6 Rejuvenation
Securing the Chinese Dream (1996–2015)

Fig. 6. Chan Koonchung in a Beijing Starbucks

Starbucks and Yahoo! were the talismans of public intellectual life in China on the eve of the 2008 Beijing Olympics. In 2006 Chan Koonchung, a writer and intellectual organizer, frequented coffee shops in Beijing. Sometimes, as in the picture above, it was one of the many Starbucks lounges that have proliferated in major cities, but just as often it was in cafés associated with bookshops where he hosted salons bringing together scholars, thoughtful businesspeople, and cultural entrepreneurs from the

Chinese diaspora who, like himself, had been drawn to Beijing to understand "Rising China" and its relations with the outside world. Meanwhile, Chan would start publishing critical novels about the problems of contemporary life in China. At the same time, Liu Xiaobo, firebrand literary critic and human rights activist, was at home in Beijing, on the computer and online. He was adding to his blog and praising the Internet. For Liu, first arrested after June 4th for his part in the 1989 Tiananmen demonstrations, and most recently jailed for his protest activities in late 1996, the Internet opened a new world. While he could not publish in China, he was tolerated when publishing outside China. Before the Internet, however, getting manuscripts safely abroad took a lot of time and effort. Now, he was sending his latest articles by email and getting a reply from the editor overseas in a matter of hours. The computer and Internet are wonderful, enthuses Liu; they expanded his world unimaginably, supercharged his writing, and provided enough income to get by. This ease of online publishing energized Liu to join "Charter 08," a petition for democracy in China of which he became the lead author, and for which he was detained in 2008 and subsequently sentenced to jail for eleven years.

The ideological moment: the Chinese Dream and the perils of prosperity

In the early 2000s China was a marvel to the world, with phenomenal economic growth, flourishing cities, a rising middle class, and a growing sense of national self-confidence. There can be no greater contrast to the situation a century earlier, when Liang Qichao struggled to find a way to "save China." "Rising China" became the catchphrase, at home as well as abroad. How had the Chinese Communist Party defied expectations and provided some two decades of sustained economic growth without conceding political power to democratic reforms? Talk of a "China model" or "Beijing consensus" began to challenge the "Washington consensus" of George W. Bush and the neoliberal triumphalism of America. The rising self-confidence in China came to a crescendo in August 2008 with the Beijing Olympic games. The run-up had been marred by uprisings in China's west around Tibet and the worldwide confrontations that ensued as China paraded its Olympic torch around the world only to be greeted by protesters. The games themselves, however, were a festival of celebration, an announcement of

Voices in the 2000s

YU KEPING (b. 1959): *DEMOCRACY IS A GOOD THING* (2006)

Democracy is a good thing, but this does not mean that democracy can do everything. Democracy is a political system that holds that sovereignty belongs to the people, but it is only one of many systems that govern human societies. Democracy mainly regulates the political lives of people, but it cannot replace the other systems and it cannot regulate everything in people's lives. Democracy has its internal limitations; it is not a panacea and it cannot solve all of humankind's problems. But democracy guarantees basic human rights, offers equal opportunity to all people, and represents a basic human value. Not only is democracy a means for solving people's livelihood issues, but it is also a goal of human development. A tool for achieving the other goals, democracy is also in accord with human nature. Even if food and housing are widely available or even guaranteed to all, the human character is incomplete without democratic rights.

. . . Since democracy is rule by the people, it should respect the people's own choice. If a national government employs forceful means to make the people accept a system that they did not choose, then this is national autocracy and national tyranny masquerading as democracy. When one country uses mostly violent methods to force the people in other countries to accept their so-called democratic system, then this is international autocracy and international tyranny. National tyranny and international tyranny are both contrary to the nature of democracy.

We Chinese are presently building a strong, modern socialist nation with unique Chinese characteristics. For us, democracy is not only a good thing but an essential one.[1]

CHARTER 08 (2008)

A hundred years have passed since the writing of China's first constitution. 2008 also marks the sixtieth anniversary of the promulgation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the thirtieth anniversary of the appearance of the Democracy Wall in Beijing, and the tenth of China's signing of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. We are approaching the twentieth anniversary of the 1989 Tiananmen massacre of pro-democracy student protesters. The Chinese people, who have endured human rights disasters and uncountable struggles across these same years, now include many who see clearly that freedom, equality, and human rights are universal values of humankind and that democracy and constitutional government are the fundamental framework for protecting these values.

[1] Yu Keping, "Minzhu shige hao dongxi" (first published 2006), trans. in Yu Keping, *Democracy Is a Good Thing: Essays on Politics, Society, and Culture in Contemporary China* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2009), pp. 4–5.

(*cont.*)

. . . China, as a major nation of the world, as one of five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, and as a member of the UN Council on Human Rights, should be contributing to peace for humankind and progress toward human rights. Unfortunately, we stand today as the only country among the major nations that remains mired in authoritarian politics. Our political system continues to produce human rights disasters and social crises, thereby not only constricting China's own development but also limiting the progress of all of human civilization. This must change, truly it must. The democratization of Chinese politics can be put off no longer.

Accordingly, we dare to put civic spirit into practice by announcing *Charter 08*. We hope that our fellow citizens who feel a similar sense of crisis, responsibility, and mission, whether they are inside the government or not, and regardless of their social status, will set aside small differences to embrace the broad goals of this citizens' movement. Together we can work for major changes in Chinese society and for the rapid establishment of a free, democratic, and constitutional country. We can bring to reality the goals and ideals that our people have incessantly been seeking for more than a hundred years, and can bring a brilliant new chapter to Chinese civilization.[2]

BAI TONGDONG (b. 1970): *NEW MISSION FOR AN OLD STATE* (2009)

Chinese intellectuals mistook the weakest moment of this abnormal dynasty [the Qing] as representing the core of traditional Chinese politics, and misguidedly turned their fire on tradition. During the May Fourth Movement (in 1919), Chinese radicals called for the demolition of the "Confucian Store" (*Kong jiadian*). The sad irony was that, in their bid to get rid of the authoritarian elements in Chinese politics, they helped to dissolve the Confucian elements that served historically as the main counterbalance [to the authoritarian Legalist elements]. In consequence, Chinese politics has since developed an even more authoritarian tendency, which has reinforced the radicals' conviction that traditional Chinese politics was purely authoritarian. For example, under early Communist rule (Chinese Communists belonged to the most radical wing of the May Fourth Movement), even village officials were directly appointed by the central government. However, throughout much of Chinese history, communities below county level had often enjoyed a large degree of autonomy. Recently China has experimented with village elections, which many Chinese and Westerners welcome as a sign of the country's democratization. Yet this development can equally be viewed as a return to traditional politics, when the regime was far less authoritarian.[3]

[2] Liu Xiaobo, *No Enemies, No Hatred: Selected Essays and Poems* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), pp. 301 and 309–10.

[3] Bai Tongdong, *Jiu bang xin ming: Gujin DongXi canzhao xiade gudian rujia zhengzhi zhexne* (New Mission of an Old State: Classical Confucian Political Philosophy in a Contemporary and Comparative Perspective) (Beijing: Beijing chubanshe, 2009), trans. in Bai Tongdong, *China: The Political Philosophy of the Middle Kingdom* (London: Zed Books, 2012), pp. 174–5.

China's prosperous age (*shengshi Zhongguo*).[4] The financial collapse exploded in America only a few months later, and the global financial crisis that ensued only strengthened the feeling that China's time had come and that the age of Western domination that had defined life in China for over a century was passing. By 2012 the newest Party leader, Xi Jinping, tapped this emerging official Chinese triumphalism by calling on everyone to pursue and achieve the "Chinese Dream"—to "dare to dream, work assiduously to fulfill the dreams and contribute to the revitalization of the nation."[5]

This happy state of affairs, however, brought its own challenges. Now that China had gained a measure of wealth and power and was internationally respected, or at least treated with respectful tact, how to deal with the consequences of reform? How to share the wealth at home? How to be a responsible player regionally and on the world stage? In short, the question that defines the ideological moment in China today is, *how to be a great power?* For the CCP this translates into how to secure legitimacy as a ruling party and how best to handle the PRC's foreign policy. For China's intellectuals in the public arena the question is broader: how to be a just society and positive leader in the world?

China's intellectuals, like Chan Koonchung and Liu Xiaobo, have been operating in new worlds as well. The disestablishment of China's intellectuals from the party-state, already apparent in 1995, has carried on apace. New roles have established themselves, particularly as university professors, independent writers selling their manuscripts, journalists, book and magazine editors, businesspeople of all stripes—all in various ways *experts*. Government jobs in think tanks, research institutes, even the Propaganda Department, have continued but those intellectual cadres have retreated to the functional specialization of their fields, advising and serving the bureaucracy as experts and no longer speaking "for the people." The vaunted roles of intellectual cadres and establishment intellectuals as teachers of the nation, active leaders in a historical transformation of society, even as repositories of China's cultural heritage, are increasingly only a memory, though a powerful one. Some of China's thinkers and writers have begun to talk in terms of post-intellectuals, leaving that identity to the past.

[4] Geremie Barmé, "China's Flat Earth: History and 8 August 2008," *China Quarterly*, No. 197 (March 2009), pp. 64–86; and Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom, *China in the 21st Century: What Everyone Needs to Know*, 2nd edn. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 101.

[5] Xi Jinping's quote from "Youth Urged to Contribute to Realization of 'Chinese Dream,'" Xinhuanet, May 4, 2013, at http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2013–05/04/c_132359537.htm. This history and current use of the slogan is covered by the official English-language newspaper, *China Daily*, at www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/Chinese-dream.html, accessed June 25, 2015.

Intellectuals (*zhishifenzi*) had been the ineffectual cultural critics of the Republic and the culpable handmaidens of the disaster under Mao. Better to be scholars (*xuezhe*), readers (*dushuren*), writers (*zuojia*), commentators (*pinglunjia*), or one of any number of intellectually respectable professions—scientist, journalist, artist, doctor, lawyer, or such.

In the late 1990s the mood of intellectuals was despairing. Zhu Yong's 1999 book *What Are Intellectuals to Do?* captures something of the mood:

> I fear no social group has had such ups and downs as intellectuals have, experiencing such a dramatic fate in a century of profound changes: from heroes of creation to objects of remolding, from subjects of discourse to marginal mayflies, and feeling themselves unable to explain themselves simply, and so presenting the world with a confused and indistinct image. They created myths and were shattered by those myths; they led the currents and were engulfed by those currents. They were paragons of excellence and they were thoroughly degraded; they cherished the ideal nation, yet created a spiritual prison. They appear to be the critics, but seem unable to escape their original sin.[6]

In Rising China, China's thinkers and writers have moved on. They go online at coffee shops, at university, and more recently on their electronic tablets. They travel internationally more; they live on their smartphones—having pioneered the short text messaging now known as Weibo in China and Twitter elsewhere, and more recently Weixin (WeChat) mobile text messaging.[7] It is a confusing world to describe, but even more confusing for China's current intellectuals to live in. We will review the shape of their world, made up of the sinophone universe, those communicating in Chinese, and the reality of the directed public sphere under the anxious watch of the party-state but fired by a form of print capitalism and the unpredictable forces of the Internet. Within this universe we will visit again the many worlds of China's intellectuals: the official world, academic world, commercial world, associational worlds and the lonely world of open dissent.

We are interested in the public intellectuals (now known by the shorthand *gongzhi*), those who choose to address public affairs beyond their scholarly or professional specialties. We will see a range of public intellectuals—establishment, academic, and independent. The new limited version of

[6] Zhu Yong, *Zhishifenzi yinggai gan shenme?*, p. 1.

[7] Weixin is a Chinese microblogging service akin to Twitter (Twitter is blocked from use in China). Until about 2013, when it came under increased censorship pressure from the CCP, Weibo was the dominant social media service used by China's intellectuals. In response, much social commentary has moved over to the more flexible Weixin/WeChat format which provides micro-messaging on mobile devices between individual users or to a set list of recipients. Weixin is harder to control but reaches fewer people.

establishment intellectuals includes Pan Wei at Peking University, theorist of the China model; Yu Keping, a Party advocate of democratic reform at a key government think tank; and Cui Zhiyuan at Qinghua University, who embraced the left-wing Chongqing model under Bo Xilai. Academic public intellectuals speak from their university perches but to a public intellectual audience. They include Xu Jilin and Bai Tongdong in Shanghai; and Qin Hui, Wang Hui, and Xu Youyu in Beijing. They give a sense of this vibrant world dominated by intellectual standoffs between New Left and liberal camps. Chan Koonchung is our entryway into the third world of independent public intellectuals, where commerce, religious and local associations—including a range of New Confucian organizations—and the Internet intersect. Among and between these three roles for public intellectuals live the lonely souls who choose open dissent, from 2010 Nobel Peace Prize-winner Liu Xiaobo and Ai Weiwei, the performance art *enfant terrible* of the establishment, to a host of lesser-known activists, lawyers, and malcontents. All of this is *shengshi Zhongguo*: China in the prosperous age. In this ideological moment, China's thinkers and writers, now with smartphones and Weixin accounts, continue to debate who are "the people," what it is to be "Chinese," and what is "democracy." But they do so no longer in order to save China from destruction but to call on China to deliver on her promises to all Chinese and to the world.

The challenges of China's prosperous age

China in 1995 was on the cusp of sustained growth. Already the major cities showed profound changes, not least the arrival of notable foreign brands, such as McDonald's and Starbucks, but also in a building boom of skyscrapers. At the same time, daily life changed in fundamental ways. The power of the work unit, the *danwei*, to shape the lives of urban Chinese began to wane in the 1990s. Until then, not only did one's work unit provide employment and health insurance, but usually also housing, schooling for children, and even job placement for the next generation. They also doled out ration coupons for grain, meat, oil, and cloth. Universities, of course, were the *danwei* for students and the job allocation system of the universities was a major fact of life for intellectuals up to then. Recall that Chen Ziming and Wang Juntao just ten years earlier were driven to form a non-state think tank in Beijing because they had been punished through the job allocation system with assignments to inappropriate jobs. Increasingly in the 1990s, finding jobs, changing jobs, and securing housing and even grocery shopping or going to a restaurant moved from the bureaucracy to the market. The most exciting development on the streets of Shanghai in the mid-1990s was the proliferation of real-estate offices,

with windows plastered with apartment sales. This had not been possible for nearly fifty years. It was refreshing, it was exciting, and it was time-consuming. Deng Xiaoping had gambled rightly; the market absorbed the anxieties and energies of China's urban classes that had been dangerously focused on political reform.

Chinese intellectuals noted the change. They called it the commercialization of daily life. The lures of the market, with the titillations of infotainment, the distractions of shopping, and the temptations of money-making were all part of the economic liberalization of daily life, and they dazzled. This rush to the life of the market only compounded the political alienation of China's former intellectual cadres. Held at a distance from their government, China's intellectuals now found that their reading public had stopped paying attention. Intellectual debate turned inward and stumbled on some of the bad habits that the Taiwanese writer Bo Yang had identified in the 1980s, particularly intellectual factionalism and feuding. Even the main contestants in these rows admitted that the struggles were often "storms in a teacup." The debates raged in the new intellectual journals, beginning with *Twenty-First Century* (*Ershiyi shiji*), and joined by *The Scholar* (*Xueren*), *Reading* (*Dushu*), *Strategy and Management* (*Zhanlüe yu guanli*), and *Frontiers* (*Tianya*). These intellectual journals had more leeway and less censorship than the national press of the 1980s but they reached only a tiny minority of Chinese—fellow academics, students, and those who identified as intellectuals—not even 1 percent of the population.

