China’s Rise to Power
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China’s Rise to Power

Conceptions of State Governance

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We initiated this book project through a three-day symposium in summer 2011 in which scholars from Australia, Canada, China, Finland, Great Britain, Hong Kong, Macau, South Korea, and the United States gathered in Hong Kong to discuss the appeal of state-led capitalism against domestic discontents in a rising China.

Always supportive of our efforts, Hong Kong Shue Yan University, especially the Centre for Qualitative Social Research under the Department of Sociology, hosted the symposium participants and ensured an intimate and collegial setting for collaboration. Warm, gracious, and welcoming, Shue Yan professors, especially Raymond Chi-Fai Chui, Yinni Peng, and Chak-Wing Lam served as co-organizers and discussants, while their students were symposium helpers. Together, Pace University and Shue Yan University provided the financial support necessary to complete the manuscript for publication.

Contributors to this volume include all symposium participants, R. G. Tiedemann, who sharpened discussion over the course of the three days, and authors of the case studies contained herein. Their careful preparation ensured that each stage of our collaboration was both pleasurable and rewarding. Farideh Koohi-Kamali and Sarah Nathan at Palgrave Macmillan deftly directed us through to publication, while the anonymous reviewer provided useful suggestions for the book’s improvement. For all this, the editors are most grateful. More importantly, without our families’ constancy none of this would have been possible.
On Chicago’s northwest side, in a neighborhood that has for decades served as the site of first settlement for refugees, a museum founded by survivors houses a rare exhibit and genocide memorial. With slogans and photographs, artifacts and maps, it documents the fervor of Pol Pot’s Khmer Rouge and the devastation of millions in Cambodia from 1975 to 1978. “Intelligence is of no value; manual labor is priceless,” one banner announces like something out of a parallel, twisted universe. Cambodia’s socialist experiment was inspired first by Maoism, and later, by Pol Pot’s belief in cultural purification. Yet, like the Maoist inspiration, it cannot be relegated to some distant place and time. From the 1930s to the 1970s, Maoism attracted admiring followers in tens of millions from around the world. In China, Cambodia, and elsewhere, people mobilized themselves in work and recreation, in recitation and song, in self-criticism and public protest, as well as in open warfare. Apart from a handful of remote places and cases, Maoism today appears to be an abandoned, archaic philosophy that was interred with the man. But look again. In their new home of Chicago, those who fled the country renamed Kampuchea—whether they fled as soldiers or laborers, artists or shopkeepers, Buddhists or Muslims, victims or perpetrators—relive, as they rework the violent experiences and memories that they brought with them. A healing garden is bold in its irony, occupying museum space after the main exhibit yields the contradictions of Pol Pot’s peasant utopia and
infamous killing fields. Tilling the earth might yet mend the wounds suffered from mass mobilization around agrarian, manual labor.

Whether in Pol Pot’s Cambodia or Mao’s China, the Chinese Communist state has demonstrated the power of both appeal and discontent—seemingly contradictory tendencies that many have struggled to put behind them, but which actually augur the ongoing struggle for China and its admirers. In each particular instance, the state has appealed to the masses with promises of concrete as well as intangible benefits. But the human and social sacrifices involved in striving for such utopian visions have yielded only disillusionment, and even horror. Moreover, the irresistible attraction of a revolutionary utopia has, in fact, been proportionate to the level of tension and conflict already existing in these societies. With deeper understanding achieved through historical and empirical analysis, today we can see how the widespread appeal of Mao’s radical and transformative ideology revealed the presence of long-standing disharmonies, discontents, and disorders. Likewise, in this book, ten scholarly essays address how a twenty-first century contradiction—the combination of authoritarian rule and market-oriented economy—reveals the paradox of state-led capitalism’s global appeal against growing domestic discontent. Such an understanding is essential for diagnosing the fragile foundation of Chinese politics and dispelling the myths surrounding China’s recent emergence as a global powerhouse.

In this introductory chapter to 
*China’s Rise to Power* we critically examine from both historical and contemporary perspectives China’s global appeal. First, we conceptualize the framework of appeal as complement to discontent—much as yang is to yin in Daoist cosmology. Such a lens clarifies the politics of perception and misperception in top-down propaganda campaigns, the growing detachment of the state from civil society, and the public resistance against official indoctrination. Consequently, the so-called China model (*Zhongguo moshi*), or China developmental model (*Zhongguo fazhan moshi*), is rendered not monolithic, but dialectical: full of contradictions, discrepancies, and space for maneuvering in the nation- and state-building process. Second, we highlight the evolution of China’s political appeal as well as the profound continuities and changes from the Maoist era (1949–1976) to the Reform period (1976 to the present). Appealing to sympathetic audiences among radical intellectuals in the First World, supporters of its bid to replace the Soviet Union as leader of the Second World, and Third World countries seeking a hand in modernization encouraged China to define and demonstrate “the good life” both for
itself and for others. Resonating with diverse audiences, moreover, required wielding more than one rhetorical discourse and speaking more than one language. The residual elements of such rhetoric are still available for use today, and so third, we shift from a historical focus to the contemporary uses of appealing frames. Finally, we discuss the structure of this book.

THE YIN AND YANG OF CHINA’S RISE

Today China claims the twenty-first century for itself, projecting rising economic and political strength to not only rival, but surpass that of the United States. Combining the transformative power of market economy and the super-stability of authoritarian rule China’s Communist leadership adapts certain tenets of capitalism such as opening up to foreign investment, deregulating its labor market, and building infrastructure, while maintaining firm control over government, military, public security, and information. This has enabled China to overtake Japan to become the world’s second largest economy in 2010. The International Monetary Fund forecasts that by 2016 China will replace the United States as the largest economy. Paralleling the success of China’s economic miracle, notably, is the consolidation of authoritarianism. Accompanying authoritarianism’s prominence, however, has also been escalation of domestic conflict: from Xinjiang to Tibet, and from coastal Wenzhou to inland Chongqing.

Creating an appealing rhetoric in a discontented society is an integral part of statecraft. Such discourse has to appear coherent and unitary. In the past, Maoism fired up radicals at home and abroad. It seemed that the more the US-led anticommunist alliance and the Soviet bloc tried to undermine the Maoist state, the more Maoism appealed to those leftist progressives in the First, Second, and Third World. Mao’s Red Guards may have caused countless human deaths during the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), for example, but for Slavoj Žižek, the scale of violence and terror was excusable because it sustained revolutionary enthusiasm among the masses and rejuvenated the pursuit of pure revolutionary truth worldwide (Žižek, 2007). In contemporary China, the discourse of building a harmonious society (hexie shenhui) and promoting the country’s peaceful rise (heping jueqi) have replaced Maoist vitriol. Yet, to overlook the instability and fragility of such a construct is to err. From the reinvention of Confucianism to the co-optation of feminism various discourses entangle a wide range of management strategies meant to fortify power, including soft propaganda in state media and cyberspace,
standardized historical memories, constructed interethnic harmony in a deeply divided frontier, and control over body and health.

Appeal and discontent may represent two extreme ends of the government spectrum, yet they are complementary, even bound together. Methodologically this conceptualization of appeal and discontent reconciles two distinct approaches to the study of contemporary China: the fields of political science and international relations concentrating on geopolitics, balance of power, and realpolitik (Shambaugh, ed., 2005; Odgaard, 2007, 2012; Lampton, 2008; Foot and Walter, 2010; Callahan, 2012) versus the fields of humanities and social sciences emphasizing historical context, deep structures, and a closer reading of many different kinds of texts (Weston and Jensen, eds., 2000; Wasserstrom, ed., 2002; Wasserstrom, 2010).

Most conventional studies on China’s rise have addressed the orthodox and intentional aspects of the country’s transformation—what might be called the yang side, or the political and behavioral control of the people by a powerful state. They focus, specifically, on the Chinese state’s discourse of building a harmonious society, the creation of the world’s largest Internet police force, and the promotion of state-led capitalism as an alternative to free market economy protected by the rule of law (Cai, ed., 2010). These intentions and policies fit Communist leaders’ vision and propaganda of what China should strive to be, and which constraints, risks, and difficulties ought to be overcome in order to achieve modernization. By reinventing traditional cultural values and historical memories, a handful of powerful individuals envision the state as a unifying and autonomous moral agent capable of neutralizing various local initiatives and preventing overt resistance (Thornton, 2007: 14–21, 202–205).

But there is also the yin side, the unregulated world of media consumers, savvy Internet users, migrant workers, and activists. This realm contradicts policymakers’ image of China as they think it ought to be, and reveals a multitude of the state’s broken promises. Looking at this construction of China from below, especially from the vantage point of women, migrant workers, netizens, ethnic minorities, and health-care recipients, presents a different perspective of both state and society. While we acknowledge the extraordinary capacity of the Chinese state to accommodate a wide variety of governance situations in managing both short-term crises and long-term structural problems, we question widespread predictions that China will inevitably rise to become the next global superpower and provide a unique model for the developing world. In fact, because of potentially explosive conflicts exacerbated by the state’s aggressive development
strategies and reluctance to restructure its authoritarian system, the China model may not succeed at all. A rising China that denies its citizens what they desire—such as health care, job security, minimal interethnic tolerance, gender equality, and equal opportunity for all to advance by personal efforts—pushes discontented sectors to mobilize themselves for collective action to find security, solace, and justice (Fewsmith, ed., 2010; Zhang, Kleinman, and Tu, eds., 2011). If the state cannot tolerate the pressures and outcomes of its own appeal, it is bound to trap itself in a perpetual cycle of discontent.

Such a shaky state foundation—and therefore, conversely, dynamic framework—was set up by Mao Zedong long before China’s present rise and predicament. Harvard philosopher and scholar of Confucianism Tu Wei-Ming writes on the paradox of Maoism and the mayhem of the Cultural Revolution in a Confucian context: “What Mao created, as an ingenious response to the post-1949 situation, was more a cultural ‘process’ than a social ‘structure’ of control, with the specific purpose of mass mobilization for socialist construction. It was not Stalinist totalitarianism because the dynamism, though initiated by directives from above, was often fueled by enthusiastic voluntarism from below” (Tu, 1996: 17). In seeming contradiction, China’s citizens committed themselves to the destructive capacities that Mao claimed were the prerequisite for reconstruction. This dialectic suggests the perspective that appeal and discontent, too, can explain a wide range of contradictions and conflicts arising from state-led authoritarian capitalism. Moreover, a dialectic framework exists already in the Chinese Daoist tradition. By definition, the Daoist elements yin and yang, femininity and masculinity, passivity and activity, are equivalent yet opposing cosmological concepts that sustain the balance or harmony of the world. We offer yin and yang not as prescriptive behavior, what was the philosophy’s original intention, but as predictive tool. Because each object or situation gives birth to its antithesis, the relationship between yin and yang is always in flux, even as it seeks balance. Not hard, rigid categories of difference as espoused by Confucius or producing what one might characterize a harmony of submission, the opposing elements of yin and yang together provide a dynamic tension ensuring a harmony of transformation.

In referring to these philosophical insights, we seek not only to explore the discontent that stems from rigid, coercive government policies and the Chinese Communist leadership’s emphasis on control, but to anticipate new dynamisms beyond the perpetual cycle of tension and conflict. As demonstrated in our previous work, Marginalization...
in China: Recasting Minority Politics, rhetorical appeal often creates space for the marginalized to critique the dominant discourse and so reveal the internal cracks and fundamental fissures in a state’s foundation (Cheung, Lee, and Nedilsky, eds., 2009). Thus, it is possible for differences to emerge from within China’s unifying propaganda project (Cheung and Law, November 13, 2010). In this book, we highlight the fault lines visible in China’s social infrastructure and then anticipate the possibility of an alternative resolution that comes not from government and party dictate, but that comes from the people.

**Historicizing China’s Appeal under Mao**

Since 1949, the People’s Republic of China has worked to cast an attractive image to lead others on a common path of development. Toward this end it has employed economic resources and political muscle but mostly revolutionary ideas. Maoism and its component parts—liberation from imperialism, peasant revolution, Third World unity—have provided hope, purpose, direction, and rationale among the oppressed. At the same time it fed the imaginations of various interested parties, unifying them in an imagined community of moral action, Maoism fueled factionalism and created contradictions among the people. This it did intentionally and purposefully. Orthodox Marxism identified capitalism and the proletariat as the principal contradiction that begot revolution. In contrast, writes Maurice Meisner, Mao Zedong developed and maintained the notion that imperialism’s intimate relationship with capitalism in China made imperialism and the nation the principal contradiction and thus the impetus for revolution in a largely agrarian society (Meisner, 1982: 54). Rather than the capitalist class Mao identified multiple and diverse enemies of the people: classes and groups, foremost among them landlords, complicit with the imperialist and alien agenda, and thus regarded as internal foreigners. Preconditions for communism according to Karl Marx, urbanization could be bypassed, capitalism and its corrupting tendencies avoided, the city as but a foreign-dominated stage abandoned, if one followed Mao’s advice to tap the voluntarism, morality, and energy of the masses in China’s countryside.

Competing as an alternative framework for communist revolution and rule, labeled a revisionist ideology, Maoism asked and answered the questions that distinguished it from its rivals and stoked commitment from its supporters: What leads and inspires action? How is commitment demonstrated? Who or what is the enemy of the people? Who is more Red, thus more deeply grounded in class struggle
and mass mobilization? Answers to such questions required direct and personal engagement, and among the first outsiders to pursue them was the American journalist, Edgar Snow. When Edgar Snow made his momentous journey first by boat as a stowaway across the Pacific, and then like a rank-and-file soldier on foot as a journalist to Yan’an, he set the standard in the 1930s for adventurous, tenacious war correspondents after him. In many ways Snow applied his standards of manhood to the Communists he met in China. Out to break a nine-year news blockade he would “risk his foreign neck” to reach the only men who could tell the stories that mattered about the world’s most populous country. Whether writing about rebel leaders who he encountered in the villages under Nationalist control or Communist Party chiefs and military strategists he interviewed in the revolutionary oasis at Yan’an, Snow judged these men according to the qualities that inspired him personally, and which distinguished them from their fellow Chinese. He found among the warriors and strategists and future heads of state Reds he could relate to—bold and daring, dignified, egalitarian, loyal, disciplined, and happy (Snow, 1938/1968). These qualities, moreover, stood in sharp contrast not only to the majority of Chinese folk, but with the Nationalists who ruled, if not controlled China. Writing of his first encounter with a gun-toting Red bandit, whose presence signaled to Snow that he had crossed the Red Rubicon from the White world of the Guomindang, he expressed awe (later deemed naiveté): “With relief, I saw the young farmer’s face soften and then I noticed that he was really a good-looking young man, with fine bronzed skin and good white teeth. He did not seem to belong to the race of timid peasants of China elsewhere. There was a challenge in his sparkling merry eyes, and a certain bravado. He slowly moved his hand away from his revolver butt and smiled” (Snow, 1938/1968: 58).

Besides Edgar Snow, other politicized American progressives who were engaged in the battle for democracy looked to China with wonder and admiration. For W. E. B. Du Bois, who visited China first in 1936 and then again in 1959, China was the sterling example of a Third World country rising up to compete with the First World. On the one hand, China proved that by employing strategies of collective action seemingly powerless people could actually achieve popular liberation. People’s Democracy (*renmin minzhu*) was more than a slogan to gain political power; it was an echo of the desires of the masses, long exploited and silenced within China. Du Bois heralded the arisen Chinese worker as an example worthy of emulation, for “[h]e exorcised the Great Fear that haunts the West, the fear of
losing his job; the fear of falling sick; the fear of accident; the fear of inability to educate his children; the fear daring to take a vacation. To guard against such catastrophe Americans skimp and save, cheat and steal, gamble and arm for murder” (Mullen and Watson, eds., 2005: 193). On the other hand, China projected the anticolonial, anti-imperial call that appealed to African Americans like W. E. B. Du Bois and to people of color the world over. Maoism, according to Bill V. Mullen and Cathryn Watson, resolved for Du Bois the dilemma that Marxism (although ideologically commensurate with his goals) was an invention of white Europeans, concerning the exploitation of white workers. Being yellow skinned the Chinese including their theoretical guide, Mao Zedong, represented an opposing identity to the colonial, imperial powers of Europe. In fact, Du Bois informed his African audience, “China is flesh of your flesh and blood of your blood. China is colored and knows to what a colored skin in this modern world subjects its owner” (Mullen and Watson, ed., 2005: 199). For these reasons he urged Africa to recognize China as the true spiritual leader of the colored world.

As demonstrated in the person of W. E. B. Du Bois, association of Maoist China with Third World peoples included the racial minorities living in the United States. By the 1960s Blacks, Latinos, and Asians populating urban America and manning its factories and fields and mines established their separate Maoist organizations based on their distinct racial identities. In Los Angeles, San Francisco, New York, Newark, and Chicago, inspired by Mao Zedong’s doctrine of revolutionary nationalism, these radical groups mobilized around the principle that nonwhites or those coming from a Third World heritage but living in a First World country—like their Third World counterparts in Africa, the Caribbean, South America, and Asia—represented workers of the greatest revolutionary potential for dictatorship of the proletariat. While revolutionary nationalism sparked further fragmentation and ideological discord, privileging as it did the concept of nation over that of class, this was not the extent of factionalism within the Marxist camp. Stridently rejecting Marcus Garvey’s Back to Africa movement, some Maoist factions favored the Stalinist concept of Black Belt Nation wherein concentration of Blacks in historic settlements in the American South demanded political recognition. Others, however, embraced Mao’s broader concept of self-determination for nationalities, extending in principle, if not in deed, the right of political autonomy to marginalized minorities such as Chicanos, Puerto Ricans, Native Americans, Asian-Americans, as well as natives of Alaska and Hawai‘i, the US Virgin Islands, and
US-held Pacific Islands, whether or not they represented geographic concentration, distinct language, and thus nation (Fields, 1988). And, at the same time American minorities formed their independent Maoist organizations, individuals within the Black Power movement like Huey Newton and Eldridge Cleaver of the Black Panther Party tapped selectively into the revolutionary violence espoused by Mao Zedong.

In France of the 1960s and 1970s, the Cultural Revolution and Mao Zedong Thought fueled what historian Richard Wolin refers to as a cultural-political intoxication of La Gauche Prolétarienne, the Proletarian Left (Wolin, 2010: xii). Not only did Maoism offer the youth a rationale for their own liberation from stuffy, debilitating socialist bureaucracy, but a cleansing of France’s colonial guilt with a healthy dose of revolutionary promise as well. “Mao’s China offered the students a way to perpetuate the intoxications of the French Revolutionary tradition—the glories of the Bastille, of Valmy, and of the Paris Commune—in an era when the oppressive nature of ‘really existing socialism’ had reached undeniably grotesque proportions” (Wolin, 2010: 3). Students practiced Mao-spontex, or spontaneity, to break free of hierarchy, classism, and elitism. They took to class struggle, love marches, self-criticism, and following the mass line. Working shoulder to shoulder with the French autoworkers and agricultural laborers they sought the human socialism China modeled for them. More than a youthful fancy, however, Mao Zedong Thought provided what Richard Wolin describes as a political chic that truly transformed France’s intellectual elite. Heeding Mao’s call to follow the mass line—or the notion that truth resided with the people—luminaries such as Jean-Paul Satre, Michele Foucault, Jean-Luc Godard, Simone de Beauvoir, and Louis Althusser surrendered themselves to the popular political tide. In other words, as French intellectuals embraced the logic of the mass line, they stopped being Mandarins in remote and privileged Paris, and started siding with the people, growing in tune with popular notions of justice, even justifying the violence of spontaneous justice historically associated with the mob (Wolin, 2010; Fields, 1988).

European communists first looked to Asia not to set the standard for communist revolution in the Third World, but to incite such revolution in Europe itself, though not the way Richard Wolin describes in his history of Maoism in France. As Germaine Holston has written, anticolonial agitations in China, India, and elsewhere were expected to “break the crucial link by which Western European capitalisms were nourished by imperialist expansion.
National revolutions in Asia would disrupt markets for European capital, inciting economic distress in Europe, and finally sparking the long-awaited proletarian revolutions in the West” (Holston, 1986: xi). When, in 1949, the Communist revolution succeeded in peasant-dominated China, not as the break in the supply-chain forecast, nor as orthodox proletarian change as might be expected in urban, industrialized Japan, Marxist theory was turned on its head. Impossible was nothing.

Yet, while the radicalization of young people in the 1960s and 1970s raised the international profile of China through the appeal of Maoism, that appeal was not only limited, but was constantly contested within the ranks of Maoists outside China. The influence of the Soviet Union—despite its known failure to serve the people in Budapest (1956) and Prague (1968), and despite the suffocating grip of the Leninist party system it propagated—continued well after Stalin’s passing to dominate the imaginations and loyalties of the Communist bloc. Even though Karl Marx emphasized changing the world and thus opening up Marxism itself to change as a doctrine of mass movement (McLellan, 1979: 2), promoters of orthodox Marxism-Leninism in Europe actively repressed as counterrevolutionary and splitist theories both Trotskyism and Maoism. Only Albania among the Communist party-led regimes in Europe sided openly with China under its Great Helmsman Mao Zedong in 1960, and rejected the revisionist label bestowed upon Maoism.

Likewise, Maoism’s popularity in the First World, while intense among believers, was extremely limited, and at the same time divisive. Although Richard Wolin argues that Maoism transformed France’s intellectuals and reinvigorated French civil society, Maoist entrenchment in French political life or in any multiparty system was certainly undermined by the very Mao-spontex it demanded. Communist parties and their even less permanent counterparts competed for fragments of the electorate as well as the allegiance of workers. The war in Vietnam that mobilized radicals in France and the United States against imperialist aggression was originally held up as a model of Maoist revolution. Yet the war itself created fissures within the Communist bloc. At first, the Vietnamese communists had the sympathy of American Maoists and other antiwar groups. But, by the 1970s these same communist leaders lost backing as they sided with the Soviet Union in the Sino-Soviet split. The North Vietnamese not only abandoned revolution in favor of a peaceful transition to socialism, but also invaded neighboring Cambodia and ousted the pro-Beijing regime of Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge.
When in 1971 China and the United States took their first steps toward détente those Maoists in the United States committed to the dictatorship of the proletariat and opposed to any peaceful transition to socialism criticized the US government and decried China’s leadership as Red bourgeoisie. Like Albania, they refused to recognize Mao’s successor, Hua Guofeng, and expressed unwavering rhetorical support to the Gang of Four. During Deng Xiaoping’s first visit to the United States in early 1979, American Maoists demonstrated in opposition to this revisionist leading the Chinese Communist Party. Factionalism and contradictions among the people emerged not by chance but by design. When ideological winds shifted and China abandoned its revolutionary zeal, the stalwart Reds experienced loss and confusion.

More than anything, the Cultural Revolution that inflamed their imaginations ultimately undermined the enthusiasm of Maoists. The news blockades of which Edgar Snow had written in the context of the Anti-Japanese War lasted long into the reign of Mao Zedong. Whether imposed by the United States to minimize the influence of socialism and communism, or achieved through the Soviet Union’s directives against an ideological competitor, censorship originally enhanced the appeal of unsanctioned ideas. Those fortunate few like W. E. B. Du Bois who could travel to China while it was going through this period of experimentation, enjoyed the audiences they could monopolize. But soon it emerged that the Chinese leadership, too, concealed the story of the continuous revolution which aimed to end all need for revolution, the violent struggle that would usher in earthly paradise. Removing the blockade revealed much dissonant information to resolve. For example, when Japanese Communist Party member Niijima Atsuyoshi brought back with him and published Cultural Revolution documents from China suggesting conflict between Mao’s Red Guards and traditional revolutionary vanguards like workers and peasants, he was expelled from the Japanese Communist Party (Kuriyama, 1976). As the full records of the violence revealed that tens of millions died to build a new society, the People’s Republic of China came to resemble the Soviet example that it sought to counter. Human misery rather than human socialism came to characterize Maoist China.

As China’s leaders distanced themselves from the utopian fervor of the Cultural Revolution, the world was generally shifting its orientation. Except in peripheral places like Andean Peru of the Shining Path (Sendero Luminoso) studied by Orin Starn (1995) and Northeast India of the Naxalites as written about by Nicolas Jaoul
(Gayer and Jaffrelot, eds., 2009), ideas no longer mobilized political action. Those few factions who clung to ideas stood more alienated than ever. “Consigning Maoist utopianism to the ‘dustbin of history,’ as is currently fashionable among Peking’s leaders and their foreign observers, is of course very much in accord with the general temper of the times,” wrote Maurice Meisner, within five years of Mao’s death. “For we live in an age when utopian visions of a future good society have all but vanished in both the industrialized capitalist world and the ostensibly ‘socialist’ world” (Meisner, 1982: x). Modern economic development replaced both revolutionary doctrine and voluntary fervor, so that what avowed socialist states did was simply “play out a historical parody in tattered Marxian garb” (ibid.: x–xi). Yet China’s current leaders still have to address the rising expectations formed largely through the Chinese Communist Party’s own historic rhetoric, policies, and actions of not just audiences abroad but also of the populace within its borders. The labels, campaigns, and judgments that fueled class tensions and revolutionary struggles in the past haunt the regime today, even as it seeks a comfortable alternative.

**From Revolutionary Idealism to Realpolitik**

From the early days of the People’s Republic a combination of both revolutionary idealism and pragmatic consideration shaped China’s global and domestic appeal. The framing of the 1949 Communist revolution is a telling example. Portrayed as a successful peasant revolution in the official literature, China’s second revolution demonstrated the failure of the peasantry to achieve change on its own. Communist leaders coupled the policy of class struggle against landlords with that of class coalition, uniting the majority against the few. Land reform designed to undermine the landholding class was only implemented years after the Communist rise to power. Although not a radical tactic, class compromise enabled the Chinese Communists to draw support from the countryside and secure power from the Nationalists.

Another example of pragmatism in revolutionary China concerns the triumphs and crises of state socialism during the successive eras of Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping. Chinese state socialism was neither an incarnation of the Confucian absolutist government, nor a reproduction of the Soviet model. Instead, it departed radically from the previous imperial state in its governance objectives, institutional control mechanisms, and the extent of state power to penetrate society,
economy, and culture (Blecher, 2003). At the same time, whereas many socialist states repressed society into quiescence, the Maoist state ruled China by activating society. Mass mobilization characterized the political climate, with the state creating a wide range of institutional mechanisms to penetrate all levels of society and using mass organizations to facilitate the implementation of government policies, more akin to the Nationalist party-state model (Kirby, 2000). After land reform destroyed the landlord class in China’s rural hinterlands, nationalization of industry and commerce in cities completed the socialist transformation of the urban economy. In addition, the state launched numerous campaigns to politicize everyday life. Through the Cultural Revolution, Mao Zedong pressed for public criticism of party officials and leaders. The massive protests that ensued practically brought down the state. Only by suppressing the revolutionary spontaneity of the masses Mao had unleashed did Communist authorities retain power (Lee, 1980).

Since then, communism as a dominating belief system has largely collapsed among China’s citizenry. Pragmatism has prevailed under Deng Xiaoping and subsequent leaders. From the 1980s onward, economic growth, not revolutionary transformation, has given people hope and the Chinese Communist Party its legitimacy. The state has implemented neoliberal reforms to distract people’s attention from politics. While Deng’s Four Modernizations have lifted hundreds of millions out of poverty, the state has been reluctant to give up its monopoly of power. Whenever the people have challenged the state, leaders have called in the troops to restore control. Such has been the government’s response during the 1989 crackdown on the Tiananmen Square pro-democracy movement, and the military suppression of interethnic riots in Tibetan- and Muslim-dominated frontiers during 2008 and 2011. As China further modernizes on all fronts, friction between pluralism and unity becomes intense and visible.

Pragmatism has also dictated China’s diplomacy. The Maoist era witnessed the country’s transformation from Soviet ally into champion of the Third World (Neuhauser, 1968). With inauguration of the People’s Republic, China faced diplomatic isolation imposed by the West. The United States, through its strong military presence in Japan and South Korea, sought to contain Maoist China in northeast Asia. The Korean War (1950–1953), a war between the United States and China fought on Korean soil (Johnson, 2000: 101), proved a successful response by the Chinese to the military challenge of the West. The conclusion of a formal alliance between China and the Soviet Union in February 1950 marked the beginning of the Cold War in
East Asia. From 1950 to 1957, China saw itself a protégé of the Soviet Union and identified with the Communist bloc. In return, Moscow sent technicians to assist China’s industrialization. But this cooperation between China and the Soviet Union was short-lived (Goncharev, Lewis, and Xue, 1999). After Stalin’s death in 1953 and the suppression of the Hungarian Uprising in 1956, ideological differences culminated in the 1960 Sino-Soviet split and the withdrawal of Soviet aid (Lieberthal, 1997; Teiwes, 1997). Without support within the socialist world, China had to look elsewhere for diplomatic recognition. To break through China’s diplomatic isolation Mao conceived a global coalition of radical and progressive forces in the Third World against US imperialism and Soviet revisionism: an alternative political force made up of the newly independent countries of Africa, Asia, and Latin America. This ambitious strategy was encapsulated during the Cultural Revolution by the slogan, “All people of the world unite, to overthrow American imperialism, to overthrow Soviet revisionism, to overthrow the reactionaries of all nations!” (Van Ness, 1993: 203–204)

By repositioning China as a Third World country, Mao asserted diplomatic leadership and gained certain global power. For Mao the Third World represented tremendous potential, being a place where old political alliances were crumbling and new ones had yet to be formed. In September 1965, designated successor to Mao and Commander of the People’s Liberation Army Lin Biao announced, “The United States and Western Europe are cities of the world, whereas Asia, Africa and Latin America are rural areas of the world” (Lin, September 3, 1965: 24). In Chinese Communist rhetoric, it was the countryside that encircled the cities and ensured the success of the peasant revolution. Consequently, China portrayed Africa, Asia, and Latin America as forming a united front against the United States and the Soviet Union. When China appealed to the Third World during the 1960s and 1970s, it invoked anticolonial rhetoric to support local nationalistic movements. Third World intellectuals including Ernesto “Che” Guevara, like the First World activists and polemists already mentioned, depicted Mao’s China as a model for developing countries and oppressed peoples. At the same time, in the struggle to liberate the oppressed in Bolivia and in the Congo, Che fashioned his own approach to violent class struggle; one which diverged significantly from the Maoist example (Friedman, 1970). Despite admiration for Maoism, moreover, few Third World countries followed China’s leadership against the two superpowers. During the Cold War, China was still a middle power, lacking military and economic capacity sufficient
For Deng Xiaoping economic modernization took precedence over revolutionary struggle: no matter whether the cat was black or white, as long as it caught mice it was considered a good cat. More significantly, with his get rich first (xianfu qilai) policy Deng dismissed criticisms that inequality threatened social unrest or political betrayal. To Deng, economic reforms meant that state-owned enterprises would be managed by party cadres, local townships and cities, and state entities such as the People’s Liberation Army, and not run by ambitious entrepreneurs from outside the political establishment. One unintended consequence of Deng’s economic reforms, therefore, was the consolidation of a new class known as Red capitalists (hongse zibenjia) (Dickson, 2003). Initially composed of Communist Party leaders and state officials, ex-officials, their relatives and friends, this class soon took on a life of its own, with its own agenda. In 2001 the state responded by co-opting into the party hierarchy this powerful interest group. As a result of their official status, Red capitalists have no intention of subverting the one-party state. Instead, in times of crisis they support the status quo. After the deadly earthquake in Sichuan province on May 12, 2008, for example, Red capitalists displayed loyalty through generous donations to the state’s relief efforts.

On the whole, Deng Xiaoping’s policies to open the door for economic development have created the conditions for today’s fast-growing economy. First, since its entry into the World Trade Organization in November 2001, China has been fully integrated into the global economy, enabling the country to attract foreign capital and expertise in order to modernize its infrastructure and internal socioeconomic practices. Second, the state has come to hold profit-making as the criterion for assessing the performance of government officials. The quest for profit pressures bureaucrats to implement growth policies at the grassroots level. Third, reforms have rejuvenated the crumbling economy and reduced China’s poverty rate. From a rate over 50 percent in the Maoist era, poverty in 2011—calculated as an annual income of less than 2,300 yuan or US$361—has fallen to around 10 percent (Meisner, 1996: 512–513; He, November 30, 2011).

In diplomacy, Deng’s pragmatic principle of lying low and biding time (taoguang yanghui) called for normalizing China’s relationship with the capitalist world (Chen and Wang, 2011). China supported the US-dominated global order and joined the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the World Trade Organization in order
to be treated as an equal. The country sent students and officials to receive technical training from the West rather than assigning them to serve the Third World. Against this backdrop, communism lost its credibility, replaced by nationalism as a new force Deng used to re-appeal to the citizenry. During the Sino-British negotiations over Hong Kong in the early 1980s, for instance, Deng asserted China’s sovereignty over the colony and pressed Great Britain to accept his one country, two systems (yiguo liangzhi) formula. Hong Kong’s return to the motherland on July 1, 1997 and Macau’s on December 20, 1999 did not simply end China’s century of national humiliation; these negotiated reunifications represented a new mode of governance that accommodated former colonies’ capitalist economies for China’s modernization (Tsang, 2004: 218–227).

**Not so Peaceful: The Rise of an Assertive China**

Having by 1989 already set itself apart as a state-managed economy employing gradualist reforms in an increasingly market-driven, post-communist world, China at the turn of the century distinguishes itself further as a model of development for other countries to follow. Encouraged, perhaps, by recognition like Joshua Cooper Ramo’s 2004 notion of a Beijing Consensus to rival the neoliberal economic policies of the Washington Consensus, China has generated its own rhetoric of distinction. China of the early twenty-first century under Hu Jintao marks itself by the political concept of a peaceful rise (heping jueqi). Through leadership that is nonthreatening to its neighbors and stressing development that is antihegemonic and mutually beneficial to the global economy China asserts that it has risen rather than stood up (qilai) in the revolutionary sense. This Chinese term for rise, jueqi, likewise contrasts with the perceived decline of the West. A dramatic twist occurred after the terrorist attacks of 2001. The US decision to invade Afghanistan and Iraq in response to al Qaeda’s coordinated airborne assaults on both the World Trade Center and the Pentagon committed American military power to two costly and diffuse campaigns. Moreover, Washington’s failure to denuclearize either North Korea or Iran further destroyed the perception of the United States as being able to control the arms race. Detecting a shift in the balance of power in China’s favor, the Communist leadership took up a proactive policy based on forming alliances with nations in Central and Southeast Asia as well as with many oil-producing countries in the Middle East and Africa.
Closely associated with the concept of peaceful rise projected for global appeal has been the idea of constructing a harmonious society (*hexie shehui*), one characterized by justice, trust, fairness, and the rule of law, by which to appeal to China’s domestic audience. Combining traditional Chinese philosophy, socialist ethics, and contemporary Communist Party analysis of China’s political realities, Hu Jintao’s vision of a harmonious society is repeatedly referenced as the basis for creating a new global order and a new China respectful of diversity, interdependence between rulers and people, and peaceful conflict resolution. Through this juxtaposition of global security concerns and Confucian governance values China reveals its growing confidence in its top leadership to reshape international institutions as well as domestic norms in the new century (Mark, 2012: 124–126).

Contrasting sharply with the Euro-American ideas of democratic political and technology-heavy economic development, audiences in Africa have been more drawn to China’s principles of nonintervention and development through labor. Africa’s leaders see many practical reasons for applying China’s governance model (Alden, 2007; Dent, 2011; Taylor, 2006, 2009, 2011; Pieter van Dijk, ed., 2009). China’s century-long experience of anti-imperialist struggle and nation-building, wherein the country started on its modernizing path from a position inferior to that of the West and Meiji Japan, attests to its successful modernization as only a recent phenomenon. African states can model themselves on Chinese labor-intensive economic development, with the painful process of governance change a result, not a precondition, of development. Furthermore, with Chinese contributions to infrastructural development and technology transfer, including not only upgrades of infrastructure projects originally funded by Mao Zedong but also recent creation of development zones and agrotechnical centers, African states can generate employment opportunities and improve their formal economic sectors. For example, the China Africa Development Fund, with a budget of US$5 billion, is designed to finance joint ventures (Executive Research Associates Ltd., October 2009). Differing from the West’s emphasis on democratization, poverty reduction, and individual empowerment, China’s macro-level development approach has been hailed as “a successful model of rapid economic growth and relative political stability” because it puts collective interests ahead of any hasty impulse to liberalize the country (Zhao, 2011: 45–63).

Hu Jintao’s vision for China has proven ambitious: recasting China as a responsible international player that emphasizes consensus-building and multilateralism in dispute resolution comes from a
China saddled with considerable ideological baggage. It appears that in choosing pragmatism over ideology, China’s leaders have opened themselves to negotiate and compromise with any government. Before Aung San Suu Kyi was freed from house arrest in November 2010, Communist Party officials met with Burmese opposition leaders in Beijing for talks on future collaboration. Shortly after Arab Spring swept through the Middle East and North Africa, China negotiated with revolutionary leaders in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Syria for deepening economic ties. Aware of the vulnerability of its overseas strategic interests and investments in the event of a collapse of the government, China has worked to balance the interests of all factions. As with his predecessors, however, Hu Jintao has continued to exploit foreign affairs to foster social stability and economic development at home. He has done so, moreover, with less success in recent years.

China’s alienation of its neighbors (with the exception of North Korea) raises worries about China’s readiness to assert its newfound power. In early 2010, the Communist leadership’s reaction to the Google dispute, arms sales to Taiwan, and the Dalai Lama’s White House visit departed from the old pattern of diplomatic reassurance. The “China can say No” attitude surfaced diplomatically, with public calls for sanctions against the United States and hostile remarks by junior commanders of the People’s Liberation Army reflecting a new sense of domestic confidence. In July 2010, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton proposed a multilateral framework to resolve sovereign disputes in the South China Sea. China publicly condemned the Association for Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) for providing Clinton a platform, and in so bullying its Southeast Asian neighbors, China undercut old diplomatic reassurances. During mounting military tensions on the Korean peninsula in August 2010, China refused to criticize North Korea’s provocative attacks, and alienated the United States, South Korea, and Japan. The United States responded by urging South Korea and Japan to form a regional strategic alliance for mutual protection. And, in summer 2011 the collision between a Chinese fishing vessel and Japanese coastal defense forces reinforced this negative image of an assertive China. After Japan backed down despite tremendous domestic pressure to stand firm, China continued its suspension of rare earth supplies to Japan. Consequently, opinion polls in South Korea and Japan indicated that the general public regarded China as a serious threat to regional stability.

Several structural factors have further complicated the appeal of a rising China at home and abroad. First, hostility toward innovative Chinese intellectuals, journalists, and policymakers who take an even
moderately pro-US stance continues in China today. Imprisonment of Nobel Peace Prize laureate Liu Xiaobo, house arrest of legal activist Chen Guangcheng, harassment of artist Ai Weiwei, violation of the rights of defense lawyers, and forced exile of dissidents all show that the state has tightened its grip upon the citizenry despite its rhetoric of tolerance and compassion. Discontent among citizens frustrated in their pursuit of enrichment through entrepreneurial initiative, freedom of speech through the power of the Internet, and political voice through social activism incur state distrust rather than awareness. In Chongqing municipality until only recently, Bo Xilai, son of revolutionary hero Bo Yibo, gained renown employing Maoist rhetoric and state-sponsored projects for political gain among the old guard. With Bo’s recent fall from power, the Communist leadership has demonstrated its awkwardness in resolving the contradictions of both Maoist past and reformist present. Displays of assertiveness and confidence occur, moreover, with rising socioeconomic discontents that inhibit real self-assertiveness. Since the 2008 financial crisis, for instance, leaders have felt constrained by the export-led economy. Nevertheless, the once-in-a-decade leadership succession in late 2012 discourages any ambitious leaders or bureaucrats from addressing these structural problems by engaging liberal models, standards, or values.

Second, the possibility of an economic slowdown in China suggests that while state-led capitalism may be running its course the Chinese Communist Party will not relinquish its hold on either the economy or the state. According to Carl E. Walter and Fraser J. T. Howie (2011), the state is reluctant to transfer power to entrepreneurs and financial professionals, while ruling elites mainly use state-run commercial banks to drive growth that hides nonperforming debts and distorts the value of bank assets. Whereas sustainable growth requires China’s consumers buy more local products, urging a massive transfer of wealth to the citizenry in order to do so, the state does the opposite by increasing spending on fixed investment. Since late 2011, many private enterprises in the city of Wenzhou and the Pearl River Delta region have been bankrupt because they lack the political connections to secure bank loans that could resolve their cash flow problems. Whether or not China postpones a crisis for the time being, the days of being perceived as the economic miracle are numbered.

Although the state grants limited political rights to its citizens and permits greater space for intermediary social and cultural organizations, the regime’s survival rests on containing the spread of liberal values and keeping discontented sectors “small, fragmentary, and localized” (Ho, 2007: 6). China’s market liberalization has proven a
double-edged sword. The rapidity with which the state has achieved growth has created tensions and conflicts at all levels. Extremely efficient and highly urban, China’s development has yielded growth rates above those of most developed nations. But its new wealth is unevenly distributed, its labor market ruthless, and its living environment Dickensian. The finer points of its model indicate prosperity at the expense of First World-style discontent. Top leaders troubled by unprecedented levels of public grievance and unbridgeable divides between China’s cities and its vast rural hinterlands (Halper, 2010) employ harmonious society as a rhetorical defense against chaos (luan). A bizarre mixture of Confucian hierarchism, legalist authoritarianism, and Communist dictatorship, harmonious society reflects the leadership’s obsession with stability maintenance (weiwen).

Finally, as popular protest becomes a prominent mode of political participation in China, the danger of ineffective governance is from within. As many as 180,000 strikes, demonstrations, and protests were reported in 2010; an average of 493 incidents per day (Cai, 2010; Wright, 2010). This official figure indicates a dramatic increase from the 90,000 incidents documented in 2006 and fewer than 9,000 in the mid-1990s (Sun, 2007). Frequent outbreaks of labor and peasant disputes, interethnic riots in Tibet and Xinjiang, and calls for democracy in Hong Kong and Macau plague the country with serious governance problems. Even when successful in localizing these grievances, preventing them from spreading through nationwide networks and allying with rival factions in the Communist Party as happened in spring 1989, top leaders’ freedom of action has been foiled by uncooperative, middle-ranking officials. In the most recent rights-defense activities (weiquan huodong) in Wukan, a fishing village outside Shanwei municipality in the Chaozhou-speaking region of Guangdong province, municipal and provincial authorities were assigned to negotiate with protesters. But they did nothing to coordinate with official actions. Specifically, when Shanwei Municipal Party Secretary Zheng Yanxiong addressed Wukan villagers, he ignored calls from Beijing and Guangzhou for calm, and instead dismissed allegations of official corruption and forced land seizures. His remarks, broadcast live on TV, outraged the public. In the end, central party leaders compromised with demonstrators, permitting Wukan villagers to elect their protest leaders as heads of the village committee (Wines, March 4, 2012). After watching events like the one in Wukan, many people elsewhere become politicized, ready to defend civil society against the state (Zhou, 2010; Weller, 2001).
Organization of this Book

The nine chapters that follow investigate China’s different modes of rhetorical politics—especially the Communist state’s use of Confucianism, popular music, online regulations, historical memories, health care, and food security—meant to appeal to its people. What the findings reveal is that the rhetorical appeals and political objectives of state agents change as frequently as their ruling strategies, and that under the burden of mutual disagreements officials and citizens respond sometimes with sympathy, sometimes with indifference, sometimes with hostility, but always in dynamic tension with one another.

Chapters 2 and 3, by Kelvin C. K. Cheung and Sharon R. Wesoky, highlight the ideological cache of today’s China—legacies upon which China appears to draw, despite contradictions and compromises in doing so. Creating an inventory of the recent employment of Confucianism, Cheung compares the struggle since 1949 to submit to authoritarian regimes in Taiwan and Mainland China. Chiang Kai-Shek’s Nationalists reinvented Confucianism to Sinicize postcolonial Taiwan. Nevertheless, contradictions between state-imposed Han Chinese culture and Taiwanese democratization cast doubt about Confucianism’s efficacy in fostering a shared identity among the people of Taiwan. The same doubt appears today among Mainland intellectuals critical of the state’s aggressive use of Confucianism to maintain control of society. For her part, Wesoky presents a feminist critique of harmonious society discourse. Using a keywords approach, Wesoky teases out the cultural nationalism inherent in the new Confucian revival phenomenon in China and abroad, even as she reveals connections first to the language of development, then socialism, then finally democracy. Although gender concerns have often been overlooked or subsumed in these discussions, the state-society interaction is never a one-way street. With opportunity to participate along with the state in defining harmony, women and women’s groups contribute an alternative modernity.

