

This PDF is auto-generated for reference only. As such, it may contain some conversion errors and/or missing information. For all formal use please refer to the official version on the website, as linked below.

Contemporary Petitioning and Chinese Internet Censorship

<https://www.e-ir.info/2014/04/04/contemporary-petitioning-and-chinese-internet-censorship/>

TAE EON AHN, APR 4 2014

"[China's] modernization needs two prerequisites. One is international peace, and the other is domestic political stability... A crucial condition of China's progress is political stability."
—Deng Xiaoping

Zhao Jing, a well-known Chinese journalist, states "The Internet has two Internets. One is the Internet, [and] the other is the Chinanet."^[2] The Chinanet is separated from the Internet by the Great Firewall, the most extensive digital boundary that blocks foreign websites and practices surveillance of domestic online materials. It is estimated that China now has 600 million Internet users and 500 million micro bloggers.^[3] Nevertheless, the Chinese Communist Party has successfully kept people under control unlike other authoritarian regimes in the Middle East, corroborating the effectiveness of its censorship apparatus.

Despite pervasive and systematic censorship, it would be a mistake to assume that the Chinese Internet is comparable to a wasteland set only to forcibly inculcate people with Communist ideologies. Contrary to what many suspect, the Chinese Internet is a vibrant and growing yet isolated online platform reserved only for Chinese netizens. Offering substitutes to global social networking sites—Baidu for Google, Weibo for Twitter, Renren for Facebook, and Youku for Youtube, China often tries to sever connections between the outside and people inside China.^[4] Though China is only one of the four countries to not allow Facebook, Chinese people use Chinese versions of social networking sites to express their views, communicate, and share their beliefs. Of course, their views are often censored and deleted by the government officials. Despite endeavors to play above the system, the central government enforces the three-tier censorship program that makes it extremely difficult for online posts not to be reviewed at least once by either the computer program or employed personnel—IP blocking, keyword blocking, and self-censorship.

This paper first addresses two dominant perspectives about the motivation behind Chinese Internet censorship: (1) keeping out foreign influence; (2) suppressing dissent. The paper offers an alternative explanation which claims that the Chinese government seeks to prevent organized opposition and maintain stability through internet censorship. Arguing that isolating China from foreign ideas and suppressing all political activities are not the main objectives of censorship, this view breaks with existing explanation. The paper then introduces the longstanding tradition of the petitioning system in China and the values it represents. A final section supports the alternative perspective by tracing historical parallels between the petitioning system and contemporary Chinese Internet censorship, largely on the similar roles they serve: appeasing the anger of the public, maintaining stability, and keeping people and local governments under control.

Argument 1: Keeping Out Foreign Ideas and Influence

This argument claims that the Chinese government is obsessed with keeping foreign influence out of China and strives to separate China from the outside world. This argument was particularly prevalent when China decided to first adopt the Internet in 1987. Scholars suspected that the Chinese Internet would be reclusive, only opening itself to the bare minimum. Based on Deng Xiaoping's saying, "If you open the window for fresh air, you have to expect

Contemporary Petitioning and Chinese Internet Censorship

Written by Tae Eon Ahn

some flies to blow in,” the Chinese government dreaded potential “flies” of Western political ideologies seeping into and eventually adulterating political purity of China. However, cognizant of the immense economic benefits of embracing the Internet, Chinese leaders found the adoption of the technology inevitable.

A fear of foreign influence originates in China’s deeply embedded sense of superiority as the economic and political powerhouse. Before industrialization shook the dynamics of the world power, China had invariably been hailed as the most advanced empire. While Europe was struck by ongoing wars and fragmented into numerous city states, China remained unified or almost nearly unified throughout its entire history, save from few occasions. Therefore, the idea of Middle Kingdom—China located at the center of world while other neighboring states were either expunged from the map or depicted as savage barbarians—was entrenched in the mindset of China.

The predilection to resist foreign influence and preserve traditional Confucian values is illustrated in historical events. When Macartney was sent as a British envoy to the Qing dynasty in September 1793, and demanded that the Qing dynasty establish British diplomatic representation in Beijing and fair and equitable tariffs, the Qing Emperor, dismayed by his hubris, adamantly refused to entertain the request.[5] George the third, the king of England, in response, resorted to violence by starting the Opium War in 1839 and devastated the Qing dynasty.[6] The Qing dynasty was coerced to open its coastal areas to the industrialized Western powers, portending its eventual demise.[7] In the midst of such crisis, the Qing dynasty still refused to implement major reforms to catch up with the development level of Western counterparts. Unlike Japan, which successfully revamped its obsolete system through the Meiji Restoration in 1868, the Qing dynasty could not discard its sense of superiority and intransigently clung to its traditional values. Reforms took place under Dowager Cixi, yet they could not change a course of rapid decline.[8] These examples clearly evince how ingrained their sense of superiority was; China did not deign to reform in the mold of the industrialized western powers.

The sense of superiority did not alter even after China experienced humiliating defeats and brutal treatments from Japan. After the extended civil war which lasted for more than twenty years, Mao promulgated the beginning of the People’s Republic of China and promoted the Great Leap Forward (1958).[9] Though intent on rapidly improving the economy by socialist means—agricultural collectivization and heavy investment in labor-intensive industry, the Great Leap Forward bore disastrous offshoots: agricultural production level took a nosedive, people starved due to widespread famine, and people started to question his authority.[10] To recover his damaged authority, Mao reasserted Communist beliefs in China and openly excoriated liberals or even intellectuals who remotely displayed the influence of foreign ideas. The Cultural Revolution ‘rectified’ China when it was starting to deviate from Communist ideologies. Under Deng Xiaoping, China began to modernize.[11] However, the remnants of the Cultural Revolution still characterize China, for China did not modernize for the sake of improving the lives of people; the modernization was purely to improve its economy which had been wiped out by famines and decreasing agricultural production. In fact, Deng Xiaoping left the original political structure and most of socialist policies intact even when he was exhorting for modernization in 1980s and 1990s. He encouraged greater economic initiative by granting more autonomy to provincial governments while echoing for Confucianism and egalitarianism.[12]

This outline of China’s modern history, though occasionally shows attempts for reforms, is largely characterized by the cyclical pattern of the authority reinforcing Communist ideologies when people show signs of deviation or nonchalance. Thus, the international community anticipated a similar response when China started “using” the Internet in September of 1987.

