanese textbook revisions could prove disastrous for China's relationship with any one of a number of countries. With the angry youth pushing a hard-line agenda, the Chinese government would be placed in the extraordinarily difficult position of either pleasing their domestic audience or securing a harmonious international environment. The possibility of them achieving both objectives without damaging either their

ties to the angry youth movement or the foreign country in question seems remote.

Such a scenario, one that appears likely within the context of the movement's history and present trajectory, inspires concern within not only the international community but also the ranks of the CCP leadership. The Chinese government is well aware of the historical tendency of patriotic student movements to switch their focus from the evils of rulers abroad to the failings of rulers at home. Moreover, they recognize that the angry youth are not necessarily pro-Party, but rather pure Chinese nationalists, apt to support the CCP as long as they believe it is advancing the interests of the Chinese people, but not blindly follow its leadership. The *fen qing* may very well remain a force that does more to help than harm the interests of the Chinese government. Such a future, however, is far from assured.

Regardless of whether the coming years feature a cooperative relationship between the angry youth and the CCP or one that is defined by tension, the *fen qing* seem destined to leave their impact on Chinese foreign policy. At a time when the PRC is growing increasingly important in world affairs, the anxiety that such a fact inspires in the hearts of China watchers around the globe is far from unreasonable.



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<<http://world.huanqiu.com/roll/2009-06/481863.html>>.
23. Such reactions could be found widely (in both English and Chinese) on Chinese web portals such as sina.com and xiaonei.com in the days immediately following the riots.




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