

**Performance, Meaning and Ideology in the Making of Legitimacy: The Celebrations  
of the People's Republic of China's Sixty-Year Anniversary**

**Abstract**

This article analyzes how the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) uses the sixty-year anniversary of the People's Republic of China to construct its legitimacy. We analyze the elaborate celebrations, which involved not only a large-scale military parade, but also a civilian pageant and various cultural products. By adopting a discourse analytical approach, our analysis shows how the celebrations are devised explicitly with a domestic audience in mind, and how they represent an attempt to bridge the various ruptures between contemporary Chinese modernity and the nation's revolutionary past. Even though this attempt is highly pervasive, we nevertheless find that China's propaganda experts cannot achieve their goal in full.

## **Introduction**

1 October 2009 marked the sixty-year anniversary of the People's Republic of China (PRC). The elaborate celebrations, which involved not only official activities such as forums, intellectual conferences, and a large-scale parade, but also various cultural products, such as arts exhibitions, TV series, and movies, have again brought questions to the fore that have occupied students of political science and of China for roughly two decades.

Ever since the fall of Communist rule in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, many Western observers have been waiting for the PRC to become part of what Huntington (1991) called the "Third Wave": the last series of states that would transform from authoritarian into liberal democratic systems. However, the degree to which the Chinese leadership rejects Western-style political reforms while simultaneously liberalizing the economy and opening up China to the world continues to puzzle scholars (Gilley 2008, 272): how, so the question goes, has China not followed the path of other formerly closed political systems and moved from totalitarianism to authoritarianism and then finally towards liberal democracy? How has the PRC defied what is otherwise regarded as an inevitable transition, based on a shift in values that should come naturally with economic reform, and has nevertheless retained its political legitimacy?

This paper addresses these questions by examining the ways in which the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) uses ideological means to justify its one-party rule over mainland China. To this end, we analyze how the 2009 anniversary celebrations featured into the CCP's legitimization strategy, and how the Party and the Chinese state apply rituals, performances, and cultural products to re-invent their legitimacy basis. Michael Shapiro (2004) has referred to such practices as "cultural governance"; a term which describes processes of cultural representation that constitute and legitimize sovereignty.<sup>1</sup> Cultural governance aims to strengthen specific discourses, while preventing those that challenge sovereignty. In essence, this means regulating society by regulating culture. Such processes involve the state, but are not fully dominated by the state. In this paper, we treat the anniversary celebrations as instances of cultural governance, and argue that

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<sup>1</sup> For an account of such practices in China, see Callahan 2006 and 2010.

various legitimization strategies interact, intersect, and fuse together within these political communication processes.<sup>2</sup>

The analysis conducted for this paper employs a method of discourse analysis. Following the work of Michel Foucault (1975), the term “discourse” here refers to linguistic practices (i.e. written or spoken texts) and non-linguistic acts (i.e. acoustic and visual) that establish social truths. We further understand discourse as a synthesis of discursive and social practices, as well as the domain in which such discursive and social practices are exercised. As Laclau and Mouffe (1985, 107-108) have shown, any social practice has its discursive dimension; conversely, any discursive practice has its material foundations and is, in effect, a social practice. In line with this understanding of the term discourse, we regard “celebrations” as a domain of dispersion in which various discursive/social practices interact. Accordingly, this paper investigates not only what people say during the celebrations (i.e. official speeches) but also what people do (i.e. actual performances). In short, this paper treats discourse as a complex communication process.

We start with an overview of the debate on legitimacy. In the tradition of Max Weber (1980), we understand legitimacy as creating acceptance for a political system among its subjects. The second part of this paper analyses the military parade that was staged for National Day, and which displayed the latest military weaponry and equipment of the People’s Liberation Army (PLA). We show how this parade is a political ritual.<sup>3</sup> It is neither primarily a display of military power, nor is it meant as a deterrent to potential foreign aggression. Instead, the performances have the purpose of unifying the domestic audience and providing a sense of national identity. In the third part of this paper, we examine the huge civilian parade that showcases the country’s social, economic and political achievements, and is used not only to justify the existence of the one-party state

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<sup>2</sup> Grand occasions such as national anniversaries often provide the backdrop for political justification in the PRC. Aside from celebrating traditional CCP holidays such as National Day or Labor Day, the state also expands the set of commemorative occasions at times when the unity of the nation calls for it. For instance, following the Tibetan riots of 2008, the leadership declared a new national holiday in 2009, entitled “Serf Emancipation Day.” 28 March now marks the anniversary of the day on which the PLA overthrew the Tibetan government in 1959. Various kinds of celebrations were held across China to mark the occasion, including an exhibition at the Cultural Palace of Nationalities, hailing the “liberation” of the Tibetans from a regime portrayed as brutal and feudalistic.

<sup>3</sup> The importance of rites and rituals throughout Chinese political history, and particularly in Confucian traditions, is well documented; for examples of Confucian rituals and their contemporary relevance, see Bell 2008, ch.3.

but also to interpret (and at times: re-assess) Chinese politics. In the final part of this paper, we analyze some of the cultural products that the authorities have produced and released for the occasion, focusing mainly on the star-studded blockbuster *The Founding of a Republic (Jianguo Daye)*.

By examining these different elements of the festivities, we show that the leadership is propagating a set of ideological elements that include faith in economic development, residual dogmatic Communist historiography, nationalist sentiments, and an emphasis of social harmony that echoes selected traditional Confucian teachings. The leadership unites all these different, sometimes seemingly contradicting or incompatible ideas by appealing to an overarching belief in modernization, and significantly shifts the Party's ideological legitimacy away from its original base.