The Internet, as expected, was only reserved for research and academic purposes at first. In 1987, China was first connected to the Internet by the China Academic Network (CANET) which only intended to promote research on computer science studies. Until 1993, when the first commercial network, CHINANET was launched, the Internet was not used for commercial purposes.[13] However, CHINANET started to sell accounts and provide email services to commercial users; surprisingly, within a month of its debut, more than 800 subscribers registered for the service. Soon, more private Internet Service Providers (ISPs) began offering full-fledged Internet services to individuals, and even the government organizations began using the Internet to create national computer networks.

If the Chinese government had censored the Internet to keep the foreign influence out and maintain the political and

Contemporary Petitioning and Chinese Internet Censorship

Written by Tae Eon Ahn

cultural purity of China, the Internet would have not spread so widely across the nation. The Chinese government also would have not permitted the commercial use of the Internet, and even if it did, the commercial use would have been limited to special cases approved by the government. However, contrary to this belief, the Chinese government has been taking proactive role in promoting the development and more widespread adoption of the Internet since 1993. In fact, perceiving the Internet (Information Technology) to be instrumental for economic, educational, and social development, IT spending topped \$2 trillion for the first time in 2013 despite the economic slowdown.[14] Further, the Chinese government revamped the private telecommunication agencies to facilitate the growth of the Internet. It was to no one's surprise when China increased the government expenditure on internal security by 12.7 percent in 2011.[15] Therefore, this argument of keeping the foreign influence out of China, though to certain extent, valid, does not fully account for the motivation behind Chinese Internet censorship and the relationship between the Internet and the Chinese government.

Argument 2: Suppressing Dissent

The goal of the Chinese leadership, according to this theory, is to "suppress dissent, and to prune human expression that finds fault with element of the Chinese state, its policies, or its leaders." [16] The desired offshoot of expanding Internet use is to make the public perceive the government more favorably by shedding light upon mostly positive aspects of the Chinese government and the Chinese Communist Party. Therefore, according to the state critique theory, political issues that uncover, or even subtly insinuate, the flaws of its leadership are almost immediately taken down from the Internet.

The Tiananmen Square crackdown of 1989 is one of the most often cited examples to support this argument which can be labeled as the state critique theory. The Tiananmen Square protests were not limited to participating students; they garnered support from students all across China and received international attention.[17] Such popularity largely ascribes to the role Tiananmen protests served in China: channels for people to express their frustration as well as yearning for freedom of speech and government accountability.[18] As support for the protests spread like an unstoppable wildfire, the Chinese government abandoned conciliatory approaches and ordered troops to open fire on demonstrators, taking a toll of approximately 200 lives of innocent students.[19] Because these protests directly questioned the authority and underlying political ideologies of the Chinese Communist Party, the Chinese government responded with brutal military actions. Further, in order to prevent another mishap from causing turbulence, the Chinese government has blocked Internet access to search terms related to the 1989 Tiananmen Square crackdown. Those terms such as "six four", "23", "candle" and "never forget", when typed in Chinese search engines, do not return any relevant information.[20] As discussions of the Tiananmen Square crackdown remain as tacitly accepted taboo in China, typical Internet search of Tiananmen Square only returns insipid descriptions of the square, photos of tourists, or the main landmarks contiguous to the Tiananmen Square. This example demonstrates that the Chinese government readily censors online materials that challenge the Chinese Communist Party and its fundamental political beliefs.

Physical seizures and arrests also reveal how vigilant and insecure the Chinese government is when beleaguered by criticisms. The Chinese government is notorious for categorizing pro-democratic journalists, authors, or any popular figures as seditious dissidents and detaining them for "re-education" in labor camps or prisons.[21] Those seizures and arrests are continuing endeavors of the Chinese government to suppress criticisms that undermine the legitimacy of the Chinese government.

Once the evidence of dissident activity is sufficiently found, arrests and seizures are conducted. Chinese security agents often arrest in the middle of night in order to make incursions more unpredictable. Immediately after breaking in, they search for computers to find incriminating evidence on the hard drive.[22]

Numerous political figures were detained by such surreptitious forays. The Chinese Democratic Party leader Wang Youcai was at the forefront to fight against the arbitrary imposition of Communism.[23] He was arrested on November 2, 1998 and was sentenced to eleven years in jail for allegedly founding the Chinese Democratic Party and conniving with foreign forces to overthrow the Chinese Communist Party.[24] The Hangzhou Public Security Bureau discovered eighteen copies of the Chinese Democratic Party Constitution and the declaration of its

Contemporary Petitioning and Chinese Internet Censorship

Written by Tae Eon Ahn

establishment that were sent to international human rights activists and dissidents.[25] Huang Qi, another “seditious” political figure who openly criticized the Chinese government for human rights violations, was also detained by Chengdu police in June 2000.[26] He opened the www.6-4tianwang.com site and posted information about the 1989 Tiananmen Square crackdown and other incidents of egregious human rights violations. The website was shut down in March of 2000, and he was sent to a detention center in Chengdu.[27] These examples aptly show that the Chinese government is leery of scathing criticisms posted on the Internet.

50 cent party, in addition to arrests and seizures, reinforces the state critique theory. 50 cent party is an epithet for people who are paid 50 cent for every comment they write to support the authorities on online discussions.[28] Rather than fostering an open dialogue, 50 cent party deludes the Internet users into thinking that the public support is much more prevalent than it actually is and that abuses—tortures and corruption—are much less rampant than they are in reality.

The methods by which the 50 cent party manipulates online dialogues are misleading yet undeniably effective and convincing. Interviews with anonymous online commenters suggest that they are even involved in the process of identifying and recommending deletion.[29] Further, instead of effusively praising the Chinese Communist Party or its polices, which can make it too obvert that they are paid to post such comments, online commenters denounce government critics and sometimes even muddle the facts by giving false eyewitnesses that contradict the netizen accounts detailing on government injustice.[30]

The state critique theory, however, does not completely explicate the use of censorship. Recent scholarship even claims that the state critique theory is no longer valid; rather, the Chinese government only censors materials that incite collective actions. In fact, the likelihood of censorship does not necessarily increase even when people posts comments that directly criticize the Chinese Communist Party or its policies. This idea is further elaborated in the next section: Preventing Organized Opposition. It provides counter-examples that disprove the state critique theory.

