

**Truth, Justice, and Accountability: The Tiananmen Crackdown**

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- Gao Wenqian, "The June Fourth that I Saw," *China Rights Forum*, 2009, no. 2, <http://www.hrichina.org/public/contents/169343>.
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# FAQ ON JUNE FOURTH

- What is June Fourth?
- What triggered the Democracy Movement?
- Where did the demonstrations take place?
- How did the government react to the demonstrations?
- How many people were killed or wounded in the crackdown?
- How many people were arrested?
- What have foreign governments done in past years to call attention to June Fourth?
- What have the exile community and Chinese activists done in past years to commemorate June Fourth?
- Who is Ding Zilin?
- Who are the Tiananmen Mothers?
- Will any Olympic events take place on Tiananmen Square?
- Why is June Fourth important today?
- What can YOU do?



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## → What is June Fourth?

June Fourth refers to the violent crackdown on the 1989 Democracy Movement by the Chinese authorities on June 4, 1989. The 1989 Democracy Movement demonstrations centered on Beijing's sprawling Tiananmen Square, where tens of thousands of students and workers began gathering in mid-April 1989 to press their demands for political reform. The demonstrations soon spread to hundreds of cities across China. But on the night of June 3, 1989, the government ordered the square cleared, moving in tanks and troops which began firing on the unarmed protesters. While no official list of the victims has ever been made public, estimates are that hundreds and possibly thousands were killed, and additional hundreds and perhaps thousands arrested.

## → What triggered the Democracy Movement?

The protests in Tiananmen Square began on a small scale when students and others began meeting in the area to mourn the death on April 15, 1989, of Hu Yaobang. Hu, a reformer, was forced out of Deng Xiaoping's government in 1987 amid harsh criticism from Deng. The public mourning sparked calls for an official reassessment of Hu, which grew into widespread demands for reform. The students were soon joined by workers and intellectuals. Ultimately, more than one million people marched in the square, carrying banners, shouting slogans, and calling for a dialogue with the government.

## → Where did the demonstrations take place?

While the largest demonstrations took place in Beijing, in and around Tiananmen Square, large-scale protests also took place in over 400 other Chinese cities. Support movements also sprouted up in Hong Kong, the United States, and elsewhere outside of China.

## → How did the government react to the demonstrations?

The government initially released statements opposing the demonstrations, but students continued to occupy the square and march through the city. On May 19, Zhao Ziyang, a former premier and Communist Party General Secretary, went to the square and urged students to end their hunger strike. It was his last public appearance, and martial law was declared the next day. Zhao was placed under house arrest, where he remained until his death. As the hunger strike progressed into its third week, the government began to move troops into the city, and checkpoints were established, blocking off the university district. On June 3, the government ordered the People's Liberation Army to clear the square. Following the crackdown, large-scale protests continued in several cities outside of Beijing, but only for a few days before the authorities regained control.

## → How many people were killed or wounded in the crackdown?

No official list of the wounded or killed was ever released, and there are conflicting estimates. According to an internal Chinese document, more than 2,000 people died in various Chinese cities from June 3-4 and the days immediately following. Other estimates range from 188 to 800. One reason for the uncertainty is suspicion that Chinese troops may have quickly removed and disposed of bodies. Following the crackdown, additional deaths occurred when an unknown number of workers and students were executed for their participation in the protests.

## → How many people were arrested?

After the crackdown, more than 500 people were imprisoned in Beijing's No. 2 Prison, and an unknown number were detained in other Chinese cities. Hundreds were tried and sentenced to lengthy or life sentences. Most life sentences

## FOREIGN GOVERNMENT ACTION ON JUNE FOURTH

### United States

*Foreign Relations Authorization Act, FY 1990 and 1991, Public Law 101-246, U.S. Statutes at Large 104 (1990): 15, § 902 (the “Tiananmen Square Legislation”).*

*Condemning the crackdown on democracy protestors in Tiananmen Square, Beijing, in the People's Republic of China on the 15th anniversary of that tragic massacre, HR Res. 655, 108th Cong., 2d Sess., June 1, 2004, [http://thomas.loc.gov/home/gpoxmlc108/hr655\\_jh.xml](http://thomas.loc.gov/home/gpoxmlc108/hr655_jh.xml).*

*U.S. Congressional-Executive Commission on China, 15 Years After Tiananmen: Is Democracy in China's Future?, CECC Hearing, June 3, 2004, <http://www.cecc.gov/pages/hearings/060304/index.php>.*

*Urging the European Union to maintain its arms embargo on the People's Republic of China, HR Res. 57, 109th Cong., 1st Sess., February 2, 2005, <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/bdquery/z?d109:h.res.57:>.*

*A resolution urging the European Union to maintain its arms export embargo on the People's Republic of China, S Res. 59, 109th Cong., 1st Sess., February 17, 2005, <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/bdquery/z?d109:sr59:>.*

*U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee, The Lifting of the EU Arms Embargo on China, 109th Cong., 1st Session, March 16, 2005, <http://www.senate.gov/foreign/hearings/2005/hrg050316p2.html>.*

### European Union

*European Council, EU Declaration on China, Madrid, June 26–27, 1989, available at <http://www.sipri.org/contents/expcon/euchidec.html>.*

*European Parliament, European Parliament resolution on EU-China Relations, INI/2005/2161, adopted September 7, 2006, available at <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/FindByProcnum.do?lang=2&procnum=INI/2005/2161>.*

were later commuted to 18 years in prison, and many individuals were released after serving their sentences in the summer of 2007. However, it is believed that 20 to 200 people are still imprisoned for June Fourth-related offenses.

### → What have foreign governments done in past years to call attention to June Fourth?

Foreign governments, including the United States and the European Union, have taken steps to pressure China to account for its June Fourth actions. These steps include legislative hearings, imposition of an arms embargo, and statements.

### → What have the exile community and Chinese activists done in past years to commemorate June Fourth?

Many different groups, coalitions, and organizations have conducted commemoration activities, including: Beijing Spring Society [北京之春杂志社], China Democracy Party [中国民主党], China Democracy Party World Union [中国民主党世界同盟], Chinese Democratic Society [中华民主学社], Chinese Social Democratic Party [中国社会民主党], Chinese Student Federation in Germany [全德学联], The Committee for Global Commemoration of June Fourth [全球纪念六四委员会], The Epoch Times [大纪元], Federation for a Democratic China [民主中国阵线], Hong Kong Alliance [香港支联会], Hong Kong Forum [香港论坛], Independent Federation of Chinese Students and Scholars in the US [全美中国学生学者自治联合会], Liberal Intellectual Association of Australia [澳大利亚自由文化人协会], and New China Society [新中国学社]. Human Rights in China participated over the years in commemoration events in Hong Kong, Europe, and North America.

## → Who is Ding Zilin?

In 1989, Ding Zilin (丁子霖) was a professor of philosophy at People's University. Her 17-year-old son, Jiang Jielian (蒋捷连), was one of the first killed when the army cleared Tiananmen Square. In August 1989, she met another bereaved mother, and formed a network with some 150 other families who had lost children in the crackdown. This group became known as the Tiananmen Mothers. Professor Ding is now the spokesperson for the group. She has been interrogated, persecuted, threatened, detained and subject to frequent house arrest.

## → Who are the Tiananmen Mothers?

The Tiananmen Mothers are a rights defense group that has worked to challenge the official accounts of June 3–4, 1989, to document the deaths and those individuals still imprisoned, and present demands for full investigation, accountability, compensation, and dialogue with the authorities. Members of the group have been persecuted by the government, and their pleas for a reassessment of the 1989 events have been met with silence.

## → Will any Olympic events take place on Tiananmen Square?

China has already used the square as a symbolic backdrop during preparations for the Games. It held a controlled ceremony there, in front of invited guests, on March 31, 2008, to send the Olympic torch on a 130-day journey around the world. Another ceremony will be held on the square when the torch arrives back in Beijing at the end of the relay. Tiananmen Square will be the last leg of the relay before the torch enters the National Stadium. It will also be the starting point for the Games' marathon event. No live coverage of Tiananmen Square will be allowed during the Olympics, the Associated Press reported in March 2008.

## → Why is June Fourth important today?

Past human rights abuses are not erased by the passage of time. Nineteen years later, family members still remember and mourn their missing and dead loved ones. June Fourth remains a painful injustice for the victims and their families when the Chinese authorities fail to respond to their repeated calls for official accountability, reassessment, compensation, and most recently for dialogue. June Fourth also remains a societal wound that must be healed before a truly harmonious society and a rule of law can be built. Dr. Jiang Yanyong, a People's Liberation Army surgeon, asks in an open letter: "Who among us does not have parents, children, brothers and sisters? Who would have an innocent family member killed and not voice the same demand?"

## → What can YOU do?

**Support the Tiananmen Mothers**, and sign the *Fill the Square* petition at <http://www.fillthesquare.org>.

**Learn more** about the 1989 Tiananmen Square crackdown at HRIC's website.

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## THE JUNE FOURTH THAT I SAW

**T**ime has passed in a flash. It's been 20 years since the Chinese government cracked down on the student democracy movement in Tiananmen Square. For me this is a weighty and emotionally charged topic to write about. The mere mention of June Fourth still triggers memories of a brutal, bloody, and terrifying night. What happened that night constitutes the darkest chapter in contemporary Chinese history and one that is etched forever in our memory. The bloody suppression has changed the lives of many Chinese, including mine.

At the beginning of 1989, the situation in China was ripe for a political storm. As the Chinese saying goes: Turbulent wind heralds a rising storm in the mountains. The economic reform initiated by senior leader Deng Xiaoping had reached its tenth year. It was moving forward like a crippled duck, having already produced mounting social conflicts. Moreover, the government's failure to contain inflation caused by the relaxation of price controls the previous year had led to widespread public discontent. In the spring, former Party Secretary Hu Yaobang passed away in despair.<sup>1</sup> Hu was the last idealist within the Chinese Communist Party and was revered by many Chinese. Soon, the commemorative activities started by university students expanded into a large-scale nationwide protest movement.

At that time, I worked at the Central Committee's Research Center on Party Literature. The majority of my colleagues and officials at other government agencies stood on the side of the students, whose demands for clean government and calls for further democratic reforms in China represented the voices of ordinary

*In spring 1989, Gao Wenqian was a historian in the document research center of the Chinese Communist Party. The protests and the government crackdown on June 3-4 that he witnessed were life- and career-changing for him. He resolved to tell the world the truth about the Communist Party through the story of Zhou Enlai and the Cultural Revolution. His efforts resulted in the critically acclaimed book, Zhou Enlai: The Last Perfect Revolutionary, a book banned in China.*

**Gao Wenqian**

TRANSLATED BY WEN HUANG

people. Many of my colleagues would sneak out onto the street during regular work hours and watch the student demonstrations. I remember that on April 27, when a large-scale demonstration was being organized, I arrived at work quite early. I had heard that students were planning to take to the street again. The armed police and public security officers had set up several road blocks in the Zhongguancun region. A bloody collision seemed likely. All morning, people at work talked about this, many worrying about the students' safety. At noon time, we learned that student protesters had broken through the blockade and were marching toward Tiananmen Square.

I remember several white-haired professors from Qinghua University marching in the front row of their group. They held up a big white banner, which read: "Having knelt for so long, we have stood up to take a stroll." This was black humor, incorporating all sorts of flavors and emotions. When I read those words, I felt a jolt in my heart, and tears ran down my face.

I rushed out of my office building immediately and stood on the overpass in Fuxingmen, watching an endless parade of protesters from north to south. The line stretched as far as the eye could see. Students and pro-

fessors from Beijing's major universities filed past. I remember several white-haired professors from Qinghua University marching in the front row of their group. They held up a big white banner, which read: "Having knelt for so long, we have stood up to take a stroll." This was black humor, incorporating all sorts of flavors and emotions. When I read those words, I felt a jolt in my heart, and tears ran down my face. I understood the meaning of these words, felt their weight and tasted their bitterness: they were the loud cry from the hearts of those who had risen from the purgatory of psychological abuse and torture.

At that very moment, I felt a sense of spiritual liberation. Having been subjected to years of totalitarian rule, the Chinese people had been cowered by politics, their human nature distorted, and their conscience devoured. Even more, the intellectuals' backbone had been broken; they trembled with fear and dared not take even one step in the minefield. The fear of politics had seeped into the blood of our people and had become an instinct. People were afraid to talk about politics and avoided it like a plague. This psychological dark cloud had haunted ordinary Chinese like a nightmare that wouldn't go away.

My childhood years were spent in constant fear. When I was six years old, my father was branded an "alien-class element" for opposing Mao's "Great Leap Forward,"<sup>2</sup> and was forced to join the army and then banished to Tibet. During the Cultural Revolution, my mother was accused of being an "active counterrevolutionary" and was thrown into the Qincheng prison in Beijing. The sufferings of my family helped me see clearly the brutal nature of the Communist dictatorship. I knew that those in power were bound to settle scores with anyone who challenged their authority. Despite what I knew, I could not stop thinking and worrying about the students, especially after they started their hunger strike. Everyday, before and after work, I would circle around Tiananmen Square on my bike, trying to follow the news of the day. I tried to persuade the students not to take extreme measures and give themselves enough leeway for negotiation, and hoped that the situation could come to a peaceful end.

May 18 marked the sixth day of the students' hunger

strike. Every now and then, a student who had passed out was sent to the hospital. The ambulance sirens tugged at the hearts of every resident. At the same time, the cold-blooded indifference displayed by the authorities was pushing public sentiment to the tipping point. It was under these circumstances that I led a group of employees in our department out on the street to support the students. I also drafted an open letter in the name of "a group of voluntary petitioners from the Central Committee's Research Center on Party Literature," addressed to the Party's Central Committee. In the letter, I urged Party leaders to retract the editorial in the *People's Daily* that characterized the student demonstrations as "turmoil"<sup>3</sup> and to acknowledge that the protest was a patriotic democracy movement initiated by students. I also called on the Party to "clean up corruption starting from the top leaders and punish their family members or relatives who had abused power." The open letter was later posted on a bulletin board of the organizational department of the Central Party Committee and became a major target of investigation in the post-crackdown period.

