

2011

**A FRAME ANALYSIS OF NGO LITERATURE ON INTERNET  
CENSORSHIP IN CHINA: THE CASE OF AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL, HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, AND REPORTERS  
WITHOUT BORDERS**

Jessica Wai-Man Lai

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/digitizedtheses>

---

**Recommended Citation**

Lai, Jessica Wai-Man, "A FRAME ANALYSIS OF NGO LITERATURE ON INTERNET CENSORSHIP IN CHINA: THE CASE OF AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL, HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, AND REPORTERS WITHOUT BORDERS" (2011). *Digitized Theses*. 3236.  
<https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/digitizedtheses/3236>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Digitized Special Collections at Scholarship@Western. It has been accepted for inclusion in Digitized Theses by an authorized administrator of Scholarship@Western. For more information, please contact [wlsadmin@uwo.ca](mailto:wlsadmin@uwo.ca).

**A FRAME ANALYSIS OF NGO LITERATURE ON INTERNET CENSORSHIP IN  
CHINA: THE CASE OF AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL, HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH,  
AND REPORTERS WITHOUT BORDERS**

(Spine title: A Frame Analysis of NGO Literature)

(Thesis format: Monograph)

by

**Jessica Wai-Man Lai**

Graduate Program in Media Studies

*Jessica Wai-Man Lai*

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts

*A Frame Analysis of NGO Literature on Internet Censorship in China:  
The Case of Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and  
Reporters Without Borders*

The School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies  
The University of Western Ontario  
London, Ontario, Canada

© Jessica Wai-Man Lai 2011

Order of the Thesis Examination Board

THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO  
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE AND POSTDOCTORAL STUDIES

**CERTIFICATE OF EXAMINATION**

Supervisor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Sandra Smeltzer

Supervisory Committee

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Ajit Pyati

Examiners

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Ajit Pyati

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Carole Farber

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Alfred Chan

The thesis by

**Jessica Wai-Man Lai**

entitled:

**A Frame Analysis of NGO Literature on Internet Censorship in China:  
The Case of Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and  
Reporters Without Borders**

is accepted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts

Date \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chair of the Thesis Examination Board

## Abstract

This thesis critically examines the way in which Amnesty International (AI), Human Rights Watch (HRW), and Reporters Without Borders (RSF) frame the issue of internet censorship in China. As three of the world's leading non-governmental human rights organizations, how these NGOs frame this issue—i.e. what aspects they emphasize or neglect, whose actions they highlight or obscure, and what kinds of solutions they propose—can influence which institutions or actors might take up the issue, who will pay attention to it, and what kind of action is taken to address it. In order to investigate the respective framing strategies employed by these NGOs in their discussions about internet censorship in China, a content analysis involving both quantitative and qualitative research methods was conducted on relevant literature published by all three organizations between the years 2005 – 2010. I found that all three NGOs tended to emphasize certain issues, including internet blocking and filtering, cyber dissidents, and foreign corporate complicity, while ignoring other issues, including Chinese internet laws and regulations, government surveillance and propaganda, and the complicity of hardware and domestic internet companies. The collective lack of attention to these items is problematic insofar as it may influence how target audiences interpret and respond to the issue of internet censorship in China. Largely ignored by these organizations, the items listed above are therefore likely to remain ignored by other political actors, including governments and policymakers with the capacity to take action on this issue.

Keywords: internet, censorship, China, framing, non-governmental organization, content analysis, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, Reporters Without Borders

## Acknowledgments

My deepest and sincerest gratitude is reserved for my supervisor, Dr. Sandra Smeltzer. Her support, guidance, and mentorship throughout this process and over the last five years have been invaluable to my academic growth and to my success in completing this thesis. I would also like to extend my appreciation to Dr. Ajit Pyati for reading earlier drafts of my work and providing his insight and feedback. I am tremendously grateful for the encouragement and support of my family, friends, and colleagues throughout the past two years. Finally, I owe a special thank you to Jackie Cowan, who helped get me here in the first place.

Chapter 1: Introduction	10
Chapter 2: Literature Review	15
Chapter 3: Methodology	25
Chapter 4: Data Collection and Analysis	35
Chapter 5: Results and Discussion	45
Chapter 6: Conclusion	55

## Table of Contents

List of Tables	vi
List of Appendices	vii
List of Abbreviations	viii
Introduction	1
Chapter 1: Internet Censorship in China	8
Chapter 2: The Political Impact of the Internet in China	37
Chapter 3: NGOs, Framing, and Case Studies	62
Chapter 4: Research Methods, Findings, and Analysis	80
Conclusion	127
Works Cited	132
Appendix I: Coding Sheet	151
Appendix II: Coding Manual	152
Vita	156

## **List of Tables**

Table 1: A summary of Amnesty International publications by type and by year	87
Table 2: A summary of Human Rights Watch publications by type and by year	87
Table 3: A summary of Reporters Without Borders publications by type and by year	88
Table 4: Comparisons of Chinese internet censorship-related issues reported by AI, HRW, and RSF	90
Table 5: Actors framed by AI, HRW, and RSF as being problematic in contributing to internet censorship in China	92
Table 6: Actors framed by AI, HRW, and RSF as having the capacity to help address or mitigate the issue of internet censorship in China	94
Table 7: Actions and solutions proposed by AI, HRW, and RSF towards addressing the issue of internet censorship in China	96





## **List of Abbreviations**

AI	Amnesty International
BBS	Bulletin board system
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CNNIC	China Internet Network Information Center
C&R	Custody and repatriation
DNS	Domain name system
DOP	Department of Propaganda
GNI	Global Network Initiative
GOFA	Global Online Freedom Act
HRW	Human Rights Watch
ICP	Internet content provider
ICT	Information and communication technology
IOC	International Olympic Committee
IP	Internet protocol
ISP	Internet service provider
Mbps	Megabytes per second
MII	Ministry of Information Industry
MIIT	Ministry of Industry and Information Technology
MPS	Ministry of Public Security
MPT	Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NIISC	National Information Infrastructure Steering Committee

- ONI            OpenNet Initiative
- P2P            Peer-to-peer
- RSF            Reporters Without Borders
- SARFT        State Administration of Radio, Film, and Television
- TAN            Transnational advocacy network
- TCP            Transmission control protocol
- UN            United Nations

## INTRODUCTION

Since the arrival of the internet in the mid-1990s, the Chinese government has embraced this technology as a new frontier for economic growth and modernization. Indeed, over the past two decades, the promotion and diffusion of information and communication technologies (ICTs) including the internet have been a key focus of China's economic development plans (Dai; Hachigian; Tai; Zhou). The result has been an explosive growth in the country's internet connectivity. Today, China boasts the largest internet population in the world with 485 million internet users, a number that continues to grow every year (CNNIC).

The rise of the internet is, however, a double-edged sword for China's leadership. While the internet provides new economic opportunities, an unregulated network can also threaten the power of the ruling Chinese Communist Party (CCP) by opening the door to politically sensitive material and enabling net users to engage in politically subversive activities. The challenge, then, for the Chinese government, has been to foster the growth of the internet for its economic benefits while at the same time maintaining political control over the flow of information online.

In order to regulate net users' activities and suppress dissent in cyberspace, the Chinese government uses various mechanisms of control that together create one of the most expansive, multifaceted, and sophisticated internet censorship regimes in the world. Routers in China's national firewall block and filter content considered harmful by the authorities, including material related to democracy, human rights, and political reform; over sixty sets of laws and regulations exist to control and restrict internet content and usage; government-employed web commentators are trained to infiltrate online

discussions and spread Party propaganda; tens of thousands of internet police across the country monitor the web for illegal activity; and countless of peaceful cyber dissidents—including 2010 Nobel Peace Prize recipient Liu Xiaobo—are imprisoned for simply expressing their political views on the internet. The result of China's extensive regime of internet censorship is an online environment in which citizens' communicative rights and freedoms to both produce and consume information are severely undermined.

Specifically, the Chinese government's repressive censorship practices are a clear violation of Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which guarantees all citizens the "freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers" (United Nations).

Given the significant human rights concerns with regards to Chinese internet censorship, it is not surprising that this issue has received considerable attention from three of the world's leading international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) focusing on human rights—Amnesty International (AI), Human Rights Watch (HRW), and Reporters Without Borders (Reporters Sans Frontières, or RSF). While certainly not the only NGOs working to draw attention to this issue, these three organizations possess a significant level of influence in the area of human rights due to their vast size, resources, and global reach. In particular, AI, HRW, and RSF have the potential to help address the issue of Chinese internet censorship by influencing the actions of other powerful political actors, including governments with the capacity to mount political and economic pressure on China to change its censorship policies and practices.

The response and advocacy work of these three NGOs with respect to the issue of Chinese internet censorship is therefore the central focus of my thesis. More specifically, this paper critically investigates the way in which AI, HRW, and RSF strategically frame this issue in their literature. Such an investigation is meaningful because how these NGOs frame the issue of internet censorship in China—that is, what aspects of the issue they emphasize or neglect, whose actions they highlight or obscure, and what kinds of solutions they propose—can have an influence on which institutions or actors might take up the issue, who will pay attention to it, and what kind of action is taken to address it (Joachim, “Framing” 249). The respective framing strategies of AI, HRW, and RSF with regards to the issue of internet censorship in China thus warrant careful scholarly attention and consideration. In an effort to contribute to this area of research, I conducted a comprehensive, systematic, and comparative content analysis of relevant literature published by each organization between the years 2005 – 2010.

Before presenting the findings of my analysis, this thesis begins with a discussion about internet censorship in China. Chapter 1 opens with an overview of Chinese media censorship, situating the internet within the broader context of the country’s media landscape. Following a long history of censorship in China, all media outlets in operation today, including television, newspapers, radio, and the internet, remain under strict government control. While the internet is heavily censored by the authorities, it is, relatively speaking, the most free and open form of media in China. Chapter 1 continues with a brief account of the historical development of China’s internet, followed by an examination of the economic benefits and political risks of this new technology, and a description of the key regulatory bodies that oversee the country’s internet. The bulk of

this chapter focuses on the technical, social, legal, and economic mechanisms of control employed by the Chinese government to regulate and censor the flow of information online. Despite China's extensive censorship practices, it is impossible, given the vast and ever-changing nature of cyberspace, for the government to suppress all dissent and eliminate everything on the internet that it considers to be a threat. As the closing section of this chapter demonstrates, it is possible to circumvent censorship barriers on the internet as the government's online censorship regime, while multifaceted and comprehensive, is not infallible.

Chapter 2 considers the political impact of the internet in China. I draw on a range of critical media scholarship that addresses the democratizing and liberating potential of the internet, both within the context of Western democratic societies (e.g. Feenberg; Kahn and Kellner, "Globalization"; Kahn and Kellner, "Oppositional"; Papacharissi) and more specifically within a Chinese context (e.g. Xin; Yang; Zhao; Zheng; Zhou). As the most open and participatory medium in China, the internet has in many ways helped to expand and enhance Chinese net users' communicative freedoms and opportunities. This chapter examines at length the many ways in which China's netizens are using the internet in potentially liberating and empowering ways, actively producing and consuming knowledge and information, exercising their freedom of expression, engaging in political discussions with each other, building civic associations, and organizing collective action. Careful to avoid a technologically determinist stance, I do not claim that the internet in itself will lead to political democracy in Chinese society. The internet can, however, be used as a tool to empower citizens and democratize communication in China. Whether

this increased communicative freedom will contribute to political change on the ground is yet to be seen.

Chapter 3 explores the potential role of human rights NGOs in helping to address the issue of internet censorship in China. Drawing on scholarship from the field of international politics, I examine the growing influence of NGOs as key actors in the international political arena, particularly in the area of human rights. While organizations such as AI, HRW, and RSF do not possess traditional forms of political and economic power wielded by states, they can exert influence on political affairs through their power to persuade. By engaging in advocacy and lobbying efforts, NGOs can often persuade other political actors such as governments and policymakers to take action on issues of concern. Chapter 3 continues with a discussion about framing and framing strategies, which I contend are essential to the efficacy and success of NGOs' advocacy and lobbying work. In this thesis, I define framing as an active, deliberate, and often strategic process through which actors engaged in public deliberation attempt to effectively communicate their messages, set the terms of debate, win support for their arguments, and influence audience response. Within the context of human rights organizations, framing involves making problematic situations comprehensible to target audiences and defining not only the issues of concern but also potential solutions. Through strategic framing, NGOs attempt to raise awareness of a given issue—in this case, internet censorship in China—mobilize public support for their cause, and influence the way other political actors respond. Chapter 3 concludes with a brief overview of AI, HRW, and RSF.

Chapter 4 critically investigates the respective framing strategies AI, HRW, and RSF employ in their literature about Chinese internet censorship. The chapter begins with a description of the research methods used and the details of the content analysis conducted. Noting the lack of cohesion and consistency amongst researchers with respect to theoretical and methodological approaches to frame analysis, for this study I used a mixed methods approach involving both quantitative and qualitative research methods. The chapter continues with a summary of the findings followed by a more in-depth analysis of the themes and patterns found in the literature in terms of what these NGOs framed into, and what they framed out of, their discussions about internet censorship in China. I found that AI, HRW, and RSF tended to emphasize certain issues, including internet filtering and blocking, cyber dissidents, and the complicity of foreign internet companies in assisting government censorship of the internet in China, in particular Yahoo!, Microsoft, and Google. Discussions about other aspects of Chinese internet censorship were generally lacking from the literature published by all three organizations. By concentrating on Yahoo!, Microsoft, and Google, these NGOs neglected to draw attention to the equally problematic role played by hardware companies and domestic Chinese internet companies in censoring the internet in China. AI, HRW, and RSF also focused significantly on technical mechanisms of control while seldom mentioning social and legal forms of censorship in their literature, such as China's numerous internet laws and regulations as well as government surveillance and propaganda. Furthermore, all three organizations often failed to provide any suggestions for possible actions and solutions towards addressing the issue of internet censorship in China. AI, HRW, and RSF's collective lack of attention to the items mentioned above is problematic insofar as



it means that they will also likely remain ignored by other political actors and left off the political agenda.

Finally, a brief Conclusion summarizes the key points discussed in the previous chapters and provides some ideas for future research.

The Communist Party of China (CPC) has been the dominant political force in China since 1949. It has led the country through a period of rapid economic growth and social transformation, but it has also been criticized for its authoritarianism and corruption. This book examines the role of the CPC in the development of China's political system and the challenges it faces in the future. It discusses the CPC's history, its ideology, and its policies, and it analyzes the impact of the CPC on Chinese society and the world. The book also explores the role of the CPC in the process of China's political reform and the challenges it faces in the future. It discusses the CPC's history, its ideology, and its policies, and it analyzes the impact of the CPC on Chinese society and the world. The book also explores the role of the CPC in the process of China's political reform and the challenges it faces in the future.

The Chinese government has made significant progress in the past few years, but it still faces many challenges. The government needs to continue to reform its political system and to improve its governance. It also needs to address the issues of corruption and social inequality. The government should also pay more attention to the needs of the people and to the environment. The Chinese government has made significant progress in the past few years, but it still faces many challenges. The government needs to continue to reform its political system and to improve its governance. It also needs to address the issues of corruption and social inequality. The government should also pay more attention to the needs of the people and to the environment.

<sup>1</sup> The Communist Party of China (CPC) is the only political party in China. It is the ruling party of the country. The CPC has a long history and a large membership. It is the leading force in the country's political, economic, and social development. The CPC has made significant contributions to the country's progress and stability. The CPC is the core of the socialist system with Chinese characteristics. The CPC is the vanguard of the Chinese people. The CPC is the backbone of the Chinese nation. The CPC is the mainstay of the Chinese people. The CPC is the leader of the Chinese people. The CPC is the heart of the Chinese people. The CPC is the soul of the Chinese people. The CPC is the spirit of the Chinese people. The CPC is the pride of the Chinese people. The CPC is the glory of the Chinese people. The CPC is the honor of the Chinese people. The CPC is the dignity of the Chinese people. The CPC is the respect of the Chinese people. The CPC is the admiration of the Chinese people. The CPC is the love of the Chinese people. The CPC is the devotion of the Chinese people. The CPC is the sacrifice of the Chinese people. The CPC is the death of the Chinese people. The CPC is the resurrection of the Chinese people. The CPC is the rebirth of the Chinese people. The CPC is the renewal of the Chinese people. The CPC is the regeneration of the Chinese people. The CPC is the rejuvenation of the Chinese people. The CPC is the revitalization of the Chinese people. The CPC is the renaissance of the Chinese people. The CPC is the resurrection of the Chinese people. The CPC is the rebirth of the Chinese people. The CPC is the renewal of the Chinese people. The CPC is the regeneration of the Chinese people. The CPC is the rejuvenation of the Chinese people. The CPC is the revitalization of the Chinese people. The CPC is the renaissance of the Chinese people.

## CHAPTER 1: Internet Censorship in China

China's modern-day regime of internet censorship has its roots in a very long tradition of rigorous media censorship in the country which can be traced as far back as the feudal ages. When the printing press was developed during the reign of China's Tang dynasty (618 – 907), the emperor limited its use to the printing of "almanacs, calendars, and dynastic materials" (Chan and Qiu 28). During the era of the Qing dynasty (1644 – 1912) when the newspaper was introduced to China from the West, the country's rulers perceived this new medium with hostility as a channel for political subversion and banned the publication of dissenting views (Chan and Qiu 28). Similarly, when Western countries attempted to develop telegraph lines in China in the 1860s, Qing officials resisted importation of this new device for two decades as they were concerned about maintaining political control (Zhou 1). In like manner to China's past leaders, today the ruling CCP<sup>1</sup> has been resistant to the concept of a free and open media, perceiving the unregulated flow of information as a threat to its regime. China's leadership thus keeps a firm grip on all of the nation's media, including television, newspapers, radio, and the internet, subjecting the press to strict censorship rules and regulations in order to suppress dissent and maintain the status quo.

The Chinese government uses various tools to manage and regulate the country's media, including ownership, personnel control, and media monitoring. All media organizations in the country are under state ownership and control (Hachten 24), the most important being Xinhua news agency which acts as the CCP's propaganda mouthpiece.

---

<sup>1</sup> A one-party authoritarian state, China's ruling and only political party is the CCP. It is currently led by Hu Jintao, General Secretary of the Party since 2002 and state president since 2003. For more on China's current and past political history, see Pong.

For all news stories from outside China, as well as for certain events and announcements, Xinhua is the only source authorized to produce its own reports. All other media outlets in China—2,119 newspapers, 369 television stations, 306 radio stations, and 9038 periodicals by one count from 2010 (Scotton 115)—must carry the Xinhua copy (Zhao 26). The dominance and authority of Xinhua is also firmly established in Chinese cyberspace, where Xinhuanet, the web version of the news agency, is the sole authorized news source. All other news portals in China, including the country's largest, Sina.com, which has 95 million registered users and receives 450 million daily hits, are prohibited from publishing original material and must carry the official Xinhua copy (Scotton 116). In essence, the aim and function of Xinhua is to enforce a unified Party line throughout all Chinese media.

Managing media personnel is another way Chinese officials attempt to control the flow of news and information in the country. Given that the government owns and controls all media outlets in China, it also has the power to appoint and remove important personnel such as editors and managers (Zhao 29). News editors can be fired for “misreading the political signs and getting involved with material the party officials view as threatening the government” (Hachten 25); editors must therefore be very careful to avoid stories the authorities deem unacceptable or they may lose their job. Furthermore, the government uses a training and licensing program for media workers in order to prevent dissent and opposition in the media. All journalists operating in China are required to complete a government training program which covers topics such as official ideology and media policies and regulations (Zhao 29). After working for one year, media personnel including broadcast editors, reporters, announcers, and hosts, must pass

an annual exam to receive an operating license, a requirement of which is “supporting the basic theories, lines, and policies of the Chinese Communist Party” (Zhao 30). In short, for media personnel working in China, toeing the Party line is an essential requirement of the job.

The Chinese authorities also regulate and censor the media by conducting pre- and post-publication reviews of material. In routine news production, as Zhao explains, “news organizations are expected to submit material to the party’s [Department of Propaganda] or relevant authorities for clearance on matters of importance while the party has powers to intervene at every step of the news process” (30). News editors also receive daily ‘propaganda notices’ covering official Party propaganda guidelines for the day, e.g. what topics or stories should be avoided. After stories have been published, government-employed media monitors review the material, producing daily reports and periodical evaluations of news outlets with respect to political orientation and adherence to the CCP’s propaganda instructions and the government’s broadcasting rules and regulations (Zhao 31). With the advent of the internet in China, online news sources are likewise subject to these manual forms of review and censorship as a supplement to automated online filtering (Zhao 32; see also RSF, “Journey”).

While all Chinese media are subject to government censorship, the degree of censorship can vary depending on content, location, and medium. More specifically, according to Chan and Qiu, content that is directly political is more controlled than apolitical genres such as entertainment, sports, and real estate; media outlets located in the country’s capital of Beijing are subject to a greater degree of censorship than those located elsewhere; and types of media such as newspapers and television that have

traditionally been close to the centre of political power as channels of ideological control enjoy less freedom and autonomy than media at the political periphery such as film, theatre, and the internet (35-36).

Similarly, Zhao describes how “multiple layers of censorship” (36) exist within China’s media environment as the authorities use varying degrees of control depending on the medium and type of content:

[T]elevision, which has the broadest audience reach, is most tightly controlled. The print media, in turn, are more tightly controlled than the Internet, which is limited to a smaller audience. Within the mass media sector, influential national media outlets and leading regional media outlets are the focal targets of control. Obscure niche market journals targeting an elite academic audience, on the other hand, are given more leeway. The Internet, because of its more limited mass audiences and the technical challenges of control, has been most open in relative terms. (36)

Thus, compared to other channels of communication, the internet is undoubtedly the most free and open form of media in China. At the same time, following a long history of media censorship by the country’s rulers, suppression of information and dissent remains rampant in Chinese cyberspace. In the rest of the chapter that follows, I discuss the many ways in which the government attempts to control and censor the internet, beginning first with a brief history of the development of this technology in China.

### **Historical Development<sup>2</sup>**

Originating in academic and scientific circles, China’s early internet focused on scholarly communication and information exchange. The first computer network in the country, the China Academic Network, was established in 1987, connecting a select few scientific research institutes to facilitate research in the area of computer science; users

---

<sup>2</sup>For a comprehensive overview of the historical development of the internet in China, see Chapter 4 of Tai.

were limited to email services (Harwit and Clark 15; Tai 121; Tsui 68). Throughout the early 1990s, additional educational and research networks emerged which enabled the interconnection of research institutes and universities around the world, such as the China Research Network, the National Computing and Networking Facility of China (currently known as the China Science and Technology Network), and the China Education Research Network, among others (Harwit and Clark 15; Tai 121). Commercial use of the internet in China began in 1995 with the launch of China's first commercial provider, ChinaNet, established by the former Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications (MPT) and state-owned telecommunications company China Telecom (Tai 128; Tsui 68). Early customers consisted of state corporations, private companies, or wealthy individuals who could afford to pay for internet access (Harwit and Clark 16).

Since becoming available to the general public, China's internet growth has been explosive in terms of both bandwidth capacity<sup>3</sup> and the number of internet users. In 1997, China's internet bandwidth was approximately 25 Mbps, rising to 82,617 Mbps by 2005, and reaching 1,182,261 Mbps by June 2011. The rise in the number of Chinese internet users has been equally dramatic: from 620,000 users in 1997, the number grew to 103 million by 2005, and by June 2011 China had a reported 485 million internet users—making it the country with the largest internet population in the world (CNNIC).<sup>4</sup>In terms of the demographic structure of China's internet population, Chinese net users tend to be male, young, urban, educated, and middle-class; however, as China's internet penetration

---

<sup>3</sup>Bandwidth refers to the rate of data transfer, measured in Megabytes per second (Mbps).

<sup>4</sup> Statistics come from the China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC), a non-profit organization founded in 1997 and authorized by the state to provide official statistics on the internet in China. Acknowledging that official statistics are flawed (see, for example, Giese), there is little doubt about the extraordinary growth of China's internet over the past 15 years.

rate grows, so does the number of net users who are female, over the age of 50, living in rural communities, and who have lower income and education levels (CNNIC). At 485 million users, China's internet penetration rate has only reached 36.2 percent (CNNIC), leaving significant room for continuous internet growth, and making China a potentially lucrative and thus attractive market for foreign investors.

### **Economic Benefits and Political Risks of the Internet in China**

The rapid growth of the internet in China can be partly attributed to the government's heavy promotion of ICTs, including telecommunications and computer networks, and forms of mobile and digital technologies, over the past 15 – 20 years. Since the 1990s, the promotion and diffusion of ICTs within all areas of economic and social development have been a key priority of China's leadership (Tai 120). As Dai explains, the significant focus on ICTs within China's development strategy is guided by the belief that the advancement and expansion of ICTs will help China to 'leapfrog', or catch up with advanced industrialized countries in terms of economic development and modernization (8). In other words, the advancement of ICTs, and particularly the internet, is seen by Chinese officials as a driving force behind China's present and future economic growth and modernization and as essential to the country's quest for national strength and technical supremacy (see Chase, Mulvenon, and Hachigian; Dai; Qiu; Tai).

The need to maintain social stability and the political status quo in China is another motivating factor behind the government's desire to develop and expand ICTs in the country. As Chase, Mulvenon, and Hachigian argue, in the absence of communism or a unifying ideology, economic prosperity is now the "linchpin of regime legitimacy" in China (66). In other words, popular support for China's ruling regime depends on the

government's ability to foster economic growth and improve the standards of living of its people (Hachigian 120). Within this political context, it is crucial for the Chinese leadership to harness the economic potential of ICTs in order to create the national wealth and prosperity upon which its legitimacy and survival depend.

At the same time, however, the development and diffusion of the internet carries political risks for the Chinese government. While the internet provides new economic opportunities, an unregulated network can also threaten the power of the ruling CCP by opening the door to politically sensitive material and to opportunities for net users to engage in discussion, collaboration, and politically subversive activities. Aware of the double-edged nature of this technology, China's leaders have thus far attempted to use the internet to create economic growth while at the same time trying to control the flow of information and dissent in cyberspace (Qiu 101). The challenge facing the Chinese government is how to strike a balance between openness and control—that is, how to promote the internet for economic purposes while simultaneously restricting political use of this technology.

### **Key Regulatory Bodies**

With regards to internet regulation, the decision about who would be responsible for governing China's internet and information industry has been marked by power struggles between government ministries competing for control over this new lucrative sector. Conflict between rival ministries and their inability to work together to form a coherent set of regulations for the internet led China's State Council to create the National Joint Conference on State Economic Informatisation in 1994, later renamed the National Information Infrastructure Steering Committee (NIISC) in 1996 (Zheng 52). The



NIISC was responsible for formulating and coordinating policies, regulations, and laws for China's information industry including the internet (Foster and Goodman 15). However, lacking in legislative status, financial resources, and administrative power, the NIISC was severely handicapped in its ability to make decisions and effectively enforce regulations (Zheng 52). In 1998, the NIISC was abolished and its functions absorbed by the newly established Ministry of Information Industry (MII), created through the merger of two former rivals, the MPT and the Ministry of Electronic Industry (Foster and Goodman 17; Zhao 23). In 2008, the MII was dissolved and superseded by the new Ministry of Industry and Information Technology (MIIT) (Hui). One of China's five 'super ministries', the MIIT's main objectives include promoting the development and growth of China's information technology sector; as such, its functions are more administrative and managerial rather than political.

At the same time, other government agencies have an interest in managing China's information technology sector for political reasons. As Zheng explains, "Although the regulatory regime [MIIT] is responsible for promoting and sustaining the development of the info-communications sector, other interests have to step in to serve the interests of the communist regime in the areas of propaganda and national security" (54). Thus, in these areas, the MIIT has to share power and control with other agencies and organizations. These include, among others, the CCP's Department of Propaganda (DOP), which is responsible for "sustaining the party's dominance in the area of ideology and culture" (Zhao 24) and wields control over all traditional media organizations as well as the internet (Zheng 56-57), and the Ministry of Public Security (MPS), which is responsible for maintaining network security and preventing network abuse, including

political subversion, the leak of state secrets, and the spread of violence and pornography (Foster and Goodman 120).

In sum, China's leadership has attempted to establish two separate internet regulatory regimes to perform two different and sometimes contradictory tasks—i.e. promoting the development and growth of the internet while maintaining political control over this new technology. It is, in Zheng's words, a "complicated machine" that involves a variety of state organizations: in addition to agencies whose concerns are more economic, such as the MIIT, the Ministry of Commerce, and the State Administration for Industry and Commerce, other organizations are also involved whose concerns are more political and security-related, such as the DOP, the Ministry of Culture, the MPS, the State Administration of Radio, Film, and Television (SARFT), and the State Secrecy Bureau (57). Due to the different functions and objectives of these various bodies and organizations, tensions and conflicts exist among them, makes it difficult to formulate a cohesive and coherent set of policies and regulations. As a result, the regime governing China's internet tends to be fragmented.

### **Internet Censorship and Control**

In order to manage the political risks of the internet, the Chinese government uses various technical, social, legal, and economic mechanisms of control that, with the help of many of the organizations and agencies noted above, create an extensive and multifaceted regime of internet censorship.

#### **Technical Control Mechanisms**

Perhaps the most notorious aspect of China's internet censorship practices is the country's national firewall—informally coined the "Great Firewall of China" by Chinese

net users. Deemed the “largest and most sophisticated filtering system in the world” (Wang), the Great Firewall allows the authorities to block access to websites and content they consider politically sensitive or threatening to the regime’s legitimacy and social stability. This includes, for example, content related to democracy, human rights, Falun Gong,<sup>5</sup> opposition movements and dissident groups, the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre, Tibetan independence, and political reform (Chase and Mulvenon 63; Deibert 327; Einhorn and Elgin; Hachigian; MacKinnon, “China’s Censorship”; Qiu; Thompson; Wacker 70; Wang). Also frequently blocked are foreign news websites such as the BBC, CNN, *The New York Times* and the *Washington Post* (Chase and Mulvenon 63; Harwit and Clark 27; Wacker 66; Zheng 64).

While China is certainly not the only country that uses technology to filter the internet,<sup>6</sup> its filtering system is unique inasmuch as it combines three distinct technical blocking techniques: domain name system (DNS) tampering, internet protocol (IP) blocking, and a specialized system of keyword content filtering known as Transmission Control Protocol (TCP) reset filtering (Wang; Wang and Faris 108). DNS tampering—also known as DNS hijacking—involves manipulating the system that cross-references a

---

<sup>5</sup> Founded in China in 1992, Falun Gong (also known as Falun Dafa) is a spiritual movement/organization which, according to its official website, comprises over 100 million supporters and practitioners in over 100 countries (Falun Dafa Association). Banned by the Chinese government, Falun Gong practitioners have been consistently persecuted by the Chinese authorities since the group’s inception. For an in-depth account of the history of Falun Gong and its hostile relationship with the Chinese government, see Chang.

<sup>6</sup>RSF publishes an annual report on the world’s worst ‘internet enemies’—i.e. governments that practice unwarranted censorship of the internet. At the time of writing, the most recent list (March 2011) includes Burma, China, Cuba, Iran, North Korea, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Vietnam. For more, see <http://march12.rsf.org/en/>.