The Chinese state in the information age harnesses numerous resources to shape the perceptions of its own population. Television and Internet vie with more traditional ways of educating the masses like big character posters and memoirs to urge the realization of a harmonious society. Because the experience of nation- and state-building under the 63-year rule of the Chinese Communist Party has been preoccupied with contradictions among the people, disparate experiences require different, even contradictory accounts. Casting
an appealing image for groups who have historically been singled out as troublemakers, separatists, counterrevolutionaries, or simply losers on the battlefield of class struggle means any appeal is more about a process of amelioration than of unification. The state’s preference for entertainment rather than blunt indoctrination makes CCTV popular music-entertainment shows a logical choice for educating the masses. Here state-sanctioned formulations of a harmonious society—including both the implicit harmony of music itself and the explicit unity involved in singing “The Same Song” (tongyi shouge)—become, as Lauren Gorfinkel writes, indoctrainment. On the one hand, CCTV’s programming renders a unified, militarized nation-state sharing the moral codes of Hu Jintao’s Eight Dos and Eight Don’ts (barong bachi), and on the other hand, showcases the diverse, romantic ethnic minorities and the newly restored special administrative regions of China. Based on over 500 hours of TV viewing, Gorfinkel analyzes the different ways that the state promulgates its goals on state-sponsored TV.

The state’s desire to retain ruling authority over cyberspace not only as economic frontier to exploit but also as political space to restrain is couched in terms of building a harmonious online society. Policing norms and sanctions has meant developing a filtering and blocking system highly sensitive to banned keywords. In fact, as Sidney Y. Liu elaborates in his analysis of online governance, building the Great Firewall involves negotiating not just the domain between state and society, but that which theoretically separates public and private spheres, sovereign state and international arena. Liu explores the attempts by the state to use new technologies to build a harmonious cyberspace as part of its China model, both internally with hard, punitive tactics and internationally with a more soft approach. A top-down model of Internet governance gradually evolves in China. Dissidents are not alone in feeling burnt, as the cases of Green Dam and Google suggest. As cyberspace becomes increasingly politicized, the widespread use of communications technology impacts the balance of power between civil society and party-state institutions.

Located on the Sino-Russian border region of Manchuria, the 64 historical settlements around Blagoveschensk studied by Martin Fromm serve the Chinese state as a well of memory. Life history accounts (wenshi ziliao) of the 1900 massacre there, first collected by historians in the early 1960s, are wielded in the 1980s to reconcile and reintegrate frustrated populations after the Cultural Revolution, and to resolve the current neoliberal contradiction with class struggle. The old interview data is now recast to depict Chinese migrants
along the Sino-Russian border as patriotic, cosmopolitan, and entrepren­eurial, and as a new positive force driving China’s moderniza­tion. Dealing with the same diversity of historical experience left in the wake of Portuguese colonialism, the Macau Museum (Museu de Macau) has created a new standard for retelling the special admin­istrative region’s story. Shared experience under Portuguese rule, Kam­Yee Law documents, draws visitors from Brazil, Mozambique, Angola, and Portugal itself to marvel at the exhibits in distant Macau. Here Macau’s own variety of harmonious display—with the Portuguese influence featured on par with the Chinese—generates a transna­tion­al and international emphasis underscoring a brotherhood with the Third World harkening back to the Maoist revolutionary policies of the 1960s. Friendship diplomacy affords a convenient substitute for Chinese nationalism, allowing the Special Administrative Region of Macau to control its own story by employing a message China cannot refuse.

Where there are occasional outbreaks of deadly interethnic vio­lence in western China’s Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, officials stridently wield the discourse of harmony. Young, well-educated Han men and women living in Urumqi interviewed by Elena Caprioni respond to Chinese-language slogans by rejecting the soothing directives of the state, including Hu Jintao’s Eight Dos and Eight Don’ts. Han residents instead sharpen the distinctions experienced in every­day life in urban Xinjiang, articulating an image of Uyghur ethnics as dirty, drunken, semiliterates with whom personal engagement spells contamination of the sort once officially associated with foreigners, intellectuals, and entrepreneurs. Taken together, these five empirical studies—like the ironic use of the passive verb to be harmonized (beihexie) wielded by citizens—reflect individual and group frustrations with the means as well as the project of a Chinese state coming awkwardly to terms with its past dealings with contradictions among the people. More importantly, they reveal the agency or yin of citizens today as they critique the rhetoric of official, yang China.

That the Chinese state seeks to influence practices upon its bor­ders, including territories historically under its control but separated by British, Portuguese, or Japanese imperialism, is captured in the phrase one country, two systems (yiguo liangzhi). Yet the phrase can aptly apply to a wider China divided between the winners and losers of authoritarian capitalism. Those once the standard bearers of the Chinese Communist Party—whether organized labor or the masses of peasants and unorganized laborers—today live on the margins of China’s booming economy. It is on the margins of the old and new
orders that yin is most obvious, and the development challenges for the rest of the world are most profound. Whereas in the 1960s China was engineering medicine for the masses—training and equipping barefoot doctors to offer basic medical care in the country’s countless villages—in the 1990s Communist leadership began shifting away from state-sponsored services. In so doing, Ka-che Yip elaborates, state resources could be redirected to other strategic needs. Not only has medicine today become privatized, with a growing majority of citizens paying out of their own pockets for basic as well as emergency care, but also become, like its manufacturing sector, export oriented. Investing capital in pharmaceuticals including vaccines for foreign markets, China’s health-care agenda has been moving into the specialized niche occupied by German and American firms. Not surprisingly, this switch from serving domestic patients to international consumers has coincided with the rise among China’s citizenry of contagious and epidemic diseases, including the plagues of the developing world: malaria, TB, and cholera.

While the one country, two systems model suggests a Chinese realpolitik, recognizing ideological difference is not necessarily promising peaceful development without disturbances and creating harmonious society without conflicts, argues Siu-Keung Cheung in his study of China’s material relationship to Hong Kong. As with China’s strategy for securing steady relations in Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East, China’s Hong Kong policy has historically hinged on its supply of material goods and with it the perception of the country’s overwhelming power. With China supplying Hong Kong its essentials such as food and water, the territory’s stability and prosperity ultimately came at the whim of the Chinese not the British. But as demonstrated in eruptions of food scares and security concerns, China’s influence over Hong Kong through stable provisions comes with destabilizing tendencies.

Taken as a whole, all nine chapters reveal a multitude of governance issues in China, each revealing its own, unique contradictions. By detailing the alienating effects of leaders’ attempts to use Confucianism, popular music, online regulations, museums, medical services, and food and water supplies to indoctrinate the public, empirical findings highlight the long-term structural challenges in China’s authoritarianism. A central concern is the leadership’s obsession with categorizing, planning, and manufacturing an appealing image. As James C. Scott points out, when modern states expand in scope and acquire more aggressive agendas, government leaders and bureaucratic officials become “removed from the society they
are charged with governing” (Scott, 1999: 76). It is their detachment that induces China’s leaders to reinvent new rhetoric and access state resources to render legible the populations they lead. In so doing, however, they expose the contradictions of state expansion and ideological engineering.

Not only do the chapters uncover specific groups’ alienation from the state, they reveal Chinese leaders’ limitations in employing old policies of assimilation and co-optation. Elena Caprioni’s study of young Han rejection of government entreaties for a harmonious society in Xinjiang demonstrates this vividly. Besides the long-standing Han chauvinism, new resentments are being stoked in the name of building a harmonious society. Prejudice is not simply inherited, but finds a new attraction for the younger generation called to share dorm rooms and classrooms and an urban future with Uyghur schoolmates. Even as they try to stabilize the multiethnic frontier, policymakers at the political center are shaped by racist attitudes on public display, as well. By dehumanizing both Tibetan and Uyghur activists as terrorists, for example, state leaders rule out the option of peaceful conflict resolution. This growing climate of fear and competitiveness based on the skewed notion of the Other—be the other ethnic minority or netizen or British colonial subject—is likewise highlighted in the chapters by Sidney Y. Liu and Siu-Keung Cheung.

Finally, in addressing how local circumstances and individual experiences have challenged the state, these chapters indicate the harmony of transformation rather than submission characteristic of today’s China: a powerful state yields the creation of new space for alternative agents and outcomes. While Han and Uyghur in Xinjiang grapple with the ideological and material appeals of a rising China, with increasing frustration mind you, entrepreneurial migrants long dead are resurrected in Blagoveschensk both in spirit and in body, determined to protect their well-being, assert their rights as citizens, and fight for their vision of what a good society ought to be. While citizens join together to sing the same song or romanticize the primordial difference of ethnic minorities on CCTV programming, museum staff in Macau develop a multicultural definition of their city’s past, present, and future that the restored Chinese sovereign state cannot negate. This complicated process of state-society encounter is often filled with confusion, angst, violence, and disillusionment. Yet, as the sixth-generation leaders come of age at this critical juncture in the history of the People’s Republic, it also demonstrates that the way out of these internal crises need not be the way of the Chinese Communist Party.
Bibliography


Appropriating Confucianism: Soft Power, Primordial Sentiment, and Authoritarianism

Kelvin C. K. Cheung

Introduction

The centennial celebrations of the Republican Revolution led by Sun Yat-Sen in October 1911 provided a moment of reflection on modern China (China Information, 2011: 213–282). Over the last century, China transformed itself from a dynastic empire threatened by Western imperialism into a rising power. It recently overtook Japan to become the second largest economy in terms of gross domestic production (GDP) and it is believed that it will surpass the United States in a decade. Not all aspirations envisioned by Sun Yat-Sen, however, have been fulfilled. For instance, Mainland Chinese have yet to gain full citizenship rights under Communist rule. Far more concerned with stability and control, the Communist Party is reluctant to liberalize the political system. In addition, the complicated relationship between tradition and modernity is still an issue of discussion among policymakers and intellectuals. In the late nineteenth century, the ti-yong (essence-utilization) debate prompted government officials to embrace modernization by preserving Chinese learning as the essence (zhongxue weiti) and appropriating Western learning for application (xixue weiyong). This debate resurfaces in a paradigmatic shift from a strong belief in Westernization during the 1980s to the adherence to Confucianism in the early twenty-first century.
Like it or not, the revival of Confucianism has broad political implications as the Communist leaders set out to reshape the ideological landscape at home and recast China as a stabilizing force abroad. With the success of Deng Xiaoping’s economic reforms, the ethos of capitalism dominates every level of the society but rapid transformation causes much anxiety among the populace. Rampant corruption, ruthless competition, pursuit of material gain, and consumerism are symptoms of social insecurity. Many Chinese have lamented the moral degradation and the absence of an ethical code to replace the waning Maoist ideology. Some people turn to Confucianism for psychological support and moral guidance in order to cope with stresses and strains in a fast-changing world. The best example is the famous writer Yu Dan, who refers to *The Analects (Lun Yu)* in her popular primetime television lectures and self-help guides on personal fulfillment. In an inspirational mode, Yu Dan adapts many Confucian ideas for the tired and stressed-out moderns, weaving his ancient sayings with the everyday experiences of her urban audience (Yu, 2006, 2007; Lee, Frank, Yu, and Xu, 2011).

Besides ethical guidance, Confucianism offers government officials valuable resources for addressing China’s new political needs. With a sense of confidence about the country’s economic transformation, the Communist leaders seek to articulate the unique Chinese perspectives on many developmental issues, ranging from the idea of a harmonious society to China’s peaceful rise. They recognize the need to revive Confucianism to serve the new political agenda (Cheung, 2012). Nevertheless, the government cannot monopolize the interpretation of Confucianism in an increasingly diverse country. Many overseas and Mainland scholars are competing with the party-state to define the essence of Confucianism. While the government authorities are debating with the scholars about the compatibility between Confucianism and modernization, there is a convergence of both official and unofficial perspectives on the role of Confucianism in politics. First, in the post-Cold War era, the issue of soft power (i.e., the ability of a nation to attract others and to achieve its policy objectives through persuasion) adds an important dimension to advance national interest in an interdependent world. Confucianism, being a cultural tradition well known outside China, can be used to promote the Chinese voice on the cultural front. Second, Confucianism is expected to contribute to the process of reunification by providing a common identity among all Chinese in Taiwan. Third, there is a growing scholarly consensus that the hierarchal order (*chaxu geju*) of Chinese society as stipulated in Confucianism legitimates
the authoritarian state (Fei, 1991). This chapter examines the instrumental values of Confucianism in contemporary China. In particular, it discusses the various strategies through which the state reinvents Confucianism to project a benevolent image to the outside world, to advance its soft power, to foster a common identity for the reunification of Taiwan, and to offer a new principle of governance.

Confucianism and its Modern Fate

Confucianism became state ideology in the Han dynasty (206 BC–220 CE). The Confucian teachings stipulated the ceremonial rituals, sociopolitical customs, social relations, and political institutions in imperial China, and shaped the diplomatic interactions between the Middle Kingdom and its neighbors (Fairbank, ed., 1968). In the late nineteenth century, however, Confucianism lost its appeal under the challenge of Western imperialism. Many scholars regarded Confucianism as an obstacle to modernization. In 1905, the Qing government abolished the civil service examination (keju) and adopted new reform policies (Xinzheng), thereby ending Confucianism as a dominant political force. The anti-Confucian sentiment was prevalent among urban intellectuals from the May Fourth Movement (1919–1921) to the subsequent decades of iconoclasm. After the Communist victory of 1949, the Maoist state, condemning Confucianism as the ruling tool of the reactionary class and the remnant of feudalism, launched numerous political campaigns to enforce ideological control over the population. The younger generation unlearned all that was part of traditional culture and internalized the Marxist and Maoist doctrines. The anti-Confucian attacks became more intensified during the Cultural Revolution. At the Anti-Lin Biao, Anti-Confucius campaign (pi Lin pi Kong yundong) from 1973 to 1976, the regime singled out Confucianism as the imagined archenemy of the state, and associated Confucius with Marshal Lin Biao, who was once Mao Zedong’s chosen successor but who fell from grace and died in a mysterious plane crash following an alleged coup. By demonizing Confucianism, the state completely rejected traditional culture.

Throughout the Maoist era, Confucianism fared better in overseas Chinese communities. During the early years in postwar Taiwan, the Kuomintang (KMT; i.e., the Nationalists or Guomindang) under Chiang Kai-Shek renationalized the Taiwanese by using Chinese culture to displace the Japanese colonial influence (Huang, 2007). This top-down strategy of Sinification (hanhua) became an integral part of the KMT rule in Taiwan. The KMT regime launched the
Chinese Cultural Renaissance Movement (Zhonghua wenhua fuxing yundong) to recast the Republic of China on Taiwan as the guardian of Han Chinese civilization. This cultural engineering project was implemented through the National Palace Museum in Taipei, where artifacts and relics were carefully staged to display a thousand years of unbroken Chinese history. In doing so, the KMT government distinguished itself from the Maoist state and used the Han Chinese culture to civilize Taiwan. In this ideological and political climate, scholarly research on Confucianism flourished on the island. This trend of Confucian scholarship, together with the academic works shaped by Confucian specialists in Hong Kong and the United States, gave rise to an intellectual discourse known as New Confucianism (Makeham, 2003: 25–53).

When Dengist China broke away from the iconoclasm of the Maoist period, the discourse of New Confucianism advanced by overseas scholars contributed to the revival of Confucian studies on the Mainland. Since 1986, an intellectual project known as “Research on New Confucianism” had received state funding under the seventh and eighth five-year plans for philosophical and social scientific research (Makeham, 2008: 47–48). Nonetheless, this project continued to apply the Marxist theory of historical materialism to examine the role of Confucianism as a feudalistic ideology that served the interests of the bourgeoisie in China and abroad (Fang, 2007b: 232–240). Though framed in the rigid Marxist rhetoric, the research team was later divided into two groups. One group of scholars adhered to the project’s original objective to critique Confucianism from a Marxist perspective, whereas another group argued that Confucianism ought to be studied on its own terms. Being labeled as new traditionalists, the latter group gave rise to two schools of thought. One school looked at the spiritual aspect of Confucianism (xinxing ruxue), a common approach shared by many overseas Confucian scholars (Makeham, 2003: 29), and the other school concentrated on the notion of political Confucianism (zhengzhi ruxue), using the Confucian teachings to justify the governing authorities (Jiang, 2003). These scholarly debates should be seen as a backlash to the tight ideological control of the Maoist period and reflected the divergent views of Confucianism during the Reform era. Methodologically, the new traditionalists advocated a closer reading of the original Confucian texts in order to affirm the contemporary relevance of Confucianism. They were extremely critical of the old Marxist paradigm that dismissed Confucian values as patriarchal and suppressive. By comparison, the study of Confucianism prevailed abroad and the writings of
overseas scholars shaped the debates between the new traditionalists and Marxists on the Mainland (Zheng, 2001). Instead of framing Confucianism as a tool of class exploitation, the overseas scholars urged their Mainland colleagues to explore the transcendent ideal of humanity and creativity as espoused by Confucius, and to reevaluate the role of Confucianism as the driving force of modernity behind East Asian societies (Makeham, 2008: 107–110). But the Mainland Marxists criticized these scholars for taking Confucianism to be the equivalent of Chinese culture and overlooking other traditions such as Daoism and Buddhism. They also criticized those advocates of political Confucianism for favoring cultural relativism over universal values and undermining the development of liberal democracy in China (Zhang, 2007: 1–31). When the Marxist cultural critiques were valid to some extent, the official ideology during the Maoist period was equally culpable for rejecting the Chinese traditions and Western democratic values. What underscored the intellectual disagreement was the challenge posed by the resurgence of Confucianism toward the orthodox status of Marxism in Reform China (Fang, 2007a: 255–258).

The Communist state initially criticized the scholars’ efforts to promote Confucianism over Marxist ideology (Ai, 2009: 699–700). Nevertheless, when Hu Jintao and Wen Jiabao recognized the benefits of using Confucianism to justify the one-party rule, the government appropriated certain Confucian teachings to construct the discourses of harmonious society, peaceful rise, and minben (people-based or people-as-root) rule. The ambiguity of the state was shown in the removal of the giant statue of Confucius from Tiananmen Square. In September 2010, the central government authorized the commemoration of Confucius’s birthday for the first time since 1949, and in January 2011, it inaugurated a Confucius statue outside the National Museum of China, symbolically putting Confucius and Mao on Tiananmen Square. On March 15, however, the statue was removed, indicating disagreements among the top leaders. Whatever reasons caused the episode, the emergence of Confucianism as a new cultural force had to do with the support of some top leaders.

Confucianism as Soft Power

Even though the top leaders fall short of embracing Confucianism, they recast this philosophy as a new cultural symbol and founded hundreds of Confucius Institutes (Kongzi xueyuan) worldwide. Sponsored by the China National Office for Teaching Chinese as a
Foreign Language (Hanban) and formed in partnership with many universities, high schools, and cultural institutions, the Confucius Institutes promote the study of Mandarin Chinese abroad and establish exchange programs between hosting organizations and Mainland universities. But the instrumental value of Confucianism had been recognized by economists and policy analysts much earlier. During the 1980s and 1990s, there was much attention on the four dragons or four Asian tiger economies, namely Singapore, Taiwan, South Korea, and Hong Kong. These economies achieved rapid growth through an effective management of resources. Apart from looking at macroeconomic policies, researchers identified shared cultural values and norms as the key to the success of these economies. These cultural factors behind the East Asian miracles constitute what Tu Wei-Ming calls the Confucian ethic, which is comparable to the concept of Protestant ethic as identified by Max Weber to explain the rise of capitalism in Western Europe (1984: 84, 142). The concept of Confucian ethic informed the ongoing debates about Confucian capitalism and Asian values as an alternative to the Western-style market economy during the 1990s, even though Nobel economist Paul R. Krugman cautions, “[I]f there is a secret to Asian growth, it is simply deferred gratification, the willingness to sacrifice current satisfaction for future gain.” Focusing on the institutional factors of economic mobilization, Krugman explains that the rise of Asian tiger economies was primarily driven by mobilizing resources, especially raising the economic inputs of labor, machinery, infrastructure, and education, in the same manner of the former Soviet economy. The lesson is that sustained growth demands efficiency gains and painful sacrifices at both collective and individual levels (Krugman, 1994: 62–78; Makeham, 2008: 30). Therefore, many Asian policymakers simply appropriated the Confucian rhetoric to demand sacrifices from their hardworking citizens and to crack down on dissent and protest.

The interest in an East Asian model of development is renewed by the phenomenal success of China’s reforms. Joshua Cooper Ramo (2004) first theorized the distinctive Chinese developmental model as the Beijing Consensus and contrasted it with the Washington Consensus, a set of neoliberal economic policies proposed by Washington-based global financial institutions and frequently imposed on the developing world as loan conditions in the 1990s. Nobel economist Joseph E. Stiglitz (2002) shared the same view and blamed these neoliberal policies for causing economic failure and political instability in many developing countries. By comparison, the China developmental model (Zhongguo fazhan moshi) that emphasizes the centrality of state in
formulating development strategies appeals to the Third World. After the 2008 financial crisis, many developed countries strengthened government intervention in economy, making the Chinese state-led capitalism an attractive model (Halper, 2010). Against this backdrop, Mainland scholars theorized the China model (Zhongguo moshi) as an alternative to the West (Pan and Ma, eds., 2010). According to Pan Wei (2010), authoritarianism that contributed to China’s growth embedded itself in the Confucian statecraft. The Confucian notion of people-based (minben) politics enabled the Communist state to mobilize human and socioeconomic resources for development. Therefore, the China model affirmed the role of authoritarian rule in facilitating growth and guaranteeing prosperity.

The China model reminds us of what S. N. Eisenstadt (2000) called the rise of multiple modernities in East Asia. As the Chinese development becomes the focus of academic and media attention, China seems to offer a credible alternative to the West. This has motivated the Communist leaders to project new soft power to complement the country’s growing status. When Joseph S. Nye, Jr. (1990) introduced the idea of soft power in the early 1990s, he argued that global politics in the post-Cold War era was characterized by power diffusion, which undermined superpowers’ capacity to use the military to shape international outcomes (Nye, Jr., 1990: 160). In this new era, the ability to achieve political objectives through co-optation and negotiation was more important (Nye, Jr., 1990: 166). China is currently on the rise and the model of pro-growth authoritarianism appeals to many developing countries, but the United States is still capable of using its soft power to set the international and regional agendas. Seen from this perspective, the Chinese leaders acknowledge that Confucianism does more than justifying an alternative model of state-led capitalism; it can counter the West and reframe the normative order of international system.

The modern international system was built on the European experience and adopted as a global norm during the Western imperialist expansion (Bull and Watson, eds., 1984). Many existing studies contrast the European international system with the East Asian one. David Kang (2003), for example, refers to the flexibility of a China-centered tributary system. While the Confucian-East Asian international order emphasized formal hierarchy with China as the center of the political universe, it permitted considerable informal equality among the member states. Unlike the European international system of formal equality, the China-centered tributary hierarchy maintained informal hierarchy among sovereign nation-states. Kang (2003: 164)
explains that the East Asian international system was far more stable than the European one. When the hierarchal order was observed under a strong and powerful China, there was little need for interstate war. By comparison, the European international system was characterized by frequent interstate tensions and conflicts, threatening regional peace and stability. The political subtext of Kang’s interpretation is that as long as China remained dominant, the international relations in East Asia would be stable. This discourse justifies the Chinese official rhetoric of peaceful rise, peaceful development, and Confucian pacifism, suggesting that an assertive China would never threaten its neighbors as the Western imperialists had done in the past. As convincing as it sounds, many neighboring countries in East and Southeast Asia remain skeptical of David Kang’s interpretation and Chinese leaders’ diplomatic reassurance.

**Confucianism and Nation-Building in Taiwan**

Closer to home, Confucianism is projected as a source of primordial sentiment capable of winning the hearts and minds of Taiwanese, who have been politically separated from the Mainland for more than a century (Wang, 1996: 20–21). Following the democratization of Taiwan in the 1990s, there is a strong domestic opinion against any closer integration with the Mainland because of cultural, ethnic, and ideological differences (Lin, 2001: 217–266). The democratic and civic values of the Taiwanese national identity are thought to be incompatible with the Chinese authoritarianism. Although democracy is not a prerequisite for the creation of a civic nation, it provides an important institutional basis for cultivating the high culture of a civic nation. According to Ernest Gellner (1983: 127), what is essential for the imagining of a civic nation is the common medium of understanding in which the population is socialized, not the content of the communication. In this political context, Confucianism provides a primordial culture shared by the people across the Taiwan Strait and counters the Taiwanese democrats’ arguments against political reunification. Given the preservation of traditional Chinese culture in Taiwan under the KMT rule, it is very reasonable for China to appropriate Confucianism to promote cross-Strait relations. A critical look at Taiwan’s postwar development, however, suggests that the use of Confucianism may not produce the desirable results as anticipated because traditional Chinese culture was severely attacked during Taiwan’s democratization.
In postwar Taiwan, the popular quest for democracy can be divided into two distinct phases. The first phase of democratization was advanced by the efforts of Western-educated liberal intellectuals through the publication of *Free China Journal* (*Ziyou Zhongguo banyuekan*) following the end of the Chinese Civil War (1947–1949) (He, 2008). *Free China Journal* was originally to be published in Mainland China. With the personal support of Chiang Kai-Shek, the journal was part of the Free China Movement (*Ziyou Zhongguo yundong*), providing a forum for free thought and discussion critiquing the Chinese Communist Party on the cultural front. After the relocation of the KMT government to Taiwan, the journal was first published on the island in November 1949 (Ma, 1993: 74–164). With Hu Shih as the chief executive and Lei Zhen (or Lei Chen) as the editor-in-chief, the mission of the journal was to promote democracy and freedom, with the goal of liberating the whole of China from communism. Nevertheless, its advocacy of democracy and liberty, while serving as a useful instrument for the KMT’s anticommunist propaganda, was at odds with Chiang Kai-Shek’s authoritarian rule.

Throughout the 1950s, *Free China Journal* remained the only public platform for liberal intellectuals to criticize both the Communist and KMT regimes. The intellectuals criticized the KMT of adhering to the unrealistic goal of recovering the Mainland by force, creating an illusion about the immediacy of such military attack, and justifying unpopular policies that sacrificed the long-term development of Taiwan. The critics also demanded constitutional rights including freedom of the press, freedom of assembly, and the right to organize opposition parties to ensure that the KMT government was accountable to the Taiwanese people (Ma, 1993: 302–336). Apart from addressing constitutional and socioeconomic issues, the intellectuals critiqued the sacred status of Han Chinese culture in the KMT’s ruling ideology. As one editorial of *Free China Journal* wrote in 1957,

> If it is deemed patriotic to be retrogressive, how come it is regarded as unpatriotic when one promotes science and democracy to enable the country’s rejuvenation and progress? . . . If the so-called “historical culture” is merely the aggregate effort and success of our ancestors . . . then, why does it become disrespectful when we criticize our historical culture and past success when it is no longer suitable for the modern way of life? (The Editorial, 1957: 3)

In line with the patriotic and transformative spirit of the May Fourth Movement (1919), the intellectuals criticized the KMT’s policy of Sinification as an obstacle toward the modernization of China.
Unfortunately, this phase of democratization ended abruptly after the KMT’s crackdown on the journal in 1960 when Lei Zhen criticized Chiang Kai-Shek as a dictator and called for the establishment of the Democratic Republic of Chinese Taiwan (*Zhonghua Taiwan Minzhu Guo*).

The second phase of the popular quest for democracy in Taiwan began with the Dang-Wai (Outside-the-KMT-Party) Movement during the mid-1970s and early 1980s. Under Chiang Kai-Shek’s martial law, all political parties except the KMT were banned. Periodical publication was the only way for activists to organize themselves. For those activists working for democratic change within the current system, they left the KMT and sought public office through parliamentary elections as independents. In 1986, many prominent members of the Dang-Wai Movement founded the first opposition party in Taiwan, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP). The Dang-Wai Movement and the DPP championed the indigenous concerns about Taiwan’s development rather than the liberation of China from the Communists. When the Republic of China lost its United Nations seat in 1971 and all its major allies recognized the People’s Republic of China, Taiwan found itself in diplomatic isolation. Since then, the Republic of China on Taiwan lost the claim to represent the Chinese nation. Following this diplomatic setback, the Taiwanese cultural consciousness shifted from a broader identification with Mainland China to the struggle for justice at home. This new orientation informed the Xiangtu literature debate in the late 1970s when many Taiwanese writers discussed the everyday life of local people rather than constructing an imagined Chinese homeland (Yang, 2007: 71–86). The Taiwanese consciousness was manifested in political activism. Frank Hsieh Chang-Ting, a human rights lawyer and a prominent DPP leader, who was the presidential candidate in 2008, published the opposition journal, *The New Culture (Xin Wenhua)* that criticized the Chinese tradition as oppressive and blamed the KMT’s discriminatory policy of promoting Mandarin against Taiwanese language (*Taiwan hua* or *Minnan hua*) and other dialects (Wang, 1987a: 5–12; Hong, 1987: 27–32). By attacking the hegemony of Han Chinese culture, activists put Taiwan at the center of public discourse and undermined the legitimacy of the KMT’s rule (Wang, 1987b: 114–117).

The liberal intellectuals of the 1950s and the pro-independence activists of the 1990s blamed the KMT-imposed Chinese culture for sustaining authoritarianism on the island. The liberal intellectuals saw the Chinese culture as a hindrance toward modernization and the pro-independence activists considered it to be a form of colonial
domination. In other words, the Chinese culture became an antithesis to Taiwanese democratization. The indigenous perspective has dominated the public discourse, especially after Lee Teng-Hui and Chen Shui-Bian implemented the policy of Taiwanization (Hao, 2010: 49–74). Despite the recent efforts by the KMT government to revert some of these policies, most Taiwanese reject the efficacy of Chinese culture, especially Confucianism. The image of Chinese culture as a threat to Taiwan’s democracy is reinforced by the latest development in Hong Kong, when Beijing recast the model of one country, two systems as a Confucian family-nation and justified China’s forceful interference in Hong Kong’s affairs (Cheung, 2012). Such development coincides with the reinvention of political Confucianism as a new source of legitimacy for the Communist dictatorship.

**Confucian Authoritarianism in Post-1989 China**

Authoritarianism is an important topic of discussion among Chinese intellectuals. After the military crackdown on the Tiananmen Square pro-democracy movement on June 4, 1989, there was a tighter ideological control. The collapse of the Soviet Union reinforced the fear among policymakers and intellectuals about similar institutional collapse in China (Fewsmith, 2001: 79). The overwhelming concern for order and stability thwarted the call for liberalization, a subject shared by many scholars during the Chinese cultural fever (wenhua re) of the late 1980s.3 Beside the fear of chaos, economic conditions led to strong support for authoritarianism. Prominent social scientists Hu Anguang and Wang Shaoguang (1999; 2001) argue that a centralized state is indispensable in regulating economic activities during China’s transition. They call for the need of a powerful state to penetrate all levels of economy and society, and to mobilize resources for development. Their obsession with the state’s capacity to manage development earns much international attention in the twenty-first century. Along this line of reasoning, the latest scholarly consensus identifies strong state capacity as a key to the China model, and the Communist leaders are quick to seize this attitudinal change and promote minben politics for domestic governance.

The Confucian notion of minben occupied an important position in the public discourse under President Hu Jintao. The Communist leaders often talked about putting people first (yimin weiben) and implementing people-based politics (minben zhengzhi). The Confucian idea of minben resonates with the benevolent rulers’
commitment to promoting the well-being of the people. In the absence of liberal institutions—rule of law, checks and balances, and protection of civil rights, Hu Jintao’s *minben* politics is derived from the state’s ability to satisfy the material needs of the people. This understanding reveals another Confucian idea of benevolent governance (*renzheng*), in which political order is built on a rigid hierarchy that delineates power and responsibility in different social strata, with the leaders being benevolent toward the people in return for their support. According to Kang Xiaoguang (2004: 108–117), this Confucian mode of governance enabled the Communist leadership to gain support and legitimacy in the Reform era. Under this *minben* doctrine, political participation of the people is limited to conveying their concerns to the leaders (Shi and Lu, 2010: 126). This has been figuratively described as the right of the people to choose from the menu given by the leaders, but not to fire the chef and pick a new one. The officials call this arrangement a Chinese-style democracy (*Zhongguoshi minzhu*); but this is not a two-way street that empowers the public and equalizes the state-society relations.

To actualize the *minben* politics, Chinese scholars such as Pan Wei (2006: 3–40) draw on the experience of Singapore and Hong Kong to recommend a consultative regime against direct democracy. Pan argues that rule of law and democracy, which only provide “periodic elections of top leaders by electorates,” are separable tools of governance, and that an independent judiciary is more effective in ensuring good governance than the periodic election of leaders and representatives (Pan, 2006: 7). Elections give people the right to limited participation because the majority only cast their votes once in a while, whereas a handful of people enjoy greater participation through policymaking. A consultative regime that solicits public opinion directly seems to work better than democracy. Other scholars argue that a consultative rule of law regime can be a transition toward democratic governance in the long run (Diamond, 2006: 79–90).

Similar proposals of a consultative regime are being experimented in Mainland China under the rubric of deliberative democracy (Leib and He, eds., 2006). According to John S. Drysek (2000: 10), the objective of representative democracy is to address the political preferences of the people and the democratic process is designed to allow the people to express their preferences through ballot papers. But in deliberative democracy, the people’s preferences can be shaped in the process of deliberation, in which individuals adjust their preferences and work out a consensus through consultation with the others.
Consensus-building through deliberation is widely practiced in the government-run public hearings at the local level. Observations of these public consultations suggest a mixed result. On the one hand, the public consultations create the norm of government accountability and pave the way for more structural changes in local governance. On the other hand, the efficacy of these practices depends on the commitment of local party leaders. The Chinese cultural norm that avoids disagreements and confrontations may undermine the authenticity of public consultation (He, 2006: 190–195). Instead of sowing the seeds of representative democracy, this top-down system of public consultation actually reinforces authoritarian rule and creates a form of consultative Leninism (Tsang, 2009).

**Conclusion**

With China’s rise to power, many East and Southeast Asian states fear an assertive China. China’s readiness to exercise its newfound power in regional politics and its brutal crackdown on dissent at home reinforces this anxiety. China’s rise is complicated by an uncertainty about what values and norms this country represents. As the recent US strategic review puts it, “the growth of China’s military power must be accompanied by a greater clarity of its strategic intentions in order to avoid causing friction in the region” (The White House, January 3, 2012). China has yet to appeal to its neighbors. In this context, Confucianism is the only available cultural force that can be used to rebrand China.

This chapter has explored the instrumental value of Confucianism in contemporary Chinese politics. My assessment shows a mixed result, with Confucianism being regarded more favorably abroad than at home. Since the debate on the role of Asian values behind the East Asian economic miracles in the 1980s, Confucianism is thought to sustain industrial development, both in its ethical values that motivate East Asian workers and in its ideological support of authoritarian rule. But contradictions between state-imposed Han Chinese culture and Taiwanese democratization cast doubt about Confucianism’s efficacy in fostering a shared identity among the people of Taiwan. The same doubt appears today among Mainland intellectuals critical of the state’s aggressive use of Confucianism to maintain control of society. As the Communist leadership continues to politicize Confucianism in the new century, the fate of this living tradition deserves sustained attention.
Notes

1. For a critique of the hypocrisy of this idea of sovereign equality, see Krasner (1999).
2. For critiques of the notion of Confucian pacifism, see Johnston (1995) and Wang (2011).
3. One good example is the documentary series *Heshang* [River Elegy], which called for China to embrace the maritime culture (*haiyang wenhua*) through complete westernization.
4. China recently changed its views on the international human rights regime. According to Kent (1995), the Chinese leaders downplayed the discussion of civil and political rights and regarded the rights to subsistence and development as the paramount human rights.

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Harmony and Critique: Chinese Modernity, Harmonious Society, and Contemporary Chinese Feminist Perspectives

Sharon R. Wesoky

Introduction

In this chapter, I examine the fraught and complicated relationship between the contemporary rhetoric used to describe the China experience and feminism. In particular, I employ a keywords approach to highlight areas of simultaneous concurrence and conflict between statist discourse on development and feminist concerns, and to examine how specific terms relevant to Chinese reform and conceptions of modernity reveal their problematic meanings and ultimately their conceptual hollowness. A conceptual hollowness is, however, also a space that enables new imaginings of development and modernity as well as of women’s place therein. This means that the notion of harmonious society (hexie shehui) and other aspects of the China experience retain considerable contingency in their long-term implications for gender politics.

First, I explore various formulations of the China model to reveal fundamental commonalities among diverse discursive approaches to
China’s reform and development. In particular, I discuss how, in the assorted labels given to China’s alternative modernity, these approaches demonstrate both idealized and practical manifestations. Second, I examine the Chinese regime’s current rhetorical focal points, notably harmonious society, in relation to a number of keywords significant for conceiving the meaning of modernity. Modernity is itself a word inherently syncretic and heterogeneous in the Chinese context, associated with anticolonialism, nationalism, development, socialism, and democracy. Looking at the relationship among harmonious society, feminism, and each keyword shows the complicated relationship between the Chinese party-state and its female citizens as real actors and any project or conception of Chinese modernity. Because women and gender have been central conceptual anchors for comprehending modernity in China since the late Qing dynasty (Hershatter, 2007), because the party-state is recently engaged in a nationalist discursive project that both affirms and potentially contradicts its stated commitment to women’s equality, and because feminists provide one of the few acceptable voices of sociopolitical critique today, feminist analyses reveal wider paradoxes in the Chinese construction of an alternative modernity.

The Harmonious Society and Other Chinese Models

Observers of all persuasions place China’s current incarnation of development at multiple levels—social, economic, political, and not least cultural. Some assert that there is a Chinese model of development (Cao, 2005a, 2005b) or claim that there is a China experience (Li, 2007), while others merely discuss China’s unique road to modernization (Hu, 2005: 84). Certain foreign observers even suggest that a Beijing Consensus has emerged as a counterpoint and alternative to the neoliberal Washington Consensus (Ramo, 2004). While serving different narrow purposes, these labels all seek to generally establish how China’s development under reform constitutes an alternative modernity.

From a domestic Chinese perspective, the socialism with Chinese characteristics (zhongguo tese de shehuizhuyi) of the Deng Xiaoping era has evolved into one emphasizing construction of a harmonious society and scientific outlook on development (kexue fazhan guan). At the Sixth Plenary Session of the 16th Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party in October 2006,
the party-state endorsed the former, defining harmonious socialist society as:

A democratic society under the rule of law, a society based on equality and justice, an honest and caring society, and a stable, vigorous and orderly society in which humans live in harmony with nature. (People’s Daily Online, October 12, 2006)

The following year, at the 17th Party Congress, officials affirmed the scientific outlook on development as the Hu Jintao regime’s major contribution to the Chinese Communist theoretical canon (Delury, 2008: 44). This concept, in President Hu’s own words, “takes development as its essence, putting people first as its core, comprehensive, balanced and sustainable development as its basic requirement, and overall consideration as its fundamental approach”; its aim being to create a harmonious socialist society (Xinhua, October 15, 2007).

Foreigners observing China’s development offer their own labels for it, meant to appreciate the global implications of China’s rise. Most notable of these is probably the concept of the Beijing Consensus first proposed by Joshua Cooper Ramo in a 2004 policy paper. For Ramo (2004: 4), the Beijing Consensus replaces what he regards as the widely discredited Washington Consensus coined by John Williamson and commonly associated with neoliberal economics prominent in the 1990s. According to him (2004: 11–12), the Beijing Consensus consists of three theorems centered on notions of innovation, sustainability and equality, and self-determination suggesting how a developing country should organize its place in the world. Since its emergence Ramo’s thesis has received a great deal of attention, including criticism from both Chinese and foreign fronts questioning how accurately it represents China’s reform experience (Kennedy, 2010: 462). Despite this, the Beijing Consensus theorems serve to map key conceptual expressions taken from the Chinese regime’s own descriptions of its development path—for example, innovation corresponds with scientific outlook on development, and concern for sustainability and equality with the notion of harmonious society.

One way to examine these various characterizations of China’s development is to see them as keywords that—despite oversimplifying and misrepresenting the actualities of economic ideologies and policies—contain grains of truth. As with keywords, the same can be said for official rhetoric on constructing a harmonious society: it is both ideological move and component of state policy formation. English Marxist Raymond Williams, in his classic work Keywords: A
Vocabulary of Culture and Society, drew attention to this 30 years ago. There he dealt with the history and complexity of certain words’ meanings, beginning with culture, we tend to take at face value (Williams, 1983: 17). The Beijing Consensus and harmonious society each represents an ideology, itself for Williams a keyword. While often used pejoratively by conservative critics of social policies but also representing “the set of ideas which arise from a given set of material interests” (Williams, 1983: 153–157), ideology can simply represent a wider inspiring ideal, a vision of the good society that is part of a particular political imaginary (Schwarzmantel, 2008: 3–5).

Both keywords and ideologies deserve critical examination of their ideals and their realities, their normative meanings, and their practical applications. These dimensions need to be understood in context, not divorced from the social and political power relations in which they are deeply embedded. As Raymond Williams remarks,

[I]t is necessary to insist that the most active problems of meaning are always primarily embedded in actual relationships, and that both the meanings and the relationships are typically diverse and variable, within the structures of particular social orders and the processes of social and historical change. (Williams, 1983: 22)

Thus, for instance, any concern about contemporary China lacking a compelling ideology, as expressed by Confucian intellectual Kang Xiaoguang, relates not only to efforts to create a new basis for the Chinese Communist Party’s ideological hegemony in the country, but also to historical contingency and counterhegemonic expressions (Ownby, 2009: 104; Ren, 2010: 188).

According to Prasenjit Duara a state may seek to root its national identity and thus its legitimacy in a regime of authenticity based on past ideas of unchanging truth, while simultaneously moving toward a desired future direction. In order to move into the future, however, it must also negotiate the contradictions linear history conceals. Such negotiation occurs in the face of contemporary diversity of the nation-state striving against reality to establish its ideal, historical unity (Duara, 1998: 287–295). The notion of harmonious society particularly locates its vision for China’s future development in aspects of traditional Confucian culture, and needs to be understood, both for its idealistic hopes, as well as for its practical negotiation of past, present, and future in its connection to policy.

Duara’s discussion is particularly relevant in that he focuses on gender and the role of women as fundamental to the construction of
the Chinese regime of authenticity. Women in China throughout the twentieth century have embodied the notions of honor, morality, and spirituality that are foundational to the Communist regime’s search for truth (1998: 295). At the same time, however, Duara (1998: 306) notes that the supposed passivity of women in these constructions provided a platform for resistance and creation of more independent ideas of citizenship. Duara’s analysis is consistent with more general feminist discussions of the relationship between feminism and nationalism in postcolonial settings:

In most colonial and semicolonial countries, struggles for women’s emancipation went hand in hand with national resistance movements, and the “woman question” never failed to be part of the national agenda. (Liu, 1994: 41)

The relationship between women and nation-state in the postcolonial context is a long-standing and complicated one. In one sense, when aspects of the reality are unfavorable to women and the ideal, too, threatens marginalization of gender concerns, women face the peril of falling into the gap between ideals and realities of nationalist ideological frames. In another sense, the place of the woman question on the national agenda opens potential discursive space for women’s agency: “Feminism is implicated in nationalism as well as in its counter-discourses” (Grewal and Kaplan, 1994: 22).

Correspondingly, contemporary Chinese nationalism as manifested in ideas such as the China model or the harmonious society contain both problems and promise for feminist organizing and discourse. Doubtlessly there are aspects of contemporary Chinese nationalism where the Confucian emphasis is problematic for women’s status and role in Chinese society and polity. Yet, since feminism is, in a sense, an innately critical enterprise, there are ways that the Chinese formulations of an alternative modernity are likewise innately appealing in their superficially anticapitalist, anticolonial leanings.

I turn now to explore how certain keywords are reflected in Chinese formulations of development, especially the concept of harmonious society, and how these also correlate to feminist concerns, concepts, and conversations. While Raymond Williams in his book *Keywords* looks primarily at the historical evolution and etymology of certain words, the discussion here focuses on Williams’s central aim “to show that some social and historical processes occur within language” (Williams, 1983: 22, emphasis in original). In this sense, I examine how certain apparently hegemonic linguistic tropes are themselves sites of resistance and thus the potential for transformation.
**Anticolonialism**

Since the late nineteenth century, one constant in China’s development discourse has been the reaction and response to the West as both model and rival. In the contemporary era, this is manifested in China’s often ambivalent attitude toward the globalization inherent in the rhetoric of reform and opening (*gaige kaifang*). The popular slogan to link up with the international track (*yu guoji jiegui*) represents China’s aspiration to become an important member of the international community, and points to such facts as China’s accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO), its hosting of the 1995 United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women and the 2008 Olympic Games, as well as its increasing power as a trade and investment source and destination. Despite these inroads there are countervailing concerns and opposition to China’s entanglements in global normative and institutional structures. The phrase “link up with the international track,” writes Hongying Wang, reached its peak in popular use within Chinese media and academic discussions in the 1990s and early 2000s (Wang, 2007: 5–7). Its meaning relates primarily to technocratic and economic concerns reminiscent of the late-nineteenth-century *ti-yong* slogan (i.e., Chinese learning as essence, Western learning for application). Wang adds, it also relates to Chinese people’s many positive impressions of globalization (Wang, 2007: 11–16). But in the educational and political spheres, critics and skeptics question whether linking to the global ideas is applicable to China (Wang, 2007: 17).