## **1. Political Legitimacy in Contemporary China**

What political scientists mean by legitimacy varies from author to author, but as Lynn White (2005, 7) argues, the general “ghost that haunts” this line of scholarly work is Max Weber's definition of the term. Weber (1980, 16, 122-123) conceived of legitimacy as the chance to attain acceptance for specific commands or a general political order from a given group of persons. Weber argued that any political system would have to “inspire and maintain the belief in its ‘legitimacy’” (1980, 122; authors' translation). Citizens accept the political systems they live in on a variety of grounds, for example charismatic leadership, traditions, ideological orthodoxy, a sense of national unity, the way the state delivers its promise of welfare to the citizens, the extent to which an administration is accountable for its actions, etc. Such a definition moves the discussion on legitimacy away from normative questions (i.e. what type of political system is “good” or “bad”), and instead asks: why does a citizenry accept a specific political order, and how did the rulers create this acceptance?<sup>4</sup>

In the case of China, when the PRC was established sixty years ago, the Marxist-Leninist ideology provided the most, although not the only, convenient way to legitimize the CCP's monopolistic rule over China. Since then, however, China has experienced a drastic economic, social, and political transformation, in particular after

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<sup>4</sup> While this paper focuses on legitimacy in a domestic political context, the concept also has an international dimension. On the role of legitimacy and sovereignty in the international society, see Hurrell 2007.

adopting the Reform-and-Opening-up Policy in 1978. China has entered a period of transition – from a developing country to a newly industrialized one – which has, among other things, created a middle class that possesses expectations that may not always conform to those of the ruling authorities. Since the reform policies of Deng Xiaoping, the Maoist idea of “class struggle” has become a thing of the past. At the same time, China now faces a very different international environment compared to 1949. Especially today, amidst recent international developments such as the global economic crisis and the acceleration of globalization, the Communist ideology that offered the original moral foundation of the CCP’s one-party rule is fading away.<sup>5</sup> As a result, the CCP today encounters very different challenges in order to maintain its power and legitimacy than it used to. A simplistic legitimization strategy no longer fits the complex social and political order of contemporary China.

The problems and challenges that the CCP encounters have sparked a debate among Western political scientists and China watchers as to how the “authoritarian resilience” of the PRC’s political order should be explained (Nathan 2003, 6). A central focus of this debate is the idea that China’s leadership is changing the strategies it uses to legitimize its rule. As Gilley and Holbig (2009) have pointed out, the Chinese leadership has recognized the legitimacy crisis it faces: since the early 2000s, the Party has promoted a debate in Chinese academic journals on how to revisit the CCP’s legitimacy; a debate that draws strongly from Western political science concepts by authors such as Weber and Easton. The intention is to provide broader justification for China’s one-party political system.

According to Vivienne Shue (2004, 30-34), the resulting legitimization strategies are not new at all, but rather revamped conceptions dating back to the imperial age. The imperial governments of China’s past based their legitimacy on conceptions of moralistic, benevolent, and glorious rule. The PRC’s current leadership is following this logic, so the argument goes, but has adapted these traditional ideals to the modern context: the moral truth of a cosmic heavenly order has been replaced by the faith in modernity and scientific truth, the paternalist benevolence of officials has been retained through

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<sup>5</sup> An example is the ideological shift that Jiang Zemin introduced with his theory of the so-called “Three Represents.” This concept officially allowed entrepreneurs to join the CCP, and essentially sanctioned the Party’s endorsement of the private sector (Shambaugh 2008, 111-112). Other authors have shown that this new policy was de-facto a strategy “to legitimize the existing red capitalists” (Tsai 2007, 65), i.e. was an after-the-fact acknowledgement that many CCP cadres were already active in the private industry.

charitable welfare and economic development projects, and the glory of the empire is conserved by appealing to citizens' patriotic sentiment.

These ideals are then promoted through a sprawling propaganda complex.<sup>6</sup> Scholars like Anne Marie Brady (2008, 65-87) have argued that the CCP is today able to significantly boost its propaganda efforts due to various new technologies, such as television or the Internet, as well as public relations (PR) and mass communication techniques that are not unlike the ones utilized in Western democratic societies. According to Brady, contemporary Chinese society is controlled through persuasion rather than force, and consequently "propaganda work has become the very life blood of the party, the main means for guaranteeing the party's ongoing legitimacy and hold on power" (Brady 2006, 59).

In contrast to these arguments that Chinese legitimacy is mainly an issue of ideological "thought work" that aims to "guide minds",<sup>7</sup> other authors have advocated a conception of legitimacy that includes not only traditional beliefs but also structural components and behavior. David Shambaugh (2008) identifies various CCP reform efforts that are meant to transform the political system in order to strengthen the longevity of the CCP as the ruling party in China. These adaptation measures involve enacting new rules for leadership succession, broadening the CCP's membership base, initiating anti-corruption campaigns, enhancing the Party's governance accountability, etc. Likewise, Gunter Schubert argues that much of the debate on "authoritarian resilience" has failed to take into account the full range of legitimization strategies that the CCP has adopted. Schubert lists the various "zones of legitimacy" that he identifies in China, which range from new ideological concepts such as the "Three Represents" and the "Harmonious Society" to political reforms that target the quality of government (Schubert 2008, 199). In particular, he argues that the Party's attempts to reform the

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<sup>6</sup> For an introduction to China's propaganda system, see Brady 2006 and Shambaugh 2007.

<sup>7</sup> Note that such a strong belief in the persuasiveness of political communication is not unproblematic: firstly, if mass media are capable of "guiding minds" (Brady 2008, 59), then this should be equally true for democratic societies. Secondly, this line of argument is based on the assumption that audiences are passive receptacles for media content. Various authors have criticized this paradigm of early media studies, and have demonstrated that audiences are much more active in their interpretation of media content than many scholars give them credit for (see the various contributions in Donald et al. 2002). Finally, we argue in this paper that new technologies make it more difficult rather than easier to "guide minds." Recent examples are Google's threat to withdraw from the Chinese market (Thompson 2010), and the fact that China's government abandoned its attempt to install the controversial "Green Dam" censorship software on Chinese home computers (BBC 2009).

administrative system and intra-Party decision-making need to be understood as potential sources of legitimacy, and should not be discarded based merely on the normative belief in an “illegitimate regime in China that informs so much scholarly research” (Schubert 2008, 194).

Following this line of argument, legitimacy should indeed be understood in the terms of David Easton’s approach, i.e. as a mix based on three possible sources: ideology, structure, and the personal qualities of the political leadership (Easton 1965, 287). Consequently, this paper regards the CCP’s legitimization strategy as a “hybrid approach.” By hybrid we mean that the CCP has, on the one hand, initiated a broad range of substantial governance reforms, while, on the other hand, simultaneously diversifying the formats and styles through which it “frames” (Holbig 2006,13, Brady 2009a, 445, Pan et al., 2001, 334) the ideological foundation of these reforms.

In short, ideology is not the only legitimizing force in China, but it remains a significant factor: legitimization in the PRC is constructed through a highly intricate process of deployment, meaning making, symbolization, and ritualization. In order to be persuasive, this process of political communication needs to achieve what Jeffrey Alexander (2006, 29) has called “fusion”: reconciling the audience’s background knowledge and living conditions with the various elements of political performance, i.e. sets of symbols, the means of cultural production, the *mise-en-scène*, the relevant actors, and the participating audience. The analysis conducted in this paper will focus on this process of political communication by taking the PRC’s 60th anniversary celebrations as a case in point.