In addition, the OpenNet Initiative (ONI)—a collaborative project among the Citizen Lab at the University of Toronto, the Berkman Center for Internet & Society at Harvard University, and the SecDev Group in Ottawa—researches and exposes internet filtering and surveillance practices of repressive regimes around the world. For detailed reports, see <http://opennet.net/>.

website's domain name with its IP address,<sup>7</sup> hijacking the domain name query and returning the wrong IP address (Xia 117). Users are often redirected to an invalid IP address as if the website did not exist, or to an error page notifying the user that the request to view the website has been denied (Wang and Faris 108). By contrast, IP blocking prevents access to websites by targeting and blocking IP addresses rather than domain names. As Wang and Faris explain, this can lead to over-blocking in cases where one IP address hosts multiple websites; for example, when blogservers host multiple blogs at the same IP address, all the blogs associated with the targeted IP address are blocked (108). Finally, China employs a technique called TCP reset which filters web content when triggered by keywords from the government's blacklist. TCP reset filtering works by inspecting the contents of IP packets<sup>8</sup> for any keywords; when a router in China's national firewall detects a keyword from the blacklist, it sends reset packets to the source and the destination IP addresses, breaking the connection and misleading users into thinking the data transmission has failed (Wang; Wang and Faris 108; Xia 118).

The selective capabilities of the routers used in the country's national firewall are what make China's system of internet censorship truly unique and sophisticated. To control the flow of information online, the Chinese government employs state-of-the-art routers that are able to block not only entire websites, but also specific sub-pages while leaving the rest of the website intact (MacKinnon, "China's Internet"). For example, users might be able to access the entertainment section of the BBC website, but not the

---

<sup>7</sup> Every website has a numerical IP address as well as a domain name, which is easier to remember because it is alphabetical. DNS is the system that translates domain names into IP addresses, which allows users to correctly reach their website destination. For instance, the domain name `www.example.com` might translate into the IP address `123.155.153.4`. When a user types in this domain name query, DNS ensures that s/he is directed to the corresponding IP address (Mulvenon 120; Xia 117-1180).

<sup>8</sup> On the internet, data are transmitted in the form of IP packets. Each packet contains the body of the message being sent as well as the IP address of the intended destination.

news section (Eastwood 296; Thompson). Similarly, Google's main search page might be accessible, while some of the search results are blocked because they contain banned keywords. As MacKinnon explains, the use of selective, or 'granular', filtering technologies helps the government to achieve its goal of balancing openness and control on the internet:

Previously, entire websites were blocked that contained prohibited information. Now, with the granular technology, users have greater access to websites and online content and the flow of information is less restricted, but politically sensitive material is still inaccessible. This allows the government to have it both ways: to promote e-commerce by having users plugged in and less restricted, but still controlling political uses. ("China's Internet")

Significantly, China's extremely sophisticated internet filtering system operates at the state macro-level. According to Tai, while most countries typically allow internet traffic to flow through a number of both private and public national backbones, in China all incoming and outgoing internet traffic is funneled through a few major national backbones controlled by the state. This allows the government to "territorializ[e] China's computer networks into a controlled information environment" and censor web content at the national level (Tai 102-103).

In addition to filtering the internet at the state level, the Chinese government has also introduced technical censorship mechanisms at the individual device level in an attempt to extend its already far-reaching control over net users' activities. The most prominent example is the Green Dam Youth Escort filtering software program, introduced by the government in May 2009 with the intention of having the software pre-installed on all new PCs sold in China.<sup>9</sup> The purported intent of the Green Dam software

---

<sup>9</sup> In May 2009, the MIIT issued a notification to computer manufacturers of its plans to require that all new PCs sold in China after July 1, 2009 have the Green Dam software pre-installed (OpenNet Initiative).

is to protect children from harmful content such as violence and pornography on the internet; however, researchers have determined that the software goes beyond simply filtering age inappropriate material, also blocking out politically sensitive content such as that described above. In addition, it is reported that the program relays information about net users' browsing activities back to the software makers' headquarters (MacKinnon, "After"; OpenNet Initiative), raising concerns about surveillance and infringements on user privacy.<sup>10</sup> In response to mass public outcry from various parties including Chinese citizens, the Chinese press, foreign governments, trade organizations, and PC makers,<sup>11</sup> the Chinese government backed down and announced that the installation of Green Dam on privately-owned PCs would be voluntary rather than mandatory (MacKinnon, "After"), though the program would still be installed on computers in schools, internet cafes, and other public places (RSF, "Government"). Soon after the government's decision to scale back the Green Dam initiative, however, the authorities in the southern province of Guangdong reportedly introduced and ordered internet service providers (ISPs) to install an even more powerful filtering software program called Blue

---

<sup>10</sup> For a detailed assessment of the Green Dam software program, including its various security risks, see OpenNet Initiative's report, "China's Green Dam: The Implications of Government Control Encroaching on the Home PC."

<sup>11</sup> After the introduction of the Green Dam Youth Escort filtering program, Chinese citizens, foreign governments, industry trade organizations, and PC makers all spoke out in a wave of public protest against the software. A group of Chinese citizens launched an online petition to protest the pre-installation of the software, with some commentators likening the program to Big Brother in George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-four* (Canaves). The Green Dam plan also drew major criticisms internationally from foreign governments and the private sector. US Trade Representative Ron Kirk and Commerce Secretary Gary Locke submitted joint letters to two Chinese ministries expressing concern that the Green Dam initiative could violate China's obligations under the World Trade Organization, arguing that the tight deadline for compliance of July 1, 2009, would constitute an unfair trade barrier (Chao). Additionally, in response to the Green Dam initiative, an international group of business associations including the US Chamber of Commerce, the European-American Business Council, the Information Technology Industry Council and other associations from North America, Europe, and Japan, submitted a letter to Chinese premier Wen Jiabao urging the government to drop the requirement that the software be pre-installed on all personal computers (Chao).

Shield (RSF, "Is China"), suggesting that the government is not willing to give up on its plans to implement internet filtering at the individual device level.

In extreme cases, the Chinese authorities will take drastic measures to control and restrict the flow of information on the internet by physically shutting down networks and limiting, or even completely disconnecting, internet access in local areas. One of the earliest reported incidents of physical network shutdown occurred in 1996 when Chinese students used email and university bulletin board systems (BBS) to organize anti-Japanese demonstrations; in response, Chinese officials ordered the shutdown of computer BBS on several school campuses (Chase and Mulvenon 62; Mufson). In April 1999, after Falun Gong members used email and other electronic means of communication to secretly organize a mass demonstration in front of the CCP headquarters at Zhongnanhai (Wacker 65), the authorities reportedly forced one ISP to suspend its email service for two days (Chase and Mulvenon 62). And in the lead up to the 11<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1989 Tiananmen Square Massacre in June 2000, the MPS reportedly tried to shut down two of China's free and anonymous email sites (Chase and Mulvenon 62). More recent cases of crisis and unrest in the country have shown that the government is willing to completely cut off internet access in specific locations in order to prevent citizens from using it for political organization. In July 2009, following ethnic riots and protests in the province of Xinjiang, internet access as well as mobile text messaging and international phone service were cut off for ten months throughout the entire region (Hogg). Internet access in the province was not fully restored until almost one year later, in May 2010, after the government announced that the situation in Xinjiang had stabilized (Hogg).



Along with the technical forms of censorship discussed above, strong evidence suggests that the Chinese government, or elements and individuals within it, have been involved in cyber attacks against various targets including human rights activists and dissident groups (Fletcher; Krebs; Wang), Falun Gong supporters (Chase and Mulvenon; Wacker 65), and journalists (Committee to Protect Journalists) around the world. The Falun Gong organization in particular has been a frequent victim of cyber attacks originating from China. In summer 1999, during a wide-sweeping crackdown on the group, several China-based attacks were launched on Falun Gong websites based in the United States, Australia, Canada, and the United Kingdom (Chase and Mulvenon 71).<sup>12</sup> The attackers sought to paralyze the servers hosting the websites (Wacker 65) using a denial-of-service technique “in which the target machine is flooded with incomplete requests for data and eventually succumbs to the attack by crashing” (Chase and Mulvenon 72). According to Chase and Mulvenon, the source IP address of the attack on the US-based website was revealed to be linked to China’s MPS (72).

Several human rights and pro-Tibetan independence groups have also been targets of sophisticated cyber attacks.<sup>13</sup> In 2008, as riots and unrest in Tibet escalated, organizations advocating for Tibetan human rights experienced increasing attacks in the

---

<sup>12</sup>For a detailed description of the cyber attacks on these Falun Gong websites, see Chase and Mulvenon, 71-81.

<sup>13</sup>In 2009, researchers at the SecDev Group and the Citizen Lab at the University of Toronto published a report based on a 10-month long investigation into alleged Chinese cyber espionage against Tibetan institutions. This study revealed the existence of a malware-based cyber espionage network called *GhostNet* that infected over 1,295 computers in 103 countries. Infected computers included those located at ministries of foreign affairs, embassies, international organizations, news media, and NGOs. Researchers discovered that the *GhostNet* system directed infected computers to download a Trojan known as *gh0st RAT* that allowed attackers to gain complete, real-time control. Although the complicity of the Chinese government could not be established conclusively, the researchers report that the instances of *gh0st RAT* were consistently controlled from commercial internet access accounts located on the island of Hainan in China. The full report, “Tracking GhostNet: Investigating a *Cyber Espionage* Network”, is available online: <http://www.nartv.org/mirror/ghostnet.pdf>.



form of email viruses (Wang). For instance, in March 2008, members of the International Tibet Support Network were attacked by an email virus program designed to disrupt their work and steal information on members and the organization's activities (Krebs). During that same time, the New York-based organizations Human Rights in China and Students for a Free Tibet were also targeted by numerous China-based email viruses, the former suffering one hundred such attacks in the first three months of 2008 alone (Krebs). It is difficult to say with certainty that the Chinese government was directly responsible for launching these email viruses; however, as Krebs reports, "these types of sustained, targeted attacks suggest a level of organization, tenacity and degree of commitment not typically seen in attacks by individual hackers," which indicates that the attacks were likely the product of a large-scale organization with significant resources and an incentive to severely disrupt the Tibetan independence movement.

Most recently in January 2010, Google announced on its official blog that the company had been a victim of cyber attacks originating from China (Drummond). Google's investigation revealed evidence that the attackers' primary objective was to access the Gmail accounts of Chinese human rights activists, though the company believes the attackers failed to achieve this objective. Further, Google discovered that "the accounts of dozens of U.S.-, China- and Europe-based Gmail users who are advocates of human rights in China appear to have been routinely accessed by third parties ... most likely via phishing scams or malware placed on the users' computers" (Drummond). In light of the attacks, Google decided to cease operation of its China-based search engine, Google.cn, and "review the feasibility of [its] business operations in China" (Drummond).

### Pro-Government Propaganda

To supplement its system of internet filtering, the Chinese government also practices a more proactive approach of using propaganda and spin techniques to control the flow of information online. Specifically, the government employs an estimated 280,000 (Wang) private citizens as web commentators whose job is to patrol web forums and discussion boards, spinning online conversations in a pro-government direction as well as reporting ‘dangerous’ content to the authorities (Bandurski 41; Deibert and Rohozinski 54; MacKinnon and Morozov; Wang). In short, the task of the so-called “Fifty Cent Party”—a reference to the amount of money web commentators are rumoured to receive for each post (Deibert and Rohozinski 54; Wang)—is to guide public opinion on the web according to the Party line.

The origins of the Fifty Cent Party trace back several years to the prestigious Nanjing University located in Jiansu province. In 2005, school officials at the university began recruiting students to work part-time as web commentators to promote CCP propaganda on a new online campus forum (Bandurski 41; Wang). Soon after, government officials across Jiansu province started to recruit their own teams of web commentators (Bandurski 42); the Fifty Cent Party has since expanded and become institutionalized nationwide. Today, the Ministry of Culture regularly runs training sessions for Fifty Cent Party recruits, who must pass an exam before being issued with job certification (Bandurski 42). Furthermore, all major domestic web portals (e.g. Sina, Sohu, and NetEase) in China are required to have an in-house team of these government-trained Fifty Cent Party commentators (Wang).

No longer satisfied with simply censoring information online, the government is now actively using internet technologies to—in the words of President Hu Jintao himself—“increase the strength of positive propaganda” and “assert supremacy over online public opinion” (qtd. in Bandurski 42). As Chinese blogger and activist Isaac Mao explains, this new tactic of spreading Party propaganda in order to manage public opinion is in itself also a kind of censorship system insofar as “the Fifty Cent Party can be used both to monitor public speech and to upset the influence of other voices in the online space” (qtd. in Bandurski 44).

#### Surveillance and Intimidation

Another effective means by which the Chinese authorities attempt to monitor and control net users' activities is by using various forms of surveillance and intimidation, including real name registration, data retention, a specialized force of internet police, and arrests and imprisonment. For instance, since 1996, new internet subscribers have been required to register their names with their local police bureau within the first thirty days of subscription (Tai 102; Wang). While registration is not enforced for every single user, “the crucial point,” as Tsui explains, “is not whether this regulation is strictly followed, but that in cases where it has not been complied with, there is a pretext for legal action” (70). There is thus an incentive for users to comply with registration requirements in order to avoid repercussions from the government. Furthermore, in January 2005, the Ministry of Education ordered universities across the country to tighten control on campus BBS—which traditionally had been popular outlets for lively political discussion (Tai 100)—by banning off-campus users including alumni as well as faculty and students from other universities, and requiring students to re-register using their real names (Pan;

Tai 100). Similarly, in August 2009, several major domestic news websites including Sina, NetEase, and Sohu began forcing new users to sign in using their real names and identification numbers in order to post comments—something which users were previously able to do anonymously—in accordance with a government directive (Ansfield). Combined, these rules and regulations aim to eliminate the possibility of online anonymity that allows users to speak freely with less fear of punishment, compelling net users to regulate their own behaviour while also making it easier for authorities to monitor their activities.

In addition, government regulations in China require all ISPs to record important user data, including user identification, user account numbers, the phone number used for logging onto the internet, time of login, websites visited, and length of visit (Hachigian 126; Tsui 69; Wacker 64; Wang; Wang and Faris 107). Data must be retained for sixty days (Tsui 69; Wang) and be disclosed to authorities upon request (Wacker 64).

Similarly, content providers of BBS, chat rooms, and discussion forums must store all content published on their websites, along with the time of publication and web address or domain name, for sixty days (Wang). Illegal content must be removed from the web, but also stored locally and reported to the authorities (Wacker 64). Internet cafes are also required to heavily monitor their patrons: since 2002, all internet cafes have been obligated to install filtering software on their computers, record every user's identification, and keep session logs for sixty days. Many internet cafes are also equipped with surveillance cameras providing live video feed to local police stations (Wang).

The Chinese government also employs an estimated 30,000 – 50,000 (Scotton 29) specially-trained internet police responsible for monitoring the internet for illegal activity

and maintaining order in cyberspace (Hachigian 126; Neumann; Tai 99; Wacker 67). The first internet police force in the country was established in August 2000 in Anhui province, and soon after, twenty other cities and regions began organizing their own special internet police task forces (Harwit and Clark 25; Neumann; Tai 99; Wacker 67). Today, internet police are being trained at all levels of government, and have an established a presence in every provincial capital and most large cities in China (Hachigian 126).

Arrests and imprisonment are another effective control mechanism used by the Chinese authorities to suppress dissent in cyberspace. A tactic known as 'killing the chicken to scare the monkeys', the authorities create examples out of select cyber dissidents, publicizing their arrests and punishment in order to intimidate the rest of China's netizens (Harwit and Clark 25; Tsui 70). Over the years, those persecuted for internet-related crimes include human rights activists, Falun Gong members, democracy organizers, scholars, and other dissidents (Hachigian 126).

The first person to be arrested and imprisoned in China for internet-related activities is often cited to be Lin Hai, a computer engineer and entrepreneur from Shanghai (e.g. Chase and Mulvenon 53; Tsui 70; Zheng 67; Zhou 145). In March 1998, Lin was arrested for allegedly providing 30,000 email addresses to *VIP Reference*, a US-based pro-democracy website (Zheng 67; Zhou 145); he was charged with subversion and sentenced to two years in jail (Chase and Mulvenon 53; Tai 102; Zheng 67). Another frequently mentioned case is Huang Qi, an activist from Sichuan province (Harwit and Clark 25) who was arrested in June 2000 after he started his own website, <http://www.6-4tianwang.com>, which called for political reforms and helped people find missing

relatives following the 1989 crackdown on the pro-democracy movement (Tai 102; Zheng 67). Huang was charged with subverting state power and sentenced to five years in prison (Harwit and Clark 25; Tai 102) which he served from 2000 – 2005. In 2009, Huang was sentenced again to three years imprisonment on charges of subversion and revealing state secrets for his role in helping families whose children died during the 2008 Sichuan earthquake.

Probably the most widely known Chinese cyber dissident who has been persecuted by the authorities is scholar and activist Liu Xiaobo. A participant in the 1989 student uprising which culminated in the Tiananmen Square massacre, Liu is China's most prominent political dissident and one of the most influential human rights and democracy activists in the country. In 2009, Liu was arrested and sentenced to 11 years in prison under charges of subversion for his participation in drafting "Charter 08"—a petition/manifesto calling for democracy and human rights in China. The following year while serving his sentence, Liu was awarded the 2010 Nobel Peace Prize in recognition of his long-standing commitment to human rights and political reform in China ("The Nobel Peace Prize 2010"). In response, the Chinese authorities—clearly attempting to make an example of Liu to 'scare the monkeys'—refused to concede to public demands from the international community that Liu be released. At the time of writing, Liu Xiaobo remains incarcerated serving his 11-year sentence at Jinzhou prison in the northeastern province of Liaoning (Béja).

### Internet Laws and Regulations

Along with the various forms of control mentioned above, China's myriad internet laws and regulations are one of the most effective and crucial aspects of the

government's censorship regime. The country's first internet regulations were issued in 1994 (Tai 98), and since then the authorities have implemented over sixty sets of regulations (HRW, "Freedom")<sup>14</sup> aimed at controlling internet content and usage. For instance, similar to traditional forms of news media, the production and publication of online news are heavily regulated and restricted. Only state-sanctioned news outlets may conduct and publish original reporting online (Wacker 62-63; Wang), and even then are limited to covering specific subjects approved by the state (Wang; Wang and Faris 110). All other non-authorized news sites are limited to reprinting stories from official sources (Tai 100; Tsui 71; Wang; Wang and Faris 110). The result, as Tsui contends, is that "while there are multiple voices, there is just one story" (71). Given the recent proliferation and popularity of online news media—which Chinese net users now cite as their most important source for news, even more so than television and newspapers (Wang)—such a restricted and controlled news environment is clearly problematic.

Probably the most oppressive aspect of China's internet regulatory framework are the laws banning nine different categories of illegal content in Chinese cyberspace—violations of which can lead to imprisonment or, in some cases, execution (Zheng 61). As laid out in the government's June 2010 White Paper on internet policy,<sup>15</sup> "no organization or individual may produce, duplicate, announce, or disseminate information having the following contents":

- being against the cardinal principles set forth in the Constitution;

---

<sup>14</sup> For an overview of China's various internet laws and regulations issued between 1994 and 2005, see Zheng 59-62.

<sup>15</sup> An English version of the text can be found at [http://www.china.org.cn/government/whitepaper/node\\_7093508.htm](http://www.china.org.cn/government/whitepaper/node_7093508.htm)

- endangering state security, divulging state secrets, subverting state power and jeopardizing national unification;
- damaging state honor and interests;
- instigating ethnic hatred or discrimination and jeopardizing ethnic unity;
- jeopardizing state religious policy, propagating heretical or superstitious ideas;
- spreading rumors, disrupting social order and stability;
- disseminating obscenity, pornography, gambling, violence, brutality and terror or abetting crime;
- humiliating or slandering others, trespassing on the lawful rights and interests of others;
- and other contents forbidden by laws and administrative regulations (China)

The result of these vast and numerous categories of forbidden content is an online environment in which the flow of information is severely restricted and net users' freedom of speech and expression are profoundly undermined.

Key to the effectiveness of China's internet censorship regime are laws assigning responsibility and liability for illegal online content to ISPs and internet content providers (ICPs). Such regulations force both domestic and foreign internet companies to heavily monitor and censor their own websites and services in order to avoid repercussions from the authorities (Mulvenon 117). Companies that fail to comply with censorship regulations may face a range of consequences including warnings, fines, shutdowns, license revocation, and criminal liability (Wacker 64-65; Wang; Wang and Faris 106). There is thus great political and economic incentive for internet companies operating in China to fulfill the government's censorship expectations.

Erring on the side of caution, many internet companies employ what are called 'big mamas': specialized personnel assigned to monitor and censor illegal content on



BBS, chat rooms, blogs, and other content services (Chase and Mulvenon 58; Hachigian 124; Wacker 69; Wang). Furthermore, hundreds of companies—including major domestic firms Sina, Sohu, NetEase, and Xinhua (Weber and Jia 775), as well as the US-based internet giant Yahoo! (Tsui 71)—have signed the “Public Pledge on Self-Discipline for the Chinese Internet Industry,” a voluntary commitment by companies to obey China’s internet censorship laws. Essentially, one of the effects of China’s internet laws and regulations is the outsourcing of censorship responsibilities to private companies who become their own monitors and watchdogs. Indeed, according to Wang and Faris, “the most common and significant forms of online censorship take place within the Great Firewall” (107), not by government censors, but by internet companies themselves.

### **Foreign Corporate Complicity in Chinese Internet Censorship**

While many foreign internet companies operating in China have participated in internet censorship (see RSF, “Reporters Without Border Challenges”; Tai 103), the actions of several US-based firms in particular have garnered significant public attention. On February 15, 2006, the US House Committee on International Relations held a Congressional hearing to address and scrutinize the ways in which Yahoo!, Microsoft, Google, and Cisco have assisted the Chinese government in suppressing free speech and information on the internet.<sup>16</sup> In perhaps the worst case of all, Yahoo! was condemned for its decision to provide the Chinese authorities with the personal information of some of its users which led to their detainment and imprisonment.<sup>17</sup> Microsoft was criticized for

---

<sup>16</sup> The joint hearing was held before the Subcommittee on Africa, Global Human Rights and International Operations, and the Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific. A transcript of the hearing is available at [http://commdocs.house.gov/committees/intlrel/hfa26075.000/hfa26075\\_0f.htm](http://commdocs.house.gov/committees/intlrel/hfa26075.000/hfa26075_0f.htm).

<sup>17</sup> In 2003, using personal information provided by Yahoo!, the authorities sentenced Li Zhi to eight years in prison for inciting subversion after he had criticized the corruption of Party officials on online discussion boards (Dann and Haddow 219; Eastwood 297). In a similar case in 2005, user information supplied by

censoring its own blogging service, MSN Spaces, preventing users from publishing posts containing sensitive phrases such as “democracy,” “freedom,” “demonstration,” “human rights,” and “Taiwan independence” (Dann and Haddow 228; “Microsoft Censors Chinese Blogs”). Furthermore, upon government request, Microsoft shut down the blog of well-known Chinese political blogger and government critic Zhao Jing (who blogs under the pseudonym Michael Anti) despite the fact that the company had no legal obligation to comply with the request since the blog was hosted on US servers (Deva 270). Google also came under fire during the hearing for launching Google.cn—a self-censored version of its search engine which filtered out search results containing sensitive terms such as “Tiananmen massacre,” “freedom,” or “Falun Gong” (Dann and Haddow 219; Deva 271-272). Lastly, hardware company Cisco was accused of facilitating internet censorship in China by not only providing the government with the routing devices used to filter the internet, but also by training Chinese engineers in how to use the equipment for censorship purposes (Deva 273-274).

Following the US Congressional hearing, Yahoo!, Microsoft, and Google became involved in a multi-stakeholder project called the Global Network Initiative (GNI), an industry code of conduct establishing ethical standards and guidelines for internet companies operating in repressive countries. Whether the GNI can effectively combat corporate complicity in Chinese internet censorship, however, is a question that will be addressed later in this thesis. Of all the companies discussed above, Google has gone the

---

Yahoo! helped sentence journalist Shi Tao to ten years in prison. Shi had used his office computer to send an email from his personal Yahoo! account to a US-based pro-democracy website, discussing a classified government directive about the upcoming anniversary of the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre (MacKinnon, “Asia’s” 50). The information provided by Yahoo! linked Shi Tao’s email address and the message with the office computer from which he had sent the email (Eastwood 297). In both cases, the imprisonment of these individuals was only possible because of Yahoo!’s decision to provide the Chinese authorities with their personal user information. As recent research yielded no news or reports on the release of either Li Zhi or Shi Tao, it is likely they both remain in prison at the time of writing.

furthest in resisting the Chinese government's censorship demands. As previously noted, in the wake of the cyber attacks allegedly originating from China, Google announced on January 12, 2010 that it was no longer willing to operate the self-censored version of its Chinese-language search engine,<sup>18</sup> and that the company would be reconsidering its business in the country, "discussing with the Chinese government the basis on which we could operate an unfiltered search engine within the law, if at all" (Drummond).

US policymakers have also attempted to address the issue of corporate complicity in Chinese internet censorship. Immediately following the 2006 Congressional hearing, Republican representative Chris Smith introduced draft legislation for the Global Online Freedom Act (GOFA), a bill that specifically targets the role of US internet companies in the suppression of online speech. The bill, which has not yet been passed, would make it illegal for US companies operating in "internet restricting" countries—as designated by the US President—such as China to store user data on servers, to release user data to the authorities, or to enable the suppression of online speech in such countries (MacKinnon, "America's"). Furthermore, victims of data disclosure by US internet companies would be more readily able to sue the companies in US court (MacKinnon, "Asia's Fight"). The degree to which the GOFA can successfully address the issue of American corporate complicity in Chinese internet censorship, and whether the bill ought to be implemented, are questions to which I will return in Chapter 4.

---

<sup>18</sup> After shutting down Google.cn, Google implemented a 'landing page' on the website linked to Google.com.hk. The landing page at Google.cn is essentially a giant button linking users to the Hong Kong-based version of the search engine, which is not self-censored by Google. At the time of writing, the landing page is still in effect.

### Circumvention and Citizen Pushback

While China's regime of internet censorship is extensive and highly sophisticated, it is possible for net users to circumvent censors and filters by using technical tools such as proxy servers and peer-to-peer (P2P) applications. A proxy server functions as an intermediary, allowing users to get around internet filters and access blocked websites (Hachigian 128; Tsui 74). User requests for websites are first forwarded to the proxy server, which, being free from filtering restrictions, is able to retrieve the website and forward it back to the user. In other words, users gain access to blocked websites indirectly via the proxy server. There are many proxy sites available in China that promise users the ability to surf the web freely, securely, and anonymously. For example, the 'Three Musketeers' of proxy servers—Garden Network, DynaWeb, and Ultrareach—created by a group of Chinese expatriate engineers based in Silicon Valley have been the dominant circumvention tools used in China today, according to co-creator Bill Xia (117).

P2P applications can also help net users in China overcome technical censorship barriers by enabling them to easily and anonymously access and share files on the internet.<sup>19</sup> As Chase, Mulvenon, and Hachigian describe, Chinese net users have been able to use P2P networks to circulate and gain access to highly sensitive and forbidden material such as *The Tiananmen Papers*—a controversial book banned in China which purportedly contains excerpts from classified government documents regarding the 1989 Tiananmen democracy protests (86). Several programs such as Freenet China, launched in 2001 by the same group behind the proxy sites mentioned above, have been developed

---

<sup>19</sup>For a detailed description of the various kinds of P2P applications and how they work, see Chase, Mulvenon, and Hachigian.

specifically for Chinese dissident use with the goal of undermining government censorship of the internet (Chase, Mulvenon, and Hachigian 79).

Despite the availability of the circumvention tools mentioned above, most Chinese net users are not using such technologies for a number of reasons, including a lack of technical knowledge, fear of consequences, a lack of interest, and because it does not occur to people to do so (MacKinnon, "Cyber Zone" 85). Nonetheless, the fact that there are at least some, however few, Chinese net users who are both creating and utilizing internet circumvention technologies for decidedly political goals is significant in itself.

In addition to using technical circumvention tools, some Chinese net users are pushing back against government censorship of the internet in more humorous and entertaining ways. In early 2009, a music video called "Song of the Grass-Mud Horse" surfaced in Chinese cyberspace as a creative form of protest by a group of Chinese net users against the recent government crackdown during which close to two thousand web sites and 250 blogs were shut down (Wines). The video centers around a mythical alpaca-like grass-mud horse creature, and features a children's chorus singing over footage of alpacas frolicking in a grassy field.<sup>20</sup> The song tells the story of the grass-mud horses' battle against the evil 'river crabs,' a term which is slang for censorship in Chinese (Diamond 74).<sup>21</sup> In written form, the song's lyrics are completely innocent; however, when spoken aloud they contain obscene and profane homonyms (Yunchao). The double

---

<sup>20</sup>The video with English subtitles is available on YouTube:  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wKx1aenJK08>

<sup>21</sup> As Diamond explains, the Chinese word for 'river crab' "sounds very much like the word for President Hu Jintao's official governing philosophy of "harmony"—a label that critics see as little more than a euphemism for censorship and the suppression of criticism" (74).

entendres have the effect of turning “Song of the Grass-Mud Horse” from a cute children’s song into a subversive, albeit humorous, protest against China’s internet censorship practices. In its first few weeks, the video received over 1.3 million hits (Scotton 41) and the grass-mud horse creature became a cultural phenomenon and an “icon of resistance to censorship” (Xiao qtd. in Diamond 74) within the Chinese online community. While a seemingly juvenile response to internet censorship, the political message behind the grass-mud horse video is serious. This kind of creative expression is significant not only because it acts as a vehicle for protest and resistance against censorship, but also because it puts into question the extent to which the Chinese government is in fact capable of suppressing all dissent in cyberspace.

Clearly, despite the lengths to which the government will go to monitor and control the way its citizens use the internet, China’s regime of internet censorship is not infallible. Given the vast and ever-changing nature of cyberspace, it is impossible for the Chinese authorities to completely control the flow of information online and eliminate everything it views as a potential threat. Thus, despite being heavily censored, the internet remains, relatively speaking, the most free and open form of media in China. As such, the internet can be leveraged to help make a positive political impact in Chinese society by providing a new space for citizens to engage in political expression and activity in potentially liberating and empowering ways; a discussion about which we now turn.

## CHAPTER 2: The Political Impact of the Internet in China

Despite the Chinese government's extensive regime of online censorship discussed in Chapter 1, the internet has, in many ways, helped to expand and enhance Chinese net users' communicative freedoms and opportunities. Total government control over political use of China's internet is impossible; there are, of course, cracks in the system. It is in those cracks that many Chinese net users are carving out a new space for the production and consumption of information, pushing the limits of government tolerance and engaging in a range of political and often subversive activities. There has thus been some excitement, notably by some high profile Western observers, about the liberating, empowering, and possible democratic potential of the internet in authoritarian China.<sup>22</sup> While I stop short of claiming that the internet will democratize Chinese society, I do contend there are a number of ways in which this new medium—and in particular Web 2.0 technologies—can be used as a tool to empower net users and democratize communication in the country. Internet technology in itself will not bring political democracy to China, but it can be leveraged to promote democratic values by enhancing net users' abilities to produce and consume knowledge and information, exercise their freedom of expression, engage in political discussions with each other, build civic associations, and organize collective action (see Esarey and Xiao; Xin; Yang; Zheng, Zhou). The Chinese government's efforts to censor and control such political uses of the

---

<sup>22</sup> Western optimism about the democratizing force of the internet in China is exemplified by former US President Bill Clinton's assertion in 2000 that China's efforts to censor and control the internet was "like trying to nail Jell-O to the wall." Similarly, in a 2005 editorial, "Death by a Thousand Blogs," *New York Times* journalist Nicholas Kristof claimed that the CCP has "met its match" in the internet, stating that "it's the Chinese leadership itself that is digging the Communist Party's grave, by giving the Chinese people broadband" (Kristof).

internet are therefore problematic insofar as they undermine these freedoms and opportunities.