The concept of harmonious society emerged in direct response to China’s experience of globalization and as a means of diminishing overt Westernization. Some scholars regard the Confucian revival itself as an ironic outcome of globalization (Dirlik, 1995), inspired at least in part by the economic success of other East Asian examples notably the Singaporean model of authoritarian development (Delury, 2008: 38–39). A zealous advocate of Confucianism in China, Kang Xiaoguang writes,

> The whole of modern and contemporary history is the history of the decline of Chinese culture… China today is on the verge of losing its culture. We should have a sense of urgency! One needs to realize that it will take long and arduous efforts of Confucianism to defeat the West. (Kang, 2006: 113–114)

Such a perspective inherently links Confucian tendencies normally associated with harmonious society with being a strong resistance to Western influence.
In searching for a Chinese way, some among China’s New Left (xin zuopai) or Liberal Left (ziyou zuopai) seek to resist Western neoliberalism (Wang, 2005). Tian Yu Cao argues that, from a Marxist perspective, capitalist development contains dangers requiring specific responses:

A clear recognition of the danger demands that our government face the cruel reality, get a clear sense of China’s national interests and national goals, have proper policies, and rely mainly on national industry to both cooperate with and struggle against transnational capital, so that our nation may be rejuvenated. (Cao, 2005a: 2)

Such a stance is not entirely different from certain feminist approaches. For instance, noted Third World feminist Chandra Talpade Mohanty (2003) features decolonization along with solidarity and anticapitalism as the three major conceptual categories of her approach to feminism without borders. Similarly, Uma Narayan writes how continued economic exploitation in many postcolonial contexts has contributed to “the construction of national identity in opposition to ‘Westernization’ and ‘Western culture’” (Narayan, 1997: 20).

Chinese feminists have, perhaps more than others in China, been of two minds regarding relations with the West. Linking to the international track (yu guoji jiegui) has been an important discourse of the Chinese women’s movement since the 1990s. This connection has introduced important new concepts, including gender (shehui xingbie) and nongovernmental organization (minjian zuzhi) or NGO (Zhang and Hsiung, 2010: 166–167), that have in turn instituted new ideas about individuals and their relationship to state and society. Such perspectives have allowed feminists to “take advantage of the government’s eagerness to find ways for China to ‘reenter’ the world and join capitalist globalization” (Wang and Zhang, 2010: 41).

While globalization has contributed new perspectives in Chinese feminism, there are ways Chinese feminists seek to locate themselves in relation to Third World feminism to create a uniquely Chinese approach (Wang, 2008). American-based Chinese feminist Wang Zheng has recently written in a Chinese publication about how the US scholars in the field of women’s studies critique “America’s hegemonic position in the global power structure.” In her mind Chinese feminists who view positively the individualism wrought by globalization (Li, 2001) need to amend their thinking in order to create distinctively Chinese feminist perspectives on globalization and its effects on subaltern populations (Wang, 2004).
In their desire to craft appropriate theoretical perspectives for their own context Chinese feminists, while critical, do not necessarily see eye-to-eye with nonfeminist Chinese intellectuals likewise opposed to Western influence. Song Shaopeng, professor at Renmin University in Beijing, has written of how the Chinese New Leftist Gan Yang rejects the ideology of connecting with the global ideals (*jieguizhuyi*) because it relies on Western concepts rather than on “local experiences and ideological resources.” She also notes that some New Leftists, in their search for roads to domestic development, also reject feminism as both Western in origin and as focusing on “trivial problems” (Song, 2007). As I now discuss, the notion of harmonious society is part of a nationalist revival of Confucian thinking that contains many problematic aspects for women.

**Nationalism**

The harmonious society discourse connects integrally to a nationalist revival of Confucianism and traditional culture. While there are of course ways in which they are mutually constitutive, I distinguish anticolonialism from nationalism in their respective points of reference. In my usage, the former is primarily a reaction to China’s engagement with the outside world, especially the West, while the latter is the creation of a more positive and unique identity for what it means to be Chinese.

While the harmonious society concept is part and parcel of an ongoing cultural nationalist trend in China, the party-state’s actual interest in such a revival is disputed. Some, such as Daniel Bell (2008), see the state as actively involved in resurrecting Confucianism, while others such as Jiawen Ai (2009) detect skepticism on the part of the Chinese Communist Party toward Confucianism’s revival. What is indisputable is that the government has been funding Confucius Institutes worldwide in an effort to promote Chinese language and culture.

Like Prasenjit Duara’s regime of authenticity, Uma Narayan’s idea of venerability encourages recognition that “national cultures in many parts of the world seem susceptible to seeing themselves as unchanging continuities stretching back into a distant past” (1997: 21, emphasis in original). Illustrating this tendency are arguments for the revival of traditional Chinese culture, whether seeking a strong version of Confucianism, even advocating for the establishment of Confucianism as the state religion of China (Kang, 2006), or restoring certain Confucian virtues that emphasize Confucian hierarchical order (Song, 2007).
These intellectual perspectives pose particularly negative consequences for women, carrying as they do inherently masculine implications. While a century ago the woman question (funü wenti) was central to wider intellectual considerations of Chinese identity and nationhood, today’s intellectual discussions dominated by men are largely silent on the subject of gender. Song Shaopeng writes how, for instance, thinkers in the New Left often reject considerations of gender, ethnicity, and class as Western concepts. Song warns of the possible crowding out of subcultures such as feminism if Confucian ideas attain a cultural hegemony (Song, 2007). Cultural nationalism may promote a traditional idea of women’s role, as well as revive the nationalist patriarchy integral to the Republican- and Maoist-era approaches whereby “women were to be liberated for and by the nation; they were to embody the nation, not to be active agents shaping it” (Duara, 1998: 298–299). In studying the 1989 Tiananmen pro-democracy movement, Rey Chow has found that women in China, including during the Reform period, “are required to sacrifice and postpone their needs and their rights again and again for the greater cause of nationalism and patriotism.” This requirement connects to the Chinese tradition “that emphasizes order and harmony, but that also consistently crushes the openness brought to it by intellectuals, students, and young people” (Chow, 1991: 88). In other words, order and harmony demand that women be orderly and submissive.

Generally speaking, the statist definitions of harmonious society erase or ignore gender as a relevant category in considerations of what such a society would encompass. Yet, if “female virtue became a metonym for Chinese civilizational truths” (Duara, 1998: 298), anxieties over threats to that virtue can be a starting point from which women assume agency regarding their situation. Practical problems facing women such as divorce, the emergence of er’nai (concubines), and adultery can be framed as problems of the mores of civilization that threaten societal harmony as well as women’s status. Indeed, potential contradictions exist within the harmonious society discourse. On the one hand, by exalting traditional culture harmonious society discourse articulates Chinese cultural exceptionalism. On the other hand, it offers a rather honest appraisal of China’s problems that, if taken as status quo, form barriers to the realization of harmony. Thus, the muscular culture advocated by Confucian advocates like Kang Xiaoguang instead becomes a venue of critique (Ownby, 2009: 106). Feminists can co-opt the ideology of harmonious society as they seek ways to define it and incorporate ideas of gender equality.
Hence, feminist Huang Lin writes of a smiley Chinese feminism (*weixiaozhe de Zhongguo nüxing zhuyi*; Huang, 2004, flyleaf) “sharp but not aggressive . . . concerned with the harmonious development of both sexes. Its utmost focus is on the eternal subject of humanity” (Schaffer, 2007: 20). Smiley feminism of this sort can also be found in activism by women’s nongovernmental organizations. Beijing-based women’s NGO *Nongjianü* (*Rural Women*) promotes women’s gender consciousness and political participation, but also endorses particular notions of love and compassion compatible with Confucian ethical systems and “a prospective ethical system that is in contrast with the more individualistic oriented aspects of the market economy” (Wesoky, 2009: 151). This is similar to Song Shaopeng’s (2007) call for creating a Confucianized feminism (*ruxue hua de nüxing zhuyi*), one that examines connections between Confucian ideas of benevolence and the feminist ethics of care, for instance. Other feminists employ the notion of harmonious society to call attention to all the ways Chinese society is not harmonious:

Gender harmony, together with economic harmony, social-strata harmony, ethnic harmony, regional harmony, generational harmony and ecological harmony, is a prerequisite for achieving social harmony as well as an inherent requirement of building a moderately prosperous society (*xiaokang shehui*) in an all-around way. (Chen, 2005: 11)

Still other feminists seek to historicize the use of harmony as a way of resisting traditionalist interpretations of Confucian culture, contrasting the feudal and unequal notion that the male is superior to the female (*nanzun nübei*) to a contemporary harmonious relationship of male-female equality (Ma and Chen, 2008: 76). Harmonious society consequently moves from being a nostalgic revival of Confucian culture and traditional gender roles to a prospective vision of a new China that has not yet been realized. The concept functions, therefore, as an ideological source of critique.

**Development**

Related to the hopeful vision implicit in harmonious society is the acknowledgement of problems with China’s current reform process and path to development. In fact, the terminology used to qualify development’s success—a moderately well-off society (*xiaokang shehui*)—is itself a concept with origins in traditional culture. As
opposed to ideas of a Chinese model implying that China is an exemplar, this vision of the China experience acknowledges both positive and negative lessons (Li, 2007: 102). Indeed, it lists several challenges and tests for China’s experience: a redundant agricultural population, widening income gap, end of the age of cheap labor, environmental and resource issues, and problems of dealing with an aging society (Li, 2007). Indeed, the Chinese regime seems more honest about developmental problems than those postulating about the Beijing Consensus. Joshua Cooper Ramo’s second theorem regarding sustainability and equality is more wishful thinking than a reality at present, according to Arif Dirlik, who notes the government’s immense concern with the growing gap in development between coastal cities and China’s vast hinterland (Dirlik, 2006: 4).

The state’s commitment to the woman question remains an important part of feminists’ ability to continue advocacy for women’s development as part of the overall vision of Chinese development. When China hosted the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, then-President Jiang Zemin announced to a global audience that a basic national policy was gender equality and women’s development. Feminists since then have sought to make this a “guiding concept and basic principle for making specific policies in every aspect of the economy and society” (Tan and Jiang, 2006: 3). The comprehensive, balanced, and sustainable development that is part of China’s scientific outlook on development is echoed in women’s calls to ensure that the development process in China remains attuned to questions of gender equality. We can see similar connections between this emphasis on science in development and the importance of women’s studies as a form of feminist activism in the Chinese context. When feminist scholars write that “scientific observation and rational discussion are the basic prerequisites for understanding gender equality and women’s development in China” (Tan and Jiang, 2006: 4), they are setting their claims for women’s development firmly within the ideological bounds of scientific development.

In their efforts to influence policy on development, some feminists have devoted attention to the feminization of agriculture occurring in China. Inspired by international feminist discourses of gender and development, they introduce new concepts of development into the rural sphere as well as work on concepts of empowerment for rural women (Jacka, 2006; Gao, 2008; Wesoky, 2011). Many women’s NGOs emphasize doing projects as the fundamental mission of their existence. They take on specific issues and problems such as
health, employment, and political participation, thus grounding their activism in a highly pragmatic approach to women’s development (*funü fazhan*). Using concrete actions to change the fates of rural women, a group vulnerable to the impulses of market economy and the pace of GDP growth (Xu and Ren, 2009: 125–126), the organization Rural Women administers development projects in areas such as literacy, female employment skills, women’s political participation, and suicide prevention.

Such vigilant attention to the market economy highlights how feminists question the single-minded national economic development approach that has been part of the reform process in China (Lin, Liu, and Jin, 1998: 111). From this vantage point, they offer at least implicit critiques of what is often the unexamined idea of development as a keyword (Williams, 1983: 104). Some examine the marginalization of women’s labor in the export-oriented factories of the eastern coastal area (Jin, 2008). Others, especially Dai Jinhua, critique the consumerist turn in contemporary urban China and its effects on women (Dai, 2001, 2002; Barlow, 2004). Engaging in critiques of the beauty culture (*meinü wenhua*) and beauty economy (*meinü jingji*), a hybrid of the traditional view of gender equality and the market economy (Tan and Jiang, 2006: 19–20), feminists remain attuned to both postmodern and traditional aspects of gender inequality in China’s path to development.

A review of equality, development, and harmony for women in the years from 1995 to 2005 defines women’s development (*funü fazhan*) as:

[How] with economic growth and social advancement, women’s political, economic, educational, cultural and household conditions are improved. Gender equality and women’s development, which are mutually conditional and promote one another, are combined in one dialectical unity. The kind of women’s development we expect should be under conditions of gender equality, and through this development can we reduce the difference between the two sexes on resources occupied and interests allocated; the kind of gender equality we expect should be based on development, and this expectation is consistent with the goals of building a moderately prosperous society in all respects and constructing a socialist harmonious society. (Tan and Jiang, 2006: 4)

As is evident here, feminists combine a number of distinct discursive frames to communicate their expectation that gender equality remain an integral part of the development discussion in China.
Socialism

Despite the turn in China toward cultural nationalism, socialism remains central in visions of Chinese social and economic growth. Observers disagree whether the Confucian revival and harmonious society are compatible with the Chinese Communist Party’s continued claim to be on the road to socialism. There is obvious incongruence between the party’s interest in harmonious society and Confucian notions of social order on the one hand, and Marxist theoretical perspectives including a Chinese canon based upon Mao Zedong’s call for continual revolution and class struggle on the other. Jiawen Ai notes multiple types of Confucians in contemporary China, including liberal Confucians and more traditional Confucians, but also Marxist Confucians (Makesi rujia) or bureaucratic intellectuals (guanliao zhi-shi fenzi) who support a particular version of the Confucian revival (Ai, 2009). Others have written that the so-called moderately well-off society (xiaokang shehui) advocated as a traditional mode of framing the goals of Chinese development by Jiang Zemin and subsequent top leaders was actually a notion Confucius rejected in favor of great unity (datong) (Delury, 2008: 38).

At the same time, the Chinese regime maintains as its stated goal the achievement of socialism, albeit a redefined version. Deng Xiaoping defined the goals of this revised version as “developing productive forces, eliminating exploitation, and achieving prosperity together” (Cao, 2005b: 304–305). There are some, including feminists, who have sought greater commonality between socialism and Confucianism. Such negotiation may be strategic. Legitimating the Confucian revival in relation to what remains of China’s official ruling ideology is one way to ensure continued commitment to male-female equality as part of that ideology. Resolving inconsistencies may also connect interests so as to form the cultural authenticity discussed above. Chinese women’s studies, for example, draw connections between traditional notions of harmony and certain aspects of socialist thought:

The core of essential humanism in Chinese philosophy, for example, is to see Yin and Yang, the two opposing principles in nature respectively represented by feminine and masculine, as in a harmonious unity. Is there anything valuable in this proposition? Is there even some affinity in its recent revival, in effect, for the socialist aspiration for cooperation and solidarity? (Lin, Liu, and Jin, 1998: 116–117)

Others look at the idea of gender harmony (xingbie hexie) in relation to conflict in society, recognizing that harmonious society discourse
is a response to conflict and therefore opening up the possibility for critical perspectives within any discussion of harmony. One of the characteristics of gender harmony, writes one theorist, is that it “does not mean that gender relations are rid of contradictions and oppositions, but that these are non-antagonistic contradictions” (Chen, 2005: 12). Such language of course directly draws on Mao Zedong’s own essay “On Contradiction” in its formulation of the nature of conflict within socialist society. It allows for differences of interest to exist within some version of harmonious socialism. Feminists indeed continue to employ the state’s rhetorical commitment to socialism to press for gender equality, with gender standing in for class in discussions promoting social justice (*shehui gongyi*) (Wang and Zhang, 2010: 66–67).

Feminists and others connect such a perspective of social justice, alongside equity, to a notion of harmony when considering the proper goals of a socialist society (Chen, 2005: 13). Wu Zhongmin of the Central Party School, who asserts that social justice is the very essence and cornerstone of a harmonious society, sees a “bottleneck for the country’s efforts towards a harmonious society” where “relative to economic development, the country’s social development has obviously been lagging behind” (Wu, 2007: 117, 121–123). Wu uses this perspective to argue for state provision of public goods through a basic level social security system. In fact, Wu is not the first to demonstrate that China’s post-Mao economic growth is rooted in foundations established in the Mao era, for instance, in improvements in education and public health (Dirlik, 2006: 7). Just as Arif Dirlik concludes after considering the appeal of the Beijing Consensus to the developing world, Wu’s logic ultimately relates more to legacies of the socialist revolution than to China’s embrace of a neoliberal economy. While harmonious society may revive aspects of traditional culture, clearly it cannot yet be separated from socialist ideology.

**Democracy**

One stated component of harmonious socialist society is that it is a democratic society under the rule of law (*fazhi*). Rather than detail the byzantine debates regarding China and democracy, I explore democracy (*minzhu*) as keyword to understand its meaning in the context of harmonious society discourse as well as in relation to feminist activism. In this sense, what matters most is the vision of state-society relations currently prevailing within China in relation to gender and culture as revealed in discussions of China as a harmonious society.
The rhetoric of harmonious society is to some extent a cultural rationale for continued one-party rule, although the way that this is legitimated takes various forms. Some theorists of the Chinese path of development critique Western democracy as merely procedural in nature and inappropriate for representing the interests of those in society lacking economic resources or power. These same critics continue to favor a powerful centralized state apparatus as the means to rectify such inequalities (Cao, 2005a, 2005b: 301). At the same time, discussion revolves around the evolution of Chinese state-society relations, both in terms of the influence of global norms on traditional political culture as well as the promotion of political reforms and civil society development. Such a perspective acknowledges universal political values (pushi zhengzhi jiazhi) behind demands by Chinese citizens for more influence in how their country is governed (Yu, 2005: 227). Some, notably Kang Xiaoguang, seek to combine these perspectives into a Chinese synthesis. Kang has researched the value of a third sector (disan bumen), social organizations for poverty alleviation (Ownby, 2009: 103), but also turned toward a comprehensive formulation of Confucianization (rujia hua) in the form of benevolent governance (renzheng) as the best way to restore legitimacy to the Chinese state. Kang critiques liberal democracy as a superstition, neither promoting equality nor democracy (Kang, 2006: 92–93, 94).

Visions of the relationship between democracy and harmonious society usually blend an enhanced civil society with a strong state. Feminist visions share this tendency in that Chinese feminism emphasizes both the role of the Women’s Federation and the newer women’s nongovernmental organizations in promoting women’s rights and interests. Even nongovernmental feminists see a role for the Women’s Federation, although they often assert it has not adequately allowed bottom-up initiative from women themselves (Gao, 2008: 16–17). This is one asset of the nongovernmental sector of Chinese feminism; it enables more grassroots voices and activism in the Chinese women’s movement.

Other Chinese feminists recognize that their connections to global feminism, while not uncontroversial, have allowed them to introduce new concepts like gender that inherently embody notions of rights, including citizens’ rights (gongmin quanli) against an authoritarian state (Wang and Zhang, 2010: 47). Experience today echoes Prasenjit Duara’s account of the early twentieth century when “women sought to deploy the tensions between citizenship and authenticity to their advantage” (Duara, 1998: 306). As linear visions of capitalism confront historically minded notions of authenticity, they create the
potential for resistance. Capitalism promotes new, individual subject positions as well as a wider sphere of autonomy both from state and from traditional familial and other structures. The evolving relationship of state and society as with global and local under the conditions of capitalism is apparent in the feminist sphere. Here, Chinese feminists initiate societal activism to complement the state’s commitment to gender equality, modeling the culturally hybrid nature of Chinese state-society relations more generally.

A Chinese Alternative Modernity

By way of conclusion, I establish how the intersection of feminism and harmonious society discourse can exemplify an alternative modernity. As discussed earlier, there are elements of both ideal and real in ideological constructions like harmonious society. Historian Perry Anderson asserts that successful examples of alternative modernities usually rest on a creative balance between selective appropriation of the national past and selective learning from the external interstate system (Anderson, 2005: 18). Evidently, Chinese feminism is itself an alternative modernity that has evolved within such a balance.

A centrally important discourse in Chinese feminism in recent years is that of indigenization (bentuhua). This standpoint willingly learns from global influences, but also purposefully studies local conditions, needs, and culture. Two outcomes of such a synthesis are the importance of gender training (shehui xingbie peixun) and gender mainstreaming (xingbie zhuliuhua) in contemporary Chinese feminist activism. According to Wang and Zhang (2010: 56), gender training is especially suitable to the local culture because of its connection to notions of modernity, but also in its manifestation of Confucian ideas about self-cultivation and the potential for individual perfectibility. Meanwhile, gender mainstreaming, derived from global feminist discourses, relates closely, in the Chinese context, to the strong role that the state continues to play in economy and society as well as in its women’s movement. It gives feminists a lever with which to apply pressure on that same state to incorporate gender concerns into policymaking, including its conception of the nation’s macro-development (hongguan fazhan) (Tan and Jiang, 2006: 17). These two concepts work hand in hand, allowing nongovernmental activists to train state activists in some cases. For instance, the Beijing-based Rural Women runs trainings for rural women village leaders employing a participatory approach (canyushi fangfa) on issues of
gender awareness (xingbie yishi) and capacity building (nengli jianshe). Collaboration around such concepts raises the possibility that those concepts may enter state and party structures (Nongjianü Wenhua Fazhan Zhongxin, 2007: 10).

In the final analysis, gender training from below and gender mainstreaming from above are paradigms for how state and society are building an alternative modernity in China today. Harmonious society discourse is a complex example of this construction at both ideological and policy levels. Ideologically, the discourse is deeply rooted in a nationalist revival of traditional Chinese culture. But it also points to serious contradictions and problems arising from the Chinese reform process, thereby opening up spaces for self-critique incorporating feminist voices. At a policy level, it supports a strong state’s pursuit of national development in a fashion that may look back to traditional Chinese culture. But it also justifies a continued socialist frame in comprehending a syncretic Chinese modernity of the early twenty-first century. Similar complexities are apparent in the following studies of harmonious society discourse in mass media, Internet, and museums.

Notes

1. I am inspired here by Andrew Kipnis’s discussion of suzhi (quality) as a keyword (2006).
2. Lin Chun writes of the plural nature of modernity in China (2006: 34); New Left intellectual critic Wang Hui has also questioned “whether modernity in the realm of history and intellectual thought is singular, multiple, or interactional” (Wang, 2009: 80).
3. Perry Anderson argues that discussions of China as an alternative modernity need “less normative than predictive” discussions (2005: 18).
4. It is important to note that gender inequality does not make this particular inventory of China’s challenges.
5. Dirlik here cites Singh (n.d.). This argument is also made extensively by Lin (2006b).
6. Both Wang and Zhang (2010) and Zhang and Hsiung (2010) detail the evolution and importance of both of these concepts in contemporary Chinese feminism.
7. Tamara Jacka writes of how popular notions of suzhi (quality) in contemporary China, while often connected to the influence of neoliberalism in China, also do hearken back to nineteenth-century Chinese anxieties about modernity and even further back to Confucian ideas of “the possibility and desirability of self-cultivation, training, and improvement” (2009: 526–527).
Bibliography


CHAPTER 4

Promoting a Harmonious Society through CCTV’s Music-Entertainment Television Programming

Lauren Gorfinkel

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I investigate how China Central Television’s (CCTV) music-entertainment programs produce the idea of harmony and of building a harmonious society. I first discuss the official Chinese rhetoric of harmony and the important role of the media, particularly entertainment forms, in disseminating party-state visions and ideologies. I then present three in-depth case studies that highlight different ways music videos and live music-entertainment programs are constructing and promoting the concept of a harmonious society for different target audiences. With a special focus on programming in the years leading to the Beijing Olympic Games in 2008, I argue that harmony is presented in a spectrum of hard and soft ways. Fairly hardened productions imply that a harmonious society on a domestic level will ensue if Communist cadres and Chinese citizens more generally adhere to the party-set codes and principles. At another extreme, in programs produced for international audiences, a harmonious society is constructed as a soft and open celebration of cosmopolitanism, global cooperation, cross-cultural exchange, with mutual respect. The discourse of harmony is also used to overtly and subtly promote other party-state policies and ideologies such as Hu Jintao’s Eight Do’s and Eight Don’ts, the one-China policy, and the principle of peaceful coexistence. Produced with the ideological constraints of
party-state media, each of the cases reflects how different producers, directors, and performers put a distinct spin on the idea of harmony for particular state purposes.

Harmonious Society, Party-State Ideology, and Entertainment Television

At a high-level Communist Party seminar in February 2005, President Hu Jintao instructed China’s leading officials and party cadres to place at the top of their work agenda the building of a harmonious society. In this speech—a complete version of which was released on June 26 and studied by government officials at all levels (Xinhua, June 27, 2005)—Hu referred to both China’s great economic achievements and the country’s looming social and economic problems, including the widening gap between rich and poor, corruption and crime, and an unjust world order. Hu called upon high-ranking officials to envision a harmonious society to remind them of their mission to actively enforce the rule of law by holding accountable powerful people in political, administrative, and judicial sectors. He also urged officials to strengthen people’s moral standards and promote common ideological aspirations for the whole society, develop a more democratic policy-making mechanism to ensure a closer relationship between people and government (so that citizens’ opinions could be absorbed in the decision-making process and different social interests could be balanced), improve the standard of living of China’s rural population, properly handle social conflicts, and address environmental problems to ensure all citizens have clean water to drink, fresh air to breathe, and healthy food to eat. Hu emphasized that if these conditions were not met, more serious social problems could arise (Xinhua, June 27, 2005). Then, on October 11, 2006, following a Party Central Committee plenary—the first in 25 years to discuss social issues (as opposed to economic and political development)—the Chinese Communist Party formally endorsed a political doctrine calling for the creation of a harmonious society (Fan, October 12, 2006).

Harmonious society, variously referred to as a sociopolitical vision, a political formulation (tifa), a theory, an ideological doctrine, and a slogan (kouhao), draws on Confucian discourse revived in Mainland China from the late 1970s onward, a topic of discussion in the last two chapters. For the first 30 years of Maoist rule, Confucianism was completely rejected by the state. It was considered the source of all
feudal ills and as the cause of China’s stagnation. Since the economic reforms, and following the 1989 Tiananmen incident, however, the state has reclaimed Confucianism and found many practical uses for Confucian discourse (Song, 2003). State discourses have incorporated fundamental Confucian tenets of social harmony, respect for authority, obedience to superiors, devotion to the state, and protection of the family in order to maintain stability, to build a sense of national unity, and to reestablish the legitimacy of Communist rule. This comes at a time when former socialist ideals and the Communist Party’s raison d’etre have lost saliency (Song, 2003: 91, 97; Chen, February 27, 2011). In a complete about-turn in official discourse, Confucius himself is now promoted by the party-state as a national icon and symbol of harmony and peace (Song, 2003: 84–88). Confucian statues have sprung up around China and the world, including, for a brief time, a large one opposite the portrait of Chairman Mao in Tiananmen Square. His image has also been used to promote Chinese language and culture globally through the state-sponsored Confucius Institutes (Kongzi xueyuan), and in films like Hu Mei’s 2010 feature Confucius (Kongzi) starring Chow Yun-Fat (Zhou Runfa) in the title role. While Confucius himself may not always appear directly in the media texts, Confucian notions of social harmony are used to divert attention away from interethnic and civil unrest, and to present China as a highly unified, stable, and harmonious country.

An official view of harmonious society emerges, in part, in response to its appeal to a global audience. On the one hand, China’s leaders and state cultural workers use their vision of a harmonious society to fight against a persisting global image of China as an aggressive rising power and rogue Communist regime (Song, 2003: 84–88; Zhang, 2009: 103–104, 113–114; Sun, 2010: 58–59, 68). Following the military crackdown on the pro-democracy movement on June 4, 1989, China was criticized for its violation of human rights and suppression of people’s democratic aspirations. And from the early 1990s, the Central Propaganda Office, also known as the Information Office of the State Council, began actively promoting a favorable image of China through overseas activities to counter this negative image. It has continued to build its image in the 2000s in order to highlight China’s progressiveness, competency, and emergence as a great, but soft and nonthreatening, power.

On the other hand, harmonious society and harmonious world are also presented as concepts from which the whole world can learn
(Qin, October 13, 2006). This global discourse on harmony reached its peak leading up to and during the Beijing Olympic Games. At the time phrases like harmonious Olympics (hexie aoyun), humanistic Olympics (renwen aoyun), peaceful Olympics (heping aoyun), safe Olympics (pingan aoyun), and harmonious world (hexie shijie) were ubiquitous in publications, brochures, street posters, and in the media across China. The official Games website emphasizing its “One World, One Dream” (tongyi ge shijie, tongyi ge mengxiang) slogan linked China’s political notions of a harmonious society with the universal values of the Olympic spirit, which include unity, friendship, and harmony.¹

Songs and musical performances that are broadcast nationally on television and internationally via satellite and the Internet provide a major platform for disseminating official visions of harmony. As I have discovered from hundreds of hours of viewing from 2007 to 2010, CCTV’s music-entertainment shows are fixated on happiness and harmony, with music itself constructed as a significant metaphor for harmony. A visual spectacle of unity and happiness is created through having many people gathered together, smiling and singing “The Same Song” (tongyi shou ge). An aural sense of unity is also created through the sounds of singing in unison or in musical harmony. In addition, the phrase “The Same Song” has been used by program hosts repeatedly as a metaphor for unity, and was adopted as the title of a popular, large-scale weekly variety program (Gorfinkel, 2011: 123). “The Same Song” has been sung at the beginning and the end of the program. Apart from regular weekly and daily music programs on its comprehensive arts channel (CCTV3), music channel (CCTV-Music) and the Chinese language international channel (CCTV4), CCTV3 runs its own daily music video program called “China Music Television” (Zhongguo Yinyue Dianshi) featuring many party-state produced and endorsed songs. It also offers one-off music-entertainment specials (tebie jiemu) to connect important party-state events with key ideological themes including that of a harmonious society. As with the main melody films (zhu xuan lü), which reinforce positive values as endorsed by the Communist Party and present Chinese society as a harmonious body, CCTV’s music-entertainment programs enforce political policy in both crude and sophisticated ways. Some entertainment programs overtly reinforce the significance of the party and publicize the strengths of the Chinese nation and the People’s Liberation Army, while other shows are much subtler in “negotiating within
the genre’s rules a more audience-appealing version of whatever party line is being sold” (Kracier, n.d.).

CCTV officially operates as a mouthpiece (houshe) of the central committee of the Communist Party, and is the only national network in China. Ever since television became a popular medium in the late 1970s, it has been put to the task of using entertainment formats to “unconsciously” educate the Chinese people about their nation, the party, dominant ideologies, and current government policies (Lu, 1995: 4). Wanning Sun (2009: 64; 2002: 190) labels this attempt to marry political indoctrination and palatable entertainment “indoctrainment.” The creative packaging of political and ideological lessons (Fung, 2009: 187), or masking of politics in popular entertainment (Sun, 2002: 190), is thought to make propaganda more effective. By rendering audiences oblivious to their own indoctrination, the state reinforces among the public the efficacy of its governance (Fung, 2009: 181).

The notion of indoctrination suggests that the Chinese state has a single, predetermined idea about what it wants to dictate to people. But is there one conception of harmonious society presented in the entertainment programs that has become a vital part of contemporary Chinese political and cultural discourse, or do the shows reveal a range of articulations? And how is the formulation of harmonious society used to reinforce a range of other state ideologies? In this chapter, I study the integration of ideology and entertainment in party-state media through a detailed critique of television texts featuring the notion of harmony in the CCTV music-entertainment genre. If harmonious society is an important component of contemporary state ideology, and if the state hopes to indoctrinate audiences across the nation, then what exactly do these texts reveal about the nature of harmonious society? How are these entertainment television programs defining harmony for contemporary audiences? To address these questions, I have chosen three music videos and one live, special, staged program that explicitly deal with the vision of harmony: (1) a music video called “Harmonious Society Cultivates a New Wind” (Hexie shehui chang wenming), produced to disseminate Hu Jintao’s moral code, the Eight Do’s and Eight Don’ts and made available online, (2) a special production entitled “The 85th Anniversary of the Establishment of the Party—Celebrating a Harmonious Society” (Jian dang 85 zhounian qingdian hexie shehui), broadcast on CCTV-3, and (3) two official Beijing Olympic Games music videos, “Forever Friends” (Yongyuan de pengyou) and “Me and You” (Wo he ni).
While predominantly a textual analysis, where possible I take into account audience reactions in the form of online comments. Neither the small minority of the television audience who access television clips via the Internet, nor the miniscule number who choose to leave comments online represent the much broader television audience, but they are included where possible to give some impression of the variety of public reactions. It is worth noting that, as Fan (October 12, 2006) points out, initial reactions to the official concept of harmonious society were mainly positive; this concept continues to be interpreted by some commentators as an integral part of the state’s concerted effort to bring about a gradual change for the better. Over the years increasing numbers of commentators have come to see the idea of harmonious society not as an ideal but as a euphemism or catchphrase for justifying tight control of information and suppression of dissent in a society that is actually becoming increasingly unjust, unequal, and unfair. CCTV’s productions should also be considered within a broader context of entertainment and information production that includes online media. Of particular note, netizens in China have created and popularized their own music-video clips with very different and even satirical interpretations of the state-produced constructions of harmonious society. One of the most viral and critical songs was “Song of the Grass-Mud Horse” (Cao ni ma zhi ge), which sounds like a children’s song and features endearing pictures of alpacas. *Cao ni ma* (Grass-Mud Horse) is a homonym for “go f*** your mother” in Mandarin Chinese, and plays on the metaphor of mother often used to refer to the Communist Party. The song also references the “river crab” (*héxiè*)—a homonym for harmony (*héxié*) in Mandarin Chinese, but which has come to be a euphemism for Internet censorship and used as a metaphor for getting past the censors. Netizens widely use the phrase “harmonized” (*bei héxié*) to describe topics and websites that are censored. Rather than focus on the discontented reactions of netizens, however, I examine official productions and constructions of harmony designed for state-run television, which netizens have also made available online.

**Harmony Enforced through Military Strength and Moral Codes**

One way party-state television presents harmony is via a hardened view, whereby harmony is related to social stability, shown to be established as a result of strong rule by the Chinese Communist Party. The people adhere to a strict set of rules and moral codes, while a strong
military guarantees that China and the Chinese people are safe from any external threats. This politicized vision of harmonious society is promoted explicitly through the lyrics and visuals of party-state propaganda music videos, one illustrative example being “Harmonious Society Cultivates a New Wind” (Hexie shehui chang wenming) (lyrics by Jia Ding, music by Wang Luming). Jia and Wang’s song links the idea of harmony with Hu Jintao’s Eight Do’s and Eight Don’ts (Ba rong ba chi), variously translated as the Eight Honors and Eight Disgraces, the Eight Virtues and Shames, Hu Jintao’s Eight-Step Programme, and the Socialist Concepts on Honors and Disgraces. Released by Hu Jintao on March 4, 2006, the Eight Do’s and Eight Don’ts is a set of moral codes for all citizens and especially for Communist Party cadres. The opening and ending verses of the song directly link the idea of harmonious society to socialism and to Hu’s moral code, explaining to listeners that the Eight Do’s and Eight Don’ts advocate socialist concepts of honor and dishonor as well as a civic virtue. Lyrics highlight the responsibility of all Chinese to enact their instinctive moral goodness in order to ensure a bright future for socialist China.

The song’s second stanza explicitly iterates President Hu’s official set of rules, which were also distributed as policy documents for collective discussion among party cadres in political meetings, and posted on doors and walls within all work units and other public institutions. Consequently, the song functions as another way of publicizing the official ideology and code:

Love the country; do it no harm.
Serve the people; never betray them.
Follow science; discard superstition.
Be diligent; not indolent.
Be united, help each other; make no gains at other’s expense.
Be honest and trustworthy; do not sacrifice ethics for profit.
Be disciplined and law-abiding; not chaotic and lawless.
Live plainly, work hard; do not wallow in luxuries and pleasures.

(Xinhua, September 19, 2007)

Communicating top leaders’ awareness of major social and governance problems that need to be combated, this moral code spells out such problems as the lack of patriotism, ethical standards, rule of law, and care for others, on the one hand, and the presence of disunity, self-centeredness, and rampant corruption on the other. Some workers in party-run cultural industries, like Deputy Editor-in-Chief Huang Weiding of the Red Flag Publishing House, as reported in
the *Washington Post* (Fan, October 12, 2006), believe that a moral code of conduct is necessary for restoring harmony within China. Huang argues that with such a large country and several millions of party cadres, it is important to unify everyone’s thoughts under a guiding theory. Others argue that these rules are mere slogans and propaganda. Nonetheless, whatever one’s reaction, it is hard not to read into the lyrics the message that in order to achieve a harmonious society, the Chinese as a collective body must work hard and follow the rules set by the Communist Party.

The strong message communicated through song lyrics is substantially reinforced by accompanying visuals. China’s national strength, for example, is presented via images of the military and infrastructural development. Power is conveyed through the commanding voice of the male singer, who wears a navy uniform in the video. Power is also illustrated through scenes with masses of male soldiers or, alternatively, countless female soldiers dressed in green army uniforms. The soldiers are shown raising guns and saluting as well as waving and smiling, implying that they are not there to fight the people but to ensure the peace by protecting them and guarding against enemies. Black and white images of soldiers fighting illustrate the important historical role the Red Army has played, and plenty of red flags waving in the video symbolize both the Communist Party and the Chinese nation-state. With teeming, red flags building a sense of urgency, the video suggests that the fate of China is clear: a strong China requires a powerful but benevolent national army under the leadership of the Communist Party, and such an army is required to ensure China’s autonomy against incursions from without, as well as against chaotic elements weakening the state from within.

In the same video, the Communist Party promotes its creation of a harmonious society by wedding it to China’s national economic and technological development, an achievement that the party claims has incrementally improved over the past 30 years, and a message that CCTV’s music-entertainment television programs constantly reiterated in the lead-up to the Beijing Olympic Games in 2008. Thus the notion of modern and national development, and of China’s rise, are marked in the video through images of high-rise buildings, a stadium, new cities, freeways, a high-speed train, a red sports car on a freeway, and the launch of a rocket into space. Through symbolic architecture and places that have stood the test of time, including the Forbidden City, the Great Wall, and Tiananmen Square (where all major Communist-sponsored parades and events have been held since 1949), China’s one-party state is linked visually to the country’s
long history. The Communist Party is thereby portrayed as integral to China’s past and present.

In addition, visuals in the clip suggest that this harmony is based on the support and hard work of different groups within society. Important collective members of the state appear: farmers depicted as human silhouettes stooping in the fields, workers donning hard hats sitting happily in front of a sign that reads “Serve the People” (Wei renmin fuwu), children wearing the red scarves of young pioneers expressing their support for the Communist Party, and China’s multiethnic communities happily, colorfully amassed and representing the official 56 nationalities. The Communist Party is portrayed as guardian of the unity among all nationalities, without which there would be chaos and disturbances caused by ethnic separatism. Any problems of class and ethnic tensions are completely erased from the visuals in this clip, and only implied by the need to assert harmony in such a forceful way. Significantly, urban professionals and business people are missing from the scene. Their absence suggests that the video is aimed at a less wealthy, more marginalized, older, and rural audience—the primary audience of television in an era where younger, wealthier urbanites are increasingly abandoning official television propaganda for entertainment on the Internet, or using their television monitors for other purposes such as karaoke, playing video games, and watching DVDs (Zhong, 2002: 125–126, 141).

Aurally, the song is imbued with militaristic sounds: trumpets calling out, snare drums measuring a steady yet urgent march, violins rising with crescendos, modern Western style orchestras as a backup force, and deep, strong male voices echoing key words projected by the lead singer. Clearly enunciated main lyrics highlight the importance of the song’s linguistic message. Overwhelmingly, the vision of harmony presented in this clip is one where the powerful party-state with its ideologies, rules, and moral codes, coupled with the strong military, is necessary to safeguard China’s modern, material development, and internal unity.

**Harmonious China and One China**

While the previous example highlights the party-state’s use of music videos to propagate a hardened, masculine vision of harmony as based on moral codes and militaristic control, other programs promote the notion of harmony in softer and more feminine ways. In 2010, CCTV broadcast a live music-entertainment television special specifically entitled “The 85th Anniversary of the Establishment of the
Party—Celebrating a Harmonious Society” (Jian dang 85 zhounian qingdian hexie shehui). In the spoken language of the hosts and through the names and lyrics of songs superimposed on the screen, harmonious society rhetoric is directly emphasized throughout the program. The opening song, “Harmonious China” (Hexie Zhongguo) (lyrics by Qu Bo, music by Wang Yongmei), the feature song taken from Zu Hai’s “Hong Kong Good Luck Has Come Mega Concert Album” (Xianggang haoyunlai daxing yanchanghui zhuankan) in celebration of the tenth anniversary of Hong Kong’s return to China in 2007, musically represents the idea of harmony in multiple ways: through synchronized choral voices, through the strong, smooth, high-pitched sounds of female military performing arts singer, Zu Hai, and through the sweet voices of the popular female Black Duck Trio (Hei yazi zuhe). Its lyrics present an image of peaceful, polite, happy, sweet, and harmonious people coming together at an auspicious time in the history of the People’s Republic.

In the second verse, the phrase “Harmonious China, Harmonious China / One China, the same happiness, singing together for harmony on earth” (Hexie Zhongguo, Hexie Zhongguo, Yi ge Zhongguo tongbuan tongle yi chang tian xia he) directly links the image of a harmonious country with the notion of “one China” (Yi ge Zhongguo). A direct reference to the one-China principle (Yi ge Zhongguo yuanze), this notion of “one China” insists that both Taiwan and the Mainland are inalienable parts of a single China. Moreover, it constitutes the basis of the one-China policy (Yi ge Zhongguo zhengce) that requires any country seeking diplomatic relations with the People’s Republic of China to end official relations with the Republic of China on Taiwan, thus recognizing the former as the sole, legitimate government of China as a whole.

The third verse draws on traditional Chinese cosmology of harmony between nature and man as it links the beauty of the unique (he’er butong), sublime (songgao), and modest (qianhe) mountains and rivers to the harmonious and beautiful family of the great Divine Land (Shenzhou, another name for China). More so, this third verse emphasizes harmony among people. First, it uses the metaphor of everyone singing “The Same Song” as a symbol of nation-state unity. Second, its lyrics squeeze in a reference to the “Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence” (“Good neighbors in peaceful coexistence, with many understanding friends”). Originally proposed by China in 1953 during negotiations with India over Chinese control of Tibet, since the 1970s, these five principles have become part of the broader Chinese diplomatic strategy toward the developing world.
and are widely accepted by other states. They include acknowledging mutual respect for each other’s territorial integrity and sovereignty, mutual nonaggression, mutual noninterference in each other’s internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence. This last principle was formerly applied to capitalist and communist countries coexisting peacefully, but is now used in a broader diplomatic sense (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, November 17, 2000). The third verse of “Harmonious China” implies that the five principles put forward by the Communist Party are respected by neighboring countries, and because of effective negotiation, the Chinese are able to live peacefully in the world.

Visual images in this onstage performance depict both allegiance to the Communist Party and a sense of personal contentment and happiness. As Zu Hai sings, she swings freely, with huge sunflowers projected behind her. Dressed, not in her military uniform, but in a glowing golden dress, she smiles broadly. Members of the Black Duck Trio also smile throughout their song. These women wear bright red dresses—red being the color of China and the Party. Dancers on stage wear red and white, colors symbolic of China and peace. Even though this performance still overtly articulates the important role the Communist Party plays in safeguarding territorial sovereignty and unifying the country, the use of female singers and sweet harmonies to promote the concept of a harmonious society offers a less rigid approach compared with the militaristic images in the previous example.

Depicting different groups of people as unified gives the impression that thanks to the efforts of the party-state, the collective spirit of the people has given rise to a harmonious society. The broadcast alternates between images of the onstage performance and stock video footage. Along with happy students in school uniforms waving at the camera, the video displays a family comprised of grandparents, parents, and a single boy—a “correct” family unit under the government’s one-child policy—all dressed in red and waving at the camera. Various nationalities in different costumes dance with each other happily and harmoniously and wave red scarves, suggesting the unity of all ethnic minorities. Children in red tunics run with red young pioneers’ scarves tied around their necks, displaying their support for the Communist Party. They are also depicted playing violins, suggesting the youths’ dual embrace of the Communist ideals and of Western modernity and development. Nurses, dressed uniformly in white tunics, throw red roses into a garden. And female foreigners are seen waving their arms in a friendly manner, although the fact that
their faces are not visible suggests that outside validation is not to be overemphasized.\textsuperscript{5}

Significantly, the transition between the end of the song, “Harmonious Society,” and the subsequent message from hosts is musically linked through the tinkling of the well-known tune, “If there was no Communist Party, there would be no New China” \textit{(Meiyou Gongchangdang, jiu meiyou xin Zhongguo)}. This connection clearly aims to impart among audiences the ideological message that if there were no Communist Party, there would also be no harmonious society. The lyrics of songs, the discourse of hosts, the type of music (i.e., choral singing and female voices), the choice of white and red colors, visual images of happy people singing, dancing, waving, and playing musical instruments in harmony, all work together to reinforce the same message: the Communist Party is the key to building and sustaining a harmonious and unified society. I have found online only one response to this highly politicized clip—“harmony, so harmonious!” Having just one brief online remark of such shallow insight suggests little interest by netizens in the more hardened and overt party propaganda, or that the video clip’s main audiences are not accessing it via the Internet. Nonetheless, regardless of whether audiences actually believe in and access such ideological messages via broadcast television or the Internet, attempts by the state media to appeal to the masses through music-entertainment in broadcast and online forms remains significant.

