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The Wobbling Pivot

IT IS UNUSUAL for the contents of a semi-confidential email to become universally known on the Internet. But in March of 2009, after the nomination of Charles W. Freeman Jr. as chair of the American government's National Intelligence Council, his email to the ChinaSec listserv group of May 26, 2006 drew attention for this comment about the Tiananmen incidents of 1989: "I find the dominant view in China about this very plausible, i.e. that the truly unforgivable mistake of the Chinese authorities was the failure to intervene on a timely basis to nip the demonstrations in the bud, rather than – as would have been both wise and efficacious – to intervene with force when all other measures had failed to restore domestic tranquility to Beijing and other major urban centers in China. In this optic, the Politburo's response to the mob scene at 'Tian'anmen' stands as a monument to overly cautious behavior on the part of the leadership, not as an example of rash action."

Freeman's suggestion that the contrast is to tactics, and not to politics, leaves the comment dangling above the ground, out of contact with historical patterns of China's recent centuries. The hearts of China's political capitals have been occupied by state opponents and dissidents repeatedly over the centuries. State reaction is rarely swift, though it is often bloody. These events are products of a structural relationship between government and society that was strongly in evidence from at least 1644 to 1958, and since 1976 has been reestablishing itself to a modest degree. It is a system with a peculiar way of producing social and economic order, but one that in very extreme circumstances is vulnerable to catastrophic breakdown. Considered outside its historical context, it sometimes leads observers too quickly to words like "instability," "disorder," "chaos."

When I was following the thread that now runs through this book, my mind kept returning to scenes from contemporary China. I was in China for the first time in 1977. On an otherwise quiet afternoon in Luoyang, where the streets did not look particularly crowded, a loud discussion broke out between two men over a bicycle (in those days, bicycles were all *Flying Pigeon*, identical to any but the eye of love). A small knot of people quickly wound itself around the disputatious men, listening carefully, advising moderation and not, coincidentally, preventing the bicycle from going anywhere. The knot grew to a crowd large enough to block the narrow street.

A few men at the front of the throng had joined in the conversation, questioning the men in turn, and repeatedly advising calm and honesty. After some minutes the inevitable representative of local public security arrived. She was a small woman, not plump but solidly built, with the regulation even hair length and middle part, and a bright red arm band proclaiming her official status. The crowd shifted only enough to allow her to make her way to the front, a few people darting glances of blame at the bicycle men for having brought the authorities onto the scene. The public security woman asked a few questions of the men and appeared, for a moment, to be attempting to break up the congregation and send the men on their way. But she was a late arrival on the scene. The two men who had begun negotiations between the adversaries continued in their role, with polite acknowledgment of the official's presence. Occasionally Public Security would inject her questions or views, but at roughly the same rate and pitch as others at the center of the circle. After ten minutes, the contenders nodded agreement to each other, one moved off with the bicycle, and the crowd, including the woman distinguished by her bold red armband, moved on to their business.

I had the strong feeling that I had seen something that was not the least unusual. Everybody took the dispute, the resolution and the public participation in stride. The crowd was not merely bystanders, camp followers or observers for sport. The quickness with which they organized themselves for conflict containment and resolution, the precision with which certain individuals assumed and fulfilled their roles, suggested to me something basic about the social methods of the Luoyang inhabitants who had entered the street expecting to do their shopping or their chores, but instead became embroiled in the forensics, the philosophy and the administration of a dispute between two men over a bicycle. I did not know at the time, but am convinced now, that in 1977 such a social phenomenon in Luoyang evinced ancient practices that a decade before had been under extreme assault, and wounded seriously though not fatally.

Another side of this phenomenon seems to be evident in two anecdotes recently related by the journalist Tim Johnson in 2008. In the first, Johnson discovers that it is impossible to get taxi drivers in Changchun to actually use the meters and issue receipts from them. Since the law requires that the meters be used and the receipts issued, Johnson approached a "security guard" (the contemporary equivalent of the security maiden I spoke of in Luoyang in 1977) to complain. The guard merely shrugged. Johnson commented, "At first, I found this a little irksome. But on reflection, I sort of admired the taxi drivers. The local authorities apparently had imposed an impractical limit on fares, and the cabbies rebelled in the only way they could. The security guard understood and sympathized." In a second vignette, Johnson ends up on a bus after the flight he expected to take was cancelled. The airline had chartered the bus at no expense to the passengers, and had obviously provided the driver with sufficient cash to take the high-speed, well-maintained toll roads to the destination. The driver, however, took a meandering, pothole-riddled route, keeping the toll fees for himself. Passengers repeatedly pointed out to him the highway ramps he was passing, but otherwise took no issue or action. Johnson experienced some outrage at this, too, but then reconsidered after taking a comparative view: "It was a minor inconvenience. I thought back to times in South America, where bus drivers would be in cahoots with armed bandits, pulling buses over at remote spots where everyone would be robbed."

In Johnson's view, the passivity of the Chinese passengers was related to his philosophy of what is worth getting outraged about. But I see it in the same theme of social compact I witnessed in Luoyang. In the case of the Changchun taxi drivers, local officials and local riders permit the flaunting of law – and legally stipulated fares – in exchange for having reasonably numerous and reasonably efficient taxis accessible. There is also the assumption that taxis are not ridden in by the majority of people, but are usually hired by businessmen and foreigners who can arrange to be compensated for their inflated fares by filling in the blank receipts with the sum of their choosing. Losses will be passed on to a rich (possibly foreign) corporation. In the case of the bus driver, the riders could take the view that it was really the airline and not themselves that was being dunned to pay a little extra to a hard-working bus driver. If there was injustice, it was hard to define and seconded to a faceless, absent entity. Of course, being captives on the bus in question was not a trivial matter. Though it was not part of the scenes above in Luoyang or in Changchun, in Chinese history there is plenty of evidence of the complex role of coercion and terror in the workings of these social compacts.

Because of the uncertain balance between local and central power, coercion can go either way. There is nothing new about well-connected individuals using their status as leverage against local law enforcement, and in China there continue to be vivid examples of it. Cases of élites flaunting their privileges can be woven into an emerging popular discourse of heroic resistance to authority. In April of 2008, CCP party cadre Zhang Longping, aged 30, attached to the Hubei Automotive Institute, was out driving with some friends. Her car became involved in a minor collision with a police cruiser, which happened to be driven by the commander of the local constabulary. Both drivers jumped from their cars and began to shout. The police commander struck Zhang, and threw the keys to her car into a ditch. Zhang's friends spilled from her car and surrounded or disabled the police car so that it could not leave the scene. Zhang opened her cell phone and summoned twelve men to come help. When they arrived, they beat the police commander to death. Though Zhang was immediately arrested, she argued that the police commander had been drunk, and that his own behavior had precipitated his death.