In this chapter, I draw on a range of critical media scholarship that addresses the democratizing and liberating potential of the internet. While many of the scholars I reference focus on the internet within a Chinese context (e.g. Xin; Yang; Zhao; Zheng; Zhou), some of the literature is written within the context of Western democracies (e.g. Feenberg; Kahn and Kellner, "Globalization"; Kahn and Kellner, "Oppositional"; Papacharissi) but is nonetheless useful in providing a framework for understanding the political impact and significance of the internet in China.

The literature upon which I draw is situated along a broad spectrum of scholars within the field of critical media studies who have made competing observations about the democratic potential of the internet in society. On the more optimistic side, some scholars focus on the supposed emancipatory and transformative effects of the internet, pointing to its potential to facilitate the creation of a new virtual public sphere, foster and enrich forms of community, civic engagement, and political participation, and act as a tool and a site for oppositional politics and resistance (e.g. Benkler; Carty; Coleman and Blumler; Davis, Elin, and Reeher; Feenberg; Lievrouw; Pole; Rheingold, *Smart Mobs*; Rheingold, *The Virtual Community*; Shirky). By contrast, more skeptical scholars caution against the ways in which the internet may actually undermine democracy by enabling users to filter what they view online, insulating them from opposing viewpoints and encouraging group polarization and social fragmentation (e.g. Adamic and Glance; Hargittai, Gallo, and Kane; Keren; Lawrence, Sides, and Farrell; Maynor; Putnam 177-178; Sunstein, "Democracy"; Sunstein, *Republic.com 2.0*; Van Alstyne and Brynjolfsson;



Varnelis 157). In addition, contrary to claims about the internet's potential to help transform existing power relations in society, many scholars emphasize the digital inequalities—i.e. between those with and those without the access, capacity, and opportunity necessary to use and benefit from the internet—which reproduce and often exacerbate social inequalities in the physical world (e.g. Hargittai, “Digital Na(t)ives”; Hargittai, “Digital Reproduction”; Mossberger; Norris; van Dijk, *Deepening*; van Dijk, “One Europe”).<sup>23</sup> More influential to my own project is the range of scholars in between these two ends of the spectrum who take a more nuanced approach to discussions about the internet's potential to enhance political democracy. Papacharissi contends that aspects of the internet simultaneously augment and curtail its potential to revive the public sphere, ultimately concluding that the internet presents a public space for deliberation, but that it does not in fact constitute a virtual public sphere. Fuchs conceives of the internet as a dialectical space containing both opportunities and risks. On one hand, the internet can help facilitate cyberactivism and progressive social movements; on the other hand, it can also be a tool of corporate and state domination by enabling panoptic surveillance and economic exploitation of internet users (Fuchs, “New Media”; Fuchs, “Social”). Similarly, Kahn and Kellner suggest some of the ways the internet can be used for both domination and democratization by corporate and state powers and by oppositional political movements, respectively (“Globalization”).

---

<sup>23</sup> While a discussion about China's digital divide is beyond the scope of this thesis, I acknowledge the significant gap between those with and those without internet access in China, which mitigates the political impact of the internet in the country. While China has the largest internet population in the world at 485 million users, the majority of the country's 1.3 billion citizens remains without internet access (CNNIC). According to the latest official report on China's internet statistics, the greatest disparity in internet access is between China's urban and rural populations, with the latter comprising only 27 percent of China's overall internet population (CNNIC). However, the number of rural Chinese citizens with internet access has been steadily increasing over the years and continues to grow.

With specific regards to China, a more hopeful perspective is presented by Yang, who focuses on the many ways in which Chinese citizens use the internet as a tool for political activism. In a similar vein, Mao views the internet as a force for progressive change that will help facilitate China's transition from an authoritarian to a democratic society. Conversely, less optimistic scholars emphasize the ways that repressive governments like China's actively use the internet to promote their own ideas and interests and extend their reach and authority (e.g. Bremmer; Morozov). Still other scholars—with whom I align myself—provide a more balanced perspective, maintaining that citizen use of the internet will not undermine the power of the CCP in the short term, but that it may help effect slow, evolutionary political change in the long term (e.g. Chase and Mulvenon; Hachigian; MacKinnon, "Cyber"; MacKinnon, "Flatter"; Mulvenon; Tai; Xin; Zheng). Certainly, in the case of China, where the government attempts to balance the contradictory tasks of promoting the internet for economic purposes while suppressing political use of this technology, a nuanced approach to discussing the political impact of the internet in society is necessary.

Here, Feenberg is useful in helping to develop a better understanding of the political complexities of the internet in China. The internet, as Feenberg notes, is in flux, constantly developing and being negotiated by different actors (1). Kahn and Kellner likewise refer to the internet as a "contested terrain"—that is, a site of ongoing struggle between opposing forces, including dominant corporate and state powers as well as political groups on all ends of the political spectrum, who use the internet to advance their own interests and agendas ("Globalization" 21-22). Thus, the internet should not be seen as either wholly emancipatory or oppressive (Kahn and Kellner, "Oppositional" 80);

rather, it holds an array of possibilities depending on how it is used by different actors in different contexts.

Similarly, Zheng describes the Chinese internet as mutually empowering to the state and society as both sides compete for power in this new public space. Careful not to overstate the potential of the internet to act as a democratizing force in Chinese society, Zheng nuances his discussion by distinguishing between political liberalization and political democratization. Drawing on O'Donnell and Schmitter, he defines political liberalization as “the process of making effective certain rights that protect both individuals and social groups from arbitrary or illegal acts committed by the state or third parties” (qtd. in Zheng 88). Political democratization, by comparison, refers to

the processes whereby the rules and procedures of citizenship are either applied to political institutions previously governed by other principles, or expanded to include persons not previously enjoying such rights and obligations, or extended to cover issues and institutions not previously subject to citizen participation. (O'Donnell and Schmitter qtd. in Zheng 88)

The qualitative difference between liberalization and democratization is that the latter requires structural change, but the former does not; liberalization can occur within the existing—in this case, authoritarian—political framework (Zheng 88). Zheng argues that the internet has helped facilitate political liberalization in China in the form of regime openness, transparency, and political accountability, but that it has yet to lead to the democratization of Chinese society (88). However, he maintains that “it is reasonable to argue that political liberalization is also an integral part of political changes toward democracy” (168) and that the process of moving from liberalization to democratization can be seen as a continuous one.

Following Zheng, my own position is one of cautious optimism. I acknowledge that the Chinese government maintains strict control over the flow of information online and will go to great lengths to eliminate what it sees as a potential threat to its regime. At the same time, as several scholars have demonstrated (e.g. Yang; Zheng; Zhou), many Chinese net users are using the internet as a platform for dissent and political activism. In other words, both freedom and control exist in Chinese cyberspace—it is not a zero-sum game. To be clear, the progressive role of the internet in facilitating social and political change in authoritarian China should not be overstated. As Xin similarly contends, the growing presence of the internet in China and the country's increasing technological advancements will “not necessarily lead to the development of a Western model of democratic society characterised by justice, press freedom, openness and tolerance” (181). This does not mean, however, that the political impact of the internet in China is insignificant. As discussed in greater detail below, the internet can be used in many ways to empower Chinese net users and enhance communicative freedoms and opportunities, which, as Redden and Meikle assert, “can be seen as a good in its own right, consistent with values of free speech and a self-organising citizenry” (214). The larger question of whether this increased political freedom will translate into the democratization of Chinese society still remains.

### **Information Access**

To begin, perhaps one of the most democratically significant and celebrated aspects of the internet is the abundance of information and content available to users online. As Kahn and Kellner explain, the internet “makes more information available to a greater number of people, more easily, and from a wider array of sources, than any

instrument of information and communication in history” (“Oppositional” 76). Indeed, those who are plugged into the internet have access to more news, information, and knowledge than ever before—this is true even in China, where, despite extensive censorship, the internet offers a greater volume of information, at a lower cost, and from a wider range of competing sources than traditional media outlets such as television, newspapers, and radio (Zheng 105). Evidence suggests that Chinese net users are taking advantage of the newfound wealth of news and information available in cyberspace: official statistical reports consistently rank the acquisition of information as a top activity by Chinese net users (CNNIC) who also cite the internet as their most important source of news (Wang). Arguably, the internet’s popularity as a source of news and information in China can be partly attributed to the country’s restrictive media landscape in which, as described above, traditional mass media are tightly controlled by the state, often acting as a mouthpiece for the CCP. In such an environment, the internet offers an advantage to users by providing access to alternative news and information sources (e.g. web sites hosted outside of China) and to content not available from traditional state-controlled media.

In this sense, the internet may be viewed as a source of citizen empowerment: by opening up new channels of news and information, the internet can be used to promote a more informed and politically active citizenry. Greater access to news, information, and knowledge can possibly, though not necessarily, increase citizens’ capacity and desire to participate in political action and deliberation. Such opportunities, it should be noted, are limited to those with both technical access to the internet and the skills required to effectively organize and manage the vast volumes of information online. And even

amongst those skilled users, access to greater information does not necessarily produce more informed and politically active citizens (Papacharissi 15). Brundidge and Rice similarly observe that an abundance of information on the internet does not mean that people will use it in ways that “advance their roles as citizens” (145). For some, the internet is used primarily for leisure and entertainment, for example. Furthermore, for those who do use the internet as a tool and platform for politics, there is no guarantee that political action online will necessarily translate into effective on the ground politics in the physical world. In short, access to greater information is conducive to, but not sufficient for, political participation. Nevertheless, those with the access, skills, and motivation to take advantage of the wealth of information and knowledge available on the internet are equipped with additional tools to be politically active citizens, online and offline.

### **Political Expression**

In addition to greater information access, the internet also provides new opportunities for users to publish their own thoughts, ideas, and opinions on important social and political issues, expanding the space for free expression in China. A particularly salient example of political expression is Chinese intellectual websites. Well-documented by Zhou, such websites focus on “academic, critical, and theoretical discussions of diverse political, cultural, and other intellectual topics” and are usually comprised of three parts: a webzine (online magazine) for online publications, a digital academic archive of scholars’ works, and a discussion forum for more improvised conversation and dialogue (Zhou 156). According to Zhou, these sites have become popular outlets for Chinese intellectuals to voice their opinions on a variety of social and

political issues. Their popularity must, however, be understood within the context of China's larger media landscape:

[E]ach newspaper or journal has to have official sponsorship and submit to official supervision in order to receive publication permission. Under this control, independent publication and editorship were dreams beyond the reach of Chinese intellectuals before the arrival of the Internet. Since a web site can be easily turned into an online magazine (webzine) published on the Internet anywhere in the world, it is very difficult for the government to monitor them all the time. Furthermore, since such webzines do not need much start-up capital, Chinese intellectuals have enthusiastically embraced this new opportunity, and an increasing number of intellectual web sites are flourishing online. (Zhou 156-57)

For China's intellectual community, these websites therefore constitute a "new domain of intellectual inquiry" where members attempt to "break free from the existing constraints of censorship to pursue a larger degree of freedom of expression" (Zhou 164). Indeed, Zhou describes how intellectual websites have become an outlet for nonconformist, and sometimes even dissident, Chinese intellectuals to publish thought-provoking essays that are usually banned in state-controlled mainstream academic publications (177).

As the domain of China's intellectuals, such websites, it should be noted, are undoubtedly of a rather elite and exclusive nature. Thus, any expanded space for political discussion is limited to a niche group within China's overall internet population. Furthermore, even within this new, freer domain, complete freedom of expression is not possible. Members are constantly testing the limits of what is permissible in Chinese cyberspace, and various degrees of self-censorship are still necessary in order to avoid having websites shut down by the authorities (Zhou 179) and other ramifications such as arrest and imprisonment. This means that discussion about forbidden topics (e.g. Falun Gong and Taiwan independence) are likely to be avoided. Despite these restrictions, Chinese intellectual websites have clearly "expanded the space of free expression" for



intellectuals in China (Zhou 157) by opening up new opportunities for members to publish their opinions on a range of important social and political issues, share their work with others, and engage in debate and dialogue with fellow members of the Chinese intellectual community.

### **Web 2.0, Blogging, and Citizen Journalism**

More recently, the advent of Web 2.0, sometimes referred to as the ‘participatory web’, has provided greater opportunities for ordinary citizens to participate in the production and consumption of online content. First publicly coined in 2003 by Tim O’Reilly (founder of O’Reilly Media) (Chadwick and Howard 4), the term Web 2.0 is generally used to describe an online environment that is more participatory, interactive, and collaborative than the first-generation web (see O’Reilly; Song; Warschauer and Grimes; Zhai and Liu).<sup>24</sup> Stanyer describes Web 2.0 as involving “a variety of changes relating to the look of content, speed of access, mobility, and content reception and production” (202). As he explains, the second generation web is characterized by more diverse content including not only text and images but also audio and video; increased network capacity due to the emergence of broadband and greater mobility due to the advent of wireless technology (wi-fi) and mobile devices; a variety of platforms for browsing online content (e.g. laptops, mobile phones, and tablets); and the ability for users to upload their own digital content to the web with greater ease (Stanyer 202).

These changes and characteristics of Web 2.0 are best exemplified by web services and

---

<sup>24</sup> The first generation web (1993-2003) consisted primarily of static HTML web pages versus the more interactive and dynamic web applications of Web 2.0; and whereas ordinary users make up the core of Web 2.0 content, web coders were the predominant content producers on Web 1.0 (Zhai and Liu 27). Some scholars note that these developments are not all that new as the web has always been a social and participatory medium since the beginning (e.g. Bianco 303; Fuchs, “Web 2.0” 289). Arguably, however, Web 2.0 applications make user participation and collaboration easier and thus more prolific.



applications such as blogs, podcasts, YouTube, Wikis, RSS (Really Simple Syndication) feeds, Flickr, Facebook, and MySpace, which are designed for social networking and sharing user-generated content (Bianco 303; Stanyer 202; Xin 179).<sup>25</sup> Indeed, user participation in both the content consumption and content production process is at the core of Web 2.0. The emergence of user-friendly applications such as those mentioned here, combined with increased bandwidth and the availability of relatively inexpensive production technologies (e.g. cameras and recording devices) allow even those with very little technical knowledge to easily, quickly, and cheaply create and share text, images, audio, and video content on the web (Fuchs, "Web 2.0" 289; Kolbitsch and Maurer 205; Stanyer 202). The result has been a proliferation of user-generated content online.

Web 2.0 has thus given rise to the so-called 'prosumer' (or 'produser')—a term that describes users' new status as both consumers and active producers of knowledge and information on the internet (Bianco; Bruns; Cohen). While an in-depth discussion is beyond the scope of this thesis, it is important to mention the problematic political and economic ramifications of user-generated content on the web. These include the exploitation of users' immaterial labour as well as the increased possibilities of government and corporate surveillance of users due to the huge amounts of personal data collected on many Web 2.0 applications (see Brabham 83; Cohen; Comor; Fuchs, "Web 2.0"; Zwick, Bonsu, and Darmody). The issue of surveillance is a particular concern in China, where the government already keeps a close watch on citizens' online activities.

In this user-based environment, Web 2.0 applications are, some argue, changing the nature of communication: moving away from traditional mass communication—i.e. top-down, one-directional, and one-to-many—and facilitating bottom-up, bi-directional,

---

<sup>25</sup> For an overview of many of these applications, see Kolbitsch and Maurer; Warr.

and many-to-many forms of communication (Kolbitsch and Maurer; Mao; Xin). In Castells' terms, Web 2.0 enables "mass self-communication"—i.e. content that can be considered mass communication in the sense that it can potentially reach a global audience, but that is also self-communication in the sense of being generated, directed, and selected by users themselves (*Communication Power* 55). For Isaac Mao, one of China's most prominent bloggers, the social and political value of Web 2.0 in China is in what he calls "sharism" (101): connected in their social networks, users share their thoughts, ideas, and knowledge with each other, making the internet a "truly social medium" (101). The result of this mutual sharing amongst users, according to Mao, is that citizens are less likely to trust blindly in the elites, experts, and authorities in society; instead, people will see others expressing different viewpoints and will in turn learn how to express themselves, ushering in a new era of "free thinking" (97) in Chinese society. While Mao's utopian vision is perhaps naively optimistic, there is little doubt that the internet, and Web 2.0 applications in particular, have helped users expand the space of political expression in China.

Most notably, blogging technology has become a popular outlet for political expression by Chinese net users. Blogging gained critical mass in China in 2005, when, according to official statistics, the number of bloggers in China jumped from 500,000 in January to 16 million by the end of the year (Esarey and Xiao 753). The most recent official survey report claims that by the end of June 2011 there were 318 million bloggers in China (CNNIC).<sup>26</sup> The popularity of blogs can be attributed in part to their ease of use and low cost for entry—internet access is all that is required—which makes them a

---

<sup>26</sup>Though it should be noted that official statistics say little in terms of production and consumption patterns of bloggers, e.g. how often people blog, how many people read other users' blogs, and the audience size and popularity of blogs.

simple and convenient platform for Chinese net users to broadcast their views to an unprecedented degree.

While political bloggers represent only a small segment of China's blogosphere, there is a growing number of Chinese blogs that address political subjects (Esarey and Xiao 754). In one insightful study about political expression in Chinese blogs, Esarey and Xiao demonstrate how some Chinese netizens use blogging as a platform to launch sophisticated critiques against the government without encountering harsh repression. As they explain, savvy Chinese bloggers find clever ways to make political statements which are comprehensible to readers but which can slip by the filters and censors, though the subtlety with which these political bloggers write perhaps limits their audience to those readers who are able to pick up on the implied meanings and read between the lines. Esarey and Xiao identify four types of this subtle form of political expression: political satire; humourous adaptations of official media products (known as spoofing, or *egao* in Chinese, meaning to "mess with" media products in a harmful way); implicit criticism; and explicit but guarded criticism (756). Explicit criticism is the most risky form of political expression, and only a small percentage of bloggers in China dare to directly criticize the regime. Those who do often formulate their critiques "more like the expression of a desire for positive change" than as a call to action (Esarey and Xiao 767), though this does not necessarily make them any less critical or subversive. Esarey and Xiao draw on the example of the Beijing-based teacher and popular blogger Luo Yonghao's "New Year's wish list" post in which he expresses hope that "Chinese peasants can migrate freely in their own country"; "all corrupt officials will live in greater fear"; and "all websites will not have key words filtering [sic]" (768). Luo's comments

are extremely critical of China's status quo; however, he guards himself against potential backlash from the authorities by using vague language. He does not say who or what is responsible for the plight of China's rural migrants, which corrupt officials should be living in fear, or why internet filtering is problematic. Rather than issuing a forceful call to arms, Luo instead expresses his criticism as a hopeful desire for progressive social and political change in China.

As demonstrated by Luo's subtle and nuanced writing, political expression in the Chinese blogosphere is "often the result of a compromise between what bloggers want to express and what the regime allows them to write" (Esarey and Xiao 756). Nevertheless, Esarey and Xiao contend that blogging has helped to expand the range of political discourse in China. While some may view this subtle form of political expression as ineffectual and unimportant, many Chinese bloggers themselves extol the new freedom provided by blogging and the internet in general. Esarey and Xiao remind us that "Unlike Westerners, who commonly compare freedom of speech in China to freedom of speech in democracies, Chinese bloggers compare their present freedom to the more restricted environment they encountered in the past" (770). It would therefore be wrong to dismiss this kind of online political expression as insignificant. In a society where the media remain tightly controlled and the government goes to great lengths to manage public opinion, any opportunity that citizens have to express themselves and expand the space for political discourse is indeed significant.

Web 2.0 technologies including blogging in particular have also been instrumental to the emergence of citizen journalism. Following Gillmor's influential book, *We the Media: Grassroots Journalism By the People, For the People*, many scholars have

discussed the ways in which blogging allows ordinary citizens to 'be the media' (e.g. Allan and Thorsen; Bruns; Glaser; Meikle and Redden; Pole). In Jay Rosen's terms, blogging allows "the people formerly known as the audience" to go beyond their role as consumers and become active producers of news, contributing diverse voices, alternative viewpoints, and on the ground, instantaneous reporting which is often lacking from the mainstream news media (Rosen). In other words, blogging helps facilitate citizen journalism—i.e. journalism by ordinary citizens. Bruns suggests three ways that citizen journalism can extend, or complement, mainstream news coverage: it can extend the breadth of coverage to include issues that professional media lack flexibility or resources to cover (e.g. local news or analysis in specialized fields); it can extend the depth of coverage by providing more detail and a greater variety of alternative and critical voices to the news; and it can extend the duration of coverage to go beyond the political and economic constraints of traditional news media (i.e. the 24-hour news cycle) (137).

With regards to China, blogs have become an important platform for citizen journalists who often cover important social and political issues which remain neglected by the country's official media for political and economic reasons (Yang 74). China's most well-known citizen journalist is probably Zhou Shuguang, a former vegetable vendor more commonly known by his pen name, Zola. Hailed as China's "first citizen reporter" (Kennedy qtd. in Yang 191), Zola has gained international attention as a reporter who travels around China documenting incidents of social injustice against citizens. He became famous in 2007 after covering the so-called 'nail house' incident, a term which refers to a home whose owner refuses to relocate in order to make room for development (Yang 74-75). That year, a family in Chongqing received an outpouring of

public sympathy after refusing to move even after construction had begun around their house, leaving their home standing alone in the centre of a 10-metre deep pit, like a single nail in a floorboard. While the mainstream media were slow to pick up the story, Zola traveled over 16 hours by train from his home town in Hunan province to Chongqing to report on the dispute. He conducted interviews with the nail house owners and posted images and videos on his blog, which became an important platform for other net users to comment on and discuss the story (Xin 183). It was only after Zola and the Chongqing nail house became famous and a popular topic within China's internet community that the mainstream news media began reporting on the story.<sup>27</sup> Xin notes how in this particular case citizen journalism not only served as a source of information for the mainstream media, but it performed an investigative watchdog role in uncovering violations of citizens' property rights (182-83). After the Chongqing nail house story started receiving some attention in the mainstream news, however, all print and online media outlets in China were forbidden by the government to report on it (Xiao; French). Thus, despite the success of Zola and other internet users in bringing this issue to a wider mainstream audience, the story was ultimately censored by the authorities, which points to the limitations of citizen journalism to actually help foster a more free and democratic press in China.

Another well-known example of Chinese citizen journalism is the coverage of the 2008 Sichuan earthquake. During and after the earthquake, citizen journalists were instrumental in getting out news and information about the disaster: using internet and mobile technologies, citizens were literally reporting the earthquake as it happened,

---

<sup>27</sup> After the publicity of the story in the mainstream media, the city government and the developers came to an agreement with the family and the house was soon demolished (Elegant; Xin 183).

posting photos, videos, and twitter updates online. As Nip reports, in the early stage after the quake, before professional journalists arrived on the scene and official information was released, citizen journalists “filled the vacuum of information” by recording and uploading video footage which was later broadcast on the official China Central Television network (98). More significantly, in the aftermath of the earthquake, bloggers and citizen journalists began raising questions about the disproportionate number of collapsed schools and child casualties, blaming it on corrupt officials who had taken bribes to allow the schools to be built short of compliance with building codes. After professional media followed up on the issue, one Chinese official eventually admitted the possibility that poor construction may have contributed to the collapses (Nip 101; Wong). While reporters enjoyed a rare window of news freedom immediately following the earthquake, it soon closed after the government ordered the media to avoid the subject of collapsed schools and focus instead on the positive aspects of the events such as the heroic rescue efforts (Branigan, “China”; Nip 102). Furthermore, Sichuan school teacher Liu Shaokun was detained and sentenced to a year in a labour camp after taking photographs of the collapsed schools and circulating them on the internet along with criticism of official corruption (Branigan, “China”).

As these examples demonstrate, there is some truth to Castells’ claim that through the use of the internet and related tools such as blogs, mobile phones, and recording devices, “we have all become potential citizen journalists” (*Communication Power* 413). In these two cases, Chinese citizen journalists aided by internet technologies were crucial not only in providing news and information about important events which were lacking from the mainstream media, but also in performing a watchdog role by

uncovering violations of citizens' rights and incidents of official corruption. There are, however, significant limitations to this liberalizing potential of citizen journalism. Both stories discussed here were eventually censored in the mainstream media by government authorities once publicity became too large. Furthermore, the case of Liu Shaokun shows the lengths to which the Chinese government will go to silence critics who push the limits of media censorship too far. Thus, to recall Zheng, the measured success of the examples discussed here are a possible indication of political liberalization, though not yet political democratization. That is to say, China's citizen journalists have the potential to help expand the limits of journalism within the existing political and economic framework of China's media landscape; however, citizen journalism on its own will not lead to a free and democratic press in China. Indeed, the question remains whether internet-enabled citizen journalism can make a more sustained and long-term impact on Chinese journalism in terms of creating a more critical and participatory news environment beyond coverage of isolated events.

### **Public Deliberation, Online Communities, and Collective Action**

Another democratically significant feature of the internet is the ability, as previously mentioned, for bi-directional and many-to-many communication amongst users. Unlike traditional forms of mass media such as television, newspapers, and radio, the internet is an interactive medium that enables users to communicate directly amongst themselves (Bohman; Castells, *Communication Power*; Feenberg; Kahn and Kellner, "Globalization"). Web 2.0 technologies in particular, e.g. blogs, podcasts, and social networking sites, are designed for horizontal communication amongst users, creating a participatory public space in which geographically dispersed netizens can interact,



exchange ideas and opinions, and engage in politically oriented debate. Especially in China, the internet offers an enormous advantage for net users who “use it as a platform for public discussions that the government dislikes,” providing “a way to work around the government’s tight control, which aims to completely eliminate such free discussion space” (Zheng 117).

I should make it clear that, following Papacharissi, I do not claim that the internet is, or will possibly ever be, a new public sphere in the Habermasian sense—that is, a free and open space where citizens can discuss public affairs, engage in rational-critical debate, scrutinize activities of the state and formulate public opinion which can be brought to bear upon state power. Rather, the internet acts as a new public space for the exchange of information and ideas. The difference, as Papacharissi argues, is that public space enhances discussion, while the public sphere enhances democracy (11). In other words, the internet certainly provides a new platform for politically oriented discussion and debate in China, which is significant in and of itself, but whether that discussion ultimately contributes to democracy on the ground remains in question. Nevertheless, as Papacharissi notes, “people who would never be able to come together to discuss political matters offline are now able to do so online, and that is no small matter” (23).

Furthermore, the ability for geographically dispersed users to converge in cyberspace facilitates the formation of civic associations and online communities of all sorts. With respect to China, Zheng argues that the formation of voluntary groups and communities online enables citizens to overcome the isolation and social atomization of contemporary Chinese society (119):

In China, the impact of the Internet on civic engagement is very positive. While traditional media is still tightly controlled by the government, the

Internet has rendered government control extremely difficult, if not impossible. When information monopoly becomes impossible, individuals can communicate with one another and form a group identity. Indeed, the fact that digitally mediated collective action frequently takes place implies that individuals in China do not bowl alone; instead, they bowl together.<sup>28</sup> (34)

In a similar vein, Feenberg highlights the democratic significance of online communities as sites of political resistance. He describes how the “ease of communication on the Internet” allows activists and community members to coordinate, organize, and advance their goals and political agendas (6). For Feenberg, the emergence of new forms of online community is the internet’s greatest contribution to democracy (1).

In addition to Feenberg, many scholars have discussed the potential of the internet as an important organizational tool to help coordinate and facilitate collective action and social movements (e.g. Castells, *Communication Power*; Castells, *The Internet Galaxy*; Dahlberg; Kahn and Kellner, “Globalization”; Kahn and Kellner, “Oppositional”; Zheng). For example, Castells observes how major social movements around the world have used internet technologies to help organize political action since the mid-1990s (*The Internet Galaxy* 138). By facilitating the development of “horizontal networks of interactive communication that connect the local and the global in chosen time” (Castells, *Communication Power* 65), the internet can be an especially useful tool for activists and social movements to help organize and coordinate activities and to help mobilize local citizens while building solidarity for their cause in the world at large (Castells, “The New” 86). In short, the internet provides an essential means for regionally, nationally, and globally dispersed activists to connect with each other, to share and exchange

---

<sup>28</sup> Zheng is referring to Robert Putnam’s 2000 book, *Bowling Alone: the Collapse and Revival of American Community*, in which the author claims that over the past several decades, American society has suffered a decline in social capital and civic engagement. As Putnam puts it, Americans are increasingly ‘bowling alone’ rather than bowling together.

information and ideas, to collaborate with and provide support and solidarity for each other, and to coordinate collective action.

Specifically in the context of China, Zheng provides many examples of internet-based activism in the country, one of the most prominent being Falun Gong, whose members began using the internet early on to organize a series of protests in China (Castells, *The Internet Galaxy* 139; Margolis and Moreno-Riaño 86; Zheng 100). During one significant demonstration on April 25, 1999, more than 10,000 Falun Gong supporters gathered outside the CCP headquarters in Beijing in a day of peaceful protest to ask the government to legally recognize the sect, lift the ban on sect publications, and release fellow practitioners arrested the day before in Tianjin (Chang 1; Ownby 15). Caught off guard, the Chinese government responded by launching a brutal campaign of suppression against the group which led to the incarceration and torture of many Falun Gong followers. Despite the government's crackdown on the organization, Falun Gong members have remained active, using the internet and email to circulate information about repression against the group, as well as to keep in touch with the movement's leader, Li Hongzhi, who lives in the United States (Castells, *The Internet Galaxy* 138; Hachigian 131). In the case of Falun Gong, whose network of followers is dispersed all around the globe, the internet has been crucial in allowing the group to maintain effective communication and to stay organized (see also Bell and Boas; Chase and Mulvenon).

Another example of a successful internet-based collective action in China is the abolition of the "Measures for the Custody and Repatriation of Urban Vagrants and Beggars" regulation following the death of Sun Zhigang.<sup>29</sup> On March 20, 2003, 27-year-

---

<sup>29</sup>As Zhao explains, there is a significant urban and rural divide in China. Laws and systems are in place to maintain this divide and restrict rural Chinese citizens' freedom to move to urban areas. Rural migrants

old Sun was beaten to death by eight other detainees in a custody and repatriation (C&R) centre in Guangzhou. The story of his death spread throughout the internet and stirred up public outrage against the C&R system. People from all over China posted online their own stories and experiences in C&R centres, as well as stories about police brutality, the injustice of the detention regime, and social inequality in general (Zhao 259; Zheng 150). China's internet community, including the country's elite intellectuals, were quickly mobilized around the issue of Sun's death as well as the larger civil rights debate about the constitutionality of the C&R regulation. Prominent Chinese intellectuals posted "powerful pieces on the Internet, appealing to the authorities to investigate the case" (Zhao 259). An especially influential piece was a petition written by three Beijing-based legal scholars calling for constitutional review of the C&R regulation (Zhao 261). The petition drew popular support from around the country, putting significant pressure on the Chinese government. The impact of the collective action in response to Sun's death was

---

who move to urban areas are essentially treated like second class citizens, forced to obtain temporary residence permits and temporary work permits. At the core of this system of social control was the 1982 State Council "Measurements on the Detention and Repatriation of Vagrants and Beggars." The C&R regulation permitted police to detain, shelter, and repatriate three types of "vagrants": rural residents who have moved to the city to become beggars; urban residents who have become street beggars; and other homeless people with no form of livelihood. The regulation was primarily a way to maintain order and control in the cities, though it did include a welfare aspect with a provision for the state to provide food and shelter for the homeless. However, the social control function soon overrode the welfare dimension, as targets of the C&R regulation expanded from beggars and the homeless to encompass a much broader segment of the migrant population, including those without an identification card, a temporary residence permit, or a work permit. Corruption in the system was frequent as police began to collect fines from detainees as a means to cover operational costs of the detention centres as well as to make a profit. In addition to corruption was a tendency towards power abuse by police, a general discrimination by the urban population against rural migrants, and an incentive system in which staff were paid according to the number of people arrested or the value of the fines extracted. The result was "an extremely brutal regime of social control and economic exploitation of rural migrants" (Zhao 248).

