China in the 21st century is a post-communist society that still retains its communist government. How does the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) maintain its political acceptability while dismantling the socialist system? How can the government maintain popular support when the unifying force of Marxist-Leninist-Maoist ideology is spent and discredited? And what has taken the place of communist ideology? Since the two major political watersheds of the last ten years of the Mao era and the dramatic events of 1989, the CCP has undergone a repackaging, similar to the re-invention of the British Labour party under Tony Blair. The CCP is seeking to extend its rule over China indefinitely, and in doing so, is attempting to move from being a revolutionary party to a political party. In the post-1989 era the outward symbols and the all-important name brand CCP© remain, but the content and meaning of the party’s activities have changed significantly.

Rather than the revolutionary romanticism of the Mao period, “scientific guidance” is the new theme of CCP rule. Party strategists now acknowledge the collapse of faith in Marxist revolution, and in the dictatorship of the proletariat and Marxist economics, yet still need to find a means to justify the one-party state in China. The new economic and political goals of the post-Mao era are symbolised by Deng’s Four Cardinal Principles and the Four Modernisations, meaning in practice: adopting marketisation and other capitalist-type systems without calling it that, while maintaining the CCP dictatorship. Post-1989 and throughout the 1990s, Jiang Zemin has attempted to forge a new consensus in China, a logic for continuing CCP rule indefinitely. The party leadership is determined that the CCP will avoid the fate of the CPSU in the Soviet Union and learn from its mistakes. Party think-tanks are also studying the fate of other long term one-party states, such as Mexico, and trying to learn from their mistakes and successes. In 1999 Jiang Zemin announced the new policy of the “three represents”
which called for the party to represent the “advanced social productive forces, the forward direction for China's cultural advancement, and the truest representative of the fundamental interests of China's vast population”. 

Now party leaders are refining notions of turning the CCP into a “party for all the people” (quanmin dang). At meetings for senior leaders at the resort of Beidaihe in September 2001 Jiang hinted that the CCP’s long-standing goal of class struggle had been abandoned, and said that the party must open its door to the “new classes” of private business people and professionals. According to Jiang, in the current era business people and professionals had now displaced workers and peasants as the “vanguard” of society.

Propaganda work is playing a central role in the repackaging of the CCP. Propaganda - publicising the government’s activities and educating the population - has always been an essential element of the CCP hold on power. The Central Propaganda Department (Zhongyang xuanchuanbu) of the CCP sets guidelines over the Chinese media, film, drama, art, news, literature and education, and disciplines those who break the rules on what can and cannot be presented in these mediums.

The propaganda system (xuanjiao xitong) remains one of the key groupings of bureaucracies within the Chinese political system. This article surveys the modernisation of the propaganda system in China, examining continuities and new developments in the system, in particular, attempts to manufacture consent for the re-invention of the CCP.

**Unifying Public Opinion**

Propaganda work in the 1990s and into the early 21st century has focused on the goals of uniting public opinion in China, strengthening government power, and improving both the party and the military’s image. With the decline in faith in Marxist-Leninist-Maoist Thought since the end of the Mao era and especially since 1989, the CCP has faced the difficult task of finding a suitable replacement for communist ideology’s unifying role. Nationalism, or rather chauvinism, has come to be an important tool to unite the Chinese nation. Immediately after June 1989 the government made a point of blaming the growth of the student movement on “outside forces” and warned of the danger of “peaceful evolution”, heping yanbian. The phrase stemmed from a comment by US Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, in 1955, that Chinese communism would be undermined by
means of the gradual influence of Western ideas and culture, a peaceful evolution rather than violent invasion. Throughout the 1990s, CCP propagandists worked to foster a sense of antagonism towards Western countries, especially focusing on the imperialist past. Numerous books, films, television programs, and exhibitions continually reminded Chinese citizens of the wrongs enacted against Chinese society by foreign countries. Beginning in the mid-1990s Beijing raged that in addition to “peaceful evolution” plots, Western countries were now trying to “contain China”, ezhi Zhongguo, and attacked the “China threat” theory proposed by some Western analysts as the fig leaf for justifying China’s containment. A leading article in Liberation Daily in 1995 claimed that proponents of the “China threat theory” were mobilising public opinion to secure “a bigger slice of the enormous Asian arms purchasing pie for the US”. The article stated the theory’s supporters were trying to sow discord between China and its Asian neighbours, creating a leading role for Washington in the region.