An account of the intellectual debates of the 1990s and early 2000s produces a dizzying map of debates that flowered, faded, and merged into the next debate across the social sciences, the humanities, and policy advice. At mid-decade these included heated exchanges on "institutional innovation" (a candidate to replace "reform" and avoid "democracy"), on "state capacity" (a vehicle for advocates and opponents of "neo-authoritarianism"), on "national studies" (i.e. fresh debates on what "Chinese" means and platforms for academic New Confucianism), on "the humanistic spirit" (a defense of literature and philosophy in the face of short-term policy orientations), and on the concept of civil society and constitutional democracy carried out in terms of foreign examples and academic arguments.[8] These intellectual debates had dissolved by the early 2000s into three major constellations: liberals, New Left, and New Confucians.[9] We will meet

[8] These debates and readable translations from some of the main disputants, along with a handy chart of the debates (on p. 38) are provided in Wang, *One China, Many Paths*. Much of the material in the book was first published in the *New Left Review*, and so reflects that journal's orientation.

[9] Reviewed in Gan Yang, *Tong san tong* (The Three Traditions) (Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 2007).

several representatives, below, with Wang Hui and Cui Zhiyuan widely identified as New Left critics of neoliberalism and nostalgic for the good parts of Mao's revolution. Xu Jilin and Qin Hui represent the Chinese liberal approach, favoring law and incremental reforms toward electoral democracy. Kang Shaoguang and Bai Tongdong open the window on the diverse communities that self-identify as New Confucian.

National politics was dominated first by recovery from Tiananmen, and coping with the profound shock and challenge of the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, and then by the torrent of passions that the new nationalism of a post-Tiananmen patriotic education campaign had stirred across Chinese society. These passions were engaged on the one hand by the pleasure of Hong Kong returning to Chinese administration in 1997 and on the other by the frustration of viewing Taiwan's increasing moves away from the status quo since 1949 (under which the Guomindang also claimed to be the government of China). A local independence movement was growing on Taiwan under the Democratic Progressive Party. This led to a confrontation in the Taiwan straits in 1996 in which the PRC flexed its muscle, and tested some missiles, to make the point to Taiwanese electors of the dire consequences of going independent (in the end Lee Teng-hui, the Guomindang candidate, won the presidential contest and maintained the status quo). The major problem for the CCP, however, was domestic. Chinese students and urban citizens hit the streets in numbers not seen since Tiananmen in 1989. They were demonstrating *in favor* of the government while loudly clamoring for the Party to "protect the dignity" and "the national honor" of China by sinking any American ships that came too close.[10] The Party found itself riding the tiger of popular nationalism.

The Party established a predictable, if still confidential, pattern for leadership rotation through Party congresses held regularly every five years beginning in 1977. The decade of the 2000s saw China enter the WTO in December 2001. Relations with the United States drew back from what looked like bitter confrontation in the late 1990s after China signed up to the War against Terror following the 9-11 attacks on the US in 2001. While America welcomed Chinese support in its new crusade, Chinese authorities promptly declared Uighur separatists in the far western autonomous region, Xinjiang, to be terrorists. Stern measures there and in Tibet have kept those two regions in the PRC but at considerable cost. Uprisings, demonstrations, and the Party's harsh repression of these areas continue to sour China's relations with Western nations. At

[10] Peter Hays Gries, *China's New Nationalism: Pride, Politics, and Diplomacy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).

home, China's harsh rule in Tibet and Xinjiang is a continuing source of concern for some of China's intellectuals as well: how can China in this prosperous age, how can a great power, how can the Chinese Dream, be doing these things?

Public life in China has most strongly been shaped by the social contradictions that have come from the Party's reform efforts. The struggle between winners and losers in prosperous China appears in three contradictions: class conflict, competition between local and central governments, and contradictions between growth and sustainability. There is a simmering class conflict brewing between the prosperous middle class, the minuscule super-elite, the rural poor, the laid-off industrial workers, and the lumpenproletariat of the "floating population" of urban day-laborers.[11] The second contradiction is the undeniable reality of *two governments* in the one-party state: the central government and the local governments. China may not be a multi-party system, but it is emphatically a bifurcated state system. Beijing leaders bemoan the insubordination of local authorities, and local leaders know full well that (contrary to Western views about Communist systems) the Leninist party-state is in fact not strong enough to control all of them all the time.[12] The third contradiction is between growth and sustainability, particularly resource and environmental sustainability. None of the actors in Chinese society, from the top leadership to the poorest farmer or day-laborer, can continue to use land, water, air, and energy in the same wasteful ways and expect other than disaster in just a few decades. While social contradictions between rich and poor and central and local governments are more acute, it is the chronic contradiction of environmental sustainability and economic growth that will most fundamentally determine China's future. Only belatedly has the government leadership done more than talk the talk of conservation and sustainability and only recently have social groups been able to mobilize to protest the local destruction caused by industrial pollution.[13]

China's public intellectuals have engaged all these issues as best they can in the directed public sphere of China since Tiananmen. The

[11] The best overview of policy and intellectual debates in my view is given in Fewsmith, *China since Tiananmen*, and is covered in short compass in Timothy Cheek, *Living with Reform: China since 1989* (London: Zed Books, 1989), pp. 103–21.

[12] The impact of these tensions between central and local state is powerfully documented in Joseph Fewsmith, *The Logic and Limits of Political Reform in China* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

[13] China's environmental issues are hard to grasp. A good introduction is Judith Shapiro, *China's Environmental Challenges* (London: Polity Press, 2011). The science is covered sensibly in works by Vaclav Smil, such as *China's Past, China's Future* (London: Routledge, 2004). The long-term history is covered in Robert B. Marks, *China: Its Environment and History* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2012).

limitations were reinforced in the 2004 public intellectuals case. That September, *Southern People Weekly* (*Nanfang renwu zhoukan*) profiled fifty of China's top "public intellectuals." The list included journalists, activists, artists and writers, legal specialists, and university scholars from the social sciences and humanities. This popular PRC journal defined public intellectuals: "They have academic backgrounds and professional knowledge; they address and participate in public affairs; they maintain a critical spirit and moral ideals."[14] The writings of the profiled intellectuals address every conceivable contemporary issue, from US–China relations to AIDS to this week's news or popular movie, in essays published in the popular print media and all conveniently accessible from interlinked websites.[15] They particularly embarrassed the Party during the SARS (severe acute respiratory syndrome) epidemic scare in early 2003—exposing Party efforts to quash reports on the outbreaks. If China's intellectuals are not to be propagandists for the Chinese Communist Party or technocratic servants to an authoritarian state, then how will they find a public role? By the end of 2004 the Party media closed ranks around the leadership, reimposed restrictions on scholars and journalists, and ran virulent denunciations of "public intellectuals" in the state media, blaming them for dividing the people and the Party.[16] Over the decade since, China's intellectuals have sought ways to leverage government position, academic prestige, and professional status to maintain a role as public intellectuals.

China's directed public sphere and the social media revolution

In China today the life of intellectuals is first of all subject to the ground rules of the directed public sphere of the CCP. It is the powerful remnant of Mao's fearsome propaganda state as the Party retreats from total control of the public sphere to "scientific management" of communication. At the same time, revived commercial media and new Internet social media propel confusing changes. In this hybrid public sphere, intellectuals speak within sinophone discourse, which entails a set of

[14] "Yingxiang Zhongguo gonggong zhishifenzi 50 ren," *Nanfang renwu zhoukan* (Southern People Weekly), September 2004, at http://business.sohu.com/s2004/zhishifenzi50.shtml, accessed November 15, 2013.

[15] For such websites, see *Nanfang renwu zhoukan*, above.

[16] Particularly in *People's Daily* and *Jiefang junbao*. David Kelly gives a good assessment of this list and the political fallout it generated in autumn 2004 in "The Importance of Being Public," *China Review*, No. 31 (2004–5), pp. 28–37. Also see Willy Wo-Lap Lam, "Hu's Campaign for Ideological Purity against the West," *China Brief*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (January 18, 2005).

expectations beyond simply communicating in Chinese. Intellectual life is further enlivened by the value spheres of several intellectual worlds: the official world of public and political life; the academic world of universities and scholarship; the commercial world of making, buying, and selling; the associational world of public intellectuals, religious groups, Internet communities, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and other tolerated groups; and finally the *waiyu* world of "foreign-language communities" in China, particularly those competent in English or other major European languages. This range of intellectual worlds inside the universe of sinophone debate means that there is naturally a range of opinions among various thinkers and writers. But at the same time, there are shared concerns, assumptions, and ways of being a Chinese intellectual.

China's directed public sphere

The directed public sphere is the public arena as it exists in China today: the media, public institutions like universities and cultural associations, and the legal structure of associational life (i.e. the rules governing NGOs, religious groups, other social associations). In China the institutions of civility and social publicity are still organized and controlled by the propaganda system—the culture and education system led by a member of the CCP Central Committee—that we met in Chapter 3.[17] This system integrates under Party leadership the current newspaper and media systems as well as internal reporting systems within the party-state administration; the research agendas of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences; and the strategic planning, curriculum, and research output of all universities and research institutes. The reforms in the post-Mao period have modified China's propaganda state. Print capitalism that flourished in the first half of the twentieth century and was suppressed in mainland China under Mao has returned, and new avenues of citizen communication have emerged in the social media of the Internet, but both remain under the "management" of the CCP's Propaganda Department. There is certainly more intellectual freedom in China today compared to the Mao period—at a minimum the blessed freedom to be silent, to avoid politics, and to just get on with your own business,

[17] This is the *xuanjiao xitong*. For studies of the contemporary propaganda system in China, see Anne-Marie Brady, *Marketing Dictatorship: Propaganda and Thought Work in Contemporary China* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008); David Shambaugh, *China's Communist Party: Atrophy and Adaptation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009).

including serious academic research. The CCP has learned to use market choices to serve the goals of directed culture: with entertainment to distract the masses and financial inducements to corral intellectual energy in academic professorships and grants, government-funded research projects, and state-approved artistic ventures.[18] And, for those incorrigible souls bent on dissent, there remains the stick. Jeffrey Wasserstrom has evocatively named this startling mix of commercial excess and political regress "China's Brave New World"—where China has succeeded in achieving something of the vision of Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*: "the stability-crazed, pleasure-mad society of 'Year of Our Ford 634'."[19]

The power of the Internet is the second defining feature of China's directed public sphere today. China first connected to the Internet in 1987, but it was not until the mid-1990s that usage became relatively widespread. Today, there are over 600 million Internet users in China, mostly connecting through broadband service or their smartphones. The Chinese Internet is owned by the state, which famously set up what Geremie Barmé calls "the Great Fire Wall of China" to filter out unwelcome content.[20] Much of Western news and social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.) is blocked by this firewall. It is, nonetheless, the largest area of the global Internet, though of course it is in Chinese. Fortunately, a number of new books give English readers a pretty good sense of the Chinese Internet.[21] Western newspapers regularly quote outrageous statements about popular nationalism from Chinese netizens. It is worth keeping in mind, however, that the Chinese Internet, like Chinese society, is unified but not homogeneous.[22] It is united by the directed public sphere, shared patriotism, the norm of the sinophone intellectual sphere to worry about China, and the pleasure-seeking distractions of Wasserstrom's "Brave New World." But the lives and interests reflected on the Chinese Web are by no means homogeneous: there

[18] Yuezhi Zhao, *Communication in China: Political Economy, Power, and Conflict* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008), pp. 5–7; Brady, *Marketing Dictatorship*.

[19] Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom, *China's Brave New World: And Other Tales for Global Times* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), esp. pp. 125 ff.

[20] Geremie Barmé, "The Great Fire Wall of China," *Wired*, Vol. 5, No. 6 (June 1997), pp. 138–51.

[21] Two of the best studies on the Chinese Internet are Guobin Yang, *The Power of the Internet in China: Citizen Activism Online* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009); and Johan Lagerkvist, *After the Internet, Before Democracy: Competing Norms in Chinese Media and Society* (New York: Peter Lang, 2011).

[22] This is how Kuhn describes Chinese culture in the eighteenth century and the insight holds for today; see Kuhn, *Soulstealers*, p. 223. An excellent set of recent studies that reinforce this image of coherent diversity is the special issue on cyberpolitics in China edited by Guobin Yang, in *China Information*, Vol. 28, No. 2 (July 2014).

is not only the usual human diversity of good and bad intentions, clever and dull minds, energetic and lax efforts; there is also the reflection of the social and professional worlds (and, of course, private worlds of friend networks, fantasy fiction, and, yes, pornography). It is easy to mistake the uniformity of compliance with PRC rules of public discourse and anxious patriotism for some unanimity of values and intentions. Scholars have been saying this for decades, but it bears repeating: China is diverse.

However, the Chinese Internet does highlight some voices over others. The voice of popular nationalism is particularly prominent. Because "loving China" is something the directed public sphere's police cannot censor, extreme statements made in the name of patriotism pick up a huge audience. The international community, particularly Japan and the United States, regularly obliges with either gaffes or real conflicts of interest (from islands in the South and East China Seas to demands concerning the exchange rates of China's currency, the renminbi or yuan). The result, as several scholars have shown, is that China's foreign policy is driven in part by managing these angry voices on the Net.[23] Thus, while more regulated than the Internet in other countries, China's Internet is nonetheless volatile and shows the limits of control by even the Communist Party.[24]

For advocates of freedom, this sounds good. However, many examples of independent thought on the Chinese Internet are voices of xenophobic ultranationalism. Even the efforts of well-educated graduate students with experience in Europe or the US and conversant with English or other languages can be surprising. Tang Jie is such an example. During the 2008 Olympic torch relay, China's runners were heckled as they ran through Australia, Europe, and the United States because of their government's harsh suppression of demonstrations that year in Tibet. In response Tang Jie, a PhD student in German philosophy, and his Fudan University classmates in Shanghai, produced a short video, "China Stands Up 2008." It looks likes typical CCP propaganda in its defense of national purpose and rejection of Western interference. However, Evan Osnos's interview with him shows that for Tang this reactionary video was a product of just the sort of intellectual freedom that Westerners embrace—Tang had jumped China's Great Fire Wall and gotten access to the webpages of CNN and *Der Spiegel* and was disgusted with

[23] Zhao, *A Nation-State by Construction*; Gries, *China's New Nationalism*; and Yang, *The Power of the Internet in China*.

[24] Susan D. Blum, "Why Does China Fear the Internet?", in Weston and Jenson, *China in and beyond the Headlines*, pp. 173–92.

the anti-Chinese slant of Western journalism.[25] Tang Jie's reflections offer a startling contrast to the image of angry Chinese youth in most newspaper accounts. He is articulate and challenging: "Because we are in such a system, we are always asking ourselves whether we are brainwashed," Tang Jie says. "We are always eager to get other information from different channels. But when you are in a so-called free system you never think about whether you are brainwashed."