Sun Zhigang came from a poor rural village in Hubei Province, but managed to obtain urban citizenship after he passed the university entrance exam and was accepted to Wuhan Science and Technology University. On March 17, 2003, Sun was arrested by police in Guangzhou; he had just moved there from Shenzhen and had not yet obtained a temporary residence permit and he was not carrying his identification card. The next day, he was moved from the police station to a custody and repatriation centre. In retaliation for his protesting and crying out for help, staff members moved Sun from room to room, encouraging the other detainees to punish him, even to the point of death (Zhao 246-49).

clear: 23 officials implicated in the event received disciplinary actions; criminal sentences were issued to the 18 people directly responsible for Sun's death; and on June 20, 2003, Premier Wen Jiabao abolished the C&R regulation and replaced it with "Measurements Regarding the Assistance and Management of Vagrants and Beggars without Subsistence in the Cities" (Zhao 262). The new regulation "prohibited local state agencies from detaining people against their will" and also included reforms to the social welfare system aimed at assisting and ensuring the livelihoods of vagrants and beggars in the cities (Zhao 262). The case of Sun Zhigang's death and the abolition of the C&R regulation demonstrate how the internet can provide an effective channel for political participation in the form of collective action that successfully challenges and pressures the Chinese government to change its policies.

A more recent example of dissident use of the internet to coordinate collective action and call for social and political reform in China is the "Charter 08" petition/manifesto. Issued on December 10, 2008—the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights—by over 300 Chinese citizens, including "writers, intellectuals, lawyers, journalists, retired Party officials, workers, peasants, and businessmen" (Human Rights In China), "Charter 08" is a manifesto outlining its creators' vision for fundamental political change in China. Inspired by the "Charter 77" petition issued in 1977 by dissidents in the former Czechoslovakia (Link), "Charter 08" calls for legal reforms, democracy, and the protection of human rights and freedoms in China. There are two main websites, one in Chinese<sup>30</sup> and one in English,<sup>31</sup> where internet users around the globe can sign the petition, which reportedly amassed over 8,000

---

<sup>30</sup><http://www.2008xianzhang.info/>.

<sup>31</sup><http://www.charter08.com>.

signatures in its first month (Cha) and continues to grow. In response, the Chinese government launched a campaign to crackdown on the signatories and supporters of "Charter 08." As discussed earlier, in 2009, the authorities sentenced co-author Liu Xiaobo to 11 years in prison on charges of subversion, which he is currently serving. Whether the petition will have an actual impact on China's political system is yet to be seen. Certainly, the harsh action taken against Liu casts some doubt on the potential of initiatives like "Charter 08" to promote human rights and effect social and political change in Chinese society. What is significant to note, however, is the way in which the internet has been used to disseminate and raise awareness about "Charter 08," promoting solidarity from the world at large and helping to build a foundation of support for a new democracy movement in China.

### **The Internet in China: A Tool for Political Suppression and Political Empowerment**

Drawing on a number of different scholars, I have discussed the ways in which the internet, despite China's extreme censorship practices, can be used as a tool to empower Chinese net users by enhancing their ability to produce and consume knowledge and information, exercise their freedom of speech and expression, engage in political discussions with each other, build civic associations, and organize collective action. I am careful, however, not to overstate the democratizing potential of the internet in China. Although Chinese net users have and continue to use the internet as a political tool, carving out independent spaces and sites of resistance online, those who push too far are met with severe repercussions, such as in the cases of Liu Shaokun, Liu Xiaobo, and many Falun Gong practitioners. Thus, while China's citizens enjoy greater political freedom on the internet, their freedom is limited; the government will hit back against

activists and dissidents if it feels the regime is being threatened. Any claims that the internet will necessarily democratize Chinese society are therefore unrealistically optimistic and rooted in a technologically determinist narrative that does not adequately take into account China's complex political and economic situation.

As a technology that is constantly in flux, the internet can be used to enhance as well as restrict citizens' freedoms and civil liberties. It is precisely because of its status as 'contested terrain' that efforts to curtail government censorship of the internet in China are so crucial at this moment. For those committed to defending citizens' communicative rights, it is important to do whatever is possible to promote a Chinese internet that is characterized primarily by openness and freedom rather than by governmental control and suppression.

Among those fighting for a free and open internet in China are three of the world's leading international human rights NGOs, AI, HRW, and RSF. As influential political actors in the area of human rights, these organizations have the capacity to draw attention to, and help address the issue of, Chinese internet censorship. In the chapter that follows, I first consider the role of human rights NGOs in international politics; I then provide a discussion about framing and the framing strategies of NGOs; finally, I present a brief overview of AI, HRW, and RSF.



## CHAPTER 3: NGOs, Framing, and Case Studies

### NGOs in International Politics

With their growing proliferation over the last few decades, domestic and international NGOs have come to be recognized as increasingly important actors in the political arena (see Clark, *Diplomacy*; Clark, “Non-Governmental”; Clark, Friedman and Hoschstetler; Joachim, *Agenda*; Joachim “Framing”; Keck and Sikkink; Weiss and Gordenker). In particular, many NGOs have developed significant influence and authority in the area of human rights, playing a critical role in establishing international norms in this area (Clark, *Diplomacy*; Clark, “Non-Governmental”).<sup>32</sup> For three prominent international human rights NGOs—AI, HRW, and RSF—internet censorship in China has become a significant human rights issue. These organizations view the unwarranted censorship of the internet by Chinese authorities as a violation of citizens’ communicative rights and freedoms. Specifically, the Chinese government’s excessive censorship of the internet violates the “freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers” (United Nations) as set out in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Despite China’s insistence that human rights are a domestic issue, internet censorship and other human rights abuses in the country have become a concern for the international community including AI, HRW, and RSF, all of which have a history of challenging the sovereignty of nation states in order to defend and protect the rights and freedoms of citizens around the world.

---

<sup>32</sup> AI has been especially influential in this area. Clark explains that prior to the formation of AI in 1961, no “complex of rules” surrounding the area of human rights existed (*Diplomacy* 4). Through the effective use of such tactics as letter-writing and public campaigning, AI became a “pioneer” in the area of human rights, contributing significantly to the establishment of international human rights norms and standards, as well as monitoring mechanisms that exist to pressure states to uphold those standards (Clark, *Diplomacy* 3-4).



While NGOs may not be powerful in a traditional sense—they lack the political and economic resources, including sovereignty, territory, military power, and financial power, which are available to states and, to an extent, multinational corporations—they can still be an influential force in international politics via their “power to persuade” (Ahmed and Potter 15). As Ahmed and Potter contend, the influence of NGOs is premised on their ability to demonstrate to others through persuasion that “there are other ways of organizing social and political arrangements besides those currently in use” (15). Similarly, Keck and Sikkink situate NGOs as central members of transnational advocacy networks (TANs), which are composed of “relevant actors working internationally on an issue” whose goal is to “change the behavior of states” and other non-state actors (2). They describe four kinds of politics in which TANs engage to accomplish their goals: 1) information politics, which involve the collection, interpretation, and dissemination of information on issues of concern; 2) symbolic politics, referring to the use of symbols to make sense and raise awareness of a problematic situation;<sup>33</sup> 3) leverage politics, in which other powerful actors are called upon to act on a given situation where weaker TAN members are unlikely to have influence—for example, human rights NGOs may try to convince diplomats and policymakers from influential countries to impose economic sanctions on human rights abusing governments; and 4) accountability politics, which comprise efforts to make target actors live up to their previously stated policies and principles (16). Lacking traditional forms of power, NGOs rely on such tactics and the effective use of information to communicate, to persuade, and to lobby the policies and actions of governments and other important political actors. Attempts by AI, HRW, and

---

<sup>33</sup>Keck and Sikkink draw on the example from 1992 of indigenous people’s use of the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the voyage of Columbus to the Americas as a symbolic event to raise awareness of important contemporary indigenous issues (22).

RSF to use these tactics in their efforts to address the issue of internet censorship in China will be discussed in Chapter 4.

By engaging in the advocacy and lobbying activities described above, NGOs can influence international politics by helping to set the political agenda—i.e. the list of items policymakers pay attention to at any given time (Ahmed and Potter 48). Indeed, of the various phases in the policymaking process, Joachim argues that the agenda formation phase is where NGOs can be the most influential (*Agenda* 16). As she contends, political agendas do not simply “exist out there”; rather, they are formed out of a dynamic political process (18). Here, Joachim draws on the ‘garbage can’ model of organizational choice (see Cohen, March, and Olsen; Kingdon) to explain how agendas develop as the product of four relatively independent phenomena: problems, solutions, participants, and choice opportunities:

*Problems* are the conditions that people both inside and outside the organization find no longer acceptable and that require attention from decision makers. *Policies* are solutions ranging from further research to education, laws, and resource allocation. *Participants* with different resources drift in and out of the decision-making process with their pet problems and solutions. *Choice opportunities* are changes in the political climate, political realignments, and earmarking events that create openings or a window for change to occur. (Joachim, *Agenda* 18, emphasis in original)

While these four different aspects of the political process generally exist independently of each other, at times they come together—like waste that is dumped and mixed up in a garbage can—and it is at this moment of choice opportunity that political agendas are formed. In other words, agendas are created out of a mix of ‘garbage’ determined by who participates in meetings and discussions, what problems they are concerned about, and what solutions they propose. NGOs, as participants in the agenda setting process, can

exert influence by “framing ‘problems’ or offering ‘solutions’ in a strategic manner that involves seizing ‘choice opportunities’” (Joachim, *Agenda* 18). While acknowledging that agenda setting has less of an impact than decision-making, Joachim argues that it is nevertheless an important political process for three reasons. First, it is through the process of agenda setting that issues are either organized into, or out of, politics. That is to say, issues either become matters of serious consideration within the political arena, or they remain neglected. Second, this process determines how an issue will be defined and who will pay attention to it. Third, agenda setting helps actors secure and extend power (*Agenda* 16). Given the political salience of agenda setting, those NGOs with the ability to participate in and influence this process can significantly impact political affairs.

With regards to human rights, the ability of NGOs to help set the political agenda in intergovernmental arenas like the United Nations (UN) can enable them to contribute to the establishment of new international human rights norms. This is especially true of NGOs like AI, HRW, and RSF that have consultative status at the UN which lends them recognition and arguably a legitimate place within the political system (Ahmed and Potter 53). According to Clark, three key attributes in particular provide these NGOs with the legitimacy that allows them to participate in the political process of establishing new international human rights norms: 1) loyalty to the moral principles of human rights; 2) independence and political impartiality; and 3) attention to facts and interpretive capacity (*Diplomacy*). The last attribute refers to the ability of NGOs to collect and publish facts about human rights abuses around the world, which is significant insofar as it works to undermine the efforts of abusive governments to hide such information and avoid judgment from the public and other political actors. Furthermore, by interpreting such

facts, NGOs can help expose the gap between the abusive practices of offending governments and the normative human rights standards and expectations established by the international community (Clark, *Diplomacy* 33). This kind of critical reflection by NGOs with regards to the behaviour of abusive governments “sets in motion the kind of reasoning and use of evidence that fosters deep discussion and potential consensus about questions of right and wrong that must be worked out before formal legal norms can be constructed and ratified” (Clark, *Diplomacy* 33).

It is important to note that despite the often positive role NGOs can play in terms of promoting social justice and human rights, they are not without limitations or faults. In recent years, many scholars have begun to raise questions and concerns about the accountability, legitimacy, and internal democracy of some NGOs (Ahmed and Potter 127, 245; Hahn; Havrda and Kutilek; Kovach; Lewis and Kanji 18; Scholte; Wood; for an overview see Charnovitz; Collingwood and Logister). Havrda and Kutilek, for example, contend that NGOs in general are “not very keen on disclosure,” and that as a result, “it is often not clear where INGOs [International NGOs] get their resources from, how they spend them and for what purposes, and how efficient their activities are” (165). Other scholars question the ‘representativeness’ of certain NGOs—that is, the degree to which these organizations actually represent the voices of their supposed beneficiaries—which is especially important to consider in cases where NGOs based in industrialized countries are advocating on behalf of citizens in the developing world (Ahmed and Potter 246; Hahn 221). Here, Hahn cautions that the power of advocacy exerted by some NGOs may be used by these organizations to pursue their own political agendas, in effect silencing those they claim to represent (236). Still other scholars are concerned that the over-

professionalization and corporate nature of some NGOs may “sap the potential of more radical grassroots action,” domesticating and softening the political edge of social movements (Lewis and Kanji 18; see also Kaldor).

While there is a dearth of scholarly critiques of HRW and RSF, scholars have on occasion questioned the reliability and accountability of AI. For instance, Baehr points to AI’s 1990 report on the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait in which the organization falsely reported that over 300 premature Kuwaiti babies had died after being removed from their incubators by Iraqi soldiers (16). Despite the organization’s rather serious reporting error, it was ultimately a “relatively isolated incident” that did not damage AI’s overall reputation (Baehr 16). Additionally, Kovach suggests a lack of transparency and accountability on the part of AI, citing a 2003 report by One World Trust, a UK-based think tank and NGO, which claimed that the organization failed to provide financial information and annual reports.<sup>34</sup> However, it appears as though AI has since changed this practice, as a recent visit to the organization’s website confirms that financial statements and balance sheets for the previous year are available online. Notably, in recent years, AI and other major international NGOs have begun to address the question of their accountability. In 2006, for instance, AI and 10 other NGOs adopted an International Non-Governmental Organizations Accountability Charter which outlines their commitment to transparency, accountability, and maintaining the “highest common standards of conduct for NGOs working transnationally” (Baehr 14).

These criticisms aside, all NGOs have limitations in what they can accomplish. Efforts by NGOs to help establish new international human rights norms, for example,

---

<sup>34</sup> The report by One World Trust, “Power Without Accountability?” assessed the accountability of 18 organizations from the intergovernmental, corporate, and international non-governmental sector.

are not always successful, and the creation of new norms and standards does not guarantee that countries will comply. China in particular is notoriously resistant to international pressure when it comes to its human rights record, and attempts by NGOs to compel the Chinese government to change its human rights policies and practices have often been less than successful (see Baldwin; Power).<sup>35</sup> China's leadership continues to fall back on the argument that human rights fall within each country's domestic jurisdiction (Power 249) and asserts its right to act as it sees fit in order to maintain a stable society (Baldwin 281). Efforts by AI, HRW, and RSF to contribute to the emergence of new international human rights norms, and, further, to ensure that China maintains those standards, are thus met with significant resistance.

While the human rights situation in China today remains critical, Power maintains that progress has been made over the last few decades. Compared to the immediate post-Mao era, Chinese citizens today enjoy greater personal freedom and political and economic liberty than before, and the international community "undoubtedly hold[s] China to a higher standard than it used to" in the past (Power 249). For example, citizens are now free to find their own job, make money independently, have choice in clothing and music, enjoy access to the outside world and greater press freedom, have relations with foreigners and travel, and go about their daily lives without significant government interference. These improvements, as Power contends, indicate a "turnaround of immense proportions" (233).

In addition, many Western governments have recently begun to speak out against China's human rights abuses, something they have historically avoided due to fear of

---

<sup>35</sup> A recent example can be drawn from the human rights promises made, and broken, by Chinese officials prior to the 2008 Beijing Olympics; a matter which I discuss further in Chapter 4.

jeopardizing their economic and diplomatic relations with the country. In particular, Power notes the significance of the United States' decision in 2000 to publicly condemn China's human rights abuses at the UN Human Rights Commission (234). More recently, international outrage in response to Liu Xiaobo's prison sentence and public demands for his release from governments and figures including the United States, the European Union (Grajewski and Quinn), Canada (Anna), Switzerland (swissinfo), Germany (Illmer), and UN Human Rights High Commissioner Navi Pillay (UN News Service), can be interpreted as a message to the Chinese government that "its growing economic strength and power do not exempt it from universal standards of human rights" ("Liu Xiaobo Must be Freed"). While appeals for Liu's freedom have thus far been unsuccessful, the fact that powerful members of the international community are speaking out against China's human rights abuses is significant in itself. Clearly, China is no longer immune from human rights criticism. This suggests the possibility that continuous and effective lobbying and advocacy work by NGOs such as AI, HRW, and RSF may, at least to a certain extent, be successful in fuelling the diplomatic pressure necessary to compel China to change its human rights policies and practices with regards to internet censorship.

Essential to the efficacy of these and other NGOs' advocacy and lobbying efforts are their framing strategies. Through effective framing, NGOs are able to raise awareness of a given issue (e.g. internet censorship in China), mobilize public support for their cause, and influence the way other political actors respond. To elaborate, a discussion about the framing strategies of NGOs follows in the section below.

## **Framing**

First conceptualized by Erving Goffman, frames are “schemata of interpretation” that enable individuals to “locate, perceive, identify, and label” occurrences and experiences within the world (Goffman 21). In other words, frames guide the perception and representation of reality which allows us to interpret and make meaning of occurrences in our lives and in the world at large. Gitlin elaborates on Goffman’s initial conceptualization of framing with his own widely quoted definition: “Frames are principles of selection, emphasis, and presentation composed of little tacit theories about what exists, what happens, and what matters” (6). For Gitlin, the framing process does not necessarily appear to be a deliberate one; rather, he describes it as a more or less unconscious effort producing latent frames instead of something actively manufactured.

By contrast, Entman views framing as a deliberate process of selection and salience. In his influential essay, “Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm,” he writes that “to frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described” (52). Entman identifies four functions of frames: they work to 1) define problems; 2) diagnose causes—i.e. identify who or what is to blame for creating the problem; 3) make moral judgments by evaluating causal agents; and 4) prescribe remedies to rectify the problems (52). Frames work, he contends, by selecting and highlighting specific aspects of an item or issue which increases their salience—making these pieces of information “more noticeable, meaningful, or memorable to audiences”—while simultaneously omitting and obscuring other aspects of



the item under discussion (53). For Entman, it is thus important to investigate what aspects of an issue are framed into, and what aspects are framed out of, a discussion because “most frames are defined by what they omit as well as include” (54). “[T]he omissions of potential problem definitions, explanations, evaluations, and recommendations,” he continues, “may be as critical as the inclusions in guiding the audience” and in determining how they understand, interpret, respond to, and act upon a given situation (54). In terms of agenda setting, how NGOs frame issues or problems can help shape the political agenda by influencing how policymakers interpret a situation and what aspects of it they either consider or ignore. Following Entman, my own analysis considers what aspects of the issue AI, HRW, and RSF include and omit in their respective framing of internet censorship in China.

For Pan and Kosicki, framing is a strategic action by participants engaged in public deliberation—i.e. the process of open and collective discussion about important social and political issues that helps formulate public opinion and shape the public agenda. As they maintain, framing is an integral and inevitable part of public deliberation that allows actors to present their arguments to others and for the audience to understand and evaluate their case (60). They conceive of framing as a kind of “ideological contest over not only the scope of an issue, but also over matters such as who is responsible and who is affected, which ideological principles or enduring values are relevant, and where the issue should be addressed” (40). In such a contest, effective framing strategies enable political actors like AI, HRW, and RSF to define the boundaries of discourse surrounding an issue and gain support for their ideas by closing off the discussion to alternative understandings and interpretations (Pan and Kosicki 42).

If we think of framing as an active, deliberate, and strategic process<sup>36</sup> through which actors engaged in public deliberation attempt to effectively communicate their messages, set the terms of debate, win support for their arguments, and influence audience response, then the relevance and importance of framing to NGO activity becomes clear. As discussed above, the influence of NGOs comes largely from their capacity to collect, publish, and interpret information; thus, how these organizations frame that information is crucial to success in achieving their communicative and political objectives (Joachim, *Agenda*; Joachim, "Framing"; Keck and Sikkink; McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald; Rein and Schön; Snow and Benford; Snow et al.). NGOs aiming to draw attention to certain issues must frame those issues in such a way as to "make them comprehensible to target audiences" (Keck and Sikkink 2) including governments and politicians, the news media, academics, and the general public. For human rights NGOs concerned about complex social and political issues, strategic framing is especially important because frames can provide a given audience with "a perspective from which an amorphous, ill-defined and problematic situation can be made sense of and acted upon" (Rein and Schön 263). Furthermore, through the process of framing, NGOs attempt to define the boundaries of the debate with regards to both problems and solutions. As Schön and Rein explain, how NGOs frame issues implies "not only what is at issue but what is to be done" (qtd. in Joachim, "Framing" 251).

---

<sup>36</sup> Whether framing is always and completely a deliberate process is certainly debatable. Gitlin, as noted above, views frames as being more or less unconsciously manufactured. To some degree this is probably true. For example, the ideological slant of an individual or an organization likely has an influence on how those actors interpret and communicate 'what exists, what happens, and what matters' in the world. At the same time, for NGOs whose primary goal is often to influence the policies, practices, and behaviour of other political actors, and whose primary means to achieve those goals is by effectively communicating information to target audiences, framing is undoubtedly a strategic and thus often deliberate process.

Through effective framing, NGOs like AI, HRW, and RSF can, to varying degrees, make a positive impact on how the issue of Chinese internet censorship is addressed within the international community by raising awareness about the matter and influencing the ways in which other political actors—including governments, the private sector, and the general public—respond to it. Thus, the respective framing strategies of AI, HRW, and RSF warrant careful scholarly attention and consideration. Before such a frame analysis can be presented, however, a brief overview of each organization is necessary.

### **Overview of AI, HRW, and RSF<sup>37</sup>**

#### Amnesty International

AI's origins can be traced back to 1961 in London, UK, when British lawyer Peter Benenson published an article titled "The Forgotten Prisoners" in *The Observer* newspaper.<sup>38</sup> Reprinted in newspapers worldwide, the piece brought attention to the thousands of individuals around the globe imprisoned for their political and/or religious beliefs. Calling for a year-long campaign, coined 'Appeal for Amnesty, 1961', Benenson urged citizens everywhere to rally public opinion and appeal to abusive governments to release these prisoners. With this campaign, AI began its tradition of 'adopting' individual 'prisoners of conscience' and, with the help of its network of supporters, lobbying for their freedom. Today, AI is a worldwide movement and organization dedicated to campaigning for the global recognition and protection of citizens' economic, social, and cultural rights and freedoms as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of

<sup>37</sup> Brief descriptions of AI, HRW and RSF have been compiled based on information available on each organization's website. For additional information, see [www.amnesty.org](http://www.amnesty.org), [www.hrw.org](http://www.hrw.org), and [www.rsf.org](http://www.rsf.org).

<sup>38</sup> "The Forgotten Prisoners" is available on the Amnesty International USA website, [www.amnestyusa.org](http://www.amnestyusa.org).

Human Rights. An organization with consultative status at the UN as well as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, AI is headquartered in London, UK with 80 offices worldwide and more than three million members and supporters in over 150 countries. AI's primary source of funding comes from individual donations; the organization states it does not accept funds from governments or political parties, which allows AI to "maintain full independence from any and all governments, political ideologies, economic interests or religions" (AI, "Frequently").

AI researches and addresses myriad human rights issues around the world, including war crimes, freedom of expression, and women's rights. At the heart of the organization's mission is investigating the cases of individuals at risk and campaigning for the release of prisoners of conscience. For its research and publications, AI acquires news and information from a range of sources such as various media outlets, prisoners, lawyers, journalists, and other human rights organizations, as well as from its own fact-finding missions that investigate the situation on the ground. AI uses a variety of methods and media to publicize its findings and communicate its messages, including press releases, detailed reports, audio and video pieces, newsletters, and a bi-monthly zine. Utilizing its global network of members and supporters, AI works to defend and promote human rights around the world via letter-writing campaigns, mass demonstrations, vigils, human rights education, direct lobbying, petitions, and cooperation with local and student groups (AI, *Amnesty International*).

### Human Rights Watch

HRW was first established in 1978 under the name Helsinki Watch, an organization devoted to monitoring government compliance with the 1975 Helsinki

Accords<sup>39</sup> and exposing human rights violations throughout the Soviet Union. Throughout the 1980s, several other 'Watch Committees' were formed to conduct research and advocacy work on human rights abuses in their respective regions: Americas Watch (1981), Asia Watch (1985), Africa Watch (1988), and Middle East Watch (1989). In 1988, all the committees were formally united under one umbrella organization named Human Rights Watch. Today, HRW operates on a global scale as an independent organization committed to defending and protecting human rights. Based in New York City, HRW has offices in Amsterdam, Beirut, Berlin, Brussels, Chicago, Geneva, Johannesburg, London, Los Angeles, Paris, San Francisco, Tokyo, Toronto, and Washington, D.C., and employs more than 280 staff members who are divided both geographically and thematically. The organization focuses its research and advocacy efforts on a range of human rights issues, e.g. press freedom, torture, and women's rights, in five geographic divisions—Africa, Americas, Asia, Europe and Central Asia, and Middle East and North Africa, plus a separate program on the United States. It claims to be a fully independent NGO, supported solely by contributions from private individuals and foundations worldwide, and accepting no money from any government, directly or indirectly (HRW, *Human Rights Watch*).

HRW publishes a range of materials including news releases, letters, reporters, op-ed pieces, newsletters, audio reports, videos, photo essays, and podcasts. It also holds an annual International Film Festival which showcases fictional, documentary, and

---

<sup>39</sup>The Helsinki Accords, also known as the Helsinki Final Act, was a diplomatic agreement signed by 35 countries (including the US, Canada, and all European nations except Albania) during the first Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe held in Helsinki, Finland in 1975. The purpose of the Helsinki Accords was to reduce tension and improve relations between the West and the Soviet bloc. In signing the act, the 35 signatory nations pledged to respect human rights and to cooperate with each other in economic, scientific, humanitarian, and other areas ("Helsinki Accords").

animated films or videos with a human rights focus. The organization's investigative work is heavily centred around field-based research, carried out by more than 80 researchers on staff stationed throughout the world. Their assignments regularly involve field investigations, interviewing victims and witnesses of human rights abuses, and speaking with local civil society activists and human rights advocates, lawyers, journalists, and government officials. In particular, HRW stresses the importance of interviewing victims and witnesses in order to "put the human story front and center of our reporting and advocacy" and have their stories reach a wider audience in the international community (HRW, "Our Research"). The organization publishes its findings in more than 100 reports and hundreds of news releases each year. The investigative work conducted by HRW researchers throughout the year culminates in the annual World Report which summarizes human rights practices and abuses in over 90 countries (HRW, *Human Rights Watch*).

In contrast to AI, a mass membership organization which heavily focuses on lobbying for the release of prisoners of conscience, HRW says that it "tends to look at more systemic human rights abuses and be more policy oriented" (HRW, "Frequently"). HRW's main focus is on publicly exposing human rights abuses by governments, holding said governments accountable to their obligations under international human rights and humanitarian law (e.g. the Universal Declaration of Human Rights), and seeking targeted sanctions and lobbying powerful leaders or stakeholders to use their influence and take action against perpetrators. At the core of HRW's mission are efforts to make "deep-rooted changes in policy, law, and public opinion" (HRW, "Frequently"). HRW also has consultative status at the UN.

### Reporters Without Borders

Founded in 1985 and registered in France, RSF is an international organization committed to defending and protecting journalists and press freedom around the world. Present in five continents, RSF has national branches in Austria, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Sweden, and Switzerland, as well as offices in New York and Washington, D.C., and more than 120 correspondents in other countries. Through the Reporters Without Borders Network, the organization also works closely with local and regional press freedom groups in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Belarus, Burma, Colombia, Democratic Congo, Eritrea, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, Peru, Romania, Russia, Somalia, the United States and Tunisia. Like AI and HRW, RSF also has consultative status at the UN. Funding for the organization comes from the sale of photograph albums and calendars, and from auctions, donations, member dues, public grants, and partnerships with private firms (RSF, *Reporters Without Borders*).

With press freedom as its overarching area of concern, RSF's mandate includes: exposing the mistreatment and torture of journalists and media assistants and defending those imprisoned and persecuted for doing their job; combatting media censorship and laws that undermine press freedom; financially supporting afflicted journalists and media outlets (e.g. to help pay for legal aid, medical care, and equipment) as well as imprisoned journalists' families; and improving the safety of journalists around the world. The main work of the organization involves research and publicity campaigns to expose press freedom violations and to lobby the international media to build support for imprisoned journalists and ensure those responsible for violations are punished. RSF also organizes on the ground fact-finding missions to investigate first-hand the working conditions of

locally based journalists, cases of imprisoned or murdered journalists, and to meet with local authorities. Using a tactic of 'naming and shaming', RSF works with public relations firms to mount high-profile publicity campaigns to inform the international community about abusive governments and publicly shame them in the eyes of the media, international institutions and organizations, and other governments with whom they have relations (RSF, *Reporters Without Borders*).

In addition to ad campaigns, press releases, fact-finding mission reports, books of photographs, and other publications, RSF publishes an annual report summarizing the number of journalists arrested, threatened, attacked, or killed around the world, as well as the annual Worldwide Press Freedom Index. The latter provides a numerical ranking for 178 countries (for the 2010 index) based on several criteria such as the number of violations against media outlets and journalists (e.g. censorship, imprisonment, physical attacks and threats, murders), the level of impunity afforded to press freedom violators, and the level of media self-censorship. On its website, RSF also keeps a daily updated list of murdered or imprisoned journalists, detailed reports on important cases, and various online petitions calling for the release of journalists in jail. Finally, RSF stages several annual events to draw attention to the issue of press freedom, including World Press Freedom Day, World Day Against Cyber Censorship, and the Reporters Without Borders Prize (RSF, *Reporters Without Borders*).<sup>40</sup>

---

<sup>40</sup> On World Press Freedom Day, RSF publishes its list of 'predators of press freedom' as well as a book of photographs sold to help raise funds for the organization. Launched in 2008, World Day Against Cyber Censorship aims to rally citizens of the world in support of a single accessible and unrestricted internet. On the eve of this event, RSF awards its Netizen Prize to a blogger, online journalist, or cyber dissident who has contributed to the fight for online freedom of expression. Similarly, the Reporters Without Borders Prize "honours a journalist who, by work, attitude or principled stands, has shown strong belief in press freedom, a media outlet that exemplifies the battle for the right to inform the public and to be informed, a defender of press freedom and a cyber-dissident spearheading freedom of expression online" (RSF, "Introduction").



As three of the most influential international—albeit Western-based—human rights organizations in the world, AI, HRW, and RSF provide ideal case studies for a frame analysis of NGO reporting on internet censorship in China. An investigation into these three NGOs' respective framing strategies will provide insight into how this issue is being addressed within the international human rights NGO community, which in turn may affect how other political actors may respond to, and act on, this issue. In the following chapter, I present and discuss the findings of the content analysis I conducted on a selection of AI, HRW, and RSF's relevant literature, beginning first with a brief overview of my research methods.

## CHAPTER 4: Research Methods, Findings, and Analysis

### Research Methods

Several scholars have commented on the lack of cohesion and the fractured nature of theoretical and methodological approaches to frame analysis (e.g. D'Angelo; Deacon et al.; Entman; Hertog and McLeod). Entman refers to the notion of framing as a “scattered conceptualization” and a “fractured paradigm” consisting of “pieces here and there” but lacking any coherent theory and comprehensive statement to guide research (51). Similarly, Hertog and McLeod note that despite the growing prominence of framing analysis across various disciplines such as political science, sociology, and media studies, it lacks a core theory and widely accepted methodological approach (139). There is thus no single, agreed upon and consistent method of studying and measuring frames (Deacon et al. 164); instead, frame analysis is characterized by a “conceptual openness” as scholars from various disciplines employ a diverse range of definitions, theories, and methods to suit their research (Hertog and McLeod 140).