Patriotic sentiment was further invoked through a continual series of propaganda campaigns targeted on sensitive topics designed to stimulate nationalistic fervour. These ranged from the lead-up to the return of Hong Kong and Macau to the Chinese mainland; attacks on Taiwanese leaders associated with the Taiwan independence movement such as Lee Teng-hui and Chen Shui-bian, and even mock armed attacks on Taiwan itself during the lead up to the Taiwan elections in 1996; encouraging anti-US demonstrations in China after NATO bombed the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade during the war in Kosovo in 1999; jingoism during the Sydney 2000 Olympics, and dragging out the US spy plane incident on Hainan Island in 2001. Such campaigns built on existent anti-foreignism within the Chinese population that had erupted in earlier eras (also with official encouragement) such as the first three years after 1949 and the late 1960s. The central government was careful to manage such sentiment, not allowing it to spill over into outright xenophobia. Nonetheless, allowing a certain degree of anti-foreignism to exist within Chinese society was regarded as a useful antidote to its opposite emotion - extreme adulation for Western society (summed up by the phrase chong yang mei wai) - regarded as potentially much more threatening to CCP power.

In addition to encouraging hostility to the foreign Other, party propagandists have also focused on creating a sense of CCP©-style “Chineseness”. The communist
authorities have long constructed a notion of the Ancestral land, 
zuguo, which legitimates their rule. To oppose this rule is to be unpatriotic, even unfilial. The slogan that sums up this concept “without the communist party there would be no new China” (mei you gongchandang, jiu mei you xin Zhongguo) is a phrase drummed into the consciousness of all Chinese citizens. According to CCP ideology, the party is new China, the spiritual and actual embodiment of the resurgence of an ancient civilisation. In 1995, as part of the party’s renewed “nation-building” project Jiang Zemin proposed a “spiritual civilisation” campaign advocating a return to “traditional” socialist and “Chinese” values. In the same year, he also publicly urged cadres to “stress politics”, an indirect reference to the perceived corrupting influences of excessive Westernisation. Deng Xiaoping had of course earlier launched similar campaigns and warnings in the 1980s. Along with Deng era campaigns along these lines, and indeed those of the Mao era, model figures, both old and new, were promoted as part of the campaigns, as an example to the population of how they ought to behave. In the early 1990s, even Lei Feng, revolutionary hero of China in the 1960s reappeared. Where Jiang differed from Mao and Deng was his stress on “traditional” Chinese values, in addition to “traditional” Marxist-Leninist ones. The goals of Jiang Zemin’s spiritual civilisation campaign have followed a pattern familiar from late-Imperial China, stressing the superiority of Chinese culture and advocating a selective adopting of Western “technique” only. Jiang’s (or rather his team of policy-writers) concept of which “traditional” socialist and “Chinese” values might be adopted was further articulated in the late 1990s by the new theories of the “Three Represents” (san ge daibiao) and the call to rule China by law and morality (yifa yide, zhi guo), both of which have been strongly promoted in the Chinese media. The evolution of “Jiang Thought” (continuing the history of ideological development in CCP history beginning with Marxism-Leninism, Mao Zedong Thought, and on to the Theories of Deng Xiaoping) is a necessary step if Jiang and his supporters within the party are to maintain their influence within the CCP after the transition to the next generation of senior leaders, and even more so if the CCP is to continue its overwhelming dominance of Chinese politics.