Finally, the Chinese Internet serves and promotes the growth of independent associations and communities of Chinese people with shared interests. These interests range from the proverbial bird fanciers and chess clubs, and recently middle-class backpacking communities, to public-service organizations and charities. As we shall see below, intellectuals also use the Internet to publish in a way that gets around China's restrictive press laws and to organize an independent youth movement for rural renewal. However, these groups do not act like citizens in liberal democracies. Indeed, Wenfang Tang's survey of local political activism confirms that even among non-Party or nonestablishment intellectuals, there is an acceptance that the most practical way to bring about concrete political improvement is to work with the Party.[26]

The sinophone sphere, and worrying about China

China's intellectuals, understandably, mostly communicate in Chinese. In addition to the requirements of the directed public sphere that one must meet in order to publish legally in China—primarily not to question or to challenge the rule of the CCP—Chinese intellectuals must meet the expectations of the worlds of Chinese-language, or sinophone, discourse. These expectations are independent of current Party regulations and turn up in the essays of and arguments among intellectuals themselves. There are rules for those who want to publish in the *New Yorker* or *Le Monde*; so, too, are there shared expectations, reflected in the track record of notable writings, that an aspiring Chinese intellectual must meet. We can recognize sinophone discourse even when it is translated into English. The structure of a discourse, as Gloria Davies so carefully describes, is not limited to linguistic family alone. It is the constellation of expectations, assumptions, and agreed rules on what constitutes a good

[25] Evan Osnos, "Angry Youth: The New Generation's Neocon Mood," *New Yorker*, July 28, 2008. Tang Jie's video can be viewed at www.youtube.com/watch?v=MSTYhYkASsA, accessed June 26, 2015.

[26] Wenfang Tang, *Public Opinion and Political Change in China* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), p. 187.

argument, or the "so what?" in intellectual debate. Davies captures the heart of this contemporary intellectual life in the sinophone compulsion to worry about China (*youhuan*):

> As a praxis, worrying about China carries the moral obligation of first identifying and then solving perceived Chinese problems (*Zhongguo wenti*), whether social, political, cultural, historical, or economic, in relation to the unified public cause of achieving China's national perfection.[27]

What does this intellectual "worrying" look like? Take for example, the opening paragraph of this translation of an essay by Wang Hui—a contemporary Chinese academic and public intellectual who engages Western scholars and is also frequently translated:

> Inquiry into scientism in contemporary Chinese thought is intimately bound up with the cultural atmosphere of mainland China during the late 1980s. This kind of inquiry is not primarily focused on "knowledge" ... [but] if one cannot relate critical thinking on the course of modern history to a critique of Nazism and Stalinism, then ... one might even end up concealing the true origins of despotism in modern society.[28]

Wang Hui in this passage invokes the "Western intellectual perspective" but only to justify worrying about Chinese politics.

Sinophone discourse in China's intellectual worlds is also shaped by assumptions about *how* to do intellectual work. We can see three core characteristics of this thought work among contemporary public intellectuals in China today.[29] First, such thought work continues to privilege thought, and particularly the search for correct thought, as the foundation of effective public policy. This collection of intellectual habits assumes that thought (*sixiang*) paves the road to social solutions—just as Wang Hui, in the quote above, requires "critical thinking" to address despotism. Second, such assumptions in sinophone writings provide the channels of change through which selective adaptation of foreign thought and discourse proceeds.[30] Through these cognitively familiar channels new sets of ideas, such as political liberalism, have been introduced to the center of legal public discussion. Third, the cultural identity of these

[27] Davies, *Worrying about China*, p. 7. By "praxis" Davies means political action, action in the public realm taken to change social life.

[28] Wang Hui, "On Scientism and Social Theory in Modern Chinese Thought," trans. Gloria Davies, in Davies, *Voicing Concerns*, p. 135.

[29] This section draws from Timothy Cheek, "Xu Jilin and the Thought Work of China's Public Intellectuals," *China Quarterly*, No. 86 (2006), pp. 401–20.

[30] "Selective adaptation" in the political–legal sphere is thoroughly analyzed in Pitman Potter, *Law, Policy and Practice on China's Periphery: Selective Adaptation and Institutional Capacity* (London: Routledge, 2011).

public intellectuals is clear. They are Chinese because they were born Chinese *and* live and work in the PRC, and that identity does not require them to justify their use of Western theory on grounds other than utility. One result of this assumption is that Chinese scholars living outside China must establish an institutional position inside China if they want to be taken seriously by their compatriots. While sinophone discourse spans the globe—and anyone can join in via one of thousands of Chinese-language Web pages, blogs, and Weibo feeds—in order to be an *authoritative* speaker in this intellectual universe you must present yourself as a Chinese living in China (or temporarily absent for purposes of study). Otherwise, you are a foreign commentator.

The ghost of Maoism haunts this sinophone world. Formal Maoism is dead, but the component parts of the ideology live on to shape intellectual life in China in this prosperous age in the habits of a living Maoism. Maoist orthodoxy is used by the CCP to provide the legitimacy that would otherwise come from the ballot box. The story of China's modern history that it tells is central to this legitimation and remains what Mao announced in the 1940s: China was great, was put down, and shall rise again.[31] Since 2008 many believe that China *has* risen again. Whether or not various people in China believe every part of this official line, this basic story or identity of China that the CCP presents is widely accepted. Thus we need to distinguish between the specific and general claims made in Maoist orthodoxy. Since the 1990s, most people in China do not claim to follow Mao's teachings, nor do they think that the current Party is a particularly noble example of Mao's or anyone's ideals. Yet most people in China appear to accept the assumptions in this story, about China's national identity, about the role of imperialism in China's history and present, and about the value of maintaining and improving this thing called China.

In addition, those who lived through the Maoist system carry with them the habits of thought and the expectations that made sense under Mao's rule. This population, long corralled by the rules of nondemocratic participation in *danwei* (work unit) and commune life, does not have the habits of mind conducive to a liberal or tolerant society. We shall see that the same habits and expectations even shape some of those who reject official Maoism and embrace alternative political ideas and

[31] Mao's classic statement is in "On New Democracy," first published in Yan'an in 1940 and now collected in his official *Selected Works* (English edition published Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1975). Available online at www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-2/mswv2_26.htm, accessed November 30, 2013. "Living Maoism" in contemporary China is explored in Cheek, *Living with Reform,* Chapter 2.

social practices. Inevitably, some part of these values and expectations has been passed along—by parents and teachers—to younger generations. Naturally, they change with time and new experiences, but these mental models still shape the experiences and reactions of people in China, influencing the expectations of both intellectuals and their audiences. Central among these hegemonic values are respect for intellectuals, intolerant modes of argument and illiberal public demonstrations, and the expectation that suggestions should be addressed to the state. It is this mental furniture that will shape the lives of people in China long after the *hukou* (residence permits) and *danwei* (work units) are a thing of the past.

Despite their own sense of marginalization, China's intellectuals are taken seriously by both the state and the public. That is one reason why the CCP has always bothered to repress unorthodox intellectuals—because the Party believes that what intellectuals say is influential. Popular deference to intellectuals continues today both in the expectation that highly educated professionals and cultural commentators in China ought to help figure out what to do and in cynicism and criticism of them for failure to do so in most cases. Respect for intellectuals has been co-opted by the Party through the claim that a "meritocracy" rules China, borrowing some of the prestige of scholars to imply that all Party cadres are chosen by merit and so deserve respect. China's intellectuals today wrestle with the elitist implications of this social norm. Do they use it to "guide" China wisely or do they fight it in order to empower ordinary citizens?

When intellectuals or social activists are not fighting each other, they are talking to the party-state. This is born of both habit and of pragmatism. The CCP will not tolerate a substantial social organization or movement outside its control, from Christian house churches to Falun gong to any sort of political party. Working people assume that it is up to the "leaders," or at least to the certified intellectuals, to fix things. Intellectuals cast their suggestions in terms of, or at least carefully not in contradiction to, Party ideological platforms, and most work for the state in one fashion or another—in universities, academies of science or social science, or major industries. This state orientation of civil society has been a real challenge to Western observers, who persist in seeing sprouts of democratic activity.[32] It may come, but so far lived experience, intellectual orientation, and even business practices (in which business actors survive by colluding with local political leaders in the absence of

[32] Timothy Brook and B. Michael Frolic, eds., *Civil Society in China* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1997).

legal protections) all point to collaboration with the party-state rather than confrontation. Those who set themselves up in defiance to the Party soon find themselves silenced, in jail, exiled, or dead.

The many worlds of China's intellectuals

Under the watchful eye of the Party's directed public sphere and animated by the moral call of sinophone communities to improve China, intellectuals in China in fact operate in a variety of concrete arenas, or social worlds, that establish further norms and shape expectations. It is wise to ask of any Chinese intellectual we read, "from which world are you speaking?" From the official world of the PRC government? The academic world of formal scholarship? The commercial world? Or from one of a variety of social organizations? And is this writing or speaking originally directed to sinophone worlds or already meant to engage the outside world? We have met the various worlds across the decades in the preceding chapters. It is worth revisiting them again to help map the worlds of intellectual life in China during the current ideological moment.

The official world

This is the world of the Chinese government that is completely dominated by the Communist Party and its ideology. The two overriding norms of the official world are to uphold the Communist Party and its policies and to defend the interests and honor of China. *People's Daily* is the official mouthpiece of the CCP and is an authoritative source for understanding PRC government policy.[33] Most Chinese do not participate in this government discourse directly, though a number of intellectuals do, especially in the Academies of Social Sciences and the Party Schools. Moreover, the official world shapes the media in China. Commercial newspapers, television, and radio have to toe the line of *People's Daily* and the New China News Agency, or at least avoid contradicting it explicitly. This is enforced by a robust and well-funded propaganda and surveillance system. Intellectuals flout these rules at their own peril. Within these guidelines there is considerable latitude to get on with the business of one's own social circles.

[33] *Renmin ribao* (People's Daily) is conveniently available online, and with an English edition, at http://english.peopledaily.com.cn, accessed June 22, 2015.

The academic world

Second only to the official world, the academic world is the most important for intellectuals in China. Scholarship has long held public prestige in Chinese culture and recent developments have only reinforced that status. Chinese society, like other East Asian societies, holds university professors in high esteem. Since the late 1970s the PRC has revived its university system and modeled it on the Euro-American research university. This has produced a commitment to university research and to educating greater numbers of university students. Huge amounts of money have been directed to China's university sector in the past twenty years. University jobs are increasing in number and attractiveness—a most reasonable career for aspiring middle-class life.[34] The result has been specialization. This has contributed to a massive withdrawal of intellectual talent from the public arena, as it is funneled into intellectual silos of professional activity. Nonetheless, a few remain engaged with public issues. But even those who still speak up increasingly do so as *experts* in their field rather than as public intellectuals or social critics. Most academics follow the path of Western scholars and publish in specialized journals and monographs using the technical language of the natural sciences, social sciences, or humanities. These highly educated people identify themselves as scholars (*xuezhe*), professors (*jiaoshou*), readers (*dushuren*), or experts (*zhuanjia*) rather than as broad intellectuals (*zhishifenzi*).

The commercial world

This is the intellectually least interesting arena—except, perhaps, for scholars of popular culture—but it is worth remembering that probably the vast majority of intellectual energy in China is active in this social world—the commercial market, creating entertainment, and providing services for profit. While commerce hardly defines an intellectual world, it does have two important roles: first, it aligns the interests of many intellectuals with the institutions of global capitalism and the rules for international business since many intellectuals make their living in businesses and professional services in this market. Second, the ease of movement of people and information necessary for this global economy provides many avenues for intellectuals to "hitch a ride"—a method adopted by many social

[34] W. John Morgan and Bin Wu, eds., *Higher Education Reform in China* (London: Routledge, 2001); and W. John Morgan and Bin Wu, eds., *Higher Education Reform in China: Beyond the Expansion* (London: Routledge, 2011).

associations in China.[35] That is, religious groups or public intellectuals can use a commercial channel, such as the Facebook-like websites (described below), to communicate "under the radar" of Chinese bureaucracies aimed at monitoring religious or publishing activities.

The commercial world also provides a hybrid institution for Chinese intellectuals: the press. There are now literally thousands of commercial newspapers and magazines published in China today, and many aim to provide reliable news coverage and even investigative reporting. However, there are real limitations to a free press.[36] In part this is because no publication in China is completely free of the directed public sphere of the CCP. Indeed, most newspapers are commercial wings of government or Party newspapers. For example, the famous muckraking newspaper *Southern Weekend* (*Nanfang zhoumou*), is owned by and operated under the supervision of the Guangdong Provincial Communist Party. However, this co-operative approach with the establishment is anything but craven compliance. In January 2013 *Southern Weekend* became embroiled in a censorship issue. The editors had drafted a New Year's editorial on Xi Jinping's new themes of the Chinese Dream. They decided that constitutional democracy should be a key part of their Chinese Dream. The provincial propaganda authorities did not. They changed the editorial to an anodyne theme of "progress." Worse, the authorities sent the revised editorial to press without consulting the paper's editors. The editors protested in public, and the Chinese Internet came to their defense. This reflects a widespread sense of "I've had enough" among the professional Party establishment—heavy-handed censorship is getting push-back from inside the CCP. Among those protesting the arbitrary rewriting of the now notorious New Year's Day editorial for the paper is the faculty of the Journalism Department at Nanjing University—hardly a hotbed of anti-regime activity. The consensus at the establishment level is that regularization is needed, along with the predictability of sensibly adjudicated rules. This may not be democracy, but it is an ideology of relative political liberalism inside the CCP.

Associational worlds

Alternative political parties are illegal in China, but social groups (*shetuan*) are legal. They are highly regulated by the Ministry of Civil Affairs,

[35] Kong Shuyu, *Consuming Literature: Best Sellers and the Commercialization of Literary Production in Contemporary China* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004). Also Liu, *Jumping into the Sea*.

[36] Zhao, *Communication in China*; and David Bandurski, "Jousting with Monsters: Journalists in a Rapidly Changing China," in Weston and Jensen, *China in and beyond the Headlines*, pp. 29–49.

but they are a dynamic part of life in China.[37] Below the tip of the iceberg of environmental NGOs or the Charter 08 signers, the vast majority of Chinese associational life organizes local social and religious interests—and these activities engage the intellectual activities of many educated Chinese. For instance, there are more Buddhist organizations, writings, and websites in China than there are democratic ones.

Yet the co-operative pose of China's associations, and of the intellectuals active in them, does not make them either politically conservative (i.e. supporting the government in all things) or irrelevant. Take two examples. The first is the case of using commercial networks to pursue broader intellectual aims: intellectual book publishing. One Shanghai bookshop owner has for the past fifteen years been publishing books on scholarly and ideological topics that rarely appear in major presses, and he does so by just such amphibious organizing.[38] First of all, he is not legally a publisher, but a "consultant," so his editorial work is subject to the enterprise law and not the depredations of the government's publishing controls. Second, he secures the manuscripts, edits them, and arranges for the printing, while he gets the all-important ISBN from a minor or cash-strapped legal publisher who is not too fussy. Our entrepreneur gets his book out; the press gets a title that sells. Both make money.