In their own guide to research methods in media and cultural analysis, Deacon et al. recommend a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches to frame analysis in order to balance the respective strengths and weaknesses of each method (169). A similar mixed method approach to frame analysis is also recommended by Hertog and McLeod. As they contend, quantitative analysis that involves counting the number of times certain categories, terms, or phrases relating to a frame appear in a text or across a body of texts can be useful in determining the frames employed and the rhetoric used (Hertog and McLeod 152). By measuring frequency, quantitative research can potentially, although not necessarily, indicate the level of salience and significance of

these items within a given text. One of the drawbacks of quantitative analysis, however, is that the frequency of a term or concept does not necessarily correlate with its importance. That is to say, a concept or idea need not appear often in order to make an impact, and conversely an oft-repeated idea may leave little impression on the audience (Hertog and McLeod 152). A further weakness of quantitative analysis is the risk of oversimplifying a complex body of literature as a result of the “reductionist urge to sort media texts and discourse into containers and count their size and frequency” (Reese 8).

Qualitative research methods can help overcome some of the shortcomings of quantitative analysis as researchers use their judgment to interpret and induce meaning of texts. As Reese maintains, qualitative and interpretive analysis enables researchers to capture the meanings and nuances embedded in the texts which can be obscured by quantitative analysis (8). Human judgment is especially necessary to determine what is not shown—what has been omitted and framed out of the discussion (Hertog and McLeod 153). However, there are also disadvantages of using qualitative research methods. When studying frames, qualitative methods tend to “present the possibility of idiosyncratic analysis” as researchers develop varied interpretations of the same material (Hertog and McLeod 153). Hertog and McLeod therefore conclude that an approach using multiple research methods is “especially wise where no standard content exists, concepts and theories abound and are not widely agreed to, and many interpretations of the same data are possible” (153). Given the fractured nature of frame analysis and the openness of frames to varied and disparate interpretations, for my own analysis I employ a mixed method approach involving both quantitative and qualitative research methods.

In order to address the overarching research question of how AI, HRW, and RSF frame the issue of internet censorship in China, I conducted a content analysis of a selection of relevant literature published by these three organizations between the years 2005 – 2010. My content analysis of the organizations' publications focused on the five specific research questions (RQ) listed below:

- RQ1: Which issue(s) related to internet censorship in China appeared most frequently within the body of texts?
- RQ2: Which issue was most frequently presented as the primary subject<sup>41</sup> of a given text?
- RQ3: Which actor(s) (e.g. specific Chinese government agencies, the Chinese government as a whole, domestic or international internet companies) were most frequently framed as being problematic in contributing to internet censorship in China?
- RQ4: Which actor(s) were most frequently framed as having the capacity to help address or mitigate the issue of internet censorship in China?
- RQ5: What actions and/or solutions were proposed towards addressing the issue of internet censorship in China?

An investigation into the questions above will provide insight into the framing strategies of AI, HRW, and RSF by revealing in quantitative and qualitative terms what issues they emphasize or neglect, whose roles and actions they highlight or obscure, and what kind of solutions they propose in their literature.

Qualitative research methods are critically important in the interpretation of the numbers and statistics generated from the quantitative data analysis, i.e. in uncovering

---

<sup>41</sup> The purpose of coding the primary subject of a given story is to help measure issue salience, as simply counting the number of times an issue is mentioned within a body of texts does not alone necessarily provide an accurate depiction of its overall importance and salience. In cases where multiple issues are mentioned in the same text, the primary subject refers to the main subject of the story, i.e. the issue that receives the most emphasis, which is determined by such factors as the title of the piece and the number of lines dedicated to each issue. When only one issue is mentioned in a given text, that issue is considered the text's primary subject. If a text mentions multiple issues, but none are emphasized more than the others, the text is considered to have no primary subject.

and describing the themes and patterns in the literature that emerge from the statistical data. As noted earlier, numbers and statistics alone do not necessarily indicate the level of importance of a concept or idea within a body of texts; here, the ability of the researcher to interpret and make sense of the data is crucial. As mentioned, human judgment and interpretation are particularly necessary to describe what is not there and what has been neglected from the discussion about internet censorship in China, which, to recall Entman, is just as important to consider when measuring and analyzing media frames.

Importantly, a mixed method approach combining quantitative and qualitative research methods not only allows me to analyze each NGO's body of literature individually, but also enables a horizontal comparison of the data from all three NGOs. Comparing and contrasting the findings from each organization will help reveal similarities and differences between their respective framing strategies, which may in turn affect how other political actors interpret and respond to the issue of internet censorship in China.

#### Details of the Study

The content analysis was conducted on a range of literature published by AI, HRW, and RSF between the years 2005 – 2010 that focuses on the issue of internet censorship in China. These specific organizations were chosen for this study because they are three of the world's leading international human rights NGOs in terms of size, resources, and influence on governments and other international actors in the area of human rights. Notably, all three organizations have consultative status at the UN which lends them recognition and a level of legitimacy within the political system. For a number of years, they have also actively campaigned against internet censorship in China and

have published a significant amount of literature on the issue, which makes them ideal case studies for this project.

The time frame—from 2005 through 2010—was chosen for a few key reasons. First, during this period there was a growth in popularity of many Web 2.0 applications; specifically, in 2005 blogging gained critical mass in China, creating a new outlet for self-expression for Chinese net users and prompting even greater online censorship by the Chinese authorities. In the same year, the government began a series of campaigns to crack down on net users and increase internet controls, e.g. requiring real name registration for university BBS, and demanding that website owners register with the Chinese authorities or else face closure (Tai 100). Second, since 2005, the issue of foreign internet companies' complicity in assisting government censorship of the internet in China has been a particularly important issue which has received considerable attention by AI, HRW, and RSF. Third, from 2005 onwards, in the lead up to the 2008 Beijing Olympics, these NGOs began focusing increasingly on media and internet censorship in China following promises made by domestic officials of complete media freedom during the Games. While my content analysis focuses exclusively on materials published between 2005 – 2010, in my discussion I also refer to materials published prior to and after this time period where appropriate in order to add historical context and additional insight to my assessment of the themes and findings uncovered in the data.

The range of materials examined in this study include: press releases, reports, commentaries, letters and appeals for urgent action, and other miscellaneous materials. I collected this data from publicly accessible online archives found on each NGO's

respective website.<sup>42</sup> The search was first narrowed to materials relating to China; keywords including “internet,” “network,” “web\*,”<sup>43</sup> “online,” “censor\*,” “cyber\*” “filter” and “firewall” were then used to find relevant materials on the topic of internet censorship in China.<sup>44</sup> This study focused exclusively on English texts, though it should be noted that all three NGOs publish literature in a variety of languages. Included in the content analysis were texts in which the primary or a major focus of the discussion was internet censorship in China. Eliminated from the data pool were texts that mentioned some of the keywords above, but not in relation to the topic of Chinese internet censorship, as well as texts in which internet censorship in China was mentioned tangentially in one or several sentences, but was not the primary or a major subject. The data collection process yielded a total of 180 relevant documents: 37 for AI (13 reports, 12 Urgent Action appeals, 9 press releases, 2 letters, and 1 public statement), 30 for HRW (11 press releases, 7 commentaries, 7 letters, and 5 reports ), and 113 for RSF (110 press releases, 2 reports, 1 country file). The study was exhaustive and all relevant documents were included in the content analysis.

The unit of analysis used in this study was the individual article. A standardized coding sheet and an accompanying coding manual were developed based on the five

---

<sup>42</sup>The websites for each NGO are as follows: [www.amnesty.org](http://www.amnesty.org) (AI), [www.hrw.org](http://www.hrw.org) (HRW), and [www.rsf.org](http://www.rsf.org) (RSF). It should be noted that AI has multiple websites specific to the various countries in which the organization operates. This study focused exclusively on literature found on AI’s main international website.

<sup>43</sup>In a Boolean search, the asterisk is commonly used as a ‘wildcard’ to search for all words that begin with the search term. For example, the search term censor\* will find texts that include the words censor, censors, censorship, censored, and censoring.

<sup>44</sup>For AI, a Boolean operator was used to do a keyword search of the database. For HRW and RSF, I manually searched through the archives to find materials that referenced any of the keywords listed here.

research questions listed above.<sup>45</sup> The content categories for each question (see Tables 4 – 7 below) were established after a preliminary examination of the literature in a process known as emergent coding (Wimmer and Dominick 165), in which the common themes emerging from the texts examined are used to construct the content categories used for coding the data.

### **Overview of Findings**

Tables 1 through 3 provide a summary of the literature published by AI, HRW, and RSF, categorized by year—2005 through 2010—and by type: Press Releases, Reports, Commentary, Letter/Urgent Action, and Other. Press Releases are documents prepared for, and distributed to, the press for publication. Reports refer to researched and investigative pieces which provide facts, information, and often summaries of events and issues. Commentary includes opinion/editorial pieces published in news media outlets. Letters are documents addressed to specific recipients—usually key political actors such as heads of state, politicians, and company executives—which often include appeals for action. In the case of AI, letters are usually part of the organization’s ‘Urgent Action’ campaigns that encourage AI members and supporters to send letters en masse to designated recipients pressing for action on specific cases, e.g. the release of prisoners of conscience. The three documents categorized as Other include a Public Statement and an update on an Urgent Action campaign from AI, and a web-based article from RSF which appears as an internal page of the organization’s website.

Out of a total of 37 documents produced by AI, Reports and Letters were the most prolific with 13 items classified in each category(35.14 percent). For HRW, Press Releases comprised the highest number of publications with 11 out of a total of 30

---

<sup>45</sup> See Appendices I and II for the coding sheet and the coding manual.



**Table 1: A summary of Amnesty International publications by type and by year**

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	Row total
<b>Press Release</b>	0	1	0	2	1	5	9 24.32%
<b>Report</b>	2	2	4	3	1	1	13 35.14%
<b>Commentary</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0 0.00%
<b>Letter/Urgent Action</b>	2	5	0	0	2	4	13 35.14%
<b>Other</b>	0	1	0	0	0	1	2 5.41%
<b>Total</b>	4 10.81%	9 24.32%	4 10.81%	5 13.51%	4 10.81%	11 29.73%	37 100%

**Table 2: A summary of Human Rights Watch publications by type and by year**

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	Row total
<b>Press Release</b>	1	2	0	2	2	4	11 36.67%
<b>Report</b>	0	2	1	1	0	1	5 16.67%
<b>Commentary</b>	0	0	1	1	2	3	7 23.33%
<b>Letter/Urgent Action</b>	2	1	1	0	2	1	7 23.33%
<b>Other</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0 0.00%
<b>Total</b>	3 10%	5 16.67%	3 10%	4 13.33%	6 20%	9 30%	30 100%

**Table 3: A summary of Reporters Without Borders publications by type and by year**

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	N/A	Row total
<b>Press Release</b>	11	17	12	15	28	25	0	108 95.58%
<b>Report</b>	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	2 1.77%
<b>Commentary</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0 0.00%
<b>Letter/Urgent Action</b>	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2 1.77%
<b>Other</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1 0.88%
<b>Total</b>	11 9.73%	17 15.04%	13 11.50%	15 13.27%	28 24.78%	28 24.78%	1 0.89%	113 100%

documents (36.67 percent). Out of RSF's total of 113 documents, Press Releases accounted for the vast majority of publications with 109 items falling into this category (95.58 percent). Looking at the data by year, 2010 had the highest number of publications for all three NGOs with 11 (29.73 percent), 9 (30 percent), and 28 (24.78 percent, tied with 2009) items published during that period for AI, HRW, and RSF respectively. AI and RSF also produced a slightly elevated number of publications in 2006, likely due in part to the US Congressional hearing regarding the complicity of American internet companies in Chinese internet censorship which was held that year.

#### Research Questions 1 and 2: Issue Salience

Table 4 below looks at the salience of various issues pertaining to internet censorship in China within each NGO's body of literature, which includes all five types of documents described above. The left hand column under each organization's name

shows the frequency with which each issue was mentioned within the body of texts, and the right hand column shows which issue was most frequently taken as the primary subject of a given story. The most frequently mentioned issues within all three NGOs' body of literature were blocking/filtering/shutting down websites, foreign corporate complicity, and cyber dissidents. These three issues dominated the reporting by all the organizations, though there was some slight variation among them in terms of how much attention was paid to each issue.

The results for AI and RSF with respect to issue salience were quite similar: looking at the total body of literature produced by these two NGOs, the most salient issue was cyber dissidents, which was the most frequently mentioned (29.55 percent for AI, 32.59 percent for RSF) and most frequently highlighted as the primary subject of a given story (35.14 percent for AI, 43.37 percent for RSF). For both AI and RSF, blocking/filtering/shutting down websites was the second most frequently mentioned issue, accounting for 23.86 percent and 18.75 percent of the total frequency counts respectively, but only ranked third in terms of being the primary subject of a given story. The third most frequently mentioned issue for these two organizations was foreign corporate complicity (19.32 percent for AI, 15.18 percent for RSF) which also ranked second for both NGOs in terms of being the primary subject.

In contrast to the other two NGOs, HRW paid the most attention to the issue of blocking/filtering/shutting down websites, which accounted for 23.46 percent of the total frequency counts, followed by the issue of cyber dissidents (22.22 percent) and foreign corporate complicity (18.52 percent). Blocking/filtering/shutting down websites and cyber dissidents were both highlighted the most frequently as the primary subject within

HRW's publications(16.67 percent each), with foreign corporate complicity ranking second (13.33 percent).

**Table 4: Comparisons of Chinese internet censorship-related issues reported by AI, HRW, and RSF**

	AI		HRW		RSF	
	Frequency mentioned	Primary subject	Frequency mentioned	Primary subject	Frequency mentioned	Primary subject
<b>Blocking/filtering/shutting down websites</b>	21 23.86%	3 8.11%	19 23.46%	5 16.67%	42 18.75%	14 12.39%
<b>Foreign corporate complicity</b>	17 19.32%	7 18.92%	15 18.52%	4 13.33%	34 15.18%	22 19.47%
<b>Cyber dissidents</b>	26 29.55%	13 35.14%	18 22.22%	5 16.67%	73 32.59%	49 43.37%
<b>Cyber police and Surveillance</b>	5 5.68%	0 0.00%	3 3.70%	0 0.00%	13 5.80%	0 0.00%
<b>Self-censorship by domestic internet companies</b>	1 1.14%	0 0.00%	1 1.23%	0 0.00%	8 3.57%	2 1.77%
<b>Chinese internet laws and regulations</b>	6 6.82%	0 0.00%	10 12.34%	2 6.67%	14 6.25%	3 2.65%
<b>Pro-government Propaganda</b>	1 1.14%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	4 1.79%	0 0.00%
<b>Government control over news production</b>	3 3.41%	0 0.00%	3 3.70%	0 0.00%	7 3.13%	3 2.65%
<b>Restrictions on online anonymity</b>	2 2.27%	0 0.00%	3 3.70%	0 0.00%	7 3.13%	1 0.88%
<b>China-based cyber attacks</b>	1 1.14%	0 0.00%	2 2.47%	0 0.00%	7 3.13%	2 1.77%
<b>Other</b>	5 5.68%	0 0.00%	7 8.64%	2 6.67%	15 6.70%	3 2.65%
<b>None</b>		14 37.84%		12 40%		14 12.39%
<b>Column total</b>	88 100%	37 100%	81 100%	30 100%	224 100%	113 100%

After blocking/filtering/shutting down websites, foreign corporate complicity, and cyber dissidents, the data for the remaining eight categories of issues listed in Table 4

below are fairly consistent across all three NGOs. The only notable difference in frequency counts between the organizations can be seen in the category of Chinese internet laws and regulations, which was given slightly more attention by HRW (12.34 percent of total frequency counts) than by AI and RSF (6.82 percent and 6.25 percent of total frequency counts respectively). Overall, AI, HRW, and RSF were fairly consistent with one another in terms of issue salience and there were few significant differences in the data for each NGO.

### Research Question 3: Problematic Contributing Actors

Table 5 below summarizes the references made to various political actors that AI, HRW, and RSF framed as being problematic in contributing to internet censorship in China. Once again there was a fair amount of consistency across all three NGOs. By far the most emphasis was placed on the role of the Chinese government; this includes references to specific government officials, agencies, and bodies, as well as references to the government/authorities as a whole. The latter and more vague category accounted for the highest percentage of frequency counts in the data for all three NGOs: 47.92 percent (AI), 60 percent (HRW), and 49.18 percent (RSF) of all references made to problematic contributing actors were targeted towards the Chinese government/authorities in general. In comparison, there were far fewer references by any of the organizations to specific government officials, agencies, or bodies; however, quantitatively speaking, RSF does stand out slightly from the other two with specific government references accounting for 22.13 percent of the total frequency counts, compared to 12.50 percent for AI and 8.89 percent for HRW.

**Table 5: Actors framed by AI, HRW, and RSF as being problematic in contributing to internet censorship in China**

	AI	HRW	RSF
<b>Specific Chinese government officials/agencies/bodies</b>	6 12.50%	4 8.89%	27 22.13%
<b>Chinese government and authorities as a whole</b>	23 47.92%	27 60.00%	60 49.18%
<b>Foreign internet Companies</b>	16 33.33%	11 24.44%	21 17.21%
<b>Domestic internet Companies</b>	0 0.00%	1 2.22%	1 0.82%
<b>International Olympic Committee (IOC)</b>	0 0.00%	1 2.22%	2 1.64%
<b>Other</b>	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	1 0.82%
<b>None</b>	3 6.25	1 2.22%	10 8.20%
<b>Column total</b>	48 100%	45 100%	122 100%

All three NGOs also focused significant attention on the role of foreign internet companies—especially Yahoo!, Microsoft, and Google—in assisting government censorship of the internet in China. Out of all the references made to problematic contributing actors, those focusing on the role played by foreign internet companies comprised 33.33 percent, 24.44 percent, and 17.21 percent for AI, HRW, and RSF respectively. Apart from discussions about government and foreign corporate responsibility for internet censorship in China, domestic internet companies, the International Olympic Committee (IOC), and other miscellaneous actors received minor attention as problematic contributing actors from both HRW and RSF, while AI made no references attributing responsibility for Chinese internet censorship to any other actors.

On several occasions, especially in RSF's case, no actor was specifically pinpointed as contributing to the issue of internet censorship in China.

#### Research Question 4: Key Mitigating Actors

Table 6 below summarizes the frequency counts for those actors framed by AI, HRW, and RSF as having the capacity to help address or mitigate the issue of internet censorship in China. In this case, there were some similarities and some variation in the data for each NGO. References by all three organizations to specific Chinese government personnel or agencies were limited in comparison to references to China's government as a whole. For AI, the government as a whole received the most attention out of all potential mitigating actors, making up the highest percentage (25.49 percent) of the total frequency counts in its literature. AI also frequently highlighted the potential role foreign internet companies could, or should, play in helping to mitigate the issue of Chinese internet censorship (21.57 percent of total frequency counts). By comparison, HRW focused less on the Chinese government; instead, the organization tended to target foreign governments/representatives (26.09 percent) and foreign internet companies (23.91 percent) as actors having the capacity to make a positive difference on this issue.

One of the major differences in the data for each organization can be observed in the number of stories published by AI, HRW, and RSF in which no actor is specifically called upon to play a positive and mitigating role. Such stories account for 43.64 percent of RSF's total frequency counts, compared to 17.65 for AI and 15.22 for HRW. In other words, close to half of the RSF literature coded in this study did not refer to any actor that could, or should, take action to help address the issue of internet censorship in China. The references RSF *did* make to potential mitigating actors were split more or less evenly

**Table 6: Actors framed by AI, HRW, and RSF as having the capacity to help address or mitigate the issue of internet censorship in China**

	AI	HRW	RSF
<b>Specific Chinese government officials/agencies/bodies</b>	6 11.76%	3 6.52%	5 4.55%
<b>Chinese government and authorities as a whole</b>	13 25.49%	4 8.70%	17 15.45%
<b>Foreign governments and representatives</b>	3 5.88%	12 26.09%	16 14.55%
<b>Foreign internet companies</b>	11 21.57%	11 23.91%	15 13.64%
<b>Domestic internet companies</b>	0 0.00%	3 6.52%	2 1.82%
<b>International Olympic Committee (IOC)</b>	7 13.72%	2 4.35%	2 1.82%
<b>Other</b>	2 3.92%	4 8.70%	5 4.55%
<b>None</b>	9 17.65%	7 15.22%	48 43.64%
<b>Column total</b>	51 100%	46 100%	110 100%

between the Chinese government/authorities as a whole, foreign governments and representatives, and foreign internet companies (accounting for 15.45 percent, 14.55 percent, and 13.64 percent of total frequency counts respectively). Another notable difference in the data presented in Table 6 can be seen in the International Olympic Committee (IOC) category. The IOC was frequently framed by AI as a key influential actor with an obligation to ensure media freedom in China during the Olympic Games, accounting for 13.72 percent of AI's total frequency counts compared to 4.35 for HRW and 1.82 for RSF. Similar to the data in Table 5, very few—or, in the case of AI, zero—



references were made by any of the three NGOs to the ways in which domestic internet companies might help address the issue of internet censorship in China.

#### Research Question 5: Proposed Actions and Solutions

Table 7 below shows the frequency counts for the various actions and solutions proposed by AI, HRW, and RSF towards addressing the issue of internet censorship in China. Again, there were some similarities as well as some significant variation in the data for each organization. AI and RSF both focused primarily on the immediate need to release Chinese cyber dissidents, which accounted for over thirty percent of total frequency counts for both NGOs, but far less for HRW. The literature produced by all three NGOs often did not provide any suggestions for possible actions or solutions to address internet censorship in China; this category made up 17.31 percent, 17.65 percent, and 28.57 percent of the total frequency counts for AI, HRW, and RSF respectively.

There were also some differences in the data in terms of proposed actions and solutions. HRW, for instance, was more active than the other two organizations in pressing for legislative and social reform in China (15.69 percent of total frequency counts compared to 9.62 percent for AI and 0 percent for RSF); meanwhile, AI was more focused on putting an end to online filtering and blocking in Chinese cyberspace (13.46 percent versus 5.89 percent for HRW and 4.46 for RSF). In contrast to AI, HRW and RSF both tended to favour the solution of resistance and non-compliance initiatives by foreign internet companies operating in China (11.76 percent and 12.50 percent of total frequency counts respectively, compared to 1.92 percent for AI). These initiatives include, as examples, resisting government demands for censorship, developing a human rights policy that will prevent companies from being complicit in human rights

violations, and lobbying the Chinese government for legislative and social reform.

Finally, the solution of implementing a global industry code of conduct was popular with both AI and HRW (19.23 percent and 17.65 percent respectively), though this category only accounted for 1.79 percent of RSF's total frequency counts.

**Table 7: Actions and solutions proposed by AI, HRW, and RSF towards addressing the issue of internet censorship in China**

	AI	HRW	RSF
<b>Release cyber dissidents</b>	19 36.54%	7 13.72%	37 33.04%
<b>Legislative and social reform</b>	5 9.62%	8 15.69%	0 0.00%
<b>Cease filtering and blocking</b>	7 13.46%	3 5.89%	5 4.46%
<b>Resistance/ non-compliance by domestic companies</b>	0 0.00%	2 3.92%	2 1.79%
<b>Resistance/ non-compliance by foreign companies</b>	1 1.92%	6 11.76%	14 12.50%
<b>Global industry code of conduct</b>	10 19.23%	9 17.65%	2 1.79%
<b>Foreign legislation</b>	0 0.00%	3 5.89%	8 7.14%
<b>Other</b>	1 1.92%	4 7.84%	12 10.71%
<b>None</b>	9 17.31%	9 17.65%	32 28.57%
<b>Column total</b>	52 100%	51 100%	112 100%

### Analysis and Discussion

An analysis of the data for AI, HRW, and RSF reveals both quantitative and qualitative similarities and differences which reflect each organization's tactics and

objectives. For all three NGOs, we can observe a general incremental pattern of growth in the number of publications about internet censorship in China produced each year from 2005 to 2010 (see Tables 1 – 3), which potentially suggests that the issue is a growing concern within the NGO community.<sup>46</sup> The increased attention to this issue by human rights organizations could, in part, be attributed to worsening conditions in China and/or it could reflect a growing worldwide popular interest in Chinese human rights and internet censorship following recent events such as the 2008 Beijing Olympics and the 2010 Nobel Peace Prize awarded to Chinese dissident and democracy activist Liu Xiaobo.

In terms of quantitative differences between the organizations, RSF produced by far the most literature on the topic during the given time period, publishing 113 documents compared to 37 and 30 documents for AI and HRW respectively. This notable gap in the quantity of literature produced by RSF compared to the other two NGOs is not surprising considering each organization's respective mandate and objective. While AI and HRW both actively work on addressing a broad range of human rights issues, RSF focuses exclusively on issues of press freedom, including a special "Internet" section on its website dedicated to literature on internet censorship. Given RSF's more specific focus on press freedom issues, one would expect it to be the most prolific producer of literature on the topic of Chinese internet censorship.

Qualitatively speaking, there was also some variation in the type of literature produced by AI, HRW, and RSF. The vast majority (95.58 percent) of RSF's body of

---

<sup>46</sup>I should note, however, that the number of publications produced overall by each organization is unknown. It is therefore difficult to say with certainty that these NGOs are focusing more attention on the specific issue of internet censorship in China, or whether they are simply publishing more documents in general across all issues.

literature was comprised of press releases, which likely reflects the organization's focus on providing timely and constant updates on cases and issues and "send[ing] releases to the media to drum up support for the journalists under attack" (RSF, "Introduction"). Meanwhile, AI tended to focus on producing reports as well as on writing letters/urgent action appeals calling for the release of cyber dissidents from prison, which follows the organization's long tradition of mass letter-writing campaigns on behalf of prisoners of conscience around the world. HRW's body of literature was the most diverse of the three organizations, comprised of a variety of documents including reports, press releases, letters, and, most notably, commentary pieces.

Here, HRW was unique in being the only NGO to publish op-ed pieces in the mainstream press. The publications in which HRW's pieces were featured include *The Wall Street Journal*, the *International Herald Tribune*, *The New York Times*, *Far Eastern Economic Review*, *AOL/Sphere.com*, *Forbes*, and *Foreign Policy*, all of which are American publications with the exception of the (now defunct) Hong Kong-based magazine *Far Eastern Economic Review*. The emphasis on reaching American readers makes sense considering that HRW is a US-based organization; however, attempts to reach audiences beyond those in the United States would arguably help heighten awareness of, and concern for, the issue of internet censorship in China within the wider international community. Nevertheless, the organization's efforts to reach out to everyday readers—i.e. people outside of the NGO community who may not necessarily be interested in seeking out such information—are noteworthy since getting the general public informed about issues of concern is crucial if NGOs wish build popular support for their causes.

A qualitative analysis of the data for AI, HRW, and RSF also revealed some important themes and patterns in the actual content of each organization's literature. In the following section, I examine what issues these NGOs framed into, and what issues they framed out of, their discussion about internet censorship in China. I first consider some of the most salient themes and issues emphasized by these organizations, followed by a critical exploration of the issues that are notably omitted from, or obscured in, the literature.

### Cyber Dissidents

One of the most frequently mentioned issues in the literature published by all three NGOs was the Chinese government's persecution of cyber dissidents. AI, HRW, and RSF would often call attention to specific cases in press releases and reports, as well as write letters and organize petitions calling for the release of certain incarcerated individuals. Some of the most notable cases frequently highlighted by these NGOs include:

- Huang Jinqiu, a political dissident and regular contributor to the website Boxun who was arrested in 2003 and sentenced to twelve years in prison on charges of subversion
- Li Zhi, a government employee in Sichuan province who was arrested in 2003 and sentenced to eight years in prison on charges of subversion after contacting an overseas representative of the outlawed China Democracy Party. Evidence presented during Li's trial included personal user information provided to the authorities by Yahoo!
- Shi Tao, a journalist who was arrested in 2004 for sending an email to a US-based pro-democracy website summarizing an internal CCP communiqué; in 2005 Shi was sentenced to ten years imprisonment after Yahoo! provided his personal information to the Chinese authorities.
- Huang Qi, a veteran human rights activist who served five years in prison from 2000 to 2005 on charges of subversion in connection with his website, [www.64tianwang.com](http://www.64tianwang.com), which aimed to locate missing people in China

including those unaccounted for following the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre. In 2009, Huang was sentenced again to three years in prison on charges of subversion and revealing state secrets for helping families whose children died during the 2008 Sichuan earthquake.

- Tan Zuoren, a human rights activist sentenced in 2010 to five years imprisonment on charges of subversion for investigating and posting information online about the 2008 Sichuan earthquake victims.

While AI, HRW, and RSF have advocated on behalf of these and many other Chinese cyber dissidents, the one individual who has by far received the most attention is Liu Xiaobo. As noted, while serving his prison sentence, Liu was awarded the 2010 Nobel Peace Prize for “his long and non-violent struggle for fundamental human rights in China,” (“The Nobel Peace Prize 2010”). In support of Liu, all three NGOs have campaigned forcefully for his release from prison. RSF in particular has gone to great lengths to draw attention to Liu’s case, creating an entire section on its website dedicated to the Chinese scholar which includes a biography, photos, videos, and interviews. As part of its campaign to free Liu from prison, RSF also started a petition and created “Free Liu Xiaobo” t-shirts, encouraging people around the world to submit photos of themselves wearing them. HRW has also actively campaigned on Liu’s behalf, writing numerous op-ed pieces declaring support for the Nobel laureate and calling for his freedom (e.g. “China’s Nobel”; “Free”; “Liu Xiaobo”; “Liu Xiaobo’s Freedom”; and “The Prize”). In 2010 alone, HRW published thirty pieces pertaining to Liu’s case;<sup>47</sup> that same year, the organization also honoured Liu with the Alison Des Forges Award for Extraordinary Activism<sup>48</sup> for his fearless commitment to freedom of expression and

---

<sup>47</sup> As per the established criteria, some of these documents were omitted from this study if they did not include explicit references to internet censorship.

<sup>48</sup>The award is named after Dr. Alison Des Forges, senior adviser to HRW’s Africa division for almost two decades, who died in a plane crash in New York on February 12, 2009. In honour of Des Forges

freedom of assembly in China” (HRW, “Human Rights Watch Honors”). Similarly, in recent years, AI has published an abundance of reports, press releases, Urgent Action appeals, and a petition “urg[ing] the authorities to immediately and unconditionally release Liu Xiaobo” whom the organization considers to be a prisoner of conscience (“China: Release”; see also “China: Fear”; “China: Liu”; “Chinese Authorities Urged”; “End Repression”; “Free Liu”; and “Liu Xiaobo”).

The overwhelming attention to Liu’s case by AI, HRW, and RSF can be seen as an example of symbolic politics, which, to recall Keck and Sikkink, involve the use of symbols, actions, events, or stories to create awareness of problematic issues or situations and build support for activist networks (including human rights NGOs) and their causes (22). The Nobel Committee’s decision to award a Chinese human rights activist the 2010 Nobel Peace Prize provided these NGOs with the opportunity to use this momentous event to shine a spotlight on China’s human rights record and raise awareness of government repression of cyber dissidents. A peaceful scholar, activist, and Nobel Peace Prize recipient imprisoned by the authorities simply for expressing his desire for political reform in China, Liu is a powerful representative of Chinese citizens whose communicative rights and freedoms are undermined and violated by their own government.