A further theme of post-1989 propaganda work has been selective coverage of the problems of other post-communist societies, especially Russia and the former
Yugoslavia. This effort has been particularly successful in creating popular acceptance of the inevitability of the continuance of CCP-rule in the medium term at least, in the absence of any other alternatives. The political, economic and social chaos (luan) of these post-communist societies is deliberately contrasted in the Chinese media with an incessant barrage of positive news stories on China’s “economic prosperity” and “ethnic harmony”. Even failure can be turned to success according to these guidelines, viz, the Chinese media’s coverage of the Chinese soccer team’s dismal efforts at the 2002 World Soccer Cup. Since the events of 1989 “emphasising the positive”, or positive propaganda (zhengmian xuanchuan), has been the guiding line (koujing) on China-related news stories. Manipulating the news is an old and tried tactic of CCP propagandists. In the past the phrase “the news media is the mouthpiece of the party” was commonly cited, in the 1990s, blurring the lines on the realities of one-party rule the saying has been re-phrased as, “the news media is the mouthpiece of the government.”

Apart from uniting the nation by means of strengthening nationalistic sentiment, the other main themes of CCP propaganda campaigns throughout the 1990s and into the early 21st century were specifically aimed at improving both the party’s and the military’s image, both of which had taken a body blow after 1989. An example of such image-building campaigns was the utilisation of natural disasters as a focus for central and local government propaganda work. CCP propaganda specialists recommend this as a particularly useful means of raising government approval ratings. In 1991 during floods in Anhui and Jiangsu a successful propaganda campaign was adopted on the theme “rain or wind in one boat, warm feelings amongst the people” (fengyu tong chuan, qing nuan renjian). During the 1998 flood season, central authorities organised a nationwide Anti-Flood Campaign (kang hongshui yundong), which promoted the work of the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) to combat the floods and attempted to involve the whole population in the “struggle” against the floods by conducting an extremely unpopular nationwide “voluntary” flood campaign donation program. The campaign was reminiscent in its style and tone to earlier political campaigns, but this time the enemy was Mother Nature rather than a human one. This propaganda campaign not only aimed to improve the image of the PLA, it was an attempt by the party to seize the moral high
ground on environmental issues such as deforestation (which was allegedly the cause of the 1999 floods) from popular environmental groups that had sprung up in the 1990s.

The government’s main concern with the threat of the spread of environment groups in China was not so much their activities, but their organisational abilities and their capacity to offer an appealing alternative to CCP® ideology (think Green politics). For similar reasons, since April 1999 when 10,000 Falungong followers demonstrated in Beijing, the rise of the religious group Falungong has been regarded by senior party leaders as one of the most severe threats to CCP power in recent years. Since mid-1999 anti-Falungong propaganda activities have dominated the Chinese media. Ever mindful of how other Communist regimes have toppled, the CCP is particularly concerned about the growth of religious believers outside the control of the officially managed religions in China. These are organised into the various so-called “patriotic”, or China-based, Chinese government controlled faiths, divided up into Catholics, “Christian” (meaning all Protestant denominations), Buddhists and Moslems. The Falungong propaganda campaign has seen a revival of propaganda methodology not seen since the late 1960s and early 1970s, using such tactics as broadcasting programs of followers going through “political re-education”, i.e. what in Chinese and English is known as “brainwashing (xi nao); denouncing the group as an “evil cult”; and promoting the anti-Falungong campaign as a morality movement. One particularly effective tactic in turning public opinion has been the continual broadcasting of horrific images from the self-immolation suicide attempt of a number of alleged Falungong followers in Tiananmen Square in January 2001. The constant coverage of these acts has severely tarnished the image of Falungong and its leader Li Hongzhi and has succeeded in gaining support for the government’s response to the religious group.

New Approaches
In addition to the tried and true tactics of CCP propaganda practice such as targeted propaganda campaigns, new methodology has been introduced from Western public relations technique and advertising. The use of this new methodology in the Chinese propaganda system was first proposed in the 1980s, but really came into play in the 1990s. Western-style public relations and advertising methodology have fitted
surprisingly well with the new needs of the CCP government.