In the days after her arrest, Zhang was publicly lauded by her friends and colleagues, who described her as sweet-natured, generous and loyal. Since the Hubei Automotive Institute has the status of a university, she was described in newspaper accounts as the “Female University Cadre Who is Charged with Beating a Policeman to Death.” Photographs of her smiling with an earlier certificate for meritorious service became ubiquitous. In a way, she won her case: In a country where smugglers and con men are routinely sentenced to death (and it is frequently carried out), Zhang Longping was sentenced to ten years in prison for manslaughter and being a public menace. She became an Internet celebrity, inciting online shouting matches in which a considerable number of supporters lauded her as a valiant defender of people's rights. However meritorious Zhang may have been, her university and political connections gave her resources to call upon when in trouble, and may even have given her the sense of entitlement necessary to get into a slap-down with a police commander. Her ability to call upon twelve stalwarts who arrived to beat the officer to death is also intriguing. Zhang Longping, it would seem, is among the privileged in China, who have a community and a social compact (in addition to the tailored economic and political spaces they are known to inhabit) all their own.

News from China, much of it resembling news actually reported in China, suggests that the local initiative once essential to administrative cohesion under the empires continues to express itself, and is possibly increasing after the economic and political reforms of the late twentieth century. If individuals and crowds of individuals in China are slow to react to what may appear to be trivial violations of standards by private individuals, they are quick to respond to severe injustices at the hands of authority figures. A very typical case occurred in March of 2008, in Taishan, Guangdong, when a policeman stopped a moped rider for an equipment citation. The rider jumped into the river to escape impending arrest, but then thought better of his act and asked to come ashore. The policeman refused to allow him onto land, and also prevented bystanders from aiding the fugitive. In sight of a gathering crowd, the rider drowned in the river. Immediately, the onlookers set upon the officer. When police reinforcements in full riot gear arrived, they were stoned by the gathering, which now numbered somewhere between 8,000 and 10,000 people. One policeman, out of about a thousand present, was killed, though the policeman upon whom the crowd had originally set survived.

In the instance of the drowned moped rider, the policeman was judged in violation of the custom of tolerance and humane consideration. He pushed the rules regarding traffic misdemeanors to the point of causing a man's death, and at the same time demonstrated the arrogance of official conduct which most arouses the outrage of the Chinese public. Depending on circumstances, he could have got off with a scolding and mild rough-up from the crowd, or he might have been beaten to death with the consent of the majority. As it happened, the local authorities decided to fight to defend him, escalating the *mêlée* to the point where at least one (policeman) was killed and dozens were injured. The city came under the equivalent of martial law, and photographs document that the crowd for days ignored orders to disperse. We may surmise that traffic cops in Taishan are now hesitant to pester drivers over petty infractions.

Such incidents of public outrage at official presumption are microcosms of the upheavals that have shaken many rural communities, mostly in southern China, in the past decade as a result of public fury at official corruption. Dazhou, Sichuan, has for years been showing the stress of popular anger against its mining industries, prostitution rings, drug problems and a poorly managed outbreak of avian flu. County police were summoned on December 30, 2006, to the bar of a hotel known for its connections both to officials and to organized crime. They found the body of a 16-year-old waitress slumped over in a booth. Hotel employees told them that earlier in the evening they had seen three men known to be mine managers and cronies of the hotel owner indicate that they wished the young waitress to keep them company. The girl and the men left together, and the girl returned on her own some hours later; and still later, bar employees found her dead. The police promised a thorough investigation. Hotel employees, a few of whom had seen the body, spread reports that it showed signs of beating, forced injections of drugs and repeated brutal rape. By the middle of January, 2007, the police had made no arrests and had taken no statements. The family of the dead waitress and a few hundred other people gathered in front of the hotel where she had died, loudly demanding that the investigation progress. The Dazhou party secretary quickly made public statements to assuage the community, promising a speedy and impartial resolution, while the hotel offered the family money – reports ranged from 500,000 to 800,000 RMB (approximately US \$90,000 to \$140,000) – to

not insist upon further inquiry. The family rejected the offers in favor of investigation and indictment. Days later a crowd burst into the hotel and set it afire. The riot eventually swelled to 10,000 participants, against which the Dazhou county security department deployed 5,000 armed police. By the end of the month police claimed the waitress had died of acute pancreatitis, but they arrested the hotel bartender for raping her after she returned from her tryst with the three mine managers. A policeman was demoted for having tampered with evidence. And a 24-year-old Dazhou mall worker had been sentenced to prison for spreading Internet reports about the alleged murder.

Environmental deterioration in rural China sparks public demonstrations and occasionally riots with increasing frequency. Weng'an, Guizhou, has been unsettled for years by anger over unsafe mines and polluted water. In June of 2008 the body of a 15-year-old girl was recovered from a river in Weng'an. Two sons of local officials and an additional friend were taken into custody, but soon released, and the police announced that the girl's death was due to suicide. Rumors and suspicion spread through the community quickly, claiming that the official's sons had raped and murdered the girl at the instigation of the jealous daughter of another official. The girl's parents stood vigil by the body to prevent the police from hastily cremating it. The girl's uncle, a well-known school teacher, went to the police station to ask for news of the investigation. He died there, apparently as a result of beating by police officers. News of the second death spread, and within a few days 30,000 people had surrounded the station. The building was torched and police cars were overturned. The county government sent in 2,000 police in riot gear; the people engaged in hand-to-hand combat with them. National and international reports eventually put the toll at 150 injuries (100 of them police), a gutted police station, and 20 charred police cars. Authorities restored order and the girl's funeral was held, but locals still made bold to adorn her coffin with a placard protesting that "killing people is not a crime." As the authorities announced that they would reopen an investigation into both the deaths and the riots, residents told journalists that riot leaders and peaceful protesters alike were being beaten and killed by local mobsters, either at the order of or with the permission of the police.

Incidents of popular unrest in China today, many linked to land rights, pollution, unsafe working conditions and the endless demands of local officials for bribes and sexual privileges, are too numerous to narrate or even quantify with precision. The most widely noted incidents involve heavy-handed local police responses that serve to escalate the conflicts, rather than resolving them, because the public finds organizational resources to continue resistance. Among the most famous was the incident at Dongzhou, Guangdong, in December of 2005, when farmers who felt themselves cheated in a land seizure by a state utility held a public demonstration. Police opened fire, killing at least five people at the scene. The incident drew attention when the police commander was denounced by officials and disciplined for using unnecessary violence. But many localities in Guangdong remain afflicted with frequent protests and outbreaks of violence. In nearly all cases, the government is quick to respond with statements intended to appease the public, and in a small number of incidents it actually goes the whole way with the convictions of low-level officials. The counter-productivity of strong police response has not changed the government strategy very much. An editorial in the official government Xinhua news service a year after the

Dongzhou incident proclaimed, “The huge number and broad scope of mass incidents has become the most outstanding problem that seriously impacts social stability ... We should stick to the principle of deploying police, using weapons and resorting to forceful measures prudently.”