While an in-depth discussion of the topic is beyond the scope of this thesis, the obvious question to ask is to what extent Liu’s own political convictions are the reason that AI, HRW, and RSF have rallied so forcefully on his behalf. As a staunch government critic calling for political reform in China based on the model of Western democratic

---

outstanding commitment to and defense of human rights, the award is present annually to those individuals “who put their lives on the line to protect the dignity and rights of others” (HRW, “Human Rights Watch Honors”).



societies, Liu's political ideals clearly resonate with the NGOs' own guiding values and principles which are firmly rooted in Western notions of democracy and human rights. Indeed, one wonders whether AI, HRW, and RSF would so readily adopt Liu as a prisoner of conscience and so actively campaign for his freedom if his political views clashed, rather than complimented, their own.

Despite these NGOs' numerous and outspoken appeals to the Chinese authorities to free Liu Xiaobo, at the time of writing he remains in prison. Rather than acquiescing to demands from NGOs and governments that Liu be released, Chinese officials instead called him a "criminal" ("China's Nobel Anger") and urged foreign diplomats to boycott the Nobel awards ceremony, warning they would face "consequences" if they attended (Branigan, "Eighteen"). In total, 18 countries—many of which are Chinese allies and/or trade partners—obliged China's request, including Afghanistan, Colombia, Cuba, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Morocco, Pakistan, the Philippines, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Serbia, Sudan, Tunisia, Ukraine, Venezuela, and Vietnam (Branigan, "Eighteen"; Moskwa and Gibbs). What is clear from the outcome of the event is the level of influence China has over certain governments and allies within the international community, and the challenges facing these NGOs in their efforts to mount the diplomatic pressure necessary to compel China to improve its human rights record.

#### The 2008 Beijing Olympics

In another example of symbolic politics, AI, HRW, and RSF took advantage of the 2008 Beijing Olympics as an opportunity to draw international attention to the issue of media and internet censorship and other human rights concerns in China. In the lead up to the Games, HRW created a 'Press Center' website, "Beijing 2008: China's Olympian



Human Rights Challenges” (<http://china.hrw.org/press>) aimed at addressing the issue of media censorship and the harassment of both foreign and domestic journalists during the Olympics. AI similarly launched its own “2008 Beijing Olympics Campaign” which included the creation of the now-defunct website, [www.thechinadebate.org](http://www.thechinadebate.org), meant to “encourage an open, constructive and balanced discussion about human rights in China” focusing specifically on issues of media censorship as well as the repression of activists, detention without trial, and the death penalty (AI, “Olympics Promises”). In 2005, AI began a series of reports called “The Olympics Countdown” with the purpose of monitoring and reporting on developments in these four key human rights areas in the period leading up to the Games. In 2007, AI also published a ‘Media Kit’ titled “Legacy of the Beijing Olympics: China’s Choice,” which provided an overview of the organization’s 2008 Beijing Olympics Campaign and its top ten human rights concerns in China including internet repression and media freedom. The 2008 Beijing Olympics was also an important event for RSF, which published scores of articles condemning the Chinese government’s continued assault on free speech and demanding an end to censorship of the internet and the release of journalists and net users imprisoned during the Games (e.g. “Cyber-Censorship”; “Increase”; “IOC Accepts”; “Just One”; “Olympic Disaster”; “Repression Continues”; “With Exactly”; and “With Five”). With the rest of the world fixated on China as the upcoming Olympics host, these NGOs attempted to direct that attention towards the grave human rights challenges facing the country. The Olympics provided an especially poignant opportunity for these organizations to create awareness of problematic human rights issues in China because of the clear contrast between the values and principles of the Olympic Charter—which emphasizes the

“harmonious development of humankind,” the promotion of a “peaceful society,” and the “preservation of human dignity” (IOC 10)—and the abusive human rights practices of the Chinese government.

On the issue of media and internet censorship during the Games, AI, HRW, and RSF all engaged in accountability politics by attempting to “hold powerful actors to their previously stated policies or principles” (Keck and Sikkink 16). As Keck and Sikkink explain, “Once a government has publicly committed itself to a principle—for example, in favour of human rights or democracy—[advocacy] networks can use those positions, and their command of information, to expose the distance between discourse and practice” (24). In this case, AI, HRW, and RSF attempted to expose the distance between the Chinese government’s promises and its actions with regards to media censorship, urging the government to live up to its previously stated commitments. AI called on China to “fulfill the promise of complete media freedom,” referring to the 2001 statement made by Wang Wei, Secretary General of the Beijing Olympic Bid Committee, that “We will give the media complete freedom to report when they come to China” (“Legacy”). HRW also made efforts to remind the rest of the world of the Chinese government’s publicly stated commitments to media freedom during the Games, creating a section on its Olympics ‘Press Center’ website called “In Their Own Words.” The page contains a list of past quotes from various Chinese officials who promised that “There will be no restrictions on journalists in reporting on the Olympic Games”;<sup>49</sup> “China will live up to

<sup>49</sup> A promise made in 2001 by Beijing Olympics organizers in their official bid to host the 2008 Games, quoted in a 2007 report by the organization Committee to Protect Journalists.

its words and will turn its words into deeds, providing good services to the media”;<sup>50</sup> and “No one in China has been arrested simply because he or she said something on the internet.”<sup>51</sup> Six months before the Olympics opening ceremony in Beijing, RSF condemned China’s “broken promises” that there would be total press freedom and that the Games would “help improve human rights” in the country (“With Exactly”). Instead, as RSF reported,

None of this has happened. About 80 journalists and Internet users are currently imprisoned in China. Some have been detained since the 1980s. The government blocks access to thousands of websites and the cyber-police watch Internet users closely. A total of 180 foreign reporters were arrested, attacked or threatened in China in 2007. (“With Exactly”)

Urging the Chinese authorities to “respect the promises they gave in 2001,” RSF staged a demonstration in Paris on February 8, 2008, asking passers-by to let themselves be photographed wearing “Beijing 2008” campaign t-shirts which depict the Olympic rings as handcuffs (RSF, “With Exactly”).

AI, HRW, and RSF attempted to use a significant and global event like the Olympics as an opportunity to draw attention to and help improve the issue of internet censorship in China. Ultimately, however, as reported by these NGOs, internet censorship and the repression and harassment of journalists, bloggers, and human rights activists remained rampant in the period leading up to, during, and following the Games (e.g. AI, “The Olympics Countdown – Broken Promises”; AI, “The Olympics Countdown – Crackdown”; HRW, “China: Hosting”; HRW, “China: International”; HRW, “China: No

---

<sup>50</sup> A statement by Liu Qi, President of the Beijing Organizing Committee for the Olympic Games, quoted by the *South China Morning Post* on October 1, 2006.

<sup>51</sup> A claim made by Liu Zhengrong, deputy chief of the Internet Affairs Bureau of the State Council Information Office, quoted by the *China Daily* on February 15, 2006. HRW reports that, at the time, at least 15 journalists were jailed for online writings.

Progress”; RSF, “Olympic Disaster”; RSF, “One Year”). Though it is of course possible that the situation may have been even worse if not for the work of these organizations, the lack of any notable, concrete improvements with regards to China’s draconian regime of internet censorship speaks to the level of difficulty that human rights NGOs like AI, HRW, and RSF encounter in their attempts to persuade the Chinese government to change its human rights policies and practices.

#### Foreign Corporate Complicity: Yahoo!, Microsoft, and Google

One of the most salient issues highlighted by all three organizations in their literature was the complicity of foreign internet companies operating in China in assisting government censorship of the internet. In particular, these NGOs focused their attention on American internet giants Yahoo!, Microsoft, and Google, whose involvement in facilitating Chinese internet censorship was the subject of scrutiny during the 2006 US Congressional hearing discussed above. Close to 20 percent of RSF’s total 113 documents analyzed in this study addressed these companies’ complicity in Chinese internet censorship; additionally, in 2006 both AI and HRW published significantly in-depth reports on the issue.

AI’s 30-page report, “Undermining Freedom of Expression in China: the Role of Yahoo!, Microsoft, and Google,” takes aim at these three companies for collaborating in various ways with the Chinese government on the suppression of speech and information on the internet. Yahoo! is criticized for censoring the search results of its Chinese-language search engine, and for providing the Chinese authorities with user information that contributed to the arrest and imprisonment of journalists Li Zhi and Shi Tao. The report also condemns Microsoft for censoring its blogging service, MSN Spaces,

prohibiting users from creating blogs that include words such as ‘democracy’ or ‘human rights’, and even shutting down the blog of Chinese journalist and blogger Zhao Jing (also known as Michael Anti) who is an active critic of the Chinese government. Finally, the report denounces Google’s decision in January 2006 to launch Google.cn, a self-censored version of its Chinese-language search engine. In another example of accountability politics, AI’s report exposes the contradiction between the actions of Yahoo!, Microsoft, and Google, and their own proclaimed values and principles in terms of respecting customer rights. The report concludes with a series of recommendations for these and other internet companies operating in China which, according to AI, will “enable them to act in accordance with international human rights norms” (4). The list of proposed actions includes, for example, recommendations that companies “be transparent about the filtering process used by the company in China”; “make publicly available all agreements between the company and the Chinese government with implications for censorship of information and suppression of dissent”; “exercise leadership in promoting human rights in China”; and “participate in and support the outcomes of a multi-stakeholder process to develop a set of guidelines relating to Internet and human rights issues” (28).

The same year as AI’s report, HRW also published its own 141-page report titled “Race to the Bottom: Corporate Complicity in Chinese Internet Censorship.” HRW’s report similarly focuses on Yahoo!, Microsoft, and Google for the same reasons described above; additionally, it criticizes the US company Skype for censoring words in its text chat service. As its title suggests, the report discusses the issue of foreign corporate complicity in Chinese internet censorship in terms of a ‘race to the bottom’ as

companies cave in to government pressure to increase their censorship levels in order to compete with whichever company is censoring the most (7). In order to prevent this race to the bottom, HRW provides an extensive list of recommendations to internet companies operating in China, as well as suggestions for other stakeholders, including company investors; customers; international organizations such as the World Trade Organization, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, and the UN; activists, NGOs, and other concerned groups; countries with internet companies operating in China; and finally the Chinese government itself. Similar to AI's report, HRW recommends that internet companies operating in China "never censor any material unless required by legally binding and written government request"; "use all legal means to resist demands for censorship"; "document all cases in which content has been censored ... and make this information publicly available"; "lobby and attempt to convince the Chinese government and its officials to end political censorship of the Internet"; and "develop and adhere to a code of conduct that prohibits participation in or facilitation of infringements of the right to free expression, information, privacy, association, or other internationally recognized rights" (85).

In like manner to AI and HRW, RSF has frequently denounced Yahoo!, Microsoft, and Google for collaborating with the Chinese government on internet censorship. In 2006, RSF announced it was "disgusted to find that Microsoft was censoring the Chinese version of its blog tool, MSN spaces" ("Microsoft Censors"), sending an open letter the following year to Microsoft founder Bill Gates urging him to raise the issues of online censorship and the repression of cyber dissidents during an upcoming dinner with Chinese President Hu Jintao ("Bill Gates"), though it is unknown

whether Gates obliged the request. After Google's decision to launch a self-censored Chinese search engine, RSF accused the company of "hypocrisy," stating that "the launch of Google.cn is a black day for freedom of expression in China" ("Google Launches"). Of the three internet companies, Yahoo! has come under fire the most from RSF for its role as a "Chinese police informant" ("Information Supplied"), providing the authorities with user information used to convict numerous net users in China (see also "Another Cyberdissident"; "Still No Reaction"; "Verdict"; "Yahoo! Employees"; "Yahoo! Implicated"; and "Yahoo! Settles"). In response to the "ethical failings on the part of [these] American companies," RSF launched a petition in January 2006 in support of an initiative recommending "six concrete ways to make these companies behave ethically" ("Do Internet Companies"). RSF proposed establishing an industry code of conduct backed up by US legislation. The code, a precursor to the GNI, would "ensure that US companies respect freedom of expression when they are operating in repressive countries and elsewhere" by, for example, preventing US companies from hosting servers within a repressive country, or automatically censoring key words from search engines, among other things ("Do Internet Companies").

AI, HRW, and RSF all clearly frame foreign—particularly American—internet companies operating in China as playing both a negative and potentially positive role with respect to the issue of Chinese internet censorship (see Tables 5 and 6 above). While these NGOs harshly criticize Yahoo!, Microsoft, and Google for undermining freedom of expression on the internet, they equally stress the ways in which foreign internet companies can, and should, play a positive role in addressing the issue of online censorship in China. In 2003, years before the 'ethical failings' of Yahoo!, Microsoft,

Google, and Cisco became subject to US Congressional scrutiny, RSF sent letters to executives of 14 leading international internet companies operating in China (including Yahoo!, Microsoft, and other companies based in North America and East Asia), stating that they “should feel responsible for the plight of China’s embattled Internet users” and challenging them to “take a stand against the government’s repression of the Internet” (“Reporters Without Border Challenges”). In HRW’s 2006 report, the organization maintained that companies “can and should draw a much clearer line between ethical and unethical business practices, and should revise their businesses practices in China” (“Race” 8). AI is perhaps the most forceful in expressing its desire to see foreign internet companies contribute in a positive way towards addressing the issue of Chinese internet censorship. In its 2006 report, AI states that “we believe that [these companies] are part of the problem, and ... we would like them to act as a ‘force for good’ in becoming part of the solution towards improving the human rights situation in China” (“Undermining” 4). The report goes on to say that

The question these companies should be asking is, how can they collaborate with each other most effectively to influence the way the internet is used in China so as to bring about positive outcomes for human rights. ... They need to stop denying their culpability, acknowledge where their responsibilities lie, and begin to focus on solutions. (“Undermining” 25-27)

Thus, while these organizations recognize that the ultimate responsibility to protect human rights rests with governments, they also focus significantly on the human rights responsibilities of companies in the private sector.

The decision by AI, HRW, and RSF to concentrate their attention on foreign internet companies such as Yahoo!, Microsoft, and Google is no doubt a strategic one. Large multinational corporations, driven by profits and concerned about maintaining a



positive brand image and user loyalty, are arguably more likely than the Chinese government to respond to public pressure to change its policies and practices. However, too much emphasis on the role played by foreign internet companies in facilitating internet censorship in China can be problematic insofar as it detracts attention away from the complicity and actions of other equally important actors, including hardware companies, domestic internet firms, and the Chinese government itself.

First, these NGOs' narrow focus on internet software and service providing companies ignores the role played by hardware companies in supporting the Chinese government's internet censorship regime. North American companies such as Sun Microsystems, Nortel, and Cisco have been instrumental in developing and providing the Chinese authorities with the technology to censor and filter the internet (MacKinnon, "China's Internet"). Cisco, as mentioned, developed and supplied the Chinese government with the routers used in the country's national firewall (Deva 273; MacKinnon, "China's Internet")—actions for which the company was condemned along with Yahoo!, Microsoft, and Google during the 2006 US Congressional hearing. Despite being very publicly highlighted and scrutinized by US policymakers, the case of Cisco and other complicit hardware companies have thus far remained largely excluded from discussions by AI, HRW, and RSF.

To be fair, in their respective reports mentioned above, both AI and HRW provide a rationale for focusing exclusively on software and service providing companies. AI chose to spotlight Yahoo!, Microsoft, and Google because "their size and market penetration globally mean that their sphere of influence over human rights is likely to be greater than that of other Internet companies" ("Undermining" 11). For its part, HRW

acknowledges the crucial role that several hardware companies such as Cisco, Nortel, and Juniper, have played in developing China's internet infrastructure, though the organization decided to focus solely on software companies because "we believe the hardware and Internet content businesses involve different issues—technically, legally, and in terms of corporate intent" (4). While it would be unreasonable to expect these NGOs to address all aspects of corporate complicity in every report or publication, the fact that hardware companies such as those listed here are rarely mentioned in any of the other literature published by AI, HRW, and RSF is a significant omission.

Second, notably absent from the literature published by all three NGOs are discussions about self-censorship by domestic internet firms in China. In addition to foreign companies such as Yahoo!, Microsoft, and Google, domestic Chinese internet firms are also complicit in facilitating government censorship of speech and information on the internet. As mentioned in Chapter 1, hundreds of Chinese internet companies, including some of the country's largest content providers, have signed the "Public Pledge on Self-discipline for China's Internet Industry," a voluntary pledge which commits signatories to practice 'self-discipline' by monitoring and removing from the web any content the authorities might consider harmful information (Weber and Jia 776). When considering that foreign corporations represent only a portion of all the internet companies currently operating in China, the issue of self-censorship by domestic Chinese firms is an equally, if not more, widespread and significant issue than that of US-based corporations, though the former was virtually ignored by AI, HRW, and RSF. Given that Chinese internet companies are subject to government control and are thus not in an easy position to resist government censorship demands, it is understandable that these NGOs

would focus greater attention to the case of foreign internet companies which do not operate under the same political and economic conditions as their domestic counterparts. However, it is important for AI, HRW, and RSF to at the very least recognize the significant role played by Chinese internet companies in contributing to the issue of internet censorship in the country.

Third, by emphasizing the role of private companies in facilitating, and potentially mitigating, the issue of internet censorship in China, these NGOs detract attention away from the role and responsibility of the Chinese government itself. Ultimately, solutions cannot be left up to the private sector; the source of, and the answer to, this issue are rooted in the actions and decisions of Chinese officials. It is they who compel companies and net users to practice self-censorship on the internet, and it is only by pressuring the government to change its policies and practices that we will see any real improvement to the human rights situation in China. Foreign corporate complicity in Chinese internet censorship is undoubtedly an important issue that needs to be addressed by AI, HRW, RSF, and other NGOs; however, political censorship of the internet is not only a matter between companies and consumers, but fundamentally it is a matter between a government and its citizens. By framing the issue of internet censorship as primarily one of corporate social responsibility, these NGOs ignore the fact that it is, ultimately, the responsibility of governments to respect and protect human rights.

#### Global Industry Code of Conduct and Foreign Legislation

One of the suggestions proposed by all three NGOs to help curtail the issue of foreign companies' participation in online censorship in China was to establish a voluntary industry code of conduct. In its report on corporate complicity, one of AI's

eight major recommendations to Yahoo!, Microsoft, Google, and other internet companies operating in China is to “Participate in and support the outcomes of a multi-stakeholder process to develop a set of guidelines relating to the Internet and human rights issues” (“Undermining” 28). HRW provided a similar recommendation in its own investigative report, urging companies to “Develop and adhere to a code of conduct that prohibits participation in or facilitation of infringements of the right to free expression, information, privacy, association, or other internationally recognized human rights” (“Race” 85). As mentioned, in 2006 RSF launched a petition supporting an initiative that would establish an industry code of conduct for US internet companies to ensure they respect freedom of expression when operating in repressive countries like China (“Do Internet Companies”).

Following the suggestions by these organizations, Yahoo!, Microsoft, and Google became participants in the GNI,<sup>52</sup> a multi-stakeholder effort involving companies, civil society organizations (including HRW), investors, and academics. Launched in 2008, the GNI aims to “provide guidance to the ICT industry and its stakeholders on how to protect and advance the human rights of freedom of expression and privacy when faced with pressures from governments to take actions that infringe upon these rights” (GNI). As one of the participants involved with the GNI, HRW has been the most enthusiastic of the three NGOs in supporting the initiative, claiming that it is an “important development in combating online censorship and protecting user privacy” (“Internet Rights”) and will

---

<sup>52</sup>It is of course difficult to say with certainty that these companies’ participation in the GNI was a direct result of suggestions by AI, HRW, and RSF. However, it is reasonable to assume that pressure from these NGOs, in particular from AI and HRW’s respective 2006 reports mentioned above, contributed to the decision by Yahoo!, Microsoft, and Google to make efforts to uphold their human rights obligations by getting involved with the GNI.

serve as a “compass for corporate responsibility” that will help “preven[t] the kind of ‘race to the bottom’ recently witnessed in China” (“Race” 73).

While an industry code of conduct may be useful in theory, the actual effectiveness of an initiative like the GNI is questionable. It is unclear how such a voluntary code of conduct would be enforced and whether it could successfully compel companies to change their behaviour. Even HRW, a staunch proponent of, and participant in, the GNI, admits that “if a code of conduct is adopted by key companies ... it is unlikely to be effective without accompanying legislation” since “some companies may sign up to a code and then ignore it” (“Race” 76). Furthermore, an examination of the list of corporate participants in the GNI reveals that the vast majority are companies based in United States, such as Yahoo!, Microsoft, and Google. While this is a positive step given these companies’ history of participating in internet censorship in China, they represent only part of all the internet companies currently operating in the country. In order to be effective, initiatives like the GNI need to be truly global in scope and include domestic Chinese firms as well as other transnational companies based elsewhere in the world. Given the unlikely participation of domestic Chinese companies, it is doubtful that a voluntary industry code of conduct would actually have much of a positive effect on Chinese net users.

In addition to establishing a code of conduct, another solution proposed by HRW and RSF to help address the issue of corporate complicity in Chinese internet censorship was the implementation of foreign legislation. In 2006, these two NGOs along with AI were among 14 human rights organizations that signed a statement in support of the proposed GOFA in the United States (RSF, “Fourteen”), a bill which has yet to be

passed. First introduced in 2006 by Republican representative Chris Smith, the GOFA, to recall Chapter 1, would make it illegal for US companies operating in “internet restricting” countries—as designated by the US President—such as China to store user data on servers, release user data to the authorities, or enable the suppression of online speech in such countries (MacKinnon, “America’s”). Any US company or person who violates the act would face legal action in the US, including fines or even imprisonment (Deva 313). Furthermore, victims whose personal data have been disclosed by US internet companies to local authorities would be more readily able to sue the companies in US court (MacKinnon, “Asia’s Fight”). As Eastwood observes, though the bill lists a number of offending countries, it is written with a clear focus on China (305).

While the suggestion to implement foreign legislation remained virtually unmentioned by AI, by contrast, HRW and RSF have advocated strongly for initiatives like the GOFA. For example, in HRW’s report on corporate complicity, the chief recommendation to the US and other countries with internet companies operating in China was to support legislation like the GOFA in order to “regulate the conduct of such companies and prohibit their participation in or facilitation of infringements of the right of free expression, information, privacy, association, or other internationally recognized human rights” (“Race” 86). Similarly, RSF has on several occasions over the last several years endorsed the GOFA. In one May 2009 press release, the organization vigorously urged the United States to pass the bill, claiming that

If adopted, this bill will be significant advance [sic] for online free expression. ... We call for it to be passed as soon as possible. Companies cannot combat censorship in their own [sic]. By turning the US government into a referee, the GOFA’s new version is an alternative solution that prevents US companies from being accomplices to the

violation of international standards on protection of free expression. (“To Combat”)

The following year, RSF published another press release in which the organization declared that “the GOFA...needs more than ever to be adopted” (“After Google”).

While it is clear that companies cannot combat internet censorship on their own, legislation such as the GOFA as potential solutions to this issue raises some concerns. In particular, the idea of ‘turning the US government into a referee’ as expressed above has some troubling implications. As some scholars have pointed out, the bill’s provision that the US President be responsible for designating ‘internet restricting countries’ can potentially be abused for political purposes; for instance if designation is determined by a country’s relationship with the United States rather than by its actual internet censorship practices (e.g. Deva 315-316; Eastwood 311). Also problematic is the bill’s requirement that American companies report to the US State Department all content that designated governments require them to censor. This would essentially, as some argue, turn US internet companies into informers to the US authorities about the actions of foreign governments (MacKinnon, “America’s”). Finally, Eastwood notes that the GOFA would “only be effective to the extent that it can be enforced against American companies” and the bill would be useless against companies outside the jurisdiction of the law (313). Indeed, a fundamental problem with any foreign legislation enacted to help combat corporate complicity in Chinese internet censorship is that it would only affect companies based in the country where those laws are in place. As China’s market becomes increasingly penetrated by foreign internet companies based all around the world, every country would have to implement similar legislation to the GOFA, and even if all companies complied, this would not prevent the Chinese government from using tools



and software to censor these companies' websites and services. Therefore, I contend that the limitations and political implications of foreign legislation such as the GOFA need to be considered more critically by these NGOs before they whole heartedly endorse them.

Having discussed some of the most salient themes and issues revealed from the data analysis of the NGO literature, it is now important to look at which issues and topics were, by comparison, relatively ignored by AI, HRW, and RSF.

#### Laws, Surveillance, and Propaganda

While technical mechanisms of control such as blocking, filtering, and shutting down websites were frequently discussed by all three organizations, other forms of internet censorship received far less attention in the texts analyzed for this study. Rarely mentioned, especially in the literature by AI and RSF, were China's numerous internet laws and regulations. As described in Chapter 1, China has thus far implemented over 60 sets of internet regulations, including laws banning and criminalizing the dissemination of nine different categories of illegal content/speech, forcing internet companies and net users to practice self-censorship in order to avoid repercussions from the authorities. Internet companies operating in China are further compelled to censor their own websites and services due to laws that make all ICPs and ISPs liable for any illegal content posted by users. In effect, the result of China's internet regulatory framework is the 'outsourcing' of censorship practices and responsibilities to companies and net users who essentially do the work of government censors and regulate their own activity. Thus, even in the absence of technical controls such as internet filters, online censorship enforced by companies and net users themselves would continue to be a widespread issue as a result of these laws. It is therefore surprising that discussions about China's internet laws and



regulations, and appeals for legislative reform in this area, were so often lacking from the NGO literature. HRW, as an organization focused primarily on making long-term changes to policy and law, stands out slightly from the other two NGOs in its efforts to push for changes in China's internet regulatory framework. By comparison, the most disappointing in this area is RSF, whose entire body of literature contained no suggestions or recommendations to repeal or reform China's internet laws.

Discussions about government surveillance and restrictions on online privacy and anonymity were also largely missing from the literature of all three NGOs. As outlined in Chapter 1, the Chinese authorities use several tactics to monitor the activities of net users. These include, among others, requirements that people use their real names when posting comments to news websites; regulations forcing internet cafés to record every patron's identification; and thousands of cyber police who monitor the internet for illegal content. The combined effect of these surveillance tools is the increasing elimination of privacy and anonymity online, making it even more difficult and dangerous for Chinese net users to voice dissenting opinions or engage in political activity on the internet. Government surveillance, while different from censorship in the sense of blocking access to information, is nevertheless a significant form of censorship insofar as it restricts net users from using the internet openly and freely.

Two other forms of censorship that were almost completely overlooked by AI, HRW, and RSF were government propaganda and control over online news. In recent years, the Chinese authorities have begun using more proactive measures to control the flow of information in cyberspace. Most notably, as described in Chapter 1, the government employs thousands of web commentators, known collectively as the Fifty

Cent Party, to guide public opinion by infiltrating and spinning online discussions in a pro-government direction. Furthermore, the Chinese government attempts to control public opinion on the internet by keeping a tight grasp over the production and distribution of online news. RSF's investigative report, "Journey to the Heart of Internet Censorship," is one of the few documents analyzed in this study that addresses this topic, describing in detail the unrelenting control the Chinese government maintains over all online news outlets in the country. Government propaganda directives are regularly sent to news sites with instructions on what stories to avoid, what stories to publish, what headlines to use, and where stories should be placed on the website. Online news outlets are also expected to practice self-censorship by blocking keywords, and sites that fail to meet censorship expectations face penalties ranging from fines, the dismissal of employees, or having the entire site shut down by the authorities (RSF, "Journey"). In some ways, the government's proactive propaganda techniques are more troubling than other overt forms of censorship since the former are not necessarily easily recognizable or avoidable. While the aim of blocking and filtering web content is to prevent users from accessing information, the purpose of propaganda is to manipulate public opinion and influence the way people think about and view the world, which is arguably a more insidious form of censorship and social control.

Clearly, in addition to technical forms of censorship such as blocking, filtering, and shutting down websites, legal and social mechanisms of control such as laws, surveillance, and propaganda are also important tactics used by the Chinese government to manage the flow of information and net users' activities on the internet. Here, Tsui is helpful in his use of a panopticon metaphor to explain how the Chinese authorities

enforce control in cyberspace. Designed by English philosopher Jeremy Bentham, the panopticon is a model for a circular prison in which inmates' cells are fully exposed to a centrally-located warden whose actions are invisible to the prisoners. Unaware if they were being watched at any given time, inmates are forced to regulate their own behaviour out of fear of the potential constant surveillance (Wacker and Hughes 4). As Tsui argues, the Chinese government uses legal, economic, social, and technical forms of control on the internet which, in combination, create a panoptic effect whereby net users are aware they are being watched and adjust their behaviour accordingly (67). The effectiveness of the government's internet censorship regime thus rests not only on technical tools, but a crucial component is the social and legal controls described above. In fact, the latter are arguably a more significant issue since net users can circumvent technical barriers such as firewalls by using proxy servers and other tools, while government laws, surveillance, and propaganda cannot as easily be avoided and overcome in a similar manner. Framing Chinese internet censorship as primarily a technical issue, then, is both misleading and unproductive. If AI, HRW, and RSF hope to make a difference in improving and protecting Chinese net users' communicative freedoms on the internet, I argue that it is important they address all aspects of the government's multifaceted approach to internet censorship.

#### Framing 'the Chinese Government'

As demonstrated in Table 5, the actor most often framed by AI, HRW, and RSF as contributing to the issue of internet censorship in China was, not surprisingly, the Chinese government itself. What is interesting to note here is the wording used by these organizations when referring to the government: all three NGOs tended to use very

general terms such as “the Chinese government,” “the Chinese authorities,” “Beijing,” “China,” “Chinese officials,” and “China’s leadership” to speak about the government body as a whole. Far fewer references were found in the literature published by all three organizations which pointed to specific government officials, agencies, or bodies as problematic contributing actors. Thus, while AI, HRW, and RSF attempted to highlight the role of the Chinese government in suppressing freedom of speech and expression on the internet, discussions about which government bodies or officials exactly are responsible for internet censorship were rather vague.

The problem with such vague references is the risk of oversimplifying or obscuring the political context surrounding the issue of internet censorship in China. As described in Chapter 1, there are many different government bodies that have jurisdiction over China’s internet whose interests and objectives may conflict. These include the MIIT, the Ministry of Commerce, and the State Administration for Industry and Commerce, whose concerns tend to be more economic, as well as the Ministry of Culture, the MPS, the SARFT, the State Secrecy Bureau, and the DOP, whose concerns are more political and security-related. Regulatory authority over the internet in China is also distributed throughout the different levels of government, resulting in what Tai refers to as “fragmented authoritarianism,” a model in which “the central authorities still maintain certain levers of state control while local authorities have successfully empowered themselves in securing their own spheres of influence” (108). In other words, decisions about internet censorship policies and practices do not rest solely with the central government in Beijing. In reality, the regulatory regime governing China’s internet tends to be decentralized and fragmented—a fact which is obscured by general references to the

‘Chinese government’ or the ‘Chinese authorities’ which evoke the image of a monolithic, all-powerful state. Arguably, these NGOs’ use of such vague and non-specific terms is problematic in that it does not necessarily promote an understanding of the political situation in China in a way that will be productive in addressing and resolving the issue of internet censorship in the country.

#### Mitigating Actors, Proposed Actions and Solutions

Another concern with regards to what these NGOs framed out of their discussion about Chinese internet censorship was a consideration about what can be done and who can help to address the issue. As illustrated in Table 6, a significant number of publications—RSF’s in particular—failed to point to any actors that have the capacity to help mitigate the issue of internet censorship in China. Similarly, as shown in Table 7, AI, HRW, and RSF often did not provide any recommendations for concrete action or solutions.