\textbf{A Harmonious World and the Beijing Olympic Games}

Unlike the previous two entertainment programs, clearly designed for a domestic audience, producing a cosmopolitan vision of harmony for an international audience and domestic audience simultaneously during the Beijing Olympic Games required a much softer and more open approach. This approach downplayed the role of the Communist Party and the People’s Liberation Army, focusing instead on individual, people-to-people relations. Olympic songs from 2008 often attempted to blend Chinese and English languages and musical styles, and highlight cooperation between Chinese and foreign performers and composers. For example, “Forever Friends” \textit{(Yongyuan de pengyou)},\textsuperscript{6} one of the most dynamic and highly plugged televised songs leading up to and during the Beijing Olympic Games, is sung in harmony by female, Hong Kong-born, Chinese-American star Coco Lee (Li Wen), and male, Mainland Chinese star Sun Nan. It
brings together Italian composer Giorgio Moroder, who composed the theme songs for the 1984 and 1988 Olympic Games, Mainland Chinese pianist and producer Kong Xiangdong, who is featured playing the piano in the video, as well as German lyricist Michael Kunze. The lyrics depict a peaceful world made up of friends laughing together in harmony. According to Kong Xiangdong, many “typical Chinese elements” as well as universally accepted elements are found in the theme song, ensuring that “Forever Friends” appeals to a global audience (Giorgio Moroder News, August 2, 2007). In both the Chinese and English versions of the music video, images depicting such locations as Arizona’s Grand Canyon, the Sydney Harbor Bridge and Opera House, the Pyramids of Giza, and the Eiffel Tower in Paris are blended with images of Beijing’s landmarks like the Great Wall, Temple of Heaven, Water Cube, Olympic Stadium, and the new CCTV headquarters, thus positioning Beijing as an important international city and establishing its role in promoting global harmony. Just as the Olympics feature torchbearers of different races, the lyrics overtly emphasize the idea of harmony as the coming together of people of different “races” from places around the world (“where you’ve never been”), who all feel the urge to unite with one another. The response to this song on YouTube by netizens, including by overseas Chinese, appeared to be very positive and enthusiastic except for some minor comments about Sun Nan’s need to work on his English pronunciation. One netizen, purportedly in the Philippines, expressed how “proud” he or she was to be a Chinese “descendant,” while another expressed his or her pride in being “chinese/taiwanese” [sic].

The official theme song of the opening ceremony of the Beijing Olympic Games, “Me and You” (Wo he ni) (lyrics by Chen Qigang, Ma Wen, and Chang Shilei, music by Chan Qigang), also attempts to blend East and West through the embodied duo of Chinese singer Liu Huan, well known in Mainland China, and British singer Sarah Brightman, one of the world’s best known sopranos, who had previously performed at the 1992 Barcelona Olympic Games. The lyrics of “Me and You” emphasize the coming together into one family (yi jia ren) of two separate entities, and the joining into one global family of China (as embodied by Liu) and the rest of the world (as embodied by Brightman). By simplifying the relationship between us and the Other in the official English version of the song, China is presented as a unified entity. From my extensive viewing of CCTV music videos and onstage entertainment programming in the lead-up to the Beijing Olympics, I have found that harmony between Chinese and
foreigners has almost always been presented as taking place in China (i.e., meeting in Beijing) and not abroad, highlighting foreigner’s attraction to a flourishing and harmonious China.

This discourse of harmony as friendship and the coming together of opposites into one world with one single dream represents a softer approach to propaganda in a context where the party-state tries to dampen Westerners’ fears of an aggressive, rising China. In a documentary about theme song composer/lyricist Chen Qigang broadcast on the program “People” (Renwu) on CCTV-10, artistic director Zhang Yimou reveals the song’s intention to offer the exact opposite of what he thinks foreigners expect from China:

From an international image point of view, many foreigners will expect us to sing about our great strength [Director Zhang Yimou waves his arms around fervently], but in the end we will suddenly sing, “Me and you are one family” [the other music/artistic directors sitting around the table nod in agreement]. (Author’s translation)

Zhang Yimou hopes the theme song for the opening ceremony is gentle, comfortable, and a solemn promise, rather than just a catchphrase. He wants it to “speak small not big,” to have feeling, to be about me and you, hand in hand, heart-to-heart. The gentle, slow beat of the song certainly gives this impression. While producers and directors work hard to present a nondogmatic and nonmilitaristic view of China’s approach to harmony, the reactionary tone (i.e., foreigners will expect x, but we will show them y), in contrast, continues to reflect the perception of foreigners as being against the Chinese and as having negative views of China. It speaks to a sense of fear that the Chinese may not be accepted by the West as equals in a modern, cosmopolitan world if they do not present the right image.

The visuals in the music video for “Me and You,” while similar to those of “Forever Friends,” offer an unusually open approach to harmony on a global scale in the context of CCTV’s overall music-entertainment programming. My impression of most of CCTV’s music-entertainment programming in the lead-up to the Olympics is that it was fixated on generating a strong sense of Chinese nationalism and patriotism rather than cross-cultural communication or understanding. The clip for “Me and You,” however, not only features individuals from China (including the male singer, Liu Huan), but other young men, women, boys, girls, and older people labeled as representing a range of different countries including Pakistan, Cape Verde, Costa Rica, Colombia, and South Korea, as well as the United
States, Great Britain (i.e., Sarah Brightman), Germany, and Italy. Going well beyond the norm of regular CCTV music-entertainment programming, there are close-up images of happy couples of different races—a Chinese women and an African man from Benin, and a Chinese man with a German woman—kissing and whispering into each others’ ears. A girl and a boy (apparently brother and sister) are given the hyphenated identity, China-America (zhongmei), alongside their Chinese names. This mixed-identity labeling, the idea that one can be both Chinese and American, also as embodied by Coco Lee in “Forever Friends,” was very unusual in CCTV’s music-entertainment programs from 2007 to 2010. Overall, the music video of “Me and You” is clearly directed toward both domestic and global audiences, and suggests a desire to project a more cosmopolitan China. It promotes a sense of global harmony attempting to dissolve tensions in China—foreign relations through individual-to-individual rather than state-to-state or party-to-people interactions.

Netizens’ reactions to “Me and You” are more mixed than reactions to “Forever Friends” because most people outside China would not know Liu Huan and many people in China may not have known Sarah Brightman before she sang in Beijing. One comment notes that it was Liu Huan “with some random English woman,” while another recognized Sarah Brightman with a “random Chinese guy.” The song is also much less dynamic than “Forever Friends,” offering a slower, more contemplative melody. Chinese audiences seemed particularly impressed that Sarah Brightman sang in Chinese, giving her a great round of applause during the live event and positive appraisal from netizens afterward, who also appreciated the “asian tone” of the song.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have drawn on three case studies to discuss the discourse of harmony as presented linguistically, musically, and visually via CCTV music-entertainment video clips and onstage music-entertainment programming. The examples highlight different ways the idea of harmony is constructed in the state media, and show that the idea of harmony is not fixed but varies depending on the perceived audience and purpose of the production. The various manifestations of harmonious society, harmonious China, and harmonious world, are integrated with other state ideologies and policies, including Hu Jintao’s moral code, the Eight Do’s and Eight Don’ts, the one-China policy and the principle of peaceful coexistence. These discourses
of harmony, directed at different television audiences such as party cadres, Chinese citizens, and international audiences, find distinct expressions in audiovisual texts.

Of the examples upon which I have drawn, “Harmonious Society Cultivates a New Wind” most overtly uses the vision of harmonious society to propagate moral standards and enforce the rule of law and ultimately helps promote common ideological aspirations for the whole society. It presents harmony as state unity, stability, and strength, conditions only possible when all Chinese people conform to the same closed set of civilized codes set by the Communist Party, and only when they are protected by a strong army. The special, live program, “The 85th Anniversary of the Establishment of the Party—Celebrating a Harmonious Society,” suggests that a harmonious China is dependent on upholding the one-China principle. It presents the notion of harmony in a more subtle way, with sweet, harmonious voices and the images of happy, confident women singers. It also builds into the lyrics the importance of harmony between man and nature as a key to the existing sociopolitical order. Finally, the music videos for the official songs for the Beijing Olympic Games, “Forever Friends” and “Me and You,” offer a cosmopolitan vision of harmony for both domestic and international audiences by implying that open international and interethnic cooperation and even intermarriage are important for producing a harmonious society on a global scale. While all of these clips are produced within the ideological confines of party-state media, they also reflect the malleability of the concept of harmony. Constructed differently by program producers, directors, performers and editors, depending on the political and ideological purpose of each clip or program and its intended audience, such clips present a glimpse of the party-state’s attempt to appeal through variously packaged indoctrainment.

Notes

1. A billboard with the slogan “Safe Olympics, Harmonious Beijing” can be seen at http://www.flickr.com/photos/bruce-in-beijing/2603421433/. For more information about the slogans of the Beijing Olympic Games, see the official website “One World One Dream” at: http://en.beijing2008.cn/spirit/beijing2008/graphic/n214068253.shtml. For more examples of popularized Olympic slogans, see Mr. What (July 20, 2008).

2. A clip of “Song of the Grass-Mud Horse” is available at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wKx1aenJK08
3. A clip of the music video for “Harmonious Society Cultivates a New Wind” is available at http://www.tudou.com/programs/view/bC9wFVzOeTo/. This kind of music video could have appeared on CCTV-3’s regular music video show called China Music Television (Zhongguo Yinyue Dianshi), broadcast every morning and evening.

4. The “85th Anniversary of the Establishment of the Party—Celebrating a Harmonious Society” can be viewed at http://v.youku.com/v_show/id_XODcyOTk0Mjg=.html

5. From my fieldwork observation, while foreigners rarely appeared in any Chinese music videos on CCTV from 2007 to 2010, of the few songs during the Beijing Olympic Games that had minor shots of foreign Olympic athletes, most had the foreigners’ heads cut out of the picture or included shots of foreigners looking away from the camera.


7. The comments were retrieved on May 2, 2012 from http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rhndC-zQ2uY&feature=player_embedded#

8. The documentary “Beijing Olympics Musical Director Chen Qigang” was broadcast on September 24, 2009. Retrieved on December 1, 2011 from http://search.cntv.cn/tansuo/index.shtml?qtext=%u5F20%u827A%u8C0B

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Bibliography


CHAPTER 5

Harmonious Online Society: The China Model in the Information Age

Sidney Y. Liu

Introduction

With the Internet’s prevalence growing exponentially during the past decade, cyberspace has increasingly embedded itself in the Chinese society. China’s government has responded in kind. Under the rhetoric of building a harmonious online society, Beijing has constructed a China model to monitor and regulate the Internet to eliminate political challenges posed by the decentralized and borderless technological system. This top-down model of Internet governance is characterized by a dual strategy. First, the government blocks online content and communication that it deems threatening to its rule. Second, the state fights for technical standard-setting and resource reallocation on a global stage under the guise of protecting Internet sovereignty. This dual strategy is increasingly difficult to sustain, however, as shown in the implementation of the Green Dam (lüba) program and the Google dispute. More recently, in the face of criticism and discontent, the Chinese government has switched to a softer approach: interacting with netizens, making its presence felt online, and negotiating with global Internet governance institutions. Meanwhile, at the same time China softens its stance, many developing countries have subscribed to the China model of Internet control to deal with various social and political challenges amplified by the use of the Internet. This chapter focuses on the ideological and practical appeal of the China model of Internet governance, and analyzes its political implications at the domestic, regional, and international levels.
Since the People’s Republic broke away from the Maoist era of revolutionary socialism and transformed itself from a centrally planned to a free market economy three decades ago, China has amazed the world with its double-digit growth and its consolidation of Leninist polity. On the one hand, the growth of foreign and domestic investments, the supply of an abundant and flexible labor force, and the effective combination of private and state sectors have made China the second largest economy in the world, second only to the United States. On the other hand, through a series of gradual political reforms, the Communist Party has legitimated its rule without abandoning the old authoritarian institutions and practices (Zhao, 2010). The idea of socialism with Chinese characteristics is captured and theorized by many analysts as a unique China model, totally distinct from the Western view that development and democratization are genetically linked (Yang, 2009; Lagerkvist, 2010; Zheng, 2008). Under this developmental model, sound economic performance has become a new source of legitimacy that keeps the Communists in power. In order to sustain a stable environment and concentrate resources on national development, however, all plurality is sacrificed, and individual rights and needs are ignored. This is what Lai Hongyi (2010: 820) dubs a system of pro-growth authoritarianism.

Such a pro-growth authoritarian system is best shown in state control of Internet space. China’s leadership, like its counterparts in the developing world, has recognized information technology as one of the most important strategic industries through whose development China can realize its dream of catching up with the advanced Western economies. In 2006, China released the National Informationization Development Strategy as a means of creating a well-integrated information society in the new century. In fact, two Southeast Asian countries launched similar policies to create better telecommunication and electronic networking. In 1996, Malaysia ventured on a Multimedia Super Corridor, and in 1999, Thailand unfolded an IT2000 plan. Although some optimists have predicted that with the information age comes the rise of civil society and collapse of authoritarianism, as shown in the Arab Spring uprisings, the Chinese government has retained strong control over cyberspace.

Precisely because of the Internet’s liberalizing tendencies, China has developed a sophisticated filtering system to contain such forces of social and cultural liberalization, and co-opted many private Internet service providers for nation- and state-building. As Zheng Yongnian (2008) posits insightfully, the Internet has provided an important avenue for the mutual empowerment of Chinese state and society.
Furthermore, China’s attempts to co-opt domestic and transnational Internet companies and restrict the operation of social media technologies players in the country have in fact globalized discussions of Internet governance. Seen from this perspective, Internet development in China not only highlights the changing government-society relationship, but also reveals how the state develops new strategies to fend off political, social, and cultural challenges from the Internet.

This chapter focuses on China’s strategy of building a harmonious online society. It traces the evolution of such a strategy on domestic and international levels. By blocking and filtering sensitive online materials and by co-opting the private sector via a rigid licensing system, China appears to have tamed the Internet. When societal and business forces begin to assert themselves, risking state authority as shown in the Green Dam and Google incidents, however, sustaining such a strategy becomes extremely difficult. While still enforcing a strict surveillance policy on the Internet, the government has also adopted some softer tactics by engaging with the domestic online communities and negotiating with the global Internet governance regime. These inward and outward efforts are designed to construct a state-regulated harmonious Internet space. With China’s emergence as a rising political and economic power in the early twenty-first century, China’s model of Internet governance and control has strong policy appeal and broad implications regionally and internationally.

China’s Inward Pursuit of a Harmonized Online Society

The foremost task of harmonizing online space is to set up the boundary within which any cyber activities can be restricted by norms and rules prescribed by the Chinese government. The ambiguous wording of China’s policy provisions constructs a perceivable but intangible frame, so that netizens must confine themselves to an iron cage. For example, the Administration of Internet Information and Service Procedures, promulgated in 2000, vaguely defined nine types of unlawful online content, including any content that would oppose the Chinese Constitution, compromise state security, and harm the dignity and interests of the nation (State Council, September 25, 2000). In 2005, an updated version of the procedures banned any online information that would incite illegal assemblies, marches and demonstrations, or represent the agendas of any illegal civil groups. Meanwhile, in 2004, the state authorities founded the China Internet
Illegal Information Reporting Centre (CIIRC) to police Internet space and identify any unlawful online materials.

Heavy punishments have been imposed for those Internet service providers, hosts, and users who violate the rules. For instance, any domestic websites that distribute news information without approval from state agencies are shut down and fined up to 30,000 yuan (US$4,736.94). Government regulations also target offline entities such as Internet cafes and network users. In a purge ostensibly prompted by a fatal fire in 2002, authorities in 2004 shut down 47,000 Internet cafes without proper business licenses, but an internal report estimated that number to be as high as 130,000 (Lum, February 10, 2006). An ethnographic study of Internet cafes by Helen Sun has shown that every net bar visitor is confronted with mandatory real-name registration, on-screen warnings, and web manager’s monitoring. Although these intimidating methods have enabled the state to maintain effective control over cyberspace, among teenaged Internet users they have aroused much sympathy toward online activism (Sun, 2010: 250). Amnesty International reports that between 1994 and 2004 at least 54 online dissidents and activists were arrested and prosecuted for subversion and breach of national security (Zheng, 2008: 70–78).

Besides these punitive actions, the Chinese state adopts many preemptive methods to shape the online sphere. Since 1998, the Ministry of Public Security has developed a powerful filtering and blocking system to monitor information flows between China and the outside world. This project, known as the Golden Shield (jindun gongcheng), has become one of the most sophisticated and effective checkpoints in the information network. China is not the only country that deploys filtering techniques but “it is unique in the world for its system of Internet connections when triggered by a list of banned keywords” (Open Net Initiative, 2009: 17). Through this filtering system, the government contains any undesired information and discussion during politically sensitive periods. For example, officials wiped out controversial news and antigovernment speeches on the Internet ahead of the inauguration of the 17th Party Congress in 2007.

The state also employs a rigid business licensing system to demand obedience and cooperation from the private sector. As a result, many Chinese online service providers assist the state in monitoring the Internet. In 2003, 30 major online news corporations including Xinhua, Sina, Sohu, and NetEase, signed the Internet News Information Service Self-Pledge and swore to “obey government administration and public supervision voluntarily, to resist firmly
internet transmission of harmful information such as obscenity, pornography and superstition, and to resist the information that violates the fine culture traditions and moral codes of the Chinese nation” (Zheng, 2008: 65).

Cooperation of the private sector is crucial for the government to respond to any crises that otherwise would have induced instability and threatened the regime. The best example was the self-imposed censorship over any information about the Jasmine Revolutions, which had spread eastward from Tunisia to Egypt, Yemen, Bahrain, and Syria, and then doubled back to Libya in 2011. All online portals and forums eliminated any reference to Egypt, Libya, jasmine, Facebook, and revolutions (Wong and Barboza, January 31, 2011).

With this hard-line approach, China is determined to reshape Internet space according to its own ideology. In late 2007, Cai Mingzhao, then the vice director of the Information Office of the State Council, emphasized that all forms of Chinese online media should “have a firm grasp of correct guidance, creating a favorable online opinion environment for the building of a harmonious society” (Bandurski, 2007). Any opinion calling for the end of one-party rule is therefore not tolerated in cyberspace. On this score, Rebecca MacKinnon (2009a) has shown that online references to Falun Gong, the 1989 Tiananmen pro-democracy movement, and Tibetan struggle for independence are heavily censored by the major Blog Service Providers. The harmonious online society is primarily built by isolating any undesired information from the public domain and by carefully monitoring and shaping online behavior.

As the latest issue of Freedom on the Net points out, these intimidating measures have made the Chinese Internet more like an intranet (Freedom House, 2011: 88). The binary opposition between Internet freedom and control has created a paradoxical feature in China’s cyberspace: growing online freedom is accompanied by intensification of government surveillance through formal and informal censorship. Nevertheless, given the transnational nature of the online system, China has yet to promote its model of Internet governance to the outside world.

**China’s Outward Struggle for a Harmonious Internet**

In constructing the internal Great Firewall (fanghuo changcheng) to harmonize Internet space, China negotiates with other international players over the issue of Internet governance. As a globalized
network, the Internet relies on commonly agreed technical protocols that enable data transmission among its users and terminals. Such protocols are of great political significance because they can “reap disproportionate benefits for actors that either own the standards in a proprietary fashion or have first-mover advantages in exploiting those standards” (Drezner, 2007: 107). Another political power of the Internet lies in the allocation of resources, especially embodied by domain names and IP addresses, which are increasingly limited given the rapid expansion of online communities. Historically, protocols and Internet resources have been almost exclusively governed by the United States either directly through governmental agencies or indirectly through nongovernmental organizations (Carr, 2009; Rosenzweig, 1998). China’s struggle for Internet power, therefore, starts with and centers on breaking the American monopoly.

To a large extent, the seamless function of the Internet system is realized and sustained by a series of technical standards (Mathiason, 2009), such as the Transmission Control Protocol/Internet Protocol (TCP/IP), the HyperText Markup Language (HTML), and the IEEE 802.11 standards for wireless local area network (often called Wi-Fi). Controlling these technical standards is tantamount to dominating a global network system. China, a latecomer to Internet development notwithstanding, has been aware of the political implications of such a technological arrangement, and has endeavored to gain security and independence in cyberspace through indigenous innovations. To develop indigenous standards and techniques is consistent with China’s strategy of enhancing its technological innovations against competitors (Hu, October 24, 2007). In order to avoid dependence on Western technology China’s government invests in a series of indigenous innovations and Chinese technology products. For example, it supports the Time Division Synchronous Code Division Multiple Access (TD-SCDMA), the wireless local area network (WLAN), WLAN Authentication and Privacy Infrastructure (WAPI), various kinds of Chinese home networking standards, and Internet Protocol (IP) version 9. All these Chinese alternatives to familiar IT aim at breaking the Western monopoly in digital technologies and making China a new global player.

Among these technological breakthroughs, the WAPI standard as alternative to Wi-Fi exemplifies the Chinese strategy of Internet governance. Wi-Fi technology has been an internationally accepted standard for wireless network. In view of both Wi-Fi’s technological loopholes and China’s opportunity to advance its indigenous innovations, however, China established the Broadband Wireless IP
Standards Group in 2001, and in 2003 adopted the WAPI standard as a replacement for the standard Wi-Fi technology. The government required all wireless devices sold in the Chinese market to support the WAPI standard. This move threatened the interests of the Wi-Fi coalition and provoked strong protest from the United States (Kennedy, 2006). In 2004, US Secretary of Commerce Donald L. Evans, Secretary of State Colin L. Powell, and Trade Representative Robert B. Zoellick jointly sent a letter to their Chinese counterparts complaining that the mandatory WAPI policy posed a technological barrier to international trade (Lemon, March 4, 2004). Under tremendous diplomatic pressure, China initially postponed implementation of such a policy, but later changed its tactic from internationalizing the WAPI standard to popularizing it first in the domestic market. Meanwhile, China launched several prominent projects to institutionalize the WAPI standard domestically. It used WAPI extensively in the Beijing Olympic Games and in all government procurements. This policy effort paid off in 2009 when ten major countries, including the United States and several industrial giants like Intel and Broadcom, agreed to promote China’s WAPI as a new standard (Hong, 2009). The Chinese effort to internationalize the WAPI standard suffered a temporary setback in mid-2011, however, when the United States refused to issue a visa to a Mainland Chinese expert planning to raise the WAPI issue at the International Standard Organization’s conference in San Diego, California.

Through technological innovation, China strives to influence the Internet’s resource reallocation. The most critical resource of the global Internet is its Domain Name System (DNS), regarded by Monika Ermert and Christopher R. Hughes (2003: 127) as “a significant source of political power due to its function of allocating, storing, and retrieving Internet addresses.” For historical reasons, the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN), founded under the law of California and responsible only to the US Department of Commerce, has since 1998 administered the allocation, registration, and creation of generic top-level domains (gTLDs) such as .com, .org, and .edu (Mathiason, 2009). Although there is no international consensus over the control of non-Latin-character domain names, China still has much space to maneuver. When an American company announced in 2000 it would start registering the non-Latin domain names including those using Chinese characters, China protested strongly and claimed the Chinese people exercise absolute mandate over the registration and allocation of Chinese domain names (Ermert and Hughes 2003: 135).
In the following decade, Chinese officials called for the reform of ICANN and the diversion of administrative authority from the private sector to various national governmental bodies. Eventually, in 2010, ICANN yielded to Chinese pressure and granted China authority to manage all registered Chinese character domains (.zhongguo, or .china) in both simplified and traditional versions (*The China Daily*, April 28, 2010). This move was a tradeoff by ICANN in exchange for China’s embrace of the organization (MacKinnon, 2009b). Besides the sheer size of its online population, China is growing in political and economic importance in the international sphere. ICANN has little choice but to accommodate China’s concerns over Internet governance.

China’s unique notion of Internet sovereignty dictates these struggles over control of online technical standards and resource redistribution. The Chinese state’s attempt to co-opt the Internet for nation-building contrasts with the common understanding of the Internet landscape as transnational and borderless. According to one Chinese official report (Information Office of the State Council, 2010), “The government believes that the Internet is an important infrastructure facility for the nation. Within Chinese territory, the Internet is under the jurisdiction of Chinese sovereignty. The Internet sovereignty (wangluo zhuquan) of China should be respected and protected.” This policy announcement should be understood as a first step toward nationalizing the Internet. China publicly rejects the Western conception of a market-based, private-dominated Internet system, and favors a new structure that weighs governmental authorities over nonstate actors and national security over individual liberty and freedom. Evidently, these aggressive policies of harmonizing cyberspace and influencing Internet governance abroad reveal a growing sense of confidence among China’s top leaders. These current leaders appear ready to break away from Deng Xiaoping’s old strategy of biding time and lying low; they demonstrate determination to challenge Western dominance over digital technologies and to construct a more equitable structure for global and national Internet governance.

**The China Model Online: Influences and Discontents**

Chinese attempts at creating an online harmonious society show a combination of both internal and external policies of Internet control. Internally, the state has asserted sovereignty over cyberspace within its territories. It has isolated, contained, and eliminated any
undesirable online information, and promoted its own ideology and practice. Externally, the state has imposed its influence over global Internet governance and sought to reshape the future development of Internet infrastructure. Despite the different focuses of internal and external control, these two strategies are inherently intertwined. It is relatively easy for the government to regulate the online behavior of netizens and restrict public discussion internally. But the transnational nature of the Internet and the availability of circumventing techniques mean that the sophisticated Great Firewall cannot totally control information flows from outside China. The most fervent critics against the Communist regime are usually exiled dissenters, who coordinate protests in China from afar using foreign servers and IP addresses. Beijing has frequently accused overseas Muslim Uyghur organizations of exploiting the Internet to disseminate anti-Chinese rumors, and mobilizing during the summer of 2009 massive protests in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (Xinhua, July 9, 2009). Officials’ efforts to demarcate Internet sovereignty by regulating the Chinese-script domain names, therefore, would buttress the domestic strategy of harmonizing cyberspace.

The more power China gains over the global Internet governance structure, the fewer spaces available for Chinese dissenters, Tibetan activists, and Muslim Uyghurs to maneuver in their struggles against Beijing. To a certain degree, China’s official understanding of Internet sovereignty and its pursuit of cyber control can be seen as an extension abroad of its Great Firewall censorship within. By claiming state authority over the Internet on both fronts—domestic and international—China has created a new model of cyber governance that would turn the Internet into an intranet, subject to monitoring and surveillance at all times (Freedom House, 2011: 88).

This distinctively Chinese model of cyber control, nonetheless, holds great appeal for many countries in Southeast Asia, where governments find the Internet economically promising but politically threatening. In Thailand, the ousted populist leader, Thaksin Shinawatra, has effectively used the Internet to connect with his supporters, mobilize waves of antigovernment protests, and spread radical and antimonarchy rhetoric (Liu, May 4–5, 2011). In Malaysia, the Barisan Nasional (BN) ruling coalition experienced its worst electoral defeat since 1957 when it lost its two-thirds parliamentary majority in the 2008 general election. The opposition’s strategic use of the Internet for grassroots mobilization was at least partly responsible for this electoral setback (Case, 2009; Sani, 2009). In Myanmar, the new mass media played a significant role in that country’s 2007
Saffron Revolution (Chowdhury, 2008). Moreover, the rapid increase in the prevalence of the Internet has intensified certain preexisting social conflicts in Southeast Asia, where race, ethnicity, religion, and class are crisscrossing into large-scale movements. In 2005, East Timorese politicians and activists relied on the Internet to consolidate their independence struggle and foster primordial identities in times of brutal communal conflict in Maluku province (Hill and Sen, 2005).

Facing these political and social headaches, many Southeast Asian governments find the China model of Internet governance an irresistible attraction. China’s influence can be identified at three levels. First, several countries have turned to China to duplicate its surveillance technologies. Vietnam crafted an Internet firewall similar to the Great Firewall of China to filter and block online information flows (Cain, 2009), while Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak ignored public outcry over two attempts to put in place a Chinese-style Green Dam system (Chooi, April 24, 2011). Secondly, through official exchange programs, Southeast Asian governments have learned the latest regulatory strategies and techniques of Internet governance from China. An increasing number of officials from Thailand, Kampuchea, Myanmar, and other countries have received training in China, where Chinese judicial, policing, and Internet control tactics are par for the course (Cain, 2009; Kurlantzick, September 24, 2011). Last, but not least, China is redoubling efforts to integrate regional telecommunication networks across Asia, making feasible interstate cooperation in the regulation of cross-border online activities. The most important project is the Great Mekong Sub-region Information Superhighway (GMS-IS) launched in 2004 to construct a unified and high-capacity telecom network among Southwest China, Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Kampuchea, and Vietnam. The telecom network is composed of three major routes. The first route begins at Nanning in China and stretches through Vietnam from Hanoi in the north to Ho Chi Minh City in the south, with parts of the telecom cable expanding westwards to Laos and Kampuchea. The second route starts at the Chinese city of Kunming and runs southwards to Vientiane in Laos and Bangkok in Thailand. The third one is to be built from Dali in China to Yangon in Myanmar. Completion of such an extensive and visible telecom infrastructure makes China a better and more reliable political ally for its neighboring countries than either Europe or the United States. With such considerable political, social, and economic integration in the Great Mekong Sub-region, it is no wonder that the China model of Internet governance dominates this part of the world (see map 5.1).
The China model of Internet governance and control directly challenges Western ideals of freedom of expression and access to information. The Internet’s early development, itself decentralized, begot digital communication technology that was easily affordable and accessible to all. Accessibility rather than exclusivity—by which early users tended to come almost exclusively from member countries of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)—prevailed. In fact, OECD countries envisioned a private- and individual-dominated cyberspace, free from government interference. This vision is the complete opposite of the China model. These two contrasting visions of Internet development have surfaced.
in numerous diplomatic exchanges. For example, while China has tightened electronic surveillance and harassed online activists, US Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton (2010) has conveyed the United States’ deep commitment to advancing Internet freedom worldwide. Her French counterpart, Bernard Kouchner (March 13, 2010), has also remarked that defending the fundamental freedom of Internet use is a crucial battle in the twenty-first century.

This rhetorical disagreement reflects more than difference of perception; it also reflects the West’s growing anxiety about China’s pursuit of indigenous innovation in information technology. As Scott Kennedy (2006: 43) argues, such technological efforts challenge the West in an area where Western countries have thought themselves to be competitive and capable of withstanding China’s rise. With the emergence of many new information technologies, conflicts between China and the West over standard-setting and resource reallocation are unavoidable.

Discontent in response to the China model stems not only from national governments in the West, but also from the civil society, general public, and private sector in China. The Green Dam episode exemplifies domestic discontent over government regulations of the Internet. On May 19, 2009, the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology issued a sweeping directive requiring all personal computers sold in China, including those imported from abroad, to preinstall a filtering product called the Green Dam Youth Escort Software (lüba huaji huang ruanjian), in order to create a green, healthy, and harmonious Internet environment, and to prevent harmful information from poisoning the minds of Chinese youth. Critical research findings have shown, however, that this filtering software did more than what it claimed to protect children from harmful information; it introduced a more intrusive and comprehensive filtering system than the existing centralized ISP-level filtering schemes (Open Net Initiative, 2009).

What caught the Chinese government by surprise was fierce public criticism against such a policy. In mid-June 2009, a Chinese professor from the South China University of Technology in Guangzhou criticized the policy as a typical example of the abuse of state power and an encroachment on civil rights. Meanwhile, several scholars from Hong Kong and Beijing submitted a joint letter to the State Council, stating that the policy was absolutely irrational and even violated some of China’s telecommunication laws. Findings from online public surveys have indicated that 92 percent of more than 36,000 voters completely rejected the Green Dam program, giving it a poor score of 0.7 out of 10. A group of Chinese hackers, calling themselves Anonymous (Wumingshi), threatened to attack the Green Dam software company.
if its filtering software were mandatorily installed in all new computers (Taylor, August 13, 2009). The government responded to the public outcry and postponed the mandatory installation of the Green Dam-Youth Escort software on new computers. It conceded to public pressure and allowed consumers to install the filtering software voluntarily. This episode is widely hailed as a victory of Chinese netizens, who are prepared to stand up for their rights, and who are keenly aware of the increasing vulnerability of the state in regulating the Internet.

The Chinese private sector has also added its voice to the public outcry over state regulations of the Internet. In January 2010, Google, the global online search engine giant, threatened to pull out of China, partly because its Gmail service had been targeted by hackers. More importantly, the company was critical of China’s censorship regime and refused to censor any sensitive online information in exchange for the government’s renewal of its operating license. Although the government played down this incident as a mere commercial dispute, the public statement issued by Google sparked extensive debate among Chinese about the future of cyberspace. Some netizens even placed bouquets of flowers in front of Google China’s headquarters in Beijing as a gesture lamenting Google’s potential departure. At the same time, Google’s decision to leave China was welcomed by numerous groups in the United States, because in deed as well as in word, Google upheld its motto, “Do no evil.”

Though no one will ever be sure of Google’s real motives in the dispute, it is undeniable that Google’s actions stood in direct opposition to China’s long-held policy of politicizing the private sector and co-opting it for nation-building. In the end, Google renewed its license and continued its operations in China. At the same time, it redoubled its efforts to cooperate with Microsoft, Yahoo, and many human rights organizations to support the Global Network Initiative, previously launched in 2008, to monitor violations of Internet freedom worldwide. That, along with Google’s business counterparts, groups from the United States and netizens everywhere expressed ardent support for Google in its intention to abandon the China market has sent China a clear message: the global community has vetoed its authoritarian model of Internet governance and control (Jones, October 28, 2008).

Is the China Model on the Brink?
The Green Dam and Google incidents reveal a decline in China’s state power vis-à-vis its civil society and private sector in an age of
information technologies. The China model of Internet governance and control is being challenged by netizens at home and abroad. Before these two milestone incidents, some observers referred to 2007 as the Year One of Public Events (Gonggong shijian yuannian). It was in 2007 that well-educated netizens, mostly homeowners in the city of Xiamen, Fujian province, forced municipal authorities to relocate from Xiamen’s downtown to the countryside a massive paraxylene (PX) chemical plant proposed for construction (Xiao, 2011: 47–48). Many netizens and environmentalists in other parts of China mobilized themselves to protest similar chemical plant construction projects.

In fact, the growth of online activism has revealed some structural weaknesses in the China model. By the end of 2010, the Chinese online population reached 457 million, among whom 294 million used blogs and 352 million used instant message services on a regular basis (CNNIC, 2010). The ever-expanding Chinese online community and the sheer size of information flows together have made government censorship more difficult and more costly to achieve. The old strategy of simply restricting and suppressing information flows is no longer effective. Attempts at co-opting multinational corporations also risk provoking criticism by human rights groups and governments in the West, and breaking down the potential co-optation of the private sector. Many organizations that support Internet freedom in cooperation with Western leaders have become more institutionalized and posed a strong challenge to China’s Internet censorship regime. A number of US policy advisors have called for export controls on American companies selling Internet censorship and surveillance technologies to China and other authoritarian countries (Calingaert, 2010). While acknowledging all these structural weaknesses, is the China model of Internet governance on the edge of collapse?

To the contrary, recent developments within China’s Internet strategy demonstrate modification and adjustment rather than fundamental transformation or collapse. Instead of blockading any sensitive data and regulating online behavior, China’s leadership has maximized the potential of Internet-facilitated policy forums to achieve better governance. Rather than eliminating what the state considers harmful and undesirable information, the government has played an active role in shaping state-approved values, norms, and practices in cyberspace. In 2008, President Hu Jintao communicated with Chinese netizens for the first time via the state-run Strengthening the Nation Forum (qiangguo luntan) hosted on the People’s Daily website. Since then, the online presence of China’s leaders has become more frequent. On
February 28, 2009, Premier Wen Jiabao engaged netizens in policy discussions and won applause from domestic and overseas media. Some journalists called this development an era of Internet democracy (wangluo minzhu) in China (Xinhua, February 28, 2009). As the interactive social media technologies become popular in the country, many journalists, low- and middle-ranking officials, and grassroots organizations have used micro-blogging to their advantage. When a people’s representative used a blog to report live from inside the Great Hall of the People during the annual session of the National People’s Congress in 2010, the news story attracted nationwide attention (Mills, April 9, 2010). A recent study by Fudan University in Shanghai shows that the Communist Party has fully embraced the social media technologies, with more than 2,000 micro-blogs in China associated with party officials and government agencies. Nineteen of these political micro-blogs are created by officials at the provincial and ministerial levels, and 105 of them are run by the departmental officials (Zhang and Jia, 2011).

This trend of development highlights the changing mindset of China’s leadership. When Chinese leaders first encountered the Internet frontier, they felt threatened by it and blamed the new information technologies for causing turbulences. But today, leaders have not only familiarized themselves with the latest social media technologies but also employed the Internet as a new instrument to increase state-society communication and enhance the quality of government operations and public services. The new strategy is to embrace rather than marginalize the Internet as a vehicle for propagating the government’s message (Mills, April 9, 2010).

Constructing an electronic Great Wall to guard China from outside influence is not a feasible option for today’s leaders. An important shift in the government’s thinking is to pursue an Internet with Chinese characteristics in the competitive international environment (Mills, April 9, 2010). This perspective reminds us of the nineteenth-century Chinese thinker Wei Yuan (1794–1856), who proposed to emulate foreigners’ strength in technology in order to overcome them (shi yi changji yi zhi yi). That is, China ought to employ Western science and technology to defeat the West. In a similar fashion, China’s current government has strongly encouraged and supported the creation of indigenous websites and social media technologies to replace international ones. As a result, Chinese netizens can only access Youku, Tudou, and Ku6, Chinese equivalents of video-sharing sites Youtube and Vimeo; Renren and Kaixin001, local versions of social network site Facebook; and Sina Weibo, similar to micro-blogging
platform Twitter. In a similar move, the government has funded and established through the People’s Daily an online search engine called people’s search (goso.cn) to compete with Google and homegrown Chinese search engine Baidu.

By nurturing these indigenous communication technologies, China has entered competition with major media companies and media technology players abroad. The country has become more participatory, yet more assertive, in global Internet governance as the Internet with Chinese characteristics requires even more authority on the part of China to set new global standards of Internet governance and resource reallocation. Since China reengaged the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) in 2009, its impact on the development of global Internet governance is still unfolding, with serious implications for netizens worldwide (MacKinnon, 2009a).

This shift of Internet strategy does not, however, mean that China’s government has abandoned its censorship regime. Embracing new social media technologies has reinforced online censorship. The government has simultaneously combined its censorship regime with interactive media technologies to strengthen one-party rule. When in March 2011 Premier Wen delivered his report on the work of the government, he emphasized the need to utilize and regulate the Internet within the unique Chinese political and cultural environment (Wen, March 5, 2011). This dual-track strategy of utilizing and regulating online space is best reflected in the establishment of the State Internet Information Office in May 2011, a new body responsible for implementing government policies on Internet information transmission, organizing online propaganda campaigns, investigating and closing illegal websites, and supervising the registration of domain names (Xinhua, May 4, 2011).

When China encountered serious difficulty in its attempt to build a harmonious online society, it revamped its Internet strategy by co-opting, utilizing, and regulating the new social media technologies for one-party rule. This mode of thinking displayed feasibility among the top Communist leaders and appealed to the elites of the developing world. For example, Hugo Chavez, Vladimir Putin, and Thaksin Shinawatra have found in online media a new mobilizing tool. Even though they have not gone so far as their Chinese counterparts in reshaping the Internet with their national characteristics, they fully embrace the information technology revolution. They have set up personal accounts on Facebook, Twitter, and other blogging websites in order to spread political ideas, defend
themselves, and attack opponents. Despite criticism about corruption and policy failures, they have earned points for their online presence in the electronic media. Some countries, however, have actually followed in the footsteps of China with moves to nationalize cyberspace. In late 2009, Turkey created a national search engine that better conformed to Turkish sensibilities. Meanwhile, Iran, Russia, and Malaysia have proposed to develop their nationwide email systems (Morozov, 2011: 67). As these countries set about developing new regimes of Internet control, the China model may prevail in some parts of the world. Perhaps in the early twenty-first century there will be a new Beijing Consensus in the management of cyberspace.

Bibliography


CHAPTER 6

The Harmonious Language of Young Hans in Urumqi, Xinjiang

Elena Caprioni

Introduction

In recent years, Chinese President Hu Jintao and the leadership of the Communist Party have held up harmonious society (hexie shehui) as crucial for guaranteeing the country’s prosperity, the nation’s rejuvenation, and the people’s happiness. The government has repeatedly asserted that as complement to the current dramatic socioeconomic transformation in China, a harmonious language environment is essential for transforming China into a truly harmonious society. The words of Chinese citizens, consequently, matter insofar as whether they can work toward or against the ultimate realization of this nation-building effort. In examining the spoken vocabulary of the Han society in Urumqi—the capital of Muslim-populated Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region in northwestern China—this chapter sheds light on how the younger generation of Han Chinese residents reacts to the state’s new agenda of building a harmonious country. A detailed comparison of official propaganda slogans coupled with firsthand oral records is useful for interpreting Han feelings in an increasingly unstable Xinjiang, fraught as it is with ethnic tensions and social disputes. Based on field observations and empirical studies, I argue that Han youths in Urumqi do not fully subscribe to the state’s rhetorical emphasis on harmony. In fact, rather than cooperating with the state to create a harmonious language environment, they frequently use discriminatory and violent language against ethnic
minorities, especially Uyghurs, thereby fuelling the already tense and explosive predicament of this frontier region.

Constructing the discourse of harmony has been an integral part of contemporary Chinese statecraft, a major topic of discussion in the last few chapters. The official concept of building a socialist harmonious society (shehui zhuyi hexie shehui) was first introduced by Hu Jintao during the 16th Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party in September 2004, and reached its full maturity in 2006. Since then, this concept has become a significant policy task, part and parcel of the Chinese socialist cause, and a vital and realistic means for institutionalizing a modern society. According to President Hu, a harmonious society should feature democracy and the rule of law, fairness and justice, integrity and fraternity, vitality, stability and order, and harmony between man and nature (i.e., environmental sustainability) (Renmin Ribao, October 18, 2006). To achieve these ends—and eventually build a just and equal society—requires equally ambitious steps to expand the fast-growing Chinese middle class, uniformly redistribute wealth, reduce contradictions and inequalities caused by rapid economic growth, and promote education and create opportunities for all. Communist officials pledge to transform China by 2020 from a partially developed society into a highly developed and fully modernized country, benefiting the whole population instead of only a small, rich minority. Bettering socioeconomic conditions for all is thought to be a key to maintaining stability, enhancing governance, and winning the hearts and minds of China’s people in the twenty-first century.

Even if the Communist Party believes that Chinese society is generally harmonious, it acknowledges that several issues such as rampant corruption, social injustice, public protests, income and development disparities, and shortage of energy and resources jeopardize internal stability and economic growth. To resolve these problems and build a harmonious country, President Hu emphasizes that all Chinese people must advocate the concept of harmony and nurture the spirit of harmony. Such personal cultivation will “further foster common ideals and beliefs for the whole society, and solidify the ideology and moral base for the whole Party and people of various ethnic groups to work hard in unison” (Xinhua, October 11, 2006). The state now considers the new socialist core-value system to be the moral and ideological foundation for strengthening unity and harmony within China.

In the 1980s, the Chinese authorities issued a package of moral instructions known as the Five Standards, Four Virtues, and Three
Loves (wujiang simei sanre’ai) to resurrect China from the chaos of the Cultural Revolution. Five standards refer to the five essentials of personal behavior: decorum, manners, hygiene, discipline, and morals; four virtues mean four points of beauty: mind, language, behavior, and environment; three loves mean three ardent loves: party, country, and socialism. Following in the footsteps of the Five Standards, Four Virtues, and Three Loves, President Hu’s moral code launched in 2006 promotes civil integrity and simply reminds people of the difference between right and wrong. A list of the Eight Dos and Don’ts (barong bachi, an abbreviation of bage guangrong bage chiri), also known as the Eight Honors and Disgraces, or the Eight Worthies and Eight Shames, has since become the new socialist convention:

Love thy country; Do it no harm.
Serve the people; Never betray them.
Follow science; Discard superstition.
Be diligent; Not indolent.
Remain united and help each other; Make no gains at another’s expense.
Be honest and trustworthy; Do not sacrifice ethics for profit.
Be disciplined and law-abiding; Not chaotic and lawless.
Live plainly, work hard; Do not wallow in luxuries and pleasure.

(Xinhua, October 18, 2006)

This list presents a summation of virtues including patriotism, decency, honesty, self-control, and professional dedication.

As Lauren Gorfinkel and Sidney Y. Liu show in their respective chapters, the Communist state has aggressively launched media and online campaigns to promote these new socialist values and norms, and to co-opt the public and private sectors in its nation-building project. Starting from the central government, many departmental agencies, provincial and municipal authorities, universities and schools of all levels, and even the China Disabled Persons’ Federation have made plans since 2006 to study and disseminate these new political values and norms. The state has also organized both civilians and army musicians to compose theme songs to celebrate and popularize Hu Jintao’s moral code at all levels of society. For example, the General Political Department of the People’s Liberation Army singled out six theme songs composed by civilians and army musicians, and instructed that service personnel learn them thoroughly (Xinhua, April 7, 2006).

Similarly, in late summer 2007, Chinese Internet operators launched a nationwide online competition to promote the political philosophy of harmonious society. For a top prize of 5,000 yuan (US$657)
state-run online service operators invited all Chinese people, regardless of age, gender, or ethnicity, to submit articles, photographs, and video clips related to the idea of harmonious society and peaceful development (Xinhua, August 15, 2007).