Argument 3: Preventing Organized Opposition

Until recently, scholars had vehemently contended that the censorship program intended to suppress criticisms of the state or the Communist Party—the state critique theory. However, a recent Harvard research paper argues differently. Claiming that the Chinese government is more concerned with preserving stability than about promoting Communist ideologies, it offers a novel perspective on the Chinese Internet censorship: “The target of censorship is people who join together to express themselves collectively, stimulated by someone other than the government, and seem to have the potential to generate collective action.”[31] Even when people decry the Chinese Communist Party for incompetence and backward conservatism, the probability that their posts will be censored does not necessarily increase.[32] Only when those criticisms encourage collective actions—demonstrations, boycotts, or even writing group petitions—do they get censored by the Great Firewall. This tendency clearly indicates that the Chinese Communist Party is more fretful about collective actions than about derisive criticisms that are likely to be forgotten over time if kept under control.

Falun Gong, spiritual discipline that first emerged in China in 1992 by Li Hongzhi, combines meditation and qigong with moral philosophy.[33] Focusing on morality and cultivating integral virtues—truthfulness, compassion, and forbearance, Falun Gong enables practitioners to aspire for better health and mental stability.[34] Because Falun Gong reflects both Taoist and Buddhist traditions, it initially garnered considerable support across the nation. Though introduced during the “qigong boom”—a period when meditation and slow-moving and breathing exercises were the vogue, Falun Gong stood out amidst other qigong schools because it did not require any fee or demanding daily rituals.[35] The officials also had openly endorsed the Falun Gong until the late 1990s. Li Hongzhi even toured the country giving lectures and seminars to spread the practice under the auspices of the state-run qigong associations.[36]

Public endorsement and support, however, was only ephemeral. As the membership grew rapidly to include more than ten million Falun Gong practitioners across the nation, the Chinese government increasingly became vigilant over its substantial growth as an independent-minded group flourishing outside of the Chinese Communist Party’s

Contemporary Petitioning and Chinese Internet Censorship

Written by Tae Eon Ahn

control.[37] Tensions escalated and finally appeared on the surface when Falun Gong practitioners congregated in Beijing to ask for legal protection and freedom to practice Falun Gong without constant state interference.

In response, the Chinese Communist Party began a nationwide crackdown to weed out the practice. Categorizing Falun Gong as a heretical organization that disturbs the maintenance of peace and social stability, the Chinese government blocked access to the Internet sites that make even the most subtle allusions to Falun Gong. Terms including or related to “Falun Gong” were blocked in the mainland China, and attempts to search those terms often rendered browsers inoperable for over a minute.[38] As a stark contrast, in Hong Kong, Google search on “Falun Gong” returns about 849, 000 entries.[39]

An intriguing fact is that Falun Gong was not fundamentally opposed to the Communist Ideology; rather, it pursued freedom to practice meditation and slow moving exercises that are believed to bring physical health and inner peace. Although Falun Gong neither denounces Communist ideologies nor promotes pro-democratic ideas, it remains as one of the most severely censored subjects in China. Nationwide crackdowns against Falun Gong practitioners evince Chinese government’s fear of collective actions. That the Chinese government resorted to violence only after Falun Gong practitioners gathered in front of the Beijing compound reinforces this view.

Astonishingly, an event with one of the highest collective action potential was also apolitical. Soon after the Japanese earthquake and the meltdown of the Fukushima nuclear power plant, people in Zhejiang province were seized by an erroneous rumor that the iodine, one of components that make up salt, would protect them from radiation. Convinced by the false rumor, people in Zhejiang province rushed pell-mell to buy salt, dramatically increasing the salt consumption but not affecting any of the local political figures or issues.[40] However, this rumor was heavily censored[41].

Recently, China also cracked down on Western-style singing contests and demanded local television stations that they increase “morality-building” shows like news and documentaries to inculcate loyalty to the state.[42] Even though the shows were completely apolitical, the Chinese authority was chary of giving too much room for public opinion and populist input. “Super Girl” which had more than 400 million viewers was banned from voting through text-messages possibly because its balloting was considered to be the largest voting exercise conducted in China.[43] This again suggests that the Chinese government is more concerned about maintaining stability than about keeping itself immune from criticisms.

This is not to say that the Chinese government does not censor criticisms. In fact, if criticisms get out of control and display possibility to fuel collective actions, they are censored. When Ai Wei Wei—jailed writer and staunch advocate of freedom who was even prized the Nobel Peace Award—was first reported to have been detained by the Chinese government, people began to criticize the government on Weibo and came up with plans to spark demonstrations to arouse international fury that they could use to pressure the Chinese government.[44] The Chinese government, in response, shut down websites and personal accounts in microblogs mentioning Ai Wei Wei. Likewise, criticisms against the Chinese government or the Chinese Communist Party do get censored once they transgress the “acceptable level.” Therefore, this argument—preventing organized opposition—provides more thorough explanation of how the Chinese government decides to censor. In fact, the Chinese government makes it virtually impossible for people to start collective actions before it finds out about them.

The Arab Spring clearly corroborates the immense power of the Internet and made the world transfixed its attention to other oppressive regimes—most prominently, China. However, unlike the Arab regimes, China has adopted more systematic measures to prevent collective actions. In case of the Jasmine Revolution, the Tunisian government hacked into political protest pages and tried to get hold of all of the Tunisian Facebook accounts.[45] However, its attempt to muffle communication backfired, and during the unrest, Tunisians accessed to Facebook and Twitter where they updated stories of state oppression, police brutality, and forthcoming street protests.[46] It not only facilitated communication among the rebel groups and better enabled them to overthrow the Ben Ali regime but also unified the public with a common goal of toppling the authoritarian regime.[47] Egypt and Syria also temporarily shut down the Internet, but ironically, this radicalized the opposition.[48] Likewise, the Arabian regimes were not equipped with adequate censorship apparatus to stop the revolutions and did not comprehend the need to provide a narrow

Contemporary Petitioning and Chinese Internet Censorship

Written by Tae Eon Ahn

window to vent frustration and grievances. China, on the other hand, has developed its own version of social networking sites which give an online platform to express views yet minimize communication with the outside world. It does not crack down on the Internet and other cellular communication methods because not only is it impossible to permanently disconnect from the Internet but also the Chinese government understands that it would actually agitate the public even more.