After martial law was declared,<sup>4</sup> residents in Beijing spontaneously organized themselves and successfully blocked the troops who were to enforce martial law from entering the city. For a while, the atmosphere hung heavy like clouds before a storm. But it became increasingly clear that the authorities were going to regain control, even if it meant bloodshed. On the morning of June 3, when I passed by Liubukou on my way to work, I saw that residents had seized a military truck filled with bayoneted guns, steel helmets, and other military supplies. That afternoon, I heard that troops that had amassed inside Zhongnanhai<sup>5</sup> were dispatched there and had taken back the truck and military supplies. Upon hearing the news, I immediately got on my bike and rushed to the scene. The troops had just finished their operation, and I could still smell the tear gas in the air. Several residents had been beaten up. The dark red blood on their white undershirts was particularly glaring in the sunlight. This was the first time I saw blood after students had started their hunger strike. My heart tightened.

After dinner that evening, I went with my wife to Tiananmen Square again. The situation had become

very tense. You could even smell the stench of blood in the air. It was stifling. As a researcher of history, my instinct told me that a tragic episode was about to unfold in China's modern history. I decided to remain at the square, to bear witness. My wife was absolutely against it and tried to drag me home. I became very emotional and argued with her ferociously. I was determined not to leave. In the end, my wife convinced me with this: You are a student of history. You can't just die here. More important things are waiting for you to do. You can use your pen to record history.

**I decided to remain at the square, to bear witness. My wife was absolutely against it and tried to drag me home. I became very emotional and argued with her ferociously. I was determined not to leave. In the end, my wife convinced me with this: You are a student of history. You can't just die here. More important things are waiting for you to do. You can use your pen to record history.**

In those days, I lived near Shatan, not too far from Tiananmen Square. After I got home that night, I could hardly sleep. I got up and stood on the balcony of my apartment and stared in the direction of Tiananmen Square. I could see flames in the distance. When darkness came, sounds of gunshots could be heard clearly.

At dawn the next morning, I rushed toward Tiananmen Square. At the intersection of Nanchizi Street, I saw with my own eyes how government troops were slaughtering Beijing residents. Soldiers with loaded guns lined up at the gate of the Public Security Ministry were shooting at protesters. About five or six residents were shot on the spot. The soldiers were on a killing spree and wouldn't give up. They chased fleeing residents into the side streets and kept shooting.

I followed the crowd and managed to hide inside a small lane, squatting at the foot of a wall. I could hear

the gunshots from the street, "tat-tat-tat-tat." My heart was beating fast. An old man next to me was a flatbed tricycle driver. He looked like he was in his late sixties or early seventies and had seen a lot in his times. He didn't seem as nervous as I was, but his face was shrouded in gloom. He couldn't contain his anger and was trembling with rage. He said to me: Even when the Japanese invaded Beijing, they didn't kill people like this. What sins! The Communist Party—what an utterly immoral lot!

On the afternoon of June Fourth, I rode my bike to go to my mother's, crisscrossing the devastated city. What I saw on the road made my hair stand up in anger. When I arrived, I turned on my radio and anxiously listened to Voice of America's news program, which was broadcast hourly. At the same time, I listened repeatedly to Beethoven's Fifth Symphony and Tchaikovsky's Pathétique Symphony.

On that day, the Voice of America featured an interview with Nien Cheng, the author of *Life and Death in Shanghai*. As a mother who had lost her daughter during the Cultural Revolution, Cheng was talking to other Chinese mothers who had lost their children during the bloody crackdown. She understood the pain of losing one's children. She showed her empathy and tried to comfort them. The tone of her voice was that of sorrow and tenderness. I listened and cried. I felt as if my heart was bleeding.

Afterwards, I wiped my tears and got ready for the upcoming post-crackdown investigation. My mother dug out some of the self-criticisms that my father had written in the 1950s during his persecution so that I could prepare myself psychologically. As I leafed through the yellowed pages, all sorts of feelings welled up in me. It was hard to believe that father and son had fallen to a similar fate.

I spent the rest of the summer in extreme depression and terror. Martial law troops patrolled Beijing's streets and alleys carrying guns. Public security officers and armed police were arresting people in the middle of the night. On state-run television, we saw scenes upon scenes of "thugs" being arrested and hauled to the execution ground.



At the same time, internal purges were being conducted in every government agency. I was a key target in my work unit. During those days, I would stay inside my office for days with the excuse that I was reflecting on my mistakes and writing self-criticism. In reality, I was examining my career and the role I had played as an official historian, and exploring the relations between the Cultural Revolution catastrophe and the June Fourth crackdown.

**I was intrigued by an important question: Why was it that, despite the government's campaign to "thoroughly reject the Cultural Revolution" that was launched in the early 1980s, the logic and language of the Cultural Revolution reappeared immediately after the tanks had rolled into Beijing?**

My research focused on the Cultural Revolution, and I had contributed to the official "Biography of Mao Zedong" and "Biography of Zhou Enlai." I was intrigued by an important question: Why was it that, despite the government's campaign to "thoroughly reject the Cultural Revolution" that was launched in the early 1980s, the logic and language of the Cultural Revolution reappeared immediately after the tanks had rolled into Beijing? I reached a conclusion: The Chinese political system, which was responsible for the catastrophe of the Cultural Revolution, had been kept intact. It had remained, as the Chinese saying goes, the same medicine though the water has been changed. I was determined to share with my fellow countrymen the truth about what the Cultural Revolution had wrought. This was the time I first conceived of the idea of writing *Zhou Enlai, the Last Perfect Revolutionary*.

After I came to the United States in 1993, upon the recommendation of a friend, I was able to work as a visiting scholar at Harvard University's Fairbank Center, and my dream of writing this book thus became a reality. The Chinese authorities got wind of my project soon after it was started and attempted to talk me out

of it through various private channels, using tactics both soft and hard. First, they tried to buy me off. Then, they sent me messages through a third party, such as: "Your mother suffered tremendously during the Cultural Revolution. I'm sure you don't want to see her suffer more in her final years." This was a naked threat. I did not budge. Then, they put pressure on Harvard University, which eventually cut off my funding. The threats and intimidation in fact strengthened my resolve to finish the Zhou Enlai book.

Afterwards, I stayed home and devoted my time to writing the book, while my wife supported me. My own mother also gave me tremendous moral support. She wrote me and said: This is a task assigned to you by the lord in heaven. You must tell the ordinary people the truth about the Cultural Revolution.

After five years, the book, *Zhou Enlai, the Last Perfect Revolutionary* was finally published. The Chinese government banned its distribution in mainland China. Officials there knew very well that the collapse of Communism in the former Soviet Union began with the declassification of historical archives. Reassessment of historical events and figures is bound to destroy the very foundation of totalitarian rule.

**The question of June Fourth has become an intractable problem that stands in the way of social transformation, crippling China's efforts over the past century to move toward a constitutional democracy. This is the sorrow and misfortune of the Chinese people.**

During the last century, Chinese intellectuals and the general public were eager to save China, hoping to build a stronger nation. They came under the spell of the Communist Utopian fantasy and embarked on a wrong track. As a result, China became a testing ground for Communism, an unprecedented catastrophe that engulfed the Chinese people. After a century of blood and strife, Communism has long lost its illusory aura,

and has revealed its true face: brutal, evil, hypocritical, and inhuman. After the ideological bankruptcy, the Chinese authorities are resorting to blatant, violent suppression and lies to maintain their rule.

Twenty years after the June Fourth massacre, the historical wounds still have not healed. Instead, they continue to fester. The social conflicts that triggered the protests continue to intensify under the one-party system. Bad habits die hard. At this very moment, China is on the eve of another historical change—the country faces the challenges of transforming from a totalitarian state to a constitutional democracy. The question of June Fourth has become an intractable problem that stands in the way of social transformation, crippling China's efforts over the past century to move toward a constitutional democracy. This is the sorrow and misfortune of the Chinese people. However, one thing is certain: without resolving the question of June Fourth and without granting justice to those who were killed, China will never be able to stand respected on the world stage. ◆

## EDITOR'S NOTES

1. Hu Yaobang was Chairman of the Communist Party of China from 1981 to 1982, and its General Secretary from 1982 to 1987. He was forced to resign on January 16, 1987, in the wake of a series of student demonstrations that took place in late 1986. The party hardliners accused him of being too lax on “bourgeois liberalization” and too empathetic towards China's liberal intellectuals. He was submitted to humiliating “self-criticism.”
2. On April 15, 1989, the day Hu Yaobang died, people started bringing wreaths to the Monument to the People's Heroes in Tiananmen Square to mourn him, expressing sympathy for his political misfortunes and discontent with authorities. From April 17 on, the mourning grew in scope and quickly became a demonstration of public anger against government corruption, demanding reform and triggering the nation-wide 1989 Democracy Movement.
3. Mao initiated the Great Leap Forward campaign (1958–1961) in order to catapult China from an agricultural country to an industrialized one, overtaking Britain and the United States. The campaign, which emphasized steel production and even required families to melt their pots and pans, devastated agricultural production and resulted in a great famine, during which at least 20 million people died.
4. “Bixu qizhi xianmingde fandui dongluan” [必须旗帜鲜明地反对动乱] {It is Necessary to Take a Clear-cut Stand Against Disturbances}, *People's Daily* [人民日报], April 26, 1989.
5. Martial law was declared on May 20, 1989.
6. The vast compound, just west of the Forbidden City, that houses government offices and the residences of the top leaders of the Chinese Communist Party.

## LET OUR CHILDREN'S LIVES CONTINUE THROUGH US: INTERVIEW OF DING ZILIN

**Li Heng:** At the end of February this year, right before the convening of the “Two Sessions,”<sup>1</sup> the Tiananmen Mothers delivered to the Two Sessions an open letter entitled “Please Show Courage, Break the Taboo, Face June Fourth Head On.”<sup>2</sup> Your group has delivered an open letter to the Two Sessions every year since 1995 to demand a just resolution to the June Fourth issue, raising three demands: “truth, compensation, accountability.” How has the government handled your demands? Also, how should we understand your three demands?

**Ding Zilin:** Since 1995, when we, 27 families of the victims, wrote an open letter for the first time, until February 2009, we have sent 15 open letters to government leaders and representatives of the Two Sessions. We have never received any reply. You can see the government’s attitude from the press conference the evening before the opening of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC). There, a Voice of America reporter asked, “Since ’95, the Tiananmen Mothers have written a letter to the Two Sessions nearly every year advocating for a resolution to the June Fourth issue. Have the representatives of the Two Sessions received these letters? What is the response?” And didn’t Zhao Qizheng<sup>3</sup> answer in this way? “The Party and the government have already reached a conclusion.” They have repeated these words endlessly. This has always been the response to our open letters over the years. Of course, they also said other things, like “we must start from the basic interests of the wider public,” “we must protect the overall social stability,” and “we must ensure the people live and work in peace and contentment.” This has always been their defense of the June Fourth crackdown.

*For nearly 20 years, and against official silence, Ding Zilin and other families of the victims of the June Fourth crackdown—the Tiananmen Mothers—have pressed the Chinese government for “truth, compensation, accountability.” In this interview, Ding asks not only the Chinese authorities, but also the student leaders, to reflect upon their responsibility in the tragic event.*

**Li Heng**

TRANSLATED BY HUMAN RIGHTS IN CHINA

**Li:** You said you had predicted that the government wouldn’t pay attention to these demands, nor would they resolve the June Fourth issue. So why have you persisted for so many years?

**Ding:** We have persisted not only for ourselves, but also in order to change the country’s fate. For over half a century, the Communist Party has continuously launched political movements, with total disregard for human life, persecuting people and persecuting them to death. After persecuting people to death, at times that suit their political needs—or, you can say, the needs of factional struggles within the Party—they rehabilitate people, to win over people’s hearts, reconsolidate their power, and

protect their own rule. We therefore feel that we must change this kind of vicious cycle. That is why we do not accept the so-called “rehabilitation”; we do not accept their way of taking victims as hostages. In the end, we recognize the need to change the Chinese Communist Party’s (CCP) customary path of “persecution-rehabilitation”; the Party acts as if no matter what has happened, once the word “rehabilitation” is uttered, the victims have to be deeply grateful, and the issue is thus resolved. That is why we demand resolution of the June Fourth issue within the judicial framework and according to legal standards, investigating the legal responsibility of those responsible, and not leaving it to the say-so of a particular Party faction or leader. Only by doing this can similar tragedies be prevented in the future.

Although the government has long stated its position on June Fourth, and proclaimed that it would not budge, we still work hard at it. I believe effort accumu-

lates like drops of water, and can eventually pierce through stone. China's progress requires people with their feet firmly on the ground, working bit by bit; it requires tenacity, perseverance, and a common direction. Things will start to change sooner or later. The Tiananmen Mothers is a small and weak group, capable of saying and accomplishing very little. But we will continue. Every little bit counts.

## We have persisted not only for ourselves, but also in order to change the country's fate.

**Li:** You are no longer merely demanding an explanation for your deceased family members, but have acquired a universal dimension.

**Ding:** During June Fourth, we lost our own children. As a result we felt we should value life even more, value our children and young people, even if they aren't perfect and have this or that problem. We cannot again let young people and generations after them suffer the same fate that my son and the other June Fourth victims suffered. We also cannot again let China's mothers and fathers suffer the pain of losing their children that we have suffered. We must stop this kind of tragedy from replaying in China. Therefore, we demand a just and reasonable resolution to the June Fourth issue so that our country can follow this example, to establish and popularize among the Chinese people the concept of respect for life. This is also an important step in the long journey toward a civil society.

June Fourth was a crystallization of the Communist Party's mutilation of life. We must change this type of history. Among us Tiananmen Mothers, no one wants to overthrow the CCP regime. But the ideology of Lenin's and Stalin's Soviet Communism, which the CCP has been advertising since its founding, must be overthrown and thoroughly abandoned. Otherwise we Chinese people will truly be doomed forever and will never be able to find our footing in the tide of human progress.