## **2. Staging the Military Parade**

In the tradition of past military parades,<sup>8</sup> China’s leaders transformed the world’s largest urban square into a sea of colors on 1 October 2009. Tiananmen Square had been framed in the east and the west by fifty-six poles (the “National Unity Poles,” representing China’s fifty-six ethnic groups), and 80.000 young Chinese volunteers filled the historic site, holding tens of thousands of Chinese roses in full bloom to form the characters

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<sup>8</sup> The 2009 military parade is China’s 14th since 1949. For the first decade of PRC history, such events were held annually, but since then many anniversaries fell victim to political vacuums or social turmoil. There have only been two in recent decades: a small event in 1984 and a grand parade ten years ago. For analyses of previous parades, see Hung 2007 as well as Sun 2001.

*guoqing*, or: “National Day.” In this setting, the Chinese government organized a grand celebration; one that aimed to display the country’s major military and economic achievements of the last six decades.

Yet, this grand celebration was more of a media event than an actual popular gathering. Only a small number of vetted elites actually attended the parade: The authorities had barred the public from the parade route, and had allowed only 30,000 invited guests and some 200,000 carefully selected volunteers onto Tiananmen Square.<sup>9</sup> The broad Chinese public enjoyed the events in the privacy of their homes. What they (and observers abroad) in turn witnessed, was a propaganda barrage that the organizers had skillfully staged specifically with live TV broadcasting in mind. This was apparent not only from the commentaries, which were scripted and timed to coincide precisely with various camera shots, but also from the fact that the montage of shots was carefully planned and rehearsed. The camera angles showing streamlined arrangements of men and of equipment prove that the filming process had been preceded by substantial planning, coordination, and rehearsal. The broadcast on China Central Television (CCTV) left little to chance, and aimed for a maximum melodramatic and propagandistic impact. As Dayan and Katz (1994, 59) have noted, such a televised staged event has the effect of giving the domestic public an “illusion of political involvement;” illusory because normally “social movements take place outside the home, not inside.”

This “illusion” begins at precisely 10.00 AM local time. To demonstrate unity among the CCP leadership – past, present, and future – Chinese president Hu Jintao and other top leaders such as his predecessor Jiang Zemin and his designated successor Vice President Xi Jinping, walk the red carpet to take up their positions on the Tiananmen podium – the historical location where Mao Zedong had declared the founding of the PRC sixty years prior. In an allusion to the chairman, Hu is clad in a “Mao suit” (a high-collared, dark grey attire that is known in China as a Sun Yat-sen suit, or *Zhongshan zhuang*), while the other Chinese leaders are dressed in Western suits and red ties.

The ceremonies commence with the raising of the national flag. Accompanied by a 60-gun salute, a special squad of 200 soldiers marches from the Martyrs’ Memorial in the centre of Tiananmen Square to the flag pole; their 169 goose steps each symbolizing one

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<sup>9</sup> Part of the reasons for this was to limit the risk of a security breach: following the outbreaks of violence in Xinjiang and Tibet during the previous two years, the authorities had made security a priority concern (Bristow 2009).



year in China's struggle for modernization since its painful exposure to British military power during the first Opium War in 1840.

This custom is immediately followed by another: the President's traditional military inspection of the country's armed forces.<sup>10</sup> The television cameras follow Hu Jintao as he drives east along Chang'an Avenue in a "Red Flag" limousine, passing the rows of Chinese troops that stand to attention along the northern part of Beijing's famous traffic artery. In a ritualistic display of power and humility that has its roots in the Mao era, Hu now addresses the armed forces through four microphones mounted on the roof of his vehicle. As he shouts "hello comrades," the troops reply "hello chairman" in unison. This exchange is followed by the leader's assertion "comrades, you have worked hard," which the troops answer with the words: "we serve the people." This ritual is repeated for roughly ten minutes, as Hu continues his inspection across a stretch of about three kilometers, before turning and heading back the same route to Tiananmen Square.

Back on the balcony, Hu gives an eight-minute oration in which he praises China's "5000-year history," its current economic prosperity, the unity of the nation, and the leadership of the Party. The various elements of Hu Jintao's speech are accompanied by very precise camera cuts that serve to illustrate the words: as Hu mentions Mao Zedong, the camera cuts to the Mao portrait on Tiananmen Gate; as Hu lauds the achievements of Jiang Zemin, the camera cuts to the former president; as Hu talks about the CCP's leadership, the camera captured close-ups of the various Politbureau members standing on the Tiananmen Gate balcony. In this sense, the "third-order audience" (Rauer 2006, 260) at home watches an even more coherent and "fused" event than the first-order audience in the square, or the second-order audience of TV camera men and news anchors broadcasting the parade.

Once Hu has concluded with the words "long live the great People's Republic of China, long live the great Communist Party of China, long live the great Chinese people," the actual military parade begins. 14 square formations, featuring nearly 5,000 soldiers, march past the Gate of Heavenly Peace. A thick, white dotted line across Chang'an Avenue marks the spot at which their commanders salute the leadership and each formation begins goose-stepping across the square. The montage and camera-work of

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<sup>10</sup> The head of the PRC commonly holds all top three positions in China's political system: state president, general secretary of the CCP, and commander-in-chief (i.e. chairman of the Central Military Commission). This overlapping of posts, referred to as "interlocking directorates," maximizes the Party's control over central political institutions (Lieberthal 2004, 239).

CCTV is as immaculately drilled as the performance on the square: the editors cycle through the same pattern of angles, one after another, turning the military formations into 35-second narrative units of eight to eleven shots.<sup>11</sup> The marching soldiers are followed by an array of tanks, armored vehicles, heavy artillery, and intercontinental nuclear missiles, all captured in similar camera angles throughout. As this arsenal thunders by, the television editors splice in images of saluting spectators and smiling representatives of various ethnic minorities in the audience.

The vehicles are followed by twelve squadrons of fighter planes, helicopters and bombers that zoom by overhead. At the same time as this demonstration of military prowess, tens of thousands of schoolchildren stand in the square south of the parade, flipping colored flash-cards in unison, creating an enormous human screen that displays slogans in yellow and red: “love the people,” “repay the nation,” “devote yourselves to the mission,” “uphold honor,” “harmonious society,” etc. The scene is acoustically underscored by a 1,500-man military band that plays revolutionary marches throughout the progression.