Another salient feature of the Chinese Internet censorship is found in one of the provisions of “Computer Information Network and Internet Security, Protection and Management Regulations” (1995).[49] The Article 10 states that the network providers “must assume responsibility for the Internet network gateways as well as the security, protection, and management of the subordinate networks.”[50] All network providers are held accountable for any problem that is caused on their network; if a network fails to censor violations and prevent collective actions, its business license can be readily nullified by the Public Security Bureau.[51] Therefore, it is in the interest of commercial network providers to maintain close partnership with the Chinese government so that they are not put at risk of getting their business license cancelled. For instance, Google has not been on good terms with the Chinese government since it refused to censor politically sensitive search terms and decided to move most of its operations to Hong Kong.[52] The embittered discord between Google and the Chinese government culminated when Chinese hackers stole the login details of hundreds of senior U.S. and South Korean government officials.[53] Although no direct evidence was found to confirm that the hackers were paid by the Chinese government, seeing from the level of technological sophistication, it is hard to rule out the possibility that the attack was orchestrated by the state.[54] Likewise, despite China's immense size and population, the Chinese government keeps the censorship effective by delegating censorship responsibilities to individual network providers. Therefore, the Chinese government tends to perceive the Internet as a political tool to sustain stability rather than as a source of potential danger.

This paper, in alignment with this argument, attempts to make a connection between the petitioning system and Internet censorship. It will argue that the Internet is supplementing the role of the petitioning system because unlike the current petitioning system, the Internet enables the Chinese government to prevent collective actions from taking place, thus providing better mechanism for maintaining stability in China. It has also been empirically shown that the petitioning system entails the risk of vengeance and high chance of failure in spite of much time and effort required to file a complaint. The Internet, therefore, provides a more efficient platform for people to express their frustration or anger towards the local, or sometimes even the central government. However, before analyzing the connection between the petitioning system and the Internet, it is important to first understand the history of China's petitioning system and its Confucian values.

History of China's Petitioning (Complaint) System

The petitioning system was created to support aggrieved people who failed to get satisfaction from local officials by allowing them to register complaints to higher levels of the administration. This system reflects the deeply embedded influence of Confucianism in Chinese governance.

Confucianism emphasizes the Mandate of Heaven and parental rulers and pursues stability as the primary goal. Rulers are conferred with the divine right to rule, but if they fail to bring happiness to people, people have the right to overthrow the government and establish a new one. That is, just as parents are responsible for the well-being of their children, rulers should be held accountable for the well-being of their people. Confucianism argues that by duly fulfilling the role as the ruler, he can ensure stability and peace of China. The petitioning system was one of the ways rulers occasionally satisfied their people and lived up the obligation as parental rulers.[55] Giving opportunity for people's concerns to be heard, the petitioning system helped build trust between the rulers and their subjects. It also often pressured local governments to be more transparent and loyal to the central government, enabling China to remain unified instead of dissolving into independent city-states despite its enormous size that makes it challenging for overarching control.

This center-periphery relationship in which the central government addresses local concerns while it stays above the fray and reinforces its power goes back as far as Zhou dynasty.[56] Unfortunately, there is no archaeological evidence to prove the existence of complaint institutions during the Zhou dynasty. The first written evidence appears

Contemporary Petitioning and Chinese Internet Censorship

Written by Tae Eon Ahn

in an account by an anonymous commoner from the Former Han dynasty (206 BCE-8CE).[57] His account mentions a drum erected outside the palace gate. Commoners who were dissatisfied with local vassals or landlords were allowed to beat the drum, and the Royal Groom whose primary duty was to deliver king's orders and punish delinquent local officials informed the king whenever he heard the drum rolling.[58] However, it was not until the Tang dynasty that the complaint system was institutionalized and became a part of the judiciary structure.

The Tang dynasty established a more articulate and comprehensive system than those put in place by previous dynasties. In fact, the Tang dynasty not only made the complaint system a part of the judicial structure but also structuralized the sequence in which people could file their complaints: first to local governments, and then to upper governments, and if complainants found all of the previous decisions unavailing, finally to the central government.[59] The Tang dynasty forbade people from skipping levels and making direct complaints to the central government.[60] When people disregarded the sequence of the complaint system and directly proceeded to the central government, brutal corporal punishment was meted out to them.[61] However, in order to forestall local officials from interfering with the delivery of important messages, the Tang dynasty also adopted the petition box to where people could write and submit formal complaints directly to the central government.[62] Nevertheless, the Tang dynasty could not effectively redress grievances, and many complainants continued to find it difficult to draw satisfaction from the petitioning system. Improving on such inefficacy, dynasties following Tang endorsed more humane and flexible attitude towards skipping complaints. In a few short periods, the rulers of the Southern Song and early Ming even lifted the ban on skipping complaints until people started making frivolous complaints on very trivial matters.[63]

Major reforms took place under the Qing dynasty. Rather than imposing corporal punishment on those who made direct and skipping complaints, it adopted a more lenient attitude by substituting corporal punishment with relatively manageable fines.[64] The Qing laid out a plan to establish the Administration Court.[65] The Administration Court was a significant stride because it aspired to judge people's complaints in accordance with the law—the rule of law to preventing an arbitrary whim of local officials from failing people's complaints.[66] Another notable difference from previous dynasties was that the Qing government began to permit collective complaints and even sometimes collective actions.[67] The Qing dynasty seemed to have assumed that if kept under control, collective actions would not involve violence, let alone make people question the legitimacy and authority of the government. The heritage of this remarkable face-lift has been carried on to subsequent governments, even to the current Letters and Visits system. Although the Qing dynasty and the republican regime to follow were struck by turmoil—constant foreign invasions and economic exploitation, the concept of natural resistance—people seeking justice from the central government—was only more deeply ingrained into people, even encouraging people to carry out collective actions in the face of potential repercussions—labor camps, detainment, torture, and sometimes even capital punishment.[68]

In fact, people's reliance on the complaint system has steadily risen due to the enforcement of more stringent regulations and the excessive promotion of decentralization. In 1982 and 1995, the Chinese Communist Party revised the Regulation Regarding People's Letters and Visits. The revisions established a more comprehensive complaint system but each time, imposed more restrictions on what people can "rightfully" do when complaining. According to the updated version of regulations, all complaints should be valid and lodged by sequence from local governments to the central government; the number of collective complainants should not have more than five people; the attacking of government organs and intercepting of public vehicles are prohibited.[69] Although the regulations outlawed official suppression of complainants and revenge against them, they failed to mention the punishment official violators would face, thus in reality, leaving complainants vulnerable to vengeance sought by local officials.