There are some 200 such small private "publishers" across China, publishing from a dozen to a hundred books a year each. In truth, most of the titles our Shanghai entrepreneur publishes are cookbooks, novels, and pop books (with translation of books like *The Da Vinci Code*), but this supports a small line of serious books of social and cultural criticism. While all legally published books are subject to censorship, small regional presses in poor provinces are often less scrutinized than the major presses. This is a small doorway to de facto press liberalization. Indeed, our publisher uses websites like Alashan League, an environmental group, as a safe place to communicate with suppliers and buyers.[39]

The second example of associational life is the Liang Shuming Rural Reconstruction Center outside Beijing. In the rural suburbs west of the capital, near the Fragrant Hills, is a compound that houses this voluntary

[37] For two examples, see Jessica C. Teets, "Dismantling the Socialist Welfare State: The Rise of Civil Society in China," in Weston and Jensen, *China in and beyond the Headlines*, pp. 69–86; and Alex L. Wang, "China's Environmental Tipping Point," in ibid., pp. 112–33.

[38] This information comes from my interviews with a bookshop owner and independent publisher in July 2006 and April 2011. Given that his purpose is to avoid attention, his identity will remain undisclosed.

[39] See A-la-shan huwai lianmeng, at www.alsyz.com, accessed August 30, 2014; and www.alsm.unzt.com, shut down in 2010.

group dedicated to the renewal of China's rural society. It is a community-oriented youth organization, but it is registered under Renmin University in Beijing (which provides its mailing address). Building on the ideas of a charismatic professor, Wen Tiejun, the group aligns its goals not only with its namesake, the noted "last Confucian" and rural reformer of the 1920s and 1930s Liang Shuming, but also with current PRC government rural policy, the *sannong* or "three agricultural issues" (villages, rural inhabitants, and rural society). The organization is a startling hybrid of Maoist slogans ("serve the farmers"), YMCA volunteerism (university-age youth join up to lead teams to provide moral uplift to local villages, in the style of James Yen), and early twentieth-century Chinese anarchism (these volunteers live in a commune in the suburban compound, raise organic vegetables, and study together the rural-reconstruction materials of the organization). There is even a songbook replete with a disconcerting mix of Cultural Revolution songs, Hong Kong and Taiwan pop tunes, and folk ballads. When I visited the compound in June 2010, a cheerful group of young volunteers led me and my colleagues in a rousing round of singing from this hymnal. This astonishing mix of cultural resources blends in a cheerful community of committed young people dedicated to helping the less fortunate in their society. This group represents a partnership between intellectual youth and some idealistic university professors and is not part of the CCP Youth League. Indeed, it harkens back through Liang Shuming to the most notable noncommunist rural reconstruction effort in China.[40]

Religion is an important part of associational life in China. The five organized religions recognized by the state have all revived activities in the post-Mao period: Buddhism, Daoism, Islam, Protestant Christianity, and Catholic Christianity. Meanwhile, popular or folk religion of local deities, temples, and festivals thrives across rural and urban neighborhood China. Most of these activities and organizations are politically neutral, though Protestant house churches have been engaged in a decades-long struggle with the state because they are not "properly registered."[41] The key to CCP policy is organization. This explains the treatment of the Falun gong

[40] In Chinese: *Liang Shuming xiangcun jianshe zhongxin*. The group's website evokes the *sannong*: www.3nong.org, accessed October 5, 2014. The group publishes a newsletter, a journal (*Shijian* or "Practice"), and a series of books—printed in just the same size (and red color) as Mao's *Quotations* (including the song book from which we sang) under the general title *Daxuesheng xiaxiang zhinong zhidao shouce* (Guidebooks for University Students Going down to the Countryside to Help Agriculture) published by Hainan chubanshe in 2008.

[41] Contemporary religious life in China, as well as historical perspective, is covered in Goossaert and Palmer, *The Religious Question in Modern China*.

sect that was banned by the Chinese government in 1999 for organizing a surprise peaceful "sit-in" outside the gates of the CCP's leadership compound in Beijing, Zhongnanhai, that April. The key point about Falun gong and the CCP's repression of it is that the problem was not ideological—it had been legal for years as a wonky exercise cult—but was organizational: thou shalt not have any other party but My Party.[42]

Dissent

There are Chinese dissidents in China today, as there have always been.[43] Sun Yat-sen tried to bring down the Qing Dynasty in the late nineteenth century, and Mao Zedong and his fellow Communists started as radical students and dissidents in the 1910s. Social mobilization and resistance to misrule at the local level is widespread in communities across China. Our focus on the diverse worlds of intellectual life is not to diminish the courage and dedication of China's small circle of outright dissidents, but to show why most Chinese intellectuals seek avenues other than confrontation with the state to carry out their resistance to what they feel is wrong. Indeed, much of the most profound intellectual dissent in China comes not from the intellectual elite, but rather from ordinary lawyers and activists.[44] Some, such as Chen Guangcheng, the blind lawyer from Shandong, have captured the attention of international audiences, but they are only the tip of an iceberg of social activism in China today. Yet, for reasons made clear by the Liu Xiaobo case and Charter 08, discussed below, most dissidents inside China try to cast their criticisms in terms of the political language of the CCP, calling on the government to respect the promises of China's current constitution or invoking ideals from the Maoist canon.

Within these political, institutional, and social worlds, China's intellectuals today ply their trade.[45] Self-consciously working in the tradition of Liang Qichao, Liang Shuming, and even the young Mao, these contemporary Chinese intellectuals seek to address the enduring question of

[42] Falun gong (which also calls itself "Falun dafa") is covered in nearly every book on contemporary China and it maintains its own propaganda network; see www.faluninfo.net, accessed June 25, 2015. For a serious analysis of Falun gong from the perspective of China's social history, see David Ownby, *Falun Gong and the Future of China* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

[43] For a reliable study that focuses on dissent, see Goldman, *From Comrade to Citizen*.

[44] You-tien Hsing and Ching Kwan Lee, *Reclaiming Chinese Society: The New Social Activism* (London: Routledge, 2009).

[45] William Callahan calls them "citizen intellectuals," in Callahan, *Chinese Dreams: 20 Visions of the Future* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013); also see Callahan's profile of Ai Weiwei, "Citizen Ai: Warrior, Jester and Middleman," *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 73, No. 4 (November 2014), pp. 899–920.

China's long twentieth century: how to save China from its ills and make it a beacon of civilized life? In the current ideological moment, the question becomes, what should China do to be a truly great power? Among the welter of voices in thousands of books and magazines, and all over the Internet, we can identify three prominent examples: New Left service to the state as establishment intellectuals, liberal engagement with scholarship to offer social criticism as public intellectuals, and writers and artists in somewhat independent associations using literature and informal salons to explore problems and solutions as independent public intellectuals.

Establishment intellectuals: Cui Zhiyuan and the New Left Chongqing model

Cui Zhiyuan (b. 1963) offers a window both into the New Left constellation of Chinese public intellectuals, which includes the notable theoretically informed writers Wang Hui and Gan Yang, and into government service as an establishment intellectual, that world of intellectual life focused on direct participation in administration or direct development of policy in contemporary China. There are other important examples: Pan Wei, a professor at Peking University who advocates the "China model," and Yu Keping, in a central Party think tank, who seeks to harmonize theories of democracy with Party rule. Cui Zhiyuan, however, crosses both worlds. Son of a nuclear scientist in Sichuan, Cui is now a professor at Qinghua University's School of Public Policy and Management. He has a PhD from the University of Chicago and was a professor at MIT for six years before taking up his position in Beijing in 2004. Cui Zhiyuan is best known for two things: his association with New Left intellectuals who criticize neoliberal economic reforms as "market fundamentalism" (along with his desire to recover the good things of Mao's socialist revolution), and his participation in the Chongqing municipal government of the controversial (and now deposed) Party leader, Bo Xilai.

Despite his intellectual and policy differences with the liberals among China's intellectual elite, Cui Zhiyuan's history and current life embody several important realities of intellectual life in China today. First, he is extensively engaged with international thought in his field of work. While by no means all of China's leading intellectuals in this period of building China's dream have studied in a Western university, nearly all have at least spent some months or years as visiting scholars, even those for whom English or another European language is a barrier. All engage in various ways the main scholars and their ideas from global, but largely

Euro-American, scholarship and usually in English. China's intellectuals today are inherently engaged with the broader world.

Second, this familiarity and engagement, however, have not made these intellectuals Western. As Gloria Davies has noted in the case of Chinese humanities scholars who embrace critical theory and postmodernism, Chinese writers, even when translated or writing in English, rarely get the attention of Western scholars beyond those already interested in China.[46] China's intellectuals, with greater or lesser degrees of sophistication, cherry-pick from the theories and models on offer in graduate programs around the world to address Chinese problems. Their writings are not only mostly in Chinese but nearly always cast in the rhetoric or discourse of contemporary sinophone academic and policy concerns. In short, China's intellectuals are in the global world of theory and scholarship but not yet of it.

This reminds us of the importance of ideological moments. The question of the day in today's ideological moment for China is still inward-looking: how to make China a truly great power, at home and abroad. China's intellectuals have yet, as a generation, to turn to global problems in the global context in the way that many North American and European intellectuals have done. This is no doubt related to the realities of international power. The Euro-American order is the global order, and indeed that is one major complaint of China's New Left intellectuals. Thus it is not some primordial or ethnic limitation that produces this inward gaze of China's intellectuals, rather the cause is contextual—it is simply where the most urgent work needs to be done. That said, most of the leading Chinese intellectuals of the 2000s have had at least three or four essays translated into English, and several have had a number of full-length books in Western languages. Their international audience is largely in China studies and in China policy circles, but we can anticipate that those circles will expand to globally oriented and general scholarly discussions in time.

Finally, all these intellectuals have websites and blogs, and most also post on Weibo, and message through Weixin, China's version of Twitter, and WeChat. Regular academics have their home pages, but those interested in engaging public affairs usually have multiple presences, with websites for their essays and places on larger discussion fora that allow both "libraries" of an intellectual's writings and discussion groups to debate points. It seems that everyone gets Weibo or WeChat feeds on their smartphones of new posts, publications, or pronouncements by the

[46] Davies, *Voicing Concerns*; and Davies, *Worrying about China*.

intellectuals or public figures they follow. The Great Fire Wall may put constraints on public debate between those in China and the wider world, but some 600 million people make up the Chinese Net—a sizable audience for China's intellectuals.

Cui Zhiyuan is amongst those Chinese scholars and public intellectuals who seek to contribute directly to policy formation by serving the establishment. His work takes its cue from central Party and government directives and he is sought out for advice by the government. His connection with Chongqing developed in this way from a conference there in 2008, to taking an interest in its approach to reform that seemed to combine both state control and market vitality, to being invited to accept a year's secondment from Qinghua University to work in Chongqing's State-Owned Assets Management and Supervision Commission in 2010–11.[47] Before his Chongqing engagement, Cui had already made a name for himself with his 1993 article entitled "Second Liberation of Thought," in which he argues that China needs to get past a superstitious fixation on market ideology and rediscover what is good in China's socialist experience. This includes a hallmark of what has become the New Left orientation: an emphasis on economic democracy (equity) as well as political democracy.[48] Cui continued to explore these themes in English, comparing the Chinese experience with a range of Western thinkers in a 2005 book chapter on "liberal socialism," or what he calls "petty bourgeois socialism." Cui begins with a classic formulation: "A spectre is haunting China and the world—the spectre of petty bourgeois socialism. Why? Both Marxism and Social Democracy have lost their political and intellectual momentum worldwide. Disillusionment with neoliberalism is also growing."[49] The image of the "haunting spectre," of course, comes from the opening lines of *The Communist Manifesto* and, in fact, Wang Ruoshui—Cui's establishment intellectual predecessor—also invoked the image in his defense of Marxist humanism in 1983. But this time it is not Marx's "communism" or Wang's "humanism" that haunts the contemporary world, it is the prospect of this new sort of socialism. Cui announces that "petty bourgeois socialism can make some

[47] Cui Zhiyuan is profiled in Callahan, *China Dreams*, pp. 83–7.
[48] Cui Zhiyuan, discussed in Wang, *One China, Many Paths*, pp. 23–4.
[49] Cui Zhiyuan, "Liberal Socialism and the Future of China: A Petty Bourgeoisie Manifesto," in Tian Yu Cao, ed., *The Chinese Model of Modern Development* (London: Routledge, 2005), pp. 157–74, reprinted with editorial corrections in Cui Zhiyuan, "China's Future: Suggestions from Petty Bourgeois Socialist Theories and Some Chinese Practices," in Fred Dalimayr and Zhao Tingyuan, eds., *Contemporary Chinese Political Thought* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2012), pp. 185–208, quote from the beginning of the original article now on p. 186.

sense out of the current confusion in interpreting the institutional arrangements in today's China." He basically argues that the leading class of socialism has shifted from the proletariat to the petty bourgeoisie, not a modest claim in Marxist circles. In addition, Cui is careful to point out that since his idea of the petty bourgeoisie includes the peasantry, it is not the same as "middle class," but it does fit the needs of current Party policy to build a moderately prosperous society (*xiaokang shehui*).[50] The remainder of Cui's essay is a comparison of key policy initiatives under liberal socialism and of major Western thinkers from the pantheon of petty bourgeois socialists or their supporters, amongst whom he claims are J.S. Mill, James Meade (the 1977 Nobel laureate in economics), and the historian Fernand Braudel. One policy initiative Cui highlights is the shareholding co-operative system he saw in operation during decollectivization in Shandong in the early 1990s. He declares this a "new form of property" that bridges public and private ownership. The villages in the Zhoucun district of Zhibo in Shandong decided not to divide their property to individual households when their commune was disbanded in the 1980s, nor to sell off things that could not be divided, such as trucks, but rather to distribute shares that paid out something like the "social dividend" envisioned in James Meade's theory. The heart of the matter, for Cui, is that individual peasants got some share of the collective wealth without abandoning the economies of scale that collectivization offered.[51]

Cui Zhiyuan brought these concerns to his sojourn in Chongqing in 2010. By that October he was reporting in Chinese in the *Journal of the Central Party School of the Chinese Communist Party* on the "Ten Projects for the People's Livelihood in Chongqing." These include massive public housing construction for lower-income citizens, granting of urban residence to some two million agricultural migrant workers in the city, a market for land certificate trading that would give peasants some of the increased value of their farmland, increasing the role of state-owned industries (SOE) while maintaining support for private enterprise, and especially taxing those SOEs to fund the public-welfare programs. "These benefits," Cui announces, "did not, as some feared, go to the wealthy but were distributed among the common people."[52] The next

[50] Cui, "China's Future," pp. 186–7.

[51] Cui, "China's Future," pp. 189–92. An example of such village shareholding in Dongguan, Guangdong province, near Guangzhou, is detailed in Tony Saich and Biliang Hu, *Chinese Village, Global Market: New Collectives and Rural Development* (New York: Palgrave Macmillian, 2012).