While the audience in Tiananmen Square was cheering as atomic weapons passed by dancing minorities, foreign observers were largely baffled and shocked by this display of militarism. For Western journalists such as the *Financial Times*' Geoff Dyer and Jamil Anderlini, the immense, flawless organization of the parade was a major departure from the Olympic opening ceremony of 2008, which had presented “a sort of hi-tech and creative authoritarianism,” while the 2009 celebrations “had a whiff of north Korea's ‘mass games’” and “represented a retreat into Communist slogan and kitsch” (Dyer et al. 2009). This Western criticism, as understandable as it may be, nonetheless misses a few important points.

On the one hand, the mass-display of military power is meant for a domestic audience, and in fact for a very specific segment of that audience. The outmoded imagery of armored vehicles may not be a convincing display of political legitimacy to foreign observers, but then again: it is not meant to be. The intention of the parade is to reel in

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<sup>11</sup> In order to track the broadcasting methods during the event, we have created shot protocols of the various parade segments and have analysed these for commonalities. We have come to the conclusion that CCTV must have had five or six different cameras on the ground, filming the parade from different positions. In addition, CCTV made use of one, possibly two aerial cameras. The first four shots of each formation are identical (with two minor exceptions), and the same angles are chosen to display certain moments in each formation (for instance when the formations reach the far-side of the square). All of this enhances the feeling of unity and discipline that is on display during the parade, and fuses the performative elements.

orthodox Party members and nationalist supporters with images of military might, while at the same time subtly changing the meaning of the armed forces in a way that suits the current leadership's foreign policy agenda. The CCTV commentary to the parade is important in this regard: the announcers on the one hand emphasize that more than fifty new types of weapon systems are on display here, including unmanned drones and cruise missiles capable of deterring US aircraft carriers. All of these new systems are proudly announced as "made in China." This is a significant shift away from the message portrayed during the celebrations ten years before: the armed forces now emphasize quality over quantity, technology over manpower, and national achievement over foreign influences.<sup>12</sup>

On the other hand, the CCTV anchors re-frame the symbols of military power by claiming that the equipment on display is employed in the service not just of "national security," but also of "peace and world development." Such euphemistic phrases are bound to resonate with young nationalist viewers, who wish to see their country challenge US military hegemony in the world especially in light of the PRC economic successes of the past decade, while at the same time still promoting what is arguably the title of the current administration's reign: "harmony" (*hexie*).

### **3. The Civilian Parade: Re-Framing Socialist Historiography**

Harmony is also the central theme of an elaborate civilian parade that follows and dwarfs the military display. 100,000 people, waving paper flowers and red banners, march across the square. The participants are grouped around sixty brightly decorated floats, each showcasing a different theme or accomplishment in the PRC's sixty-year history.

The progression opens with three formations: the first presenting the national flag, the second featuring the national emblem, and the third symbolizing the CCP's early "bloody struggle" (*yuxue fendou*) to power. The following four segments of the parade are structured around large portraits of the four leaders who have ruled China over the past six decades, and who now form the Chinese Communist pantheon: Mao Zedong,

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<sup>12</sup> This discourse of domestic technological advancement is also reflected in China's claim to perfect weather control: as the CCTV commentators point out, the clear blue sky that day had been engineered by Chinese scientists. Already in the weeks preceding the celebrations, China's media had announced that the country's "artificial weather manipulation" apparatus (employing roughly 37,000 scientists) would target unwanted rain clouds as well as the notorious Beijing smog through a combination of satellite imaging, cloud-probing lasers and dispersal chemicals (Jacobs 2009).

Deng Xiaoping, Jiang Zemin, and Hu Jintao.<sup>13</sup> Each of these segments features political slogans and iconic representations of the respective leader's reign.

The float carrying Mao's image (hyperbolically entitled "creation of heaven and earth") is accompanied by signs reading "long live Mao Zedong thought" and "the Chinese people have stood up." As the float passes by, the school children in the square turn their flashcards over to form the words "socialism is good." A recording of Mao's famous quote "the People's Republic of China is hereby established" blasts from loudspeakers. A dance performance rounds off this part of the parade. Next follows a segment on China's reform period, entitled "the story of spring": An image of Deng Xiaoping moves past, while the helpers on Tiananmen Square flip their cards to form the words: "emancipate the mind." The large portrait is accompanied by formations that carry the slogans "insist on Deng Xiaoping Theory" and "push forward the modernization work of the open-door policy and of socialism." The loudspeakers play a fragment of a Deng speech, in which the late president propagates "socialism with Chinese characteristics."

After another short dance performance, the huge human billboard on Tiananmen Square flips to read "striding into the next century" and "proceed with the times." Jiang Zemin's portrait glides by, along with the slogans "insist on the important ideology of the Three Represents" and "comprehensively establish a society of comparatively good living standards." Jiang's voice booms from the speakers, declaring his conviction to "a beautiful future." This segment is a good example of how China's communist propaganda is still struggling to assign meaning to the Jiang era with its rampant capitalism. According to this representation of Jiang, the defining moment of his reign seems to be that he happened to run the country at the turn of the millennium: the passing of time is here reconstructed as a heroic achievement.<sup>14</sup> The segment is consequently entitled "walking into a new era." Similarly, the Hu Jintao era is celebrated under the title "carry forward the cause, and charge ahead into the future." The flashcards in the background read "scientific development" as Hu's image moves past, along with the slogans "implement the concept of scientific development" and "resolutely continue

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<sup>13</sup> Note that the parade makes no mention of China's second communist leader, Hua Guofeng, who followed in Mao's footsteps as CCP chairman in 1976 and was ousted from office in 1981. This part of China's past is here deleted from the country's historiography.

<sup>14</sup> For a more generous evaluation of Jiang's impact see Fewsmith 2008. Heike Holbig (2006) has shown what role propaganda concepts from the Jiang era actually play in China's political discourses today.

down the road of socialism with Chinese characteristics.” A recording of Hu’s voice announces that all should “diligently struggle” to improve China’s living conditions.