A notable increase in the number of complaints in last couple decades also ascribes to decentralization and bureaucratic pragmatism. Deng Xiaoping and Jiang Zemin tried to accelerate the economic growth by not only incorporating capitalistic components to the Chinese economy but also by actively decentralizing its power and giving discretion to state governments to decide on their own tax rates, investment, foreign trade, and the distribution of resources.[70] Those major economic reforms enabled China to ultimately escape the economic doldrums and relish unprecedented economic growth. However, they also spurred numerous local problems—high tax rates on farmers, confiscation of private properties to promote commercial development in rural areas, and urban relocation to spruce up the appearance of cities—because local officials were pressured to produce "visible achievements" that were

Contemporary Petitioning and Chinese Internet Censorship

Written by Tae Eon Ahn

required to gain bureaucratic promotions, which often entailed more violation of people's rights.

Frustrated by egregious abuse of power, more people filed their complaints to the Letters and Visits offices. The first signs of an unexpected surge surfaced from late June to the end of September 2003, when the number of registered petitioners increased by 58 percent compared to the year before.[71] Even more surprising is that the number grew even more afterwards. Not only the number of collective complainants has surged greatly but also more complainants are transgressing the statutory regulation of five people for collective complaints. Those collective complainants pose tremendous danger to the Chinese Communist Party because at any time if forced to the edge of unjust burdens, they can turn into civil disobedience—the scariest thing for the Communist Party that is always seeking for stability.

In order to contain the growing number of collective complainants, local governments have adopted sly and illegitimate tactics. In 2003, as more people took collective complaints to the capital, the Chinese Communist Party began to associate the number of complaints with the effectiveness of local officials and secretly stipulated that any magistrate confronted with a collective complaint of more than fifty people resign.[72] Another confidential central order even deprived the chance for promotion from the magistrate that sends collective complainants to Beijing.[73] In other words, although the Chinese Communist Party has implemented measures to protect and channel people's constitutional rights to complain about official abuses, being too fearful of collective actions, it also took various measures to suppress them.

Observing from the current state of the complaint system, it is evident that the Chinese government is left with two options: either it adopts more effective political reforms to separate the Party from the state and address growing socioeconomic problems or it finds a substitute that can replace, if not complement, the role of the petitioning system. Unless either one of them takes place, “natural resistance” rooted in Chinese culture and history is only bound to steadily increase and bedevil the Chinese government from maintaining social stability, the ultimate and the most essential goal of the Chinese politics. And since it is implausible for the Chinese Communist Party to fully embrace and practice the rule of law, it is wiser for the Chinese government to look for a complementary system that fortifies the Letters and Visits system.

This paper argues that the Internet can aptly serve as a complement to the Letters and Visits system and possibly convalesce the increasingly dysfunctional and corroding system that seems to be deleterious to both parties—the Chinese government (Chinese Communist Party) and the complainants.

New Petitioning System: the Internet

The Internet is supplementing the role of the petitioning system. As the Internet is no longer exclusively reserved for educated, urban dwellers, more people across China are using the Internet to express their dissent. The Internet, in fact, is inherently a better platform in the perspective of the government; (1) it prevents collective actions to which people unsatisfied with the outcome of the petitioning often resort to; (2) it can increase the support of the population and loyalty of the local governments more effectively than the petitioning system.

Ironically, petitioning Beijing which intends to raise the support and trust of people tends to do otherwise. The conclusion of a study on the correlation between the results of the petitioning system and the trust in the central leadership is rather grim. Of 1,314 petitioners, 28.2 percent said they were fined by the government, 31.4 percent said that their homes ransacked, properties confiscated, and valuable taken away, and 46.2 percent were framed and wrongfully accused of theft, tax evasion, or violation of the birth control policy by cadres. [74] In sum, over 60 percent of petitioners suffered one or more varieties of local repression.[75] This result has a significant implication, for petitioners who suffered reprisals from local governments have displayed propensity to place blame on the incompetence and lack of commitment of the central leadership. Thus, the more the petitioners struggle with the repercussions of petitioning, the less they trust the Chinese government and the Chinese Communist Party.

A more precarious aspect of the petitioning system is that once petitions founder to address local concerns, petitioners tend to resort to uninstitutionalized and more assertive political participation, a reaction that the Chinese government fears the most. The same study claims that petitioners who no longer believed in the commitment of the

Contemporary Petitioning and Chinese Internet Censorship

Written by Tae Eon Ahn

central leadership were 37.8 percent more prone to choose to scare officials and 26.8 percent more likely to establish an organization to expose the hypocrisy of the central government.[76] Furthermore, these activities are more perilous than they seem on the surface, as numerous precedents show that they evolve into riots. As such, a high level of trust that people demonstrate when they first start petitioning often plummets and eventually induces more aggressive popular actions.

Considering the potential dangers involved with the petitioning system, the Chinese government would find the Internet to be an alluring substitute. The Chinese government can easily clamp down on microblogs that insinuate political protests, and detain leading dissidents by tracking the IP addresses. Thus, in contrast to the petitioning system, the Internet enables the Chinese government to often eradicate the cause of collective actions even before they take place. Violent actions provoked by dissatisfaction with the petitioning system occur unexpectedly because the government is not informed of their plans for collective actions before they physically take place. Congregating in Beijing often for similar injustices—corruption, unjust unemployment, land division quandaries—petitioners ratchet up group protests in front of the State Bureau of Letters and Visits or the Forbidden City. Their protests are usually orchestrated furtively on a personal basis, so it is virtually impossible for the government to thwart the political actions from occurring; the best it can do is to crack down on protests only after they occur. Therefore, the Internet serves as a great alternate for the petitioning system.

Furthermore, the Internet ineluctably makes local governments more loyal to the central government—a unique feature that the current petitioning system does not entail. A salient feature of the Chinese censorship apparatus is that the main server only exists in Beijing.[77] The central government holds power to delete comments posted online, often leaving local governments vulnerable to criticisms. In other words, if the central government and the Chinese Communist Party find local government officials unfavorable, they give temporary freedom of speech to people to disparage those officials and make people believe as if they have acquired more freedom of speech than before. Moreover, for public dislike is a legitimate reason for impeaching officials, the central government can dispose of any local officials at any time, abating the power of local officials and reinforcing the strength of the central government.