The state media has appreciably instilled into Chinese public opinion the idea of harmony. According to the China Knowledge Resource Integrated Database, the Eight Worthies and Eight Shames appeared 921 times in media report titles in 2006. The real boom, however, has been in quantifying the term harmonious society (hexie shehui). Since its debut in official documents, this concept has proliferated in various government publications, street posters, conferences, and speeches. The number of Chinese media reports that used the phrase harmonious society in their titles jumped from 417 in 2004 to 7,152 in 2006. Browsing through official documents and news reports in every sphere—from socioeconomic to political, cultural, philosophical, environmental and religious—one finds blatant overuse of the single word harmony. Searching for harmony as a keyword in any Chinese electronic database reveals a growing number of references: from 886 in 2004 to 21,627 in 2006, a 24-fold increase in just two years. Likewise the adjective harmonious is widely associated with a variety of fields, ranging from development and relationship to culture and environment. Even in academic circles, among those seeking to influence Communist policymakers, visibility in references to harmonious society is prevalent. In 2004, only 120 academic journal articles listed harmonious society in their titles, but in 2006, that number jumped to 10,015. Conducting the same keyword search in media reports reveals the rapid growth in references from 712 titles in 2004 to 19,457 in 2006. By 2006, the discourse of harmony dictated the terms of academic and journalistic discussion.

Ironically, it is in places fraught with tension and conflict caused by urban-rural disparity, unequal distribution of income, widening gaps in wealth, and massive unemployment that the concept of harmony and its related rhetoric of peaceful development are overtly emphasized. Located in China’s underdeveloped western frontier region, mainly inhabited by 13 distinct ethnic groups, and given the significant levels of discontent between two particular ethnicities—Uyghur and Han—Xinjiang is an ideal place to explore these issues. Uyghurs, members of Xinjiang’s largest ethnic group, speak an eastern Turkic language and adhere to the Hanafi school of Islam, a religious branch far more liberal and moderate in orientation than its Arab counterparts. Since the early 1990s, however, Xinjiang has witnessed new waves of interethnic conflict, both violent and nonviolent,
expressing mutual distrust and hostility between Uyghurs and Hans (Bovingdon, 2010: 174–190). In March 2011, Nur Bekri, current chairman of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, announced, “Xinjiang faces severe challenges in maintaining ethnic harmony and sociopolitical stability.” The whole region, he explained, with a weak background of social and interethnic management, is doomed to fail in efforts to achieve development and improve the livelihoods of its populations (Xinhua, March 8, 2011). Nur Bekri’s was the first official, public acknowledgement that Xinjiang had for years been fraught with interethnic tensions and conflicts. At the same time, his announcement echoed the view of the Communist leadership that economic development and ethnic discontent are related issues, and that material security is the best guard against interethnic strife. Believing that economic growth cuts across ethnic boundaries, Chinese leaders have proposed establishing a comprehensive security system via rapid economic development in Xinjiang. Insofar as “all ethnic groups in the region can live a more prosperous and happy life,” they hope the fruits of modernization will benefit Xinjiang’s entire population, especially Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities (Xinhua, April 23, 2010). Such indeed is the wishful thinking of the Chinese Communist leadership.

As with other Chinese inland areas, Xinjiang has benefited considerably from rapid economic growth, especially after 2001, when the Western Development Program or the Open up the West Campaign (xibu dakaifā) was launched. This ambitious policy was designed to boost the economic output of China’s less developed western regions, comprising the six provinces of Gansu, Guizhou, Qinghai, Shaanxi, Sichuan, and Yunnan, the five ethnic autonomous regions of Xinjiang, Tibet, Ningxia, Inner Mongolia, and Guangxi, and the municipality of Chongqing. Even though there is still a huge development gap between China’s coastal and western regions, massive investment from outside has vastly improved Xinjiang’s industrial output. The regional gross domestic product (GDP) increased from 149.1 billion yuan (US$18.1 billion) in 2001 to 543.7 billion yuan (US$79 billion) in 2010. This represents an annual growth rate of over 17 percent, a figure far exceeding the Chinese national average of 9.87 percent for the same period (Xinjiang Weiwu’ér zizhiqu tongji ju, ed. 2011: Table 2.1). Zhang Chunxian, current general secretary of the Communist Party in Xinjiang, reports that since 2001, per capita disposable income of urban residents in Xinjiang has risen by 10 percent annually to reach 13,500 yuan (US$1,985) in 2010, while the per capita net income of rural residents now exceeds 4,600 yuan.
(US$676), up 700 yuan (US$102) from 2009 (*The Shanghai Daily*, November 13, 2011). These statistics underscore Xinjiang’s impressive track record of economic development. From the perspective of China’s top leaders, conventional theories of socioeconomic growth project a strong correlation between economic prosperity and social harmony. At the very least, in overseeing a rapidly developing society China’s leaders are not expecting their people to harbor rancorous sentiments toward one another.

Under this rhetorical banner of building a harmonious society across China, the *White Paper on the History and Development of Xinjiang* emphasizes the necessity of Chinese Communist Party leadership in Xinjiang. It is the party-state that motivates all ethnic groups to collaborate with each other and leads them in building a comfortable life and a beautiful home characterized by equality, unity, mutual assistance, and interethnic harmony (Information Office of the State Council of the People’s Republic of China, September 21, 2009). This language has shaped extensively discussion of Xinjiang’s development. Surprisingly, even Uyghur human rights activists and dissidents refer to the Chinese official concept of harmony. For example, after the violent riots in Urumqi in July 2009, Rebiya Kadeer, prominent leader of the World Uyghur Congress, called on the top Communist leaders to respect China’s constitution and laws on regional ethnic autonomy, to protect the rights of ethnic minorities to manage their affairs, and to create a harmonious society in her Xinjiang homeland (Radical Party, November 22, 2009). On many Uyghur websites outside China, the term harmonious proliferated in posts as well, even though the content of online posts may have assumed a sarcastic and critical tone toward Beijing.

Against this backdrop of escalating ethnic tensions, we should ask two important questions about China’s Xinjiang social environment. How have efforts by the Chinese government to construct a harmonious society affected local inhabitants in Xinjiang? How far have the related actions of the younger generation hindered or contributed to the realization of a harmonious interethnic environment? This chapter draws on the diverse experiences of young, educated Han residents of Urumqi—Xinjiang’s political, social, and economic center—to discuss the transmission, localization, and reception of the official concept of harmony. Although one cannot generalize from this single field study, my empirical findings and analytical insights should throw light on the political, social, and ethnic complexities of young and educated people living in the midst of a booming economy but situated on unstable, multiethnic ground.
Language and Thought

Chinese authorities have long claimed that language not only plays an important role in surmounting barriers between peoples and cultures, but also serves as a useful platform for building a harmonious society. As the classical Chinese saying goes, “a kind word brings warmth in the chill of winter, while a harsh word burns more than the summer heat of June” (haohua yiju sandong nuan, e’yu shangren liuyue han). Similarly, China’s top leaders urge citizens demonstrate wisdom enough to discern what words and expressions can be used without hurting listeners’ feelings. For example, especially during sensitive discussions some Darwinian expressions such as survival of the fittest (shizhe shengcun) and law of the jungle (ruorou qiangshi) should be avoided because these phrases neither promote solidarity among people nor create a harmonious language environment (Yin, December 23, 2005). Today’s leaders appreciate fully the negative consequences of divisive and provocative language: a disharmonious language setting, one in which barriers and rifts between people further hinder interpersonal communication, breeds discord and instability.

Several Chinese linguistic scholars, including Li Yingzi, Ping Guangyi, and Zhang Guohua, have singled out a harmonious language environment as a precondition for achieving a peaceful and moderately well-off society (xiaokang shehui). Contemporary language and idioms in Mainland China, these scholars charge, are infused with political meaning reflecting hostility toward others based on specific historical circumstances and economic imbalances, to which the Maoists commonly referred as contradictions among the people (maodun). They advocate replacing today’s language climate full of violent and offensive vocabulary with one composed of gentle, kind, and decent words. Harmonious language cannot be viewed only as political rhetoric or academic jargon, underscores Zhang Guohua, but must become the common language among average citizens. To achieve this ambitious goal requires that every citizen cooperate and compromise with every other (Li, 2009: 58–62; Ping, 2007; Zhang, 2006: 41–43). Following the same line of reasoning, Zhang Yongbin and Dai Qingxia shift the focus of discussion to China’s multiethnic regions, where promoting Mandarin is as important as respecting and protecting the languages of ethnic minorities. Cultivating a harmonious linguistic environment between Mandarin speakers and speakers of the languages of various ethnic minorities then becomes, according to Zhang and Dai, a key to stabilizing multiethnic regions. As reasonable as they may sound, these Chinese scholars limit their
understanding of the construction of a harmonious language environment to the perspective of policymakers (Zhang, 2009: 71–73; Dai, 2008: 100–104). This top-down analytic approach fails to examine policy recipients’ reactions at the grassroots level. In fact, the transmission, localization, and reception of specific language policies and terminologies can provoke different responses. Such responses, I posit, reveal the beliefs and feelings of people in China’s multiethnic and multicultural regions.

A closer analysis of the everyday political vocabulary in Xinjiang’s Urumqi, I argue, can clarify whether the young Han Chinese society is ready to follow the central government’s instructions to respect and tolerate others and to form a harmonious society inclusive of all ethnic groups. Clifford Geertz notes that language is a major symbolic system used in all societies and cultures. Language embodies “a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which people communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life” (Geertz, 1973: 89). Since language is so important in interpersonal communication and cultural transmission between individuals, we can observe the use of specific words as independent entities that allow readers to understand the ideological and symbolic implications of the society at hand. These words basically serve as a bridge for transmitting knowledge, culture, and history between people. Along the same line of argument, Douglas H. Brown points out that “cultural patterns, customs and ways of life are expressed in language: cultural-specific worldviews are reflected in language” (Brown, 1994: 45). In a multiethnic context like Urumqi, with two distinct ethnic groups and cultures (Han and Uyghur), these differences can easily incite misunderstanding and resentment in cross-cultural communication.

I borrow from the conceptual insights of Geertz and Brown on the intrinsic links between language and culture, and put forward the theory that language is an integral component of culture essential for effective socialization and interaction. My ethnographic study of everyday language should enable us to gain a new perception, “not only into the nature of man but also into the nature of culture” (Videbeck and Pia, 1966: 71–77). After all, a living culture is not homogenous or static, but is fluid, socially constructed, and variable. Likewise, language develops in response to the historical, economic, and political evolution of a new society. In fact, a word does not simply contain a sequence of sounds but assumes a particular meaning assigned by a distinct culture in a unique setting. Furthermore, language never matures in a vacuum, but is constructed by all members
of society. The meaning of words can be extremely powerful and appealing in one society at a particular moment, while the same words may not bear any significance in another place in time. Chinese words such as *hexie* (harmony) and *fazhan* (development) might have strong symbolic meaning in Xinjiang and other parts of China today, but they may be devoid of any policy implications outside China or lack any relevance at all in the Maoist period. Thus, the objective of my chapter is not to examine the words used by my respondents and generalize about the universality of this vocabulary in the Han society in Urumqi. Instead, I analyze language use by a particular group of young Han residents at a time when the political center has been aggressively propagating the ideologies and policies of building a harmonious multietnic society (Passerini, ed. 1992: 18).

In the following sections, I first explain the profile and situational data of the Han society in Urumqi. Next, I provide a brief investigation of the state’s harmonious propaganda campaign that forms the basis of my conversations with young, well-educated Han residents in Urumqi. Finally, I decode the wide range of daily vocabularies in order to examine whether the discourse of the state works towards or against the realization of a harmonious society.

**Methodological Issues**

Analyzing the terminology used in Urumqi by young, educated Han Chinese, this study acknowledges that spatial and generational delimitations are not random choices but considerations dictated by various factors. As the regional capital, Urumqi is held up as a shining model of interethnic stability for other towns in Xinjiang to emulate (Wulumuqishi tongjiju, ed. 2002: 2). Official descriptions present Urumqi as a cosmopolitan place where different peoples “live harmoniously, build villages, and develop rich and fascinating cultures” (Wulumuqishi tongjiju, ed. 2007: 3). Despite this public praise, however, the city was not included in the list of China’s top 41 cities with harmonious development as compiled by East China University of Science and Technology in Shanghai for the 17th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party in 2007 (East China University of Science and Technology, 2007). According to the Urumqi Statistical Yearbook, the city has a population of 2.4 million, including Hans (1.75 million), Uyghurs (315,017), Huis (250,933), Kazakhs (66,958), Mongols (9,719), Kyrgyzs (1,848), Xibes (5,323), Russians (3,559), Tajiks (344), Uzbeks (1,964), Tatars (1,010), Manchus (10,419), Dours (583), and others (Wulumuqishi tongjiju, ed. 2011: 94, 96, 99). These
different groups live, work, and study locally, thereby making Urumqi very cosmopolitan—or what the official tourist literature calls a family of ethnic minorities (shaoshu minzu zhijia). Given its rich history of multiculturalism, intermingling of different nationalities, and official emphasis on interethnic harmony, Urumqi is an ideal research site for analyzing the extent to which ethnic groups mutually respect and tolerate cultural differences by purging their everyday language use of prejudice and discrimination.

Herein, I focus solely on the language use among young, educated Han Chinese in Urumqi for two main reasons. First, Han inhabitants are concentrated in Urumqi, making up 72 percent of the capital’s total population as compared with only 39 percent across the whole region (Wulumuqishi tongjiju, ed. 2011: 94; Xinjiang Weiwu’er zizhiqu tongjiju, ed. 2010: Table 3.8). Second, their mother tongue, Mandarin, is the same language used by the government, since 2004, to promote the idea and policies of building a harmonious society. Scholars promoting the cognitive conception of language hold that natural language is the medium of all human conceptual thinking. This means that a specific language is necessary for the acquisition of specific concepts, and serves as a vehicle to analyze the process of human thought. Guy Deutscher (2011) suggests that different languages influence our vision of the world in distinctive ways because the natural language obliges people to think in a certain way. From this perspective, we cannot compare the terminology of harmonious society promoted by President Hu Jintao in Mandarin with that used by non-Mandarin-speaking Uyghurs and other minorities. Because Mandarin-speaking Hans constitute over 72 percent of Urumqi’s population of 2.4 million, I focus only on this ethnic group.

Having identified the Han society as the main variable for this research, I reduce the number of potential respondents by concentrating on those young and educated people. Especially since Hu Jintao’s succession to power in 2002, this young generation has received an education colored by the state ideology of sociopolitical harmony. Living on a university campus with regular classes, textbooks, conferences, workshops, and extracurricular activities renders this segment of the Han population an easy target of government indoctrination around the concept of harmony. Curiously, Noam Chomsky suggests that propaganda works better on educated people than on the uneducated because the former “read more, so they receive more propaganda” and because “they have jobs as agents of propaganda, they believe it. By and large, they are part of the privileged elite, and share their interests and perceptions” (Chomsky, 1987–1988: 15).
Given their overall reluctance to rock the boat and change the status quo, Han educated elites are more willing to subscribe to the ideology of harmony for their own betterment. The dramatic rise of local academic publications on the construction of sociopolitical and interethnic harmony illustrates this trend. From 2006 to 2011, 262 master theses and ten doctoral dissertations at various universities in Urumqi identified the concept of harmony as the subject matter for investigation. During my own fieldwork in Urumqi in 2007, my academic host and supervisor at Xinjiang Normal University changed the title of my research proposal from “Daily relations between Hans and Uyghurs” to “Harmonious Relations between Hans and Uyghurs” in order to adhere to the dominant ideological climate at that time. As Li Changchun, propaganda chief of the Chinese Communist Party, announced, “University students are a cherished source of talent for the Party and state… We must support the core task of ideological education by placing patriotic education (aiguo zhuyi jiaoyu) at the center and the building of ideological morality as the basis” (Agence France Press, May 30, 2010). As such, young, educated Hans are the ideal analytical sample for gaining a proper understanding of current and future developments in Urumqi’s Han-dominated, mainstream society.

To explore the similarities and differences between government rhetoric and locals’ respective terminologies, the following discussion draws on published, official documents on the subject of harmony, in addition to many hours of my participant observation and informal talks with Han youth. I conducted five months’ qualitative field research in Urumqi from March to July 2007, followed by a full year’s study at Minzu University of China in Beijing from September 2007 to July 2008. Frequent, short research trips to Urumqi between 2008 and 2011 supplemented the data. During my stays in Urumqi and Beijing, I consulted various visual and audial media outlets to keep current with the progress of the official campaign to build a harmonious society, and to familiarize myself with the central government’s perspective. These media outlets include numerous articles and editorials in the People’s Daily (Renmin Ribao), Xinjiang’s Daily (Xinjiang Ribao) and Xinhua News Agency, regular television programs on Urumqi TV-1, and radio programs on China National Radio (Zhongyang Renmin Guangbo Diantai) and Urumqi People’s Broadcasting Station (Wulumuqi Renmin Guangbo Diantai).

With respect to my field research, the most effective way for me to be accepted by Urumqi academic communities was to register myself as a language student at Xinjiang Normal University. This formal
status enabled me to interact with many Han students on campus, participate with them in their daily activities on site and off campus, establish contacts with and befriend local academics, and seek help with subsequent research trips to Urumqi. Given the sensitivity (min-gan) of interethnic relations (Caprioni, 2011: 271–275; Yee, 2005: 35–36), however, I encountered some obstacles during my fieldwork. Rather than taking only ten minutes, as at any Beijing police station, it took me approximately ten days to register with local police in Urumqi for security reasons. Similarly, because of local security concerns I could not watch the Olympic torch relay in the streets of Urumqi in June 2008. Whenever I tried to leave campus in the time leading up to the Olympics, I was stopped by public security officials who carefully checked my passport and my local student card (shen-fengzheng). These security concerns affected my everyday interactions inside and outside the confines of my university campus.

Despite these security issues, I secured through the snowball technique informal interviews with 50 Han subjects: 29 women and 21 men, ranging from 20 to 35 years of age. These respondents were postsecondary graduates who had been living in Urumqi for at least 15 years. Depending on the relationship that I had established with the individual, our conversation took place over one or more meetings. In all cases, talk was guided by core questions about the construction of a harmonious society in Urumqi. To avoid treading on sensitive ground, I refrained from using a tape recorder, but wrote down detailed notes within one or two days of the actual conversation. Moreover, it was crucial for my research to observe and participate in several academic and social activities, including attending conferences and master thesis defenses at Xinjiang Normal University, joining dinners and gatherings at restaurants, and accepting invitations to my respondents’ homes. These formal and informal meetings allowed me to gain respondents’ trust and engage with them regularly. In addition, they let me listen to and become part of both official, harmonious conversations and unofficial, discordant ones. Having addressed these methodological issues, the next two sections examine in detail the reactions of young, educated Hans toward the state-imposed vision of a harmonious society.

Harmonious Propaganda

Harmonious propaganda (hexie xuanchuan), an ideological attempt at promoting a particular political point of view through informational messages, has been developed in Urumqi and other parts of China to
circulate official concerns for stability and development as well as to create a peaceful and calm environment amongst local citizens. The propaganda is disseminated both subtly and overtly through simple, short and comprehensible slogans (kouhao) emphasizing sustainable development, social welfare, ethnic unity, and ultimately the creation of a fair and equal society under Communist rule. Goals include strengthening citizens’ trust in the Chinese Communist Party, and directing the public’s potential antagonism against any anti-China and anticommmunist forces in Xinjiang specifically, and in greater China.

In addition to standard slogans calling for peaceful development (heping fazhan) and harmonious development (hexie fazhan), a current list of important phrases catering to the multiethnic context of Xinjiang would include the following examples:

1. People participate together in the construction of a harmonious society (Renren canyu gongjian hexie shehui);
2. Constructing harmonious ethnic relations, realizing a long period of peace and order in Xinjiang (Goujian hexie minzu guanxi, shixian Xinjiang changzhijiu’an);
3. Stressing a righteous atmosphere, establishing new trends, striving for development, enhancing harmony (Jiang zhengqi, shu xinfeng, mou fazhan, cu hexie);
4. People of every nationality fight for mutual unity, develop for mutual prosperity (Gezu renmin gongtong tuanjie fendou, Gontong fanrong fazhan);
5. Safeguarding the national unity, promoting the unification of the motherland (Weihu minzu tuanjie, Cujin zuguo tongyi);
6. Strengthening ethnic unity, safeguarding social stability (Zengqiang minzu tuanjie, Weihu shehui wending);
7. Ethnic unity is the lifeline of all ethnic groups in Xinjiang (Minzu tuanjie shi Xinjiang gezu renmin de shengmingxian);
8. Love ardently the great motherland, establish a happy home (Re’ai weida zuguo, jianshe meibao jiaoyuan);
9. Fighting ethnic separatism, safeguarding the unity of the motherland (Fandui minzu fenlie, Weihu zuguo tongyi);
10. Stability is fortune; separatism is misfortune (Tuanjie wending shi fu, Fenlie dongluan shi huo).

Unlike many specialists of Chinese Communism who divide propaganda slogans into political, economic, cultural, and social categories, I group them into positive and negative sides based on their
anticipated audience impact. The first eight slogans use favorable adjectives and phrases to enhance the positive meaning of socialist values in China, while the last two slogans employ militant and ominous expressions to scare the public.

On the positive side, the official slogans include many optimistic terms such as harmony, unity, peace, and love. The Chinese ideological mantra appeals to people’s desire for a peaceful, harmonious world and a better life. For centuries China’s Confucians, Daoists, and Buddhists have propagated cosmological harmony and inner enlightenment as favorable conditions in the sociopolitical world. Deeply embedded in ancient Chinese thought, such sentiment is what contemporary propagandists fully understand and seek to tap for ideological purposes. For example, repeating the terms harmonious and harmony helps persuade many Chinese to accept the current socioeconomic transitions in China, even if the actual consequences undermine the goals of this official rhetoric. In the meantime, words such as motherland (zuguo) and ethnic unity (minzu tuanjie) are used deliberately to invigorate the sense of Chinese nationalism and patriotism, and to rally popular support for the state against any perceived external threats.

By comparison, the few slogans on the negative side are designed to provoke among the audience critical attitudes toward any subversive group of people and any separatist thought. Indeed, this mode of propaganda simply lays out a positive and a negative option, convinces the listeners and readers that the negative option is very dangerous and unpleasant, and renders the positive option the only suitable option for all. Such ideological manipulation follows a very simple yet clever formula. As shown in the slogan, Stability is fortune, separatism is misfortune (Tuanjie wending shi fu, Fenlie dongluan shi buo), people are meant to understand that the only alternative to separatism is stability under Communist leadership. To achieve stability, they should actively cooperate with the government.

Even an average Mandarin-speaker or a non-Mandarin-speaking Han can easily remember slogans and catchphrases repeated frequently in the mass media and displayed ubiquitously on huge posters along roadsides, on construction sites, and at entrances to schools, banks, bookstores, and museums. One good example of this visible display is the Kadeer Trade Center, a six-story building erected in the 1990s by businesswoman Rebiya Kadeer in southeast Urumqi, where most Uyghurs live. Arrested by Chinese authorities when she publicly protested China’s official policies toward Uyghurs, Rebiya Kadeer fled to the United States upon her release in March 2005. As
for the Kadeer Trade Center she left behind, the government planned to demolish the building after its official crackdown on anti-Chinese riots in Urumqi in July 2009. According to some rumors, however, the government changed its mind when faced with strong diplomatic protests by the United States and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Today, its exterior completely covered with huge propaganda slogans written in Chinese, the Kadeer Trade Center is a vacant ruin (see figure 6.1). Xinjiang Normal University, whose assembly hall, all major administrative buildings, and entrances to all academic departments have been adorned with political slogans, is likewise used to project the discourse of harmonious society. During academic conferences and important meetings, large posters showing the theme of harmony have been prominently positioned behind the main podium. Any athletic competition or music recital organized by the university has been opened with speeches, talks, and related slogans on interethnic unity and harmony.

The reader of such propaganda posters in Urumqi, while all too familiar with their message, can still be confused. Contrary to everyday signs written in Uyghur and Mandarin Chinese, propaganda slogans are typically written in large Chinese characters without any
Uyghur translation. Occasionally small Uyghur script appears at the top of banners and signs, followed by huge Chinese characters beneath. In these posters, the background usually displays a modern Urumqi, represented by skyscrapers sometimes flanked by flowers, birds, and happy Chinese families with two children (notwithstanding China’s one-child policy). Meanwhile, the few slogans translated in both languages deliberately emphasize the theme of interethnic unity, with representatives of different ethnic groups smiling and walking hand in hand (see figure 6.2 and figure 6.3).

These propaganda slogans have been designed for the inhabitants of Urumqi, whether Han or Uyghur, with the overall objective being to cultivate patriotic sentiments toward the motherland and forge political unity against separatism. While the targeted audience of government slogans is actually comprised of people of different ethnicities and languages, the underlying political message is very consistent especially in slogans and posters written exclusively in Mandarin Chinese. This propaganda strategy—one built on a Mandarin language foundation—can be interpreted in several ways. First, Chinese characters are efficient for expressing concise ideas because each character represents a word or an idea, while Uyghur, an alphabetic language, requires at least six or more letters to communicate the same idea. Combining the two languages into a single poster would be difficult where the coexistence of Chinese characters and Uyghur alphabet would occupy too much space and reduce the poster’s visual impact on the audience. Second, Urumqi is inhabited mainly by Hans, while most Uyghurs there have no trouble reading and understanding Chinese characters.

Figure 6.2  Public Bus with Slogan, Seize the Opportunity to Develop and Build a Prosperous City (meihao jiayuan), Urumqi, Summer 2011. Photograph courtesy of author
Third, perhaps to avoid any public discussion of the extremely sensitive subject of anti-Chinese riots the official messages of sociopolitical and interethnic harmony are rarely translated into Uyghur. As one Uyghur told me, “If the slogans are not translated into our mother tongue, we do not really pay attention to them” (Caprioni, July 3, 2011). Could it be that the political message of harmonious society is designed only for ethnic Hans in Urumqi? With most propaganda posters communicating in Chinese, clearly the state addresses young, educated Hans because the Hans have played an important role in creating a secure economic and social environment to better the lives of all ethnic groups in Xinjiang.

**Derogatory Language in the Positive Side**

Despite widespread use of positive words, China’s propaganda campaign to build a harmonious society did not seem very influential among my respondents on and off the university campus. Even
though some of them explored the issue of harmony in their master theses and doctoral dissertations, and gave formal presentations on this subject, no one ever used the word harmony seriously during our informal talks. Whenever I began our conversations by referring to my research project on harmonious interethnic relations, my respondents showed no interest in this area of discussion. At first glance, they simply appeared quite tired of the official concept and rhetoric.

Any discussion of harmonious interethnic relations in Urumqi should, supposedly, convey an image of mutual respect and tolerance for different cultures, languages, religions, foods, beliefs, and values among the various ethnic groups. My Han respondents, however, tended to make racist and derogatory remarks about other ethnic groups, Uyghurs in particular. They often characterized Uyghur men as alcoholic (jingui) and negligent (lan). These derogatory terms might be used to describe different situations but with the same aim of discriminating against Uyghurs. For example, if the conversation focused on marriage, my respondents referred to Uyghurs as alcoholics, and if the conversation referred to occupation, they called Uyghurs lazy and negligent. Some Han women expressed pity toward Uyghur women, telling me that these Uyghur women were often abused, beaten, and betrayed by their men, even though they did all the chores (Caprioni, June 14, 2008). Basically, my interview notes conjured up the following stereotype of Uyghur men: people with poor work ethics, who spend their time drinking, relaxing, dancing, and playing music. Ironically, Chinese officials have crafted the typical touristic image of Xinjiang similarly: Uyghur men and women as dancers and musicians, not hardworking laborers and professionals.

Once our conversations shifted from marriage to other topics, Han respondents displayed the same racist and derogatory attitudes. Among the Hans, the most common nickname for Uyghur men and women is lamb-skewer (yangrouchuan) or Xinjiang person (Xinjiang ren). Many of my Han respondents, educated as they are in the concept of harmony, appear oblivious that such nicknames wound Uyghurs in Urumqi. Whether it is inadvertent or intentional, Hans employ these terms in everyday conversation without bothering to consider Uyghur sentiments. But for Uyghurs the term yangrouchuan has strong, negative socioeconomic connotations, implying that ethnic Uyghurs sell lamb-skewers at food-stalls because they have little knowledge and few skills with which to move up the social ladder. In fact, the majority of Urumqi’s Uyghurs are employed in primary industry, especially agriculture and mining. The other term, Xinjiang ren, reminds Uyghurs of their relative backwardness and
lack of modernization as compared with the Hans. Nevertheless, according to Han respondents, yangrouchuan only refers to the delicious Uyghur food, and Xinjiangren speaks to the beauty and attractiveness of Uyghur women.

Even though some Han respondents apologized for their negative portrayal of Uyghurs, one-fifth of my respondents insisted that Uyghurs were dangerous, describing them as pickpockets (xiaotou) stealing people’s wallets and mobile phones, or as knife-wielders (chidaozhe) picking fights and looking for trouble. On some occasions, the Hans actually drew on this derogatory characterization of Uyghur men to scare outsiders and Han children. In May 2007, a Han taxi-driver refused to take me to Erdaoqiao bazaar in the Uyghur-populated Tianshan district, southeast of Urumqi. He thought the bazaar unsafe for a foreign woman, one who could easily put herself in an uncomfortable (bu fangbian) situation when surrounded by Uyghur kids and men with knives (Caprioni, May 16, 2007). I came across the same racial prejudice during a city bus ride, as well, when I overheard a Han woman whispering to her crying toddler, “Stop crying, otherwise I will call a Uyghur man.” This idea of a Uyghur man belonging to a strange culture not only frightened the child but also entrenched in its young mind a common prejudice toward other ethnic groups. Curiously enough, Uyghurs displayed the same bias toward Hans in their everyday language. On a bus ride a few years later, I overheard a Uyghur mother saying to her baby in Uyghur: “Stop crying, otherwise I will call a Chinese man.”

Obviously, these racist labels destabilize interethnic relations and sow the seeds of mutual suspicion and distrust between two groups inhabiting Urumqi. In July 2011, all the Han and non-Han residents of Urumqi who worked for the Chinese-run institutions had to participate in public gatherings in celebration of the ninetieth anniversary of the founding of the Chinese Communist Party. For security reasons, no participants were permitted to bring their bags inside the venue. Yet a Uyghur worker reacted to this prohibition sarcastically: “Why should I leave my bag outside the venue? Do you think that I have a knife inside?” The casual remark expressed his frustration toward the Han stereotype of the Uyghur man. But this was emblematic of how the widespread use of negative words has deeply affected interethnic relations in Urumqi.

Closer interactions between the two groups have done little to correct the stereotypes. Six of my Han respondents who shared rooms with Uyghurs in the dormitory called their roommates dirty (zang) because of the stench of lamb on their clothing and the different
habits of ensuring cleanliness and hygienic lifestyle. On one occasion, a small group of Han graduate students laughed at a Uyghur girl who cleaned her nose with a tissue in class after sneezing. The Han students found it disgusting because she never excused herself from the class and kept the dirty tissue in her hand. In addition, these respondents together with another 11 Han women who took classes with Uyghurs often stereotyped their Uyghur classmates as unintelligent (bu congming), not because of their academic ability, but because of their strong accent when expressing themselves in Mandarin. These Han women also complained about the presence of Uyghur students in their children’s schools because the Uyghurs’ poor vocabulary and thick accent might affect the academic progress of their children. One mother even stated, “This is one of the reasons why my Chinese daughter and her Han classmates do not hang out with the Uyghur girls inside and outside the classroom” (Caprioni, June 29, 2011). The Han children have evidently internalized these racist prejudices to the extent that they distance themselves from their Uyghur classmates in school and on the playground.

One would not expect derogatory terms such as alcoholic, negligent, lamb-skewer, pickpocket, and knife-wielder to be part of the vocabulary in line with the official ideology of harmony, but local Hans still use these terms in both comedic and serious manners. The strong, racist sentiment against Uyghurs has been widespread among young, educated Hans, thereby evoking a misperception of Urumqi as a perilous city inhabited by irresponsible, violent, and dangerous people. Such popular racism pervasive in Han society completely contradicts the official representation of Urumqi as a family of ethnic minorities (shaoshu minzu zhijia). This development not only upsets Uyghurs by straining interethnic relations, but also reveals persistent racist prejudices toward others among the young and educated segments of Han society. This culture of popular racism is derived from many preconceived notions of Uyghurs as backward and uncivilized that young Hans have gained from the previous generations of Chinese migrants to Urumqi. Yet these perceptions do not accurately mirror the current economic growth. Officially, the various ethnic groups are supposed to work and study together in their common efforts to build a harmonious society. But long-standing racist sentiments and prejudices totally undermine this government’s agenda.

After perusing through China’s national media outlets and listening to many Chinese television and radio programs on harmonious economic development, we can expect local Hans’ words to reflect an image of Urumqi where inequality has disappeared and wealth is distributed
uniformly among all citizens. Four-fifths of my respondents agreed that the Open up the West Campaign had brought several advantages to Urumqi’s citizens. Even if they were aware that the Chinese government had spent billions of yuan to alleviate poverty in the region, they only spoke about the success of harmonious and peaceful development either in official circumstances or in a sarcastic manner. Of my 50 respondents, 45 never talked about economic development with any sense of the propaganda ideas in mind. Instead, all 29 women and more than half the men frequently used the expression “bad economy” (jingji bu hao) to complain about the problems of high competition (gao jingzheng) and overpopulation (renduo). Two short phrases were also recurrent in our conversations: low quality of life (shuihuo shuiping di) and low salary (gongzi pubian di). These were thought to be the main reasons for the growing income gap between upper and lower classes and the rise of socioeconomic inequality. Indeed, the medium annual income in Urumqi is 16,502 yuan (US$2,619) by the late 2010s. The lowest annual personal income is 5,770 yuan (US$905), whereas the highest personal one is 39,443 yuan (US$6,188) (Wulumuqishi tongjiju, ed. 2011: 389). Moreover, two-fifths of my respondents maintained that because of general corruption (tanwu fubai) peaceful development was far from being achieved.

These comments and complaints suggest that young, educated Hans have never actually believed the propaganda about construction of a harmonious society. The negative sentiments entertained within Han society have had much to do with the marginalized economic status of their city, frustration with limited career opportunities, and disillusionment with life’s realities versus prospects. In actuality, the economy of Urumqi has improved remarkably in recent years. Urumqi’s GDP in 2010 amounted to 131.85 billion yuan (US$21 billion), a 12.2 percent increase from that of 2009 (Wulumuqishi tongjiju, ed. 2011: 71). By 2011, the city constituted the largest economy in Xinjiang and its own GDP made up 32.7 percent of the entire region’s total industrial output (Hong Kong Trade Development Council, September 5, 2011). Misperceptions of the city’s marginal status have been part of the intellectual and linguistic landscapes of the young Han society so that there has been a strong sense of frustration among the Han Chinese. This feeling not only blunts the Communist government’s achievements of developing the western frontier region, but also indicates that popular misconceptions of Xinjiang as remote and underdeveloped, which date back to the previous generations, are still present in everyday culture and find new life in young Hans today.
Furthermore, several of my respondents have held that the government’s harmonious economic targets are not being met because of certain affirmative policies favoring ethnic minorities at the expense of the Hans. Only one woman dared to say that eliminating inequalities between ethnic groups was the only way of achieving equal opportunity for all in Urumqi. The feelings of disparity between the Hans and other ethnic minorities in the economic sphere illustrate that a small segment of the Han society has blamed the new affirmative policies for its own misfortune. In fact, the ethnic minorities are in a far more disadvantaged position than the Hans politically, economically, and socially. There is a significant absence of successful Uyghurs in business and government. Adverse feelings between various ethnic groups have prevented Xinjiang from pursuing a path to peaceful economic development.

**Derogatory Language in the Negative Side**

By shifting attention to the use of derogatory language in the negative category, it appears that those hostile propaganda slogans had a mixed effect on my respondents. The perceived threat of ethnic separatism (*minzu fenlie*) reached its target audience successfully. There has been a deeply rooted sentiment and worry among my respondents about the future of their society. This culture of fear has been impressed upon them through a highly effective propaganda campaign. Everyone with whom I spoke seemed concerned about the danger of ethnic separatism. The respondents were equally divided among those who worried about illegal religious activities (*feifa zongjiao huodong*), terrorism (*kongbu zhuyi*), and violence (*baoli*). It is not my intention here to analyze whether religious extremism, terrorism, and ethnic separatism are still considered the three evils of Xinjiang. It is important, however, to bear in mind that most young Uyghurs do not share with those in the 1990s the vision of independence. Instead, they prefer to wave the red Chinese flags and display their strong political affiliation with the People’s Republic of China even on the rare occasion of public protests as they did during the demonstrations in July 2009. Furthermore, the Uyghur diaspora prefers genuine regional autonomy to national independence and armed struggle. Thus, the term separatist (*fenli fenzi*) is not an accurate label for the contemporary Uyghur society in Xinjiang and abroad. But the Hans still look at the situation through the lens of ethnic separatism and condemn Uyghur human rights activists as separatists subverting the People’s Republic. These examples confirm that
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the Han society continues to produce misleading and oversimplified stereotypes to discredit and demonize the Other.

Nonetheless, the relatively positive official slogans, such as safeguarding the unity of the motherland (Wei hu zuguo tongyi) and stability is fortune (Tuanjie wending shi fu), have not appealed to my respondents. Throughout the late 2000s, my respondents’ language displayed strong worries about the potential collapse of their homeland yet showed no interest in the political mission of defending the country’s unity. Their reactions indicated that the campaign of negative rather than positive propaganda worked better for the government. The Hans were more conscious of the unpleasant circumstances they might encounter in Urumqi than of the pleasures of interethnic harmony in their city. The effects of negative propaganda reflected an urban Han culture critical of the government’s spin but not mature enough, on the one hand, to reject the old stereotypes toward ethnic minorities and not yet ready, on the other hand, to install the values of interethnic harmony and mutual cooperation.

Conclusion

An old editorial on the environment of language in the Saturday Review (April 8, 1967) once stated that language had “as much to do with the philosophical and political conditioning of a society as geography or climate,” because negative language had the danger of infecting “the subconscious of most people from the time they first learn to speak.” From this perspective, prejudice is constructed rather than merely imparted or superimposed; it is metabolized in the bloodstream of the society. In Urumqi, the use of Chinese as a medium of official propaganda allows for the preservation of stereotypes. These racist stereotypes provide a breeding ground for culturally entrenched prejudices and misperceptions to develop over time, especially as stereotypes do not reflect the complex realities on the ground. Such stereotypes have become deeply embedded in the daily language usage, underlining the superiority of one ethnic group over others. This development does no justice to the significant improvement of Urumqi’s economy. After all, the overall living standard of most Han and non-Han citizens has increased considerably over the past few years.

Many Han Chinese, however, are still influenced by the long-standing culture of racism. Young, educated Han are inundated with countless harmonious propaganda slogans, and are made out to be part of a successful society. As time goes by, people seem to
care less about these slogans, which in the Maoist era were taken more seriously. Indeed, the everyday language that people use completely betrays official efforts to promote interethnic harmony, and shows that the Han society is not yet ready to rid itself of all racist prejudices against Uyghurs and other ethnic groups. Even though Hans are aware that the socioeconomic status of Urumqi has gradually improved, they still prefer to use racist and derogatory language against ethnic minorities, Uyghurs included. Urumqi continues to be characterized by Hans as a city of mutual distrust and suspicion between different ethnic groups, unequal economic development, injustice, instability, and chaos. Notwithstanding the state’s harmonious propaganda, young Hans’ everyday language reveals the utter absence of goodwill, cooperation, and harmony in Urumqi. My respondents’ remarks suggest that their racist prejudices are intrinsic by nature, even against a body of evidence that may suggest otherwise. There are many institutional and cultural reasons for concern because a certain group, in this case the young, educated Han society, is continuing to spread among themselves and reproduce among their children such racist stereotypes about the Other in Urumqi.

As the dominant majority in the People’s Republic, the Hans should be critical of their own racist prejudices. They should avoid using these hostile words and phrases to dehumanize other ethnic groups and fulfill their moral and civic duties to promote interethnic harmony. Although a truly harmonious and cooperative society does not exist in the Xinjiang region at this time—as demonstrated by frequent outbreaks of ethnic violence—recognizing the overt use of derogatory language can at least be an important first step for resolving its problem of interethnic conflict.

Notes

1. The China Knowledge Resource Integrated Database, also called the China National Knowledge Infrastructure, is the largest authoritative electronic database with most of the China-based information resources.
2. The Uyghurs (10 million) represent 46% of the population in Xinjiang while the Hans (8.4 million) account for 39%, and the remaining 15% of the population include Kazakhs, Huis, Kyrgyzs, Mongols, Tajiks, Xibes, Russians, Uzbeks, Tatars, Manchus, and Daurs (Xinjiang Weiwu’er zizhi ju tongji ju, ed. 2010: Table 3.8).
3. The local universities include Xinjiang Daxue [Xinjiang University], Xinjiang Shifang Daxue [Xinjiang Normal University], Xinjiang
Yike Daxue [Xinjiang Medical University], Xinjiang Nongye Daxue [Xinjiang Agricultural University], Xinjiang Yishu Xueyuan [Xinjiang Arts Institute], and Xinjiang Caijing Daxue [Xinjiang University of Finance and Economics].

Bibliography


——. June 29, 2011. Informal conversation with a Han woman. Urumqi, Xinjiang.


CHAPTER 7

Invoking the Ghosts of Blagoveshchensk: Massacre, Memory, and the Post-Mao Search for Historical Identity

Martin Fromm

Introduction

During the early 1980s, the People’s Republic of China faced a double crisis of legitimacy. The degeneration of society into violent ideological factionalism during the lost decade of the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976) appeared to render bankrupt the revolutionary ideals by which the Chinese Communist Party had defined itself. At the same time, the post-Mao market reforms called into question the socialist principles to which the party claimed adherence. These two issues of collective trauma and ideological vacuity required the party’s involvement in a national project of political healing, reconciliation, and reconsolidation.

An important component of China’s healing process became the revision of historical memory, whereby the ideas of united front and national salvation were resurrected to serve as the means for subsuming contradictions between communism and market reform within an all-encompassing framework of national unity. Downplaying ideological difference, official commemorations of anti-Japanese patriotic resistance, for instance, highlighted the joint heroic efforts of the Nationalist and Communist parties in wartime (Mitter, 2000; Waldron, 1996). Instead of the earlier focus on class struggle against feudal elements such as landlords and capitalists within society, foreign
imperialism was the new historical enemy. Socioeconomic inequities between the haves and have-nots of pre-1949 society were submerged within a homogeneous collective struggle of the Chinese nation as victim of a relentless series of national humiliations. Coexisting with this narrative of foreign aggression/Chinese victimization were celebratory accounts of Chinese commercial enterprises, both at home and across national borders, that provided historical precedent for and validation of the post-Mao policies of market development and opening to outside investment (Wright, 1993).

One form this working-out process took during the 1980s decade of transition involved the state’s mobilization of local and personal memories for the production of wenshi ziliao, or literary and historical materials. Its purpose was reenergizing grassroots participation in Deng Xiaoping’s Four Modernizations, while capturing diverse local and individual voices within a unified national framework. The wenshi ziliao thus represented the intersection of state ideology with personal and local memories where this healing, reconciliation, and reintegration process played out. This cultural initiative actually began in the early 1960s under Premier Zhou Enlai’s direction in response to an earlier crisis of party leadership following the Great Leap Forward debacle. After the massive breakdown of commune chain of command and the loss of connection between central planning and local conditions during the Great Leap Forward, bureaucratic orchestration of investigation, collection, and editing of local testimonies served to reintegrate the local with the central. Teams of investigators dispatched by provincial branches of the People’s Political Consultative Conference, the administrative body charged with the task of carrying out the wenshi ziliao and of mediating the Communist Party’s relationship to other social and political organizations, conducted on-the-ground investigations of various pre-1949 historical events. Through careful collection, selection, and editing, living testimonies of survivors could be formulated into a persuasive party-ordained version of historical development. The wenshi ziliao project, therefore, provided a powerful institutional mechanism for putting the state back in touch with actual local conditions, while reviving a broad-based united front coalition.

To this end, the People’s Political Consultative Conference drew on the anniversaries of major national historical events to undertake the wenshi ziliao project. In September 1961, for instance, wenshi ziliao committees at the central, provincial, and local levels used the People’s Political Consultative Conference-organized official commemoration of the 1911 Revolution as a unifying theme for mobilizing the
collection of life history accounts. The reminiscences that emerged out of this commemorative project appeared on the pages of the *People’s Daily* and *Guangming Daily*, both official mouthpieces of the party-state, and the People’s Political Consultative Conference sent copies of the publications to news agencies in Hong Kong, Macao, and among overseas Chinese communities as a means for appealing to and drumming up a united front community across national borders (Zhang, 1984). Certain key events in the collective national memory thus served as vehicles for rallying diverse voices toward a common national purpose and containing those voices within a widely shared, clearly defined political framework.