Despite Xinhua’s urging that local authorities respond with a clenched fist, there is strong evidence that local officials and police commanders vary their responses, depending on circumstances. In Hunan province in September of 2008, officials and entrepreneurs cooperated in a plan to run a private, unregulated stock market in order to raise capital for local industries. Sellers of the shares promised quick profits, reported somewhere between 70 and 135 percent or more, to local investors – many of whom were underemployed and retired, attracted by the promise of rapid returns in an environment where interest rates were lower than inflation and few opportunities to exploit savings existed. According to reports from the press and from local Internet-based informants, between 2004 and 2006 the scheme raised over a billion dollars (in USD equivalence) for about fifty companies from about 150,000 local investors. But in June of 2008 the local officials lost their nerve when higher government levels began to learn of the scheme. The result was quick withdrawals by the well-informed, crashing the stocks and wreaking economic devastation on the local small investors. By the end of August it was clear that the losing investors had no hope of compensation, and tens of thousands of people took to the streets, demanding the arrest and prosecution of the entrepreneurs behind the disaster. Approximately 5,000 People’s Liberation Army soldiers based in Hunan were sent to the scene. Injuries were minimal and only a small number of rioters were arrested. Instead the executives of Fuda Property Development Company were taken into custody by provincial authorities. In a similar incident in Gaodong, Sichuan, residents had lived for decades with the daily explosions from a network of manganese mines (their home county produces 20 percent of the world’s manganese). The blasts had deafened residents and undermined the foundations of their homes. In early 2008 they invited a county official to listen to their complaints, and were rewarded with the usual government bromides about tempering the drive for economic development with compassionate concern for the people’s well-being. They took to the streets a few months later when their water supplies were poisoned, their crops ruined and rising incidences of cancer were starting panics. They surrounded and petitioned the company headquarters and officers. The provincial government took an unorthodox but not rare approach in this case, standing on the sidelines like a mildly interested observer, doing nothing as the locals pressured the company into paying token compensation for its assault on the local quality of life.

This is not to suggest that intermittent periods of government timidity in the face of public unrest correlate to the demonstrated boldness of individuals or groups in challenging the government. In all periods, public questioning or denunciation of the government in China is an act of serious courage, and may even be suicidal. This underscores the significance of the relative frequency with which individual Chinese proclaim their opposition to or skepticism of the government, or groups demonstrate on behalf of an individual or a cause. Overall it appears that people who take on the government without benefit of a resilient organizational connection fare worse, by far. In contrast to the cell-phone wielding/university student/party cadre/fashion plate Zhang Longping who was given ten years for having her friends beat a police

commander to death, the Beijingers protesting destruction of their homes during the development frenzy that preceded the Olympics in 2008 were helpless. An estimated total of 1.25 million Beijing tenants from various neighborhoods were evicted on command; if they resisted, they were evicted by force. All were promised full compensation; very few received it. Riots were ruthlessly suppressed, lawsuits connected to tenants' rights were delayed or diverted, and petitions requesting the right to demonstrate during the Olympics against the removals were denied. Against the residents was arrayed the strongest axis of state capitalism in China: the party itself, almost wholly composed of investors in state-protected industries as well as privately-managed corporations that operate under CCP partnership. And arrayed behind them was the cohort of connected, predatory venture capitalists who intended to raze the neighborhoods not only for Olympic architecture but for "culture streets," dubious historical restorations designed to rake in dollars from credulous tourists. The residents themselves had been deprived of their only real resource – the organizational infrastructure of their neighborhoods, some of which had been inhabited by their ancestors for generations. Nevertheless, in a situation in which the state had optimal leverage and the society had none, protests continued. Thousands were fined and jailed. Most famous among them, perhaps, were Wu Dianyuan, 77, and Wang Xiuying, 79, who were convicted by the police, not the courts, of disturbing public order. The women, both of whom walked with canes, were sentenced to a year of "re-education through labor," though the police suggested they might waive the imprisonment if the convicts would go home and be quiet. Instead, Wang and Wu decried both the original injustice and the new injustices of their prison sentences, after which they were carted off to jail. During their imprisonment photographs of the two women sweltering in the mud-walled cell they shared were distributed across the Internet. Other Beijing residents whose petitions for redress had been denied continued to voice complaints to international reporters and to Chinese Internet writers.

More disturbing to state security planners are real or prospective combinations of traditional rages against government misbehavior with explosive tensions in the border and minority areas. Many of the most colorfully reported incidents of public disturbance are in Tibet, where riots provoked by local perceptions of government misconduct – or economic predation encouraged by government policies – have occurred off and on for decades. More relevant to this discussion might be the incidents of March 2008. Newspaper accounts and vivid television footage showed Tibetans attacking Han Chinese in Lhasa. The victims were not government officers but civilians, particularly shopkeepers. As the riots grew and police moved in to restore order, just under 1,400 shops were reported destroyed, along with 120 houses and over 80 cars and trucks. Though Lhasa is not one of the bigger cities in the PRC, casualties were very high for an incident of this sort. The official figures, which were probably lower than the actual numbers, listed 22 deaths (including at least one police officer) and over 600 injuries, of which at least 200 were suffered by the police. The statistics do not appear to include monks and nuns known to have been summarily executed, a normal feature of government crackdowns in Tibet. Trials that were concluded in November of 2008 sentenced another 55 Tibetans to prison terms for their roles in inciting, participating in or abetting the violence. Undoubtedly, there are aspects of civil conflicts in Tibet that are different from the civil conflicts in other parts of China. But the basic structure, in the case of March 2008, is similar. Because of

government policies encouraging Han Chinese to migrate to Tibet from overpopulated and economically constrained parts of China, the Han merchants who operate in Tibet under the protection of the state are regarded as agents of the state – enriching themselves, as officials often do in other parts of China, with the leverage gained through family or, in this case, racial connections, at the expense of the local population. The implied compact of adjusting ambitions in order to preserve a basic comity was perceived to be broken, and as happens in other parts of the PRC when the compact is broken, the locals took matters into their own hands with violence.

The scale and the shape of public disorders in Tibet are being increasingly paralleled in Xinjiang province. In August of 2008 two police officers were killed and two others critically injured in what seemed a bizarre incident outside Kashgar, Xinjiang province. All involved in the incident, both attackers and attacked, were Uighurs (or Türki, as they call themselves). Witnesses claimed that a police troop of eight or ten soldiers, accompanied by the village mayor, were walking in a cornfield when they were attacked by six or seven individuals, wielding knives. Over 500 Han Chinese soldiers were brought in, ostensibly to apprehend the suspected attackers. Local Muslim men and women were closely questioned, but the suspects in the attack could not all be identified, and none could be located. Only weeks before, three Uighur policeman had been knifed to death in another Xinjiang village; a Uighur woman was a suspect, but had also not been apprehended, despite the posting of a 50,000 *yuan* (roughly US \$8000) reward. And there were more incidents during the same month, involving both stabbings and bombings of police stations and police patrols. Though the state language describing such incidents in Xinjiang frequently mentions the word “Muslim,” and often but not always suggests that there is a special issue in these conflicts (implying disrepute of and likelihood of terrorist connections among Xinjiang Muslims), the above incident has a shape that is similar to incidents that occur with great frequency in more central parts of China: The police were attacked by one or more local residents, and the locals supported the attackers (and perhaps the attack itself), in this case by shielding them from apprehension.