2011 Wenzhou train crash case aptly reflects this view. When the two high-speed collided and derailed each other in Wenzhou, four cars fell off the tracks and forty people were reported dead.[78] After the incident, railroad officials clumsily responded to the emergency by burying the cars and trains and muzzling the media. However, astoundingly, the central government allowed five days of freedom of speech, and 10 million criticisms of the high ranking officials deluged the Internet—reports on incidents of similar magnitude get censored immediately.[79] This freedom offered the government a great pretext to sack such corrupt railway officials as Long Jing, Li Jia, and He Shengli who had been embroiled in numerous corruption scandals.[80] From this incident, it is overt that the central authorities opens a precise and narrow window of freedom of speech on the Internet to get rid of local officials deemed unfavorable, hence reinforcing their control over local governments.

The Bo Xi Lai scandal is another example to support this view. Serving as a member of the Central Politburo and the secretary of Chongqing's Communist Party, Bo Xi Lai was hailed as one of the rising leaders in China.[81] Unlike other top Chinese leaders, he earned tremendous respect for cracking down on an organized crime, increasing spending on the welfare program, and maintaining the double-digit GDP growth.[82] Due to the stellar achievements and popularity, he was even considered for promotion to the Politburo Standing Committee in 2012. However, his splendid political career abruptly ended when the demoted vice-mayor, Wang Lijun requested asylum at the United States Consulate in Chengdu.[83] Later, his wife was also accused of murdering a British family friend, Neil Heywood.[84] Strangely, the rumors regarding his implication with various criminal activities spread on Weibo for two months without much interference of the state, and the Chinese netizens almost freely castigated Bo as long as they did not display any intention for collective action.[85] Because the Chinese Communist Party has long questioned Bo's insatiable ambition and opportunism and feared his rapid and threatening rise in the preordained hierarchical structure, this scandal provided a perfect pretext to discharge Bo and eradicate his influence.

This feature is particular to the Internet because people whose petitions have been stymied by local repression seem to correlate local repressions with the incompetence of the central government. That is, the petitioning system is

Contemporary Petitioning and Chinese Internet Censorship

Written by Tae Eon Ahn

largely counterproductive in that in contrast to its intended effects, it vitiates the reputation of the central leadership. However, by allowing people to criticize local officials on the Internet and sometimes getting rid of those corrupt or inept officials, the Chinese government stays above the fray and strengthens its power while debasing the authority of local officials. Therefore, the Internet is a great replacement for the petitioning system to get the support of not only the local governments but also the people.

Conclusion

The objective of Chinese Internet censorship is more profound than to merely fight for ideological purity or repress all dissent. Not only are such goals impractical but also possibly counterproductive to the Chinese Communist Party's main objective: to maintain stability. Detaching people from all foreign contents and muzzling criticisms are to only put away problems to be dealt later, usually in a greater magnitude as simmering tensions can only be contained for so long. It is crucial that the government enables people to vent their grievances and frustrations to mollify their anger.

Chinese leaders have realized the importance of establishing connections with the people since the Zhou dynasty and have long had some form of petitioning system to redress local concerns. However, those efforts were not sufficient to prevent the demise of multiple dynasties in the Chinese history. This does not necessarily suggest that the Chinese Communist Party is bound to confront the same fate. Internet censorship appears to allow the Chinese government to prevent collective actions and placate dissatisfaction of the general public more effectively than the petitioning system. The critical question going forward is whether the government will manage to continue effectively censoring the Internet in the name of China's stability, or whether the balance of technology will shift in favor of those who would organize against the government.

[1] "China Smartphone Owners Swell Number of Internet Users," *BBC News* (July 17, 2013), <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/technology-23343058>.

[2] Michael Anti, "Behind the Great Firewall of China," TED video, 2:35, filmed June 2012, posted July 2012, http://www.ted.com/talks/michael_anti_behind_the_great_firewall_of_china.html.

[3] "China Smartphone Owners Swell Number of Internet Users."

[4] Michael Anti, "Behind the Great Firewall of China," TED video, 3: 42-3: 52, filmed June 2012, posted July 2012, http://www.ted.com/talks/michael_anti_behind_the_great_firewall_of_china.htm

[5] Martin Jacques, *When China Rules the World: The End of the Western World and the Birth of a New Global Order* (Penguin Books, 2012), 82-83.

[6] Jacques, *When China Rules the World*, 84.

[7] Jacques, *When China Rules the World*, 100-103.

[8] Jacques, *When China Rules the World*, 102-104.

[9] Jacques, *When China Rules the World*, 111.

Contemporary Petitioning and Chinese Internet Censorship

Written by Tae Eon Ahn

- [10] Jacques, *When China Rules the World*, 111.
- [11] Jacques, *When China Rules the World*, 174-180.
- [12] Jacques, *When China Rules the World*, 194-195.
- [13] Thomas Lum, *Internet Development and Information Control in the People's Republic of China* (NY: Nova Science, 2009), 3-4.
- [14] Connie Guglielmo, "IT Spending To Hit \$2 Trillion in 2013, Even as China Slowdown Drags down Growth," *Forbes*, August 5, 2013, <http://www.forbes.com/sites/connieguglielmo/2013/08/05/it-spending-to-hit-2-trillion-for-first-time-in-2013-even-as-growth-slows/>.
- [15] Dean Cheng, "Middle East Lessons for China: Internal Stability," *The Heritage Foundation*, no. 3200 (March 21, 2011).
- [16] Gary King, Jennifer Pan, and Margaret E. Roberts, "How Censorship in China Allows Government Criticism but Silences Collective Expression," *American Political Science Review* (May 2013): 2-3.
- [17] "The Tiananmen Papers," *Foreign Affairs* 80, no.1(2001): 2-3, <http://www.ou.edu/uschina/texts/ChiPol/Nathan2002Tiananmen.pdf>.
- [18] "The Tiananmen Papers," 2.
- [19] John Chan, "Origins and Consequences of the 1989 Tiananmen Square Massacre," *World Socialist Web Site*, June 4, 2009, <http://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2009/06/tien-j04.html>
- [20] Katia Moskvitch, "China Bans Tiananmen Square-related Web Search Terms," *BBC News*, June 4, 2012, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/technology-18321548>
- [21] Michael Chase, and James Mulvenon, *You've Got Dissent! Chinese Dissident Use of the Internet and Beijing's Counter-Strategies* (Rand Publishing, 2002), 50-62.
- [22] Chase, Mulevenon, 50.
- [23] Chase, Mulevnon, 51.
- [24] Chase, Mulevenon, 51.
- [25] Chase, Mulevenon, 51.
- [26] Chase, Mulevenon, 55.