[52] Cui Zhiyuan, "Chongqing 'Shida minsheng gongcheng' de zhengzhi jingjixue" (The Political Economy of Chongqing's 'Ten Great Projects for the People's Livelihood',"

year, publishing in an American academic journal, Cui stressed the significance of the Chongqing experience: "If Shenzhen was a symbol of China in the 1980s, and Pudong (the new part of Shanghai) in the 1990s, then Chongqing embodies China in the first decade of the twenty-first century."[53] This was no idle boast. The CCP had, in fact, designated Chongqing a national experimental zone in 2007 and, as William Callahan notes, Chongqing really was in many ways a microcosm of China, with a population of 33 million in a territory the size of Austria and with a similar demographic mix as the rest of China: 30 percent urban, 70 percent rural. Cui tied the "land certificate exchange" system in Chongqing to both the ideas of Henry George, who argued "that the economic rent of land should be shared by all in society," and Sun Yat-sen, who had taken his cue from George in Sun's own famous formulation, "The increase of land value not due to the private owner's effort should go to the public." Cui concludes, "The point of Chongqing's 'land certificates exchange market' is exactly to allow peasants who live far from urban areas to share the land value increase by selling their 'development rights' ('land certificates')" to others. In a system a bit like carbon trading, the exchange does not trade land ownership but the right to develop it. In 2011 Cui estimated that the average farmer gets between 150,000 and 200,000 yuan (between $25,000 and $33,000) per *mu* of "land certificates" exchanged.[54]

Cui likewise addresses the public–private partnership of the Chongqing model by a comparison with James Meade's theory of liberal socialism. Cui's goal is to avoid the idea that SOEs have to rule over private enterprises or vice versa. He is interested in the "optimal mix" of public and private ownership. Cui praises not Bo Xilai, the Party chief, but the mayor, Huang Qifan, for developing this "third hand" in public finance. Cui also addresses the notorious singing of Red songs promoted by Bo Xilai, somewhat defensively, noting that in the context of these practical reforms, such public displays can be seen as an effort to "depend on the 'mass line' [tradition of the CCP] to win the hearts and minds of the common people." Although Cui invokes Antonio Gramsci's theory of "hegemony" in culture in contradistinction to "domination" in the political realm, this really seems like a weak defense of

Zhonggong zhongyang dangxiao xuebao, Vol. 14, No. 5 (October 2010), pp. 5–10, quote from p. 6.

[53] Cui Zhiyuan, "Partial Intimation of the Coming Whole: The Chongqing Experiment in Light of the Theories of Henry George, James Meade, and Antonio Gramsci," *Modern China*, Vol. 37, No. 6 (2011), pp. 646–60, quote at p. 647.

[54] Cui, "Partial Intimation of the Coming Whole," pp. 648–53, quote at p. 652. A *mu* is approximately one-sixth of an acre.

political sloganeering with a troubling resemblance to the excesses of the Cultural Revolution years.

Cui Zhiyuan is a typical establishment intellectual, or *engagé* scholar, working with the government in China today, but he is by no means the only one, or the most influential. At higher levels, Yu Keping (b. 1959), a deputy director of the Compilation and Translation Bureau of the Central Committee of the CCP, an elite central Party think tank, advises on political reform, the nature of civil society in China, and issues of democratization. He publishes widely in English, though in those circles advertises his academic appointment as director of the Center for Chinese Government Innovations at Peking University. He has also been a fellow at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government. By his own account, Yu's PhD in political science from Peking University in 1988 was the first doctorate in that field to be completed in China. What Yu Keping says is powerful stuff: "An advanced state of democracy and rule of law is the only true way to achieve the great revitalization of the Chinese people, and it is where the basic nature of socialism lies." As an establishment intellectual, Yu Keping is all too aware of resistance inside the Party and that any change will have to start with the Party, but it can get some help. "I think that 'to rule the country by law we must first rule the Party by law'," Yu declares, and that "mutual governance by the government and the people is the basic path to good governance."[55] Yu Keping is considered an adviser to the previous leadership, Hu Jintao and Premier Wen Jiabao, and like them his ideas have yet to be embraced by their establishment colleagues.

The academy and public intellectuals: Xu Jilin and the liberals

New Left intellectuals, such as Cui Zhiyuan and Wang Hui, have taken up the role of establishment intellectuals, serving or supporting the Party. Another influential group of academics are considered liberals advocating legal restraints on political power and greater voice for citizens. These academic intellectuals are trying to carve out a role as public intellectuals. Although other intellectuals—from local scholars, to New Confucian advocates running independent schools, to Chan Koonchung and other writers who gather to discuss public issues—certainly also play the role of public

[55] "Yu Keping: Prizing the Will of the People," *China Media Project* (University of Hong Kong), posted April 16, 2012, by David Bandurski, at http://cmp.hku.hk/2012/04/16/21469, accessed November 29, 2013. See also Yu, *Democracy Is a Good Thing*.

intellectuals, these prominent academic intellectuals have cultural prestige and have become prominent examples of *gonggong zhishifenzi* (public intellectuals in the Chinese sense) today. So much so, they have attracted government criticism, first in 2004 (as noted earlier) and more recently once again. In June 2014 the website of *Seeking Truth*, the theory journal under the Central Committee of the CCP, republished a Weibo post by the self-styled Maoist Yin Guoming, in which he likened public intellectuals and the democracy movement to an evil cult (*xiejiao*). Yin suggests that public intellectuals and democracy advocates are driven by irrational religious convictions and are puppets of American interference in Chinese affairs. Yin's post was not official Party policy (indeed, *Seeking Truth* published a disclaimer), yet, as Gloria Davies concludes, the Party is content to use rumormongering when such innuendos serve its purposes.[56] The line between public intellectual work and dissent in China may be fuzzy and shifting, but it is real and carries serious consequences. It is little wonder that academic public intellectuals speak cautiously.

Xu Jilin (b. 1957), professor of history at East China Normal University in Shanghai, has built a reputation as one of the most prolific academic public intellectuals in China today. He is one of the fifty public intellectuals profiled by *Southern People Weekly*.[57] Beginning in the mid-1980s Xu started publishing on contemporary issues of modernization, ranging from the May Fourth Movement, to Japan's experience, to contemporary events, and he has published a dozen books focusing on intellectuals and the history of Chinese thought in the twetieth century.[58]

[56] Yin Guoming, "Wei shenme shuo minyun shi yizhong xiejiao" (Why I Call the Democracy Movement an Evil Cult), reposted on *Qiushi*, June 11, 2014, now available at www3.nd.edu/~pmoody/Text%20-%20Peter%20Moody%20Moody%20Webpage/Democracy%20and%20Cults.pdf, accessed June 29, 2015; discussed in Gloria Davies, "Destiny's Mixed Metaphors," *2014 China Story Yearbook* (Canberra: Centre for China in the World, Australian National University, 2014).

[57] See, for instance, the entry on Xu Jilin in Edward L. Davis, ed., *Encyclopedia of Contemporary Chinese Culture* (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 685.

[58] Xu Jilin published his first book on Huang Yanpei and Zhang Junmai in 1988—*Wuqiong de kunhuo* (Endless Perplexity) (Shanghai: Shanghail sanlian shudian, 1988). His major books are *Xunqiu yiyi: Xiandaihua bianqian yu wenhua pipan* (In Search of Meaning: Transformations of Modernization and Cultural Criticism) (Shanghai: Shanghai sanlian shudian, 1997); *Ling yizhongde qimeng*; *Qimeng ruhe qisi huisheng*; and Xu Jilin, ed., *Ershi shiji Zhongguo sixiang shilun* (On the History of Twentieth-Century Chinese Thought), 2 vols. (Shanghai: Dongfang chuban zhongxin, 2000). He has numerous collections of essays, such as *Xu Jilin zixuan* (Xu Jilin's Own Selections) (Guilin: Guangxi shifan daxue chubanshe, 1999), which includes a catalogue of his main books and articles up to 1999 on pp. 401–5; and a collection of *suibi* in the popular "Cultural Windows" book series (Renwen shichuang congshu): Xu Jilin, *Xinshiji de sixiang ditu* (Ideological Map for the New Century) (Tianjin: Tianjin renmin chubanshe, 2002). This series also includes collections by Qin Hui, Liu Dong, and other prominent academic intellectuals. Xu writes

He appears regularly in the tony PRC intellectual press such as *Dushu* (Reading), or in influential Web journals such as *Ershiyi shiji* (Twenty-First Century), and on intellectual Web pages such as *Ai sixiang wang* (Fond of Thinking).[59] He is interested in Western ideas for China, particularly in the political philosophy of liberalism—but works to find a Chinese voice for these values.[60] Like Fang Lizhi, Xu is China-trained yet global in orientation. He came up through the Party university system after the Cultural Revolution. This has not stopped Xu from spending six months as a visiting scholar at the Harvard-Yenching Institute in 2001 or from organizing conferences with Western and Japanese colleagues.[61] In addition to a number of social commentaries, Xu has led discussions on the nature and role of intellectuals and on the possibility of a role for public intellectuals in China today.[62]

When Xu Jilin and his colleagues write to their fellow academics in sinophone discourse they adopt the voice of the professional academic, drawing from formal social sciences, historiography, philosophy, and critical theory. While the audience is educated (and most often academics), such complex writings are aimed at those intellectuals interested in doing the work of public intellectuals.[63] Thus Xu's long analytical pieces do not find their way into *Lishi yanjiu* (Historical Research), the premier academic journal in Beijing, rather they appear in the popular highbrow intellectual journals such as *Dushu* (Reading), *Dongfang* (The Eastern), and *Kaifang shidai* (Open Times).

extensively in mainland Chinese intellectual journals, such as *Dushu* (Reading) and *Ershiyi shiji* (Twenty-First Century) and maintains an active Web presence. See his Chinese-language blog at http://blog.sina.com.cn/xujilin57, accessed July 31, 2014. English translations of two essays by Xu Jilin are available in Davies, *Voicing Concerns*; and Gu and Goldman, *Chinese Intellectuals between State and Market* (see citations below).

[59] *Ai sixiang wang* page for Xu Jilin at www.aisixiang.com/thinktank/xujilin.html, accessed July 1, 2015.

[60] Jing Wang identifies Xu and Wang Ning as leaders in this project of recovery beginning in the 1990s. See Wang, *High Culture Fever*, p. 265.

[61] Xu Jilin is busy with international workshops and conferences, collaborating with colleagues in North America, Europe, Japan, and Taiwan. Xu and I co-organized a conference titled "Public Intellectuals in China" in December 2002, and several similar meetings since.

[62] Xu Jilin, "Cong feidian weiji fansi minzu, shequn he gongmin yizhi" (On the Concepts of Nationality, Community and Citizen after the SARS Crisis), first published on the website of *Shiji Zhongguo* (Century China) in May 2003 and later published in *Tianya* (Frontiers) (2003), No. 4, at http://mall.cnki.net/magazine/Article/TAYA200304001.htm, accessed June 24, 2015.

[63] Xu Jilin distinguishes between "professionalized" (*zhuanyehua*) and commercialized, or media (*meiti*) intellectuals and public intellectuals (who fit the definition given by *Southern People Weekly*, above) in his essay, "Gonggong zhishifenzi ruhe keneng" (How Public Intellectuals Can Be Possible), in Xu Jilin, *Zhongguo zhishifenzi shilun* (Ten Essays on China's Intellectuals) (Shanghai: Fudan University Press, 2003), pp. 33–78.

Xu Jilin's theoretical disquisitions are aimed at a practical project: to find a language of civility for China's warring intellectuals.[64] He favors the formulations of two scholars for framing his argument: Zygmunt Bauman's image of intellectuals as either "legislators" or "interpreters," and Wang Yuanhua's distinction between, on the one hand, "scholarly thinking," using the example of the Cultural Revolution period diarist Gu Zhun, and, on the other, "thoughtful scholarship," using the example of the noted and reclusive Republican-period scholar Chen Yinke. What these two kinds of public intellectual are and can do is framed by Xu's analysis between Bauman's formal models and Wang's concrete examples. Postmodernity is key to this analysis. Xu sees postmodern society as deeply fragmented, in which the common ideological platform of the 1980s has crumbled. Instead, and this lies at the root of Xu's analysis of the vitriolic debates between "New Left" and "liberal" intellectuals in the 1990s,[65] even though scholars have "cultural capital" (per Bourdieu), they are locked into warring discourse communities that mutually disdain each other and have incommensurate criteria for argument and proof. These communities are, for Xu, none other than the well-known *pai* (schools) of intellectual debates in China today: the "national studies," "enlightenment," "postmodern," "liberalism," and "New Left" groups.[66]

In this fragmented and pluralistic society what is missing is a discourse that reflects, acknowledges, and engages this diversity. Xu bemoans the out-of-date "legislator" mentality of China's intellectuals. They fail to address the "interpretive" needs of society precisely because "they only speak within their community with the habit of those 1980s 'legislators' and have not become used to speaking across to different communities

[64] Xu Jilin, "Zi xu," in *Ling yizhongde qimeng*, pp. 1–26.

[65] See Xu Jilin, Liu Qing, Luo Gang, and Xue Yi, "In Search of a 'Third Way': A Conversation Regarding 'Liberalism' and the 'New Left Wing'," in Davies, *Voicing Concerns*, pp. 199–226; and Xu Jilin, "The Fate of an Enlightenment," trans. in Gu and Goldman, *Chinese Intellectuals*. This is a translation of "Qimeng de mingyun," in Xu Jilin, *Ling yizhong qimeng*, pp. 250–68. Xu's version of the debates is largely accepted by Geremie Barmé in "The Revolution of Resistance," in Perry and Selden, *Chinese Society*, pp. 198–220. Xudong Zhang, on the other hand, sees the debate more from the "New Left" perspective associated with Wang Hui. See Zhang's *tour de force* survey, "The Making of the Post-Tiananmen Intellectual Field: A Critical Overview," in Zhang, *Whither China?*, pp. 1–75.

[66] Xu Jilin, "Zi xu," p. 15. These have been analyzed in recent anglophone studies, such as Xudong Zhang, "Postmodern and Postsocialist Society: Cultural Politics in China in the 1990s," *New Left Review*, No. 237 (October–November 1999), pp. 77–105; Geremie Barmé, "The Revolution of Resistance," in Perry and Selden, *Chinese Society*, pp. 198–220; and Kalpana Misra, "Neo-left and Neo-right in Post-Tiananmen China," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 43, No. 5 (2003), pp. 717–44.

by translating their community's language into a public language."[67] Xu sees the same faults that Bo Yang denounced in his "Ugly Chinaman," but rather than blame Chinese culture, Xu offers a solution. Intellectuals must create a "public" by devising a language of translation—a *discourse*—between increasingly differentiated social groups, not to mention factionalized intellectual groups. A fair amount of Xu's work in the past few years has been a search for the rules for such a discourse that can govern the conversation between independent communities in a plural society, and so provide intellectuals with a productive role in public debate.

Recently, Xu took part in just such an effort among different Chinese intellectual groups held, interestingly, in Oxford, England. Xu Jilin joined this annual meeting of the Forum for Chinese Theology and cosigned its "Oxford Consensus 2013." The declaration is notable for its effort to forge the sort of tolerant community of diverse intellectuals that Xu has been advocating:

> We are a group of Chinese intellectuals with diverse academic and ideological backgrounds in the new liberal, new left, new Confucian, and Christian traditions who love the holy land of China and are faithful to our people. We treasure intellectuals' responsibilities as critics and sentinels of society. We hope, in this critically important time of change in China and the rest of the world today, to carry forward the moral character and rational spirit bestowed to intellectuals by our history. We will mobilize the power and resources in culture and ideas to spur our nation and the society on to a higher and better level.[68]

The declaration goes on to announce four points of consensus: the people as the source of political legitimacy, a commitment to fairness and justice, the importance of pluralism and liberalism "while inheriting and transmitting the excellent Chinese culture," and serving humanity as well as the interests of China. The declaration is notable for adding Chinese Christians to the intellectual conversation. While the Oxford Consensus brought a range of Chinese intellectuals together, it did not include all prominent actors. Those with irreconcilable differences, such as the New Left scholar Wang Hui and the liberal Xu Youyu, did not take part. Nonetheless, the goals of the Oxford Consensus can be compared with Charter 08, led by Liu Xiaobo (excerpted in "Voices" at the start of this chapter). The Oxford Consensus is an appeal to good behavior—among intellectuals as well as by the government—while Charter 08 is a

[67] Xu Jilin, "Zi xu," p. 17.