We believe that what we do is not only an appeal to the

Chinese government, but also a kind of self-awakening. It tests and trains our faith and endurance. Of course, we are also speaking to society, speaking to the masses. From a certain perspective, it is also an awakening of others and of the masses.

**Li:** The bloody incident of June Fourth caused you to think about the country and people and demand a change in the cruel politics of contemporary China. You have already been at it for twenty years. In fact, you have become the commemorators of this bloody disaster and the bearers of righteousness and justice of the Chinese nation and people, particularly since the past twenty years have been an era in which Chinese people have rapidly lost their sense of morality.

**Ding:** There's something that I must acknowledge. Our people are indeed forgetful. In fact, our records and narrative of June Fourth, as well as our pursuit of righteousness and justice, fight against our people's forgetfulness and against the authorities' intentional rubbing out of the bloodstains. They also fight against our own depression and despair. I believe that our persistence over so many years has brought improved results. Even if the government does not respond in good faith and continues to suppress us, our testimony and appeal nonetheless have had some impact here and overseas. More and more people are gaining a better understanding of June Fourth; more and more people sympathize with and support us. And we ourselves have also been transformed and elevated in the process.

## [W]e demand a just and reasonable resolution to the June Fourth issue so that our country can follow this example, to establish and popularize among the Chinese people the concept of respect for life.

**Li:** Recently Dai Qing<sup>4</sup> has again started raising the South African model<sup>5</sup> as a solution to the June Fourth problem. What are your thoughts?

**Ding:** I welcome Dai Qing's call, because her "truth, jus-

tice, and reconciliation” are similar to our three basic demands. First is truth. There must be truth. What is the truth about those who massacred and committed violence? What is the truth about the victims, students, workers, and citizens, as well as the Independent Federation of Students, the Independent Federation of Workers? Everyone must respect the facts. Only when truth sees the light of day can we obtain fairness and justice. Truth is the foundation of justice. Without the complete truth, we cannot speak of justice. On the point of demanding the truth, we are in agreement with Dai Qing.

### June Fourth was a crystallization of the Communist Party’s mutilation of life. We must change this type of history.

Dai Qing’s letter of appeal also raised the issue of justice. Of course people differ in their understanding of justice. But I think if we can have a shared understanding of the respect for life and the rule of law, then our understanding of justice will not be that different. In addition, Dai Qing’s appeal also raised the issue of compensation.

However, the background of South Africa is different from ours. The South African problem was a racial problem between whites and blacks. At the time, a democratic system had already been established and the white people were already in the weaker position. They made concessions to the black people on their own initiative and returned social power to them. These were the prerequisites for reconciliation. If the Chinese government could also do this for the masses, then there is hope for reconciliation. If not, then there is no hope.

**Li:** How do you view the ’89 Democracy Movement?

**Ding:** Up to this day, I still think that ’89 was a great democratic movement. Great, because one million people participated in the capital. I think this was an extraordinarily heroic point in the history of the Chinese people, and a point worthy of our pride. I take pride in this. I think that these million people were all

everyday participants. They were not roused by any particular student leader. I feel the impetus came from the entire people’s love for our country, love for democracy and freedom. It was a protest against 40 years of Communist Party authoritarianism, a protest against injustice and corruption of power. It was this that pushed people onto the street; this was the quintessence of the ’89 Democracy Movement. So I think the ’89 Democracy Movement was extraordinarily great. Despite its tragic end, despite my son’s death for this, I still praise this movement and take pride in my son.

**Li:** I noticed that in order to break through the impasse in resolving the June Fourth incident, in this year’s open letter to the Two Sessions, you raised five concrete demands, including: “1. Remove all monitoring of and restrictions on the movements of June Fourth victims and their families; 2. allow families of the dead to openly mourn their loved ones; 3. stop intercepting and confiscating both domestic and overseas humanitarian aid contributions, and return all the aid money that was previously frozen; 4. relevant government departments should, in humanitarian spirit, help the victims who are facing hard times to find employment and guarantee them a basic livelihood, without any political conditions; 5. remove political biases against the disabled victims of June Fourth such that they are treated as all other disabled persons with regard to their public participation and treatment by society.” In the past three years, do you feel that these five concrete demands have been realized?

### We believe that what we do is not only an appeal to the Chinese government, but also a kind of self-awakening.

**Ding:** We must seek the truth from facts. I won’t say the word “progress,” but there has been some change in the state of affairs. The first item is to remove monitoring of and restrictions on the movements of June Fourth victims and their families. Take myself as an example. I feel that the monitoring of my phone line has not been removed. No matter where I go, my phone is monitored 24 hours a day. Also, our e-mail has become “open letters.” Each letter is “looked over” by them. In other

words, my computer is monitored by them. I have no secrets to speak of. However, when I go out I am no longer followed. In both 2007 and 2008, I went to Muxidi<sup>6</sup> on the night of June 3 to pay respects to my son and the other victims who died there, and I was not stopped. This shows that there has been a loosening on their limitations on my movement. The second item, allow families of the dead to openly mourn their loved ones. What I just said about performing rites at Muxidi can also be considered “open.” At that time I was in front of many members of the foreign media. Although there were plainclothes policemen watching, they did not interfere. Of course, we did not give any speeches; we only silently paid our respects.

As for the third item, in 1998 the authorities confiscated a humanitarian donation of 11,620 German marks. This was donated after 1989 to the families of June Fourth victims by Chinese students studying in Germany. The authorities did not give the money to us, nor did they return it to the students in Germany. The students sent checks. When we were cashing them, the Beijing State Security Bureau notified Bank of China’s Wuxi branch office to freeze the remittance. Just a few days ago, I called the State Security Bureau to remind them not to continue freezing these funds. But they did the same as always and sent their twenty-first notice to continue the freeze.

**I feel the impetus came from the entire people’s love for our country, love for democracy and freedom. It was a protest against 40 years of Communist Party authoritarianism, a protest against injustice and corruption of power. It was this that pushed people onto the street; this was the quintessence of the ’89 Democracy Movement.**

The fourth item is something they should do most of all. This is entirely a humanitarian question. Moreover, this is the easiest thing for them to do. Even citizens

having a difficult time have basic support and employment help, etc., so why should families of June Fourth victims be deprived of these benefits? In addition, the government has money, and officials engage in corruption on a large scale and squander public funds. Why can’t they give a little to help the families of June Fourth victims? Many of these victims’ families have it very bad, but for the past 20 years they have not received any help from the government.

**Those who bled and fought bravely in the massacre and ultimately died were all common people.**

**Li:** In fact, this is political discrimination.

**Ding:** With regard to political discrimination, I will tell you this. Fang Zheng has gone to America, right? During June Fourth, his two legs were crushed by tanks and were amputated above the knee. I got to know him in the early 1990s. I knew that Fang Zheng and his family had no intention of going abroad. If the country had stopped discriminating against him, had allowed his family to live in peace, why would he have wanted to leave his homeland? At the time, Fang Zheng was 23 years old. Now he is already 43. It has been 20 years, and he has become a middle-aged man. His daughter is grown and is in elementary school. But how is this family of three, his wife without a job, supposed to live? His whole family depends on his parents’ retirement money for support. Only after many requests did Fang Zheng get the Anhui Province Hefei Disability Union to give him a job that paid 320 *yuan* a month. But this job was located on the third floor. How was his wheelchair supposed to get up there?

Fang Zheng was given no option but to leave. There are many more people in China who were disabled during June Fourth like Fang Zheng. They have suffered in silence for 20 years.

**Li:** In fact they are all normal, honest people.

**Ding:** If a government in fact has a bit of sincerity, these problems aren’t difficult to solve. The treasury has so

much money that it is able to stimulate the economy, to buy American government bonds. So why can't it give a little money to help these compatriots? How can they still talk about "putting people first" and "a harmonious society"?

**[I]n the list of victims and the disabled that we've located, can you find one major or minor student or worker leader? Why is this so? I feel this is because the masses boldly stood up, voluntarily and on their own initiative, to protect the safety of the students in the square at the most dangerous time and in the most dangerous place.**

The government won't do anything. So, we have to think on our own. In 2007, we established a special fund for the elderly family members of June Fourth victims in extreme difficulty. That year, a civic organization in New Zealand awarded the Tiananmen Mothers 3,000 New Zealand dollars for bravery. After that, Liu Xiaobo<sup>7</sup> also gave his prize money to us. Wang Dan<sup>8</sup> and Wang Juntao<sup>9</sup> also donated money to us. Our friends in China and abroad also donated money. Although the amount wasn't much, it was enough to get us started. At present, we have located very few families of June Fourth victims. They are just the tip of the iceberg. Only the government can provide a complete list of names.

We demand that the government solve the hardships of the families of June Fourth victims, but without adding any political conditions whatsoever, such as requiring them to relinquish their right to sue. We will discuss anything with the government. But there are two things that we will not discuss. One is that we must not dishonor the spirits of the dead. The other is that we must not violate the integrity and dignity of the victims' families. This is our bottom line.

**Li:** Twenty years ago, you were all middle-aged. Now

you are already in old age. Many people are in their 80s and 90s. In the years ahead, people may continue to pass away. Do you believe, for example, that you and Professor Jiang<sup>10</sup> will see a reassessment of June Fourth in your lifetime?

**Ding:** When we wrote the letter to the Two Sessions this year, 19 of our friends had already passed away. They did not live to see the day of justice. We who are old and frail may not live to see that day either, but this does not affect the fact that we will do all that we can in the time we have left. We recognize that there is no life after death, so we will let our children's lives continue through their parents. Only in this way would there be meaning and value in each day that we live, and could our hearts be at peace. So while we are on this earth, we must build a good foundation for this issue. I wish to make a record of all that we've experienced and all the truth we've learned about June Fourth, to give it—through our words and voices—to history, to our compatriots, to the world.

**Li:** Yes. About the June Fourth tragedy, people have criticized the students, saying that they bear some of the responsibility, especially certain student leaders. What are your views of this issue?

**I don't intend to blame those young, naïve student leaders. But after 20 years, I think at least we parents of the victims have the right to demand that they reflect on it.**

**Ding:** I think this is a serious issue. For me, it is a very cruel issue. I often don't dare to think about it. The past 20 years, in view of the victims we have located, they were all just ordinary participants, whether they were students, workers, or residents. On May 16, 17, and 18 of 1989, there were a whole series of demonstrations, each with a million participants—this is the pride of our nation. It let the world see that the Chinese people had awoken. However, the June Fourth massacre that followed was indeed our nation's tragedy. Those who bled and fought bravely in the massacre and ultimately died were all common people.

Of course, after the June Fourth massacre, there were many student leaders who were wanted by the government. Some of them succeeded in fleeing the country; some of them were captured and sentenced. After getting out of jail, some stayed in the country and some went into exile overseas. But in the list of victims and the disabled that we've located, can you find one major or minor student or worker leader? Why is this so? I feel this is because the masses boldly stood up, voluntarily and on their own initiative, to protect the safety of the students in the square at the most dangerous time and in the most dangerous place. I don't know what the student leaders in the square thought. Before, when I was interviewed for Carma Hinton's film *The Gate of Heavenly Peace*, I did not know about the statement [student leader] Chai Ling had made. Only after I saw *The Gate of Heavenly Peace* did I know that she had said, "We hoped for blood to flow like a river. Only in this way would the masses awaken."<sup>11</sup>

I think that what she said was wrong. If she really said this, I think she should do some soul-searching and admit her mistake. This is because she also said, later [in the same interview], that she was different from others, that she wanted safety.<sup>12</sup> People's lives are of equal value; they should all be priceless. How can you hope for the blood to flow like a river? How can you explain saying such a thing? It is the executioner who does not hesitate to cause blood to flow like a river. You, who were involved in a democracy movement and unwilling to retreat, how could you be looking forward to a massacre?

Here, I don't intend to blame those young, naïve student leaders. But after 20 years, I think at least we parents of the victims have the right to demand that they reflect on it.

I respect their choice. Now they can stay far away from politics; they can immerse themselves in the business world; they can serve the powerful and live a life of luxury and dissipation. They can also enjoy a happy and sweet family life. This is their choice. I respect their choice. But as for the tragedy that occurred 20 years ago, shouldn't they bear some moral responsibility? This moral responsibility doesn't mean they should do such and such today. But shouldn't they at least reflect

upon it? If they were wrong they should have the courage to admit it. So when we say "face June Fourth head-on," we are saying that the authorities must face it head-on, the executioners must face it head-on, we victims must face it head-on, and those who were responsible in large and small ways must also face it head-on. This national suffering, the suffering after the massacre, it is we ordinary families, ordinary mothers and fathers who have to bear it every day. Is this fair? Each time I think of this, my heart aches.

**When we say "face June Fourth head-on," we are saying that the authorities must face it head-on, the executioners must face it head-on, we victims must face it head-on, and those who were responsible in large and small ways must also face it head-on.**

I have always believed that killers are criminals. If the students had erroneous ideas, foolish ideas, even barbaric ideas, this was a mistake. Crime and mistake are different. But there must be some reflection. A mistake must be acknowledged. You can't just hold your head up high and think that you've always been right. If you do this, then, on this count, what makes you different from the Communist Party? Doesn't the Communist Party also hold its head up and think that it has always been right? From repression to turmoil to crisis to whatever, the Party is always right.

**Li:** What else can people overseas do to help you?

**Ding:** Since the early 1990s, those who have continued to donate to the victims' families have all been ordinary overseas students. There actually aren't many prominent personalities. Of course, there are also groups that donate.

Recently while being interviewed, I have deeply felt that the English-speaking world does not adequately understand June Fourth. In the third book put out by we families of June Fourth victims, *In Search of the Victims of June Fourth*,<sup>13</sup> we have collected 50 search records and



there is an article called “Fifteen Years of Grimness” (*Feng yu ru hui shi wu nian* [ ]). I think that if this book could be translated and published in English, it would help the Western media and readers to more deeply and fully understand the 1989 Democracy Movement and the June Fourth tragedy, as well as the Tiananmen Mothers.