Before we look at how and why PR and advertising have been adapted by the CCP propaganda system, it is useful to look first at the history of public relations (PR). The notion of “publicity” and the “public” evolved in the United States out of the belief that factual disclosures could help to create a “conversant democratic public”. Progressive thinkers such as Thomas Jefferson believed that democracy was dependent on a literate, informed public, constantly engaging in an exchange of ideas on contemporary topics. By the late 19th century the genre of investigative journalism had developed in the US - described derogatively by US President Teddy Roosevelt as “muck-raking” - which sought to act as a check on the powers of big business and government. However, by the 1920s, a number of thinkers in the United States had come to regard the watchdog role of the American media as a serious threat to social stability. Public relations - creating positive publicity and image building - was proposed as the answer to this problem.

The earliest origins of PR work in the US show striking parallels with its use in contemporary China, reflecting a fear of the chaos of “mass rule”. Ironically in the US, especially in the 1930s and the late 1940s, the PR industry was closely linked with anti-communism as big business engaged in PR campaigns to oppose efforts such as public health insurance and public sponsored housing. Walter Lippman, one of the founding figures in PR, developed theories about the inherent malleability of the “public” through the mass media, building on the work of French social scientist Gabriel Tarde. To Tarde, “the public”, linked by the media, could be manipulated to create standardised thinking on various topics. This would bring about a new means of social rule. In Walter Lippman’s words, PR work could manage public attitudes on various topics in order to “manufacture consent” for the continuing rule of the governing elite. One of the techniques Lippman advocated for manipulating public opinion was the creation of news stories in order to get the public to take sides. This approach has long been a favourite of CCP propagandists. According to another early PR specialist Ivy Lee, PR was the “secret by which a civilisation might be preserved.” And to the influential PR guru Edward Bernays, PR was useful for “regimenting the public mind.” To Bernays, PR enabled elites to preserve their social, economic and political advantages against rising
democratic expectations in a society. Bernays recommended PR as recipe to “manufacture the imprimatur of ‘popular support’ to validate the decision-making activity of elites”. The process required was 1) study the public to ascertain their opinion on various topics, and, 2) utilise this research to set out a strategy to influence the public.

In a curious twist of history, the Nazi head of propaganda Goebbels was influenced by Bernays’ writings and those of other early American PR specialists, while Soviet propagandists adopted some of the Nazis’ techniques for use in the Soviet Union. The CCP communist system in turn, was modelled on the Soviet one. So the Chinese propaganda system has in fact long absorbed some of the basic principles of PR work, and its utilisation in the post-1989 period could be said to be more in the realm of a rediscovery, or an upgrading of existing ideas and approaches, rather than an innovation.

The modernisation of the Chinese propaganda system in recent years can be traced back to the early days of the post-Mao reform period. As the goals and methodology of the Cultural Revolution period were negated, so too were the goals and methodology of propaganda work in that era, which had played such a central role in some of the most crucial central government power struggles. Propaganda cadres in the early 1980s were advised to absorb techniques from the West, and, (especially with regard to propaganda aimed at foreigners) to cast off the dated methods of the past. From the mid-1980s, in English and other foreign languages, the more neutral phrases “public relations”, “publicity” and “information” came to be used in preference to “propaganda” to describe the government’s publicity and information activities. By the early 1990s, these phrases were increasingly being used in Chinese as well, as propagandists noted the negative connotations the word for propaganda in Chinese “xuanchuan” had acquired.

A considerable number of books in Western languages on the subject of public relations were translated into Chinese, in addition to books and articles written by Chinese authors that drew heavily on the classic works of Western-style PR. Reflecting the complex relationship between the government and the market in China, these books are usually aimed at readers working both in the public service and the private market. One such book is Hu Ningsheng’s A Course of Study in Governmental PR (Zhengfu gonggong guanxi jiaocheng), published in 1996 by the Central Party School.
Following closely in the footsteps of Lippman and Bernays (though typically of Chinese authors writing for an official audience, not citing their names), Hu advocates the use of PR in order to mould (suzao) public attitudes towards the government. According to Hu, political PR helps to “promote a good impression of the government, while pushing forward the government’s own goals.” Hu cites Coca Cola’s international success as an example of how “if you have a good image, any problem can be solved.” The Chinese government can use political PR to “gain the understanding, appreciation and support of most of the public.” PR is “an administrative tool of modern democratic government.”