[68] English and Chinese text of the meeting and its declaration available at *Sinosphere*, "Full Text of the Oxford Consensus 2013," http://sinosphere.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/10/18/full-text-of-the-oxford-consensus-2013/?_php=true&_type=blogs&_r=0, accessed June 24, 2015.

direct political challenge to CCP power. The different reactions to these two efforts by groups of Chinese intellectuals to speak publicly on political issues are telling: Liu Xiaobo got extensive Western attention (including a Nobel Peace Prize) and a long jail sentence in China; the Oxford Consensus barely rated a mention in the *New York Times* but the two dozen Chinese intellectuals who signed that declaration carry on with their lives in China.

The Oxford Consensus reflects Xu Jilin's goal of finding the right language, the right thought (*sixiang*), to allow China's intellectuals to work together to make their mark in China today. While only the New Left scholars trumpet Mao's ideas (and even then gingerly), most of China's academic public intellectuals nonetheless still look for correct *sixiang* to solve today's problems. This diverse range of intellectual effort—from academic studies, to public commentary, to commercial or government service—constitutes "thought work" (*sixiang gongzuo*) in contemporary China.[69] Much as Marxism–Leninism made socialism in the Soviet Union an attractive alternative in the 1920s and 1930s in the face of World War I and the Great Depression, for Chinese liberals in the 1990s and 2000s Western theories appear to underwrite the most successful social systems in the contemporary world—i.e. they pass the intellectual-pragmatism test.[70] Ironically, Mao Zedong's sinification of Marxism–Leninism (and Party practice over the decades) had succeeded by the 1990s in making that ideology appear both Chinese *and* inapplicable to today's problems.

In these writings Chinese academics do not wish to "become like the West" in any simple sense. Indeed, there is a range of approaches to foreign theory among China's intellectuals today. Liu Dong (b. 1955) is

[69] This section draws from Timothy Cheek, "Xu Jilin and the Thought Work of China's Public Intellectuals," *China Quarterly*, No. 186 (June 2006), pp. 401–20. For a sense of the troubled history of such thought work, see Lynch, *After the Propaganda State.*

[70] Maurice Meisner, *Li Ta-chao and the Origins of Chinese Marxism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967); Joshua A. Fogel, *Ai Ssu-ch'i's Contribution to the Development of Chinese Marxism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Council on East Asian Studies, 1987); Nick Knight, *Li Da and Marxist Philosophy in China* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996); Liu Dong, "The Weberian View and Confucianism," trans. Gloria Davies, *East Asian History* (Canberra), No. 25–6 (June–Dec. 2003), pp. 191–217. For an example of interest in conservative liberalism, see Zhang Rulun's translation of Michael Oakeshott's essays, *Zhengzhi zhongde lixingzhuyi* (Rationalism in Politics) (Shanghai: Shanghai yiwen chubanshe, 2003). Axel Schneider has analyzed conservative thought, including Confucian revivalism, in both Republican and contemporary Chinese thought. See Axel Schneider, "The One and the Many: A Classicist Reading... and Its Role in the Modern World—An Attempt on Modern Chinese Conservatism," *Procedia: Social and Behavioral Sciences*, Vol. 2, No. 5 (2010), pp. 7218–43.

editor of *Zhongguo xueshu* (China Academics) and professor of comparative literature at Qinghua University. In his noted essay "Perils of 'Designer Pidgin Scholarship'," Liu Dong calls for "an eventual development of Chinese theory after careful mastering of Western masters." His model is the now-famous Chinese scholar of the Republican period Chen Yinke, whom he quotes: "Those who are truly able to develop their own independent system of ideas and who have creatively accomplished this, must absorb and import foreign learning on the one hand while bearing in mind the position of our own nation on the other."[71] Similarly, Qin Hui (b. 1953) most recently has sought to use Western theory to redeem the Confucian tradition from Legalist pollution.[72] In fact, Xu Jilin's use of liberal theory has led him to conclude that public intellectuals in China are better off organizing the institutions of publicity, such as journals, newspapers, and websites, than in organizing independent political parties.[73]

Xu Jilin has an entire other corpus of writing, public commentaries, in which he engages topics of the day in a fluid essay style suitable to the general reader and, increasingly, the Internet reader. He takes on serious issues, from SARS, to the debate over "universal norms versus Chinese values," to the validity of a China model.[74] These essays are similar to many others in the liberal camp. Qin Hui also addresses a range of topical issues, but returns to the problem of the fractures in China's intellectual public sphere. Qin Hui's solution to the fight between the New Left and the liberals is to propose a "common baseline" in a shared commitment to intellectual freedom. He casts the current divides in a historical context, seeing echoes of the "problems and -isms" debate of the 1920s that divided the liberal Hu Shi and the Communist Li Dazhao. "Indeed," Qin concludes his historical comparison, "rigid theorizing

[71] Liu Dong, "Jingti renweide 'Yangjingbang xuefeng'," *Ershiyi shiji*, No. 32 (Dec. 1995), pp. 4–13, trans. Gloria Davies and Li Kaiyu, with a new prefatory section by Liu Dong, as "Revisiting the Perils of 'Designer Pidgin Scholarship'," in Davies, *Voicing Concerns*, pp. 87–108, quote at p. 96. Liu Dong continues this theme in his collection of essays, *Lilun yu xinzhi* (Theory and Wisdom) (Nanjing: Jiangsu renmin chubanshe, 2001).

[72] Qin Hui, "Xi ru hui rong, jiegou 'fa-dao hubu': Wenhua xiandaihua yu Zhongguo zhishiren" (Deconstruction of "Complementarity between Law and Dao" through the Blending of Western Learning and Confucianism: Cultural Modernization and Chinese Intellectuals), paper delivered at Public Intellectuals and Modern China, East China Normal University, Shanghai, December 2002. Qin Hui explores these themes in *Si wuya, xing youzhi* (Thought without Bounds, Action within Control) (Tianjin: Tianjin renmin chubanshe, 2002).

[73] Xu Jilin, "Gonggong zhishifenzi ruhe keneng."

[74] Xu Jilin's newer commentaries appear on his blog, http://blog.sina.com.cn/xujilin57, accessed November 30, 2013.

about 'isms' that avoids 'problems' is shallow learning, while the study of 'problems' apart from 'isms' is but the piling on of words."[75] The core of Qin Hui's writing, however, has been rural problems and citizen rights. What he drew from his experience as a sent-down youth in the Cultural Revolution was a commitment to help ordinary poor farmers "acquire and exercise their civil rights, such as the right to organize, which would allow them to protect their own interests."

Xu Youyu, a successor to Li Zehou at the Institute of Philosophy at the Academy of Social Sciences in Beijing, engages the New Left scholars more pugnaciously. Born in 1947, Xu Youyu was both a Red Guard and a witness to the 1989 Tiananmen protests. He details seven issues that have divided New Left and liberal scholars since 1999: the role of the market in social justice (New Left con; liberals pro), the prospect of China's entry into the WTO (ditto), evaluations of the Mao period (New Left pro; liberals con), evaluations of the May Fourth Movement and the 1980s Enlightenment Movement (New Left con; liberals pro), modernization (New Left say it equals new colonialism; liberals see progress), and radical nationalism (New Left pro; liberals con). The final issue of contention in Xu Youyu's list (not given with the six others above) is on whether or not China now is a society controlled by foreign capital (New Left, yes; liberals, no): "Chinese New Leftists distort and excise the conditions of China in order to apply contemporary Western New Left and new Marxist conceptions of the global capitalist system to China." Xu Youyu's account smacks of the "spit fight" that Xu Jilin and Qin Hui are at pains to avoid. Still, Xu Youyu captures the heart of the Chinese liberal stand in the current ideological moment. The road to making China a truly great power is,

> first, to carry on a real market and real free competition, to make just rules, and for everyone to follow them and to expel political power from the market; second, to establish the rule of law and to complete a system of law, for example, to protect legitimate private property by means of amending and supplementing the existing constitution, to narrow the gap between the rich and the poor by means of legislation, to punish and rectify corruption by law.[76]

What is the world of the Chinese academic out of which essays like Xu Jilin's emerge? Consider the plight of Liu Dong. Unlike intellectuals

[75] Qin Hui, "The Common Baseline of Modern Thought," trans. David Kelly, in *The Chinese Economy*, Vol. 38, No. 4 (2005), p. 12. The entire issue of this journal features translations of Qin Hui's essays. I have modified the translation only to use "problems" for *wenti* instead of Kelly's "issues."

[76] Xu Youyu, "The Debates between Liberalism and the New Left in China since the 1990s," *Contemporary Chinese Thought*, Vol. 34, No. 3 (Spring 2003), pp. 8–9.

under Mao, who had to please their Party secretary and keep on the right side of the Great Helmsman while pursuing their ideals of socialist service, Professor Liu faces a more complex world. He must not only demonstrate his academic abilities in front of his peers (at Harvard, the copublisher of his journal, as well as his own university), but he must also satisfy market forces, or his journal will go under. Nonetheless, he must still keep on the right side of his Party secretary, pay for his cellphone, and take care of his kid's education costs. He must balance the specialist demands of his academic peers with the commercial interests of an emerging, middle-class readership. He has, of course, new tools: the Internet, Harvard-Yenching funding, that cellphone. The pressures Professor Liu Dong faces will be familiar to academics in the West, though Liu Dong's conditions are meaningfully different: the Party still rules, and China's economic reforms have brought social ills of rural poverty, urban homelessness, and pollution that are everywhere far more intense and urgent than in Western societies. Like Xu Jilin, Liu Dong travels to Western universities and conferences. He is a cosmopolitan academic, with strong international connections, trained in German literary history and theory, and yet he accepts that his place—living and working in China—defines what he should do: serve China according to his best lights as an intellectual.

This level of international connection evokes a particular world of contemporary Chinese intellectual life: the *waiyu* world of foreign-language communication. Just as Hu Shi and some leading intellectuals in the first half of the twentieth century published in English as well as in Chinese, so, too, do many Chinese intellectuals today. Importantly, many more Chinese intellectuals and academics are *employed* in Western universities today. This hybrid role—something impossible for intellectuals, such as the rocket scientist Qian Xuesen, during the Cold War—now shapes part of today's ideological moment. A good example of this globalized hybrid is Professor Xudong Zhang (b. 1965). He is a very important example of contemporary Chinese life because he is a professor of literature and Asian studies at New York University. He is also an adjunct professor at at least two Chinese universities.[77] He is a PRC native with a PhD from Duke University in the United States, and he writes extensively in both English and Chinese. Unlike Xu Jilin or Liu Dong, Xudong Zhang identifies as a New Left scholar, closer in views to

[77] See, for example, a June 2012 lecture in Shanghai that lists Zhang Xudong as professor at both NYU and East China Normal University: www.wengewang.org/read.php?tid=35524, accessed August 31, 2014. He has since become an adjunct professor at both Peking University and Tokyo University.

Cui Zhiyuan and Wang Hui. His case raises two interesting issues about the realities of contemporary Chinese intellectual life. First, despite his good scholarship, by the early 2000s Professor Zhang discovered that one of his important audiences was not paying much attention. Despite the de facto essentialism of North American China studies that accords Xudong Zhang authority to speak on behalf of PRC intellectuals and Chinese people in general, this is demonstrably not the view of his PRC colleagues. PRC academics, such as Professor Liu Dong, dismissed him then as "a foreign scholar" because he could live and work free of the constraints that face scholars working inside China. One major reason why Xudong Zhang has taken adjunct professorships at major Chinese universities has been in order to be taken seriously by his Chinese peers again.

With scholars like Xudong Zhang now holding jobs throughout Western universities, we face a second question: who is the Western scholar and who are the Chinese subjects of study? On almost any topic concerning China there are PRC natives trained in Western graduate schools who have published academic studies in English. Yet their voice is not uniform. Some (such as Xudong Zhang) embrace postmodernist approaches associated with Foucault or Derrida, while others maintain formal, Western social-science models (as does Tong Yanqi) or attempt to blend them (as do Zhao Yuezhi and Zhao Suisheng).[78] While their childhood experiences in China and recent adventures as immigrants and visible minorities in Western societies surely shape their thinking, nonetheless their social experience as academics in North America, Europe, and Australia increasingly defines their outlook. At the same time, however, globalizing forces of professionalism bring many of the same forces (tenure review, peer-review academic publishing) to bear on academics like Liu Dong and Xu Jilin inside China.

The premier example of the globetrotting Chinese intellectual today is Wang Hui (b. 1959), the noted literary critic and New Left intellectual at Qinghua University. Fluent in English, as well as prolific in Chinese, Wang Hui is perhaps the single most influential of China's current thinkers and writers among English-reading audiences and, significantly, beyond China studies circles. He is widely published in English with his first book, *China's New Order: Society, Politics, and Economy in Transition*

[78] Yanqi Tong, *Transitions from State Socialism: Economic and Political Change in Hungary and China* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1997); Yuezhi Zhao, *Media, Market, and Democracy in China: Between the Party Line and the Bottom Line* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998); Suisheng Zhao, ed., *China and Democracy* (London: Routledge, 2000).

(2003), translating his seminal 1997 critique of contemporary Chinese thought that is credited with kicking off the fight between New Left and liberal scholars in China. Dozens of his scholarly articles and commentaries have been translated. By 2009 Wang Hui was bridging "China problems" and global concerns with *The End of Revolution: China and the Limits of Modernity*. By 2011 he was editing scholars from the US and China to write on *The Politics of Imagining Asia*.[79] In anglophone literary- and critical-theory circles, Wang Hui is increasingly taken not as a Chinese thinker but as an international critical theorist. Indeed, he now heads an MA program at Goldsmiths, University of London, on "Asian Cultural Studies" (while, of course, maintaining his position at Qinghua University).[80] Inside China, Wang Hui is still very much seen as a partisan for the New Left. Even a monumental piece of scholarship such as his four-volume history of the rise of modern Chinese thought from the Song Dynasty to today is generally received according to the reader's affiliation (New Left like it; liberals nitpick or ignore it).[81] The role of the Internet has, alas, been pernicious, enabling libelous exchanges and outrageous claims and counterclaims to find a ready audience. In the year 2000 money added fuel to the fire. Li Ka-shing, the Hong Kong-based billionaire, gave some HK$60 million to the Chinese Ministry of Education to support research. Part of that money went to a "Cheung Kong-*Reading* Award" for the best articles in the journal *Dushu* (Reading). A huge Internet brawl broke out when it was discovered that one of the winners was Wang Hui, an editor of *Reading*. The level of vitriol and polemical rhetoric is what stands out in this "intellectual exchange."[82]

Of course, most academics are not public intellectuals. Yue Daiyun, whom we met during Mao's revolutions, is still at work, and since the

[79] Wang Hui gives an account of his life in an interview, "Fire at the Castle Gate: A New Left in China," *New Left Review*, No. 6 (2002); reprinted as "The New Criticism," in Wang, *One China, Many Paths*, pp. 55–86. Wang Hui, *China's New World Order* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003); Wang Hui, *The End of Revolution: China and the Limits of Modernity* (London: Verso, 2009); and Wang Hui, *The Politics of Imagining Asia*, ed. Theodore Huters (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011).