**This national suffering, the suffering after the massacre, it is we ordinary families, ordinary mothers and fathers who have to bear it every day. Is this fair?**

You see, we who are old, weak, sick, and disabled, who do not have much time left, we as individuals no longer matter. We just want to use all our life energy to preserve these written materials for history.

**Li:** Thank you so much for being interviewed. ◆

April 1, 2009

## EDITOR'S NOTES

1. The annual plenary meetings of the National People's Congress (NPC) and the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) in Beijing.
2. For text of the letter in Chinese original, see Human Rights in China [中国人权], “‘Tiananmen muqin’ huyu ‘lianghui’ dui ‘liusi’ jinxing diaocha” [“天安门母亲”呼吁“两会”对“六四”进行调查], February 26, 2009, <http://gb.hrichina.org/gate/gb?url=big5.hrichina.org/public/contents/16688>; and in English translation, see Human Rights in China, “In Open Letter, Tiananmen Mothers Urge China's Leaders to Investigate June 4,” February 26, 2009, <http://www.hrichina.org/public/contents/135136>.

3. Spokesperson of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference.
4. Dai Qing (1941–), is a journalist and activist for China-related issues.
5. The South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was set up by the post-apartheid government in 1995 to help deal with the violence and human rights abuses committed under the apartheid regime. See the official website of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, <http://www.doj.gov.za/trc/>.
6. Muxidi (木樨地), in Western Beijing, is the location where Ding Zilin's son was shot dead on the night of June 3, 1989.
7. In spring 1989, Liu Xiaobo, then a visiting scholar at Columbia University, returned to Beijing to participate in the protest and was subsequently imprisoned for two years.
8. Wang Dan was a student leader of the 1989 Democracy Movement. He was arrested in July 1989, sentenced to four years' imprisonment, and released (on medical parole) in 1993.
9. In 1989, Wang Juntao was deputy editor of *Economics Weekly*, a publication of the Beijing Social and Economic Sciences Research Institute. He was branded a “black hand” of the 1989 protest and sentenced to 13 years. He was released (on medical parole) in 1994 for health reasons.
10. Jiang Peikun, Ding Zilin's husband.
11. Chai Ling's statements, presented in *The Gate of Heavenly Peace*, were excerpted from her May 28, 1989, taped interview with American journalist Philip Cunningham.
12. Chai Ling said, “I am different from others,” and “I want to survive.” Chinese transcript of the interview available at <http://www.tsquare.tv/chinese/archives/chailin89528.html>.
13. Ding Zilin, ed. [丁子霖], *Xun fang liu si shou nan zhe* [寻访六四受难者] (Hong Kong: Kai fang za zhi she, 2005 [香港: 开放出版社, 2005]). *In Search of the Victims of June Fourth* is the unofficial English title of this text.

# “New China”: 60 Years at a Glance

1953: Authorities successively launch campaigns for **Socialist Transformation of Agriculture, Handicraft Industry, and Capitalist Industry and Commerce**, calling for a “quick march to socialism.”

April 28, 1956: Mao Zedong proposes the Double Hundred Policy: “**Let a Hundred Flowers Bloom**” in the arts and “**a Hundred Schools of Thought Contend**” in the academe.

April 1957: Authorities begin the **Rectification Campaign**, urging democratic party factions and intellectuals to give suggestions to the Party, to “bare their hearts to the Party.” Soon afterward, Mao Zedong launches the **Anti-Rightist Campaign**, with the slogan, “**Beat back the attack by bourgeois rightists**”: 550,000 people branded as rightists.

1949 1950 1951 1952 1953 1954 1955 1956 1957 1958 1959



218

**October 1, 1949:** Mao Zedong declares the founding of the People’s Republic of China at the Inauguration Ceremony. Authorities designate slogans, including “Support the central government of the people”, and “**Long live Chairman Mao!**” (added by Mao).

**Early 1956:** Collectivization of agriculture; establishment of joint public-private ownership of businesses in industry and commerce, and the **planned economy management system**.

**May 1966:** Mao Zedong launches the **Great Cultural Revolution**. The **Red Guards** respond to Mao’s slogans, “**To rebel is justified**”, “**Sweep away all monsters**,” and “**Smash the four olds**” (old ideology, old culture, old customs, old habits), burning and destroying cultural relics and historical sites.

**March, 1958:** Mao Zedong launches the **Great Leap Forward**, and sets goal to “surpass England in 15 years, catch up to the United States in 20 years.” The whole nation engages in the **Great Smelting of Steel**. The *People’s Daily* promotes the challenge, “If the people dare, the land will bear.” Different parts of the country greatly exaggerate [their production figures] while competing to “launch the satellite,” causing the **Great Famine and unnatural death of over 30 million people**.

**March 1959:** China imposes **socialist system on Tibet** in name of “democratic reform”; **Dalai Lama flees** to India.

1960  
1961  
1962

1972 1971 1970 1969 1968 1967 1966 1965 1964 1963

1973

1974

**October 6, 1976:** The “**Gang of Four**” is crushed.

**1978:** CPC convenes the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh CPC Central Committee: shifts focus to economic development; initiates an era of **reform and opening up**; puts into practice Deng Xiaoping’s policy of “*letting some of the people get rich first.*”

**1980s:** Authorities successively launched the **Campaign for the Elimination of Spiritual Pollution** and the **Anti-Bourgeois Liberalism Campaign**.

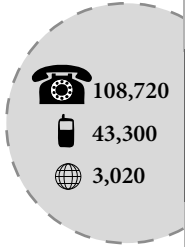
1975 1976 1977 1978 1979 1980 1981 1982 1983 1984 1985

**March 1979:** Deng Xiaoping calls for adherence to the **Four Cardinal Principles**: commitment to socialism, dictatorship of the proletariat (later changed to people’s democratic dictatorship), leadership of the Communist Party, and to Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought.

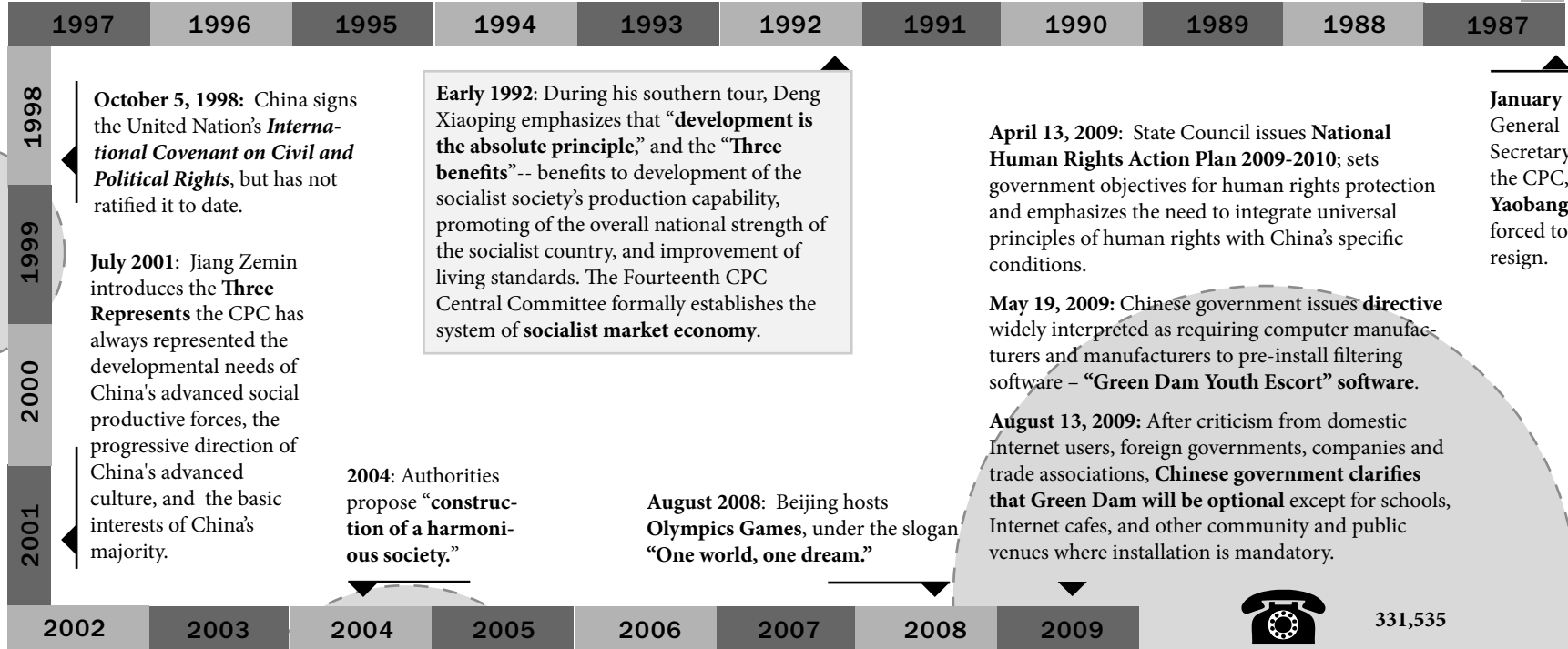


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1998: Ministry of Public Security launches the **Golden Shield Project** (金盾工程) (including what is later known as the “Great Firewall of China”).



December 11, 2001: After fifteen years of negotiations, China enters the **World Trade Organization** (WTO).



March 14, 2004: The Second Plenary Session of the Tenth National People's Congress adopts **amendment to the Constitution** of the People's Republic of China: “the state respects and safeguards human rights.”

March 30, 2004: Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China issues “**White Paper**” **Progress in China's Human Rights Cause**. It states that citizens enjoy the right to information.

February 22, 1993: **State Security Law of the People's Republic of China** (中华人民共和国国家安全法), promulgated (effective on February 22, 1993).

Early 1992: During his southern tour, Deng Xiaoping emphasizes that “**development is the absolute principle**,” and the “**Three benefits**” -- benefits to development of the socialist society's production capability, promoting of the overall national strength of the socialist country, and improvement of living standards. The Fourteenth CPC Central Committee formally establishes the system of **socialist market economy**.

2004: Authorities propose “**construction of a harmonious society**.”

August 2008: Beijing hosts **Olympics Games**, under the slogan “**One world, one dream**.”

Since the start of 2009: Authorities begin major preparations for the celebratory activities to mark the **60th Anniversary** of the founding of the PRC, expending enormous financial and human resources. The General Offices of the CPC Central Committee and the State Council jointly issue fifty “**60th Anniversary National Day**” slogans and “**Three unwaverings**”: unwaveringly hold aloft the great banner of socialism, unwaveringly commit to the socialist road with Chinese characteristics, and unwaveringly commit to the socialist theoretical system with Chinese characteristics.

April 1989: Hu Yaobang dies, triggering large-scale student unrest. On the night of **June 3**, authorities dispatch troops to carry out a bloody suppression of popular protests.

September 5, 1988: **Law on the Protection of State Secrets of the People's Republic of China** (中华人民共和国保守国家秘密法), promulgated (effective on May 1, 1989).

January 1987: General Secretary of the CPC, **Hu Yaobang**, is forced to resign.

Numbers are in 1,000



Landlines



Mobile Phones



Internet Users

## VOICES FROM THE BLOGOSPHERE

“Across the Great Wall, we can reach every corner of the world,” announced the first e-mail sent from China in September 1987. By January 1996, construction was completed on China’s backbone broadband network CHINANET, which began to provide network service throughout the country.<sup>1</sup> The number of Chinese internet users has continued to grow exponentially each year. At the end of 2008 the number was almost 300 million, up from 59.10 million at the end of 2002.<sup>2</sup> Bloggers have been active since August 5, 2002. On that day, Isaac Mao posted China’s first blog, which simply stated, “From today, I’m stepping into the blogosphere.”<sup>3</sup> Chinese authorities have continually tried to erect a “Great Firewall” to block “subversive” postings, and their efforts have intensified in preparation for the 60th Anniversary celebrations. However, bloggers have continued to raise their voices. Below is a selection of their comments on the 60th Anniversary.

*The Party knows no bounds in testing the people. The Internet has been “greened”. Education is not taken seriously. Read the newspaper, and you’ll be deceived. Drink milk, there’s poison. Lose your job, you deserve it. Buses are being blown-up. Land is being taken. Homes are being demolished. Children are being sold. Miners are being buried.*

*Young girls are being raped. The rest are subjected to security services, city management, joint defense and public security forces; they’re “harmonized” or told they have mental disorders. They say it’s anti-China to catch the rapist; it’s anti-China to ask about the quality of building construction when your child is crushed to death; it’s anti-China to expose that there’s poison in our food; it is also anti-China to petition about the beatings, killings and bullying of common people; just raising questions about the sale of children, or of HIV-infected blood, the illegal coal kilns, the fake news, the judiciary breaking the law, embezzlement and corruption, unconstitutional violation of rights, or the “green-damming” of the Internet, is anti-China.*

***If you aren’t anti-China, are you even human?***

*If you do something in the public interest, you’re gathering crowds to cause trouble and create an incident; if you do something for the nation, you are fomenting political unrest; if you clearly demonstrate that there’s been a mistake, then you have ulterior motives; if there are too many people who are angry, they have failed to see the truth and have been incited by someone; if there is international condemnation, then it is external anti-China forces.*

*We haven’t seen a ballot in 60 years; there is no universal education, no medical insurance, no freedom of the press, no freedom of speech, no freedom of information, no freedom of movement, no judicial independence, no oversight by public opinion, no independent trade unions, no national army, no constitutional protection; **all that’s left is the “grass-mud horse.”**<sup>4</sup>*

Posted June 14, 2009 by Ai Wei Wei (艾未未)

***I’m not up for rejoicing***, the money spent on National Day flowers could be better spent on the common people for their work well done. ***The financial tsunami*** has already brought us, the common people, unspeakable hardships. ***I am not up for rejoicing.***

Posted March 18, 2009 by SM世界

***Let’s shout! Shout, shout the slogans!***

***But will it make life better?!***

Posted August 26, 2009 on Zhongguo  
Changzhou Wang (中国常州网)

*I think that **amnesty should not be restricted** to “light offenders and those who have committed unpremeditated crimes.” It should also be extended to “prisoners of conscience,” who receive heavy sentences because of their “improper ways of defending rights” or “inappropriate expression of political opinion.” If all war criminals can be pardoned, why can’t they?*

Posted March 11, 2009 by Liu Xiaoyuan (刘晓原)

*You could say that in the sixty years since the Communist Party has ascended to the throne, there has not been a single day without torment. . . In the past sixty years, which of the committed errors and crimes has been completely acknowledged and apologized for? For which of them have all the facts been made completely clear and the people given consolation and [official] explanation? Not only does the government not admit to the errors and crimes committed during the past sixty years by earnestly investigating the facts, it moreover does not allow the people to investigate them, the scholars to research them, nor the people to appeal for redress of the wrongs. . . **The CPC should take the initiative to publicly apologize to the people** for the errors and crimes it has committed during the past sixty years, for the sixty years of its blind recklessness and arbitrary torment; it should **make public the truth** about the torment of these past sixty years and **seek reconciliation between the government and the people**. Only if it does so will it truly be “serving the people.”*

Posted December 24, 2008 by Ran Yunfei (冉云飞)

[Emphasis added.]