In terms of scale, it may so far appear that the four CCP leaders all received equal treatment: each was represented by a portrait, followed by important slogans, and finally honored by a dance performance. In terms of allocated time, each segment lasted four minutes, with the exception of the Mao formations, which crossed the square in five minutes. If we add the introductory floats, which all feature Mao-era themes, it would at this point seem that each leader received accolades proportional to the time they had ruled China. Mao, who’s rule took up 45 percent of the PRC’s sixty-year history, had received 44 percent of the parade time at this point; Deng (who reigned 25 percent of the 60 years) had received 19 percent, Jiang Zemin (reign: 17 percent) had received 18 percent, and Hu Jintao (total reign at the time: 10 percent) had received 19 percent.<sup>15</sup> The starting segments of the parade suggest a continuous historiography that conveniently glosses over controversial periods such as the Great Leap Forward (1958-1961) or the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). It seems to unite past, present and future in a well-balanced way. This first impression, however, is misleading. In the context of the whole parade, PRC historiography is subject to a significant shift in emphasis; one that becomes apparent in the segments that follow.

As the portraits of the four leaders exit Tiananmen Square to the west, the longest and most elaborate part of the civilian parade moves in from the east. Under the title “brilliant achievement,” 19 floats and a total of 43,000 people from all walks of life cross before the Gate of Heavenly Peace. The next twenty minutes are dedicated to the various fields in which the PRC has made achievements since the start of the Reform-and-Opening-up Policy.

The first two floats showcase achievements in agriculture and rural development, celebrating China’s ability to feed its population of 1.3 billion and to improve the living conditions of its overwhelmingly rural inhabitants. Next, the “industrial development” float pays tribute to China’s reform of the secondary sector and its achievements in manufacturing. A fourth float, carrying sculptures of highways, high-speed trains, and airplanes, represents China’s expanding infrastructure and logistic capabilities.

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<sup>15</sup> The missing three percent of PRC rule fall to Hua Guofeng.

After this demonstration of production capabilities, the following segment is meant to demonstrate China's involvement in energy preservation and environmental protection. China's increasing demand for energy is reworked here by juxtaposing oil-drilling derricks and miniature power plant models with models of wind and water turbines. An array of marchers carries photovoltaic panels, while the CCTV commentators emphasize China's commitment to renewable energy sources. The environmental protection float similarly showcases a "green" China; a theme that already dominated the Olympics discourse one year earlier. The float is decorated with huge green leaves and symbols of green landscapes. The volunteers surrounding the float wave green fans, rounding off a symbolic commitment to sustainable development that comes at a time of international criticism against China's role in global environmental politics.<sup>16</sup>

The next segment celebrates China's interpretation of democracy. The first float, entitled "democratic politics," shows the Great Hall of the People, which is home to the National People's Congress. It is followed by a second float that features an oversized sculpture of China's constitution, symbolizing the PRC's progress in establishing the rule of law. The surrounding marchers wave red flower bouquets, and the students on Tiananmen Square flip their flashcards to again form the words "socialism is good," reminding viewers of the benevolence that Chinese leaders claim of their political and legal institutions.<sup>17</sup>

After this excursion into politics, the emphasis shifts towards science, technology, education and culture: the "scientific development" formation with its test tubes, its large microscope, and its iconic sculpture of a DNA string, serves as a reminder of China's bioengineering program. The country's achievements in information technology are represented by oversized keyboards and digital screens that show various scientific breakthroughs. Next follows a float that showcases China's space program. It carries a model of the domestically-built space rocket Shenzhou 7 as well as a huge terrestrial globe. The Chinese astronaut who performed the country's first spacewalk in 2008, Zhai Zhigang, leans out of the spaceship's hatch, waving a Chinese flag, while four other colleagues who have entered space aboard Shenzhou-type spacecrafts salute to the podium of CCP leaders.

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<sup>16</sup> Most recently, Western observers such as Marc Lynas have recounted China's behaviour during the Copenhagen environmental summit, arguing that the PRC representative deliberately sabotaged the talks (Lynas 2009).

<sup>17</sup> On China's difficult transition towards a rule of law, see Peerenboom 2002.

This display of China's scientific development is succeeded by formations of university students, showcasing the theme "education." They are followed by a float with cultural elements, such as Beijing Opera figures, martial arts performers, contemporary pop icons, and a self-referential display of CCTV news anchors. This self-referential legitimization is continued on the next two floats, which focuses on sports. Nominally, the two formations have different themes: the first float, entitled "sports development," carries national sports heroes such as hurdler Liu Xiang, gymnast Li Ning, and other Olympic gold medalists. The second float, entitled "Beijing Olympics," features a model of the famous Bird's Nest Olympic Stadium, a sculpture of an Olympic torch, a large flat screen that shows video footage of the Olympics, and more Chinese medalists. As the two floats pass by Tiananmen, the band plays the Beijing Olympic theme song "You and Me." The degree to which Olympic symbols are layered here makes it clear that these two formations are really celebrating the same occasion: the successful hosting of the Games just one year before. The international sports event (itself at the time a mark of legitimacy) is integrated into the PRC's historiography of legitimizing achievements. In this sense, one media event quotes another: the sixty-year anniversary parade revives the memory of the Beijing Olympics, and China celebrates the fact that it had reason to celebrate a year before.<sup>18</sup>

The final themed element of the parade consists of seven formations that promote the ideas of unity and harmony. Three floats focus on domestic issues. The first symbolizes China's fight against communal diseases, reminding the population of the country's prevention measures against the devastating SARS outbreak in 2003 and the most recent H1N1 pandemic. Another float features an idyllic urban scene with schools, hospitals, neighborhood committees, and other public facilities under a rainbow; a symbol for a "harmonious homeland." Helpers push wheelchairs with handicapped people, who wave little Chinese flags. The third float shows a socialist-realist sculpture of construction workers, entitled "in unity there is strength": an allusion to reconstruction efforts that followed major natural disasters such as the 1998 floods or the 2008 Sichuan earthquake. The message here is: as long as all Chinese people join forces under the leadership of the Party, any difficulties the country faces can be overcome.

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<sup>18</sup> For a discussion of the Beijing Olympics see Brownell 2008, Xu 2008, Barmé 2009, Brady 2009b, as well as the various contributions in Price et al. 2008.

Next, the formation turns from domestic to international support for the PRC. The float “my Chinese heart” carries Chinese compatriots from abroad and Chinese students studying in other parts of the world. The formation “one world” is composed of 181 foreigners from 53 countries, wearing either their national costumes or traditional Chinese clothing. Those marching next to the float wear T-shirts reading “I love China.” The CCTV announcers comment that a harmonious China can only develop in a harmonious world, and that the world in turn needs a harmonious China. The segment on unity and harmony is rounded off by a formation of dancing Chinese minority groups. Finally, the “unity float,” a boat-shaped construction that features a massive Chinese flag, surrounded by ethnic minorities waving miniature flags, provides the link to the next segment of the parade.