One exception here is AI’s Urgent Action letter-writing campaigns, which usually focused on calling for the release of prisoners of conscience adopted by the organization. What is effective about these campaigns is that they not only focus on specific, concrete action, but AI also provides audiences with the names and often the addresses of the individual personnel who are in the position to respond to their appeals. For example, in a June 2009 appeal regarding the imprisoned human rights activist Huang Qi, AI urged readers to send letters to a number of Chinese officials, including Prime Minister Wen Jiabao, the Director of the Sichuan Provincial Department of Public Security Zeng Shengquan Tingzhang, and the Minister of Public Security Meng Jiangzhu Buzhang (“China: Further”). Similarly, in a January 2006 appeal, AI urged readers to send letters

to Yahoo! calling on the company to help free journalist Shi Tao from prison, providing both a letter template and the names and addresses of Yahoo! executives Jerry Yang and David Filo (“Yahoo’s Responsibility”).<sup>53</sup> Supplying the names and contact information of those individuals who are able to take action and potentially influence the situation is helpful in providing audiences and supporters with a clear and designated target for their lobbying efforts, which may possibly increase the likelihood that action will actually be taken.

Apart from AI’s Urgent Action campaigns, the frequent lack of NGO attention to the question of who, and what, can potentially help improve the issue of internet censorship in China is a concern. As established in Chapter 3, NGO framing is about helping audiences make sense of a problematic situation in order to then act upon it. The process of framing therefore involves identifying the issue(s) or problem(s) of concern, the actors or forces responsible, possible answers and solutions, and the potential actors and stakeholders with the ability to carry out those solutions. In other words, to recall Schön and Rein, in order to strategically frame issues and problems, NGOs need to define not only what is at issue, but *what is to be done*. If their goal is to help ameliorate China’s human rights situation, AI, HRW, and RSF need to communicate to their audiences not only the issues of concern, but what specific actions can and should be taken, and who has the power, authority, and capacity to help.

Overall, all three NGOs were fairly consistent with each other in terms of what they framed into, and what they framed out of, their discussions about internet censorship

---

<sup>53</sup>I should note here that since my study was limited to English-language literature, the target audiences for these specific Urgent Action campaigns are most likely readers in predominantly English-speaking countries. It is not clear whether AI also targets Chinese audiences to participate in these letter-writing campaigns; however, given the potential consequences and risk of doing so, it is reasonable to assume that these Urgent Action campaigns are geared mostly to audiences outside of China.

in China. In some respects, this kind of uniformity can be viewed as a good thing. By taking similar approaches and focusing on the same issues and concerns, these NGOs add strength to their position and persuasive influence over other actors, including governments and private companies who may be hesitant to confront China about its censorship practices and human rights abuses. Arguably, the more voices there are delivering a message, the stronger that message may resonate with target audiences and the more likely they are to respond to pressure from these NGOs to take action on this issue.

With respect to what these NGOs neglected to talk about in their literature, however, the consistency among AI, HRW, and RSF in their respective framing of Chinese internet censorship raises some concerns. As demonstrated above, references to several items—including internet laws and regulations, forms of surveillance, government propaganda, the complicity of hardware companies and domestic internet companies, specific government personnel and/or agencies, potential mitigating actors, and possible solutions—were often missing from the literature published by all three organizations. Their collective lack of attention to these issues is problematic in that it may affect the actions and response of other important actors, particularly governments and policymakers in the international community who rely on the authority and expertise of AI, HRW, and RSF for information and insight into human rights abuses such as internet censorship in China. Largely ignored by these three NGOs, the items listed above are therefore likely to remain ignored by other political actors and left off the political agenda.

While AI, HRW, and RSF cannot address every single aspect of a given issue, what is clear from the data presented here is that there are some holes in their literature on internet censorship in China which need to be addressed. If part of the purpose of strategic framing is to help NGOs achieve their political objectives—in this case, helping to protect Chinese net users' online freedoms and curtail government censorship of the internet—then AI, HRW, and RSF arguably need to expand the scope of their frames.



## CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I have explored the contradictory nature of the internet in China as both a space of individual freedom and government control. While the internet is, in relative terms, the most free and participatory medium in China, the government also takes great measures to restrict the flow of information online. Using a combination of internet filtering, propaganda, internet police, laws and regulations, and arrests and imprisonment, China has established one of the most sophisticated and extensive regimes of internet censorship in the world. The lengths to which the Chinese government will go to suppress dissent and silence its critics on the internet raise some serious human rights concerns. Specifically, China's repressive censorship practices are a clear violation of its citizens' freedom to both produce and consume information and knowledge as set out in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Significantly, the issue of internet censorship in China has received considerable attention from the NGO community, including AI, HRW, and RSF. Over the last few decades, these NGOs and others have come to be recognized as important actors in international politics within the area of human rights. Using their expertise and authority in human rights issues, these organizations have the capacity to exert influence on political affairs by exposing abusive governments and drawing international attention to matters of concern. Having consultative status at the UN and thus arguably a legitimate place within the political system, AI, HRW, and RSF are especially well-positioned to help set the political agenda with respect to human rights issues.

Given the influence of AI, HRW, and RSF and their potential to help address the issue of internet censorship in China, my thesis focused on the advocacy work of these

NGOs on this issue. More specifically, I critically investigated the way in which these organizations strategically frame this issue in their literature. Such research is important, in my opinion, because how these NGOs frame the issue of internet censorship in China is instrumental in guiding target audiences and determining how they understand and respond to the situation, which can have an impact on how this issue may be addressed within the international political arena.

Following Entman's assertion that frames are defined by what they omit as well as what they include, my analysis considered what aspects of the issue AI, HRW, and RSF framed into, and framed out of, their discussion about internet censorship in China. I found that the most salient issues across all the NGOs were internet filtering and blocking, cyber dissidents, and foreign corporate complicity with a particular emphasis on American internet companies Yahoo!, Microsoft, and Google. On the issue of cyber dissidents, AI, HRW, and RSF most frequently and forcefully campaigned on behalf of Liu Xiaobo, though their efforts to lobby the Chinese government to release him from prison ultimately failed. Also less than successful were attempts by these NGOs to hold the Chinese government to its promise of allowing complete media freedom during the 2008 Beijing Olympics. In terms of ways to address and mitigate the issue of internet censorship in China, recommendations by these organizations included initiatives such as the GNI and the GOFA, both of which are questionable with respect to their effectiveness to actually curtail corporate participation in internet censorship.

While emphasizing certain issues, AI, HRW, and RSF tended to disregard other aspects of Chinese internet censorship in their literature. By concentrating on Yahoo!, Microsoft, and Google, these NGOs neglected to draw attention to the equally

problematic role played by hardware companies and domestic Chinese internet companies in censoring the internet in China. Focused on technical mechanisms of control such as internet filtering and blocking, the literature seldom mentioned legal and social forms of censorship, such as China's numerous internet laws and regulations as well as government surveillance and propaganda. Framing Chinese internet censorship as primarily a technical issue is, I argued, both misleading and unproductive as the effectiveness of the government's internet censorship regime rests in large part on the social and legal controls described above. Also problematic was the vague and general language used by AI, HRW, and RSF when referring to the Chinese government, which I contended creates the risk of oversimplifying or obscuring the political context surrounding the issue of internet censorship in the country in a way that arguably is not productive in helping to address the situation. Lastly, with the exception of AI's Urgent Action campaigns, these NGOs often failed to pinpoint any potential mitigating actors or provide any suggestions for possible actions and solutions towards resolving this issue. If these organizations aim to help improve China's human rights situation, then it is arguably in their interest to communicate to their audiences what specific actions can, and should, be taken, and who has the capacity to implement those solutions.

My aim in conducting a frame analysis of NGO literature on internet censorship in China was to help fill what I saw to be a gap in the existing scholarship on this topic. There remains, however, a lot more research that can be done in this area. In the future, I would suggest repeating this study with multiple coders—something which I was unable to do as the sole researcher for this thesis. Using multiple coders would help strengthen

the overall research quality of the study by mitigating potential bias in the coding process and establishing a level of intercoder reliability and validity of the findings.

In addition, future research initiatives might involve similar analyses of different NGO case studies. While my thesis examined English-language literature published by large, international, Western-based organizations, other studies might consider looking at a range of NGOs that vary in terms of their size, language, and location. It would be interesting to see, for instance, how domestic Chinese NGOs and/or other human rights organizations based in non-Western countries are responding to the issue of internet censorship in China, if at all. While AI, HRW, and RSF are three of the world's largest and most influential human rights organizations, they are not the only ones working on this issue. Broadening the scope of the study to examine the framing strategies of other diverse NGOs will allow for some rich cultural comparisons and provide more insight into how the issue of Chinese internet censorship is being addressed globally within the NGO community.

By investigating and analyzing the framing strategies of AI, HRW, RSF, and other organizations, I hope this thesis and future research may help to incite or contribute to a conversation about how we can more productively and effectively talk about and approach the issue of internet censorship in China. Addressing this issue is an especially important task for critical Media Studies scholars committed to promoting a communication landscape that helps advance the democratic needs of citizens. As a technology that is constantly in flux, the internet holds myriad possibilities. In the hands of the Chinese government, it can be used for political suppression; at the same time, for China's millions of net users, the internet can be used for political empowerment. As

Castells writes in *Communication Power*, “the construction of communicative autonomy is directly related to the development of social and political autonomy, a key factor in fostering social change” (414). In other words, communicative freedom and political freedom are intimately connected. It is for this reason that it is important to defend and protect the rights of Chinese citizens to have a free and open internet. Ultimately, whether the internet is used as a tool to effect social and political change in China is up to the Chinese people themselves.

- “China: Use of Video and Other IT Technology in the Tiananmen Square Protests,” *Amnesty International*, AL 28 Jan 2000, Web: 11 Aug 2011.
- “China: Former Prisoners of Conscience Released,” *Amnesty International*, AL 4 Jan 2000, Web: 11 Aug 2011.
- “China: Liu Xiaobo Should Be Released Immediately,” *Amnesty International*, AL 6 Jan 2000, Web: 11 Aug 2011.
- “China: Release Liu Xiaobo,” *Amnesty International*, AL 3 Jan 2000, Web: 11 Aug 2011.
- “China: Authorities Taped in Free Access Liu Xiaobo,” *Amnesty International*, AL 17 Feb 2010, Web: 11 Aug 2011.
- “End Repression of Expression: Free Liu Xiaobo,” *Amnesty International*, AL 16 Dec 2010, Web: 11 Aug 2011.
- “Free Liu Xiaobo and LAJ Staff,” *Amnesty International*, AL 18 Dec 2010, Web: 11 Aug 2011.
- “Shanghai Association,” *Amnesty International*, AL 2011, Web: 01 May 2011.
- “Liu Xiaobo and Hu Jiyang: Political Change in China,” *Amnesty International*, AL 3 Feb 2010, Web: 11 Aug 2011.
- “Just Rewards: Living in Truth and Paying the Price,” *Amnesty International*, AL 20 Dec 2010, Web: 11 Aug 2011.
- “The Olympic Countdown – 100 Days to Go,” *Amnesty International*, AL 28 Feb 2008, Web: 11 Aug 2011.

## WORKS CITED

- Adamic, Lada, and Natalie Glance. "The Political Blogosphere and the 2004 US Election: Divided They Blog." *BlogPulse*. The Nielsen Company, 4 Mar. 2005. Web. 26 Feb. 2011.
- Ahmed, Shamima, and David Potter. *NGOs in International Politics*. Bloomfield, CT: Kumarian Press, 2006. Print.
- Allan, Stuart, and Einar Thorsen, eds. *Citizen Journalism: Global Perspectives*. New York: Peter Lang, 2009. Print.
- Amnesty International. *Amnesty International*. AI, 2011. Web. 30 May 2011.
- . "China: Fear of Torture and Other Ill-Treatment, Liu Xiaobo (M)." *Amnesty International*. AI, 24 June 2009. Web. 11 Aug. 2011.
- . "China: Further Information on Incommunicado Detention/Fear of Torture and Other Ill-Treatment, Huang Qi (m)." *Amnesty International*. AI, 4 June 2009. Web. 11 Aug. 2011.
- . "China: Liu Xiaobo Should be Released Immediately." *Amnesty International*. AI, 8 June 2009. Web. 11 Aug. 2011.
- . "China: Release Liu Xiaobo." *Amnesty International*. AI, 2 Jan. 2009. Web. 11 Aug. 2011.
- . "Chinese Authorities Urged to Free Activist Liu Xiaobo." *Amnesty International*. AI, 11 Feb. 2010. Web. 11 Aug. 2011.
- . "End Repression of Expression: Free Liu Xiaobo." *Amnesty International*. AI, 10 Dec. 2010. Web. 11 Aug. 2011.
- . "Free Liu Xiaobo and Liu Xia." *Amnesty International*. AI, 10 Dec. 2010. Web. 11 Aug. 2011.
- . "Frequently Asked Questions." *Amnesty International*. AI, 2011. Web. 30 May 2011.
- . "Legacy of the Beijing Olympics: China's Choice." *Amnesty International*. AI, 8 Oct. 2007. Web. 11 Aug. 2011.
- . "Liu Xiaobo: Living in Truth and Paying the Price." *Amnesty International*. AI, 10 Dec. 2010. Web. 11 Aug. 2011.
- . "The Olympics Countdown – Broken Promises." *Amnesty International*. AI, 29 July 2008. Web. 11 Aug. 2011.

- . "The Olympics Countdown – Crackdown on Activists Threatens Olympics Legacy." *Amnesty International*. AI, 1 Apr. 2008. Web. 11 Aug. 2011.
- . "Olympics Promises for Human Rights – The China Debate." *Amnesty International*. Amnesty International, 17 July 2008. Web. 11 Aug. 2011.
- . "Undermining Freedom of Expression in China: The Role of Yahoo!, Microsoft and Google." *Amnesty International*. AI, July 2006. Web. 11 Aug. 2011.
- . "Yahoo's Responsibility Towards Human Rights: Free Shi Tao From Prison in China!" *Amnesty International*. AI, 31 Jan. 2006. Web. 11 Aug. 2011.
- Anna, Cara. "Chinese Dissident Jailed 11 Years." *thestar.com*. Toronto Star, 26 Dec. 2009. Web. 24 Sept. 2011.
- Ansfield, Jonathan. "China Web Sites Seeking Users' Names." *The Washington Post*. The Washington Post, 5 Sept. 2009. Web. 22 Oct. 2010.
- Baehr, Peter R. *Non-Governmental Human Rights Organizations in International Relations*. Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009. Print.
- Baldwin, Maria T. *Amnesty International and US Foreign Policy: Human Rights Campaigns in Guatemala, the United States, and China*. El Paso: LFB Scholarly Publishing LLC, 2009. Print.
- Bandurski, David. "China's Guerrilla War for the Web." *Far Eastern Economic Review* 171.6 (2008): 41-44. *ProQuest ABI/INFORM Global New Platform*. Web. 7 Oct. 2011.
- Béja, Jean-Philippe. "Liu Xiaobo Biography." *Reporters Without Borders*. RSF, 28 Oct. 2010. Web. 11 Aug. 2011.
- Bell, Mark R., and Taylor C. Boas. "Falun Gong and the Internet: Evangelism, Community, and Struggle for Survival." *Nova Religio* 6.2 (2003): 277-93. *EBSCOhost ATLA Serials*. Web. 13 Oct. 2011.
- Benkler, Yochai. *The Wealth of Networks: How Social Production Transforms Markets and Freedom*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006. Print.
- Bianco, Jamie Skye. "Social Networking and Cloud Computing: Precarious Affordances for the 'Prosumer'." *Women's Studies Quarterly* 37.1 (2009): 303-12. *Scholars Portal*. Web. 13 Oct. 2011.
- Bohman, James. "Expanding Dialogue: the Internet, the Public Sphere and Prospects for Transnational Democracy." *The Sociological Review* 52.1 (2004): 131-55. *Scholars Portal*. Web. 13 Oct. 2011.

- Brabham, Daren C. "Crowdsourcing as a Model for Problem Solving." *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies* 14.1 (2008): 75-90. *Scholars Portal*. Web. 13 Oct. 2011.
- Branigan, Tania. "China Detains Teacher for Earthquake Photos." *guardian.co.uk*. Guardian News and Media Limited, 31 July 2008. Web. 23 Mar. 2011.
- . "Eighteen More Countries Refuse to Attend Nobel Peace Prize Ceremony." *guardian.co.uk*. Guardian News and Media Limited, 7 Dec. 2010. Web. 12 Aug. 2011.
- Bremmer, Ian. "Democracy in Cyberspace: What Information Technology Can and Cannot Do." *Foreign Affairs* 89.6 (2010): 86-92. *EBSCOhost Academic Search Complete*. Web. 13 Oct. 2011.
- Brundidge, Jennifer, and Ronald E. Rice. "Political Engagement Online: Do the Information Rich Get Richer and the Like-Minded More Similar?" *Routledge Handbook of Internet Politics*. Ed. Andrew Chadwick and Philip N. Howard. London and New York: Routledge, 2009.144-56. Print.
- Bruns, Axel. "News Producers in a Pro-Am Mediasphere: Why Citizen Journalism Matters." *News Online: Transformations and Continuities*. Ed. Graham Meikle and Guy Redden. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011. 132-47. Print.
- Canaves, Sky. "Breaching China's Green Dam." *China Real Time Report*. The Wall Street Journal, 12 June 2009. Web. 20 June 2010.
- Carty, Victoria. "New Information and Communication Technologies and Grassroots Mobilization." *Information, Communication & Society* 13.2 (2010): 155-73. *EBSCOhost Communication & Mass Media Complete*. Web. 13 Oct. 2011.
- Castells, Manuel. *Communication Power*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009. Print.
- . *The Internet Galaxy: Reflections on the Internet, Business, and Society*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001. Print.
- . "The New Public Sphere: Global Civil Society, Communication Networks, and Global Governance." *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 616.1 (2008): 78-93. *Scholars Portal*. Web. 13 Oct. 2011.
- Cha, Ariana Eunjung. "In China, a Grass-Roots Rebellion." *The Washington Post*. The Washington Post, 29 Jan. 2009. Web. 23 Mar. 2011.



- Chadwick, Andrew, and Philip N. Howard. "New Directions in Internet Politics Research." Introduction. *Routledge Handbook of Internet Politics*. Ed. Andrew Chadwick and Philip N. Howard. London; New York: Routledge, 2009. 1-9. Print.
- Chan, Joseph Man, and Jack Linchuan Qiu. "Media Liberalisation in China." *Media Reform: Democratising the Media, Democratising the State*. Ed. Monroe Price, Beata Rozumilowicz, and Stefaan Verhulst. London: Routledge, 2001. 27-46. Print.
- Chang, Maria Hsia. *Falun Gong: the End of Days*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004. Print.
- Chao, Loretta. "Big Business Groups Complain to China's Premier." *The Wall Street Journal*. Dow Jones & Company, 27 June 2009. Web. 20 June 2010.
- Charnovitz, Steve. "Accountability of Non-Governmental Organizations in Global Governance." *NGO Accountability: Politics, Principles, and Innovations*. Ed. Lisa Jordan and Peter van Tuijl. London; Sterling, VA: Earthscan, 2006. 21-42. Print.
- Chase, Michael S., and James C. Mulvenon. *You've Got Dissent! Chinese Dissident Use of the Internet and Beijing's Counter-Strategies*. Santa Monica: RAND, 2002. Print.
- Chase, Michael, James Mulvenon, and Nina Hachigian. "Comrade to Comrade Networks: the Social and Political Implications of Peer-to-Peer Networks in China." *Chinese Cyberspaces: Technological Changes and Political Effects*. Ed. Jens Damm and Simona Thomas. London: Routledge, 2006. 64-101. Print.
- China. State Council Information Office. "The Internet in China." *The Internet in China*. State Council Information Office, 8 June 2010. Web. 7 Oct. 2011.
- China Internet Network Information Center. "Statistical Reports on the Internet Development in China." *China Internet Network Information Center*. CNNIC, 2011. Web. 4 Oct 2011.
- "China's Nobel Anger as Liu Xiaobo Awarded Peace Prize." *BBC News*. BBC, 8 Oct. 2010. Web. 12 Aug. 2011.
- Clark, Ann Marie. *Diplomacy of Conscience: Amnesty International and Changing Human Rights Norms*. Princeton; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001. Print.
- . "Non-Governmental Organizations and their Influence on International Society." *Journal of International Affairs* 48.2 (1995): 507-25. *EBSCOhost Academic Search Complete*. Web. 7 Oct. 2011.

- Clark, Ann Marie, Elisabeth J. Friedman, and Kathryn Hoschstetler. "The Sovereign Limits of Global Civil Society: A Comparison of NGO Participation in UN World Conferences on the Environment, Human Rights, and Women." *World Politics* 51 (1998): 1-35. *Scholars Portal*. Web. 13 Oct. 2011.
- Cohen, Michael, James March, and Johan P. Olsen. "A Garbage Can Model of Organizational Choice." *Administrative Science Quarterly* 17.1 (1972): 1-25. *EBSCOhost Business Source Complete*. Web. 13 Oct. 2011.
- Cohen, Nicole S. "The Valorization of Surveillance: Towards a Political Economy of Facebook." *Democratic Communiqué* 22.1 (2008): 5-22. *EBSCOhost Communication & Mass Media Complete*. Web. 13 Oct. 2011.
- Coleman, Stephen and Jay G. Blumler. *The Internet and Democratic Citizenship: Theory, Practice and Policy*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009. Print.
- Collingwood, Vivien, and Louis Logister. "State of the Art: Addressing the INGO 'Legitimacy Deficit'." *Political Studies Review* 3.2 (2005): 175-92. *Scholars Portal*. Web. 13 Oct. 2011.
- Committee to Protect Journalists. "National Day Triggers Censorship, Cyber Attacks in China." *Committee to Protect Journalists*. CPJ, 22 Sept. 2009. Web. 7 Oct. 2011.
- Comor, Edward. "Digital Prosumption and Alienation." *ephemera: theory & politics in organization*. 10.3 (2010): 439-454. *DOAJ Directory of Open Access Journals*. Web. 13 Oct. 2011.
- D'Angelo, Paul. "News Framing as a Multiparadigmatic Research Program: A Response to Entman." *Journal of Communication* 52.4 (2002): 870-88. *Scholars Portal*. Web. 13 Oct. 2011.
- Dahlberg, Lincoln. "The Internet and Discursive Exclusion: From Deliberative to Agonistic Public Sphere Theory." *Radical Democracy and the Internet: Interrogating Theory and Practice*. Ed. Lincoln Dahlberg and Eugenia Siapera. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007. 128-47. Print.
- Dai, Xiudian. "ICTs in China's Development Strategy." *China and the Internet: Politics of the Digital Leap Forward*. Ed. Christopher R. Hughes and Gudrun Wacker. London; New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003. 8-29. Print.
- Dann, Elijah G., and Neil Haddow. "Just Doing Business or Doing Just Business: Google, Microsoft, Yahoo! and the Business of Censoring China's Internet." *Journal of Business Ethics* 79 (2008): 219-234. *Scholars Portal*. Web. 13 Oct. 2011.

- Davis, Steve, Larry Elin, and Grant Reeher. *Click on Democracy: the Internet's Power to Change Political Apathy into Civic Action*. Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 2002. Print.
- Deacon, David, et al. *Researching Communications: A Practical Guide to Methods in Media and Cultural Analysis*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. London: Hodder Arnold, 2007. Print.
- Deibert, Ronald J. "The Geopolitics of Internet Control: Censorship, Sovereignty, and Cyberspace." *Routledge Handbook of Internet Politics*. Ed. Andrew Chadwick and Philip N. Howard. London; New York: Routledge, 2009. 323-36. Print.
- Deibert, Ronald, and Rafal Rohozinski. "Liberation vs. Control: The Future of Cyberspace." *Journal of Democracy* 21.4 (2010): 43-57. *Scholars Portal*. Web. 7 Oct. 2011.
- Deva, Surya. "Corporate Complicity in Internet Censorship in China: Who Cares for the Global Compact or the Global Online Freedom Act?" *The George Washington International Law Review* 39.1 (2007): 255-319. *Hein Online Law Journal Library*. Web. 13 Oct. 2011.
- Diamond, Larry. "Liberation Technology." *Journal of Democracy*. 21.3 (2010): 69-83. *Scholars Portal*. Web. 7 Oct. 2011.
- Drummond, David. "A new approach to China." *The Official Google Blog*. Google Inc., 12 Jan. 2010. Web. 20 Oct. 2010.
- Eastwood, Lindsay. "'Don't Be Evil': Google Faces the Chinese Internet Market and the Global Online Freedom Act of 2007." *Minnesota Journal of Law, Science and Technology* 9.1 (2008): 287-316. *Hein Online Law Journal Library*. Web. 13 Oct. 2011.
- Einhorn, Bruce, and Ben Elgin. "The Great Firewall of China." *Business Week*. Bloomberg L.P., 23 Jan. 2006. Web. 10 June 2010.
- Elegant, Simon. "Spinning a Web." *Time.com*. Time Inc., 24 Jan. 2008. Web. 23 Mar. 2011.
- Entman, Robert M. "Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm." *Journal of Communication* 43.4 (1993): 51-8. *Scholars Portal*. Web. 13 Oct. 2011.
- Esarey, Ashley, and Xiao Qiang. "Political Expression in the Chinese Blogosphere: Below the Radar." *Asian Survey* 48.5 (2008): 752-72. *ProQuest Asian Business and Reference New Platform*. Web. 13 Oct. 2011.
- Falun Dafa Association. "Introduction to Falun Dafa." *Falun Dafa*. Falun Dafa Association, 2007. Web. 5 Sept. 2011.

- Feenberg, Andrew. "Critical Theory of Communication Technology: Introduction to the Special Section." *The Information Society* 25.2 (2009): 1-7. EBSCOhost Academic Search Complete. Web. 13 Oct. 2011.
- Fletcher, Owen. "Chinese Human Rights Sites Hit by DDoS Attack." *Computerworld*. Computerworld Inc., 25 Jan. 2010. Web. 7 Oct. 2011.
- Foster, William, and Seymour E. Goodman. *The Diffusion of the Internet in China. The Global Diffusion of the Internet Project*. The Mosaic Group, Nov. 2000. Web. 7 Oct. 2011.
- French, Howard W. "In China, Fight Over Development Creates a Star." *The New York Times*. The New York Times Company, 26 Mar. 2007. Web. 23 Mar. 2011.
- Fuchs, Christian. "New Media, Web 2.0 and Surveillance." *Sociology Compass* 5.2 (2011): 134-47. *Wiley Online Library*. Web. 13 Oct. 2011.
- . "Social Networking Sites and Complex Technology Assessment." *International Journal of E-Politics*. 1.3 (2010): 19-38. Web. 13 Oct. 2011.
- . "Web 2.0, Prosumption, and Surveillance." *Surveillance & Society* 8.3 (2011): 288-309. Web. 13 Oct. 2011.
- Giese, Karsten. "Internet Growth and the Digital Divide: Implications for Spatial Development." *China and the Internet: Politics of the Digital Leap Forward*. Ed. Christopher R. Hughes and Gudrun Wacker. London; New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003. 30-57. Print.
- Gillmor, Dan. *We the Media: Grassroots Journalism by the People, for the People*. Sebastopol, California; Farnham: O'Reilly, 2004. Print.
- Gitlin, Todd. *The Whole World Is Watching: Mass Media in the Making and Unmaking of the New Left*. Berkeley; Los Angeles; London: University of California Press, 1980. Print.
- Glaser, Mark. "Citizen Journalism: Widening World Views, Extending Democracy." *The Routledge Companion to New and Journalism*. Ed. Stuart Allen. London: Routledge, 2010. 578-90. Print.
- Global Network Initiative. "Frequently Asked Questions." *Global Network Initiative*. Global Network Initiative, 2008. Web. 12 Aug. 2011.
- Goffman, Erving. *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience*. Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1974. Print.

- Grajewski, Marcin, and Andrew Quinn. "U.S., EU Urge China to Release Prominent Dissident." *Reuters*. Thomson Reuters, 14 Dec. 2009. Web. 24 Sept. 2011.
- Hachigian, Nina. "China's Cyber-Strategy." *Foreign Affairs* 80.2 (2001): 118-33. *EBSCOhost Academic Search Complete*. Web. 13 Oct. 2011.
- Hachten, William A. "Development and Theory of the Media." *New Media for a New China*. Ed. James Francis Scotton and William A. Hachten. Chichester; Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010. 19-27. Print.
- Hahn, Kristina. "NGOs' Power of Advocacy: The Construction of Identities in UN Counter-Human Trafficking Policies." *Evaluating Transnational NGOs: Legitimacy, Accountability, Representation*. Ed. Jens Steffek and Kristina Hahn. Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010. 220-41. Print.
- Hargittai, Eszter. "Digital Na(t)ives? Variation in Internet Skills and Uses among Members of the 'Net Generation'." *Sociological Inquiry*. 8.1 (2010): 92-113. *Scholars Portal*. Web. 13 Oct. 2011.
- . "The Digital Reproduction of Inequality." *Social Stratification: Class, Race, and Gender in Sociological Perspective*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Ed. David Grusky. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2008. 936-44. Print.
- Hargittai, Eszter, Jason Gallo, and Matthew Kane. "Cross-Ideological Discussion Among Conservative and Liberal Bloggers." *Public Choice* 134.1 (2008): 67-86. *Scholars Portal*. Web. 13 Oct. 2011.
- Harwit, Eric, and Duncan Clark. "Government Policy and Political Control over China's Internet." *Chinese Cyberspaces: Technological Changes and Political Effects*. Ed. Jens Damm and Simona Thomas. London: Routledge, 2006. 12-41. Print.
- Havrda, Marek, and Petr Kutílek. "Accountability 2.0 – In Search for a New Approach to International Non-Governmental Organisations' Accountability." *Evaluating Transnational NGOs: Legitimacy, Accountability, Representation*. Ed. Jens Steffek and Kristina Hahn. Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010. 157-78. Print.
- "Helsinki Accords." *Encyclopædia Britannica*. *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*. Encyclopædia Britannica, 2011. Web. 29 May 2011.
- Hertog, James K., and Douglas M. McLeod. "A Multiperspectival Approach to Framing Analysis: A Field Guide." *Framing Public Life: Perspectives on Media and Our Understanding of the Social World*. Ed. Stephen D. Reese, Oscar H. Gandy, Jr., and August E. Grant. Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2001. 139-61. Print.

- Hogg, Chris. "China Restores Xinjiang Internet." *BBC News*. BBC, 14 May 2010. Web. 7 Oct. 2011.
- Hughes, Christopher R., and Gudrun Wacker. Introduction. *China and the Internet: Politics of the Digital Leap Forward*. Ed. Christopher R. Hughes and Gudrun Wacker. London; New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003. 1-7. Print.
- Hui, Lu. "Ministry of Industry and Information Technology Inaugurated." *Xinhuanews*. Xinhua News Agency, 29 June 2008. Web. 6 Oct. 2011.
- Human Rights In China. "Charter 08." *HRIC*. HRIC, 9 Dec. 2008. Web. 23 Mar. 2011.
- Human Rights Watch. "China: Hosting Olympics a Catalyst for Human Rights Abuses." *Human Rights Watch*. HRW, 22 Aug. 2008. Web. 11 Aug. 2011.
- . "China: International Olympic Committee Abets Censorship." *Human Rights Watch*. HRW, 31 July 2008. Web. 11 Aug. 2011.
- . "China: No Progress On Rights One Year Before Olympics." *Human Rights Watch*. HRW, 2 Aug. 2007. Web. 11 Aug. 2011.
- . "China's Nobel Threats Backfire." *Human Rights Watch*. HRW, 8 Oct. 2010. Web. 11 Aug. 2011.
- . "Free Liu Xiaobo." *Human Rights Watch*. HRW, 13 July 2009. Web. 11 Aug. 2011.
- . "Freedom of Expression and the Internet in China: A Human Rights Watch Backgrounder." *Human Rights Watch*. HRW, n.d. Web. 7 Sept. 2011.
- . "Frequently Asked Questions." *Human Rights Watch*. HRW, 2011. Web. 30 May 2011.
- . *Human Rights Watch*. HRW, 2011. Web. 30 May 2011.
- . "Human Rights Watch Honors Six Activists." *Human Rights Watch*. HRW, 4 Oct. 2010. Web. 11 Aug. 2011.
- . "Internet Rights Protection Initiative Launches." *Human Rights Watch*. HRW, 29 Oct. 2008. Web. 11 Aug. 2011.
- . "Liu Xiaobo and China's Future" *Human Rights Watch*. HRW, 27 June 2009. Web. 11 Aug. 2011.
- . "Liu Xiaobo's Freedom is as Worthy as Aung San SuuKyi's Liberty." *Human Rights Watch*. HRW, 25 Nov. 2010. Web. 11 Aug. 2011.