These incidents are symptomatic of tensions in Xinjiang. For decades government policy has encouraged migration to the region by Han Chinese from various parts of China, leaving the original Uighur inhabitants as half the provincial population and a mere 30 percent of the population in the provincial capital, Ürümqi. The government has exploited global apprehension of Muslim radicalism to pursue regulations limiting the public expression of Muslim identity. Recent policies have banned the use of Uighur as a school language, insisting that all education except for “foreign language study” (Uighur) be in Chinese. The city of Kashgar, central to the history of Uighur Muslim cultural history, has been subjected to the peculiarly brutal PRC practices of “restoration,” already visited upon Beijing, Xi’an, and other historic treasure spots within China; in the case of Kashgar, the destruction was swift and carried out with virtually no acknowledgment of the protests and the anguish of the local population. In July of 2009, an open conflict of unprecedented proportions exploded in Ürümqi, resulting in at least 200 deaths, and thousands of injuries. The precipitating event was the beating to death of two Uighur factory workers sojourning in Guangdong province, and the apparent indifference of the Guangdong authorities to it. When crowds in Ürümqi protested the deaths and the lack of government action, riots involving thousands broke out. Subsequent investigation revealed that police forces had

retreated or stood paralyzed in the face of the overwhelming numbers of protesters. The next day, Chinese media reported that Han Chinese were targeted by the rioters, and that more than 150 had been killed in one night. After the riots had been quelled by paramilitary police, Han Chinese in the city began to organize themselves to take revenge on the Uighurs. Disorders broke out in other Xinjiang cities, including Kashgar, and crowds of Uighurs continued for weeks to gather to demonstrate in front of the foreign media. The government massively augmented the troops on the scene, but promised to swiftly investigate the deaths in Guangdong and punish the killers. There are many indications, however, that the government response in border areas is leaning much more toward violent repression and much less toward civil concession. As in Tibet, the government seems to have responded to the magnitude of the challenge instead of its underlying character, while outbreaks of disorder in China's interior continue to be responded to with both repression and concession. In Tibet and Xinjiang the government may choose to use an inflexible approach as a possible backdoor solution to its "minority" problems. History suggests this would be a colossal mistake.

The broader historical energies behind public protests in China as well as minority areas are underscored by the fact that, in the aftermath of former Taiwan president Chen Shui-bien's independence-oriented government, the nationalist government of Ma Ying-jeou is having difficulty restraining crowds who gather to shower indignation upon visiting PRC officials. *Newsweek's* online columnist Jonathan Adams described two incidents in the fall of 2008 that illustrate the point. In October, a PRC trade official touring southern Taiwan was surrounded by a crowd, "including, pathetically, an elderly woman who banged on the official's car with her crutch." In early November, PRC negotiator Chen Yunlin was unable to leave his hotel in Taipei for eight hours because it had been surrounded by a mob that scolded the PRC journalists trying to cover the event, and clashed with police who tried to disperse them. The willingness of the Taiwan public to take to the streets to demonstrate against China, or against corruption, or against the increasing authoritarianism of the Ma government is regarded in some quarters as destabilizing, in others as democratizing. Adams thought it was evidence of the fact that in Taiwan, unlike China, there are civil liberties. "For his part, Chen Yunlin was reportedly livid that Taiwanese police couldn't simply clear the hotel area of protesters – a simple enough task in the mainland, but not in freewheeling, democratic Taiwan, where there's such a thing as civil liberties."

There are civil liberties in Taiwan (where martial law was lifted in 1987 and where genuine democracy has evolved since) but there is another way of looking at these incidents. Clearing protesters from a site is not, in fact, a simple task in the PRC. This was demonstrated, not least of all, in 1999, when crowds in Beijing besieged both the Japanese embassy (in April) and the American embassy (in May). The Japanese embassy was subjected to relatively peaceful demonstrations by tens of thousands of Chinese as part of a series of public disorders (including assaults on Japanese in Beijing) relating to a controversies over new textbooks published in Japan that obscured Japanese atrocities committed in China in the 1930s and 1940s. In May, tens of thousands of demonstrators surrounded the US embassy in Beijing after American planes bombed the Chinese embassy in Belgrade, killing three staff outright and sending twenty to hospital. The USA apologized for using what it said was

a faulty map of Belgrade, but otherwise made no public concessions. The crowd threw rocks, burning bottles and other debris at the embassy, destroying its windows and blockading its residents for days. International press compared the rampages of the spring to events 99 years before, when the Boxers had assaulted the foreign embassies, killing diplomats when possible and trapping foreign families in the walled embassy compounds. The American ambassador, James Sasser, survived the 1999 attacks unhurt like the rest of his staff (but soon returned to the USA and broke his arm after tripping on a cat his daughter had brought from China). In an interview with *The New York Times*, Sasser indicated that despite the mysterious ineffectiveness of the Beijing police in quelling the anti-American uprising, he had the strong impression that the PRC government, from the foreign ministry to then-president Jiang Zemin, had been helpless to avoid the prolonged assault on the embassy.

The above anecdotes are selected from hundreds of large incidents happening in recent years, and tens of thousands of smaller ones. In every province of China, workers and farmers are reported to resist or even drive off police teams sent to break up their demonstrations against the wholesale destruction of neighborhoods by developers, or for better wages, the protection of land rights, better housing standards and lower rents. Increasingly, environmental deterioration that ruins water supplies or threatens the health of children is the irritant behind public demonstrations. Even administrative issues can be subject to negotiation by mobilization, as when thousands protested a decision to diminish the status of Daye, Hubei, from a city to a district (and then protested again after police used dogs to break up the crowd) in August of 2005, or taxi drivers rioting from Guangdong to Qinghai to protest the failure to enforce regulations against unlicensed cabs. The Chinese government acknowledges these incidents are on the rise. Premier Wen Jiabao's deputy for financial and economic affairs, Chen Xiwen, made extensive comment on the matter in July of 2005, suggesting that rural incidents were a healthy sign that farmers were improving in democratic awareness without presenting a serious threat to the state. He told *South China Morning Post*, "There are at least 3 million villages [in which live about 800 million farming families] across the country and you can imagine how many problems crop up each day. If there are 30,000 villages having problems, that accounts for only 1 per cent of the total." Nevertheless almost as Chen spoke, Wen Jiabao's government made a public proposal to eliminate all taxes on the farming population by 2008, a program which has been largely realized. Though Chen Xiwen made no reference to it, the history of China is replete with popular action, both rural and urban, intended to limit the power of local officials or correct perceived injustices. It may or may not be "democratic." But it is certainly not novel, nor fundamentally related to claimed attempts by the contemporary government to introduce democratic education or reforms.

Collective expressions of discontent are not limited to the landless, homeless or laborers, agricultural or urban. Police themselves are not always unquestioning enforcers of the government will. Sometimes, as in Hunan province in December 2008, the police are doing the striking, the seizing of their own buildings, blocking a public intersection and clashing with paramilitary forces sent to quell them. The Hunan dispute was occasioned by what the police officers regarded as low wages (a type of incident with very strong resonance of events from Qing history, when the hereditary military forces, the Eight Banners, developed a rich history of riots protesting unpaid

wages). Teachers and bureaucrats are also known to engage in work actions and public demonstrations if wages, benefits or working conditions are not satisfactory and attempts to lodge complaints are ignored. The explosion in condominium-style housing has produced a large class of homeowners, most of whom are sensitive to government and private land grabs that will displace them or diminish the value of their properties. Peaceful protest by these groups is increasing. In February of 2008 homeowners in Shanghai conducted a traffic-blocking “stroll” to protest a planned new maglev line which they feared would degrade the quality and safety of their neighborhood. Demonstrations of this sort are becoming more frequent. The educated middle class of China knows that the current laws permit applications for public protest – though in practice an application to protest during a sensitive time (for instance, before the Olympics) can in itself lead to arrest and imprisonment.