Within the subsequent nine minutes, 8,500 people march by as part of the array “splendid China.” The parade formations are accompanied by 34 floats, each representing one of China’s provinces or regions. Decorated with each region’s local symbols, these floats highlight the diversity of culture within the PRC’s territory and suggest a homogenous, continuous national development. For instance, the Xinjiang float displays a flying carpet that carries a large petrochemical complex, while the Tibetan float features a large screen with video footage of happy Tibetans. The last floats represent China’s special administrative regions Hong Kong and Macao, as well as Taiwan, emphasizing the ethnic and geographic unity of the PRC.<sup>19</sup> This final regional float carries a model of Taipei’s landmark 101 Tower as well as sculptures of colorful local fruit, all arranged under a bright rainbow. “Treasure island” is written on the side of the float. On each side of the rainbow, airplanes are taking off; a symbol for improving cross-Straits relations and the new air, sea, and postal links that the island established with the mainland at the end of 2008.

The parade closes with a segment dedicated to China’s future. Another large boat-shaped float featuring a large Chinese flag sails past. The float, decorated with the slogans “prosperity and strength,” “democracy,” “civilization,” and “harmony,” symbolizes China’s “blueprint for the future.” It is followed by a drum performance of “young pioneers,” a float decorated with a large Communist star and a red torch, and a formation of children carrying balloons. This last formation, arranged around a large

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<sup>19</sup> For an analysis of how this unity was portrayed during another major event (the Hong Kong handover in 1997), see Pan et al. 2001.



basket filled with flowers and the characters “long live the motherland,” moves past as the volunteers in the square present the slogan “tomorrow will be even more glorious.” 60,000 white doves are set free and fly across Tiananmen, while a choir of roughly 5,000 children sings “we are the future of Communism.” The formation comes to a stop in front of the Tiananmen balcony. The children release their balloons into the sky, run towards the historic gate, wave colorful wreaths, and cheer at the leaders standing above.

Several aspects are noteworthy here: Firstly, all of the elements in this closing segment are traditional topoi in China’s communist propaganda, and could be seen as symbols that the domestic audience expects. Barmé has described a similar use of such symbols in commercial Chinese advertising, arguing “that many people feel comfortable with the icons – and this sense of familiarity (...) indirectly becomes a reinforcement of political legitimacy” (1999, 19). In this sense, the use of these topoi during the parade arguably suggests a symbolic continuity that reinforces the political status quo.

Secondly, the use of children for propagandistic purposes is becoming a hallmark of civilian parade director Zhang Yimou, the Chinese filmmaker who also directed the opening ceremony of the Beijing Olympics in 2008. Authors such as Donald have argued that CCP propaganda experts have long used children “to carry particular political messages to the public” and attract adult audiences by appropriating “the state of childhood for their own cultural pleasure” (1999, 97). In the case of the parade, the children cast the overall nationalist message in a benign and innocent form. By associating China’s future with cute children, nationalism (*aiguo zhuyi*) becomes “cute nationalism” (*keaiquo zhuyi*).

Finally, while still a celebration of CCP rule, the parade has moved the ideological legitimacy basis of the Party significantly away from its revolutionary heritage to a mixture of nationalism and the current administration’s interpretation of Chinese modernity. What the sixty-year anniversary truly celebrates is not sixty years of PRC history, but the last thirty years of economic development.

Indeed, only about one fifth of the parade is dedicated to China’s Maoist past. History is re-written, with an entirely new emphasis.<sup>20</sup> The civilian parade becomes an exercise in collective remembrance as well as selective amnesia: specific “memories” such as China’s leap into space, the Sichuan earthquake, or the Beijing Olympics are

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<sup>20</sup> This discursive practice of “smoothing over” historiographic ruptures is well acknowledged (see Barmé 1999, 15, as well as Callahan 2010).

carefully chosen and then arranged centre-stage in order to artificially fuse the present with an opaque past. Such selective remembering/forgetting is, as Benedict Anderson (2006, 210) has phrased it, “a characteristic device in the...construction of national genealogies.” What is remarkable here is that this historical continuity does not exist outside of the mass-mediated narrative, which is set in “homogenous, empty time” (ibid., 204). Anderson describes this sort of temporal representation as “homogenous and empty” since modern technologies (the telephone, the photograph, the filmed documentation, and even the literary devices employed in modern novels) artificially create a sense of simultaneity.<sup>21</sup>

This then is the true achievement of the televised parade. The media event makes it possible for the year 1949 to pass by in space on a colorful, reductionist float, immediately followed by the similarly simplified year 1978 as well as an array of themes from the present. The effect is that sixty years of history become thirty years, and that two periods in history, which have little in common except that they each mark the start of a new era in PRC historiography (i.e. the start of Mao’s “New China” vis-à-vis Deng’s reformed China), are imagined as a continuum.

#### **4. The Great Cause of China’s Foundation: Discontinued History and Ruptured Ideology in Chinese Cultural Products**

The sixty-year anniversary parade is arguably a corner stone in the CCP’s current propaganda strategy. However, despite its grandeur and scale, it is only one part of much broader cultural efforts to guide public opinion. One of these efforts is the blockbuster *The Founding of a Republic*, which mirrors the ideological shift present in the parade. In order to understand the relevance of this shift, a brief examination of the context in which this particular cultural product was screened is in order.

In fact, the anniversaries included a remarkable range of artistic celebrations, spanning 110 performances that represented almost all facets of the country’s culture and civilization. These performances were meant to gather leading Chinese artists in every art category on the stages of Beijing, and attract more than 300,000 visitors.<sup>22</sup> The organizers

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<sup>21</sup> See Anderson 2006, chapter 4.

<sup>22</sup> The performances began on 8 June and lasted until the end of October 2009. The opening of the series was staged at the National Centre for the Performing Arts, with the Hebei Symphony Orchestra presenting the Baipo Symphony. This symphony, which was specifically prepared for

placed particular emphasis on plays with revolutionary-historic and real-life themes. Moreover, the tribute series also specifically demonstrated the unity of all Chinese ethnic groups. All provinces, autonomous regions (i.e. Tibet, Xinjiang, Mongolia, etc.), and special administrative regions (i.e. Hong Kong and Macao) of the PRC, along with Taiwan, presented individual performances. Overseas artists of Chinese descent also visited to perform and pay tribute.