Contemporary Petitioning and Chinese Internet Censorship

Written by Tae Eon Ahn

[27] Chase, Mulevenon, 55.

[28] Ai Weiwei, "China's Paid Trolls: Meet the 50-Cent Party," *New Statesman*, October 17, 2012, <http://www.newstatesman.com/politics/politics/2012/10/china%E2%80%99s-paid-trolls-meet-50-cent-party>.

[29] Weiwei, "China's Paid Trolls: Meet the 50-Cent Party."

[30] Weiwei, "China's Paid Trolls: Meet the 50-Cent Party."

[31] King, Pan, Roberts, "How Censorship in China Allows Government Criticism but Silences Collective Expression," 2-3.

[32] King, Pan, Roberts, "How Censorship in China Allows Government Criticism but Silences Collective Expression," 1-2.

[33] David Ownby, *Falun Gong and the Future of China* (London: Oxford University Press, 2008), 23-25.

[34] Ownby, 88-89.

[35] Ownby, 60-63.

[36] Ownby, 97.

[37] Ownby, 139-148.

[38] Jan Jekielek, "Google Exit Highlights China's Most Censored Internet Topic: Falun Gong," *The Epoch Times*, March 26, 2010, <http://www.theepochtimes.com/n2/china-news/hlights-chinas-most-censored-internet-topic-falun-gong-32158.html>.

[39] Jekielek, "Google Exit Highlights China's Most Censored Internet Topic: Falun Gong."

[40] King, Pan, and Roberts, "How Censorship in China Allows Government Criticism but Silences Collective Expression," 17-18.

[41] King, Pan, Roberts, "How Censorship in China Allows Government Criticism but Silences Collective Expression," 8-9.

[42] Lily Kuo, "Why China Is Cracking down on Western-style Singing Contests," *Quartz*, October 21, 2013, <http://qz.com/137832/why-china-is-cracking-down-on-western-style-singing-contests/>.

[43] Howard W. French, "Visibility of Gay People Reflects Changes in China," *The New York Times*, September 1, 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/08/31/world/asia/31iht->

Contemporary Petitioning and Chinese Internet Censorship

Written by Tae Eon Ahn

letter.html?_r=2&emc=eta1&.

[44] Andy Yee, "China: Ai Weiwei Detained, Initial Twitter Reactions," *Global Voices*, April 4, 2011, <http://globalvoicesonline.org/2011/04/04/china-ai-weiwei-detained-initial-twitter-reactions/>.

[45] Yousri Marzouki, "The Contribution of Facebook to the 2011 Tunisian Revolution: A Cyberpsychological Insight," *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, vol. 15 no. 5: 238.

[46] Marzouki, 238.

[47] Marzouki, 242.

[48] "Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube's Role in Arab Spring (Middle East Uprisings)," *Social Capital Blog*, January 26, 2011, <http://socialcapital.wordpress.com/2011/01/26/twitter-facebook-and-youtubes-role-in-tunisia-uprising/>.

[49] Chase, Mulevenon, 57-59.

[50] Chase, Mulevenon, 57.

[51] Chase, Mulevenon, 58.

[52] Tania Branigan, "Google Angers China by Shifting Service to Hong Kong," *The Guardian*, March 23, 2010, <http://www.theguardian.com/technology/2010/mar/23/google-china-censorship-hong-kong>.

[53] Charles Arthur, "Google Phishing: Chinese Gmail Attack Raises Cyberwar Tensions," *The Guardian*, June 1, 2011, <http://www.theguardian.com/technology/2011/jun/01/google-hacking-chinese-attack-gmail>.

[54] Arthur, "Google Phishing: Chinese Gmail Attack Raises Cyberwar Tensions."

[55] Qiang Fang, *Chinese Complaint Systems: Natural Resistance* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 7-10.

[56] Fang, 15-17.

[57] Fang, 17-19.

[58] Fang, 15.

[59] Fang, 19-22.

Contemporary Petitioning and Chinese Internet Censorship

Written by Tae Eon Ahn

[60] Fang, 19-20.

[61] Fang, 21-22.

[62] Fang, 20-21.

[63] Fang, 33-34.

[64] Fang, 43-44.

[65] Fang, 35-37.

[66] Fang, 41-44.

[67] Fang, 47-49.

[68] Fang, 47-48.

[69] Fang, 128-129.

[70] Fang, 137.

[71] Lianjiang Li, Mingxing Liu, and Kevin J. O'Brien, "Petitioning Beijing: The High Tide of 2003–2006," *The China Quarterly*, vol. 210: 313-334.

[72] Fang, 144.

[73] Fang, 145.

[74] Lianjiang Li, "Political Trust and Petitioning in the Chinese Countryside," *Comparative Politics*, vol. 40 no. 2: 216.

[75] Li, 216.

[76] Li, 221.

[77] Michael Anti, "Behind the Great Firewall of China," TED video, 14: 36, filmed June 2012, posted July 2012, http://www.ted.com/talks/michael_anti_behind_the_great_firewall_of_china.html.

[78] Sharon LaFraniere, "Design Flaws Cited in Deadly Train Crash in China," *The New York Times*, December 28, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/12/29/world/asia/design-flaws-cited-in-china-train-crash.html?_r=0.

Contemporary Petitioning and Chinese Internet Censorship

Written by Tae Eon Ahn

[79] Michael Anti, "Behind the Great Firewall of China," TED video, 6: 54, filmed June 2012, posted July 2012, http://www.ted.com/talks/michael_anti_behind_the_great_firewall_of_china.html.

[80] Michael Anti, "Behind the Great Firewall of China," TED video, 15: 22, filmed June 2012, posted July 2012, http://www.ted.com/talks/michael_anti_behind_the_great_firewall_of_china.html.

[81] "Profile: Bo Xilai," *BBC News*, September 21, 2013, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-china-19709555>.

[82] "The Princelings Are Coming," *The Economist*, June 23, 2011, <http://www.economist.com/node/18832046>.

[83] Josh Chin, "U.S. State Dep't Confirms Chongqing Gang-Buster Visited Consulate," *China Real Time Report*, February 9, 2012, <http://blogs.wsj.com/chinarealtime/2012/02/09/u-s-state-dept-confirms-chongqing-gang-buster-visited-consulate/>.