[80] "MA in Asian Critical Studies, Recruiting for September 2014," www.gold.ac.uk/pg/ma-asian-cultural-studies, accessed August 31, 2014.

[81] Wang Hui, *Xiandai Zhongguo sixiang de xingqi* (The Rise of Modern Chinese Intellectual Thought), 4 vols. (Beijing: Sanlian, 2004). The partisan debates are reviewed in Zhou Chicheng, "Hunluan yu miuwu: ping Wang Hui 'Xiandai Zhongguo sixiang de qiyuan'" (Confusion and Error: A Review of Wang Hui's *The Rise of Modern Chinese Thought*), *Shehui kexue luntan* (Social Science Forum) (2012), No. 4, pp. 115–20.

[82] Xu Jilin, "The Fate of an Enlightenment"; and Geremie Barmé and Gloria Davies, "Have We Been Noticed Yet? Intellectual Contestation and the Chinese Web," in Gu and Goldman, *Chinese Intellectuals between State and Market*, pp. 75–108.

1990s has divided her academic time between Beijing and North America while teaching and researching on comparative literature.[83] She is the president of the Comparative Literature Institute of China, and the All China Women's Federation (*Fulian*) now publicizes her 2009 memoir of sixty years at Peking University.[84]

Voices from civil society: Chan Koonchung, New Confucians, and dissent

Turning our focus from government and academic intellectuals to society more broadly, the first impression is that China today is so different from earlier ideological moments. Think of Chan Koonchung sitting in a Beijing Starbucks in the photo at the start of this chapter. China is prosperous and it is a world power. This is the "prosperous age," or *shengshi Zhongguo*, in which Xi Jinping now calls us to the "Chinese Dream." In this world some of China's thinkers and writers can once again make their way as independent intellectuals earning their keep by selling their writing.

What does this commercial version of Chinese intellectual life look like? Our final guide, Chan Koonchung, gives us a good idea. It is a globalized world of professors, paid writers, as well as government civil servants, political hacks, think tanks, business ventures, and "under-the-radar" social activism. It is vibrant, raucous, with many intelligent voices, but is it not free. Chan Koonchung (also known in Mandarin as Chen Guanzhong) was born in Shanghai in 1952, grew up in Hong Kong, did graduate work in Boston, led the cultural scene in Hong Kong as a writer and editor, did a spot of script writing in Taiwan in the 1990s, and has been living and writing in Beijing since around 2002. He is not a civil servant and he does not present himself as a teacher of society. Rather, he adopts two other roles: social critic and social organizer.

Chan is known in the West mostly as a novelist. But he is also an intellectual networker. Much of his time is not spent writing fiction, but in organizing salons or discussion groups, at Beijing bookshops, such as All Sages up in the university district, but more so on the Internet.[85] Like

[83] See, for example, her English-language study published in China, Yue Daiyun and Qian Linsen, eds., *Comparative Literature in the Cross-cultural Context* (Beijing: Yulin Press, 2003).

[84] The memoir is entitled *Siyuan, Shatan, Weiminghu* (Siyuan, Shatan, Weiming Lake) (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2008); see the English notice at www.womenofchina.cn/womenofchina/html/people/writers/9/7708-1.htm, accessed June 29, 2015.

[85] As of June 2014, Chan reports that it is no longer possible to continue these salons at bookshops in Beijing, due to the current crackdown. It remains unclear whether or not this is a temporary situation.

Liang Qichao a century ago, Chan engages Chinese outside China who care about China's fate. In particular, Chan runs two listservs on the Internet: "Minjian China" and "Chindia." Each one engages Chinese, overseas Chinese, and a few international academics in open-ended conversations and occasional face-to-face salons in Beijing and Hong Kong. The Chinese Internet is famous for its thousands of blogs, webpages, and the fiery arguments on Weibo, China's Twitter. Chan's electronic salons are different for two reasons: they are bilingual, with posts in either English or Chinese accepted, and they are engaged with commercial and professional Chinese outside China as well as inside.

This is a new stage, or platform, for China's intellectuals. As Liang Qichao made use of the new commercial newspapers in 1900, and Ding Ling embraced the revolutionary literature of fiction from the 1930s, and Wang Ruoshui embraced the propaganda state of Mao's China, so Chan Koonchung has adopted the Internet and its social media as a new and powerful forum for organizing intellectuals, not just for publicizing his ideas. Chan's listservs are not secret, but they are not public—one has to sign up even to see them. So their purpose is not to publicize but to organize thoughtful Chinese, and those thinking about China, into coherent conversation to explore public issues. Chan is not alone in these efforts. Across China enterprising Chinese organize by using the Internet. Intellectuals are no exception. We have seen two such examples, above, in the commercial and associational worlds: the Liang Shuming Rural Reconstruction Center outside Beijing and the unofficial book-publishing venture in Shanghai. These folks do not take the Communist Party head-on, like Liu Xiaobo; rather, they work around it and they get a lot done.

Chan Koonchung's 2009 novel, translated as *The Fat Years*, gives us a sense of what is on the minds of intellectuals who make their way in China's new commercial world and what challenges they face. *The Fat Years* is a dystopian science fiction novel about a "forgotten month" in the near future, "forgetting," and the dangers of comfort in prosperous China.[86] At heart, Chan's novel is social criticism—Chan challenges China's intellectuals *not* to forget the sufferings of the past century, *not* to ignore the sufferings of the poor in China today, *not* to accept the limited deal offered by the Party. Like Liang Qichao, Chan is dedicated to truth. Like Ding Ling, Chan uses fiction.

[86] Chen Guanzhong, *Shengshi: Zhongguo 2013* (Prosperous Age: China 2013) (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 2009), published in English as Chan Koonchung, *The Fat Years: A Novel*, trans. Michael S. Duke (New York: Doubleday, 2011).

Chan's novel is really a story of the struggles of idealism in China today. Chan's narrator reflects,

> Hundreds of millions of Chinese lived through an age that witnessed a storm of idealism and were baptized in that flood of idealism. Even though later on their ideals turned to nightmares and disillusionment, and an entire generation of people lost their ideals, still they didn't abandon idealism.
>
> ... Just think of all those people currently languishing in prison or under government surveillance—human rights lawyers, political dissidents, promoters of a democratic constitution, leaders of nongovernmental civil organizations, promoters of independent political parties, public intellectuals, whistle-blowers, and missionaries of the underground churches—no doubt all of them are hopelessly incorrigible idealists that the People's Republic of China version 2.0 can never cure.[87]

But most intellectuals are like the lead character of *The Fat Years*, Old Chen. He is confronted with some disturbing events in prosperous China and recalls the bitter events of the Mao years:

> At this point Old Chen wanted to lay down the heavy burden of history. Can we really blame the common people for their historical amnesia? he asked himself ... Who has the leisure time to mess around looking up those few historical facts? ... Old Chen then considered a new concept: "90 per cent freedom." We are already very free now: 90 per cent, or even more, of all subjects can be freely discussed, and 90 per cent, or even more, of all activities are no longer subject to government control. Isn't that enough? The vast majority of the population cannot even handle 90 per cent freedom, they think it's too much. Aren't they already complaining about information overload and being entertained to death?[88]

Chan's most compelling challenge for intellectuals in *The Fat Years* comes in the voice of the character He Dongsheng, the mysterious Party leader that Old Chen and his compatriots kidnap to force him to reveal the truth of "the missing month." He Dongsheng's taunt rings true:

> What I want to tell you is that, definitely, the Central Propaganda organs did do their work, but they were only pushing along a boat that was already on the move. If the Chinese people themselves had not already wanted to forget, we could not have forced them to do so. The Chinese people voluntarily gave themselves a large dose of amnesia medicine.[89]

This is the challenge for China's intellectuals today: how to engage the idealism that fired Liang Qichao, Ding Ling, and Wang Ruoshui—each different in their own time and place, but each equally committed to truth and to making China better. Today the challenge is not Western

[87] Chan, *The Fat Years*, pp. 199–200.
[88] Chan, *The Fat Years*, p. 145.
[89] Chan, *The Fat Years*, pp. 286–7.

imperialism and Japanese invasion, nor political disintegration, nor economic backwardness, nor totalitarianism, but rather comfort—comfort for intellectuals while a small elite of Party princelings make Wall Street look modest but a huge number of ordinary Chinese suffer maybe not outright starvation, but social injustice, poisoned water and air, long hours of work, and low pay. Liang Qichao was a political exile, Ding Ling became a revolutionary in a civil war, Wang Ruoshui served a cosmocratic "total state." Chan Koonchung, as we have seen, goes to Starbucks in Beijing. In many ways earlier Chinese intellectuals could not help but serve a new state, criticize an old state, or be teachers of the people. Chan Koonchung's generation has the freedom to live, even prosper, without taking up these tasks of the establishment intellectual. At the same time, the current generation has fewer opportunities to mount the national stage.

Chan Koonchung uses his liminal status as a writer living in Beijing but with a Hong Kong residence permit rather than a PRC passport. This status is today's version of the "space" that the treaty port concession areas gave to Liang Qichao and Chen Duxiu a hundred years ago. It gives Chan partial protection or greater leeway. As he says himself, it is this status and the fact that *The Fat Years* is presented as fiction that has contributed to his lack of trouble with the authorities. Still, he admits that he doesn't know when trouble may turn up. Chan has also written directly on Chinese policy, but from the perspective of Hong Kong (and publishing there as well). In 2012 he published *The Heavenly Doctrine and Hong Kong*, in which he takes to task new thinking coming out of Beijing as a new "Chinese world order." That doctrine invokes imagery of the dynasties; *tianchao* literally means "heavenly dynasty." Chan's point is to argue that as far as Hong Kong is concerned, this Chinese ecumen is more like neocolonialism.[90] Chan's newest novel turns to Tibet. It is a love story in the voice of a Tibetan chauffeur and his relationships with two Chinese women. His goal, says Chan, is to explore how Tibetans and Han do get along at present and the challenges to improving that relationship. Along the way, he paints a vivid picture of middle-class Beijing social activism—in the politically safe area of animal rights and pet rescue. This novel is likely to test the limits of his leeway.[91]

[90] Chen Guanzhong, *Zhongguo tianchaozhuyi yu Xianggang* (China's Heavenly Doctrine and Hong Kong) (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 2012).

[91] Interview with Chen, Vancouver, July 7, 2014. Chen Guanzhong, *Luo ming* (Naked Life) (Hong Kong: Cosmos Books, 2012); trans. as Chan Koonchung, *The Unbearable Dreamworld of Champa the Driver*, trans. Nicky Harmon (London: Doubleday, 2014).

Tibetan intellectuals, as well as Uighur, Kazakh, and other "minority" intellectuals, are speaking for themselves, particularly through literature. The limitations and dangers of political expression that confront Han Chinese intellectuals are many times worse for ethnic intellectuals. In Tibet and for Tibetans literature has become the main area for public intellectual activity. Tibetan writers such as Woeser (Tib. Özer, b. 1966) engage not only Han Chinese colonialism but also internal Tibetan debates on the role of tradition. The constraints on Tibetan writers have tightened since 1994, says Tsering Shakya, but nonetheless Tibetan writers continue to find ways to use creative writing to address public issues within limits of permissible discourse.[92] Meanwhile, Uighur intellectuals are subject to severe repression. Even a relative moderate like Ilham Tohti has been subject to a political trial and imprisonment for advocating for Uighur interests within the framework of the Chinese constitution and for hosting a website, Uyghur Online.[93]

New Confucianism

Another vibrant associational world, and one that ties in explicitly with academic and now government circles, is New Confucianism. Confucianism had most recently been excoriated in the "Criticize Lin Biao, Criticize Confucius" campaign in the mid-1970s. However, as early as 1978 the role of Confucianism in the post-Mao cultural revival was raised by the noted historian Ren Jiyu. Since then, New Confucianism has been part of public life in the PRC. For Chinese intellectuals, the return of Confucianism as an acceptable topic of public discussion offered a variety of opportunities. In general, we can follow three paths for New Confucianism: as state ideology, as cultural identity in academic research, and as a vehicle for moral education at the grassroots level unconnected with either the state or elite intellectuals.

Despite its recent propaganda campaigns, the Party quickly embraced the renewed interest in Confucianism. In October 1978 *ruxue*, or Confucian studies, was the subject of a major conference at Shandong University. By 1980 the Kongzi (Confucius) Research Center was established in his birthplace, Qufu, and a series of international conferences followed. The leaders were intellectuals at this stage. Gan Yang, then a young

[92] Tsering Shakya, "The Development of Modern Tibetan Literature in the People's Republic of China in the 1980s," in Lauren R. Hartley and Patricia Schiaffini-Vedani, eds., *Modern Tibetan Literature and Social Change* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), pp. 61–85.

[93] "China Jails Prominent Uighur Academic Ilham Tohti for Life," *BBC News*, September 23, 2014, at www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-29321701, accessed June 25, 2015.

firebrand, proposed a "Confucian socialist republic." Soon, some intellectuals, such as Kang Xiaoguang (b. 1963) and Jiang Qing (b. 1953), were arguing for Confucianism as a state religion.[94] These efforts bring to mind, of course, Kang Youwei's proposal for Confucianism to be the state religion in 1916 and the efforts of the Nationalist government in the 1930s to infuse its New Life Movement with "traditional Confucian values."

In fact, intellectual and state interests have coincided when it comes to promoting Confucianism. Intellectual advocates tend to see a revived Confucianism providing a moral compass and a sense of Chinese pride. The state agrees and has the additional interest in promoting the orthodox school of imperial Confucianism that highlights loyalty and obedience to one's superiors. The state has continued to fund Confucius research programs, conferences, and journals. Both the central state and local governments also organize large-scale rituals to celebrate Confucian culture, such as Confucius' birthday (in September). These celebrations have also formed a handy and convivial way to reach out to overseas Chinese and Taiwanese who maintained their reverence for Confucius while the PRC went through its revolutions. "Confucianism became an orthodox label used by a great variety of different state and other organizations," conclude Vincent Goossaert and David Palmer, "for a wide range of tourism, cultural, and educational projects."[95] In 1985 Deng Xiaoping invited Harvard scholar and noted international New Confucian Tu Wei-ming to open a Confucius Research Institute in Beijing. Since then, New Confucianism has been a conversation that has crossed the academic world of the PRC and the *waiyu* foreign-language world of international scholarship in an ongoing series of international conferences and faculty exchanges, all exploring the role of Confucianism not only in China but in East Asia and the world. In the new century, the PRC embraced Confucius as part of its efforts to extend "soft power" influence around the world. Starting in 2004, the Chinese state has set up some 322 Confucius Institutes in ninety-six countries (as of 2012). While such collaborations between a Chinese and a local university focus on teaching Chinese language, these Confucius Institutes brand the PRC as the true home of China's grand cultural tradition.[96]

[94] Goossaert and Palmer, *The Religious Question in Modern China*; and Lionel M. Jensen, "New Confucianism," in Davis, *Encyclopedia of Contemporary Chinese Culture*, pp. 424–8.
[95] Goossaert and Palmer, *The Religious Question*, p. 345.
[96] Lionel M. Jensen, "Culture Industry, Power, and the Spectacle of China's 'Confucius Institutes'," in Weston and Jenson, *China in and beyond the Headlines*, pp. 271–99.