# HUMAN RIGHTS AND CHINA'S SOFT POWER EXPANSION

**Andrew J. Nathan  
and Andrew Scobell**

China's rising economic clout and its careful, steady diplomacy around the world brought Beijing a surge of "soft power" in the first years of the new century. Soft power is the ability to exert influence—beyond what a country wields through its use of force or money—through the appeal of a country's cultural values and the apparent success of its way of doing things.<sup>1</sup>

What is driving China's enthusiasm for soft power and what are its dimensions? How is China flexing its soft power muscles globally? And what are the implications of the expansion of China's soft power for human rights?

During the early post-Cold War period, the advantages of soft power accrued exclusively to the democratic West, especially to the triumphant American model of liberal capitalism. But in the early 2000s the U.S. faltered, facing trouble in Iraq, Afghanistan, North Korea, Iran, and elsewhere, and suffering a financial crisis that seemed to reflect the failings of its individualistic culture. China was also affected by the global economic downturn, but for the time being its way of doing things looked relatively good. China stood for "Asian values," solidarity and cooperation within a country and egalitarian respect among countries regardless of size and wealth. Its political-economic model was labeled the "Beijing consensus," denoting a more dynamic, fair, and efficient version of capitalism than the "Washington consensus,"<sup>2</sup> which had apparently gotten the West and its partners into trouble.

Two symbols encapsulated China's new prestige—the incomprehensibly huge number affixed to its foreign exchange reserves—\$1.5 trillion in December 2007 before the start of the global economic crisis—and the eye- and ear-bursting opening ceremony of the 2008 Beijing Olympics, a grand enactment of vigor, vastness, and vaunting ambition. In 2009, the Chinese government celebrated 60 years of Communist rule with an

elaborate display of national power designed to impress the Chinese people and foreign governments. Overseas, Chinese culture was honored by some of the world's most important commercial and cultural institutions,

from the Frankfurt Book Fair to Carnegie Hall. China's leaders—and its financial officials and cultural emissaries—were global superstars, welcome everywhere.

## CHINA'S SOFT POWER CAMPAIGN

Cultivating soft power is not a new strategy for the Chinese government. China's diplomacy had always used soft power, although the term itself was new. The physical expansion of the Han people across the territory of what is now China over the course of three thousand years was facilitated by economic interaction and cultural assimilation. Imperial China gained special influence in Vietnam, Korea, and Japan by giving these societies its writing system, Confucian classics, poetry, music, clothing styles, metal-working techniques, and agricultural practices.

Even when China was most isolated, Mao Zedong insisted, "We have friends all over the world," and welcomed a stream of so-called Maoist party leaders from other countries to visit the fountainhead in Beijing.

But whereas in the era of Mao Zedong, senior Chinese leaders rarely ventured beyond the borders of their own country, and in the era of Deng Xiaoping, top leaders made limited forays abroad today's principal leaders are globe-trotting emissaries who regularly visit countries in every corner of the world. In 2006, for example, the Chinese president, premier, and foreign minister visited 16 countries in Africa. According to a South African analyst, this activity was "unprecedented." He continued: "I can't think of any other head of state, including [South African President] Thabo Mbeki, who has visited as many African countries as that."<sup>3</sup>

Chinese diplomats are increasingly dispatched further afield including to small states in Africa and Latin America. Mechanisms for forging bilateral relationships include proclamations of “partnerships” with many powers. Since 1993, these countries have included major powers such as the European Union, Russia, the United States, as well as middle powers such as Brazil, Egypt, Mexico, and South Africa.<sup>4</sup> China has also ramped up the scope and pace of its hosting of foreign leaders and conferences both qualitatively and quantitatively. In November 3–5, 2006 and November 8–9, 2009, China held China-Africa summits attended respectively by 48 and more than 50 African heads of state.<sup>5</sup>

Beijing has had thousands of years of practice in wooing and overawing foreign guests. Foreign dignitaries are invited to the Middle Kingdom where they are given royal treatment irrespective of the size or significance of the country from which they hail.

China possesses a vast array of “cultural capital”—the Great Wall, the Forbidden City and, since the 1970s, the tomb of Qin Shihuang. In addition, cultural artifacts such as ceramics, calligraphy and martial arts are widely exhibited and China’s varied and often exotic cuisine is ubiquitous. It is not hard to exercise its soft power upon those who visit, because China’s cultural icons require no embellishment, hype or financial investment. They already enjoy global renown, and foreign visitors arrive full of excitement and anticipation. China’s aura of soft power holds sway over all guests regardless of background.

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Even the PLA is now actively engaged in the business of exchanges with other militaries, as well as in hosting international seminars and symposia designed to promote the country’s influence. One important innova-

tion has been the introduction of an annual course for foreign officers and defense officials at China’s National Defense University. Hosted gatherings include the latest iteration in a series of international conferences on Sun Zi’s *Art of War* held in November 2009 in the picturesque city of Hangzhou, and an international forum to examine the security environment of the Asia-Pacific held in October 2008 in Beijing. Both events were sponsored by the China Association for Military Science, which is affiliated with the PLA’s Academy of Military Sciences. The goal of the former is to promote the study of Sun Zi both within China and globally, while the latter aimed to articulate China’s policies and official messages to representatives of foreign and defense policy think tanks from around the world.

Beijing promotes its development model of state-guided authoritarian capitalism through the use of direct foreign investment, trade, and aid. For example, in 2009 Beijing announced a five-year \$10 billion loan program to Africa. Variouslly dubbed “market Leninism” or “authoritarian capitalism,” the Chinese model has come to be seen as “the main ideological competitor to Western liberal democracy.”<sup>6</sup>

But China has not been able to surmount one long-standing vulnerability in the battle of values and ideas, the self-inflicted wound of its pervasive violation of internationally recognized human rights. Even within China, authoritarianism is widely considered a temporary state of affairs rather than an endpoint of political development. “Building democracy and rule of law” is the stated goal not only of the Party’s critics but of the Party itself.<sup>7</sup> Even though reform and opening brought widening personal freedoms and rising wealth, the government met any challenge to its authority with harassments, threats, beatings, and arrests. Such violations were the ugly twin of China’s successful development model—for both had their roots in authoritarian one-party rule. The government acted as if any challenge to its legitimacy might get out of hand and cause a national collapse.

## RIGHTS VERSUS VALUES

Chinese diplomatic strategists recognize that the issue of human rights is a systemic weakness of the Chinese

system in global affairs. By contrast, discussing Chinese (or Asian) culture or values has the potential to be a conversation changer. As a symposium at the Central Communist Party School put it, “The theory of the unity of culture [*wenhua yiyuanlun*] always serves the centrality of the West. Therefore we must emphasize and strengthen the study of the differences between Eastern and Western Culture.”<sup>8</sup>

Unlike the human rights idea, under which countries judge one another under a set of international norms—judgments to which China is particularly vulnerable—the idea of regionally specific values offers China a chance to articulate what it has to offer the world in a positive sense. China began to promote this idea in the 1980s, concomitantly with its engagement in the international human rights regime, and found support from other authoritarian and semi-authoritarian governments in Asia such as those of Singapore and Malaysia.

By October 2008, there were reportedly some 326 Confucius Institutes in 81 countries on five continents including more than two dozen in the United States.

The thrust of the Asian values argument is that Asia can provide a counter-model to the American way of life, which has been overrun by excessive individualism, creating a wave of violent crime, drugs, guns, vagrancy, and immoral behavior. The counter-model relies on the strong hand of a wise and benevolent leadership that promulgates traditional beliefs in obedience, thrift, industriousness, respect for elders, and authority. Promoters of Asian values claim that Asians prioritize economic and social rights over civil and political rights, the community over the individual, and social order and stability over democracy and individual freedom. In fact, the values being referred to are not so much Asian as Confucian, which leaves out Asian countries throughout South Asia and parts of Southeast Asia without a Confucian past.

Reviled in Mao’s China as backward and feudal, Confucius has been rehabilitated and used to personify Chi-

nese ideal values of harmony, community, and deference. Starting in 2004, China established a network of Confucius Institutes abroad. The institute initiative, under the auspices of the Ministry of Education, is designed to promote the study of Chinese language and culture abroad. The first institute was established in Seoul, the second at the University of Maryland, and the third at the University of Stellenbosch in South Africa. By October 2008, there were reportedly some 326 Confucius Institutes in 81 countries on five continents including more than two dozen in the United States.<sup>9</sup>

## CHINA AND THE INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS REGIME<sup>10</sup>

China’s challenge to what it labeled as “Western” values coincided with, and was intended to condition, its process of engagement with the international human rights regime.

The contemporary international human rights regime started with the adoption on December 10, 1948, by the United Nations General Assembly of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR). The UDHR was not just an expression of Western values. A diplomat from the pre-communist Kuomintang (KMT) government was one of the lead drafters of the document, along with representatives from many other countries, and KMT China’s UN representative voted for adoption.<sup>11</sup> In 1966 the General Assembly put the customary-law principles of the UDHR into the form of treaties that countries could sign and ratify.<sup>12</sup> These two documents—the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (ICESCR) and the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (ICCPR)—entered into force in 1976, after ratification not only by Western states but by many socialist and Third World countries (not including, however, either China or the U.S.).<sup>13</sup>

The UDHR and the two covenants banned slavery, torture, and arbitrary arrest or execution; called for freedoms of thought, speech, assembly, and religion; and vindicated the rights to property, work, education, equal treatment under the law, and a decent standard of living. All of these same rights were recognized in China’s first Constitution in 1954. But Mao’s regime

violated all of them, partly as functional requirement of its autarkic, totalitarian development model and partly because the Party's internal political struggles morphed into violent mass movements like the Cultural Revolution that caused hundreds of millions of people to be persecuted, tortured, sent to labor camps, or killed.

**In the 53-member UN Human Rights Commission, China took the lead in creating a non-Western caucus of states that made sure that Western-sponsored resolutions against China and other Third World states never came to a vote. The Commission went so far as to elect Libya—one of the more flagrant state violators of human rights—as its chair in 2003.**

In the mid-1970s, just when international human rights norms, institutions, and advocacy groups began to enjoy a period of rising influence, Deng Xiaoping's strategy of "reform and opening up" led China to shift from Mao-era resistance to nascent engagement with the regime. As a consequence, the immediate aftermath of the government's bloody crackdown on the Democratic Movement in Tiananmen Square in June 1989 marked a high point of China's vulnerability to international pressure concerning human rights. And the incident contributed in some direct and indirect ways to further strengthening the international human rights system, as many states joined to sanction China and criticize it at the annual meetings of the UN Human Rights Commission.

But at the same time Tiananmen generated what became a complex and sophisticated Chinese challenge to the role of human rights as a set of international norms. As Beijing shifted its political and economic strategies to create "authoritarian resilience" at home and a "rising China" abroad, it found ways to blunt the impact of international human rights advocacy efforts on its internal politics and to shape the international human rights system to its own advantage. In this way

the rise of China, which has been in many ways a positive development, has put at risk the promise of human rights as a vital part of the international normative and institutional order.

As part of its growing global role in the 1990s and after, China intensified its involvement with the international human rights regime while working to shape the regime to its own preferences. In 1998 China entered into a dialogue with the newly established Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and in 2000 it signed a memorandum of understanding for a long-term program of technical cooperation on issues like human rights education, which served government purposes and exempted it from public challenges to its human rights performance. China ratified the ICESCR and signed the ICCPR (although so far it has not ratified it). In 2004, the National People's Congress amended the Chinese Constitution to state, "The State respects and preserves human rights."

At the same time, however, China used its position in the international system to slow the expansion of the international human rights regime and weaken its ability to influence Chinese foreign relations and domestic affairs. In 1990, Beijing helped block implementation of an emergency mechanism that would have enabled the Human Rights Commission to come into session following a major event like Tiananmen. In the preparatory work for the 1993 Vienna World Conference on Human Rights, China gained the backing of most Asian countries for the principles of noninterference in the internal affairs of states; non-selectivity (i.e., UN bodies should not single out specific countries for criticism); the priority of collective, economic, and social rights over civil and political rights; national sovereignty; and cultural particularism (the non-universality of human rights values across regions). These arguments had some influence over parts of the final Vienna declaration.

In the 53-member UN Human Rights Commission, China took the lead in creating a non-Western caucus of states that made sure that Western-sponsored resolutions against China and other Third World states never came to a vote. The Commission went so far as to elect Libya—one of the more flagrant state violators of



human rights—as its chair in 2003. In response, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan pushed for the reorganization of the commission in 2006 into a 47-seat Human Rights Council that he hoped would be more effective, but this body continued to be dominated by repressive regimes, who worked harder than the democratic regimes to control the Council's operations. These states, including China, shaped the ground rules for the new Council around a system of “universal periodic review.” Under this system each state was invited to submit a human rights action plan and hence each state had the initiative to define its own human rights aspirations; each state was regularly reviewed and hence no particular state was targeted; and each state received recommendations from the Council based on the report it submitted and was free to adopt or reject any recommendation. As one of the first countries reviewed, China submitted a human rights action plan in 2009, emphasizing its achievements to date and aspirations consistent with its existing political system,<sup>14</sup> and rejected all the concrete recommendations made by other states in the course of the review.<sup>15</sup>

### In relations with Western countries, China diverted the human rights issue into the channel of what was called quiet diplomacy.