Undertaken in a brief period between two high points of extreme Maoist radicalism, and in the midst of escalating tension with the Soviet Union, this initial phase of *wenshi ziliao* implementation in the 1960s saw a delicate and tense balance between the imperatives of national reconsolidation and class struggle. That is, producing history at this historical juncture wavered between defining a homogeneous Chinese nation in opposition to the foreign Other, and mobilizing revolutionary impulse and social energy through creating internal contradictions based on class difference. As this chapter shows, local survivors’ commemoration of the Blagoveshchensk Massacre of 1900, an event along the northeastern border with the Soviet Union of formative national significance, became in 1965 a critical site of local memory production—like the 1911 Revolution *wenshi ziliao* project before it. In both instances, the 1960s *wenshi ziliao* project temporarily subordinated class struggle to the imperative of mobilization for war.

Yet, due to the disruptions of the Cultural Revolution, many *wenshi ziliao* reports produced in the 1960s, including the Blagoveshchensk Massacre of 1900, went unpublished. Moreover, when the materials resurfaced with the revival of this initiative in the 1980s, they did so within a very different political environment and were driven by a new set of ideological agendas. Along with mobilizing living informants to contribute their recollections, an important dimension of the revived *wenshi ziliao* project was to unearth valuable firsthand experiential accounts no longer accessible to the generation living in the 1980s. What *wenshi ziliao* editorial committees found when they dug into the archives of the 1960s were numerous unpublished accounts based on transcribed interviews conducted during the earlier phase of the project (Chen, 1986; Chen, 2002). By reorganizing, reediting, and reframing these narratives, the editorial committees were to endow them with historical meaning resonating with the ideological imperatives of the post-Mao state.
According to these new imperatives, the collection of local memo-
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ries served as a means for restoring faith in the Communist Party’s leadership at the grassroots level, reenergizing broad-based participation in the Four Modernizations, and healing the torn social fabric through the inclusive celebration of diverse historical voices within an all-encompassing framework of national unity. Pursuing a new objective of political reconciliation, economic de-collectivization, and market-driven private enterprise, the post-Mao government turned toward nationalism in an attempt to reaffirm the one-party state’s continuous lineage as the national liberator, while eliding the contradic-
tions and discontinuities inherent within its shift toward market reform policies. Local memories provided a vehicle for concretizing and exemplifying national identity. At the same time, they served to reconcile the celebration of local distinctiveness driven by market reforms with the Communist leadership’s determination to impose social stability through political reintegration.

The very concept of nation in the 1980s took meaning from and was inscribed with the language of local distinctiveness. An article commemorating the tenth anniversary of the wenshi ziliao publication of Enping county, Guangdong province in 1984, for instance, explains that the county committee at that time identified the locality’s three major distinctive characteristics as being the homeland of overseas Chinese, the home of the first Chinese female pilot, and the site of famous revolutionary monuments. One important result of concerted efforts to highlight these unique local qualities was the return to Enping of numerous overseas Chinese visitors, many of them from Taiwan, including the female pilot herself. This, the article concludes, served to improve cross-Straits relations (Chen, 1994). In the case of Enping, its wenshi ziliao was appropriated as a project of celebrating, valorizing, and producing a sense of distinctive local cultural identity and economic development connected to the party’s larger project of national consolidation.

Localization of the kind favored in the 1980s was particularly evi-
dent in the renewed attention given to the history of pre-1949 private enterprise (Kwong, 1992). Former entrepreneurs and managers associated with lao zihao (venerable old businesses) dating back to the pre-1949 period were invited to recount the glory days of these enterprises and the heroic achievements of their founders. As didactic lessons for the new generation of emerging entrepreneurs, the one-
sidedness of these accounts led one writer to complain about attention being given only to positive contributions (Xu, 2000). In conducting this revisionist history of private enterprise, members of local business
communities collaborated and negotiated with state sponsors of the project to represent their own versions of a history driven by private initiatives and ambitions, while situating it within an overarching national framework. This manifested itself in the organization of a parallel structure of wenshi ziliao committees at the national, provincial, municipal, and county levels of the chambers of commerce that corresponded with the vertical hierarchy of the People’s Political Consultative Conference committees (Zhang, 2001). As such, the administrative apparatus through which compilation of memories took place reflected the negotiation between the mobilization of local private initiative and energies and the objective of containing and structuring them within a nationally integrated political framework.

Meanwhile, the project of state-sponsored historical production endeavored to reaffirm the Communist Party’s emancipatory role by recasting the history of pre-1949 China as a series of Chinese collective humiliations to foreign imperialist aggression. As Yang Chengwu, one wenshi ziliao committee member, puts it, “running through the past century of Chinese history was the red line of Chinese patriotism, whether that took the form of economic development or resistance to imperialism” (Yang, 1986).

As an in-depth case study of these conjoined imperatives of wenshi ziliao production, I turn to the role that the Heilongjiang Provincial People’s Political Consultative Conference played, both before and after the Cultural Revolution in commemorating the Blagoveshchensk Massacre, which broke out in 1900 in what was then northern Manchuria. The historical particularities of this region, where Russian expansion and Chinese migrant enterprise collided, offer us a unique lens for understanding how the wenshi ziliao project negotiated and articulated its ideological purposes in mobilizing local and personal memories.

The 1858 Treaty of Aigun designated the Heilong (Amur) and Wusuli (Ussuri) Rivers the Qing borders with Russia in the northeastern frontier. While representing favorable terms for Russia, the agreement included provision for a slice of land above the Amur and along the east bank of the Zeya River. Known as the Sixty-Four Villages East of the River (Jiangdong liushi si tun), this area consisted of a patchwork of Chinese, Manchu, and Daur settlements long before the Russian advance. For this reason, the Aigun Treaty stipulated that the Qing government retain sovereignty, not over the land itself, but over the non-Russian inhabitants living there. The ambiguous fate of this territory obtained a political significance far surpassing its size in the aftermath of the Blagoveshchensk Massacre of 1900.
In the decades that followed the treaty’s signing, the Russian state’s investment in military and industrial development combined with the private initiative of Russian and Chinese entrepreneurs and laborers stimulated rapid emergence of commercial centers and mining communities along the Heilong River. To further spur development, the Russian state struck a deal with the Qing government to open the Heilong River border to unrestricted migration and trade in both directions. By the turn of the twentieth century, a steady traffic of Chinese migrants crossed the river by ferry daily between the town of Heihe on the Chinese side and the much larger flourishing urban center of Blagoveshchensk directly opposite. In 1900, however, allegedly in reaction to the threat to Russian lives and property posed by the anti-foreign Boxer Uprising that had spread north from Shandong province in China proper, Russian officers rounded up at gunpoint thousands of Chinese residents in Blagoveshchensk and forced them into the river to drown. Shortly following the massacre, Blagoveshchensk became the staging ground for the Russian army’s all-out invasion of Manchuria (Zatsepine, 2011).

To appreciate the massacre’s historical significance, one must situate the event within a broader geopolitical context. The rounding up of Chinese along the Amur River escalated foreign territorial ambitions and incursions into China to a new level. This culminated in the Russo-Japanese War (1905–1906), considered by some historians to be the first modern world war, which completely transformed the balance of power in East Asia and foreshadowed the wars to come. The massacre was also the opening act in a conflict that exposed the Qing government’s impotence. Similar demonstrations of the need for fundamental overhaul of the political and economic system fueled the radicalization of anti-Qing revolutionary movements at home and abroad. Finally, in contrast with the Russian Finance Minister Sergei Witte’s liberal vision of interethnic harmony, cultural tolerance, and peaceful integration as the principles of a benevolent empire, the massacre exposed within Manchuria the brutality of Russian imperialism and heightened Chinese xenophobic and nationalist sentiments. The fate of the 64 villages became a source of border tensions and regional and national grievances that stoked political controversy, then as they do today.

**The Moments of Memory Production**

In 1965, the Heilongjiang Provincial People’s Political Consultative Committee, the administrative unit in charge of the wenshi ziliao...
project, sent out a team of local investigators to conduct interviews with survivors of this drowning of Chinese en masse that had taken place 65 years earlier. The project was carried out in the context of rapidly deteriorating political relations between China and the Soviet Union, evidenced by a series of military clashes of intensifying ferocity along the border and by outpourings of Chinese nationalist resentment against Russia's acquisition of territory north of the Heilong River a century earlier. As the internationalist communist alliance between the Chinese and Soviet parties collapsed into a reconflagration of territorial disputes in the 1960s, one of the hot spots was the Sixty-Four Villages East of the River. The Chinese Communist state conducted interviews with 73 elderly former residents from the Sixty-Four Villages area. Basing its data on what it deemed authentic living sources to ascertain details about the original Chinese settlements’ exact size and history, its ultimate aim was to stake a conclusive Chinese claim to this border region on the northern side of the Heilong River (Heilongjiang shengwei zhengzhi yanjiu shi, 1965).

Interviews with survivors of the 1900 Blagoveshchensk Massacre were thus conducted as part of the Chinese state’s discursive initiative to stake a legitimate historical claim to the border region, while exposing the Russian imperialist abuses in the past upon which contemporary territorial claims rested. Testimonies included in the draft investigative report completed in 1965 clearly reflect this political purpose. The authors of the report preface the testimonies with an indictment of Czarist Russia’s violation of the Aigun Treaty’s provision concerning Chinese residence rights in the area, and state that the purpose of this report is to reconstruct the history of this Russian infringement of Chinese territorial sovereignty.

In the organization of survivor testimonies that follows, the authors pursue a strategy that acknowledges the Maoist emphasis on class struggle, while quickly subsuming it within ethno-national struggle. A brief statement at the beginning mentions that most of the informants were from the laboring class, thus couching in socialist terms, through reliable class background, the validity of their recollections. It later refers to the socioeconomic contradiction between the poor and landless laborers and the big landlords (da lianghu). What receives far greater emphasis in the testimonies that follow, however, is the relative harmony and sociocultural integration of this population united in their antagonism against the Russian intruders. The mixture of Han Chinese, Manchu, and Daur residents, according to the narrator, participated in a shared culture of learning Chinese, a political and economic system centered on the Qing cities
to the south, and a history of settlement in the region that had long
predated the Russians’ arrival. In contrast to accounts of interethnic
harmony among Asians, a series of testimonies detail local residents’
hostilities, violent at times, with Russians, over competing claims to
land use (Heilongjiang shengwei zhengzhi yanjiu shi, 1965). The
report includes testimonies by survivors who had been the more
recent entrepreneurial migrants to Blagoveshchensk since Russia’s
establishment of the city, which became the focus of discussion in the
post-Mao published version. In the original 1965 report, however,
the weight of testimonies is clearly not brought to bear on Chinese
migrant enterprise in Blagoveshchensk at the end of the nineteenth
century, but instead focuses on the issue of Chinese territorial sover-
eignty based on the ancestral composition of the 64 villages prior to
Russian expansion. In the pursuit of this agenda, and to provide his-
torical validation for war with the Soviet Union, the authors subordi-
nate internal class contradictions to external ethno-national conflict.

After the Cultural Revolution interruption, the wenshi ziliao ed-
tor Liu Banghou, who had helped to compile survivor testimonies for
the 1965 report, revisited these materials within a drastically altered
national and regional political context. Relations between China
and the Soviet Union, particularly along the Sino-Soviet border in
northern and eastern Heilongjiang province, had changed drastically
between the two periods of wenshi ziliao production. In contrast with
the Sino-Soviet split that had driven the initial collection of local tes-
timonies, the post-Mao market reforms were well under way in 1984,
when the new version of reflections on the 1900 incident appeared in
published form.

The Dengist administration ushered in a new era of economic open-
ness and trade vitality to the 3,000-km long border linking Heilongjiang
province to Primorskii Krai. In October 1982, Heilongjiang provin-
cial delegates went to the Soviet Union to negotiate a trade deal, and
in April 1983 Soviet delegates came to Heilongjiang to finalize and
sign the agreement resuming bilateral trade relations. Economically
isolated after the Sino-Soviet split, Heilongjiang’s resumption of open
trade relations provided lucrative opportunities for the provincial,
county, and municipal governments as well as for emerging Town and
Village Enterprises (TVE) and private businesses. It was a particu-
larly important new source of revenue for the provincial government,
which had become encumbered with failing State-Owned Enterprises
(SOE) slow to reform on account of party cadres’ entrenched interests.
The initiative of TVE and private businesses in capturing this cross-
border market became an enormous windfall for provincial, county,
and municipal government agencies in the form of tariffs and taxation. By 1983, government restructuring granted major inland cities like Harbin, Jiamusi, Qiqihar, and Mudanjiang administrative jurisdiction over, and therefore economic revenue from, this rapidly expanding border economy (Christoffersen, 2002). Official border trade bureaus were established, which not only regulated trading activities across the border, but also directly participated as border trade enterprises. The city of Suifenhe exemplified this practice. At the turn of the twentieth century, Suifenhe had established a reputation as the national border commercial capital (guojing shangye dushi) through which trade between China and 19 countries had passed. This legacy reemerged and the local economy became revitalized during the 1980s as its border trade bureau set up joint ventures with 200 other Chinese enterprises (Christoffersen, 2002).

Resumption of border trade relations also reshaped official conceptions of commercial space and economic community. The Heilongjiang provincial government envisioned itself at the center of a greater northeastern Asian economic corridor, encompassed within the notion of a Natural Economic Territory (NET) including Japan and Russia. The Mudanjiang municipal government, for its part, used the city’s strategic location along several important regional railroad routes to promote its orientation toward a Northeast Asian economic circle, centering on the Tumen River Development Project supported by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), as well as the Japan Sea Rim Project based in Niigata (Christoffersen, 2002). Local governments in Heilongjiang compared this expansive orientation toward northeastern Asia to South China’s dynamic opening to the international market community. In the early 1980s, in accordance with the State Council’s “Notice on the Further Opening of Heihe and the Four Border Cities,” cross-border trade was concentrated in four Special Economic Zones centering on Heihe, Suifenhe, and Dongning. The importance of the resurgence of the Heihe-Blagoveshchensk trade corridor for this plan of provincial economic development found expression in the speech of Hu Yaobang, who called on opening the Chinese north to the outside world: Shenzhen in the south, Heihe in the north—they should take off side by side (nanshen beihei, biyi qifei) (Christoffersen, 2002). This development in turn relied heavily on capital investment from Hong Kong-based companies, leading to the official provincial slogan adopted in the mid-1980s of linking to the south, opening to the north (nanlian beikai).
From this perspective, the cross-border trade situated Heilongjiang province as the economic center extending Chinese commercial influence into the broader arena of a northeast Asian space beyond the Sino-Soviet border. The provincial government articulated this vision through imagery of Harbin as dragon’s head, with border cities like Heihe as linking spaces and dragon’s wings for Heilongjiang’s economic expansion into the fast-growing northeast Asian market (Christoffersen, 2002). Even as the border became a critical source of state revenue in the form of tariffs and taxes, the government fostered a vision that subsumed the border within a continuous, expansive Chinese space extending across both sides of the Heilong River and integrated within a natural economic corridor transcending national boundaries.

With this context in mind, resurrecting memories of the Blagoveshchensk Incident served competing national, provincial, and local agendas. On the one hand, the need to reconsolidate national integrity in the aftermath of the Cultural Revolution found expression in the dichotomy of Chinese humiliation/foreign aggression, which the Blagoveshchensk Incident appeared to demonstrate dramatically through the lens of personal and collective trauma. On the other, the editor left out most of the testimonies on the 64 villages and their accounts of territorial conflict with and loss to Russian intruders. Instead, he includes only the triumphant accounts of the more recent entrepreneurial migrants expanding into and occupying the streets of Blagoveshchensk in response to the consumer needs of the growing Russian city population. These narratives of an expansive cross-border community formed out of Chinese migrant enterprise now served as an historical authentication supporting the province’s open door trade policy. Juxtaposing the humiliation/aggression narrative with one of expansive migrant community balanced the national, provincial, and local needs of resolidifying the national polity, stimulating the private market, and accelerating China’s reintegration within the international economic community.

**Framing Migrants within the Victim/Oppressor Binary**

The narratives of three particular individuals—Yin Xingwen, Jin Baichuan, and Liu Qingqi—comprised the majority of recollections included in the 1984 published account. While intervening significantly in the organization and writing of the overall text, the editor, Liu Banghou, simultaneously made himself invisible in the text’s
production. Only the names of these three main informants interviewed in 1965 (who, as Liu notes in the introduction, were no longer alive during the editing process) appeared under the title of the published article to indicate the authorship of the text. The *wenshi ziliao* articles consisting of transcribed oral testimonies commonly included the names of both the informant and editor, delineating their respective roles in the narration, compilation, and editing process. In this case, however, the name of the editor is absent from the article’s authorship on the title page. On one hand, this can be understood as due to the temporal gap between the moments of narration and editing, as Liu Banghou had no part in conducting the interviews or in shaping and transcribing the content of their narratives. At the same time, however, the absence of any reference to the editor’s role downplayed his intervention in shaping the perceived historical significance of the text in order to lend it authenticity through the voices of original eyewitnesses, while concealing the role of the editor in retrospectively superimposing onto the narratives the state-sponsored nationalist ideology. The title of the article, “What was seen and heard of the great Hailanpao [Blagoveshchensk] massacre,” reinforces this aura of authenticity, referring to the firsthand experience of what was seen and heard.

This pursuit of authenticity through production of firsthand accounts has a long tradition in Chinese literary and historical writings. The most conspicuous examples of this in imperial China were the *biji* (miscellaneous journal records). In addition to extemporizing on contemporary political and cultural developments, the authors described unusual encounters or strange phenomena that they had seen or heard. These spontaneous and miscellaneous accounts constituted a personal, authentic alternative to the carefully crafted and politically censored official dynastic histories. In the early twentieth century, this tradition of firsthand experiential writings converged with new ideas relating to social scientific research imported from the West. These Western ideas stressed the need for objective survey data and field research interviews for the state to obtain more accurate and systematic knowledge of conditions at the local level. Liang Qichao once theorized the importance of collecting firsthand experiential accounts of watershed moments in modern China such as the Boxer Uprising and the Hundred Days Reform. A systematic investigation along these lines, Liang suggested, mobilized a living history in the service of national consciousness (Kwong, 1992).

This *diaocha* (investigation) or *kaocha* (inspection) method of social scientific research was deliberately adapted by Chinese socialists for
their own political agendas. For the project of socialist transformation, they employed oral history methodology to simultaneously mobilize the past as well as those retelling it. During the 1950s and 1960s, teams of investigators ranging from professional researchers to students engaged in school projects fanned out into villages where key events such as the Taiping and Boxer Uprisings had taken place. The objective of these campaigns was to rectify history based on authentic, firsthand testimonies of the masses while concomitantly serving as an exercise for educated elite in learning from the masses and acting out new socialist class relations through the interview process (Kwong, 1992).

The revival of the wenshi ziliao project in the 1980s involved adaptation of firsthand experiential accounts for authenticating the discourse on national victimization to foreign imperialism. In his introductory commentary on the narratives that follow, editor Liu Banghou conveys the article’s main significance as exposure of the tragic violence and injustice wrought against the Chinese people:

Hailanpao, Blagoveshchensk being the Russian name, is situated on the left bank of the Heilong River and on the right bank of the mouth of the Jingqili River, facing our country’s border city, Heihe. Hailanpao is located in the long narrow area that originally was our country’s Huanghe village near the bank of the Jingqili River and Meng Clan village near the bank of the Heilong River. These had been just across the Jingqili River from and mutually interacted with the Sixty-Four Villages East of the River.

In 1856 the Czarist Russian fleet aggressively moved down the Heilong River and illegally established a sentry post at Hailanpao, calling it Ust-Zensk sentry post. The following year it was rebuilt as a Cossack town. In May 1858, to “celebrate” the signing of the unequal Sino-Russian Aigun Treaty, the Russian governor-general of eastern Siberia, Muraviev, renamed this place Blagoveshchensk, meaning “Happy Tidings City,” and secured the Czarist government’s formal approval.

Blagoveshchensk soon served as the political, economic, and military center of the Czarist Amur Province and became an important base for expansion and incursion into northeast China. (Yin, Jin, and Liu, 1984)

Liu Banghou begins the introduction by positioning Blagoveshchensk and Heihe across the border from each other within the framework of contemporary Sino-Soviet geopolitical relations, an enduring legacy of the unequal treaties signed in 1860. He then immediately juxtaposes this current configuration with a detailed description of Blagoveshchensk’s origins as an integral territory of China comprising
a network of peaceful Chinese settlements interwoven with the Sixty-Four Villages East of the River as a natural part of the Chinese nation-body. Into this peaceful setting of Chinese settlements enters the Russian fleet as violent invader violating the established community and transforming it into a site of military aggression from which to launch further imperialist expansion southward across the Heilong River deeper into China. The editor further identifies the city with China’s subjection to Russian belligerence by asserting that the name Blagoveschensk itself, meaning city of joyful announcement, alludes to and celebrates the signing of the unequal treaties.

Having constructed Blagoveschensk as the violent product of and stage for Russia’s political, military, and economic incursion into China, Liu Banghou introduces Chinese migrants into the story. “Owing to history and geography-related reasons, as well as due to the needs of Czarist Russian far eastern policy, large numbers of Chinese residents engaged in business, gold-mining, manual work, and all kinds of forced labor in Blagoveschensk. The Chinese residents’ strenuous labor provided the most important conditions for the survival of Russians in Blagoveschensk” (Yin, Jin, and Liu, 1984). Liu accounts in vague terms of unspecified “history and geography-related causes,” and in relation to the Russian state’s policy of expansion in eastern Siberia, for the flocking of Chinese to this center of Russian imperialism. Through reducing his explanation to vague, unspecified factors, the editor elides the many historical factors that complicated the relationship between Chinese migration and Russian presence in the region. He buries beneath the vague reference to history- and geography-related causes the agency of the migrants themselves, the various economic and social incentives that drove them to make the journey to Blagoveschensk, and the importance of household demands and local community networks. He presents as subject to the Russians’ economic exploitation the different enterprises in which these migrants engaged.²

The excesses of history spilling outside the boundaries of the bifurcated nationalist discourse of foreign imperialism and Chinese humiliation are thus contained. Instead, the migrants’ economic activities are emptied of any agency among the migrants themselves and presented in terms of their bitter subjection to Russian exploitation. This, in turn, Liu Banghou employs to foreshadow the build up to the Blagoveschensk Massacre.

In July 1900, while enthusiastically making plans for and participating in the eight-nation combined army’s invasion of our country’s
Beijing-Tianjin area, massacring the Boxer masses, Czarist Russia also amassed a 170,000-man army for invading China and led a six-prong invasion of our country’s northeast. Of these the Russian army in Blagoveshchensk was an important element. In order to eliminate any threat from behind and to seize the riches of the peaceful Chinese residents, on July 17, Blagoveshchensk’s Czarist Russian authorities single-handedly carried out the “Great Blagoveshchensk Massacre” that shocked the world. In several days’ time, they massacred seven thousand unarmed Chinese residents. (Yin, Jin, and Liu, 1984)

The massacre appears here as a culmination of an ongoing history of exploitation and humiliation suffered by the Chinese. In addition, by relating the massacre in Blagoveshchensk to the eight-nation military intervention in the Boxer Uprising that same year, Liu Banghou presents the incident as an integral part of the overall, interconnected, and unified narrative of Western imperialism besetting the Chinese nation as a whole.

Editor Liu Banghou concludes by asserting that the personal recollections that follow encompassed a collective memory through which traumatic suffering associated with the event in 1900 is kept vividly alive.

Regarding this inhuman act of brutal violence by Czarist Russia, decades later the people of the Heihe and Aihun region still have fresh memories, and their bitter regrets do not fade away. . . . Here, compiled and set in order, are the records of some of the elderly Heihe residents’ recollections. As of today these elderly men have already passed away, and the living materials that they have left behind for people are truly precious. (Yin, Jin, and Liu, 1984)

The rhetorical power of such a nationalist discourse depends not on moving beyond a perceived past of traumatic suffering, but rather on constantly recreating and revivifying past events of shared collective suffering for constructing national solidarity in the present. The editor of this state-sponsored oral history project retrospectively frames the previously compiled personal narratives as a living medium for the transmission, validation, and preservation over time of this collective discourse of pre-1949 national humiliation and degradation. He does so, moreover, as a historical past from which the Communist Party led by Mao Zedong emancipated China. In the process, his original project of collecting authentic, firsthand documentation of this historical experience in the context of the 1960s regional border conflict with the Soviet Union is adapted and rearticulated in the 1980s.
within the framework of a more generalized nationalist discourse of China’s humiliation at the hands of Western imperialism.

**A Chinese Blagoveshchensk: Migrant Enterprise and the Vanishing of Russian Imperialism**

In contrast with editor Liu’s representation of the city as site of Russian imperialist aggression expanding menacingly south across the Heilong River, survivor testimonies describe Blagoveshchensk as the stage for Chinese entrepreneurs’ energetic expansion northward. The same place that Liu Banghou names the springboard of Russian military expansion, informant Yin Xingwen resignifies as the symbol of Chinese economic vitality. Whereas Liu associates the city with displacement of original Chinese settlements by Russian aggression, Yin conceives Blagoveshchensk as a space rapidly becoming Chinese through the inexorable force of migrants’ entrepreneurial spirit.

In addition, Yin draws particular attention to the economic dominance of enterprises affiliated with his region of origin. In doing so, he presents his own native place, and by extension his regional identity, as exemplar of Chinese entrepreneurial spirit. Instead of being an undifferentiated Chinese collectivity exploited by Russian imperialism, Blagoveshchensk is the site where competing regional affiliations strive for economic dominance over one another, revealing the particularities of regional identity that drive Chinese migration. Finally, such a rendering serves as medium to extol Yin’s own achievements. As Yin recalls,

> At that time Blagoveshchensk was already really large, it had 13,000 or 14,000 people. There were a great many Chinese, some who went over to find work during the day and came back to this side of the river by ferry (by sled in the winter) in the evening. Some of them lived in shop buildings in Blagoveshchensk, and many of them opened businesses there. With storefronts and houses, they brought their wives and children to live together in Blagoveshchensk. . . . Chinese owned all kinds of businesses, large and small, and no matter what size they all had storefronts. Taizi Street was the most energetic in Blagoveshchensk, and it was mostly businesses that Chinese had opened. (Yin, Jin, and Liu, 1984)

Yin portrays the city as dominated by an energetic collective Chinese enterprising spirit. For him the Heilong River is not a border between rival nationals or a symbol of Russian violence, but a peaceful, everyday
channel of commerce through which Chinese and Russian banks are integrated into a single social space. Crossing the river demonstrates the spontaneous initiative of Chinese businessmen who set up their own enterprises, successfully occupied and dominated districts, and consequently built a bustling commercial environment. From the vitality of the urban landscape and the lively streets, the Russians virtually disappear from the scene.

Yin goes on to illustrate this commercial initiative by listing according to their regional origins three large enterprises as exemplary models. “The largest of these were three businesses: one was Yonghezhan founded by a native of Ye county from Shandong province, one was Huachangtai, a two-story building, founded by a Cantonese native, and there was also Tongyongli founded by another native of Shandong Ye county” (Yin, Jin, and Liu, 1984). Two of the three in particular, he notes, are run by Chinese hailing from his own native place of Ye county. Migrants like Yin in the early twentieth century relied extensively on native place networks for obtaining various social and economic resources including housing, jobs, and capital for business investment. The majority of Chinese migrant enterprises in Manchuria during this period grew out of these tightly knit but geographically extensive social networks, and relied on capital from informally pooled funds based on mutual trust and on a system of native-place traditional banks. Those who set up their own enterprises or branches of businesses already established in northern China reinforced this channel of localistic ties by recruiting only from among the young natives of their home regions. The coastal region of Shandong province and villages in northeastern Hebei province in particular developed a Manchuria-centered commercial culture according to which employment in such migrant enterprises became both a measure of success and a rite of initiation into manhood for youths living in these areas (Zhang, and Tao, 1933, 1968; Wu, 2007).

As the Chinese official Liu Wenfeng observed during his travels through northern Manchuria, such strong regional identity fostered a highly disciplined atmosphere of business training driven as it was by knowledge that dismissal from a migrant enterprise for incompetence or bad behavior made one an object of derision by his native community (Liu, 1901: 45b). Owen Lattimore described as a living tradition these behavioral patterns that shaped the Shandongese settlements in the northeastern frontier region. The dense network of social ties between frontier settlements and hometown communities provided a strong social foundation grounding the migrants in established cultural channels rather than displacing or uprooting them from
familiar patterns of life (Lattimore, 1975: 197, 204–205). Interviews conducted by Thomas Gottschang and Diana Lary illustrate these tightly knit channels at the household level. One important aspect of this was the role of remittances and the obligation to send them in sustaining hometown attachments (Gottschang and Lary, 2000). The various native place networks through which individuals moved formed regional cliques at the provincial and county levels that waged vigorous competition against each other in the expanding northeastern market (Shen, 1987: 232; Luo, 2001: 57). Ye county was one such region along the northern coast of Shandong peninsula with a long history of extensive commercial ties with Manchuria across the Bohai Sea.

This expression of regionally defined commercial vitality paralleled Yin’s articulation of economic class particularities in relation to the collective Chinese experience. In presenting a list of occupations and enterprises, Yin reveals the vast disparities and exploitation of labor that took place among the Chinese migrants in Blagoveshchensk. His intention, however, is clearly not to show the level of class contradictions dividing the Chinese population. Rather, he ties together and reframes these disparate points along a socioeconomic spectrum to illustrate how the Chinese as a whole exercised economic dominion over the city:

These businesses all hired a large number of employees, with Huachangtai alone having more than a hundred. Aside from these, there were Chinese-owned restaurants, noodle houses, travel lodges, bathhouses, and small shops and street stalls everywhere. Chinese did all kinds of work, like carpenters, bricklayers, glass artisans, electrical engineers, masons, coolies... even sofa contractors were all Chinese. Many of those who took care of the children, cooked meals, carried the water and delivered food for Russian households were also Chinese, and some of them were teenage youths. (Yin, Jin, and Liu, 1984)

To demonstrate the success of Chinese migrant enterprises in the city, Yin refers to the exceptional scale of such enterprises noted above. These businesses all hired many workers, with over a hundred people working for Huachangtai Company alone. Having illustrated these particular enterprises’ influence, he then goes on to list the wide range of trades in which Chinese engaged: from restaurants and lodges to small peddling stalls, from skilled craftsmen to coolie laborers. He extends this list to include the various types of domestic service Chinese migrants, including young boys, provided for Russian households. In the last reference to young boy servants, Yin alludes
to his own experience working in the home of a German industrialist. In doing so, he ennobles his humble experience of service by linking it to his celebration of Chinese dominance in all sectors of Blagoveshchensk society.

Yin turns on its head editor Liu’s criticism of Russian demand for labor and services. Rather than relating them to Russian expansionary ambitions, Yin portrays these demands as integral to an environment of profit and mobility accessible to any Chinese with the proper dose of entrepreneurial spirit. “Labor was in high demand in Blagoveshchensk, and it was pretty easy to make a living. Wielding an axe or cleaver one could make two strings of cash in a day, and food was inexpensive: one jin (around 500 grams) of bread cost four cents, and a meal less than ten cents” (Yin, Jin, and Liu, 1984). Alongside glorifying even the lowliest occupations as embodying the Chinese community’s economic dominance and entrepreneurial spirit in the region, Yin exalts the great demand for labor in Blagoveshchensk as creating a bountiful paradise of high wages for everyone, regardless of skill level.

Unlike editor Liu’s portrayal of Blagoveshchensk as the site of the Russian state’s violent displacement of a long-standing Chinese community, Yin presents Blagoveshchensk as a dynamic stage wherein Chinese native place networks integrated the area within their own constellation. In doing so, he sandwiches Russian state-sponsored urban development between the larger narratives of Chinese commercial vitality and community integration dominating the local economic and social landscapes. In emptying out Russian presence in the city’s development Yin ultimately resignifies Russian expansion into the region as an expansive domain of opportunities for Chinese migrants to enrich and empower themselves. Immediately after talking about the economic opportunities for Chinese migrants, Yin describes in detail the scale of Blagoveshchensk’s urban infrastructure and industrial development:

At that time there were four avenues going east to west and twelve going north to south in Blagoveshchensk. The east-west avenues extended over ten li (one li equivalent to 500 meters or half a kilometer) and the north-south avenues were three-to-four li long. The avenues were very wide and there were few buildings along them. There was one ironworks factory, one match factory, three or four flour mills, and one alcohol distillery in Blagoveshchensk. The two largest businesses were the Russian-owned Qiulin Company and the German-owned Kong foreign enterprise. (Yin, Jin, and Liu, 1984)
In particular, Yin notes the city’s orderly grid of spacious avenues, and relates this to the presence of major factories and the two largest commercial establishments. Like these two businesses, the factories were predominantly Russian. Instead of pointing out Russian ownership in the same way that he identified specific Chinese regional affiliations for the commercial enterprises in the previous section, Yin simply presents these foreign industrial units as part of the city’s economic landscape.

The markers of the Russian state’s prevailing presence in planning the city as an industrial and commercial center are once again emptied of their political significance, and are presented instead as the manifestation of the expansive arena of economic opportunities that the city offers. Whereas in the previous passage Yin fills the streets with Chinese traders and workers of all kinds hustling their wares, in his references to the Russian infrastructures he presents the streets and buildings as empty urban space facilitating Chinese economic activities. Yin juxtaposes this depopulated urbanscape with the Chinese settlement immediately north of the city densely filled with several hundred households and many thousand individuals.

Five li north of Blagoveshchensk city was the small north village, where all the residents were Chinese. Most were from Shandong and Hebei provinces, and there were also some from Henan and Guangdong. Every summer evening, relatives would find each other, some going south and others going north, and it did not seem like being in a foreign country. Little North Village had several hundred households, several thousand people, and Russians called it the new village. (Yin, Jin, and Liu, 1984)

In contrast with the grandeur of spatial and economic scale described in the preceding passage, Little North Village appears as the reembodiment and transplantation of the fabric of native Chinese village life. Unlike the wide empty avenues of the Russian infrastructure, this area circulates densely knit native place and kinship networks, and integrates Blagoveshchensk with migrants’ native hometowns as a single, unitary social fabric. Yin confirms this impression, stating it does not appear to be in a foreign country.

This emptying out of the Russian state’s presence bears striking parallels to the Western and Japanese imperialist narrative techniques of deleting the colonial landscape and naturalizing it as empty space for exploration, occupation, and domination. In Japanese accounts of Manchuria’s colonization by Japanese farmers during the 1930s,
the areas to be colonized were rhetorically emptied of any Chinese inhabitants and represented as empty space on which to establish a new, organized administrative and societal model. According to David Tucker (2005), however, there was an irreconcilable tension between Japanese settlers’ reliance on Chinese inhabitants for their economic livelihood and Japanese colonialists’ characterization of Manchuria as an empty frontier on which to transpose a utopia free from interference by other populations. In a similar fashion, Yin retrospectively inverts this paradigm of the imperialist gaze by deleting signs of Russian expansion in his mental landscape, and situates his own personal experiences of seeking a livelihood in Blagoveschensk within a triumphant narrative of Chinese enterprising initiative.

Conclusion

While the Chinese Communist state mobilized local and individual memories for authentication of a homogenizing discourse of foreign aggression and victimization, this project paradoxically created both an official space in which to celebrate individual agency and entrepreneurial spirit, and one to valorize a regional history of migrants’ commercial vigor and expansiveness. Yet, this paradox of historical meanings inscribed within the wenshi ziliao project served to reconcile rather than undermine the state’s imperatives for sponsoring memory production. How the contradictions were exposed in these accounts both reflected and enclosed the multiplicity of meanings inherent within the post-Mao state’s pursuit of modernization. The editor-narrator mode of structuring historical testimonies harmonized the political objective of constructing the nationalist narrative of foreign aggression and victimization to maintain national unity with the simultaneous effort to justify market reforms through a celebration of the achievements of Chinese commercial ventures across and beyond national borders. The agenda of promoting a homogenized national unity went hand in hand with an effort to mobilize and channel energies unleashed by the resurgence of regional pride and identification.

The political significance of these local and individual memories clearly shifted after the 1965 report first came out, and yet certain continuities also tied together the two junctures of wenshi ziliao implementation in the 1960s and 1980s. We can conceptualize the contradiction as that between a variable factor x and a constant factor A. The variable shifted from class struggle in 1965 to market liberalization in 1984, while the constant unifying the two historical
fault lines was the imperative of national reconsolidation. Despite radically different political contexts, the significance of the *wenshi ziliao* project was remarkably consistent, and demonstrated certain underlying continuities in ideology and governance across a radical political divide.

The economic and demographic impulses shaping Sino-Russian interactions along the northeastern border constituted a particularly charged site at which to explore, enclose and reconcile the competing priorities of post-Mao reform. Throughout the twentieth century, this border region fluctuated between dynamic migration and economic exchange on one hand, and tense ethnic and nationalist hostility on the other. Sixty-five years after the Blagoveshchensk Massacre of 1900, survivors still struggled to reconcile this bipolarity in their own migration experience. This oscillating and disjunctured pattern has persisted through the Maoist and post-Maoist periods. A flourishing cross-border economic community during the 1950s was transformed into a hostile war zone in the 1960s. Nonetheless, when in the 1980s China pursued its Four Modernizations and the Soviet Union launched perestroika and glasnost, both countries adopted a more relaxed stance on bilateral relations and resumed cross-border trade.

The new global and domestic economic realities demanded new institutional responses. Eager to exploit new markets that ended decades of economic isolation, the provincial, county, and municipal governments in northeastern China reenvisioned the border region as not only a dragon's head aggressively reaching out to Russia in the north, but as an integral part of a greater northeast Asian economic zone (Christoffersen, 2002). Ironically, it was the political leadership of neighboring Russian provinces, facing a declining population and economy, who felt threatened by the rising influence of Chinese enterprise and migration. Fearing a new Yellow Peril, Russian regional authorities imposed barriers on cross-border trade and mobility from China (Larin, 1995). Fear of Chinese expansionism climaxed in 1991 when the signing of the Sino-Russian Agreement ceded to China territorial and economic privileges along the Ussuri and Heilong river borders without prior notification to Russian authorities in eastern Siberia. This diplomatic incident gave rise to anti-Chinese sentiments and prompted Russian regional leaders to criticize Moscow for appeasing China (Larin, 1995).

Against this backdrop of rapidly changing Sino-Russian relations, analysis of the production of *wenshi ziliao* materials on the Blagoveshchensk Massacre must recognize this new cross-border
dynamic driven primarily by economic energies unleashed through China’s market reforms. The 1960s editorial emphasis on past Russian aggression and Chinese victimization was constructed at the very time Chinese national and regional leaders pursued an ambitious policy of economic and demographic expansion into eastern Siberia. In the final analysis, the politics of memory production can be discerned at two levels. Externally, the state deliberately denied and concealed any offensive Chinese territorial and economic ambitions. It invoked a sense of national humiliation and victimhood to disguise the official policy of assertive expansion in the Reform era. Internally, the state employed the wenshi ziliao project as a new strategy to create a united front among victims of the socialist reforms and to recast them as a positive force driving China’s modernization. The government was determined to contain any ideological tensions between its nation-building project and the rise of local loyalties and personal ambitions.

This example reminds us of the late imperial Chinese officials who created a quasi-universal culture through the project of difangzhi (gazetteers). Not long ago Frederic E. Wakeman, Jr. (2009) argued that Chinese localism was deeply embedded in a larger national empire, and that local characteristics and individual sufferings had to be presented as important components of this imagined national order. From the state’s perspective, the purpose of memory production was to integrate the rival historical claims into a homogenous narrative that affirmed the current government as China’s liberator and modernizer. The same pattern of memory politics can also be seen in the next chapter, which analyzes the complicated relations among history, memory, and identity politics at the Macau Museum.

Notes

1. This officially sponsored history of national humiliation expanded and intensified in response to a new crisis within the Communist Party marked by the 1989 Tiananmen pro-democracy demonstrations. The intensified ideological initiative that grew out of this crisis, known as the “Patriotic Education Campaign,” became systematically incorporated into the curriculum of primary and secondary school education beginning in 1991 (Wang, 2008).

2. Native place networks facilitating access to resources such as lodging, jobs, and credit for business ventures had channeled and sustained migration patterns between specific locations in northern China proper and the northeastern frontier (Gottschang and Lary, 2000).
3. By the turn of the twentieth century, a steady flow of human and commercial traffic joined the towns of Blagoveschensk and Heihe on both sides of the Amur River. Ferries transported the crowds regularly and many of the passengers commuted back and forth in the same day. This belied the river’s designation by the Chinese officials as a political boundary.

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Chinese Nationalism in Harmony with European Imperialism: Historical Representation at the Macau Museum

Kam-Yee Law

Introduction

Museum enterprise is an integral part of modern states, using the past to construct the present, promoting nationalism and patriotic citizenship, and appealing to domestic as well as foreign visitors. Objects and images are carefully selected to foster a sense of historical and cultural consciousness among the people. Many antiques and relics that the state preserves may be of little humanistic significance, but are intended to create national unity and legitimize the current regime against other political rivals (Hamlish, 2000; Coombes, 1988; Kaplan, ed., 1994). History museums in contemporary China are no exception (Cohen, 2009; Vickers, 2007; Carroll, 2005; Denton, 2005; Steiner, 1995). As Kelvin C. K. Cheung argues in chapter 2, after losing the civil war, Chiang Kai-Shek made the Republic of China on Taiwan the guardian of Han Chinese civilization, and founded the National Palace Museum in Taipei to display a thousand years of unbroken Chinese history. In a similar fashion, the Communists on the Mainland created a network of museums to eradicate feudalism and implement revolutionary change. The Museum of the Chinese Revolution in Tiananmen Square adhered to the red line of Maoism from the 1950s to the 1970s, and the exhibitions changed as frequently as the dominant ideology (Hung, 2005). After the Sino-Soviet split, the Museum of the Chinese Revolution downplayed
the influence of the Soviet Union in the early period of Communist struggles. When Peng Dehuai, a prominent revolutionary hero in the War of Liberation and the Korean War, fell out with Chairman Mao in the 1960s, the Museum of the Chinese Revolution removed all his portraits. In the post-Maoist era, all national and municipal museums needed to reconcile the long-standing discourse of revolutionary movement with the benefits of economic reforms. The Shanghai Municipal Museum uses many interactive technologies to showcase pre-1949 Shanghai as both modern and cosmopolitan, highlighting the recent decades of modernization and serving today’s agenda of economic growth and globalization (Denton, 2005; Ho, May 24, 2011; Mitter, 2000).

Like it or not, the Chinese rulers often use museums to construct new political myths and identities to bring together different social and cultural groups. This chapter focuses on the changing representations of the local and national history at the Macau Museum since the city’s return to Chinese sovereignty in 1999. How does the Macau museum enterprise, emerging from the Western, imperialist, and modernist tradition, provide a vital function in a postcolonial Chinese city? How do museum curators accommodate Macanese concerns for heritage management with China’s growing nationalist aspirations? How do they reinterpret the colonial past and recast the city’s Portuguese heritage to assist China’s rise to power in the new century? Beginning with a critical account of the founding of the Macau Museum, this chapter discusses the politics of historical representation in the museum’s permanent and temporary exhibitions. It draws on official documents and interviews to show that the methods of display at the Macau Museum are shaped by the prevailing ideology. The conjunction of new political reality and local concerns for heritage conservation challenge us to reevaluate the politics of identity formation in post-1999 Macau.

**Harmony between East and West in the Macau Museum**

Opened in April 1998, the Macau Museum (Museu de Macau) is a three-story building located on a hill in the four-centuries-old Fortaleza do Monte (officially called in Portuguese: Fortaleza de Nossa Senhora do Monte de São Paulo; in English: the Fortress of Our Lady of the Mount of St. Paul), the military headquarters of the former Portuguese colonial government. Together with the Ruinas da Antiga Catedral de Sao Paulo, the remaining façade and
The stairway of an early-seventeenth-century Jesuit Church, the Fortaleza do Monte constitute the Historic Center of Macau, a downtown that was inscribed in 2005 on the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage List, becoming the thirty-first designated World Heritage site in China. A popular tourist attraction for Mainland Chinese and foreign visitors, the Macau Museum celebrates a colonial past that was both diverse and cosmopolitan (Fang et al., 2002). The overall layout of the museum space defines the goal of the institution, which is to present Macau as an open, affluent, and harmonious city along the South China coast. The permanent exhibition contains more than three thousand antiquities, divided into the sections of history, folk customs, and contemporary culture.

The history section on the first level traces the development of Macau through the display of archaeological evidence, antiques, arts, and painting, highlighting much of the city’s Chinese cultural heritage along with the European one. Terracotta soldiers of the Qin Dynasty and stone statues of ancient Romans decorate both sides of the museum entrance. The time tunnel on the wall presents a chronological account of both Chinese and Western civilizations. A holograph introduces the recent archaeological discoveries of primitive agricultural and fishing tools from the Neolithic period. This is followed by a perspective drawing of Jorge Álvares (died on July 8, 1521), the first Portuguese merchant arriving at Guangdong province in May 1513 and helping to establish the Portuguese settlement in Macau. The main hall on the first floor houses many interactive exhibits about the Chinese and Portuguese maritime trading networks in history, showing that Oriental commodities like tea, silk, and porcelain reached East Africa, Europe, and South America through Portuguese shipping routes. A model cargo displays a junk loaded with tea, silk, china, spices, and Japanese silver. Moreover, visitors can use the interactive audio to hear the pronunciation of tea in various languages. The mezzanine displays both European and Chinese religious icons in Macau. Here, the exhibitions of Buddhism, Daoism, folk religions, and façade of the Lingnan-style buildings are arranged opposite the Catholic icons and façade of southern European-style buildings (Lu, 2003: 57).