In the twenty-first century, professionals are clearly attempting to normalize the idea of petitioning as an implied protest against government repression of political activists, environmentalists, and leaders for minority rights. Petitioning is protected under traditional values, since all the empires and the Republican government have acknowledged the right of both common people and literati élites to petition for mercy or the righting of injustices; indeed, in imperial times petition and the appeal of legal convictions were essential tools for the central state to gain some ability to observe the conduct of its distant, local officials. Petitioning crossed cultural (but not class) divides when the dissident novelist Wang Lixiong (husband of a Tibetan blogger) led a widespread petitioning campaign for the release of Ilham Tohti, a Uighur economist arrested in the aftermath of the Xinjiang disorders of 2009. The government has every reason to expect that petitioning by professionals, bolstered as it now is by the international press, will become a more frequent feature of the public reaction to policies affecting speech, the environment, labor and cultural minorities.

In the most notorious incidence of a private citizen convicted for enraged violence against the police, journalists, lawyers, professors and other urban élites – though not members of the state–capitalist coalition – became visible as a layer of resistance against state authority. In 2007 Yang Jia was roughed up by police in Shanxi province who stopped him for questioning at a train station. Later Yang transferred to Shanghai, where he was unemployed, and was arrested by police because he was riding an unlicensed bicycle (which he had rented). He later attempted to file a lawsuit against the arresting officers, claiming that while in police custody he had been tortured and humiliated. The authorities, however, produced an audio tape of the arrest in which Yang could be heard becoming argumentative with the police as soon as they had stopped him. Yang’s claim was rejected by the court. Just a month before the Olympics was held in Beijing in August of 2008, he went on a rampage inside the same Shanghai police station. He stabbed five officers to death and wounded four more, one of whom died of his wounds the next day. Yang told arresting officers that he was acting out of revenge, and that “I’d rather break the law than live with injustice my whole life.” Yang was immediately sentenced to death by the local court, and he appealed the case to the municipal court, where angry crowds gathered demanding his exoneration. But the court confirmed the sentence in late October, and the appeal then went to the Supreme Court (*zuigao renmin fayuan*).

Newspaper editors, as well as the Shanghai public, were outraged at Yang’s conviction. A man in nearby Suzhou claimed on the Internet that Yang’s rage was due to the

fact that beatings by the police had left him impotent; the blogger was arrested and interrogated by his own local police. Editors of the *Southern Weekly* newspaper, *Southern Weekend*, *Pearl River Evening News* and *Beijing News* came to Yang's defense. They pointed out that his lawyer at his trial was also the lawyer charged with handling legal affairs for the Shanghai police. They warned that executing Yang would lead to huge public disorders in the city. Lawyers in Beijing offered to represent Yang, but the Shanghai courts refused. As local leaders, journalists and lawyers continued to comment on the case and to petition the court for clemency, the government made more arrests, blocked more people's access to the Internet, and disappeared at least two legal advocates who were arrested for misdemeanors after publicly questioning the propriety of Yang's trials. This created a second and third round of public claims of power abuse and corruption.

By the time Yang's death sentence was upheld by the Supreme Court on November 3, 2008 he had become an icon – in the streets, in the press, and especially on the Internet – of the traditional Chinese ideal of steadfast if hopeless resistance by the helpless against the corrupt and capricious state. His personal flaws, which were not denied, were regarded as the products of social deformation, and his summary death sentence was seen as an act of inhumanity. National and international calls for commutation of the death sentence were accompanied by admonitions to the government that the case now involved so many detentions and disappearances that merely executing Yang could not make the problem go away. The case, if tried in some other countries, would likely be regarded as a case of an insane rampage against rational authority. But in the hands of journalists, lawyers and academic commentators in China it became a dramatization of the interplay of police thuggery, merciless government short-sightedness and malignant social imbalances. Courtrooms in which Yang's appeals were heard were packed with crowds of Shanghai-based supporters, and the artist Ai Weiwei led a petitioning campaign for the reduction of Yang's sentence. Lawyers and academics argued, before and after resolution of the case, that the refusal of the state to show any compassion for the fact that Yang had been literally driven mad when he was abused by corrupt and self-indulgent local police meant that the present government was not even graced by the compassion of the imperial governments, which had traditionally pardoned or softened punishments for the insane. The Yang Jia case came to be regarded as, and perhaps will continue to remain, the single most complex, and single most simple, test of the legitimacy of the PRC legal system. After Yang's execution on November 26, 2008, an Internet campaign to lionize him continued, warning that “millions and millions of Yang Jia's will follow him.”

The mechanism for public trials of breakers of the peace is evolving, if somewhat erratically, in such a way as to allow a pause for public observation, comment and perhaps even intervention. In this enlarging interval between arrest and punishment, scholars, lawyers and journalists become involved in many cases. If the government response is crude enough, more arrests and trials result from the comments or claimed actions of the interveners, widening the pool of government violations and public mistrust. There are indications that the leaders of the CCP are undecided about the safest path. The rate of imposition of death sentences and actual executions is decreasing. Despite the risks, a few dozen lawyers in China continue to be full-time advocates for individual rights. They succeeded in having Deng Yujiao, a young waitress who

stabbed to death a party official who was demanding sex from her, acquitted on the same grounds (mental distress or instability) that they had argued should have been applied in the Yang Jia case. Not long after Deng's acquittal in 2009, the government also announced that it would reduce the rate of execution to "a very small number" (Amnesty International had confirmed a minimum of 470 executions in China, but assumed the figure was far below the actual total; just enough is known of the total of annual executions in China to know that it kills far more convicts and prisoners per year than any other country, with Iran being a probable second). In cases such as tainted milk, poisoned groundwater or local corruption where the government would be inclined to find and punish scapegoats anyway, lawyers have been able to insert themselves and suggest that litigation might be a normal route of redress. They continue to work on behalf of dissidents whom the government has no apparent intention of treating with leniency, and in their persistence the lawyers hope to impress upon the Chinese public the idea that law has an innate validity, and that legal processes may, by their own power, lead to justice. The fight is a long and uncertain one, but the fact that the government has not silenced the lawyers – despite the fact that each year some of their number disappear into the state prisons – is testimony to their progress.