In its relations with the UN Special Procedures, China has so far accepted only four visits (two by the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention and one each by the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education and the Special Rapporteur on Torture), set limits on the activities of each, and dragged out negotiations or left requests pending from nine other such bodies.<sup>16</sup> China worked with other members of the “like-minded group” of countries in the Human Rights Council to end, shorten, or restrict the mandates of various special procedures.<sup>17</sup>

In relations with Western countries, China diverted the human rights issue into the channel of what was called quiet diplomacy. High-level U.S., European, and Australian visitors in the early 1990s customarily brought prisoner lists to meetings with Chinese officials and

made statements on issues like censorship, Tibet, and religious freedom. China deterred such representations by treating them as affronts. An example was the re-arrest of Wei Jingsheng in 1993 after a U.S. State Department official, John Shattuck, met with him in Beijing.

Beijing rewarded quiet diplomacy with selective prisoner releases, which had the added benefit of weakening the democracy movement by sending its leaders into exile. In 1998, as a price for restoring summit-level meetings with China, Bill Clinton won the right to give an uncensored lecture at Peking University that was broadcast on Chinese TV, and used it to say that China was swimming against “the tide of history.” By contrast, Clinton's successor George W. Bush said it was best to speak with Chinese leaders about human rights issues in private. European leaders followed suit.

One of the West's demands in the 1990s had been that China enter into official dialogues about human rights. China yielded to this demand and at different times in the mid-1990s established dialogues with the U.S., Canada, the EU, the UK, France, Germany, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, Austria, and Australia. But China shaped the ground rules to its own advantage, insisting that the agendas be negotiated in advance and concern technical issues rather than current violations, and that the proceedings be confidential.<sup>18</sup> Keeping the dialogues bilateral and separating them, in time prevented the other powers from coordinating their approaches to China. China characterized as unfriendly occasional attempts to convene meetings of relevant officials from other governments to exchange ideas about their dialogue experiences (the so-called Berne Process).<sup>19</sup> Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) could not participate in Western delegations, but were shunted off to occasional forums which occurred before the government dialogues. China vetoed participation of certain groups in these forums by walking out or threatening to cancel if they were invited. From time to time China cancelled dialogues to express protest over other issues, then framed their resumption as a concession.

Reinforcing the effectiveness of these efforts was the rise of influential Western voices emphasizing the importance of maintaining smooth ties with China.<sup>20</sup> The U.S.-China Business Council, founded in 1973,

had long represented the views of large U.S. companies doing business with China. As business ties burgeoned, many private consulting firms and think tanks—such as Kissinger Associates, Stonebridge International, the John L. Thornton China Center at the Brookings Institution, and the Kissinger Institute on China and the United States at the Woodrow Wilson Center—articulated the importance of not letting human rights promotion get in the way of business and strategic interests. The threat of American trade sanctions for human rights violations disappeared. In 1994, Bill Clinton asked Congress to approve the extension of China's "most favored nation" tariff rates even though China had not complied with any of the human rights-related conditions that he had put forward a year earlier. This "de-linkage" of trade and human rights was formally made irreversible when Congress approved "permanent normal trading relations" with China in 2001 as part of the agreement for China to enter the World Trade Organization (WTO). To take the place of the annual trade privileges debate as a venue for airing worries about China, Congress set up two specialized commissions—the China Economic and Security Review Commission and the Congressional-Executive Commission on China. But these bodies only issued reports and policy recommendations and had no potential to seriously threaten Chinese interests.

## HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE BALANCE

China's goal in all this appears not to be to get rid of the international human rights regime (which would be difficult and unnecessary), but to cap its growth and expansion, freeze its effectiveness at the current level, shape its institutions so that they are deferential to states, and shade the norms to fit Chinese priorities. Accordingly, China's rise, and its widening cooperation with a host of other regimes unfriendly to human rights, has brought a slowing, and even in some ways a retrogression, in the health of the international human rights regime.

A recent study by Freedom House<sup>21</sup> traces how China and its allies have tried to shape the procedures of the Human Rights Council, lobby the treaty bodies, cut back the mandates of the Special Procedures, undercut

the International Criminal Court (ICC), and oppose the accreditation of key NGOs at the UN. These efforts have achieved results. China sends top officials with pockets stuffed full of aid programs to lobby governments who hold seats in the Human Rights Council. It sends teams of well educated and well briefed diplomats and lawyers to every meeting of an international human rights body. Its global propaganda is increasingly effective. Its grip on the Western business communities is strong. Its influence in world media is rising. China's soft power is extensive, and one of its targets is the vitality of human rights as a part of international law and institutions.

**China's rise, and its widening cooperation with a host of other regimes unfriendly to human rights, has brought a slowing, and even in some ways a retrogression, in the health of the international human rights regime.**

We have lived through a period of a few decades in which the human rights system grew at a rapid pace and seemed slated only to grow stronger and stronger. But this trend can not inevitably continue. China and its partners have mounted a formidable challenge, which advocates of international human rights must confront creatively if the human rights system is to not go into decline. ♦

## NOTES

1. Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (Public Affairs, 2004), p 5. See also Joseph S. Nye, Jr., "Soft Power," *Foreign Policy* 80 (Fall 1990), pp. 153-171. Also Joshua Kurlantzick, *China's Charm Offensive: How China's Soft Power is Transforming the World* (Yale University Press, 2007). Kurlantzick is fuzzy about the term—virtually anything China does constitutes the flexing of soft power muscles, including economic. Also cf. Jehangir Pocha, "The Rising 'Soft Power' of India and China," *New Perspectives Quarterly* 20 (Winter 2003); David M. Lampton, *The Three Faces*, 2008; the latter uses the term "ideational power."

2. The term was coined by Joshua Cooper Ramo, *The Beijing Consensus* (London: The Foreign Policy Centre, 2004), <http://fpc.org.uk/publications/123>, accessed 09.01.09.
3. Robyn Dixon, "Africa holds attractions for China leaders; Beijing's hunger for raw materials and political recognition has its top officials crisscrossing the continent like no one else to cement ties," *Los Angeles Times*, January 31, 2007.
4. On China's 'partnerships,' see Bates Gill, *Rising Star: China's New Security Diplomacy* (Brookings Institution Press, 2007), pp. 58–63.
5. "Beijing Summit adopts declaration, highlighting China-Africa strategic partnership," *Sina English*, November 6, 2006, <http://english.sina.com/p/1/2006/1105/93904.html>; "China-Africa summit shows importance of friendship with Beijing," *The Times*, November 6, 2009, <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/asia/article6907026.ece>.
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8. Jeremy Paltiel, *The Empire's New Clothes: Universality and Cultural Particularism in China's Quest for Global Status* (NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 144 n 17.
9. James F. Paradise, "China and International Harmony: The Role of Confucius Institutes in Bolstering Beijing's Soft Power," *Asian Survey* 49:4 (July/August 2009), p. 648.
10. In this context, the word "regime" refers to an international system of norms and institutions by which states regulate their relations in a particular domain of activity.
11. Louis Henkin, *The Rights of Man Today* (Boulder: Westview, 1978), Ch. 3. Mary Ann Glendon, *A World Made New*.
12. Since the UDHR is a declaration rather than a treaty, states do not have the option of signing it. It forms part of international customary law rather than treaty law.
13. Subsequently, China signed but has not ratified the ICCPR; the U.S. ratified it in 1992. The U.S. signed but has not ratified the ICESCR; China ratified it in 2001.
14. "National Human Rights Action Plan of China (2009-2010)," [http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2009-04/13/content\\_11177126.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2009-04/13/content_11177126.htm), accessed June 11, 2009.
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20. Cf. James Mann, *The China Fantasy: How Our Leaders Explain Away Chinese Repression* (New York: Viking, 2007).
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# “SOFT POWER” WITH CHINESE CHARACTERISTICS IS CHANGING THE WORLD

He Qinglian

TRANSLATED BY J. LATOURELLE

Ever since it took power, it has been the dream of the Communist Party of China (CPC) for China to become a superpower, capable of influencing the whole world. It has not hesitated in depriving its people of their well-being in order to achieve the goal of creating a “rich country with a strong military.” In recent years, the Chinese government has begun to realize that in addition to the “hard power” of “military equipment,” it must also use “soft power” to influence the world. The first government scholar to put forth this view was Zheng Bijian (郑必坚), in his essay “China’s Peaceful Rise to Great-Power Status,” published in *Foreign Affairs* in 2005.<sup>1</sup> After the *China Daily* website published this article’s standpoint in detail under the headline, “The New Path of China’s Peaceful Rise and US-China Relations,”<sup>2</sup> this has been a hot topic of discussion in China for several years running.

## 1. How China understands and exercises “soft power.”

In international relations, “soft power” refers to a third aspect of power a nation possesses, in addition to its economy and military, that consists primarily of the power of influence of its culture, values, ideology, popular opinion, etc. The concept was first advanced by Joseph S. Nye, Jr., a Harvard University professor and former U.S. Assistant Secretary of Defense, and the term has now become a fashionable phrase in the language of international politics.<sup>3</sup>

China, while using *Shenzhou 5*, *Shenzhou 7*,<sup>4</sup> and the modernization of its military force, as well as its GDP, to demonstrate its “hard power,” has also absorbed the concept of “soft power” and designed a whole set of “soft power diplomacy” strategies on the basis of its

own understanding of the concept. This “soft power diplomacy,” designed by an utterly unprincipled government that operates opportunistically, is marked by quite a number of “Chinese characteristics” indeed.

China’s soft power penetration serves its diplomatic objectives. China’s diplomacy can be divided into three levels: great

power diplomacy (with the U.S. at the core), border diplomacy, and resource diplomacy. Based on different diplomatic requirements, China’s “soft power” penetration falls into three different categories: economic aid, economic cooperation, and cultural penetration. Take for example China’s diplomacy toward the Asian countries on its borders. First, China established firm political and economic relations with Southeast Asian nations through increased foreign aid; it then developed a comprehensive cooperation framework through plans such as free trade agreements that have allowed ASEAN countries to become China’s interest partners; and, finally, through semi-official projects, it enhanced China’s cultural appeal as well as advanced the pro-China stance of ASEAN countries.

This kind of “soft power diplomacy” is not only embodied in China’s Asian strategy,<sup>5</sup> but also extended globally. Foreign aid and comprehensive, mutually-penetrating economic relations are the core of China’s “soft power” resources—this, unlike the “soft power” recognized by the international community, is actually the “hard power” of economic strength being peddled by China as “soft power”; and it is, under the promise of “incentives,” Chinese Communist cultural values and ideas cloaked in “Confucius Institutes,”<sup>6</sup> aimed at getting the world to accept a “Chinese culture” whose flavor has long ago gone bad. The annual Frankfurt Book Fair, furthermore, is a good opportunity for China to export Chinese Communist culture in soft wrapping to the whole world.<sup>7</sup>

## 2. “Purchase order diplomacy” makes Europe waver between human rights and economic interests.

The Chinese government’s diplomatic dealings with the European Union in recent years have frequently been heavily dependent on its multi-billion dollar “great multinational purchases.” This diplomatic tactic, which originated at the end of the 20th century, is commonly referred to in both foreign media and China itself as “purchase order diplomacy.”<sup>8</sup> I will sum up its genesis below.

Since the mid-1990s, China has been drawing the line in its foreign policy at whether or not a nation criticizes the human rights situation in China: those who criticize it are “anti-China, anti-Communist forces,” and the methods of punishing them, besides verbal and written denunciations in the media, include allowing patriotic “angry youth” to take to the streets and heave a few bricks through the windows of sales outlets run by these “enemies” of China to demonstrate Chinese “prowess.” The method of bestowing favors on friends has been to place large purchase orders with governments of wealthy nations and grant economic aid to the governments of poor ones. It should be said that China’s strategy in this regard has been greatly successful. Prior to 2007, with the exception of the U.S., all Western nations had adopted a policy of appeasement on human rights issues. Having refined its diplomacy through over two decades of experience, the Chinese government has become very good at using economic interests to guide and mold the China policy of the countries in the EU; the constantly changing China policy of France and Germany, the EU axis nations, is a very good example.

Under its former chancellor, Gerhard Schröder, the German government pursued an extreme pro-China policy. In April and May 2004, I gave four lectures, in Cologne, Berlin, and Hamburg, during a short visit to Germany. After hearing one of my lectures, some Chinese told me that a lecture as critical of the Chinese government as mine would not have been tolerated by German society six months earlier. At that time, the Schröder government was very “pro-China,” and some well-known sinologists had come right out in a television program and publicly issued a warning to the Ger-

man government and people: if you want to do business with China you better not criticize China’s political system and corruption, or its human rights situation.

Angela Merkel, who succeeded Schröder, modified the German government’s China policy, committing to “Value Diplomacy” and a “New Asia Strategy.” On a visit to China in 2007, she expressed concern about China’s human rights situation and raised criticism. Although this won her praise from the German public and from international human rights organizations, she was unable to get a single purchase order from China during her visit. And China responded to Merkel’s meeting with the Dalai Lama in September of that year by cancelling the breakfast meeting of the foreign ministers of the two countries that was to take place when both attended the UN General Assembly meeting, as well as the scheduled December visit to China by the German finance minister, and freezing the regularly scheduled annual trade talks and strategic dialogue on human rights issues between the deputy foreign ministers of the two countries. Preparations for “China and Germany—Moving Ahead Together” [a series of events in various Chinese cities aimed at introducing Germany to the Chinese people], scheduled to launch in 2007 and to last for a three-year period, were also brought to a halt.<sup>9</sup>

The method of bestowing favors on friends has been to place large purchase orders with governments of wealthy nations and grant economic aid to the governments of poor ones.