The folk customs section on the second level that presents different cultural traditions of Macau houses an extensive collection of traditional handicrafts, costumes, accessories, street hawkers, and documentaries about local ceremonies and festivals. The Chinese folk culture gallery is larger than the Portuguese one, and this reflects the
small Portuguese and Macanese presence. In 2001, the Portuguese and Macanese-born Portuguese people made up 0.6 percent and 1.5 percent respectively, of the total population of 436,686. Nevertheless, the Portuguese folk culture gallery houses a carefully decorated Portuguese living hall and a permanent exhibition of the Macanese cuisine. The museum is committed to preserving the Portuguese and Macanese culture in a predominantly Cantonese-speaking society. The contemporary section on the third level features urban life today and various Chinese and European artistic representations of the city. Portraying Macau as a salad bowl, the exhibitions show that this small port city still shines under the shadow of a rising China (Ashworth et al., 2007).

The essence of architectural harmony is shown in the design of the museum. The exterior is in Portuguese style and the interior is very Chinese. All exhibits of Chinese and Western arts balance one another, creating a sense of cultural fusion between East and West. There is no disaccord between traditional Chinese and Southern European columns placed on the same floor. The implication is that the historical role of Macau as a major port-city in China’s maritime silk route parallels its rise as a cross-cultural bridge between China and the Portuguese-speaking countries in the twenty-first century (Ngai, 2008). By displaying the living Chinese, Portuguese, and Macanese cultures in harmony with one another, the Macau Museum advances the current agenda of multiculturalism under the one country, two systems formula (Xu, 1998: 34).

The narratives of maritime trade, migration, and cross-cultural encounter permit the expression of a distinctive local identity. The museum sets out to reduce the tensions between these cosmopolitan possibilities and the promotion of an imagined China. The temporary exhibitions at the museum put cosmopolitanism in service of nation-building. From 1998 to 2010, over 60 percent of the 42 temporary exhibitions touched on the cultural harmony between East and West, and the rest addressed the importance of Macau in China’s quest for modernization.1 In early 2001, the museum organized an exhibition to mark the hundredth anniversary of Feng Kanghou (1901–1983), a famous seal carver and painter, who integrated Chinese and Western cultures in his works. In December 2007, the museum held another exhibition featuring 200 sketches and drawings by Gao Jianfu (1879–1951), one of the key founders of the Lingnan School of painting at the turn of the twentieth century. Gao had made Macau his home at several points throughout his life. He started as a traditional painter and later studied with a French artist to sketch a charcoal
drawing. Prior to the 1911 Revolution, Gao led the Macau branch of the Chinese Revolutionary League to assassinate the Qing officials. During the Second World War, he took refuge in Macau, giving art classes and organizing charity exhibitions for the war relief efforts. Therefore, Macau’s cosmopolitanism must be contextualized through its involvement in the turbulent history of modern China.

Nevertheless, it is still difficult for the museum to keep the multiple narratives of cosmopolitanism from challenging the nationalist discourse. In September 2006, the museum hosted an exhibition entitled “The magical art of paper-cutting: Switzerland and Foshan, China.” The organizers selected 45 paper-cuts by Foshan Chinese artists from the nineteenth century to the present, and 55 recent paper-cuts by contemporary Swiss artists. While displaying distinctive southern Chinese paper-cutting art, the organizers included the Swiss in order to create an image of cross-cultural interactions (Law, April 9, 2009). Another example is the exhibition of copperplate engraving works from Beijing’s Forbidden City in late 2007. The organizers deliberately included exquisite works from the Palace of Versailles in France. The goal was to reconcile cosmopolitan ideals with national and local cultural heritages.

**Politics behind the Construction of the Macau Museum before 1999**

A public institution that instills pride in local heritage, the Macau Museum maintains the permanent exhibition of Portuguese culture and provides the Portuguese communities with a platform to reclaim their voices and experience. A senior official at the Department of Cultural Activities and Recreation of the Bureau of Civic and Municipal Affairs in Macau explained that the long history of cooperation between the Macanese-Portuguese and Chinese inspired him to advocate Macau’s cosmopolitanism before it returned to be part of China on December 20, 1999. This senior official once entertained some Portuguese-speaking diplomats, and several Brazilian officials had been impressed by the efforts of a southern Chinese city to conserve its Portuguese heritage. The same official has been working for the postcolonial administration, and he was determined to make the museum reflect more closely the rich diversity of the city and to reach out to many Portuguese-speaking countries in the twenty-first century (Law, April 9, 2009).

The Macau Museum has redefined its function in a fast-changing world. When the Sino-Portuguese Joint Declaration was finalized in
1988, Macau entered a period of political transition. From 1989 to 1999, the Portuguese colonialists initiated the process of decolonization under the principle of good relations and friendships with all peoples, one advocated by the home government following the leftist Carnation Revolution in Portugal on April 25, 1974 (Cheng, 1999: 35). The Portuguese adapted to the coexistence of both Chinese and Portuguese influences in Macau in the hope of preserving the Portuguese language and culture in the postcolonial era (Feng, 2009). Against this backdrop, the Macau Museum transformed itself from an institution that conserved material evidence of the Portuguese and Chinese settlers into one that addressed the needs of a postcolonial society. The museum enterprise advanced the principle of Sino-Portuguese partnership, the spirit of East-West cultural fusion, and the strategic role of Macau in China’s rise to power. The postcolonial approach of museum management gradually evolved from the conventional school of expert museology, focused on cultural preservation, to that of popular museology, concentrated on folklore and public education, and that of political museology, committed to patriotic education and nation-building.

Did the Portuguese colonial administration yield to political pressure from Beijing before 1999? When the Macau Museum was under construction in the 1990s, the Chinese government recognized its strategic value and sought to use it to project a multicultural image of Macau among domestic and foreign visitors. The Chinese diplomats in charge of Macau affairs supported the decision to preserve the Portuguese cultural heritage after 1999. Kang Jimin, the Chinese chief representative of the Sino-Portuguese Joint Liaison Group, recalled that many Portuguese leaders urged China to respect and protect the historic ties between the two countries through Macau. Kang was most impressed by the statement made by José Sócrates, the deputy prime minister of Portugal at the time: “The link between Portugal and Macau for the last four centuries is a unique feature of Macau today, and Portugal would be happy to see this cultural element to be well-preserved in a fast-changing world” (Kang, 2007: 50–51).2 China acknowledged Macau’s strong tie with Europe and sought to exploit it to gain entry into the European Union and other Portuguese-speaking countries. The Chinese side strongly supported the Portuguese initiatives to conserve their cultural heritage, and the Macau Museum constituted an integral part of this cultural diplomacy and outreach (Huang, 1999: 352). The Chinese leaders were more receptive toward the Portuguese colonial legacy in Macau than the British one in Hong Kong, and permitted the former to preserve
their heritage and influence after 1999. In the official rhetoric, China was presented as a benevolent power, respecting Portugal and letting Portuguese to leave Macau with grace (Kang, 2007: 52–53; Guo, 2006: 78). A leading historian in the planning and interviewing team for the “Remembrance of Macau’s Return” oral history project mentioned that during the period of political transition, the extreme-leftist ideology greatly influenced the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, partly because of the ideological aftermaths of the military crackdown on the Tiananmen Square pro-democracy movement on June 4, 1989 and partly because of the Sino-British diplomatic entanglement over Christopher Francis Patten’s controversial political reform in Hong Kong (Law, September 8, 2011). As a result, Portugal lobbied China persistently for permission to preserve its heritage and influence in Macau. Without China’s approval, the Macau Museum would have to promote Chinese nationalism at the expense of Portuguese and Macanese culture. The close collaboration between Portuguese colonialists and Chinese officials guaranteed the success of the Macau Museum. During the mid-1990s, the Portuguese museum designer announced to the Chinese official media that both Chinese and Portuguese cultures would be equally represented in the new museum. The Portuguese curators also prepared local Chinese staff to take over the museum management after 1999 (Deng and Han, 1997).

Macau’s transition was in fact part of a larger Chinese diplomatic strategy to deal with the West during the 1990s. The Tiananmen pro-democracy movement of spring 1989 failed to achieve major political changes in China, but the powerful images of courageous students inspired the popular uprisings that overthrew the Communist bloc in Europe in the winter of 1989. When the Soviet Union was formally dissolved on December 25, 1991, China found herself deeply isolated in world affairs and needed to identify potential allies. A middle power with significant influence in Africa and Latin America, Portugal still maintained a relatively strong relationship with China after the leftist Carnation Revolution in 1974, and was never a close partner with the United States and Great Britain. During the 1980s, the Portuguese leftist political parties handled the diplomatic negotiations with China over Macau. Therefore, keeping a collaborative relationship with Portugal was a strategic priority for China in order to undermine the policy of diplomatic containment imposed by the United States and the European Union. By permitting a strong Portuguese presence in postcolonial Macau, China succeeded in co-opting Portugal, weakening certain diplomatic pressure
from the European Union, and “smashing the iron alliance of the West” (Kang, 2007: 43). While making concessions to Portugal in the early 1990s, China had trouble dealing with the British over the future of Hong Kong. In 1995, Christopher Francis Patten, the last British governor, launched very controversial political and social reforms that would undermine Beijing’s absolute control over Hong Kong after its handover. Lu Ping, the director of the Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office of the State Council, was troubled by Patten’s noncooperation and labeled him the wrongdoer who would be condemned for a thousand generations (qiangu zuiren). Lu Ping (2009: 96) later admitted that the top leaders found it more difficult to manage the transition of Hong Kong than Macau, and that they were most outraged by the international media’s negative portrayal of Hong Kong’s future, one famous example being a June 1995 cover story in *Fortune* magazine, announcing “The Death of Hong Kong” (Segal, 1993; Shipp, 1995).

Seeing the Sino-British diplomatic entanglement in the mid-1990s, the Portuguese-Macau administration was keen to emphasize that the Macau negotiation was smooth and successful, whereas the Hong Kong negotiation showed distrust and conflict (McGivering, 1999: 2). The last Portuguese-Macau Chief Secretary for Administration, António Salavessa da Costa, remarked to his Chinese counterparts in 1999: “I do not understand why Prince Charles and Governor Patten left Hong Kong in the midnight of the handover. After the return of Hong Kong, China and Great Britain should have a stronger relationship. Why did they not attend the celebration of the founding of the first Hong Kong Special Administration Region and the inauguration of Chief Executive Tung Chee-Hwa?” (Zong, 2009). Today, the Chinese leaders still refer to the return of Hong Kong as the end of the century-old national humiliation. But this type of nationalistic rhetoric never appears in the Chinese official reference to Macau. In this perspective, the strong Sino-Portuguese relations enabled the Macau Museum to retain a certain degree of flexibility to define its new mission after 1999.

**The Macau Museum and China’s Rise to Power**

More than a decade has passed since the return of Macau to China. The people in Macau are more willing than the Hong Kong public to identify with China. The postcolonial administration intentionally protects the city’s heritages to expand tourism and diversify the
casino-based economy. In 2005, the Historic City of Macau was inscribed on the UNESCO’s World Heritage Sites. In 2009, the government implemented a new heritage protection law in line with the international practice. The economic benefits of the heritage protection campaign add a cosmopolitan dimension to the construction of Macau’s postcolonial identity.

The demographic component of the local population also reveals a common sense of national and local belonging. Before 1999, most of the Macau residents were from Mainland China in pursuit of better economic opportunities. A 2005 survey showed that 41 percent of the 2,065 respondents identified themselves with China, 38 percent with Macau, and the rest with both places (Hao, 2011: 195). On March 3, 2009, Edmund Ho, the chief executive, certified Macau’s national security law, prohibiting and punishing acts of treason, secession, and subversion against the Chinese state. The public supported the official decision and showed no concern for any restriction of civil rights and freedoms. Surveys carried out by civic organizations in Macau at the time found 70 percent of local youths in favor of the national security law, and only less than 2 percent against it (Aomen Ribao, October 22, 2008; November 4, 2008). Unlike the Hong Kong public, the people in Macau believe that national security always takes precedence over local concern and community well-being. The Chinese leaders have never encountered any serious political threat from Macau. Therefore, promoting patriotism through the Macau Museum is never on the top of the postcolonial government’s agenda.

Furthermore, the political, business, and academic circles in Macau share a consensus that the former Portuguese colony should be a platform for China to reach out to Europe, Africa, and Latin America. Its colonial past is thought to be part of China’s soft power to strengthen its relationship with Portugal (Li and Jiang, 2006; Macau Trading and Investment Promotion Bureau, 2011; Jin and Wu, 2004). Premier Wen Jiabao once praised Macau as a cultural melting pot between East and West, and its bilingual experts as China’s assets to engage with many Lusophone countries such as Angola, Brazil, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, India, Mozambique, Portugal, East Timor, Sri Lanka, São Tomé and Príncipe, and Equatorial Guinea (Xinhua, 2011). In October 2003, Macau hosted the Forum for Economic and Trade Cooperation between China and Portuguese-Speaking Countries. Since then, Macau houses the official permanent secretariat office of the Forum. Bilateral trade grew from US$11 billion before 2003 to more than US$77 billion in 2008, and is expected to reach US$100 billion in 2013. Nevertheless, profit is not the major
issue. China has trade deficits with many Lusophone countries. For example, China imported US$50 billion worth of cargo from Angola and Brazil but exported less than US$23 billion worth of products to these countries in the first three quarters of 2011. China was keen to form alliance with these countries to counter the American influence (Odgaard, 2007; Lee, 2009). Brazil has become a rising power in the southern hemisphere and China has overtaken the United States as the largest foreign investor in that country. The symbiotic relationship between China and Brazil has complicated the regional balance of power. The fast-growing China-Angola tie is equally important. As the largest crude oil exporter in Africa, Angola serves China’s energy security interests by giving Beijing access to oil outside the Middle East (Taylor, 2006).

During the Ministerial Meeting of the Forum for Economic and Trade Cooperation between China and Portuguese-Speaking Countries (2010–2013), one can find many references to soft power in the Economic and Trade Cooperation Action Plan. The forum was designed to promote the soft power of Lusophone countries through education, radio and online broadcasts, movies, TV programs, sports, and cultural activities (Nye, Jr., 2011). The action plan specifically referred to Macau as a major platform for such activities. The forum proposed to send 1,500 officials and engineers from Portuguese-speaking countries to a training center in Macau from 2010 to 2013. The China-Portuguese-Speaking Countries Cultural Week (Actividades da Semana Cultural) was held in Macau in November 2011. The forum’s action plan indicates that China has fortified links with Portuguese-speaking nations through Macau’s cultural and economic institutions. Because Macau is the only Chinese city that keeps Portuguese as one of the official languages, China seeks to use its bilingual population to engage with the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States, the Organization of Ibero-American States, the Organization of African Unity, and over 200 million Portuguese speakers worldwide. Wei Meichang (2002), a member of the Macau Museum Concept and Implementation Follow-up Committee, reveals that China always regards Macau as a strategic platform to foster ties with the Portuguese-speaking world. Macau hosted the first China-Latin America and Caribbean Forum on Economic and Technical Cooperation in 2011. A major finance specialist had high hope on Macau’s soft power and urged business leaders from Latin America to visit Macau in order to better understand the city’s culture and forge a meaningful economic relationship with China (Bethel, July 5, 2011). Seen from this
perspective, the Macau Museum has made itself an indispensable partner in accommodating China’s new strategic interests with the city’s heritage conservation.

But it can be difficult for a state-run museum to reconcile cosmopolitanism with nationalism. The Macau Museum displays “Nova Tabula Asia,” an eighteenth-century Portuguese map, in which Taiwan, known as Formosa in Portuguese, is colored differently from China. A museum manager (Law, September 8, 2011) recalled that a top Chinese leader once visited the museum and criticized the map as contradictory to the one-China policy (Yi ge Zhongguo zhengce). Despite the leader’s criticism, the museum adheres to its self-defined goal of promoting cultural fusion between East and West and never removes the map.

**Conclusion: A Slack yet Tight Red Line over the Macau Museum**

At the Macau Museum, visitors find no evidence of antagonism toward the Portuguese rulers. The typical answer from the tour guide is that the Portuguese were not, strictly speaking, colonists in Macau, and that they had leased Macau for 500 taels of silver every year since the reign of Ming Emperor Jiajing (1522–1566). Critical intellectuals may reject this simplistic explanation. One should not forget the notoriety of João Maria Ferreira do Amaral (1803–1849), who became the seventy-ninth governor on April 21, 1846. Within a month of taking office, he ordered Chinese residents in Macau to pay various taxes. In early 1849, he expelled Qing officials from Macau and destroyed the Chinese imperial customs. His actions got him assassinated on August 22, 1849. Forty years later, Lisbon and Beijing signed the Luso-Chinese Treaty of Friendship and Trade (1887) to institutionalize the perpetual occupation and management of Macau by Portugal (Hao, 2011: 42). In late 1989, Lu Ping, a Chinese official in charge of the Hong Kong and Macau affairs, ordered the removal of all colonial symbols after Macau’s handover. In 1992, the statue of João Maria Ferreira do Amaral was torn down and shipped to Lisbon. Framed in the nationalistic rhetoric, Lu’s instruction reflected the prevailing ideology of nationalism among Chinese officials during the 1990s. Visitors nowadays find no reference to João Maria Ferreira do Amaral at the museum. They also find nothing about the anticolonial riots masterminded by local Communists in 1966. Such violent events of the past were deleted in the public memory so as to improve the Sino-Portuguese cooperation in the new century.
William Callahan states that the heart of Chinese diplomacy today is an identity dilemma. Wiping out the century-old national humiliation is only one component of the Chinese foreign policy (2010). Friendship diplomacy is another component that affords a convenient substitute for Chinese nationalism, allowing Macau to control its own narrative by employing a cosmopolitan message China cannot refuse. Here, Macau’s own variety of harmonious display—with the Portuguese influence featured on par with the Chinese—emphasizes a brotherhood with the developing world. This development reveals the remarkable ability of the postcolonial leadership to integrate Macau into China’s global strategic outreach.

Notes


2. Kang Jimin was the deputy director of the Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office of the State Council of the People’s Republic of China after 1993 and continues to handle Macau matters after 1999. José Sócrates was the deputy prime minister of Portugal from 1997 to 1999 and the prime minister from 2005 to 2011.

Bibliography


Introduction

The SARS epidemic of 2003 that killed almost 300 people and made more than 5,000 fall ill (World Health Organization, May 15, 2003), and the lack of expeditious response and openness on the part of the government bureaucracy in dealing with the epidemic, highlight the growing failings of the Chinese Communist Party in coping with a health crisis caused by an emergent disease. Both the outbreak and response, moreover, exposed the inadequacies of China’s health system and the degree to which the health-care infrastructure has long been losing its capacity to prevent and treat diseases.

Under the weight of several decades of economic reforms and socioeconomic changes, the Maoist-era health structure has been collapsing. Far from contributing to the building of a harmonious society (hexie shehui) the transformation of the health-care system brought about by post-1978 reforms has in fact intensified the adverse socioeconomic consequences of China’s transition to a market economy. With improvements in health outcomes outpaced by economic growth, the growing inequalities in the provision of and accessibility to medical services within the health-care system have become a serious problem, and the government is confronted with crises and
challenges in its attempt to manage a rapidly transforming system in
the new political and socioeconomic environment.

The poor, in particular, are unhappy with both the difficulty of
access as well as with the high cost of medical care. Indeed, there has
been a steady increase in the number of social conflicts—so-called
mass incidents (*qunti shijian*)—between patients and medical person-
nel or local officials. In May 2007, alarmed by widespread and some-
times violent attacks on medical workers by angry and disgruntled
patients and their relatives, the Chinese Ministry of Health actually
called for the posting of police at local hospitals to ensure the safety
of medical staff (Reuters, May 11, 2007). Along with protests over
corruption, rising taxes, and misuse of funds, protests over health
problems caused by environmental pollution, contaminated foods,
and bogus or tainted medications have become quite commonplace.
According to official statistics, the number of mass incidents rose
from 10,000 with 730,000 participants in 1994 to 74,000 with 3.8
million participants in 2004. Sun Liping (July 2010), sociologist
at Tsinghua University in Beijing, estimates that there were about
180,000 such incidents in 2010. Among those disaffected, the com-
mon mantra is, “Causing a big disturbance gets you a big solution; a
little disturbance gets you a little solution; and no disturbance gets
you no solution” (Lum, 2006: 10).

Public anger and dissatisfaction with government failure to provide
equitable health care or to protect the health and lives of citizens can
potentially undermine the Chinese government’s professed aim of
building a harmonious society. An online survey conducted by a news
portal in China in February 2010, shortly before the annual meet-
ing of the National People’s Congress, revealed that health care was
among a host of issues—including corruption, pensions, the skyrocket-
ing cost of housing, education, and the widening gap between rich
and poor—which people wanted the Congress to address (Xinhua,
February 25, 2010). China’s top leaders are keenly aware that health-
care problems adversely affect China’s stability. As an official docu-
ment from the Ministry of Labor and Social Security explains, the
failure to provide adequate health care has “intensified social con-
tradictions, and become a potential threat to social stability” (Guo,
2003: 388). This chapter examines the nature and consequences of
some of the serious health-care problems that have emerged in the
past few decades, and their impact on the government’s attempt to
build a harmonious and prosperous society in the early twenty-first
century.
The Decentralization of National Health Care

The health-care system under Mao Zedong rested on the premise that health care was a public rather than private good, and that the state had the responsibility to provide equitable care to the population. The First and Second National Health Conferences in 1950 and 1952 outlined the guiding principles for China’s health policies: to serve the workers, peasants, and soldiers; to stress prevention; to unite Chinese and biomedicine; and to combine health work with mass movements. On the preventive side, the Sanitation and Epidemic Prevention Department of the Ministry of Health oversaw a nationwide network of antiepidemic stations at the various administrative levels in carrying out public health and antiepidemic work. This vertically organized and coordinated medical structure collaborated with the clinic-based primary health-care system in the urban and rural areas. The combined systems served as an integrated medical infrastructure for both disease control and treatment. At the same time, the Patriotic Health Committee was set up to mobilize political and social resources to launch massive health campaigns, especially against common communicable diseases such as malaria, cholera, and schistosomiasis. The state government and the Chinese Communist Party determined medical policy, mobilized public support, and distributed health-care resources. The party-state clearly played the central role in the provision and delivery of health care (Cai, et al., eds., 1999: 1–4, 9–13).

Deng Xiaoping’s economic reforms, however, have reduced the centralized planning under the state and weakened the party’s control in many policy areas. State control of the economy has steadily declined, and powers have devolved from the center to the lower levels and from state agencies to enterprises, with market forces playing an increasingly important role in the provision and distribution of goods and services. Greater local autonomy, profit-making and efficiency have all been hallmarks of the post-1978 economic policies. With the partial withdrawal of the state and party from complete administrative control, the increased power of the coastal regions and cities has further undercut central political control. Moreover, a general loosening of administrative authority means that lower level units now assume greater autonomy in the acquisition and utilization of scarce resources. The emerging institutional absence along with bureaucratic fragmentation have created problems in the formulation,
coordination, and implementation of central policies, including attempts to deal with epidemic outbreaks or the failing health-care system as a whole.

The fiscal decentralization that began in the 1980s meant that as central government funding for health care has been drastically reduced, the costs of the provision of public health and medical services are now mainly borne by the provincial and county governments. Nevertheless, the money collected from local taxes has proven to be vastly inadequate as they cover only basic salaries, and the shortfall has to be made up by higher user fees. Hospitals have become more autonomous, but they are also increasingly responsible for balancing their budgets beyond the state subsidies. To maximize revenue, many hospitals charge huge markups for medicine and higher fees for the use of new technologies, even when such biotechnical procedures might not be necessary (Hesleth and Wei, 1997: 1616–1617). Some hospitals have begun to demand deposit fees before patients are admitted, and many reports describe hospitals turning away patients, with fatal results. In 2006, riots broke out when about 200 people mobbed a hospital in Sichuan province where a three-year-old boy died after his grandfather was sent away to raise money for the child’s treatment. The protesters fought with police, and about ten people were seriously injured (Ang, November 12, 2006).

An important part of the health-care system that has also been affected by fiscal decentralization is the Centers for Disease Control (CDCs), the agencies most responsible for implementing public health measures and enforcing regulations under the supervision of the Bureau of Disease Control in the Ministry of Health. As CDCs at various levels have experienced great variations in funding levels and organizational performance, inequalities in access to and provision of public health services have ensued. Influence and control from the upper-level CDCs, moreover, have declined considerably. As one observer puts it, “with limited financial resources and very few national administrative mandates, the role of the Ministry of Health in initiating and sustaining public health programs has diminished” (Liu, 2009). China’s economic reforms have undermined the efficiency of its socialist health-care system.

**Commercialization and High Costs of Health Care**

The decline in state support of health care can be seen from the reduced government budgetary allocations: the percentage of total
government spending on health dropped from 22 percent in 1991 to 14 percent in 2000. The World Health Report 2000 in fact ranks China a low 139th for health expenditure per capita, and 188th out of 191 nations for equity of financing (World Health Organization, 2000; Liu, 2004). Although the central government has tried to increase health spending, yet its share remains relatively low. In 2006, China spent about 800 billion yuan (US$126.22 billion) on health care, but the government budgetary allocation accounted for only about 17 percent of total health expenditure (Liu, 2009). Health-care services in China are therefore largely financed by private, out-of-pocket payments.

The tremendous rise in out-of-pocket payments points to problems typically associated with allowing the market to dictate access to health care. These payments, as a proportion of total health-care expenditures, rose considerably, from 20 percent in 1980 to 59 percent in 2000, and remained at about 56 percent for the decade of 2000 to 2010 (Liu, 2009; Mao, 2012). In short, more and more individuals have to shoulder the major burden of health-care expenses. This is especially hard on the poor, as they have to save a large share of their income to pay for out-of-pocket medical expenses. Many retirees also face the bleak prospect of not receiving any pension payments from their former firms or the state, and they have lost any health insurance coverage to which they once had claim. Not surprisingly, China has witnessed a surge of pension protests in recent years (Hurst and O’Brien, 2002).

There is another segment of the population who has suffered as a result of the high costs of health care: the migrant population. An estimated 229.8 million rural workers comprised the migrant population in 2009 (Tobin, June 29, 2011), the majority of whom were second-generation migrant workers born after 1980. Their dissatisfaction over tenuous job security, poor working conditions, long working hours, low wages and substandard housing have often led them to collective labor disputes (Pun and Lu, 2010). Demanding higher pay and investigation into the death of four migrant workers alleged to have been overexposed to the toxic chemical hexane, more than 2,000 employees of a factory in Suzhou smashed vehicles and factory facilities in January 2010 (Qian, January 18, 2010).

Several factors work together to make migrants a particularly needy yet unattended population when it comes to health care. Migrants lack household registration (hukou) in urban areas, and thus are not entitled to social welfare benefits including health coverage or health services in their destination location. At the same time, migrants are
particularly vulnerable to occupational and child/maternal health problems as well as emerging health threats related to environmental pollution, poor conditions in housing and the workplace, and lifestyle. Infectious diseases including tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS, and hepatitis B are common among migrant communities, and tend to travel with their hosts. The low income of migrants makes them rare and difficult clients to be served in urban health centers, which charge relatively high fees for outpatient visits. In addition, while poverty often acts as a constraint on workers seeking health services, huge medical expenses themselves often drive people into poverty.

A study in 2003 showed that 15.1 percent of urban residents and 21.6 percent of rural residents did not seek medical care when ill because of their inability to pay for it (Liu, 2009: 40). Two developments have aggravated this problem: the commercialization of medical care, and the demise of insurance programs, especially cooperative insurance programs in the countryside. With the marketization of medical care, fee-for-service becomes the norm rather than the exception. The collapse of cooperative medical schemes has meant that a large number of former barefoot doctors (chijiao yisheng) have left the countryside. Those who passed certifying examinations could practice as village doctors. Yet, from 1975 to 1987 the number of village doctors declined by 18 percent. Many of them joined community practices or private fee-for-service clinics that in 1989 accounted for about 60 percent of village clinics (Liu and Wang, 1991: 109). Since these clinics are profit oriented, many doctors drive up the cost of care by prescription medicine and other curative services that increase the burden on those who seek care. With the quality of care uneven, however, many patients bypass the lower-tier services and seek better quality care higher up in the system if they can afford it. This increases both patient load and cost at the higher levels (Thompson, 2009: 77).

The higher costs of care are driven by the increasing bias toward curative medicine, biotechnology, pharmaceuticals, and research. As medicine becomes professionalized, new medical specialties develop, with their respective specialized facilities, equipments, and pharmaceuticals. The new focus represents to some extent the response to changing disease patterns of the population as a whole. Increasingly China’s people suffer from chronic diseases such as cerebrovascular disease, cancer, respiratory disease, and heart disease (Xinhua, May 28, 2010). The profit motive, however, creates irrational incentives for hospitals to emphasize new biotechnology and drugs as well as to charge excessive fees, especially when the primacy of profit-making
shapes the medical marketplace. A brief examination of the pricing and utilization of pharmaceuticals will illustrate this point.

With the loss of government subsidies hospitals now face the problem of generating enough revenue to not simply operate, but to make a profit. Beginning in the mid-1980s, hospitals started to use (and often overuse) increasingly popular new drugs to generate revenue. This they often achieved through high markups on imported and branded items. According to a World Bank study, high retail prices and high volume of drug utilization are reflected in the fact that by 2004 China was the ninth largest pharmaceutical market in the world. Pharmaceutical expenditures amounted to 448.6 billion yuan (US$70.84 billion) in 2006, accounting for more than 40 percent of China’s total health expenditure. As the study puts it, “In both absolute and relative terms, the cost of pharmaceuticals is extremely high in China” (World Bank, 2010: 1). It is no wonder that the soaring costs of medicines constitutes serious and even financially crippling burdens for many patients, especially those with chronic conditions that require long-term use of expensive drugs.

Not only the commercialization of medical care but also the collapse of state health insurance programs has created tremendous hardship for the poor who must allocate an increasingly higher portion of their income to medical care. Ever since the 1990s, healthcare costs have risen faster than the growth of per capita income (Gu and Zhang, 2006: 66–67). In the past, the state provided health insurance to state cadres (gongfei yiliao) and state-enterprise workers (laodong baoxian) (Cai, et al., eds., 1999: 63–64). With the change to a market-driven economy, much responsibility for welfare programs has been decentralized from the state to the enterprise level. Yet the ability of individual enterprises to provide adequate and continued support of health programs varies greatly. Most enterprises do not provide full reimbursement of medical expenses, and individuals have to pay an increasing portion of their own costs. Some enterprises that are operating at a loss actually fail to offer reimbursement altogether (Grogan, 1995). At a time when the demand for medical care is increasing, especially among urban residents, urban health programs have become largely incapable of meeting the changed demand for health care.

In the countryside cooperative insurance programs had, in the past, provided coverage for most of the population. The collapse of this system, however, has meant that a significant portion of the rural population is no longer protected. From 1980 to 1985, the cooperative insurance coverage rate plunged from 90 percent to 5 percent.
Fee-for-service virtually became the norm in paying for medical care for the overwhelming majority of rural inhabitants (Liu and Cao, 1992: 504). By 2003, when the government decided to initiate new insurance programs, most of the rural population had virtually no health insurance protection.

**Growing Inequalities and the Urban-Rural Divide**

Clearly one of the most serious consequences of Deng Xiaoping’s economic reforms has been the growing inequality in income among various segments of the population. According to Wang Xiaolu, deputy director of the National Economics Institute, by 2010 the richest families (i.e., the top 10 percent) had 65 times the income of the poorest (i.e., the lowest 10 percent) (Wu, 2011: 23). China’s Gini coefficient, a measurement of income inequality, soared from 0.18 in 1978 to about 0.50 in 2010, becoming one of the highest in Asia. In particular, the average income of urban residents grew to be approximately 3.1 times more than that of their rural counterparts (Xinhua, January 27, 2010). When one includes government services such as education and health care, urban residents in today’s China are estimated to be six times better off than rural residents (Ma, December 22, 2005). For these two groups, the percentages of their respective salaries that go to paying for health care are revealing: in 2003, the average patient expenditure per visit was 108.2 yuan (US$17), equivalent to 0.77 percent of the per capita salary for an urban resident, but 4.2 percent that of a farmer. As for average inpatient expenditure per admission, it amounted to 27.9 percent of the per capita salary of an urbanite and 149.1 percent of per capita income for a farmer (Mao, 2012: 3). Not surprisingly, one of the most critical challenges in the healthcare system these last few decades has been dealing with the huge gap between urban and rural areas with regard to access to health services and distribution of health resources. Certainly, urban-rural differences existed even during the Maoist era, but the situation created by the economic changes has become untenable.

As far as the urban health-care system is concerned, by 1986 the per capita health service fund allocated by the state was 4.34 times more than that in the countryside, and the figure remained essentially the same through the early 2000s (Mao, 2012: 2). At the same time, there were 2.69 times more hospital beds and 3.07 times more doctors per 1,000 people in the urban areas (Liu and Wang, 1991: 110–111). The concentration of hospitals, specialty treatment centers
with high-tech equipment, medical research institutions, biomedical laboratories, and other health services in urban centers contrast sharply with the decline in health service facilities in the countryside since de-collectivization. Peking University People’s Hospital, for example, “has computerized charts, GE scanners, top-flight doctors and a deluxe ward” for patients who can pay extra for private suites. By contrast, community clinics in most cities or rural areas suffer from understaffing and poor facilities (Mufson, October 29, 2009). Even the overall number of village doctors has dropped, with many qualified doctors enticed to relocate to urban areas where the health infrastructure provides them with the opportunity to practice the type of medicine they want and to make more money. On the one hand are urban residents, who if they can afford to pay have full access to some of the best available care. On the other hand are rural residents, who even if they are willing and can afford the expensive medical service often cannot find the kind of service that they need.

The imbalance in capabilities between rural and urban facilities, and also between wealthy and poor provinces and municipalities, reflects the widening inequities in health care between different segments of China’s population. In 2003, “total medical spending for the 48 million people in impoverished Guangxi province, for instance, is just half that of Beijing’s, with a population of 13 million” (Forney, May 23, 2003). The results of such disparity are reflected in differences in health status: the average life expectancy in Shanghai in 2010 was 78 years, while in the poorest provinces it was only 65 years (Xinhua, January 27, 2010).

There is also another serious aspect to the urban-rural difference in health-care spending. Since the majority of national investment in rural public health institutions has been spent on paying staff salaries, the actual introduction and maintenance of public health services suffers now that resources are limited (Mao, 2012: 2). Much of the preventive work that has been vital for the control of communicable diseases especially in the countryside now fails to receive adequate funding and attention. The distribution of already reduced government funds for health care between curative medicine and public health tends to be unbalanced. Moreover, with the dominance of curative medicine, training of public health personnel suffers. Unlike the graduates of professional public health programs in most industrial countries, China’s public health students are typically undergraduates who receive a bachelor of preventive medicine degree after five years of education. The curriculum is heavy on clinical medicine, paying scant attention to such subjects as demography, or social and
policy sciences (Liu, 2009: 39). Certainly, all these developments have serious consequences for the effective control and management of infectious diseases in present-day China.

The Threat of New and Resurgent Infectious Diseases

During the first three decades of the People’s Republic, China had been remarkably successful in controlling such diseases as plague, cholera, malaria, and schistosomiasis through the use of propaganda and mass mobilization as well as through the development of a public health system that emphasized preventive medicine and primary care. Sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), especially syphilis, were virtually wiped out in the first two decades of the People’s Republic (Chen, 1985; Huang, 1986). Recent declines in investment in public health, however, have been at least partly responsible for the reappearance of some diseases once thought to have been under control. For example, in the early 1990s schistosomiasis reemerged as a major problem in parts of China. Without the massive public health education campaigns and programs common in the past, many people failed to take proper preventive measures when fishing, swimming, and rice planting in areas where the disease had been endemic. Parasitic infection also continued to pose serious health threats (Sleigh, Jackson, Li, and Huang, 1998; Anson and Sun, 2005: 67). The nationwide immunization program also suffered with the prevalence of fee-for-service health care. The drop in immunization for childhood infectious diseases contributed to a tripling of the incidence of measles between 1977 and 1980 (Henderson, 1990: 277). The reemergence of diphtheria in Beijing in 1990 was apparently linked to a reduction in regular immunization (Kobut, February 17, 1990: 12).

More worrisome still is the emergence of new infectious diseases such as severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) and avian influenza (H5N1), as well as the resurgence of syphilis and other STDs. Other diseases such as TB and HIV/AIDS are spreading rapidly throughout the country, too. China has the world’s second-largest TB epidemic (after India), constituting 17 percent of the entire global TB burden (Kaufman, 2009: 8). Despite some steady progress before 1990, there has been little improvement in recent years. This may result from the rising HIV infections and comorbidity as well as the poor housing conditions among migrant workers. Moreover, China has 25 percent of the world’s burden of multidrug resistant TB (MDR-TB), and the World Health Organization (WHO) in Geneva has identified China as one of the high MDR-TB burden countries. Wang Lixia, director
of the TB prevention department of the Chinese CDC, attributed China’s high percentage of MDR-TB to the lack of proper treatment for TB patients in hospitals at the grassroots level, especially in some clinics in rural areas and the less-developed western regions (Xinhua, March 21, 2011). Indeed, rural residents are twice as likely to be infected with TB as urban residents and many rural residents with suspected TB infection do not seek immediate medical care. Even if they do, they cannot afford to pay for treatment. A survey of 40,000 rural households undertaken in 2003 revealed that more than one-third of those with a suspected TB case did not seek medical help at all (Zhang, Tang, Gao, and Whitehead, 2007).

The first HIV/AIDS case in China was discovered in 1985. At the time, it was thought to be a disease carried by foreigners, and the response of the government was to test people entering the country. But it soon became clear that HIV/AIDS was an epidemic among needle-sharing intravenous drug users along the border with Myanmar (Burma). By 2008, the government estimated that 700,000 people in the country were infected with HIV, that over 200,000 cases were confirmed, and that the disease was found in all of China’s 37 provinces, municipalities, and autonomous regions. The number of reported HIV/AIDS cases in 2007 represented an increase of 45 percent over that in the previous year (Xinhua, February 23, 2008). In addition to drug users, new victims of infection are found among those exposed to sexual transmission: HIV/AIDS is transmitted among sex workers, sexual partners of drug users, men who have sex with men, and increasingly among the migrant population. What is most alarming is that a separate epidemic broke out from 1992 to 1997 among poor farmers in central China, especially in Henan province, who sold their blood for extra cash. The blood that was taken was reduced to plasma and the red blood cells were reintroduced into donors. This measure prevented anemia and allowed more blood be taken for donation. What is terrible is that the red blood cells were not returned to the original donors, but were pooled by blood type with that of other donors and only then returned to the donors, with tragic consequences. By 2001, the Ministry of Health estimated that 6 percent of some 600,000 HIV carriers in China were the victims of this lucrative black-market blood-selling business (Xinhua, August 23, 2001).

Related to the expanding sexual spread of HIV/AIDS are a resurgent syphilis epidemic and rise in other STDs. Gonorrhea and syphilis, though virtually wiped out in the early years of the People’s Republic, “are now among the top five most common notifiable diseases in China. In 2007, syphilis increased by 24 percent” (Kaufman, 2009: 8). The resurgent syphilis epidemic also poses an increased threat of HIV
transmission. Many of those infected do not seek treatment, whether it is because of cultural factors, lack of knowledge, or the cost associated with treatment. In short, socioeconomic changes have again made the control of infectious diseases difficult in the new era.

It took the SARS epidemic in 2003 to force the Chinese government to face up to the many challenges of new and resurgent infectious diseases. Although the epidemic began in Guangzhou in November 2002, the Chinese government did not report the outbreak to the WHO until February 2003, only after WHO received reports from Hong Kong’s Global Outbreak Alert. The Chinese government even then tried to downplay the severity of the disease, but the outbreak had spread to Hong Kong, and then to the rest of the world. China had utterly failed in the early acknowledgement and initiation of appropriate response. By May 20, 2003, there were more than 5,000 cases of SARS in the country. The initial mismanagement and failure on the part of the government to be transparent regarding the nature and spread of the disease also caused panic and protests among many who feared being infected. For instance, in April 2003 villagers of Hujiaoyao in Henan province ransacked a local hospital because they were worried that the disease would spread to the nearby village. In a village east of Beijing, protesters invaded a school, smashing windows and furniture after hearing the rumor that the building was to be converted into a SARS ward (The Sydney Morning Herald, May 7, 2003). It is interesting to note that to control the epidemic the Chinese government resorted to the political strategies of mass mobilization and patriotic health campaigns that were hallmarks of the Maoist era. In addition to adopting a more transparent stance in providing information regarding the disease, moreover, it allocated 2 billion yuan (US$315.81 million) in emergency funding for SARS control programs (Kaufman, 2009: 10). It is clear that the surveillance system and access to basic public health education and first-line care had serious inadequacies, especially in the rural areas. The lessons learnt from its SARS response provide important guidelines for controlling other infectious threats in the country, including the outbreak of avian influenza (H5N1) in April 2005.

The Threat of Environmental Degradation, Unsafe Medications and Foods

The people’s health, however, is not only threatened by new or resurgent infectious diseases, it is also threatened by health problems caused by environmental degradation as well as by bogus or tainted
drugs and contaminated foods. The proliferation of industries in the countryside and urban areas, and the lack of proper pollution control and government supervision have caused serious health issues. In August 2005, farmers in Meishan town in Changxing district, Zhejiang province, staged a week-long public protest against a factory whose industrial waste was allegedly responsible for causing lead poisoning of 700 children in the neighboring villages. The collective action finally forced the local government to intervene and launch an investigation (Xinhua, August 25, 2005). In late spring and early summer of 2009, two people died and more than 500 people in Liuyang municipality in Hunan province fell ill due to cadmium pollution caused by the discharge of waste from the Changsha Xianghe Chemical Plant. When about 1,000 villagers residing near the plant protested in July 2009, three officials of the plant were held responsible for the disaster and punished by the Liuyang municipal government (Xinhua, August 4, 2009). In June 2011, after hundreds of protesters petitioned government offices for more than a week, municipal authorities in Hangzhou agreed to quadruple the compensation offered to over 600 lead-poisoned workers in foil workshops (Hook, June 18/19, 2001). Indeed, there has been deepening concern among both farmers and urbanites of the potential health hazards posed by industrial pollution and waste as well as the damage that industrial projects might do to the environment. The post-1978 reforms have promoted rapid economic development. Local officials who have been given considerable power to foster growth have also been responsible for implementing environmental protection regulations. In most cases, local officials favor industrial growth over pollution control because of the strong financial incentives to expand economic development (Ma and Ortolano, 2000: 63; Smil, 1984, 1993).

The past few decades have witnessed not only increasing public demands for stricter enforcement of environmental laws, but also mounting anger over the government’s failure to protect the public from contaminated foods or counterfeit and substandard medicines responsible for devastating health problems. The notorious tainted milk scandal in 2008 highlighted the serious issues of food safety and political corruption. On September 17, Ministry of Health officials revealed that more than 6,000 babies had fallen ill from drinking milk and infant formula produced by Chinese dairy giant Sanlu Group, which had been adulterated with melamine, a chemical commonly used in making plastics (Ramzy and Yang, September 16, 2008). By the end of the year, 6 babies had died and 300,000
others had been made ill (Jacobs, November 10, 2010). Poor families were the ones most affected by the tainted milk because they could not afford more expensive imported brands. The incident not only led to widespread protests but also a collective suit against Sanlu filed on behalf of hundreds of families by a group of lawyers, despite warnings by government officials that the lawsuits could lead to social unrest (Ng, September 23, 2008). In fact, authorities arrested Zhao Lianhai, whose son was made ill by tainted milk, when he started a Chinese website, “Home for the Kidney Stone Babies,” to gather medical information and organize legal action against Sanlu. About a year after his December 2009 arrest, Zhao was sentenced to two and a half years in prison on charges that his online and legal activities disrupted social harmony (Jacobs, November 10, 2010).

**Facing the Challenges:**

**Government Reforms**

By 2005, when President Hu Jintao proposed building a harmonious society as the blueprint for China’s socioeconomic development, the Chinese leadership was already keenly aware of the multitude of problems accompanying economic reforms after 1978—“thorny domestic issues,” Hu called them, in a high-level Communist Party seminar in February 2005 (People’s Daily Online, June 27, 2005). But even before the Hu-Wen administration took over, there had been attempts by the Chinese government to address some of the major problems related to the access and availability of health care. The SARS crisis in 2003 further spurred the government to confront potentially destabilizing challenges in health care.