Between about 1998 and 2004, the government appeared to relax its censorship policies with the newspapers, regarding newspapers as commercial enterprises that would best thrive with minimal regulation. *Beijing News* (BN) was such a commercially-oriented outlet. It was founded in 2003 as a cooperative enterprise by two large and profitable newspapers, *Guangming Daily* (*Guangming ribao*) and *Southern Daily*. The editors of *Beijing News* were determined to print what the public wants to read, and what the Chinese public often wants to read is criticism of the government. BN's frequent reports and editorials on official corruption were greeted as a breath of fresh air by the international press, and the paper's profits soared. It soon had smaller emulators, all challenging – if only implicitly – the voice of the party organ, *People's Daily*, and the official news service, Xinhua. It appears that in June of 2005 the BN went beyond the invisible limit of government forbearance. Residents of Dingzhou, Hebei province, had set out to protest and then to actually prevent the construction of new power plant. They threw up a small tent city for themselves at the construction site. Frustrated local officials, eager to get the facility operating, enlisted hundreds of local thugs to smash both the tents and the protesters; they killed six people outright and sent dozens to the hospital. Local knowledge of the event ignited public protests and property destruction spread. Plenty of journalists were on the scene, but only the *Beijing News* correspondent reported the role of government goons in the debacle. In December, after months of discussing whether and how BN should be punished, state officials demanded the resignation of its editor. If the intention was to remind the journalists at BN that, like all journalists in China, they publish and work only with permission of the government, this did not work at first. The staff walked out, and for weeks the paper published only wire-service stories (from Xinhua). Its website was taken down, and its name and some of its bylines became targets of the Internet censor machines. Inevitably, the BN staff were replaced with more tractable editors and writers, and an assimilated *Beijing News* was back in business within a year. Yet, some of the old journalistic spirit may survive. In 2008 BN was in trouble again, this time for publishing a photograph of the forbidden kind – recalling the ugliness

of the suppression of the great Tiananmen protests in 1989. Most newspaper editors and writers these days receive warnings – more often implicit than explicit – to avoid coverage of earthquakes, floods, mine disasters and water crises. Such “natural” disasters usually involve some degree of official corruption or neglect of building codes, work safety or public hygiene provisions. At worst, news coverage can suggest direct government culpability; at best, it reminds the public of an ancient but still persisting connection between public welfare and government legitimacy.

The contemporary incidents discussed above follow a general paradigm that was established in China long before the eighteenth century, and has continued to shape China’s modern transformation. All governments in China have dealt with rural protests, in most cases relating to taxes or to material abuses by county magistrates. In a tiny number of famous cases, these protests have led to rebellions large enough to cripple or destroy the ruling dynasty. The more usual conflicts grew to a size where they became noted by the state, resulting in predictable round of concessions, punishments and restoration of order. From early times, empires in China have endured and absorbed protests by élites as well as by farmers; in the Han empire, placards, poems and essays written by protesting students and officials were recognized as the genre of “impartial critique” (*qingyi*). Subsequent regimes regarded *qingyi* as a form of protected speech (though, like all protected speech, liable to be suspended on official whim), perhaps even useful for identifying officials whose reputation for greed or incompetence had compromised their effectiveness. In its small version, the paradigm of stimulus and response starts with the collective expression of public outrage against official cruelty, arrogance or corruption. It might be incited by the kind of official pettiness that resulted in the death of the moped rider in Taishan in 2008, or the similar pettiness that enraged a crowd at Xi’an, Shaanxi province, in 1630 to attack local officials and free Li Zicheng, who went on to lead one of the most devastating uprisings of the early modern period. An incident may, depending upon the economic and environmental circumstances and the deftness of local officials, swell into a large disturbance.

The government typically responds in two ways: repression and appeasement. Local officials or magnates will mobilize forces to quell the disorders if possible. If they fail, the central government will send troops; police and paramilitary officials will be instructed to avoid violence whenever possible. But before such forces arrive, the government (usually the central government) will begin the task of restoring its reputation. Studies and investigations will be promised. Based on popular complaints, miscreants (not uncommonly from the ranks of local officials, but the status can rise to as high as a former Supreme Court Chief Justice, who in November 2008 was arrested on charges of running a corruption network worth US \$22 billion) will be identified and sent off for trial, and at least one scapegoat will be convicted, to be much noticed in the press. There will be promises of reduced taxes (a very ancient tactic, despite the Wen government’s claim of novelty) and the offer of help with local problems. The rhetoric of benevolent government will be paraded before the public. Life will return to a more or less orderly condition.

This small version of the paradigm may be very small, as when the government made lip-syncing illegal after the Chinese (and international) public verbally expressed outrage over little Lin Miaoke’s lip-syncing to the recorded voice of Yang Peiyi (whose round face and crooked teeth disqualified her from being presented to global television)

in the Olympics entertainment in the summer of 2008. Or it may be medium sized, as when public anger over the suppression of news about tainted milk, deaths of miners, and poisoned medicines led the propaganda chief of the Politburo to decide that instant tailored publication of bad news was the correct remedy – “Let us use the method of providing news as the way to control news,” he pronounced. Or, it may be very large, as it was in the case of the April 5, 1976 incident in which a demonstration in Tiananmen Square commemorating the death of Zhou Enlai led to both police suppression of the demonstrators and the purging of Deng Xiaoping (blamed for inciting the movement) from his party posts. In the second phase of the paradigm in this instance, to be described in chapter 14, the popular sentiments expressed were acknowledged, scapegoats were identified, and Deng Xiaoping rose higher than ever. In either case, it is possible to interpret the arc, long or short, of government reaction as being basically restorative. It recalls, in some ways, Lucien Bianco’s assertion (following, in a general way, Marx) that “peasant” rebellions are conservative, seeking not a transformation of relations between state and society but the restoration of a balance perceived to have been successful for centuries at a time.

This small paradigm of arousal and pacification in the interplay between local organization and state coercion exists inside a much larger paradigm which has underlain the structure and functioning of the Chinese state for most, though not all, of the past two hundred years. Disorderly confrontations, or the threat of them, between the government and the people are much of the stuff of Chinese history. Local, rural communities have over the centuries developed structures, organizations, values and communications that have allowed them to deal with unexpected hardships as well as pressure from landed élites and from the state. Some historians, comparing the administrative structures of China’s cities to those of Europe, have been skeptical that true urban communities of action have existed in China, but both history and the present suggest that contiguous communities within the cities have cohesion that approaches that of the countryside – while political and economic élites of the twentieth century have created new vectors of coherence and action that not only bind cities together but also link cities across national and global space. Just as the government has used coercive measures to prevent a destabilizing concentration of power and initiative at the community level and also in long-distance networks, so have local communities and networks used coercion to resist crushing pressure from the center.

Before the twentieth century, governments of China depended on a surface tension between state and society for their coherence. In the interplay of competing coercions and competing terrors, communities, families and individuals have found – in some periods of time – safety, comfort and creativity. In other periods, chaos has run rampant, though rarely to the degree that the local habits of order and support have entirely disappeared. Chinese history is not a history of despotism or unfettered authoritarianism, but one that has been sustained during long periods of peace and stability by the awareness of the limits on government power presented by a volatile and organized public, and the limits on public expression presented by a government equipped to violently suppress what it regards as threats. In the centuries of balanced intimidation between state and society, China has been overall peaceful and prosperous. When the power on one side or the other has grown excessive, revolution or effective fascism has resulted.