This cultural emphasis is hardly surprising. Since its Yan'an days, the CCP has regarded "culture" in the broadest sense as an important propaganda tool. Throughout its history, the CCP has been employing images, radio broadcasts, television dramas, and films to reach China's population. During the first half of 20th century, well before the dissemination of modern mass communication technologies, the CCP adopted various visual and oral media to mobilize support and communicate with the Chinese populace, which was at that time widely illiterate. According to Glen Peterson (1994, 95-120), some of these cultural means were borrowed from the Soviet Union, such as pictorial magazines, cartoons, revolutionary songs, peasant dances, and public announcements. Others, such as posters, woodblock prints, folk songs and popular opera, were drawn from Chinese popular culture. Since the 1990s, the development of new technologies (digital media, internet, mobile phones, etc.) has made the CCP's approaches to popular culture more complex.

Among other media, TV has been particularly significant, as Zhao (1998), Hong (2002), Lee (2003), Chang (2007), and other media scholars have noted in their respective research. Indeed, for decades the state has been using TV dramas as an ideological tool that is meant to provide guidance and education to its viewers. The main propaganda format is the so-called "mainstream melody drama" (*zhuxuanli ju*), which state broadcasters use to promote Party policy and help the audience identify with the socialist New China.<sup>23</sup> For the sixty-year anniversary, CCTV channel 1 broadcasted a 50-episode drama on Mao's rise to power, entitled *Liberation (Jiefang)*. The series was aired two episodes per day, from 7 September until 15 October. The propaganda efforts on

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the anniversary, deals with the historical site Xibaipo, where the Communist Party stationed its officers for the final three battles of the liberation war before the New China was founded in 1949.

<sup>23</sup> There are generally three types of main melody dramas: those that recount important events in China's revolutionary history (for example *Blank Sword: Liang Jian*, 2005), those produced for special occasions such as the ten-year anniversary of Hong Kong's return to the mainland (see *Hong Kong Sister: Xianggang Jiemei*, 2007), and those that promote the work of a particular state agency such as the police (see the three installments of *The Commissioner: Gonganju Zhang*, 2003-2007).

television were augmented on the one hand by the large-scale musical production *Road to Revival (Fuxing zhi Lu)*, which recounts China's revolutionary history since the first Opium War, and on the other hand by the state-commissioned blockbuster *The Founding of a Republic*. This star-studded cinematic present that the CCP awarded itself to celebrate its accession to power sixty years earlier is the focus of the final part of this paper.

The movie, directed by Han Sanping and Huang Jianxin with financial backing from the state-owned China Film Group Cooperation, follows the history of China from 1945 to 1949, i.e. the revolutionary war between the CCP and the KMT that ended with the Communists sweeping into power. The project was conceived by the Beijing Municipal People's Political Consultative Conference and had the support of a wide range of government departments, ministries, local governments, and media outlets.

Shooting began on 2 February 2009, and the finished version was released to cinemas on 10 September 2009. On National Day, additional cinemas screened the propaganda piece, which featured not only ideological content, but also Hollywood-style cinematography and a cast of Chinese stars: Tang Guoqiang and Zhang Guoli play the roles of Chairman Mao and his bitter rival Chiang Kai-shek, while cameos from Chinese pop icons such as Andy Lau, Jiang Wen, Chen Kaige, Feng Xiaogang, Jet Li, Jackie Chen, Ge You, Zhang Ziyi and others assure the audience appeal of the film.<sup>24</sup> China's propaganda experts have long realized that a didactically "healthy" cultural product can only be effective if it is popular. Today, the cultural industries aim to "unite the three qualities" in their products (*sanxing tongyi*): ideological, artistic, and viewing quality (interviews with Chinese media experts, Beijing 2007).

The star-studded blockbuster tells the story of how the CCP forged a unified New China from the shards of a country torn asunder by civil war. The plot follows the major decision-makers, both on the Communist and the nationalist side. Rather than focusing on the military battles between PLA and KMT forces (which are only alluded to by slow-motion, magenta-colored scenes of soldiers running across fields), the filmmakers show a seemingly endless series of political meetings. Aside from some special effects and the generally elaborate wide-screen cinematography, the film largely conforms to Chinese

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<sup>24</sup> Most of the actors and actresses reportedly worked for free or offered their services at special rates to show their support for the state's anniversary. With so many stars dying to participate in the project, some only received several seconds of screen time in the 140-minute epic.

TV drama conventions, jumping from one dialogue scene to the next, and placing little emphasis on narrative dynamics or suspense.

Instead, this docudrama-style movie provides a projection screen on which revolutionary symbols can be re-arranged to express contemporary discourses. Class-struggle is not an issue in this re-imagination of Mao's China. The movie focuses on the political wisdom of the chairman, which allows him to build the united front and win members of the pro-democratic camp for his cause. In the end, the movie not only shows the PRC's founding as a pluralist enterprise, with Mao being the first among equals. It also presents the CCP as a "democratic" party, which has the broad support of figures from all shades of the political spectrum.

The most significant feat of *The Founding of a Republic* is that the film turns Mao's Communism on its head, interpreting the chairman's ideology in a way that justifies China's current return to capitalist production processes and private property. Most notably, one sequence shows Mao and his men sitting around a table, discussing economics. Mao is frustrated that he was unable to buy cigarettes: all the shops in the area are closed. Reluctantly, the chairman has to concede that China cannot function without the capitalists. The viewers have to wonder whether Mao is still the chairman of the Chinese Communist Party, or rather of a "Chinese Capitalist Party." Here, as in the parade, the CCP is justifying China's transition to a market economy. What is at work here is a complex process of meaning-making: Over time, Mao and his brethren have been reduced to simple signs. Various social and political actors, among them China's propaganda experts, struggle to shape the meaning of these signs in a continuous process of cultural governance and resistance.

Similarly, Mao's capitalist adversaries are portrayed in an unprecedented favorable light. Chiang Kai-shek, his wife Soong May-ling, and their son Chiang Ching-kuo, are depicted as torn characters who overall have the welfare of the Chinese nation at heart: Chiang Ching-kuo proves to be an ardent fighter against corruption within his own party, whose words echo contemporary worries about corruption in the CCP. Madame Chiang is an able and internationally respected stateswoman, who fights for China's unity. Even the generalissimo himself turns out to have human (even humane) features. It is primarily external circumstances, as well as some misjudgments on the part of KMT-boss Chiang, that lead these figures down the wrong path of history. This re-interpretation is not

entirely surprising, considering that mainland China is increasingly following in the developmental shoes of its small neighbor Taiwan.