A pilot program to finance health care for the urban employed, Urban Employee Medical Insurance (UEMI), was introduced in 1994 and expanded nationwide in 1998. Under UEMI, workers maintain medical savings accounts with the addition of insurance coverage in the event of health catastrophes. Employers and employees contribute 6 percent and 2 percent, respectively, to the minimum 8 percent premium. Enrollment is mandatory and in theory, the program should provide basic medical coverage for all formally employed urban workers. But enforcement has proven to be more difficult than expected, and the plan has not included care of employees’ dependents. By 2009, about 200 million people were covered under UEMI (Ministry of Health, 2009). A new scheme for
uninsured urban residents, the Urban Resident Medical Insurance (URMI), was introduced in 2007. URMI involves government subsidies as in the case of the new rural insurance program introduced in 2003. In this scheme that provides insurance mainly for major illness requiring hospitalization, participation is voluntary. The Ministry of Health (2009) estimated in 2009 that about 118 million people enjoyed URMI coverage. By mid-2011, both schemes insured a total of 421 million people and appeared to be well-received by the public (Xinhua, September 4, 2011).

The New Rural Cooperative Medical Insurance (NRCMI) scheme that would provide catastrophic health coverage was launched in 2003. The premium sharing—subsidies from the central and local governments amounting to 100 yuan (US$15.79) with individual contributions of 20 yuan (US$3.16)—have proven quite attractive. By 2009, the government claimed to have 90 percent of the rural population insured through voluntary participation under NRCMI (Ministry of Health, 2009). The establishment of urban and rural health insurance schemes marked major steps in China’s health-care reforms meant to make health care available to all. Yet insurance is not portable in China, and people moving from one locale to another cannot maintain the same coverage. Moreover, the quality of health care obtainable in urban and rural areas remains uneven. The attraction of urban practice has left inadequately trained health personnel in the countryside, where standards for medical facilities and equipment lag behind those in urban areas. At the same time, the problem of wasteful and excessive care persists because the profit motive of health-care providers fails to receive adequate consideration.

To improve the quality of rural health care and to ensure availability, the Chinese government recently unveiled an ambitious program called one clinic in each village (yicun yige weishengshi) or one village doctor for every 1,000 farmers (yiqian ren yixia de cun weishengshi peigei yiming cunyi). Unveiled by the State Council in July of 2011, this plan ambitiously aims to expand coverage of rural clinics and doctors to the country’s rural areas before the end of 2011. The government is still in the process of implementing this program and in Ningxia, the project is expected to be completed by the end of 2013 (Weishengbu nongcun weisheng guanli si, comp., January 2012). Village doctors tend to be former barefoot doctors who have passed certifying examinations. Their duties include offering basic medical services, reporting epidemics, implementing public health measures,
and using traditional Chinese medicine in treating common diseases. Government subsidies act as incentive for clinics to join NRCMI and local doctors also receive a pension from the state. During the past two years, China’s National Development and Reform Commission has already allocated about 1 billion yuan (US$157.90 million) to support the construction of more than 25,000 rural clinics in remote and poor areas (The China’s Daily, July 15, 2011; Xinhua, September 21, 2011). The question remains as to whether enhanced benefits and a better working environment are enough to entice medical school graduates to serve in the countryside.

Reducing the high cost of drugs has been another major concern for the Chinese government prompting response. A 2006 policy capped at 15 percent profits public hospitals make on drugs that they buy from distributors. But doctors often hike retail prices by another 20 percent to 40 percent as their commission (China View, June 1, 2006). Although the government has threatened to punish doctors receiving illegal commissions, enforcement has proven difficult. In January 2009, the government decided to eliminate completely the 15 percent surcharge on hospital distributed prescription medicine. As compensation for loss of income, hospitals were allowed to charge medical service fees such as consultation fees for prescriptions, and to raise prices for technical services. The government also began subsidizing the purchase of large medical equipment, doctors’ further training, and improvements in infrastructure. Yet, by pumping money directly into hospitals, some scholars caution that the possibility of corruption and misuse of funds is greatly enhanced (Ma, January 10, 2009). Another step taken to contain the cost of medicines was the launching of the essential medicine system in August 2009. Essential medicine, as defined by the WHO, is medicine to meet the health-care needs of the majority of the population, available to the public at all times, and available in adequate amounts. All government-funded health institutions, both urban and rural, are required to give priority to prescribing essential medicine and to selling such medicine at cost (Xinhua, October 12, 2011).

To finance all these new programs, the Chinese government has been increasing investment in health services. Between 2006 and 2007, it increased the national health-care budget by 87 percent (Karvounis, April 2, 2008). In April 2009, China launched a three-year investment plan specifically to support health-care reforms, especially basic public health service programs such as regular physical examinations, vaccinations, and services for pregnant women. By mid-2011 Minister of Health Chen Zhu indicated that 65 billion
yuan (US$10.26 billion) had been disbursed for those programs in the past two years (Xinhua, September 15, 2011).

Most of the debate on health-care reform has focused on health-care financing, resource management, cost containment, and the operation and funding of hospitals. Public health and disease control capacity—despite the SARS crisis—have not received their due share of attention. Even while the CDCs are recognized in the fight against infectious diseases, yet they have not received adequate funding and support. In fact, as in the case of the hospital system’s marketization, the CDCs have become increasingly dependent on fees and extra-budgetary income from such sources as international agencies or even pharmaceutical companies. Nevertheless, at the local levels, many CDCs and antiepidemic stations have had to resort to charging for services like vaccination programs and physical examinations (Thompson, 2009: 78).

China is increasingly looking to international agencies such as the WHO and the World Bank as well as to many nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) for help in combating the spread of infectious diseases. After the SARS epidemic that involved 810 deaths in 29 countries, China has partnered with the WHO to form the WHO China’s Communicable Disease Surveillance and Response team. It monitors emerging disease outbreaks and improves pandemic preparedness. In addition to coordinating responses to SARS and avian influenza outbreaks, the team works closely with the Chinese Ministry of Health to deal with health threats from such diseases as rabies, plague, and seasonal influenza (World Health Organization Representative Office in China, May 11, 2009).

Likewise, the World Bank has been working with the Chinese government since 1991 to develop a TB treatment and prevention program. Providing treatment free of charge, and paying village health workers a bonus for every TB case identified and for every patient cured, the government is leveraging financial resources for wider gains. Moreover, the disease surveillance and reporting system has been enhanced with the revision in 2004 of the Law on the Prevention and Treatment of Infectious Diseases. Now TB and HIV/AIDS are classified as diseases that require mandatory reporting. Funding for free TB examinations and treatment has been increased, while additional support came from the international community (Lu, 2009: 27; Shan, March 22, 2011). The incidence of MDR-TB, however, is also surging, and that complicates the delivery of effective TB intervention. Treatment drugs for MDR-TB are extremely costly, and ironically, many of China’s MDR-TB patients are low-income rural
residents who cannot afford such expensive treatment (Shan, March 22, 2011). Moreover, as HIV/AIDS has spread from high-risk groups to the general population the number of TB-HIV co-infection cases is rising.

As for HIV/AIDS, the Chinese government established a Comprehensive AIDS Response (CARES) project to deal with the problem after the SARS crisis. The project cooperates with the Geneva-based Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB, and Malaria. But allegations of corruption and misuse of funds, and the Chinese government’s reluctance to work with local community groups led in late 2010 to the temporary suspension of the Fund’s grant disbursements to China. The Fund finally resumed financing activities in China only after all sides, including representatives from the United Nations, agreed to lift the freeze on funding, while all parties continue negotiations to resolve the dispute (The New York Times, August 23, 2011). The incident highlights the serious problems of rampant corruption, misuse of funds, and misreporting in China today, and the mistrust that such irregularities might engender in China’s collaboration with international agencies. Whether it is the case in this dispute remains to be seen.

In September 2003, the government announced a free national AIDS treatment program. The founding of a State Council AIDS Working Committee further raised the visibility of the problem in public. Realizing that diseases like AIDS require new types of partnerships for social service provision to reach intended beneficiaries, the government endorsed collaboration with NGOs. Such endorsement has led to the emergence of new grassroots organizations, especially those serving gay men. Love Aid, an NGO based in Shenyang, in addition to promoting health education provides free voluntary counseling and HIV testing for homosexuals (Xinhua, September 11, 2011). Patient support groups have also been formed. But being city-based, most of these AIDS-related NGOs have difficulty operating in rural areas. NGO activism has other limits, too. Friends of Nature (Ziran Zhiyou), a popular Beijing-based environmental NGO promoting the dream of an environmentally harmonious society, deliberately limits its membership and refuses to establish branch offices for fear of government intervention. Cautious to avoid too much scrutiny, NGOs like Friends of Nature tread carefully lest they overstep the line between acceptable collaboration and environmental or health-care activism delimited by the government (Schwaertz, 2004: 28–49).
Conclusion

The “Resolution of the CPC Central Committee on Major Issues Regarding the Building of a Harmonious Socialist Society” adopted by the Sixth Plenum of the 16th CPC Central Committee in October 2006 warned that “there are many conflicts and problems affecting social harmony...[and] we must always remain clear-headed and be vigilant even in tranquil times” (Xing, October 12, 2006). To promote social harmony from within, the plenum stressed that rural development, education, medical services, environmental protection, income distribution and social security should have priority in the country’s social and economic development plans. At the same time, the party also insisted that China would continue to strive for rapid economic growth (ibid.). As developments in the past three decades have shown, it has not been easy for the Chinese government to maintain a balance between these two goals. The economic reforms have contributed to growing disparities of income, glaring social inequalities, widespread official corruption, environmental disasters, skyrocketing cost of medical care, and rollbacks in access to public health care especially for the poor. These socioeconomic problems have in turn fueled the outbreak of mass incidents that badly threaten the goal of social harmony and stability.

As far as health care is concerned, decentralization and marketization of China’s health-care system in the post-1978 Reform era have seriously undermined the country’s ability to provide adequate medical care for the population and to combat new and resurgent infectious diseases. Despite advances in many areas, China still lacks resources, trained medical personnel, and a functioning and equitable health-care system. Especially worrisome are the urban-rural differences since many of the new and resurgent infectious diseases are concentrated in poor rural areas least able to handle the rising disease burden. Although the Chinese government has introduced reforms and is seeking better approaches to provide social services to and advocacy for the disadvantaged, yet corruption and enforcement of government regulations remain serious problems. A good example of the difficulty enforcing food safety regulations in China is the latest toxic milk powder scandal. In the summer of 2010 government authorities found tons of milk powder and milk products laced with melamine, the same chemical that had made babies fall ill or killed them two years earlier. Apparently, the execution of two people held responsible for the earlier milk powder scandal had not deterred others from committing the same crime as long as profits...
beckoned. Local officials might sooner use the central government’s call for social stability, moreover, as a mandate to suppress grievances by the populace.

Only recently have the government’s health-care reforms begun to emphasize basic medical care and public health improvements, moving away somewhat from earlier preoccupations with financing the system and resource management. The bias toward curative medicine and the dominance of biotechnology have diverted both attention and resources from disease prevention and care. China has indeed been very successful in eradicating or controlling most of the communicable diseases that have been scourges in the past, but with the rise of emerging diseases and the resurgence of some old ones, it is vital that the government should be more vigilant in combating these diseases, adopting preventive measures, and improving pandemic preparedness. The government has tried to rebuild a nationally integrated public health infrastructure with the establishment of the CDCs in 2002. The success of this effort will depend on the extent to which it recognizes the vital role of public finance in public health development, and on its willingness to provide adequate support for reducing geographic differences in public health capacities and access to preventive care. It is indeed encouraging that the call for building a harmonious society marks a shift in orientation of China’s developmental policy to one that takes account of both human and economic development. Perhaps the Chinese state has now come to the conclusion that public health services are public goods that need to be insulated from the vicissitudes of market forces.

Bibliography


CHAPTER 10

Controlling Lives and Bodies: Water and Food Security in Hong Kong

Siu-Keung Cheung

Introduction

While a good health-care system is essential for the well-being of a productive workforce as shown in chapter 9, so is water and food for the body. This is particularly true for the city of Hong Kong. The supply of water and food from China to Hong Kong in the late twentieth century was more than low-level bilateral economic exchange. It was serious politics that strongly affected China’s strategic priorities in the wider Cold War struggle. As Premier Zhou Enlai stated in the early 1960s, “guaranteeing regular [water and food] supplies to Hong Kong is a political task.” Zhou ordered government officials at all levels to “do their utmost to complete the task” in order to provide a safe lifeline for the local Chinese population in the British colony (Qi, 2004: 44). With the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950, Hong Kong became the frontline of the Cold War. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s the United States as Britain’s ally used Hong Kong as a beacon of capitalism against Communist China. At the same time, as a predominantly Chinese city under British rule, Hong Kong offered China a way to collect intelligence on the outside world, acquire resources and capital, and undermine the Anglo-American alliance in East Asia. Whenever top Communist leaders formulated any Hong Kong policy in relation to this broader East-West rivalry, they always emphasized the need for long-term planning and maximum utilization (changqi dasuan, chongfen liyong) of Hong Kong’s strategic importance (Mark, 2004: 26–29; 2012: 22–23). Against
this backdrop, water and food security constituted a major building block of China’s Hong Kong policy.

This chapter examines how China effectively exploited the supply of water and food as a political tactic to counter British colonial influence and consolidate Communist control of Hong Kong long before the handover of the colony in 1997. By conceptualizing water and food supplies as part of the Chinese bio-political strategy of controlling lives and bodies in Hong Kong, I argue that controlling these necessities of life enabled China to win the hearts and minds of the local population during the heyday of the Cold War and ensured the retrocession of Chinese sovereignty to Hong Kong on July 1, 1997. I draw on a wide range of Hong Kong colonial and Mainland Chinese official sources as well as local academic and popular literature to analyze continuity and change of China’s water and food supplies to Hong Kong. My empirical findings show that water and food security has been at the heart of China’s Hong Kong policy from the late twentieth century to the present. By providing an economic lifeline to millions of people, China weakened Britain’s bargaining power during negotiations over the future of Hong Kong in the early 1980s, and has continued to use this bio-political strategy to win over the majority of the local population to its one country, two systems (yiguo liangzhi) model.

**Water is Thicker Than Blood**

The Chinese Communists controlled water and food supplies to Hong Kong before the commencement of Sino-British negotiations over Hong Kong’s political future from 1982 to 1984. As early as 1959, Beijing planned to build a reservoir in Shenzhen, then a small town across the Chinese border from Hong Kong, as part of the nationwide water resource strategy meant to improve local water supply and integrate the colony into the Chinese water supply network. This ambitious engineering project, known as the Dongjiang Shenzhen or Dongshen-Hong Kong Water Supply Scheme, was designed to collect fresh water from Dongjiang (Eastern River) for people in Shenzhen and Hong Kong. In 1960, Beijing presented this project to the British colonial authorities through the Guangdong provincial government (Dong, 1991; Zhang, 2007).

Water shortage was and still is a long-standing problem in Hong Kong. Ever since the British established themselves in the colony, they had to purchase water from Guangdong province in times of drought, especially in 1902 and 1929. When Beijing announced
the Dongshen-Hong Kong Water Supply Scheme in 1959, colonial authorities promptly accepted the plan and finalized an agreement with the Guangdong provincial government. The bilateral discussion coincided with a serious drought from June 1963 to May 1964. As the colony became increasingly industrialized, supplying safe drinking water to the fast-growing population was essential for a productive workforce (Water Resources Board of Guangdong Province and Hong Kong Water Supplies Department, 1998). Yet in June 1963, combined reservoirs in Hong Kong measured only 1.7 percent of their total storage capacity of water. The drought was far worse than anyone had expected. The colonial government instituted mandatory water rationing, which initially permitted three hours of daily water supply, but later restricted the supply to four hours every four days. To alleviate the problem of water shortage, the government implemented a number of measures such as imposing fines for misuse of water, reopening abandoned water wells that had been closed due to safety issues, making artificial rain by cloud seeding, conserving water through a series of saving water campaigns, and even allowing religious groups citywide to pray for rainfall (Ho, 2001).

Despite these efforts, water shortage remained unsolved. The colonial authorities reconsidered the late Qing and early Republican practice of purchasing water from Guangdong province. In reality, such a practice involved an expensive and inconvenient operation of using tankers to transport fresh water from Guangdong to Hong Kong without acquiring water sufficient for the fast-growing population. This prompted the British to sign in 1964 a permanent agreement with the Guangdong provincial authorities known as the Dongshen-Hong Kong Water Supply Scheme. From 1965 onward, the scheme channeled fresh drinking water to Hong Kong on a routine basis (Ho, 2001). Although the British and Chinese leaders had not yet initiated any diplomatic discussion over the future of the colony, this water supply arrangement completed a major strategic task for China. The implementation of this visible and important infrastructural project not only distinguished the People’s Republic as a more benevolent ruler than Britain but also marked the beginning of Hong Kong’s integration into China proper.

Initially, the import of fresh water from Dongjiang to Hong Kong alleviated the water crisis in times of drought. But with many good rainy seasons from the late 1960s to the 1970s, Hong Kong was less dependent on China for its freshwater supply and the imported water only accounted for 20 percent to 30 percent of total consumption. A growing demand for fresh water ensued in the 1980s when
the colony experienced dramatic population growth and economic development. New social and economic realities drove the colony to renegotiate terms with Guangdong province to increase its supply of fresh water. Consequently, the Dongshen-Hong Kong Water Supply Scheme expanded its operation to improve water delivery capacity by building more water pumping stations, pipes, and mains in 1974, 1979, and 1989, respectively (Water Resources Board of Guangdong Province and Hong Kong Supplies Department, 1998). As a result, the amount of imported fresh water from Guangdong increased four times, from around 200 million cubic meters in the 1980s to 800 million cubic meters by 2000. Dongjiang fresh water constituted 42 percent of the city’s total water consumption in 1981, jumping to 50 percent in 1985, 72 percent in 1989, 75 percent in 1992, and 83 percent in 1998. Since 2000 over 70 percent of Hong Kong’s fresh water is imported from China (see table 10.1). By comparison, the actual yield of rainfall to the reservoirs ranged between 100 and 300 million cubic meters from 1982 to 2007 (see figure 10.1). With rapid urbanization, local reservoirs have not been able to satisfy the city’s water needs. Statistics indicate that Dongjiang fresh water has become vitally important for the social and economic development of Hong Kong.

The Dongshen-Hong Kong Water Supply Scheme put in place an infrastructural mechanism for China to monopolize and profit from the supply of fresh water to the colony. Once Hong Kong became integrated into the Chinese national water supply system, China was in a stronger position than Britain to dictate the political agenda in negotiations over the colony’s future (Hong Kong Government, 1984). In order to ensure the success of this infrastructural project, China undertook further efforts to monitor the freshwater supply scheme through seven administrative and jurisdictional bodies under the direct supervision of the central government (Qiang, 2008). This explains why Chinese officials in celebration of the 60th Anniversary of the Founding of the People’s Republic of China on October 1, 2009 publically recognized the strategic importance of this freshwater supply scheme and called it a major historic project (zhongda jing-dian gongcheng). As Li Jiaqiao asserts, “Because of its heavy reliance on freshwater supply from China, Hong Kong has already returned to the Chinese fatherland in practice…The Dongshen-Hong Kong Water Supply Scheme was not simply a water supply scheme but rather an integral part of China’s careful plan for reunification” (Li, 2010: 70). From the Chinese government’s perspective, this scheme was the first major step leading to the eventual retrocession of Hong Kong.
<table>
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</tr>
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</tr>
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<td>2006</td>
<td>617</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>715</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Continued
While Hong Kong grew heavily dependent on the Dongjiang freshwater supply, British colonialists were never passive bystanders. They did everything within their power to get the best deal from Beijing and to ensure water security for the colony. The British rejected the initial proposal by China to provide free fresh water for Hong Kong. The British insisted instead on paying the Chinese for the imported freshwater in order to make the arrangement a purely business transaction rather than a special political favor. Britain also urged China
to conduct negotiations through the respective local authorities in Hong Kong and Guangzhou so that the construction of water supply facilities would not become a diplomatic matter for both countries (Dong, 1991). Meanwhile, the colonial government built several new reservoirs to improve water supply and storage capacity. But the local system of reservoirs was inadequate for the fast-growing population. The government had invested heavily in technology for the conversion of salt water into fresh water (i.e., desalination), and then in 1973 established the world’s largest desalination plant, the Lok On Pai Desalter. This was indeed Britain’s last resort to guarantee water security for Hong Kong. Unfortunately the desalination plant turned out to be more expensive than importing fresh drinking water from China. Eventually, the plant was suspended operating in 1978, and completely shut down in 1982 (Ho, 2001). Without an ample and independent source of water, Hong Kong was at the mercy of China. From 1982 to 1984, Britain negotiated with China over the political future of Hong Kong from a position of weakness. As Margaret Thatcher stated in her book *The Downing Street Years* (1993), she had little bargaining power when dealing with her Chinese counterparts during Sino-British negotiations (259–262). Initially Thatcher proposed to Deng Xiaoping a model of co-governance in which China agreed to the continued British administration of Hong Kong after 1997, while resuming exercise of full sovereignty over the territory (Thatcher, 1993: 488–495). But Deng rejected the proposal. Chinese negotiators constantly exploited the Dongshen-Hong Kong freshwater supply infrastructure to push British acceptance of the one country, two systems formula.

How did Hong Kong residents react to the implementation of the Dongshen-Hong Kong Water Supply Scheme? Local reaction was mixed and changing. At first, the public worried about political risk. A local anticommunist newspaper headline in 1960 read, “China definitely uses water supply as tool for political extortion against Hong Kong. Citizens are concerned about Hong Kong government’s purchase of water from Communist China.” A similar warning about the rising Communist threat was found in another news headline, “The import of Dongjiang fresh water is political in character. Water supply to Hong Kong can be suspended immediately when there is a change in Chinese politics” (Zhang, 2007: 295). Most local residents had left Maoist China as emigrants pursuing a better life in the colony. At the peak of the Cold War many local Chinese expressed grave concerns over Hong Kong’s reliance on the Maoist regime for
its supply of fresh water along with escalation of the wider East-West struggle across East and Southeast Asia. But while the British negotiated with Guangdong provincial authorities regarding the import of fresh water, Americans never publicly opposed the Dongshen-Hong Kong Water Supply Scheme or criticized the transport of Communist water to the colony (Zhang, 2007: 295–296).

On the whole, ordinary people in Hong Kong were indifferent to the political and strategic significance of this major cross-border water supply infrastructure. They were much better off than before with an adequate freshwater supply from China. Hong Kong historian Ho Pui-Yin points out, the Dongshen-Hong Kong Water Supply Scheme enabled Beijing to win the propaganda war by recasting the Maoist state as a benevolent fatherland and cultivating “pro-China sentiment among the local working class” (Ho, 2001: 214). This was indeed a historical irony. The majority of Hong Kong’s people came to escape Communist rule, but their physical survival still depended on the daily supply of fresh water from China. Even though the public remained indifferent, if not hostile, to the Communist state, there was a growing consensus that China had a very strong hold on the people of Hong Kong and a decisive influence over their lives (Li, 2010). As the old saying goes, blood is thicker than water (xuěnóng yùshuǐ). China’s Communist leaders often used this expression to highlight the inseparable relationship between China and Hong Kong. But in practice, water and politics are inextricably linked in Hong Kong. Because of its control over Hong Kong’s water security, China cornered Britain in the negotiation process and asserted before 1997 its claim to territorial sovereignty over the colony and its people. The following analysis reveals how China deployed the same bio-political strategy to control Hong Kong’s food security in the colonial era.

**Reunification by Food**

After 1949, China’s Hong Kong policy was driven not by anticolonialist ideology but by its own security considerations. Policies of exporting both water and food to Hong Kong must be understood in this light. Shortly before the founding of the People’s Republic, Mao Zedong decided to keep the status quo and leave British Hong Kong alone for pragmatic and strategic reasons: “It is of no great significance to resolve the Hong Kong and Macau questions now because we should better use Hong Kong to develop overseas relations and to promote import and export” (Qi, 1997: 315–316). Zhou
Enlai followed the same line of reasoning and defined the criteria of China’s Hong Kong policy as long-term planning and maximum utilization (changqi dasuan, chongfen liyong) (Jin, 1998). According to Chi-Kwan Mark (2004), the key practical components of such a policy included: first, permitting the continuity of British rule in Hong Kong before 1997; second, using Hong Kong as a bargaining chip in future negotiations with Britain; third, adopting Hong Kong as a wedge for countering the US policy of containment; and fourth, utilizing Hong Kong as a gateway to reach out to the world and obtain goods, capital, and intelligence.

During the 1950s and 1960s, China showed remarkable flexibility with respect to the schedule and specific steps of reclaiming Hong Kong. China’s top leaders saw the colony as an important geostrategic outpost in the South China Sea and beyond (Qiang, 2008). As a tiny colony in China’s maritime periphery (1,100 square kilometers), Hong Kong lacked the capacity to be totally self-sufficient or become an independent city-state. The reference to Hong Kong as a “barren rock with hardly a house upon it” by Lord Palmerston in 1841 was not groundless. Most of the terrain if not mountainous was unsuitable for farming, and the limited arable land was by the mid-nineteenth century insufficient to meet the daily needs of the people (Chiu and So, 1983).

Hong Kong’s postwar urbanization meant that whatever food was produced locally would never be enough for the fast-growing population. Agriculture remained marginal to the local economy. From the 1950s to the 1960s, agriculture only made up 3 to 5 percent of the colony’s gross domestic product (Economic Research Centre of the Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1969). The figure dropped further to 1 to 2 percent throughout the 1970s and 1980s, and remained at 0.1 to 0.9 percent after 1990 (Hong Kong Government, 1970–2010). Statistics from the Hong Kong Agriculture and Fisheries Department (1950–2010) reveal the insignificance of local agriculture for the colony’s food supply system. For instance, rice is the main staple food among the Chinese, but by the 1980s Hong Kong no longer produced rice. While fresh vegetables are still grown in the New Territories, the total proportion of local vegetables in the city’s food consumption declined gradually, from 40 percent in the 1960s to 30 percent in the 1970s, to 20 percent in the 1980s and 1990s, and to less than 10 percent after 2000. Similarly, local livestock always accounted for less than 50 percent of the city’s total consumption. Since 1980, that share has dropped as low as 20 to 30 percent, and occasionally even below 10 percent.
By comparison, local live poultry appeared at first sight to be an exception. Local live poultry made up 20 to 30 percent of the city’s total live poultry consumption in the 1980s, and the figure reached 40 to 50 percent throughout the 1990s and early 2000s. But everything changed following the outbreaks in 2003 of avian influenza (H5N1) and sudden acute respiratory syndrome (SARS). Because the Hong Kong government implemented a new measure to buy out chicken farms in order to prevent any outbreak of infection, Hong Kong’s entire live poultry business was on the edge of collapse. The annual supply of local live poultry fell dramatically from 12,659 tons in 1999 to 6,417 tons in 2009.

As far as the local marine fish industry is concerned, Hong Kong fishers usually obtain their catch in the South China Sea and beyond. Over the years they have consistently contributed more than 50 percent of marine fish for the city’s consumption. By comparison, freshwater fish farmed locally remain a marginal contribution, only accounting for 10 to 20 percent of the total market share. Hong Kong has never been self-sufficient in producing its aquatic food supply, and needs to import marine and freshwater fish.

As one of East Asia’s leading ports, Hong Kong is part of a well-established food transportation network and has imported a variety of food products from virtually everywhere (Hong Kong Department of Commerce and Industry, 1950–1998). Due to the city’s proximity to China, and due to its predominantly Cantonese population, however, Hong Kong remains dependent upon China as an indispensable supplier of fresh and processed food products. In 1951, the central government authorized as the sole distributor of Chinese food products in Hong Kong the Ng Fung Hong Limited, a trading house of the China Resource (Holdings) Company Limited under the supervision of the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation. It was through Ng Fung Hong Limited that China gained greater control over Hong Kong’s food security and found a highly profitable market for its agricultural products. Chinese leaders ensured the daily delivery of fresh foods such as hogs, cattle, poultry, fish, vegetables, and fruits by three respective express trains from the cities of Wuhan and Shanghai, as well as from Henan province.

Even when tens of millions died of starvation with China’s Great Leap Forward, and tens of millions suffered in the Cultural Revolution, Zhou Enlai never suspended the express delivery of fresh food products to the colony. China went even further to instruct its leftist organizations in Hong Kong to accept the continuation of British colonialism. When Hong Kong leftists launched a citywide food strike against
the colonial administration in 1967, China opposed the strike and instructed Ng Fung Hong Limited to deliver sufficient fresh food products to Hong Kong (Ran and Ma, 2001). For Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai China’s control over Hong Kong’s food security and the need for outside capital took precedence over anticolonialism. Rather than highlighting these security and economic considerations among the top leaders, the Communist official literature tends to romanticize the importance of Chinese food supplies, calling Ng Fung Hong Limited the food basket of Hong Kong (Xianggang de cailanzi), and their food-delivery trains the lifelines of Hong Kong (Xianggang de shengmingxian) (Guo, 2009).

Nevertheless, the Chinese government never gained total control over Hong Kong’s food security during the colonial era. The best example is the rice trade. According to Victor Wang-Tai Zheng and Siu-Lun Wong (2005), Hong Kong’s rice market had from the nineteenth century until only recently been dominated by the Chaozhou-speaking merchants. They used their kinship and business networks to monopolize the rice trade from Siam (today’s Thailand) and coastal China. Even when these Chaozhou-speaking merchants lost out to the larger transnational supermarkets in the 1980s, the channels they had established from Thailand continued to feed the largest share of rice shipments for the Hong Kong market. Rice imported from China is of relatively poor quality and occupies second place in the overall market share. From 1955 to 1975, the share of Chinese rice erratically fluctuated, ranging from 20 to 30 percent. When there was a brief disruption of Thai rice exports due to poor harvests in the mid-1970s, Chinese rice still made up only 30 to 50 percent of the total market share. When the Thai rice trade returned to normal, the market share of the Chinese rice fell below 50 percent in the 1980s, down to 20 percent in the 1990s, and less than 10 percent by 2000.

The same can be said of imported staple food commodities from China. As John Wong (1971) points out, vegetables have provided a major source of protein for the people of Hong Kong. In the 1950s, Hong Kong imported 50 to 70 percent of its vegetables from China. But the figure dropped to less than 50 percent in the 1960s and 1970s, and fell further to 20 to 40 percent throughout the 1980s and 1990s (see table 10.2). The import of seafood and freshwater fish products from China has also been in decline. The Chinese seafood and freshwater fish products made up 40 to 60 percent of the total market share in the 1960s. The figure fell to 30 percent in the 1980s and 10 percent after 2000. The only exception is the import of livestock and poultry. Hong Kong has relied heavily on China for
<table>
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<th>Year</th>
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<th>Fish Products</th>
<th>Livestock and Poultry</th>
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<td></td>
<td>Overall Import</td>
<td>Import from China</td>
<td>China’s Share of Total Import</td>
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<td>Year</td>
<td>Value 1</td>
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<td>Percentage 1</td>
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<tr>
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<td>3705.39</td>
<td>1631.54</td>
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<td>4942.62</td>
<td>1896.77</td>
<td>38.38%</td>
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<td>3669.93</td>
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<td>4341.56</td>
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<td>4520.91</td>
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<td>12592.08</td>
<td>3708.99</td>
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<td>13622.00</td>
<td>2639.00</td>
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livestock and poultry. Chinese imports accounted for 70 percent of the market share in the early 1960s and have frequently exceeded 80 percent in subsequent decades.

Statistical data indicates that across the twentieth century China secured greater control over Hong Kong’s water and food security. As a rising power, China succeeded in exploiting its control over Hong Kong’s water and food security to undermine Britain’s political, social, and economic influences. Alexander Grantham was the first colonial governor to confront the potential threat of Communist China. In his published reflections on his governorship from 1947 to 1957, Via Ports: From Hong Kong to Hong Kong, Grantham (1965) observed that “the fundamental political problem of the British Colony of Hong Kong is its relationship with China.” The China factor obstructed the colony’s “advancement to self-government and independence as is the case with most British colonies” (105). Grantham foresaw the end of Britain’s colonial rule with 1997 because Hong Kong was heavily dependent on China for the necessities of life. As he wrote, “Here I would throw in a statistic…that more hogs were slaughtered in Hong Kong than in any other city in the world except Chicago, and 90 percent come from China” (Grantham, 1965: 172). The same situation remained unchanged two decades later. When Denis Bray, colonial cadet and later Secretary for Home Affairs, reviewed the political affairs in Hong Kong during the 1967 riots, he highlighted the fact that the colonial administration depended completely on China for the supply of basic necessities: “For a couple of days, there was no delivery of pigs from China by train. This was serious as it was always possible for China to cut off the food and water supplies on which we depended. We searched the region for alternative supplies, but none could supply the volume of animals we needed” (Bray, 2003: 126). Hong Kong was extremely vulnerable to the Chinese embargo on water and food supplies.

The United States shared this view of Hong Kong’s vulnerability. Even though the Americans and British did not anticipate a Chinese military takeover, they both realized Hong Kong could not withstand any suspension of water and food supplies by China. This explains why the United States only provided “moral support” to Britain when the latter sought American assistance with the defense of Hong Kong in the 1950s (Mark, 2004). In the end, Britain took alternative actions to consolidate colonial rule. The British launched anticommunist propaganda campaigns to win the hearts and minds of local Chinese residents. They demonized many homegrown Communist and leftist organizations as terrorists and condemned their anticolonial protests.
(Qiang, 2008). They hailed the success of capitalism by exaggerating the economic gap between Hong Kong and Mainland China (Lui, 2011). After China’s military crackdown on the pro-democracy movement in Tiananmen Square on June 4, 1989, the British appealed to the local population with several major infrastructural construction projects and a semidemocratic election system (So, 1999). All these political efforts failed to stop Hong Kong’s eventual retrocession to China. The last governor, Christopher Francis Patten, remarked on the vulnerability of the Crown colony: “Hong Kong Island and the Kowloon Peninsula—the land ceded outright by grant—depend on the hinterland to the New Territories and beyond for food and water” (Patten, 1998: 12–13). Throughout the late twentieth century, China successfully installed two powerful institutional mechanisms—the Dongshen-Hong Kong Water Supply Scheme and the Ng Fung Hong Limited—to control the lives and bodies of the local population. The city’s dependence on China for water and food prompted both colonial officials and the public to accept China’s ultimate control over the destiny of Hong Kong. The local population completely understood the political subtext of Governor Patten’s remarks as they had experienced and internalized this sense of vulnerability.

The politics of controlling lives and bodies is manifested in Chinese official rhetoric portraying the whole water and food supply arrangement as a wise, laudable, benevolent policy (renzheng) from Beijing. Such an interpretation has become a standard view expressed by several Mainland intellectuals as well. For example, Gu Xinggui regards the economic success of Hong Kong as the result of China’s support: “Hong Kong is such a peculiar city, where the socialist government on the Mainland supports its prosperity . . . In the postwar era, Beijing has provided Hong Kong with stable conditions to prosper for decades, and has reassured international investors’ confidence in the city . . . The decades-long stability and prosperity of postwar Hong Kong has resulted from Beijing’s policy” (Gu, 1987: 4). Xiao Chen has echoed the same patriotic sentiment, referring to the benevolence of the Chinese Communist Party: “Mainland China always provides Hong Kong with abundant foodstuffs and reliable materials that protect the wellbeing of millions of compatriots at home and at work. Whenever Hong Kong is in hardship, the fatherland will always be the first to offer the warmest help” (Xiao, 1994: 5). Qiang Shigong reinforces this propaganda about the importance of China for Hong Kong: “There is no calculation of interest about the selfless Chinese aid. Everything is based on China’s affection for its people. As a big family, we are all Chinese when we demonstrate our cohesion, love
and mutual assistance towards each other. The selfless aid from the
central government to Hong Kong involves a paterfamilias-like care
and affection for children” (Qiang, 2008: 157). Qi Pengfei, a senior
Chinese official in charge of the Hong Kong and Macau affairs, gives
an overtly politicized interpretation: “Hong Kong will not stand out
in the economic history of the contemporary world with its phenom-
enal achievements...if one does not take into account the China fac-
tor” (Qi, 2004: 45). The propaganda discourse is embedded in highly
emotionally charged and moralistic language, and is a bizarre combi-
nation of patriotism, paternalism, and altruism.

Although the official rhetoric is misleading and projects a subor-
dinate image of Hong Kong for domestic Chinese audiences, these
representations of Hong Kong-China links deliberately situate previ-
ous and current Hong Kong policies in what Julia C. Strauss (2009)
in reference to Africa-China ties calls “a distinguished lineage of prin-
ciplied relations.” China has justified its engagement with Hong
Kong as deeply rooted in the principles of anticolonialism, patrio-
tism, unconditional assistance, and mutual benefit. But in reality the
Chinese strategy of controlling the lives and bodies of the Hong Kong
population has involved a very carefully pragmatic calculation of the
national interests; it has not been a decision prompted by anticolonial
and patriotic impulses. The successful implementation of this food
security strategy has been crucial for completing territorial unifica-
tion and achieving global outreach.

**Conclusion**

China today enjoys rapid economic growth and readies itself to
exercise newfound power in the name of peaceful development (*he-
ping fazhan*). Many Chinese, however, suffer the negative effects of
environmental pollution and food poisoning. Recently the country
has weathered a series of food safety scandals. These problems have
diminished the appeal of Chinese fresh water and food products to the
people of Hong Kong. Although there has been no large-scale public
protest about lack of supervision over the quality of water and food
products imported from China, local media has publicized numer-
ous cases of food poisoning in the Mainland (*Dajiyuan*, August 22,
2005). In addition, the central government’s failure to push down
rampant inflation of food prices has outraged the public in China
and Hong Kong (Hong Kong Census and Statistics Department,
1998–2011). In 2000, several Hong Kong legislators expressed
public concern about the city’s heavy reliance on Dongjiang fresh

water, whose quality has been compromised by contamination and whose price continues to rise (Ho, 2001). Throughout the years, the monopolization of pork livestock by Ng Fung Hong Limited has provoked much discontent in the local food industry and prompted the government to investigate that company’s dubious business practices (Competition Policy Advisory Group, 2002). In 2011 several hundred demonstrators protested against the inflationary water and food prices and asked the government to intervene (The Oriental Daily, August 15, 2011).

It is worth emphasizing that China’s water and food supplies to Hong Kong have always been a profitable operation. Since the implementation of the Dongshen-Hong Kong Water Supply Scheme in 1960, consistent increases in the unit price of Dongjiang fresh water have generated much revenue for Guangdong province (see table 10.3). The unit price of the Dongjiang fresh water is among the highest in the world. In 2000, the unit price paid by Singapore to Malaysia for

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Unit price per cubic meter in Hong Kong Dollar (HKD$)</th>
<th>Increasing Rate</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>0.05</td>
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<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>0.234</td>
<td>368.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>66.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>−33.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>−03.85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978</td>
<td>0.42</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>0.5</td>
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<tr>
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<td>0.825</td>
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<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>0.789</td>
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<td>1.030</td>
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<td>1.112</td>
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<td>1.297</td>
<td>07.99%</td>
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<td>1991</td>
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<td>1.597</td>
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<td>2.839</td>
<td>08.65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>3.085</td>
<td>08.67%</td>
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</table>

Source: Based on data from Ho Pui-Yin (2001: 222).
fresh water amounted to HKD$0.33 (USD$0.04) per cubic meter, but Hong Kong paid ten times higher than Singapore, about HKD$3.08 (USD$0.39) per cubic meter (Ho, 2001). In 2005, there was a new agreement between Guangdong and Hong Kong over the city’s freshwater supply, in which Hong Kong could adjust the monthly purchase of Dongjiang fresh water rather than subject itself to a fixed annual amount. Under the new agreement, the total freshwater payment dropped slightly from HKD$2,530 million (USD$325.71 million) in 2005 to HKD$2,495 million (USD$321.21 million) in 2006. But the payment has again risen to HKD$2,959 million (USD$380.94 million) in 2009 and HKD$3,146 million (USD$405 million) in 2010 (Hong Kong Water Supplies Department, 2000–2010). To the Guangdong provincial government, water is gold, and it is always needed by Hong Kong with its fast-growing population.

The same success can be said of Ng Fung Hong Limited. Before its privatization in 2000, Ng Fung Hong Limited enjoyed decent revenue growth. The annual turnover increased from HKD$4,636 million (USD$596.85 million) in 1992 to HKD$6,663 million (USD$857.81 million) in 1999, and the annual profit rose from HKD$77 million (USD$9.91 million) in 1992 to HKD$597 million (USD$76.84 million) in 1999 (see table 10.4). Therefore, China’s water and food supplies to Hong Kong have a strong economic dimension even though the ostensible reason given is different. If China continues to do nothing to slow down the rising costs of fresh water and food, its nonaction will jeopardize among the people of Hong Kong the ideological and political appeals of a benevolent fatherland.

This careful examination of water and food security has shed light on the political, economic, strategic, and ideological components of

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Turnover in Hong Kong Dollar (HKD$)</th>
<th>Profit after Taxation in HKD$</th>
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<td>1999</td>
<td>6,663,962</td>
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China’s Hong Kong policy. China’s politics of controlling lives and bodies is like a *pharmakon*, to paraphrase Jacques Derrida (2004); that is, both a good and a bad prescription for ensuring stability and control in Hong Kong from the colonial to the postcolonial era. Disturbances against water and food security continue to occur on the ground. As recently as December 2011, H5N1 once again threatened Hong Kong when infected birds and chickens were found in the community. To control against the spread of infection, the postcolonial Hong Kong government ordered culling 17,000 chickens and banned the trade in live chickens for weeks at the expense of the normal order of life (*BBC News*, December 12, 2011). It has yet to be seen whether water and food security will become contentious issues between China and Hong Kong. The current level of public discontent has primarily focused on the postcolonial Hong Kong government’s policy incompetence and failure. On January 2, 2012, China announced that water and food security of Hong Kong will be a new political challenge, and that government officials at all levels should ensure the stability and quality of such supplies (*Renmin Ribao*, January 2, 2012). Under the guise of patriotism and unconditional assistance, the central government fully understands that water and food security are still keys to controlling the lives and bodies of the people in postcolonial Hong Kong.

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fanghuo changcheng  防火长城
fazhi  法治
feifa zongjiao huodong  非法宗教活动
Feng Kanghou  冯康侯
fenlie fenzi  分裂分子
funü fazhan  妇女發展
funü wenti  妇女问题
gaige kaifang  改革开放
Gao Jianfu  高剑父
gao jingzheng  高竞争
gongfei yiliao  公费医疗
gonggong shijian yuannian  公共事件元年
gongmin quanli  公民权利
Guangdong  广东
Guangzhou  广州
guanliao zhishi fenzi  官僚知识分子
guochi  国耻
Guo Jiading  过家鼎
guojing shangye dushi  过境商业都市
Haifeng  海丰
Hanban  汉办
haohua yiju sandong nuan, e’yu shangren liuyue han  好话一句三冬暖, 恶语伤人六月寒
Heihe  黑河
Heilongjiang  黑龙江
Hei yazi zuhe  黑鸭子组合
heping aoyun  和平奥运
heping fazhan  和平發展
heping jueqi  和平崛起
hexie  和谐
hexie aoyun  和谐奥运
hexie shehui  和谐社会
hexie shehui chang wenming  和谐社会倡文明
hongse zibenjia  红色资本家
houshe  喉舌
Hsieh Chang-Ting  谢长廷
Hu Jintao  胡锦涛
hukou  户口
Jia Ding  甲丁
Jiangdong liushi si tun  江东六十四屯
Jiang Zemin  江泽民
pingan aoyun
pushi zhengzhi jiazhi
qiangguo luntan
qiangu zuiren
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qunti shijian
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taoguang yanghui
tebie jiemu
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    Fenlie dongluan shi huo
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wangluo
wangluo minzhu
wangluo zhuquan
Wang Yongmei
Weihu zuguo tongyi
Wei Meichang

平安奥运
普世政治价值
强国论坛
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群体事件
仁
人多
人文奥运
人物
仁政
儒家
儒家化
弱肉强食
儒学化的女性主义
三鹿
汕尾
少数民族之家
社会公义
社会性别
社会主义和谐社会
深圳
神州
师夷长技以制夷
适者生存
孙楠
贪污腐败
韬光养晦
特别节目
提法
体用
同一首歌
团结稳定是福，分裂动乱是祸
王路明
网络
网络民主
网络主权
王咏梅
维护祖国统一
魏美昌
weiquan huodong
Weiwu’er
weixiaozhe de Zhongguo
nüxing zhuyi
Wei Yuan
wenhua re
Wen Jiabao
wenshi ziliao
Wenzhou
Wo he ni
Wukan
Wumingshi
xianfu qilai
Xianggang de cailanzi
Xianggang de shengmingxian
Xiangtu
xiaokang shehui
xiaotou
xibu dakaifa
xingbie hexie
Xinjiang
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xinxing ruxue
Xin Wenhua
Xinzheng
xin zuopai
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yangrouchuan
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yi jia ren
yimin weiben
yin-yang
yiqian ren yixia de cun
weishengshi peigei yiming cunyi
Yongyuan de pengyou
Yu Dan
yu guoji jiegui

维权活动
维吾尔
微笑着的中国女性主义
魏源
文化热
温家宝
文史资料
温州
我和你
乌坎
无名氏
先富起来
香港的菜篮子
香港的生命线
乡土
小康社会
小偷
西部大开发
性别和谐
新疆
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一个中国原则
一个中国政策
一国两制
一家人
以民为本
阴阳
一千人以下的村卫生室配给一名
村医
永远的朋友
于丹
与国际接轨
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