Government has floated upon the crust of social and economic self-sufficiency of the governed. Between state and society there has, for most periods of time, existed a gap in social, ideological and material space. No state before the twentieth century ever established a central educational system or a genuine police system. Instead, they created examination systems and domestic military occupations. Even the largest imperial governments in China (measured in ratio of officials to general population) never extended the floor of the state below the level of the county magistrate. Only a vanishingly small portion of the population ever saw an official person apart from the magistrate, who was seen either at a safe distance, or under very stressful circumstances. All governments in China depended upon this superficiality more or less; in the case of the last empire based in China, the Qing, it was more. The process of conquest in the seventeenth century had rested upon a strategy that avoided any obligation to engage with the majority of the population. When officials of the defunct Ming could be recruited to run their old departments, more or less as they had run them before, they were. When this was impossible, occupation authorities were given discretion to occupy and administer their territories as they saw fit, so long as such territories were pacified and taxed.

When the conquest was accomplished, administration changed only slowly. The financial strategy of the government in the late seventeenth century was one of frugality. Military conquest, which remained the prime government priority until the middle of the eighteenth century, was expensive and it occupied by far the greatest part of the government budget. Maintaining major routes of travel along roads, rivers and canals was a closely related project, and it also got a significant outlay. Education, public safety, food security and culture were not high state spending priorities. This was not because the emperors and their officials did not care about them. It was because the state used the mechanisms, long established in China, of mandates to achieve them. The state ran the examinations, which were the only avenue to government employment and a certain level of élite status. Passing the examinations was entirely the task of aspirants and their families, who spent enormous sums supporting their sons, sometimes for decades before success or, more likely, dismal failure. The state demanded that local élites look after the management of charitable hostels, grain reserves and security of the streets. Occasionally state inspectors would arrive to see that the tasks were being performed, and slackness could be punished severely. More often, local élites were left on their own to run their communities. Mismanagement, the state theory suggested, would become manifest in the outbreak of floods, famines, droughts, banditry, rebellion, witchcraft or miscarriage of legal cases that would become evident upon appeal to the central government. When problems arose, it was the first task of the local élites to solve them. They should disturb the state with ill reports only if they failed at that first task. And their punishment might be chilling.

The interplay between public intolerance of state intrusion and the state's search for wider and deeper power is a constitutional element of the Chinese polity from, at the latest, the seventeenth period to the present. It is not a unique dynamic, but certainly differs from the discourse and probably from the history of state and society interaction in Europe and North America. Social scientists have contributed many methods of describing and analyzing the relationship between Chinese state and society. Some of the elements are self-evident. "Benevolent government" (*renzheng*) as a value in Chinese society was rooted, among the traditional élites, in their reading of the Chinese classics and preparation for the civil service examinations. But it became

generalized throughout the society in early modern times, as state lecturers and local organizations for moral improvement impressed the idea upon the semi-literate or illiterate. The state was to be regarded as legitimate to the extent that it looked after the material welfare of the people, restrained the powerful from preying upon the weak, and distributed justice through its system of local magistrates and their courts. For their part, the people were to respect the state as an integral part of the social hierarchy, superior to (but more distant than) parents and those playing the parental role in local life – landowners and local officials. This was, however, respect without dependence (a corollary to the attitude of the moral adult to his parents in the disseminated social philosophy). The state in the traditional context did not supply food, housing or water. These were created or managed at the local level. The ruler’s “benevolence” consisted of keeping the state correct with Heaven, so that natural conditions would support happy human life; not interfering in the local community’s ability to supply itself, nor taxing the community to the point of crippling its ability to thrive; and being ready to redistribute to it emergency supplies if natural disasters should occur. A surfeit of natural disasters was a very bad sign, in the public view: Heaven was out of balance, or punishing the people, because of the transgressions of the rulers. A great deal of the religious content of this value has eroded from modern Chinese discourse and belief. But enough survives to consistently inform a rhetoric of indignation or protest, casting economic, environmental and even military troubles as evidence of unjust, malign, and possibly illegitimate government.

For its part, the state in China has demonstrated no less interest in the famous monopolization of violence than any other state. But the definition of violence in the discourse of the traditional Chinese state was not easy. As a term in English “violence” is not a very good translation for the normal terms in the Chinese documents for description of armed robberies, riots or rebellions. Traditional reports described these phenomena as “disorders” (*luan*), along with other unlawful gatherings that involved no violence at all. The contemporary reflection of this state viewpoint is the use of “mass incidents” (*quntixing shibian*) and related shorthand (for instance, *naoshi*, “ruckus”) in the PRC to describe all the episodes above, as well as peaceful gatherings protesting everything from water quality to suppression of the Falungong religious movement. The state’s long-standing habit of not distinguishing fundamentally between disorder and violence means that it must forego the simple monopolization of violence in favor of enjoying hegemony in the maintenance of order. Because the definition of disorder is porous, the state has historically settled for leverage instead of monopoly, with one brief exception in the twentieth century.

The study of mass movements and protests, including rebellions, in China is very well developed, thanks to scholars such as Jean Chesneaux, Elizabeth Perry, Joseph Esherick, Lucien Bianco, Mark Selden, Susan Naquin, Ralph Thaxton, Jeffrey Wasserstrom and many others. In these critically important works, rebellion is often depicted as a punctuating event, a turn in which the people cast off, if only temporarily, the bonds that normally kept them docile. Local populations are seen as “resisting” central intrusion and oppression when the occasion arises, but not constituting an indispensable element in the governing process when doing so. The inherited view is heavily colored by tropes of feudal deference (whence the consensus that Chinese farmers are “peasants”) and revolutionary iconoclasm. In the present narrative, rebellion and resistance are regarded as limited facets of an institutionalized local tension

barrier, both supporting and limiting the state. Rebellion itself is not a major theme here. Rather the emphasis is the mutual understanding between state and society of the persistent threat of collective demonstration of dissatisfaction and the justification for it. More important, the element of organization in collective local action is viewed here as a way of linking contemporary China to its immediate past. Sectarian rebellions have been regarded as more potent than non-sectarian rebellions partly because a religious organization is first and foremost an organization. It has a hierarchy, it has a form of training and education, it has channels of communication, perhaps long-distance communication. Its roots lie in the fundamental patterns of local life in China before 1949 and share lineage with village labor systems, market rules and rhythms, collective self-defense, established criminal organizations, loan clubs and extended lineages. This sturdy fabric of local life was what the Qing empire expected to support itself upon.

But that required a sophisticated balancing act. The state attempted to rule by mandate (what we would now call unfunded mandates), by suasion, and when necessary by the application of precise violence. It had to guard constantly against three dangers inherent in the system. First was the development of partnerships, between local officials and local landowners or merchants, large enough and strong enough to threaten the state. Second was the emergence of locally based cliques whose tendrils might reach into the central government itself. Third was the development of resistance at the local level of a magnitude sufficient to overwhelm state credibility or power. The wise state, as envisaged by conventional political thinkers in China from the Han period on, rested lightly on the surface of local society – hierarchical, peaceful, efficient and resilient in crisis, benevolent toward the weak and demanding of the strong. But the tendency of successful local organizations to grow grander in size and in ambition was a constant danger to the imperial state, which fought back ruthlessly when threatened. The example, it was hoped, of terrible consequences for those straying outside their assigned roles would be sufficient to make the local organizations eager to impose limits and restraint upon themselves.