[84] Michael Wines, "In Rise and Fall of China's Bo Xilai, an Arc of Ruthlessness," *The New York Times*, May 6, 2012, http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/07/world/asia/in-rise-and-fall-of-chinas-bo-xilai-a-ruthless-arc.html?_r=0.

[85] Michael Anti, "Behind the Great Firewall of China," TED video, 15: 34, filmed June 2012, posted July 2012, http://www.ted.com/talks/michael_anti_behind_the_great_firewall_of_china.html.

Bibliography

"Behind the Great Firewall of China." TED. Video file. Posted June 2012. http://www.ted.com/talks/michael_anti_behind_the_great_firewall_of_china.html.

Arthur, Charles. "Google Phishing: Chinese Gmail Attack Raises Cyberwar Tensions." *The Guardian*. Last modified June 1, 2011. <http://www.theguardian.com/technology/2011/jun/01/google-hacking-chinese-attack-gmail>.

Branigan, Tania. "Google Angers China by Shifting Service to Hong Kong." *The Guardian*. Last modified March 23, 2010. <http://www.theguardian.com/technology/2010/mar/23/google-china-censorship-hong-kong>.

Chan, John. "Origins and Consequences of the 1989 Tiananmen Square Massacre." *World Socialist Web Site*. Last modified June 4, 2009. <http://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2009/06/tien-j04.html>.

Chase, Michael, and James Mulvenon. *You've Got Dissent! Chinese Dissident Use of the*

Contemporary Petitioning and Chinese Internet Censorship

Written by Tae Eon Ahn

Internet and Beijing's Counter-Strategies. N.p.: Rand Publishing, 2002.

Cheng, Dean. "Middle East Lessons for China: Internal Stability." *The Heritage Foundation*, March 21, 2011.

Chin, Josh. "U.S. State Dep't Confirms Chongqing Gang-Buster Visited Consulate." China Real Time Report. Last modified February 9, 2012. <http://blogs.wsj.com/chinarealtime/2012/02/09/u-s-state-dept-confirms-chongqing-gang-buster-visited-consulate/>.

"China Smartphone Owners Swell Number of Internet Users." BBC News. Last modified July 17, 2013. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/technology-23343058>.

Fang, Qiang. *Chinese Complaint Systems: Natural Resistance*. New York: Routledge, 2013.

French, Howard W. "Visibility of Gay People Reflects Changes in China." The New York Times. Last modified September 1, 2010. http://www.nytimes.com/2010/08/31/world/asia/31iht-letter.html?_r=2&emc=eta1&.

Guglielmo, Connie. "IT Spending to Hit \$2 Trillion in 2013, Even as China Slowdown Drags down Growth." Forbes. Last modified August 5, 2013. <http://www.forbes.com/sites/connieguglielmo/2013/08/05/it-spending-to-hit-2trillion-for-first-time-in-2013-even-as-growth-slows/>.

Jacques, Martin. *When China Rules the World: The End of the Western World and the Birth of a New Global Order*. N.p.: Penguin Books, 2012.

Jekielek, Jan. "Google Exit Highlights China's Most Censored Internet Topic: Falun Gong." The Epoch Times. Last modified March 26, 2010. <http://www.theepochtimes.com/n2/china-news/hlights-chinas-most-censored-internet-topic-falun-gong-32158.html>.

King, Gary, Jennifer Pan, and Margaret E. Roberts. "How Censorship in China Allows Government Criticism but Silences Collective Expression." *American Political Science Review*, May 2013.

Kuo, Lily. "Why China Is Cracking down on Western-style Singing Contests." Quartz. Last modified October 21, 2013. <http://qz.com/137832/why-china-is-cracking-down-on-western-style-singing-contests/>.

LaFraniere, Sharon. "Design Flaws Cited in Deadly Train Crash in China." The New York Times. Last modified December 28, 2011. http://www.nytimes.com/2011/12/29/world/asia/design-flaws-cited-in-china-train-crash.html?_r=0.

Li, Lianjing. "Political Trust and Petitioning in the Chinese Countryside." *Comparative Politics* 40, no. 2.

Contemporary Petitioning and Chinese Internet Censorship

Written by Tae Eon Ahn

Li, Lianjing, Mingxing Liu, and Kevin J. O'Brien. "Petitioning Beijing: The Hide Tide of 2003-2006." *The China Quarterly* 210.

Lum, Thomas. "Internet Development and Information Control in the People's Republic of China." *Nova Science*, 2009.

Marzouki, Yoursi. "The Contribution of Facebook to the 2011 Tunisian Revolution: A Cyberpsychological Insight." *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking* 15, no. 5.

Moskvitch, Katia. "China Bans Tiananmen Square-related Web Search Terms." BBC News. Last modified June 4, 2012. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/technology-18321548>.

Ownby, David. *Falun Gong and the Future of China*. London: Oxford University Press, 2008.

"The Princelings Are Coming." *The Economist*. Last modified June 23, 2011. <http://www.economist.com/node/18832046>.

"The Tiananmen Papers." *Foreign Affairs* 80, no. 1 (2001).

"Twitter, Facebook, and Youtube's Role in Arab Spring (Middle East Uprisings)." Social Capital Blog. Last modified January 26, 2011. <http://socialcapital.wordpress.com/2011/01/26/twitter-facebook-and-youtubes-role-in-tunisia-uprising/>.

Weiwei, Ai. "China's Paid Trolls: Meet the 50-Cent Party." *New Statesman*. Last modified October 17, 2012. <http://www.newstatesman.com/politics/politics/2012/10/china%E2%80%99s-paid-trolls-meet-50-cent-party>.

Wines, Michael. "In Rise and Fall of China's Bo Xilai, an Arc of Ruthlessness." *The New York Times*. Last modified May 6, 2012. http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/07/world/asia/in-rise-and-fall-of-chinas-bo-xilai-a-ruthless-arc.html?_r=0.

Yee, Andy. "China: Ai Weiwei Detained, Initial Twitter Reactions." *Global Voices*. Last modified April 4, 2011. <http://globalvoicesonline.org/2011/04/04/china-ai-weiwei-detained-initial-twitter-reactions/>.

—

Written by Tae Eon Ahn

Written at: Ewha University

Written for: Leif-Eric Easley

Date Written: Autumn 2013