The ability of Chancellor Merkel to act in this way did not rest entirely on her own predilection for values and her having lived in East Germany; it was also due to the fact that Germany began to reconsider its China policy after she came to office. This reconsideration was made possible by the disclosures by some small- and mid-sized German enterprises that their investments in China had failed, the withdrawal of the Siemens conglomerate from China, and news of bribery scandals in China, all of which happened at this time.

France has a reputation as being the “motherland of human rights,” but has long been guided by economic interests, having abandoned its concern for and critique of the human rights situation in China.

The Chirac government [May 1995–May 2007] pursued a China policy that was “heavy on trade, light on human rights,” and was thus regularly able to solicit large Chinese purchase orders for Airbus and other big enterprises. Overjoyed, in April of 2007, the French government went so far as to bestow France’s highest honor, the Legion d’Honneur, on Long Xinmin (龙新民), director of China’s General Administration of Press and Publication (GAPP), the same Long Xinmin whom the government-controlled media in China have called a “hardliner.” The French government’s action was tantamount to conferring political legitimacy upon the Chinese government’s control of the media. This not only enraged Chinese intellectuals who have suffered bitterly from the government’s control of public opinion, but was also criticized by some French media.<sup>10</sup> But the French government’s move brought substantial gains to the business community. In order to punish Germany, the Chinese government adopted a “carrot and stick” policy toward France and Germany: while Merkel got the cold shoulder, French president Nicolas Sarkozy was in China basking in the “warm winter sun,” garnering the largest purchase order in the history of civilian use of nuclear power in the world (ten billion euros; \$14.9 billion) and selling 160 Airbus to boot.<sup>11</sup>

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But good times don’t last and the honeymoon between the Chinese government and the Sarkozy government quickly came to an end. In March 2008, as the Olympic torch relay was passing through Paris, people from all walks of life in France mounted a huge protest, and

Sarkozy subsequently decided to meet with the Dalai Lama in December. Given the situation, the Chinese authorities finally decided to punish France, whereupon a “hate France and boycott French goods campaign” swept through China.

Some people pointed out that those who believe that “it wasn’t worth falling out with China over a Dalai Lama” were precisely those who once said that “a Solzhenitsyn wasn’t worth a confrontation with the Soviet Union.”

The French felt deeply wronged: the Beijing authorities had muffled their displeasure when U.S. President George W. Bush, U.K. Prime Minister Gordon Brown, and German Chancellor Angela Merkel met the Dalai Lama, so why did China find the French leader’s meeting with him so hard to tolerate? Had France become, in Beijing’s eyes, “the West’s weak link”? The French media, while criticizing the Beijing government as rude and unreasonable, also assailed Paris’ handling of the Tibet issue, and noted that during his presidential run, Sarkozy had criticized former president Jacques Chirac’s China policy as “heavy on trade and light on human rights,” yet in the end he himself followed Chirac’s lead, and had not only broken faith with the people at home, but had caused France an enormous loss of reputation on the international stage.

Some people pointed out that those who believe that “it wasn’t worth falling out with China over a Dalai Lama” were precisely those who once said that “a Solzhenitsyn wasn’t worth a confrontation with the Soviet Union.” France should have stopped kissing up to China long ago.<sup>12</sup>

The Chinese government’s revenge didn’t stop there. During Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao’s visit to Europe in February and March of 2009, he made a point of not visiting France, but placed huge purchase orders in Germany worth in excess of \$10 billion. Germany’s minister of economics at the time, Karl-Theodor zu Guttenberg,

called it “a great moment” in German-Chinese relations. Moreover, the news was reported by the always strongly pro-China Chinese-language section of the Deutsche Welle, the German international broadcaster, under the headline “Berlin welcomes Chinese purchasing delegation, new friends see the glow of faith.”<sup>13</sup>

European China policy vacillates over choice between economic interests and human rights issues. On the 60th anniversary of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, French Foreign Minister Bernard Koucher had no choice but to admit that “there exists a permanent contradiction between human rights and a nation’s—including France’s—foreign policy.”<sup>14</sup> China not only makes use of “purchase order diplomacy” to manipulate and modify such unprincipled European foreign policy that is subordinate to economic interests, but also derides the “hypocrisy of human rights diplomacy.” After many countries in Europe and the Americas experienced the financial crisis in 2008 and their economies contracted, China saw “purchase order diplomacy” as the way to rescue the European economy, believing that it should turn the “purchase order diplomacy” into a kind of active, offensive tool of economic diplomacy to win over more allies. Similar purchase order diplomatic strategies could be deployed with other nations and regions, such as Brazil, Australia, the Middle East, Russia, Central Asia, etc.<sup>15</sup>

### 3. The increasingly significant “China factor” in American politics

Compared to European nations, the U.S. choice between economic interests and human rights is neither as wavering as that of France and Germany, nor as clear as that of Britain, which has placed economic interests above all else from the start. If we say that one huge purchase order can change the EU’s approach to China, then the attitude of U.S. political circles toward China is, comparatively speaking, complex and long-standing, and a large volume of purchase orders cannot fundamentally change it. For example, on September 8, 2009, during Wu Bangguo’s (吴邦国) visit to the U.S., China presented the U.S. with a \$12.4 billion trade agreement.<sup>16</sup> Two days later, the U.S. slapped tariffs on Chinese steel pipes and tires.<sup>17</sup> This outcome plunged

the patriotic angry youth in China into deep gloom, and an essay titled “Ten billion U.S. dollars worth of purchase orders buy U.S. sanctions; purchase order diplomacy is truly a disgrace for our people,” spread like wildfire over Chinese websites.<sup>18</sup>

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Compared to the EU, the channels by which China influences U.S.-China policy are much more complex. Up until the 2009 China visit of the Obama government’s Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, who made it clear that the U.S. would not allow human rights issues to affect economic relations between the two nations, the U.S. had maintained its criticism of and concern for the human rights situation in China. As for China seeking to influence U.S. policy decisions through high-level U.S. officials and business people, the U.S. has kept up its vigilance on this point. In late April 2009, the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission held a hearing targeting mainly China’s use of foreign dignitaries and the media to advance its propaganda strategies.<sup>19</sup> But all precaution to the contrary, what is undeniable is that the “China factor” has already become a major element of U.S. politics at this juncture. U.S. political circles and their think-tanks have divided into factions—the so-called Blue Team and Red Team—due to their differing stances on China.

To draw a broad distinction, the Blue Team holds that China’s actions in international affairs have been a serious threat to American interests, and its main points are China’s ideological and human rights problems; and the Red Team follows its own wishful thinking in its firm belief that China’s abrupt rise will be a stabilizing force in East Asia and the world, and its main point is the enormous economic stake China has in a stable world.

Following the shift in the center of gravity in Sino-U.S. economic and trade relations, and the emergence of a new generation of U.S. politicians, the members of the Red Team and the Blue Team are no longer divided along party lines, but rather by the interests of their electoral districts. In recent years, the most important “discovery” by Chinese authorities was that those members of Congress whose attitudes were hardening because of damage to the interests of their electoral districts were not, after all, the old-school “anti-China faction” members who had previously hated Chinese Communist ideology—and that therefore all sorts of “appropriate” tactics could be employed to soften their positions, such as strengthening economic cooperation with companies in their electoral districts, for instance.<sup>20</sup>

In fact, in China, a country which practices media and thought control, it is simply impossible for someone who has never lived in a totalitarian state to recognize the truth based on a ten-day junket.

The following are the chief ways China influences the U.S. by towing the profit line:

**1. Launch lobbying efforts through various channels.**<sup>21</sup> During the Mao Zedong era, Chinese authorities understood U.S. politics according to the political logic of totalitarian states and were eager to carry out diplomacy at the level of heads-of-state. They thought the U.S. was also a “one man show” and the top leader could have the final say. In this respect, Deng Xiaoping slavishly followed the precedent. Not until the turn of this century did the Chinese government begin to realize that U.S. politics were not entirely dominated by the “leadership core” at the White House, but that the 535 members of Congress on Capitol Hill could, whenever they wished, “create trouble,” big or small, for the White House and for all manner of foreign governments, corporations, and community organizations. Thus, lobbying Congress is a method essential to realizing China’s national interest. At present there are some two dozen public relations companies and law firms

advising China. Two law firms—Patton Boggs and Jones Day—have been hired directly by the Chinese embassy in the U.S. Jones Day’s main job is to brief China on the issues of Taiwan, Tibet, religious freedom, trade, and exchange rates, and to act as liaison with the U.S. Congress and the executive branch.<sup>22</sup>

**2. Invite members of Congress on cursory exchange junkets to China.** Beginning in 2004, China’s National People’s Congress and the U.S. Senate established a formal exchange mechanism. According to a memorandum signed by both parties, they agreed to exchange visits once every two years and establish a fixed meeting mechanism between them, whereby each country sends 12 senior members annually to take part in meetings to take place alternating in Washington and Beijing. At present, three China-related “China Congressional groups” have already been established within the U.S. Congress, of which the bipartisan “U.S.-China Working Group” is the most conspicuous. The group was founded in June 2005, and by the following year it had nearly 40 members. Co-chairs Rick Larsen and Mark S. Kirk have said on many occasions that “we should cross the river hand in hand with the Chinese people.” Larsen’s other famous line is: “The best way for Congress members to understand China is to go to China.”<sup>23</sup> In fact, in China, a country which practices media and thought control, it is simply impossible for someone who has never lived in a totalitarian state to recognize the truth based on a ten-day junket. Moreover, the Communist Party of China has accumulated several decades of experience with the “culture of inspection” and is very good at presenting its best face to foreigners and high-ranking leaders. From the July 1944 visit to Yan’an by the “U.S. Army Observer Group” to the succession of U.S. politicians who visited China following Nixon’s visit, the impression of China is often a good one. For James R. Lilley, former U.S. ambassador to China, the biggest headache in his life was discussing China issues with these “China hands” who had been to China a few times or made a brief stop there.

**3. Lobby U.S. political circles through U.S. multinational corporations with investments in China.** The broad interests of multinational corporations investing in China make them an important link



in Sino-U.S. political and economic relations. Over the years, in order to achieve and safeguard the profits from their investment in China, multinational corporations have engaged in a lot of lobbying of Congress. They have professional lobbyists in Washington, and have formed alliances.

China's behavior in Africa is "new colonialism," or "economic imperialism," aimed at plundering African energy resources while disregarding Africa's environment and ecology.

Prior to China's accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO), they were keen to appeal to the U.S. government to extend China's Most Favored Nation (MFN) status unconditionally. Faced with China's poor human rights situation and authoritarian politics, their main arguments in lobbying Congress were: "China is moving further along the road to Western-style democracy"; "economic development will spur political reform in China"; "the spread of the Internet will bring freedom of the press to China," and so on. The Chinese government greatly benefited from a number of these lobbying activities. For example, in 2000, prior to the vote on China's MFN status, Boeing and hundreds of other U.S. multinational corporations banded together to launch a massive lobbying operation in Congress. Participants included the companies' experts in government relations, lobbying mechanisms of trade federations, as well as the lobbying firms they jointly hired. Over a period of about a year, they organized a large number of lectures and discussions to impress on Congress the idea that opening up trade with China would give American companies enormous business opportunities, and their efforts were ultimately successful. This collective lobbying cost a total of \$112 million. Prior to this, the record for U.S. business community's collective lobbying effort was for the enactment of the North American Free Trade Agreement, which cost less than \$30 million.<sup>24</sup>

In 2006, the United States issued a proposed rule, *Revi-*

*sions and Clarification of Export and Reexport Controls for the People's Republic of China (PRC); New Authorization Validated End-User*,<sup>25</sup> increasing the number of products subject to export restrictions by 47 items, but in the end, what prompted the U.S. to reduce restrictions was not the protest by the Chinese government, but the lobbying by U.S. multinational corporations Boeing, United Technologies, and others.<sup>26</sup>

**4. China's Africa strategy: mutual tolerant alliances with tyrants who oppose human rights.** As of today, of the 53 sovereign nations in Africa, 49 have established diplomatic relations with China (the remaining four maintain "diplomatic relations" with Taiwan). In global terms, compared to other areas, China's penetration and influence in Africa has been its most successful.

China's current Africa strategy commenced in 1995, when China completely abandoned the "anti-colonial, anti-hegemony" ideological strategy of the Mao era, broadened the scope of its exchanges from single-purpose (ideology-export) to multi-purpose, and, in economic terms, moved from pure economic aid to an emphasis on the mutually beneficial "win-win" approach to resource development.<sup>27</sup> Especially when it comes to their joint resistance to criticism from the international community of the human rights situation in China and Africa, China and some African dictatorships have formed alliances of interests.

There are two distinct characteristics of Sino-African relations during this period: 1) Summit Diplomacy became the basis for bilateral relations; for example, in 2007 Hu Jintao led a delegation of 130 to Namibia, boosting economic cooperation between the two countries; 2) China's investment in and development of strategic resources constitute the essential relationship of Sino-African cooperation. China is now Africa's second-largest trading partner. However, this strategy constitutes an attack on the existing international order, and the strength of China's political influence is clearly growing by the day. In particular, China's protection of nations that violate human rights and its disregard for issues of governance and transparency in African nations have become topics of concern in the international community. Such criticism centers on the following three aspects.