Confucianism has also played a role in "national studies" in the Chinese academic world. Bai Tongdong (b. 1970), a professor of philosophy at Fudan University in Shanghai with a PhD from Boston University, is very active in the study of and in debates over Confucianism. In the recent English-language version of his writings, Bai offers his account of the political philosophy of the Middle Kingdom—the Confucian classics along with their ancient partners, the writings of Legalism and Daoism. Thoroughly versed in the Western classics and an eloquent speaker in English, Bai's task is to review the ideas and institutions of China's past to offer "a normative assessment of contemporary global issues and an insight into the Chinese mind." His goal is to see what Chinese thought can offer to the broader world—"what kind of regime is the best for human beings in modern times?" Read carefully, and adjusted to today's realities, Bai argues that these Chinese classics "may serve to address political issues more effectively than liberal democracy."[97] In this, of course, he echoes what Liang Shuming advocated in the Rural Reconstruction Movement of the 1930s. Several voices have picked up this theme—Confucianism as an alternative to Western political theory. An unlikely advocate of New Confucianism is a Canadian, Daniel Bell, trained as a classicist in the Western tradition at Princeton but teaching and working in Asia for over a decade and now at Qinghua University. Bell is an enthusiastic advocate of the politics of meritocracy, based on education and age, that he sees in the Confucian classics and suggests that this may deliver good government more surely than liberal democracy.[98]

Popular Confucianism took off in the late 1990s after the collapse of the Qigong exercise and meditation movement (its fate sealed by the anti-Falun gong campaign in 1999).[99] The Confucian revival in the 2000s became a genuine mass movement, organized locally by what we can call local intellectuals not connected with the state and not always related to university worlds. Literally thousands of private Confucian academies sprang up across the country. They offered courses in reading the classics, training programs for entrepreneurs looking for cultural sheen and spiritual purpose, summer camps for youth, and children's moral education. As Goossaert and Palmer note, this was a bottom-up movement. The university world overlapped with it somewhat, but did not lead it. Pang Fei, a Peking University graduate, opened up Yidan

[97] Tongdong Bai, *China: The Political Philosophy of the Middle Kingdom*, pp. 9 and 12.
[98] Daniel A. Bell, *China's New Confucianism: Politics and Everyday Life in a Changing Society* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008).
[99] Goossaert and Palmer, *The Religious Question*, pp. 296–7.

Academy near Suzhou that spawned a nationwide network of volunteers sharing practical Confucianism and getting together for breathing exercises in public parks. This cannot but bring to mind the "Liang Shuming Village Reconstruction Movement," and their commune outside Beijing that got going around the same time. New Confucianism reached a peak of media popularity in 2006 with the CCTV program on Confucius' *Analects* led by Yu Dan, a professor of media studies. The book version of her plain-language commentaries became a national best-seller.

There is an important role for the New Confucian phenomenon in our story of Chinese intellectuals: its absence. By and large, the mainstream intellectuals, including New Left and liberals, do not participate in this movement very much at all. In fact, this is part of a general orientation that eschews religion generally. Of course, these topics are mentioned, but they are neither central nor frequent in their writings. The New Confucians, even in the academy, are generally a world unto themselves. They do, of course, have government support, but that support is both focused and practical: where New Confucianism adds luster to the cultural prestige of the state and encourages "harmonious" compliance from the populace, it is good and gets state support. Furthermore, neither the state nor intellectuals outside the New Confucian circles seems willing to confront the inherent religiosity of Chinese society. Only the New Confucians are willing to address the "ongoing conflicts between China's religions and the Chinese state," David Ownby concludes, "because, for complex reasons, the state remains unwilling to accord religion the independent, protected space required by religion in a truly secular regime."[100]

Contemporary dissent

It is in this rich context that we return to look at China's famous dissidents. We met Liu Xiaobo at the opening of the chapter enthusing about the great value of the Internet for his human rights activism in 2006.[101] Two years later, Liu joined other activist intellectuals in drawing up "Charter 08," a manifesto for human rights, democracy, and the rule of law modeled in conscious admiration of Charter 77 that had appeared in Czechoslovakia's democracy movement three decades

[100] David Ownby, "Kang Xiaoguang: Social Science, Civil Society, and Confucian Religion," *China Perspectives*, No. 4 (2009), pp. 102–11, quote at p. 111.

[101] Liu Xiaobo, "Wo yu hulianwang" (Me and the Internet), published in *Minzhu Zhongguo* (Democratic China), February 18, 2006, and taken from Liu's blog, http://blog.boxun.com/hero/liuxb/513_1.shtml, accessed June 23, 2015.

earlier. Unlike other reform petitions, this was not a polite request to the Party for more reforms but rather it was a direct challenge to the Party—a forthright political platform squarely in the domain of liberal democracy, advocating a new constitution, the separation of powers, legislative democracy, an independent judiciary, freedom of association, and even the public election of administrative officials. There were 303 initial signatures when it was unveiled on December 9, 2008, but Liu Xiaobo took the decision to be the main sponsor. Because of this and his record, the police came to Liu Xiaobo's Beijing apartment and took him away for "residential surveillance." He was held that way until they formally arrested him in late 2009. On December 25, 2009, Liu was found guilty of subversion by dint of his sponsorship of Charter 08 and was sentenced to a prison sentence of eleven years. The next year, Liu Xiaobo was awarded the 2010 Nobel Peace Prize.[102] Since his imprisonment after Tiananmen in 1989, Liu Xiaobo has been out of normal intellectual circles in China. The Party has been successful in keeping this "bad apple" quarantined from general intellectual life.

Ai Weiwei is another story. Born in 1957 to a famous Communist literary figure, the poet Ai Qing, Ai Weiwei actually grew up with the privileges of Beijing high cadre circles but in exile in Xinjiang province because his father had been denounced as a Rightist.[103] Reform in 1978 brought the family back to Beijing and the world of high cadres. Ai enrolled in the Beijing Film Academy. Ai lived for over a decade (1981–93) in New York City, where he studied art and befriended the beatnik poet Allen Ginsburg (who had in earlier years met Ai's father in China). Since then, Ai has become an international figure in art circles and also the *enfant terrible* of the Chinese political world. Thoroughly international, Ai travels (when he is allowed) regularly to New York and London while maintaining art studios in China. His art is outrageous and purposefully shocking. Notable images are of him naked in Tiananmen Square or gesturing rudely (the one-finger salute) to Mao's portrait on Tiananmen itself.

In the recent decade, Ai has become a gadfly exposing government malfeasance and corruption around the terrible 2008 earthquake in Sichuan. He organized an effort to record the names of the over 5,000 children killed in the earthquake in school buildings of substandard construction (while the gleaming Party office nearby took no damage).

[102] Charter 08 and Liu's role in it are covered in Liu Xiaobo, *No Enemies, No Hatred*, esp. pp. 300 ff.

[103] An excellent overview of Ai Weiwei as of 2010 is his interview with Evan Osnos, "It's Not Beautiful: An Artist Takes on the System," *New Yorker*, May 24, 2010, pp. 54–63.

He also set about defending the local activist Tan Zuoren, who had been arrested by police for his own work uncovering misdeeds around the earthquake. Ai did this in the public arena, using China's Weibo to distribute shocking videos of police misconduct. Ai was pushed around by the police (and a blow to the head required surgery for internal bleeding), but until that point he was not formally arrested, incarcerated, or "disappeared." This was in large measure due to his status—Ai Weiwei is a princeling, the privileged descendant of a revolutionary hero. As such, the authorities dealt with him gingerly. International connections helped make dealing with Ai more awkward, but, as we have seen with Liu Xiaobo, when the Party is upset, it does not matter what the world thinks. Reportedly the Party's first attempt to resolve these confrontations with Ai was to invite him to be a member of the National People's Congress, an attempt to co-opt him that others might have accepted. He must have known the likely outcome of his decision to decline the offer. He was finally arrested in April 2011, and released a few months later only to be presented with a huge tax bill—a demand for 12 million renminbi ($1.8 million) in "back taxes." The case convinced few inside China or out, but the decision against him in June 2012 leaves Ai Weiwei in limbo and unable to speak in public. Western media present Ai as a dissident, and he is certainly pointedly critical of the authorities in China. But as his work in the Sichuan earthquake suggests, Ai works in more than one political genre. William Callahan has described Ai's activities as "multiple narratives"—the warrior going after official malfeasance, the court jester lampooning political shibboleths, and the middleman acting as broker between China and the West, between young and old people, and between civil society and the state in China.[104] Ai Weiwei is an intellectual dissident, but not only and not simply so.

There are an increasing number of "rights lawyers" operating in Beijing and across China. While most do not see themselves as public intellectuals so much as practical advocates for the ordinary citizen and the downtrodden, the Chinese state treats them as dissidents. Known as "*weiquan* lawyers" or "rights-protection lawyers," these men and women are often self-trained legal professionals who are goaded into action by the abuses of the local state. Ian Johnson profiles Ma Wenbin, an ordinary regional lawyer in Yan'an in Shaanxi, who in the late 1990s was drawn in to advocating for local farmers protesting illegal tax surcharges. He spoke on the farmers' behalf, filed legal suits, and led protests with them. His reward was to be beaten at the Office of Public Petitions in

[104] Callahan, "Citizen Ai."

Beijing (when he brought a delegation of farmers to submit their petition according to Chinese law) and a five-year sentence in reform through labor.[105] Other rights lawyers are emphatically national-level public intellectuals. He Weifang, a professor of law at Peking University, has agitated for legal reform and for limits on the powers of the Party. He signed Charter 08 and held noted closed-door discussions with leading intellectuals, the New Xishan Meeting, in which he roundly criticized the CCP as an "illegal institution." The Party, in turn, had him exiled to a small school in Xinjiang for two years in 2008 but he has now returned to Peking University and can speak overseas.[106] Xu Zhiyong, a professor at Beijing Post and Telecommunications University and an active rights lawyer, is one of the leading organizers of the New Citizens' Movement, a civil organization advocating civil and constitutional rights that started in 2010. Xu was elected to the local people's congress in Beijing's Haidian District in 2003 and again in 2006, but his name was removed from the ballot by officials in the 2011 election. The New Citizens' Movement's logo, 公民, uses Sun Yat-sen's calligraphy and its slogan is "Freedom, Righteousness, and Love" (*ziyou, gongyi, ai*). Xu was arrested for "assembling a crowd to disrupt order in a public place" and sentenced to four years in jail in January 2014.[107] In the same year Xi Jinping declared the Party's renewed commitment to "rule of law" as part of his anticorruption campaign. But it is clear that the Party does not welcome legal counsel in public or from outside its ranks.

As the characters in *The Fat Years* show, there are still idealists in China—some are like Liu Xiaobo and are in prison, but some are like Chan Koonchung and publish social criticism, others use their positions in universities to push for change, and yet others try to reform the Party itself. We can draw many lessons from the history of intellectuals in public life in China's long twentieth century—from the disasters of the 1890s to China's prosperous age today. For me, the most powerful lesson is the enduring strength of intellectual idealism in China, the commitment to truth, to making China not just prosperous and strong but also just and fair. Our guides across the century have shown us that there is more than one way to serve the public good, from government service to social agitation, and that the particular image of the ideal

[105] Ian Johnson, *Wild Grass: Three Portraits of Change in Modern China* (New York: Vintage Books, 2004), Chapter. 1.
[106] "He Weifang," in *Thinking China*, on the website of "The China Story," accessed November 16, 2014, at www.thechinastory.org/key-intellectual/he-weifang.
[107] "New Citizens: The Trial of Xu Zhiyong," *The Economist*, January 25, 2014.

changes by ideological moments across the century, but the drive and the talent have always been there.

Enduring ideas, 2005

The **people** have diversified in the writings of China's intellectuals. The collective *renmin* remain, but for the most part intellectuals think of individuals in terms of kinds of people in China—urban residents, rural residents, migrant workers, the new middle class, "returnees" (student who return from training abroad), princelings, entrepreneurs, millionaires. More so, intellectuals have likewise given up speaking "for the people." Thus Qin Hui focuses on the fate of farmers, not all Chinese. Xu Jilin sets his sights first on sorting out his own group—intellectuals. If there is a basic distinction among the category of "the people," it is one of "cultural class"—the educated and the uneducated. This is represented in the word *suzhi*, which means "quality," but quality in the sense of the British upper-class usage, "people of quality." In contemporary writings, people of low *suzhi* behave badly, spit in public, do not know how to operate in a modern economy, and probably beat their child. They need watching and it would be madness to give them democratic powers. As one National People's Congress delegate commented (below), democracy is good but only for the right sort of person. The realities of social stratification do not easily fit into official language, however. As one Chinese colleague joked recently, "In the past when we were all poor, all we could talk about was class struggle. Now that China really does have rich and poor and tensions between them we cannot mention class struggle but must talk about Harmony."

The meaning of **Chinese** remains as contested as ever. There is great pride in being the children of the Yellow Emperor with 5,000 years of cultural history. The Party has succeeded in inculcating a popular identification with the Chinese state. When it succeeds (in space exploration, for example) there is popular satisfaction within China. When China is affronted by Japan or America, there is outrage on the streets. And yet ethnic divisions have come to the fore. Han Chinese, the majority, now contest with restive minorities, particularly Tibetans and Uighurs. All are citizens of China, but who is Chinese? Regional sensibilities and languages have resurfaced. Local TV and radio stations now air some programs in Cantonese, Shanghainese, or other regional versions of Chinese that are unintelligible to Mandarin listeners. Urban Chinese, including intellectuals, now increasingly operate in two languages, their mother tongue at home and Mandarin as the common language at school and work. One can understand something of the Party's anxieties about

national unity, because on the ground China is a collection of regional nations with a common ancestry but with fierce individual identities.

Democracy is on the public agenda, but is also a topic of contention. Is capitalist democracy (per the West) the best form? Some sort of socialist democracy, or Confucian community? New Left scholars emphasize economic democracy over political democracy. Liberal scholars push one version or another of liberal democracy, focusing on political rights. New Confucian scholars promote meritocratic alternatives to what they view as venal popularity contests of elections. Nonetheless, democracy as some form of voice for citizens and restraint on government power is a widely accepted value among intellectuals in China today. Among the middle classes there is a concern that electoral democracy of the Western sort is not appropriate in China "for the time being." A civil engineer, a woman who was appointed to the National People's Congress in the early 2000s, quotes Premier Zhou Enlai from the early 1950s:

> China is the most populous country on earth, and at present holding direct elections would be extremely difficult. As for equal representation, peasants would make up 80 percent of the population, and so the majority of the deputies would also be peasants, and that would not be any good.

"Now, a half a century on," says the engineer NPC delegate, "it still holds true." She goes on to say that she supports elections, and even cites Lenin by chapter and verse, "Only universal, direct, fair elections can be said to be democratic elections." Her conclusion suggests that democracy is good, but only among the right sort of—educated—people.[108]

[108] This interview with the NPC delegate appears as "The People's Deputy: A Congresswoman," in Sang Ye, *China Candid: The People on the People's Republic* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), pp. 73–84, quotes at p. 79.