*The Founding of a Republic* shows how the Chinese authorities provide a cultural context for their sixty-anniversary celebrations. By layering a multitude of signs in various modes<sup>25</sup> and across different cultural events, the propaganda system relays its own discursive position. This process, in which various social actors (most notably: the state) manage the ideological dimension of legitimacy, is a good example of cultural governance. To make sure that the message is understood “correctly,” all cultural products and events use the same code and draw from the same discourses: national unity, social harmony, historiographic coherence, and modernity. However, as the blockbuster demonstrates, the recourse to socialist-realist kitsch and the great helmsman by no means marks a return to orthodox left-wing communism. China’s propaganda experts deploy Mao and his comrades to signify the hour zero in PRC history, and simultaneously reframe the CCP’s ideological legitimacy to justify recent developments.

The building blocks of China’s collective memory are here re-arranged to construct a road that ironically no longer leads to socialism with Chinese characteristics, but to a capitalist modernity that has more in common with Sun Yat-sen’s nationalism than with Mao’s communism. This revived and revisited version of nationalism is then sanctioned by China’s various sages, be they Communists, misguided early nationalists, or even revived pre-modern political thinkers.<sup>26</sup>

### **By Way of Conclusion: Resistance to Ruptured Propaganda Efforts**

As our above analysis has shown, the blatant socialist realism on display for the sixty-year anniversary of the “New China” should by no means be interpreted as a “return to Mao, Marx, and the military,” as some Western observers believe (Dyer et al. 2009). Quite to the contrary, the celebrations represent an attempt to bridge the various ruptures between contemporary Chinese modernity and its revolutionary past. The festivities

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<sup>25</sup> For a theoretical account of how such a semiotic process takes place in different modes, see Kress et al. 2001.

<sup>26</sup> A case in point is the recent “Confucian revival” (*rujiao fuxing*) that has swept China (see Jiang 2003 for the most prominent example). This trend is incorporated into the state-dominated cultural industries: in January 2010, a large-scale film production directed by orthodox left-wing director Hu Mei and featuring Hong Kong star Chow Yun-Fat hit the cinemas. The film is entitled *Confucius (Kongzi)*.

legitimize the CCP's one-party rule over China by re-inventing its traditions and rewriting its history. As effective as this strategy may seem, we nevertheless do not claim that the Chinese leadership can achieve its aims in full. In fact, the current administration's legitimization strategy remains ruptured for various reasons, and this makes resistance possible.

Firstly, despite the seemingly monopolistic ideological efforts of state and Party, it is by no means certain that the dominant discourses will successfully "guide the opinion" of a supposedly homogenous, passive audience. As Vivienne Shue (2004, 40-41) has argued, the ideological dimension of claims to Chinese legitimacy (in her work the advocacy of truth, benevolence and glory) has a flip-side: it leaves the political order open to contestation; each of these discourses can potentially be turned against the leadership, possibly providing fuel for counter-hegemonic struggle. Shue provides the example of the Falun Gong movement and its crack-down in 1999 to show how for instance religious practices can challenge the official discourse of modernity, and why such a challenge is seen as an immediate threat to political legitimacy in the PRC. Shue argues that the Chinese leadership will remain vulnerable to such contestations unless it moves away from its narrow legitimization discourses and justifies its rule more broadly.

Secondly, in its attempt to keep the fragmented elements of its legitimization strategy "fused," the leadership has anchored its messages primarily in a nationalist discourse. This decision may prove to be fatal. Once the authorities decided to promote, as Anderson (2006) phrased it, an "imagined community," they set the frame for all future shifts in meaning. Changes in the CCP's legitimacy basis now have to take place within the confines of the national imaginary, or the public may feel betrayed by the unfulfilled promise of unity and strength. While the authorities aim to establish a non-radical "pragmatic nationalism" (Zhao 2004), social groups such as China's so-called "angry youths" (*fenqing*; Rosen 2009) may very well aggressively challenge this discourse if they feel their leaders are not patriotic enough. The leadership is banking on an imaginary over which it does not have absolute control, and which may create resistance among Chinese neo-nationalists.

Thirdly, the way in which the Chinese government has staged this anniversary event further invites foreign resistance. The CCP still clings to its traditional dualist perception of how propaganda should work: its efforts are divided into those that address foreign observers and those that aim at domestic audiences (Shambaugh 2007, 47). This conflict

leads to the somewhat erratic propaganda that foreign observers witness in China today: On the one hand, events such as the Olympics are planned and coherently executed in ways that come close to international best-practice PR, and are consequently perceived as attempts to present a pluralist and responsible China to audiences abroad. On the other hand, foreign observers view events such as the sixty-year anniversary celebrations as a violation of China's commitment to become a peaceful and responsible actor in the international society. As Sun (2002) has shown, multiple publics view media messages in very different ways, and contextualize foreign messages using their domestic perception. In essence, a military parade that is meant for the Chinese audience re-enforces commonly expected "truths" abroad, in this case fueling the very discourses of the "China Threat" that Chinese propaganda has been trying to counter.

Finally, the rupture between foreign and domestic propaganda efforts has the potential to spill back into China. As Jenkins (2008) has argued, in an age of media convergence the old dichotomy of domestic/foreign communication becomes blurred. In the Chinese case, the leadership hopes to adapt to the challenges that the information age and globalization present by incorporating new information technologies into its style of governing. The dilemma that arises from this approach is that the very same technologies used to modernize China's communication environment make traditional top-down authoritarian methods of propaganda impossible. In the end, China's media and information strategy becomes incoherent the longer it ignores the participatory character of today's communication methods.

In short, an event such as the PRC anniversary automatically transgresses national borders, and the reactions to the parade feed back into China through channels the government cannot control. The military rituals, the dancing minorities and the waving masses become anachronistic, and in the long run impossible to "fuse" into a single, persuasive message.<sup>27</sup> The traditional revolutionary event clashes with the liberal PR attempts of the Olympics or the Shanghai Expo. These ruptures, both domestic and

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<sup>27</sup> It is not within the scope of this paper to discuss how Chinese audiences perceive foreign media reports on events in China. Future survey research could help shed light on this question.



abroad, have the potential to create resistance, which may in turn pose a challenge to the CCP's political legitimacy. Hence if China's propaganda officials truly wish to contribute to a "harmonious world," they need to overcome the dichotomy of inside vs. outside that currently dominates CCP propaganda, and instead should move towards a strategy that reconciles CCP legitimacy with new media developments in the post-dot-com world.

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