When the empire ended in 1912, the constitutional elements in the relationship between the central state (or state aspiring to centrality) and the localities persisted. Both the Nationalists and the Communists relied upon the principle in their way, but both also realized the terrible vulnerability of the state to hypertrophy of local power. The Nationalists failed to solve the conundrum, and the CCP entered into an inhospitable coexistence with it, from which the state deviated with tragic results between the middle 1950s and the middle 1970s. Though the contemporary Chinese state is gigantic in comparison to its predecessors, it is still too small and too uncoordinated to truly permeate the wide and very complex space of the PRC. Allowing the pivot to wobble, without letting it fall, continues to be the challenge for a state unable or unwilling to break its dependence upon the deep roots of local coherence and autonomy.

Further reading

The anecdotes here of popular protests, demonstrations, riots and uprisings come primarily from current information that is ubiquitous. The specifics used in this chapter come from:

- Tim Johnson's bus ride: May 9, 2008, "Taking the Slow Road in China," in *China Rises* blog: www.washingtonbureau.typepad.com/
- On coverage in Chinese of the Zhang Longping incident: www.club.qingdaonews.com/showAnnounce.php?topic_id=3859116&board_id=131
- The Xinhua editorial on the disorders in Dongzhou: "Protests and Riots on the Rise, Chinese State Media Says," *International Herald Tribune*, December 8, 2006.
- The case of the Fuda Property Development Company: Rowan Callick, September 8, 2008 in *The Australian*, "Investors Riot as Get-rich Scheme Fails in Hunan, 9 Held After Two Days of Unrest." *SCMP* Minnie Chan, September 6, 2008.
- The prosecutions of Wu Dianying and Wang Xiuying: "China's Totalitarian Games," by Jeff Jacoby, *Globe* columnist, August 24, 2008.
- The attacks in Qizilboy, Xinjiang: *Radio Free Asia*: "Chinese Police Killed, Wounded in New Xinjiang Clash."
- The difficulties of Chen Yunlin in Taiwan: Jonathan Adams, Saturday, November 15, 2008 5:49 a.m., "Strait Talk: So Near And Yet So Far," *Christian Science Monitor*.
- Interview with Ambassador James Sasser: "Besieged but Unbowed, Ambassador Is Hopeful on China," by Philp Shenon: online at www.nytimes.com/1999/08/30/us/public-lives-besieged-but-unbowed-ambassador-is-hopeful-on-china.html (accessed 08/21/09).
- On popular protests over the environment at Gaodong, Sichuan: China Digital Times (quoting Yale Environment 360), December 6, 2008, "In China's Mining Region, Villagers Stand Up to Pollution."
- Protests over administrative issues in Daye, Hubei: www.hrichina.org/public/contents/article?revision%5fid=36026&item%5fid=26823
- On police protests in Hunan and elsewhere: Xinhua: "Police Employees Appeal for Better Pay in Central China," www.chinaview.cn 2008-12-04 00:41:34; *China Digital Times*, December 6, 2008, "First Strike Action by Police Officers Since the End of the Cultural Revolution in 1976."
- On popular reaction to the arrest, trial and execution of Yang Jia, there are numerous and continuing reports. For the specific incidents referred to here, see: "Chinese Defend Accused Police Killer," by Cara Anna, The Associated Press, Wednesday, August 27, 2008 1:21 p.m. © 2008. Last updated: October 17, 2008, 9:54:21 a.m., "Yang Jia Shanghai Police Murder Conviction Appeal Being Heard," by chinafreepress.org (translation). October 17, 2008, 10:52:16 a.m.: www.news.boxun.com/news/gb/china/2008/10/200810171512.shtml © 2008 by Boxun News. Eva Pils, "Yang Jia and China's Unpopular Criminal Justice System," in *China Rights Forum*, No. 1, 2009; paginated PDF at www.hrichina.org/public/PDFs/CRF.1.2009/CRF-2009-1_Pils.pdf
- On the overt government strategy for controlling the news: *The Times* (London), Jane Macartney, "Beijing Propaganda Chief Hatches Plan to Combat Age of Internet News," November 19, 2008.
- On the petition for the release of Ilham Tohti: Edward Wong, "Intellectuals Call for Release of Uighur Economist," in *New York Times* [online edition], July 14, 2009.
- On activist lawyers, see Teng Biao, "The Law on Trial in China," in *The Washington Post* [online], July 25, 2009: www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/07/24/AR2009072402940.html?referrer=emailarticle

Analysis of community in China has taken many forms. G. William Skinner framed much of the discussion. See especially G. William Skinner, ed., *The City in Late Imperial China* (1977). A pointed debate arose between Frederic Wakeman and William T. Rowe in the 1970s and 1980s. See especially Rowe, *Hankow: Conflict and Community* (1989) and Wakeman, “The Civil Society and Public Sphere Debate” (1993). The characterization of urban communities in this book is perhaps most compatible with the approach of Belsky, *Localities at the Center* (2005). For a broad but penetrating overview of the topic, see Xu, “Urban Communities, State, Spatial Order, and Modernity: Studies of Imperial and Republican Beijing in Perspective” (2008). Tsai, *Accountability without Democracy* (2007) has presented an important interpretation of community action in contemporary China (see also chapter 17 of this book).

For the major historical studies of “peasant” rebellions, uprisings and revolutionary movements in China in the early modern and modern periods, see Johnson, *Peasant Nationalism and Communist Power* (1962); Selden, *The Yenan Way in Revolutionary China* (1971); Chesneau, *Peasant Revolt in China 1840–1949* (1973); Friedman, *Backward Toward Revolution* (1974); Naquin, *Millenarian Rebellion in China: The Eight Trigrams Uprising of 1813* (1976) and *Shantung Rebellion* (1981); Perry, *Rebels and Revolutionaries in North China, 1845–1945* (1980); Chen, *Making Revolution* (1986); Esherick, *The Origins of the Boxer Uprising* (1987); Thaxton, *China Turned Rightside Up* (1983), *Salt of the Earth* (1997), *Catastrophe and Contention in Rural China* (2008); Bianco, *Peasant Without the Party* (2004) – based on influential articles published over thirty years. For the related subject of “secret societies,” see chapter 3. For a general background discussion of popular protest, see Wasserstrom and Perry, *Popular Protest and Political Culture in Modern China*.

Qingyi has been the subject of a significant amount of scholarship, almost all in reference to its use in nineteenth-century reform movements (see chapter 10). It has been variously translated as “public opinion” (Rankin and others), “moral censure” (Polachek), and “pure counsel” or “disinterested counsel” (Bastid). Recently Alan Baumler posted a very engaging essay on Han period official protests at his website, “Frog in a Well” (June 1, 2009), which drew on Rafe de Crespigny’s “Political Protest in Imperial China” (1975). See also Eastman, *Throne and Mandarins* (1967); Iriye, “Public Opinion and Foreign Policy” (1967); Rankin, “‘Public Opinion’ and Political Power” (1982); Whitbeck, “Kung Tzu-chen and the Redirection of Literati Commitment” (1983); Bastid, “Qingyi (Disinterested Counsel) and the Self-Strengthening Movement” (1988); Polachek, *The Inner Opium War* (1992); Schrecker, *The Chinese Revolution in Historical Perspective* (2004).