



China Elections and Governance Review



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China Center for Democracy and Governance



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As China Elections and Governance (www.chinaelections.org) enters its 8th 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 quarterly *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 soothing 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 *China 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

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 information and the *cyber space* (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

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 the Internet 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 *are added* (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.

B *Journalism in the West* :

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 *public sphere* 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 *public sphere* ,

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, the people, and the market. 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 *people's interest*, 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 *South Sea* 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 you can't beat them, join them*. 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

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 traditional 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.

Journalism and the Media in China

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 *public sphere* 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* and 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).

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 *notable*. 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 *accusation*.

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

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.

Conclusion: A Liberalizing Process Between the Internet and State-Media

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 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.

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 Great Wall of Data: How the Government Controls the Internet*, 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,

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

Beyond the Internet

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 *Re-asserting the State: A New Role for the Chinese Central Government*, 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 *China's History of Mass Public Movements*, 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*, Rightful Resistance describes a contemporary social-political dynamic in which the government is, to some extent, supportive of popular protests. Rightful Resistance de-

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 *China's New Media and the Rise of a New Public Sphere*, 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.

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.



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Before the national *a*, 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 *a* 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 *a* 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,

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 q pU' is

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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 20th 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.

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

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

Loose and Clear: How China's Anarchy Opens the Internet to a New World and Impacts 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” (*i.e.*), the Chinese euphemism for blocked. In

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,

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

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.⁴ In addition to the movement's influence on the day-to-day practice of international relations, the *angry youth* 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 for three days.⁵ Meanwhile, the Chinese government, bolstered by street protests organized on the internet by the *angry youth*, 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.⁶ 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.⁷ 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.⁸

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 11th attacks, several e , 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.⁹ 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.¹⁰ 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.¹¹ 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

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.

*...the angry youth
have made a name for
themselves via osten-
tious displays of hy-
per-nationalism*

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

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