As Edward Bernays once did, in another era and another political system, Hu advocates using public opinion polls to establish what the Chinese government’s image problems are and creating a plan for government action on that basis. Hu praises political PR as a means to join local and central governments together, since it is in the interests of the local governments to support the central authorities. PR can be used to make Chinese people have more affection for Chinese politicians, necessitating 1) scripting and pre-planning of what senior leaders should wear, say and act during public appearances 2) Chinese senior leaders should give special addresses to the nation on TV, similar to US presidents, 3) they should talk about national issues openly. All of these suggestions (though perhaps to a lesser degree the one about talking about issues openly) have been put into place in the Chinese political scene in the last few years.

New Bottles, New Wine, Same Brand

One of the most important changes in CCP propaganda work in the 1990s has been the embracing of new technologies and new approaches. One of the earliest changes in the early 1990s was in the realm of television programming. From 1994 a host of new “investigative” journalism programs were broadcast, such as Focus Point (Jiaodian fantan) and Eastern Horizon (Dongfang shikong) which, with the blessing of the central authorities, produced in-depth news programs on topical issues such as corruption, local elections, environmental issues, as well as international news. Party leaders also took to heart the message about gaining better media savvy. Senior Chinese politicians such as Jiang Zemin and Zhu Rongji clearly took lessons on how to improve their television
Another change has been the introduction of political advertising on television. In the past the CCP made much use of large hoardings and local display boards to broadcast political messages in public spaces. In the mid-1990s a new technique was introduced, political advertising on television, officially described as “public service announcements” (gongyi guanggao). In 1997 central authorities even put pressure on Western advertisers to produce some public service morality messages promoting the goals of the “spiritual civilisation” campaign for the Chinese media. One of the earliest example of the new political ads in 1997 was a mixture of the “traditional” Chinese and “socialist” values Jiang Zemin was urging Chinese citizens to adopt. In a direct reference to the slogans of the Qing “self-strengthening” movement, a 30 second patriotic message showing scenes of sweaty steelworkers was flashed across TV screens during ad breaks on CCTV channels with the slogan “self-strengthen, create, and be glorious”, ziqiang chuangzao huihuang. 1997 also marked the beginning of the regular showing of a new political “trailer” preceding the nightly CCTV1 7 o’clock news (which had come to be the modern equivalent of a daily political study session). The 45 second trailer flashed a succession of split-second images of China past and present while the national anthem played in the background. The emphasis was on China’s strengths and achievements both in the present era, represented by the high-tech skyscrapers of Shenzhen, and to those of the past, symbolised by the Great Wall. The images symbolise the CCP’s new, new China; a China that is both rooted in the past, and looking to the future.

Walter Lippman particularly recommended the use of pictures and visualisation in PR work, describing them as “the most effective passageways into inner life”. Symbols, according to Lippman, could be manipulated to form “mental agreement” in the public mind. To Lippman, the utilisation of media images were the “the means by which leaders and special interests might cloak themselves in the ‘fiction’ that they stand as delegates of the common good”. He asserted that symbols helped to “magnify emotion while undermining critical thought, to emphasise sensations while subverting ideas.” Since 1997 many other political advertisements have appeared on Chinese television such as those promoting environmental messages, promoting China’s entry into the WTO, and promoting the PRC under the CCP as modernising and technologically advanced.
The Internet has been growing in importance as a tool of government propaganda in recent years. Though many analysts claim that the Internet will be one of the major means to ultimately undermine the communist system in China, a Carnegie Endowment study has revealed that to date, at least, the Internet has been effectively incorporated as a tool of the government system with its dangers (so far) held in check. Beijing’s goal is to get the whole of the Chinese government represented on the Internet by 2006. All major Chinese newspapers are now freely available on the Internet and many of the papers have Bulletin Boards and discussion groups that have become the key focus for gauging public opinion in China in the last few years. In a surprising new twist, since 1999 the bulletin board of the CCP’s flagship paper People’s Daily, “Strong Nation Forum” (Qiang guo luntan) has become one of the most popular and controversial sites. The boards are highly censored and carefully monitored, but they are read at the highest levels and some of their feedback has been incorporated into the government’s response to controversial domestic and international incidents.