- . "Our Research Methodology." *Human Rights Watch*. HRW, 2011. Web. 30 May 2011.
- . "The Prize China Doesn't Want to Win." *Human Rights Watch*. HRW, 6 Oct. 2010. Web. 11 Aug. 2011.
- . "'Race to the Bottom': Corporate Complicity in Chinese Internet Censorship." *Human Rights Watch*. HRW, Aug. 2006. Web. 11 Aug. 2011.
- Illmer, Andreas. "Rights Groups, West Blast China Over Sentence for Leading Dissident." *DW-World.de*. Deutsche Welle, 25 Dec. 2009. Web. 24 Sept. 2011.
- International Olympic Committee. "Olympic Charter." *Olympic.org*. IOC, 8 July 2011. Web. 24 Sept. 2011.
- Joachim, Jutta. *Agenda Setting, the UN, and NGOs: Gender Violence and Reproductive Rights*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2007. Print.
- . "Framing Issues and Seizing Opportunities: the UN, NGOs, and Women's Rights." *International Studies Quarterly* 47 (2003): 247-74. *Scholars Portal*. Web. 13 Oct. 2011.
- Kahn, Richard, and Douglas Kellner. "Globalization, Technopolitics, and Radical Democracy." *Radical Democracy and the Internet: Interrogating Theory and Practice*. Ed. Lincoln Dahlberg and Eugenia Siapera. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007. 17-36. Print.
- . "Oppositional Politics and the Internet: A Critical/Reconstructive Approach." *Cultural Politics* 1.1 (2005): 75-100. *Ingenta Connect Berg Publishers*. Web. 13 Oct. 2011.
- Kaldor, Mary. *Global Civil Society: An Answer to War*. Cambridge: Polity, 2003. Print.
- Keck, Margaret E., and Kathryn Sikkink. *Activists Beyond Borders*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1998. Print.
- Keren, Michael. *Blogosphere: The New Political Arena*. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2006. Print.
- Kingdon, John W. *Agendas, Alternatives and Public Policies*. Boston; Toronto: Little, Brown, 1984. Print.
- Kolbitsch, Josef, and Hermann Maurer. "The Transformation of the Web: How Emerging Communities Shape the Information we Consume." *Journal of Universal Computer Science* 12.2 (2006): 187-213. *DOAJ Directory of Open Access Journals*. Web. 13 Oct. 2011.



- Kovach, Hetty. "Addressing Accountability at the Global Level: The Challenges Facing International NGOs." *NGO Accountability: Politics, Principles, and Innovations*. Ed. Lisa Jordan and Peter van Tuijl. London; Sterling, VA: Earthscan, 2006. 3-20. Print.
- Krebs, Brian. "Cyber Attacks Target Pro-Tibet Groups." *The Washington Post*. The Washington Post, 21 Mar. 2008. Web. 7 Oct. 2011.
- Kristof, Nicholas D. "Death by a Thousands Blogs." *The New York Times*. The New York Times Company, 24 May 2005. Web. 21 Mar. 2011.
- Lawrence, Eric, John Sides, and Henry Farrell. "Self-Segregation of Deliberation? Blog Readership, Participation, and Polarization in American Politics." *Perspectives On Politics* 8.1 (2010): 141-57. *Scholars Portal*. Web. 13 Oct. 2011.
- Lewis, David, and Nazneen Kanji. *Non-Governmental Organizations and Development*. London; New York: Routledge, 2009. Print.
- Lievrouw, Leah A. *Alternative and Activist New Media*. Cambridge; Malden, MA: Polity, 2011. Print.
- Link, Perry. "China's Charter 08." *The New York Review of Books*. NYREV, Inc., 28 Dec. 2008. Web. 23 Mar. 2011.
- "'Liu Xiaobo Must Be Freed' – Nobel Prize Committee." *BBC News*. BBC, 10 Dec. 2010. Web. 17 Mar. 2011.
- MacKinnon, Rebecca. "After the Green Dam Victory." *Center for Strategic and International Studies*. CSIS, July 2009. Web. 7 Oct. 2011.
- . "America's Online Censors." *The Nation*. The Nation, 24 Feb. 2006. Web. 25 Oct. 2010.
- . "Asia's Fight for Web Rights." *Far Eastern Economic Review* 171.3 (2008): 49-55. *ProQuest ABI/INFORM Global New Platform*. Web. 13 Oct. 2011.
- . "China's Censorship 2.0: How Companies Censor Bloggers." *First Monday* 14.2 (2008): n. pag. *DOAJ Directory of Open Access Journals*. Web. 1 May 2010.
- . "China's Internet: Let a Thousand Filters Bloom." *YaleGlobal Online*. Yale Center for the Study of Globalization, 28 June 2005. Web. 11 Aug. 2011.
- . "Cyber Zone." *Index On Censorship* 37.2 (2008): 82-9. *EBSCOhost Communication & Mass Media Complete*. Web. 13 Oct. 2011.



- . "Flatter World and Thicker Walls? Blogs, Censorship and Civic Discourse in China." *Public Choice* 134 (2008): 31-46. *Scholars Portal*. Web. 13 Oct. 2011.
- MacKinnon, Rebecca, and Evgeny Morozov. "Firewalls to Freedom." *Guatemala Times*. Guatemala Times, 24 Feb. 2009. Web. 28 Oct. 2010.
- Mao, Isaac. "Flipping the Switch." *Index on Censorship* 37.2 (2008): 97-103. *EBSCOhost Communication & Mass Media Complete*. Web. 13 Oct. 2011.
- Margolis, Michael, and Gerson Moreno-Riaño. *The Prospect of Internet Democracy*. Farnham, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009. Print.
- Maynor, John W. "Bloggging for Democracy: Deliberation, Autonomy, and Reasonableness in the Blogosphere." *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* 12.3 (2009): 443-68. *Taylor & Francis Journals Complete*. Web. 13 Oct. 2011.
- McAdam, Doug, John D. McCarthy, and Mayer N. Zald, eds. *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framings*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996. Print.
- Meikle, Graham, and Guy Redden, eds. *News Online: Transformations and Continuities*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.
- "Microsoft Censors Chinese Blogs." *BBC News*. BBC, 14 June 2005. Web. 25 Oct. 2010.
- Morozov, Evgeny. *The Net Delusion: The Dark Side of Internet Freedom*. New York: Public Affairs, 2011. Print.
- Moskwa, Wojciech, and Walter Gibbs. "Economic Carrot Helps China in Nobel Boycott Drive." *Reuters*. Thomson Reuters, 7 Dec. 2010. Web. 12 Aug. 2011.
- Mossberger, Karen. "Toward Digital Citizenship: Addressing Inequality in the Information Age." *Routledge Handbook of Internet Politics*. Ed. Andrew Chadwick and Philip N. Howard. London; New York: Routledge, 2009. 173-85. Print.
- Mufson, Steven. "Chinese Protest Finds Path on the Internet." *The Washington Post*. The Washington Post, 17 Sept. 1996. Web. 7 Oct. 2011.
- Mulvenon, James. "Golden Shields and Panopticons: Beijing's Evolving Internet Control Policies." *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs* 9.2 (2008): 115-120. *Hein Online Law Journal Library*. Web. 13 Oct. 2011.

- Neumann, A. Lin. "The Great Firewall." *Committee to Protect Journalists*. CPJ, 1 Jan. 2001. Web. 7 Oct. 2011.
- Nip, Joyce Y. M. "Citizen Journalism in China: The Case of the Wenchuan Earthquake." *Citizen Journalism: Global Perspectives*. Ed. Stuart Allan and Einar Thorsen. New York: Peter Lang, 2009. 95-105. Print.
- "The Nobel Peace Prize 2010." *Nobelprize.org*. Nobel Media AB, 2011. Web. 11 Aug. 2011.
- Norris, Pippa. *Digital Divide: Civic Engagement, Information Poverty, and the Internet Worldwide*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001. Print.
- O'Reilly, Tim. "What is Web 2.0: Design Patterns and Business Models for the Next Generation of Software." *O'Reilly Media*. O'Reilly Media, Inc., 2011. Web. 6 Mar. 2011.
- OpenNet Initiative. "China's Green Dam: The Implications of Government Control Encroaching on the Home PC." *OpenNet Initiative*. ONI, 12 June 2009. Web. 7 Oct. 2011.
- Ownby, David. *Falun Gong and the Future of China*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2008. Print.
- Pan, Philip P. "Chinese Crack Down on Student Web Sites." *The Washington Post*. The Washington Post, 24 Mar. 2005. Web. 22 Oct. 2010.
- Pan, Zhongdang, and Gerald M. Kosicki. "Framing as a Strategic Action in Public Deliberation." *Framing Public Life: Perspectives on Media and Our Understanding of the Social World*. Ed. Stephen D. Reese, Oscar H. Gandy, Jr., and August E. Grant. Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2001. 35-65. Print.
- Papacharissi, Zizi. "The Virtual Sphere: The Internet as a Public Sphere." *New Media & Society* 4.1 (2002): 9-27. *Scholars Portal*. Web. 13 Oct. 2011.
- Pole, Antoinette. *Blogging the Political: Politics and Participation in a Networked Society*. New York: Routledge, 2010. Print.
- Pong, David, ed. *Encyclopedia of Modern China*. Farmington Hills, MI: Charles Scribner's Sons, 2009. Print.
- Power, Jonathan. *Like Water on Stone: The Story of Amnesty International*. London; New York: Penguin Press, 2001. Print.

- Putnam, Robert D. *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000. Print.
- Qiu, Jack Linchuan. "The Internet in China: Technologies of Freedom in a Statist Society." *The Network Society: A Cross-Cultural Perspective*. Ed. Manuel Castells. Cheltenham, UK; Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar, 2004. 99-124. Print.
- Redden, Guy, and Graham Meikle. "Conclusion." *News Online: Transformations and Continuities*. Ed. Graham Meikle and Guy Redden. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011. 210-17. Print.
- Reese, Stephen D. "Prologue—Framing Public Life: A Bridging Model for Media Research." *Framing Public Life: Perspectives on Media and Our Understanding of the Social World*. Ed. Stephen D. Reese, Oscar H. Gandy, Jr., and August E. Grant. Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2001. 7-32. Print.
- Rein, Martin, and Donald Schön. "Frame-reflective Policy Discourse." *Social Sciences and Modern States: National Experiences and Theoretical Crossroads*. Ed. Peter Wagner, Carol Hirschon Weiss, Björn Wittrock, and Hellmut Wollman. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991. 262-89. Print.
- Reporters Without Borders. "After Google, Another US Internet Company Decides to Limit its Services in China." *Reporters Without Borders*. RSF, 25 Mar. 2010. Web. 11 Aug. 2011.
- . "Another Cyberdissident Imprisoned Because of Data Provided by Yahoo." *Reporters Without Borders*. RSF, 9 Feb. 2006. Web. 11 Aug. 2011.
- . "Bill Gates Urged to Raise Internet Censorship When He Dines With President Hu." *Reporters Without Borders*. RSF, 25 Jan. 2007. Web. 11 Aug. 2011.
- . "Cyber-Censorship Continues for Chinese-Language Websites." *Reporters Without Borders*. RSF, 7 Aug. 2008. Web. 11 Aug. 2011.
- . "Do Internet Companies Need to be Regulated to Ensure They Respect Free Expression?" *Reporters Without Borders*. RSF, 6 Jan. 2006. Web. 11 Aug. 2011.
- . "Fourteen Human Rights Organisations Express Support For a US Draft Law on Free Expression Online (GOFA)." *Reporters Without Borders*. RSF, 25 Jan. 2007. Web. 11 Aug. 2011.
- . "Google Launches Censored Version of its Search-Engine." *Reporters Without Borders*. RSF, 25 Jan. 2006. Web. 11 Aug. 2011.
- . "Government Backs Down on Green Dam but Concerns Remain." *Reporters Without Borders*. RSF, 14 Aug. 2009. Web. 11 Aug. 2011.

- . "Increase in pre-Olympic Repression, With At Least 24 Journalists and Cyber-Dissidents Arrested or Sentenced Since January." *Reporters Without Borders*. RSF, 27 June 2008. Web. 11 Aug. 2011.
- . "Information Supplied by Yahoo! Helped Journalist Shi Tao Get 10 Years in Prison." *Reporters Without Borders*. RSF, 6 Sept. 2005. Web. 11 Aug. 2011.
- . "Introduction." *Reporters Without Borders*. RSF, 2011. Web. 30 May 2011.
- . "IOC Accepts Organized Online Censorship." *Reporters Without Borders*. RSF, 1 Aug. 2008. Web. 11 Aug. 2011.
- . "Is China Imposing More Powerful Version of Green Dam, Called Blue Shield?" *Reporters Without Borders*. RSF, 18 Sept. 2009. Web. 11 Aug. 2011.
- . "Journey to the Heart of Censorship." *Reporters Without Borders*. RSF, Oct. 2007. Web. 11 Aug. 2011.
- . "Just One Month Left to Opening Ceremony, But a Long Way Still to Go." *Reporters Without Borders*. RSF, 8 July 2008. Web. 11 Aug. 2011.
- . "Microsoft Censors Its Blog Tool." *Reporters Without Borders*. RSF, 14 June 2005. Web. 11 Aug. 2011.
- . "Olympic Disaster for Free Expression in China." *Reporters Without Borders*. RSF, 22 Aug. 2008. Web. 11 Aug. 2011.
- . "One Year After Start of Games, Olympic Flame Extinguished for Good." *Reporters Without Borders*. RSF, 7 Aug. 2009. Web. 11 Aug. 2011.
- . "Reporters Without Border Challenges 14 Major Internet and Computer Firms About Their Activity in China." *Reporters Without Borders*. RSF, 4 Dec. 2003. Web. 11 Aug. 2011.
- . *Reporters Without Borders*. RSF, 2011. Web. 30 May 2011.
- . "Repression Continues Six Months After Beijing Olympics Opening Ceremony, But Media and Dissidents Fight Back." *Reporters Without Borders*. RSF, 5 Feb. 2009. Web. 11 Aug. 2011.
- . "Still No Reaction From Yahoo! After Fourth Case of Collaboration With Chinese Police Uncovered." *Reporters Without Borders*. RSF, 28 Apr. 2006. Web. 11 Aug. 2011.
- . "To Combat Internet Censorship, Companies Cannot be Left to Act On Their Own." *Reporters Without Borders*. RSF, 7 May 2009. Web. 11 Aug. 2011.

- . "Verdict in Cyberdissident Li Zhi Case Confirms Implication of Yahoo!" *Reporters Without Borders*. RSF, 27 Feb. 2006. Web. 11 Aug. 2011.
- . "With Exactly Six Months to Go to Beijing Olympics, Reporters Without Borders Condemns Broken Promises." *Reporters Without Borders*. RSF, 7 Feb. 2008. Web. 11 Aug. 2011.
- . "With Five Months to Go, Repression Continues But Protests Are Growing." *Reporters Without Borders*. RSF, 7 Mar. 2008. Web. 11 Aug. 2011.
- . "Yahoo! Employees Get Chance to See Chinese Detainee Videos Outside Company's Headquarters." *Reporters Without Borders*. RSF, 12 Apr. 2006. Web. 11 Aug. 2011.
- . "Yahoo! Implicated in Third Cyberdissident Trial." *Reporters Without Borders*. RSF, 19 Apr. 2006. Web. 11 Aug. 2011.
- . "Yahoo! Settles Lawsuit by Families of Jailed Chinese Cyber-Dissidents." *Reporters Without Borders*. RSF, 14 Nov. 2007. Web. 11 Aug. 2011.
- Rheingold, Howard. *Smart Mobs: The Next Social Revolution*. Cambridge, Mass.: Perseus Publishing, 2002. Print.
- . *The Virtual Community: Homesteading on the Electronic Frontier*. Rev. Ed. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2000. Print.
- Rosen, Jay. "The People Formerly Known as the Audience." *PressThink*. Arthur L. Carter Journalism Institute at New York University, 27 June 2006. Web. 21 Mar. 2011.
- Scholte, Jan Aart. "Civil Society and Democratically Accountable Global Governance." *Government and Opposition* 39.2 (2004): 211-33. *Scholars Portal*. Web. 13 Oct. 2011.
- Scotton, James F. "The Impact of New Media." *New Media for a New China*. Ed. James Francis Scotton and William A. Hachten. Chichester; Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010. 28-42. Print.
- . "Xinhua: The Voice of the Party." *New Media for a New China*. Ed. James Francis Scotton and William A. Hachten. Chichester; Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010. 115-27. Print.
- Shirky, Clay. *Here Comes Everybody: The Power of Organizing Without Organizations*. New York: Penguin Press, 2008. Print.

- Song, Felicia Wu. "Theorizing Web 2.0: A Cultural Perspective." *Information, Communication & Society* 13.2 (2010): 249-75. *EBSCOhost Communication & Mass Media Complete*. Web. 13 Oct. 2011.
- Snow, David A., and Robert D. Benford. "Ideology, Frame Resonance, and Participant Mobilization." *From Structure to Action: Comparing Social Movement Research Across Cultures*. Greenwich, Connecticut; London, UK: JAI Press Inc., 1988. International Social Movement Research Series. Print.
- Snow, David A., et al. "Frame Alignment Processes, Micromobilization, and Movement Participation." *American Sociological Review* 51.4 (1986): 464-81. *JSTOR Arts and Sciences 1*. Web. 13 Oct. 2011.
- Stanyer, James. "Web 2.0 and the Transformation of News and Journalism." *Routledge Handbook of Internet Politics*. Ed. Andrew Chadwick and Philip N. Howard. London; New York: Routledge, 2009. 201-13. Print.
- Sunstein, Cass R. "Democracy and the Internet." *Information Technology and Moral Philosophy*. Ed. Jeroen van den Hoven, and John Weckert. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008. 93-110. Print.
- . *Republic.com 2.0*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007. Print.
- swissinfo. "Switzerland Joins Protest Against China." *swissinfo.ch*. Swiss Broadcasting Corporation, 26 Dec. 2009. Web. 24 Sept. 2011.
- Tai, Zixue. *The Internet in China: Cyberspace and Civil Society*. New York: Routledge, 2006. Print.
- Thompson, Clive. "Google's China Problem (And China's Google Problem)." *The New York Times*. The New York Times Company, 23 Apr. 2006. Web. 25 Oct. 2010.
- Tsui, Lokman. "The Panopticon as the Antithesis of a Space of Freedom: Control and Regulation of the Internet in China." *China Information* 17.2 (2003): 65-82. *Scholars Portal*. Web. 13 Oct. 2011.
- UN News Service. "Imprisonment of Chinese Dissident Deeply Concerns UN Human Rights Chief." *UN News Centre*. United Nations, 25 Dec. 2009. Web. 24 Sept. 2011.
- United Nations. "The Universal Declaration of Human Rights." *United Nations*. United Nations, 2011. Web. 27 Sept. 2011.
- Van Alstyne, Marshall, and Erik Brynjolfsson. "Global Village or Cyber-Balkans? Modeling and Measuring the Integration of Electronic Communities."

- Management Science* 51.6 (2005): 851-68. *EBSCOhost Business Source Complete*. Web. 13 Oct. 2011.
- van Dijk, Jan A. G. M. *The Deepening Divide: Inequality in the Information Society*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2005. Print.
- . "One Europe, Digitally Divided." *Routledge Handbook of Internet Politics*. Ed. Andrew Chadwick and Philip N. Howard. London and New York: Routledge, 2009. 288-304. Print.
- Varnelis, Kazys. "Conclusion: The Meaning of Network Culture." *Networked Publics*. Ed. Kazys Varnelis. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2008. 145-63. Print.
- Wacker, Gudrun. "The Internet and Censorship in China." *China and the Internet: Politics of the Digital Leap Forward*. Ed. Christopher R. Hughes and Gudrun Wacker. London; New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003. 58-82. Print.
- Wang, Stephanie. "China." *OpenNet Initiative*. The Citizen Lab at the Munk Centre for International Studies; the University of Toronto; the Berkman Center for Internet & Society at Harvard University; and the SecDev Group, 15 June 2009. Web. 31 Jan. 2011.
- Wang, Stephanie, and Robert Faris. "Welcome to the Machine." *Index on Censorship* 37.2 (2008): 106-113. *EBSCOhost Communication & Mass Media Complete*. Web. 13 Oct. 2011.
- Warr, Wendy A. "Social Software: Fun and Games, Or Business Tools?" *Journal of Information Science* 34.4 (2008): 591-604. *Scholars Portal*. Web. 13 Oct. 2011.
- Warschauer, Mark, and Douglas Grimes. "Audience, Authorship, and Artifact: the Emergent Semiotics of Web 2.0." *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics* 27 (2007): 1-23. *Scholars Portal*. Web. 13 Oct. 2011.
- Weber, Ian, and Lu Jia. "Internet and Self-Regulation in China: the Cultural Logic of Controlled Commodification." *Media, Culture & Society* 29.5 (2007): 772-789. *Scholars Portal*. Web. 13 Oct. 2011.
- Weiss, Thomas G., and Leon Gordenker, eds. *NGOs, the UN, and Global Governance*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1996. Print.
- Wimmer, Roger D., and Joseph R. Dominick. *Mass Media Research: An Introduction*. 9<sup>th</sup> ed. Boston: Cengage-Wadsworth, 2011. Print.
- Wines, Michael. "A Dirty Pun Tweaks China's Online Censors." *The New York Times*. The New York Times Company, 11 Mar. 2009. Web. 25 Oct. 2010.



- Wong, Edward. "China Admits Building Flaws in Quake." *The New York Times*. The New York Times Company, 4 Sept. 2008. Web. 24 May 2011.
- Wood, Geof. "States Without Citizens: The Problem of the Franchise State." *NGOs, States and Donors: Too Close for Comfort?* Ed. David Hulme and Michael Edwards. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997. 79-92. Print.
- Xia, Bill. "Cat and Mouse." *Index On Censorship* 37.2 (2008): 114-119. Print. *EBSCOhost Communication & Mass Media Complete*. Web. 13 Oct. 2011.
- Xiao, Qiang. "Chinese Government Forbids Reporting of the 'Nailhouse' Story." *China Digital Times*. The Berkeley Counter-Power Lab, 24 Mar. 2007. Web. 23 Mar. 2011.
- Xin, Xin. "Web 2.0, Citizen Journalism and Social Justice in China." *News Online: Transformations and Continuities*. Ed. Graham Meikle and Guy Redden. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011. 178-94. Print.
- Yang, Guobin. *The Power of the Internet in China: Citizen Activism Online*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2009. Print.
- Yunchao, Wen. "The 'Grass-Mud Horses' Battling Internet Censors." *France 24*. France 24, 13 Mar. 2009. Web. 25 Oct. 2010.
- Zhai, Dongsheng, and Chen Liu. "Web 2.0 Applications in China." *IFIP International Federation for Information Processing* 252.2 (2007): 26-33. *Springer Link Series*. Web. 6 Mar. 2011.
- Zhao, Yuezhi. *Communication in China: Political Economy, Power and Conflict*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008. Print.
- Zheng, Yongnian. *Technological Empowerment: The Internet, State, and Society in China*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2008. Print.
- Zhou, Yongming. *Historicizing Online Politics: Telegraphy, the Internet, and Political Participation in China*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2006. Print.
- Zwick, Detlev, Samuel K. Bonsu, and Aron Darmody. "Putting Consumers to Work: 'Co-creation' and New Marketing Governmentality." *Journal of Consumer Culture* 8.2 (2008): 163-96. *Scholars Portal*. Web. 13 Oct. 2011.



## APPENDIX I: Coding Sheet

- A. Item number** \_\_\_\_\_
- B. Title** \_\_\_\_\_
- C. Date** \_\_\_\_\_
- D. Type of item** 1- Press release      2- Report      3- Commentary  
in:  
4- Letter to:      5- Other:
- E. Issue(s)** 1- Blocking/filtering/  
site shut down      2- Foreign corp.  
complicity      3- Cyber dissidents  
4- Cyber police &  
surveillance      5- Domestic  
self-censorship      6- Laws & regulations  
7- Propaganda      8- Control over news      9- Anon. restrictions  
10- Cyber attacks      11- Other:
- F. Primary issue** 1- Blocking/filtering/  
site shut down      2- Foreign corp.  
complicity      3- Cyber dissidents  
4- Cyber police &  
surveillance      5- Domestic  
self-censorship      6- Laws & regulations  
7- Propaganda      8- Control over news      9- Anon. restrictions  
10- Cyber attacks      11- Other:      12- None
- G. Problematic actor(s)** 1- Specific gov't      2- General gov't      3- Foreign companies  
4- Domestic companies      5- Other:      6- None
- H. Mitigating actor(s)** 1- Specific gov't      2- General gov't      3- Foreign gov't  
4- Foreign companies      5- Domestic companies      6- IOC  
7- Other:      8- None
- I. Proposed action** 1- Release dissidents      2- Legislative &  
social reform      3- Cease filtering/blocking  
4- Non-compliance/  
resistance (dom.)      5- Non-compliance/  
resistance (foreign)      6- Code of conduct  
7- Foreign laws      8- Other:      9- None

## APPENDIX II: Coding Manual

Code all items in which the issue of internet censorship in China is the primary or a major focus. Do not code documents in which internet censorship in China is only alluded to or briefly mentioned (i.e. in a line or two), but not a major focus of the piece.

**A. Item number:** Record the abbreviated name of the publishing organization (AI, HRW, or RSF) followed by a two-digit number chronologically assigned to each item (starting with 01).

**B. Title:** Record the title or headline of each item.

**C. Date:** Record the date of publication as stated on each item (day/month/year or month/year).

**D. Type of item:** Code each item by type. When possible, use the category already assigned to each item by the publishing organization.

- 1- *Press release*: a document prepared for and distributed to the press for publication
- 2- *Report*: a researched and investigative piece providing facts and/or a summary of events and issues
- 3- *Commentary*: an opinion/editorial piece published in the news media
- 4- *Letter*: a document addressed to (a) specific recipient(s)
- 5- *Other*: anything that falls outside of categories 1 – 5

**E. Issue(s):** Code all issues mentioned/discussed in each item.

- 1- *Blocking/filtering/site shut down*: technical forms of internet censorship, e.g. filtering and blocking content and shutting down websites
- 2- *Foreign corporate complicity*: the role of foreign (i.e. non-Chinese) internet companies in censoring the internet, e.g. self-censoring search engines and websites and providing user information to the authorities
- 3- *Cyber dissidents*: net users arrested/imprisoned/persecuted for internet-related activities
- 4- *Cyber police and surveillance*: forms of government surveillance used to monitor net users' activities, e.g. cyber police, data retention, surveillance of internet cafes

- 5- *Domestic self-censorship*: forms of self-censorship by domestic Chinese internet companies, e.g. self-censorship of search engines, removal of objectionable content
  - 6- *Laws and regulations*: China's internet-related laws and regulations used to control and regulate internet content and usage
  - 7- *Propaganda*: tactics used by the Chinese government to spread Party propaganda on the internet, e.g. the Fifty Cent Party
  - 8- *Control over news*: government censorship policies/directives specifically targeting online news outlets, e.g. instructions from the government to ban publication of certain stories
  - 9- *Anon. restrictions*: restrictions on online anonymity, e.g. real name registration on websites and bulletin boards and in internet cafes
  - 10- *Cyber attacks*: cyber attacks, e.g. email viruses, targeting individuals/groups/organizations/etc. that originate from China and are linked to the Chinese government
  - 11- *Other*: anything that falls outside of categories 1 – 9
- F. Primary issue:** Code the primary issue for each text. The primary issue is the one that receives the most emphasis in a given text, which is determined by factors such as the title of the piece and the number of lines dedicated to each issue. Code only one primary issue per text. When only one issue is mentioned in a given text, code that issue as the text's primary subject. If a text has no primary issue (i.e. multiple issues are mentioned but none are emphasized more than the others and the title is non-specific), code the primary issue as None.
- G. Problematic actor(s):** Code any actor(s) framed by AI, HRW, and RSF as being problematic in contributing to the issue of internet censorship in China. This may include individuals, organizations, corporations, governments, government bodies, and other actors.
- 1- *Specific gov't*: specific Chinese government bodies
  - 2- *General gov't*: the Chinese government as a whole, e.g. references to "the Chinese government," "the Chinese authorities," "Beijing," "China," "Chinese officials," and "China's leadership"
  - 3- *Foreign companies*: foreign internet companies operating in China
  - 4- *Domestic companies*: domestic Chinese internet companies

5- *Other*: anything that falls outside of categories 1 – 4

6- *None*: no references made to any problematic contributing actors

**H. Mitigating actor(s):** Code any actor(s) framed by AI, HRW, and RSF as having the capacity to help address or mitigate the issue of internet censorship in China.

1- *Specific gov't*: specific Chinese government bodies

2- *General gov't*: the Chinese government as a whole, e.g. references to “the Chinese government,” “the Chinese authorities,” “Beijing,” “China,” “Chinese officials,” and “China’s leadership”

3- *Foreign gov't*: foreign governments and representatives

4- *Foreign companies*: foreign internet companies operating in China

5- *Domestic companies*: domestic Chinese internet companies

6- *IOC*: the International Olympic Committee as a whole and specific IOC members

7- *Other*: anything that falls outside of categories 1 – 6

7- *None*: no references made to any potential mitigating actors

**I. Proposed action:** Code any actions and solutions proposed by AI, HRW, and RSF towards addressing the issue of internet censorship in China.

1- *Release dissidents*: appeals/recommendations to release cyber dissidents imprisoned for internet-related activities

2- *Legislative & social reform*: appeals/recommendations regarding the legislative and social aspects of the Chinese government’s internet censorship regime, e.g. appeals to reform and/or repeal internet-related laws and regulations, to cease surveillance of internet users’ activities, etc.

3- *Cease filtering/blocking*: appeals/recommendations to the Chinese government to cease or scale back internet filtering and blocking

4- *Non-compliance/resistance (dom.)*: appeals/recommendations to domestic Chinese internet companies to resist Chinese government demands for censorship, e.g. urging companies to develop a human rights policy, be transparent about censorship, and lobby the Chinese government for legislative and social reform

5- *Non-compliance/resistance (foreign)*: appeals/recommendations to foreign internet companies to resist Chinese government demands for censorship, e.g.

urging companies to develop a human rights policy, be transparent about censorship, and lobby the Chinese government for legislative and social reform

6- *Code of conduct*: proposals to establish an industry code of conduct for internet companies operating in China and other repressive countries, e.g. the Global Network Initiative

7- *Foreign laws*: recommendations to foreign governments to develop domestic laws and regulations that will help mitigate the issue of internet censorship in China, e.g. the US' proposed Global Online Freedom Act which aims to prevent American internet companies from facilitating internet censorship in repressive countries

8- *Other*: anything that falls outside of categories 1 – 7

9- *None*: no recommendations or proposals for any actions/solutions