- a. China's behavior in Africa is "new colonialism," or "economic imperialism," aimed at plundering African energy resources while disregarding Africa's environment and ecology.<sup>28</sup> China imports mainly energy and raw materials and the damage of this sort of extractive industry to the environment is relatively large, leading to criticism and protests from a number of African governments and non-governmental organizations. China's economic developments in Africa are mainly in oil exploration, timber extraction, and dam construction. African scholars and NGOs are very critical of China's oil exploration and dam construction. Western companies are subject to supervision from civil society and do not dare to engage in resource extraction in Africa that goes against human rights and ethics. For example, Austrian and Canadian companies, under pressure of public opinion, abandoned their oil exploration rights in Sudan. But Chinese, Malaysian, and Indian oil companies, due to the lack of intervention by civil society, bought up these rights. PetroChina requisitioned a large land area, destroying the local traditional livelihood, causing displacement of the northern Upper Nile residents and showing disregard for their southern counterparts.<sup>29</sup> Intellectuals in Sudan and Mozambique have strong views on China's dam construction in Africa; the director of the London and Khartoum-based Sudanese Piankhi Research Group, Ali Askouri, wrote an article critical of China's forced relocation of the population from the oil-producing region and also referred to the fact that China's participation in the Merowe Dam construction forced three ethnic groups to relocate, affecting the lives of many.<sup>30</sup>
- b. China's economic development projects in Africa have not in fact brought many employment opportunities for Africans. Some Chinese companies, taking into account cultural differences, the language barriers, and costs, have opted for bringing laborers from China, which was undoubtedly a blow to the African labor market. In addition, the fact that these Chinese companies have frequently brought work models from China (long

hours, excessively low wages, and poor working conditions) over to Africa, has created an adverse effect. Moeletsi Mbeki, deputy chairman of the South African Institute for International Affairs, feels that for South Africa, China's economic development is both an attractive opportunity and a frightening threat.<sup>31</sup>

- c. China disregards human rights and supports dictatorships.

...[T]he "soft power" China is peddling to the world is vastly different from the soft power (cultural values) recognized by the international community. China's "soft power" in European countries takes the form of purchase order diplomacy; in Africa, natural resource diplomacy, along with conditional economic aid. Moreover, the impact of its genuine soft power—its cultural values—is extremely limited and mostly negative.

There are three reasons why the harm created by China's method of providing aid to Africa has come in for criticism: 1) China's non-interference in internal affairs and failure to attach any conditions to its aid break the Western countries' model of aid with political conditions attached, and allow some African countries to exercise autocratic power with impunity. Richard Dowden, director of the British Royal African Society, points out, "The Chinese government likes to deal with undemocratic governments."<sup>32</sup> China's support for Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe has also been criticized by the international community. The result of the economic cooperation between China and Sudan is largely the great amount of oil-drilling in Sudan. And according to the latest report of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the main cause of the Darfur crisis is environmental degradation. The resistance of Sudan and other countries to the international community's criticism of the human rights situation in the two countries is

even more the result of the alliances of interests.<sup>33</sup> 2) Figures on China's aid to Africa are not transparent. At the present stage, the Chinese Ministry of Commerce is responsible for China's aid to Africa, but every province and city, and every ministry and committee, has its own projects. When high-ranking leaders visit, they are provided with loose estimates, and the multi-pronged aid method makes it difficult to determine the total amount of aid. 3) China's aid is in the form of national loans to help African countries in economic construction. But due to the general lack of management capacity in African countries, not only is it difficult for China's various loans to Africa to help the normal development of the continent, the loans in fact increase the recipient countries' heavy debt burden and have a negative impact on their political development.<sup>34</sup>

China's aid to Namibia and the related procurement scandal are a vivid illustration of the enormous corruption risks encountered when China links its overseas aid with corporate interests. China conditioned its low-interest loan to this small African country by its purchase of \$55.3 million worth of Chinese container scanners, to "help fight smuggling." The supplier of these scanners was the Tongfang Weishi Technology Stock Company (同方威视技术股份有限公司), which was headed by the son of the CPC General Secretary and China's President Hu Jintao.<sup>3</sup> One could say that the Tongfang Weishi Company corruption case in Namibia caused serious damage to the "China model" in the eyes of the African people.

In sum, the "soft power" China is peddling to the world is vastly different from the soft power (cultural values) recognized by the international community. China's "soft power" in European countries takes the form of purchase order diplomacy; in Africa, natural resource diplomacy, along with conditional economic aid. Moreover, the impact of its genuine soft power—its cultural values—is extremely limited and mostly negative. In recent years, the issue of the quality of products "made in China" has caused the international community to be even more convinced that China is a society that has lost its moral compass.<sup>36</sup> For many China-based "China experts," "Chinese characteristics" in fact means "corruption." Thus, "soft power" diplomacy with "Chinese characteristics" frequently leads to the breaking of the

rules of the game and corruption. Extended to international investment, trade, and political relations, the "Chinese characteristics" leave a profound mark—that of rampant corruption. In recent years there have been endless corruption scandals involving multinational corporations investing in China: Lucent, Dell, IBM, Hitachi, and Siemens have all engaged in bribery of high Chinese officials.<sup>37</sup> And even in so pure a body as the Nobel Prize Committee a scandal has broken out involving suspected bribery of several committee members by the Chinese government.<sup>38</sup> One can say that the "interest"-led soft power that China exercises in the international community will result in the "spiritual pollution" of the world. If not taken seriously, the world will suffer the consequences of the corrupting power of this "spiritual pollution." ♦

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# EXPANSION OF SOFT POWER THROUGH LANGUAGE, CULTURE, AND EXCHANGES

## CONFUCIUS INSTITUTE

Language learning can be a powerful tool for promoting greater understanding between different cultures. China's network of Confucius Institutes were established to support Chinese language learning globally. The first Confucius Institute was established on November 21, 2004 in Seoul, South Korea, and there are now 357 in 97 countries on five continents. The Confucius Institute is an organization that promotes Chinese culture internationally through affiliated branches that are often hosted by universities and colleges. It is governed by the Chinese Language Council,<sup>1</sup> which is composed of 12 Chinese government agencies including the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Commerce, and State Council Information Office. The CLC also provides teaching and curriculum materials which focus on China's history, culture, and language.

The Confucius Institute at Michigan State University has also established a virtual Confucius Institute within the virtual world "Second Life" with the same goals as its brick and mortar counterpart.<sup>2</sup>

The role of the Chinese government in overseeing the governance of the Confucius Institutes raises questions about the kind of understanding of Chinese culture that is being advanced. If Chinese history is

sanitized by the erasure of China's censored past and of current social issues, will these officially supported programs contribute to greater understanding or to a misunderstanding of China? What will be the

implications for the role of the international academic community in supporting the progress of human rights in China and elsewhere in the world?

## GLOBAL CULTURAL EVENTS

In addition to the Confucius Institutes, Chinese authorities are actively promoting film festivals, painting and photography exhibits, cultural festivals, and performances throughout the world. Many of these cultural exchanges are not only prominently supported by the Chinese government, but also include the participation of Chinese ambassadors, representatives from the Chinese Ministry of Culture, China's State Council Information Office, and their foreign official counterparts.

In co-hosting cultural events with the Chinese authorities, is the international community falling into the trap of conflating the "Chinese culture" of China's ancient past with the Chinese culture co-opted by an authoritarian government? What is the impact of this made-for-export version of Chinese culture on human rights and on the diversity and independence of domestic Chinese voices?

## CONFUCIUS INSTITUTES AROUND THE WORLD

|                      |            |
|----------------------|------------|
| <b>Africa</b>        | <b>23</b>  |
| <b>Asia</b>          | <b>94</b>  |
| <b>Europe</b>        | <b>125</b> |
| <b>North America</b> | <b>69</b>  |
| <b>Pacific</b>       | <b>11</b>  |
| <b>South America</b> | <b>35</b>  |

## NOTES

1. The Office of Chinese Language Council International (also known as Hanban) can be found online at <http://www.hanban.org>.
2. Michigan State University Confucius Institute, "Second Life Chinese School Introduction," <http://confucius.msu.edu/secondlife/default.html>.

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## THE WORLD CELEBRATES CHINESE CULTURE 2009: A SELECT LIST

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### AUSTRALIA

National Day Dinner (Adelaide) September 25, 2009  
Jungkin Theater Troup (Sydney) September 28, 2009

### AUSTRIA

Chinese Cultural Festival (Vienna) October 23–25, 2009

### BANGLADESH

Cultural show of China's Inner Mongolia Artist Troupe  
(Dhaka) September 28, 2009  
Chinese Photo Exhibition and Film Week (Dhaka)  
September 26–October 3, 2009

### BARBADOS

Guangdong Art Group (St. Michael) October 14, 2009

### BELGIUM

Europalia features special guest China (Brussels)  
October 2009–February 2010

### CANADA

Asian Cultural Night (Toronto) May 4, 2009  
Montreal International Dragon Boat Race Festival  
(Montreal) July 25–26, 2009  
A Kaleidoscope of China: Reflections of the Modern  
Chinese Lifestyle (Calgary) October 1–31, 2009  
Mid-Autumn Festival (Vancouver) October 2, 2009  
Chinese Cultural Festival (Vancouver) October 2–4, 2009  
Chinese Cultural Week (Ontario) October 13–17, 2009  
East Asian Festival (Halifax) November 7, 2009

### COLOMBIA

Semana de China (Bogota) February 23–27, 2009

### FRANCE

Chinese Film Festival (Paris)  
September 22–October 6, 2009  
Exposition of the Art of the Seal, Li Lanqing (Paris)  
October 10–November 14, 2009  
Fourth Edition of the Festival of Chinese Traditional  
Opera (Paris) November 16–22, 2009

### GERMANY

Frankfurt Book Fair (Frankfurt) October 14–18, 2009

### ISRAEL

Experience China in Israel (Tel Aviv) October 2009

### ITALY

Snow-covered Plateau Paintings Exhibition of China  
(Rome / Milan) October 2009

### NEPAL

Women of China's Tibet (Kathmandu)  
September 10–17, 2009  
China Festival 2009 (Kathmandu)  
September 29–October 5, 2009

### NEW ZEALAND

Madam Li Yajun Water Color Painting Exhibition  
(Auckland) October 25–30, 2009

### NORTH KOREA

Chinese Oil Paintings (Pyongyang)  
September 29–October 5, 2009

### RUSSIA

Chinese Film Week (Moscow) October 9, 2009

### SOUTH AFRICA

Chinese Film Festival (Durban)  
August 18–September 11, 2009  
50 Years of Democratic Reform in Tibet Photo Exhibi-  
tion (Durban) March 25, 2009

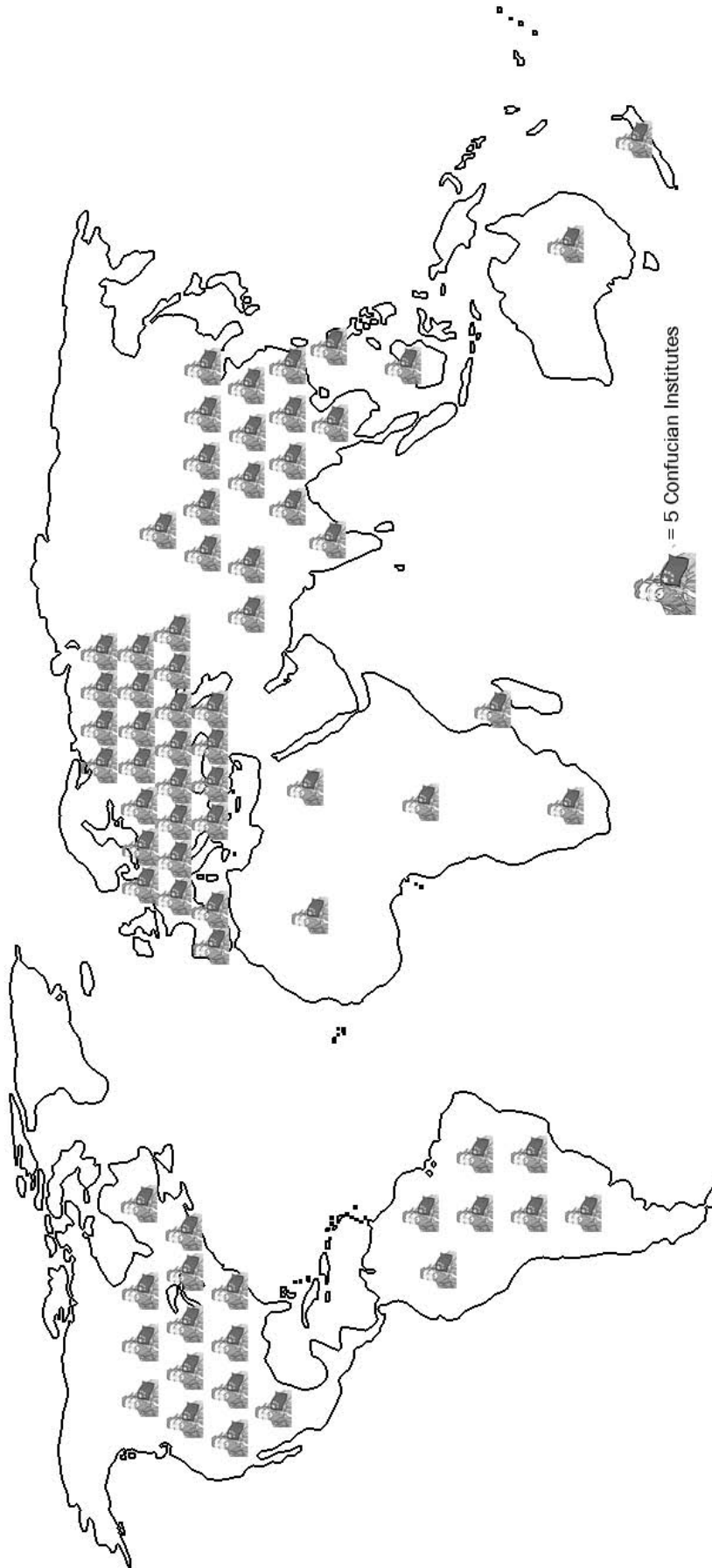
### UNITED KINGDOM

China Classic Film Festival (Wales) October 2009

### UNITED STATES

Looking East: Young Artists From China: Prints and  
Paintings (Missouri) October 2009–January 2010  
Melody of China (Pennsylvania) October 30, 2009  
Highlights of Classical Chinese Theater (Minnesota)  
November 1, 2009  
Ancient Paths, Modern Voices: A Festival Celebrating  
Chinese Culture (New York / California)  
October 21–November 10, 2009

## CONFUCIUS INSTITUTES IN THE WORLD • 孔子学院世界分布图



Map by HRIC. Source for number of Confucius Institutes: [http://college.chinese.cn/en/node\\_1979.htm](http://college.chinese.cn/en/node_1979.htm) 来源: [http://college.chinese.cn/en/node\\_1979.htm](http://college.chinese.cn/en/node_1979.htm)