Though television has taken over in overall importance as the government’s main propaganda tool, radio still has a useful role. In recent years, following on from other changes in the Chinese economy, many new commercial stations have sprung up in China. Although these stations are run as self-sufficient, self-funded businesses, this does not mean they are outside the control or influence of the propaganda system. Through such highly popular stations as Guangdong’s Pearl River FM and China Radio International broadcasting in FM in Beijing, Shanghai and other major cities, the government is able to reach a young urban audience that might be turned off from other more traditional outlets for government propaganda such as the nightly news. The same situation is occurring in the host of new, relatively independent newspapers that have sprung up in the 1990s such as Southern Weekend (Nanfang zhoumo) and Beijing Youth Daily (Beijing qingnian bao). If these papers do step too far beyond the boundaries of official propaganda, central officials have no difficulty in reeling them back to a more conservative line, whether through censure or sacking (and even arresting) key staff.

**Conclusion: A New, New China**

Since the developments of 1989 and the fall of Socialist regimes in Eastern Europe in the
early 1990s, the CCP has clearly moved beyond the concept of itself as a Marxist-Leninist political party. The party is looking for ways to maintain and justify its hold on power; propaganda work is playing a crucial role in the re-invention of the CCP from a revolutionary party to a political party. Amongst the toolkit for the party’s bid to maintain power are a renewed emphasis on nationalism, including strengthening notions of both the foreign Other and the Chinese Self; an ongoing effort to present a negative picture of post-communist societies in order to bolster fears of the potential for chaos in China if the CCP was overturned; image building activities in order to mould public opinion in favour of both the CCP and the PLA; as well as targeted campaigns focusing on perceived threats to CCP power, such as Falungong and Muslim separatists in Xinjiang. While some tried and true practices are still being utilised such as the promotion of model figures, propaganda work in the current period has been strengthened by the introduction of a host of innovative new approaches: ranging from rebuilding and indeed, recreating the party’s image; utilising the Internet as a tool of the government rather than fearing it as a threat to government stability; and utilising various aspects of PR methodology for “regimenting the public mind”. The CCP has shown itself adept at adapting to change and challenging circumstances, absorbing new approaches and taking on new directions when necessary. This chameleon-like quality of the CCP is one of the secrets of its success as one of the few remaining communist governments left in the world and bodes well for its bid to stay in power indefinitely.

1Indeed the transformation of the British Labour Party and other European left wing parties have been a topic of study for the CCP in recent years. See Oliver August and Philip Webster, “China Turns to Blair for Tips on Transformation,” http://www.timesonline.co.uk, accessed 29 May 2002.
3Yu Yunyao, p. 1.
5For an insider’s account of this system see Wu Xuecan, “Ba mei ge ren biancheng jianchayuan – Zhongguo gongchandang dui meiti de quanfangwei kongzhi”,


10 Proponents of the China threat theory believe that China is becoming increasingly belligerent and will threaten the interests of the West in the future, see for example Richard Bernstein and Ross H. Munro, The Coming Conflict with China, New York: A.A. Knopf, 1997; Samuel P. Huntington, The Clash of Civilisations and the Re-making of World Order, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996.


15 The standard Chinese translation of zuguo is “Motherland”, though “Ancestral Land” is the actual meaning of the term in Chinese. I have adopted the latter translation as being a more accurate reflection of the connotations this term evokes in Chinese.

16 For a recent high profile speech on the importance of Jiang Zemin Thought and China’s future see “Xuexi ‘5.31’ jianghua shixian ‘san ge daibiao’”, http://news.xinhuanet.com/newscenter/2002-06/04/content_422748.htm accessed 4 June 2002.

17 In an anonymous 1995 public opinion poll conducted by foreign and Chinese researchers, the majority of respondents preferred social order and stability to freedom. See Yang Zhong, Jie Chen, and John M. Scheb II, “Political Views from Below: A

18 *Xuanchuan dongtai*, 1990, p. 11.
20 Hu, pp. 93-94.
21 Hu, p. 93.
23 Ewen, p. 50.
24 Ewen, p. 48.
26 Ewen, p. 70.
28 Ewen, p. 154.
29 Ewen, p. 132.
31 Ewen, p. 399.
33 Ewen, p. 446.
35 Hu, p. 122.

38 Hu, p. 8.
39 Hu, p. 31.
40 Hu, p. 30.
41 Hu, p. 30-31.
42 Hu, p. 8.
43 Hu, p. 91.
44 Hu, p. 77-78.
45 Hu, p. 32.
46 CCTV producer Li Xiaoping’s article “Significant Changes in the Chinese Television Industry and Their Impact in the PRC: An Insider’s Perspective,” Center for Northeast Asian Policy Studies, Brookings Institution, August 2001, argues that such programs have an important “watchdog” role in Chinese politics. Kevin Latham “Nothing But the Truth: News Media, Power, and Hegemony in South China,” The China Quarterly 163, September 2000, pp. 633-654 similarly argues for the existence of a growing watchdog role in the Chinese media. My own research shows that both these articles represent an overly optimistic assessment. While investigative media activities might be allowed to be “watchdogs” on certain issues about which the government wants to air public debate, many other topics are clearly off limits politically. Indeed since the crackdown on Falungong after 1999 Jiaodian fantan and other current affairs programs have been actively involved in the anti-Falungong propaganda campaign, demonstrating that their role is indeed that of the “mouthpiece of the party” not the “people”.

47 On how government officials have been trying to improve their media skills in the 1990s see Li Xiaoping, p. 14.


50 Ewen, p. 152.
51 Ewen, p. 155.
52 Ewen, p. 157.
53 Dai Xiudian’s, “Chinese Politics of the Internet: Control and Anti-Control”, Cambridge Review of International Relations 13: 2, Spring-Summer, is typical of this point of view. Dai describes the Internet as a “double-edged sword” for the CCP, predicting that it will bring about long-term change for China. Bi Jianhai, “The Internet Revolution in China: What is the Significance of the Development of the Internet for Traditional Forms of Communist Control”, International Journal 56, 3, Summer 2001, adopts a similar point of view.
54 See Shanthi Kalathil and Taylor C. Boas, “The Internet and State Control in Authoritarian Regimes: China, Cuba, and the Counterrevolution,” Information
Revolution and World Politics Project, Global Policy Program, no. 21, July 2001, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. The conclusions of Christopher Rene Hughes in “Nationalism in Chinese Cyber Space”, *Cambridge Review of International Relations* 13: 2, Spring-Summer, appearing in the same issue as Dai Xiudian’s article (see previous footnote) support the analysis of Kalathil and Baos. See also Hu Xin, “The Surfer-in-Chief and the Would-Be Kings of Content: A Short Study of Sina.com and Netease.com”, in *Media in China*, pp. 192-199 which describes how the two major independent Internet providers in China steer clear of “political” topics, focussing instead on tabloid journalism. My own research tends to support the conclusions of the above authors.

55Personal communication from a Chinese diplomat, 2002.

56Daniel C. Lynch, *After the Propaganda State: Media, Politics, and “Thought Work” in Reformed China*, Stanford University Press, 1999 has written in some detail on this topic, see especially chapter 3. I disagree with the basic premise of Lynch’s research in this book, which argues that the CCP propaganda system is breaking down due to economic and technical changes in China (p. 7) and predicts that the outcome will be a “genuine political crisis” (p. 10). Lynch’s research finished in 1995, seven years later his prescriptions appear overly pessimistic (or optimistic, depending on your point of view). My own research indicates that the CCP has been relatively successful in regaining legitimacy throughout the 1990s and that the propaganda system has played a useful role in this process. Unlike Lynch I do not see any contradiction between a market economy as practised in China and the continuance of the one-party state. See Zhao Yuezhi, *Media Market, and Democracy in China: Between the Party Line and the Bottom Line*, Urbana and Chicago, University of Illinois Press, 1998, (which follows similar ground to Lynch) for a more conservative analysis of the impact of commercialisation and its affect on the CCP-dominated media industry in China.