

Decoding the Chinese Internet:

A Glossary of Political Slang



2015 Edition



A CHINA DIGITAL TIMES E-BOOK
中国数字时代电子书

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Foreword

In 2009, a strange creature emerged on the Internet from China. It was the grass-mud horse, a dopey alpaca frolicking in the Mahler Desert. It starred in a popular music video, staring buck-toothed into the camera while a chorus of children sang about the grass-mud horse's defeat of the river crabs. It seemed innocent enough.



"I'm a grass-mud horse."

But the grass-mud horse was actually a subterfuge of Chinese Internet censorship. Its very name skirted restrictions on cursing online. With a change of tones, "grass-mud horse," cǎonímǎ, becomes "fuck your mom," cào nǐ mā. The Mahler Desert is even worse. Those river crabs the grass-mud horse fought off their homeland? Their name is homophonous with "harmony," a key concept during the Hu Jintao-Wen Jiabao administration (2002-2012). Netizens complained when their posts were "harmonized"—that is, deleted by the censors. "Fuck your mom" is an easy target for deletion. But "grass-mud horse," written in completely different characters, evaded the censors—at least before it became a national phenomenon. And so a shaggy pack animal, the sworn enemy of the river crab, became a symbol of subversion on the Internet in China.

Over the past five years, China Digital Times has built a [wiki dedicated to "grass-mud horse language."](#) those words and

turns of phrase Chinese netizens use in order to skirt censorship and discuss political and social issues. Our Grass-Mud Horse Lexicon continues to evolve as netizens create new terms and give new meaning to older ones. This project is part of our effort to contribute to a deeper understanding of the Internet's cultural, social, and political impact by moving beyond anecdotal evidence and systematically documenting and interpreting political discourse created by Chinese netizens. We hope to map out the dynamics of censorship, domination, and resistance in Chinese communication and information networks. The aim is to vividly illustrate the increasingly dynamic and sometimes surprising presence of an alternative political discourse: images, frames, metaphors, and narratives that have been generated from Internet memes and events. This emerging "resistance discourse" steadily undermines the values and ideology of the Chinese Communist Party and its regime, and, as such, forces an opening for free expression and civil society in China.

This eBook is a distillation of the most time-tested and ubiquitous terms in our lexicon. Organized by broad categories, "Decoding the Chinese Internet" will guide readers through the colorful, raucous world of China's online resistance discourse. Students of Mandarin will gain insight into word play and learn terms that are key to understand Chinese Internet language. But no knowledge of Chinese is needed to appreciate the creative leaps netizens make in order to keep talking.

Neither this eBook nor our lexicon are exhaustive. New words are invented every day, and the terrain of Chinese websites and social media platforms is constantly shifting. But we hope to provide a glimpse into online political discourse and make it more accessible to non-Chinese readers. To see all 300+ entries in our Grass-Mud Horse Lexicon, and to keep up with new entries as they are posted, [visit it on China Digital Times](#).



New Terms in the 2015 Edition

In this third edition of the Lexicon eBook, we have included some new coinages from the past few years, as well as some iconic netizen inventions that weren't included in previous editions. Terms new to this edition are listed in the grass-mud horse silhouette here, and indicated by **green entry titles** throughout the text. Click a term to be directed to the entry.

Chai Jing blue
your country

Chaoyang masses

check the water meter

five nos

big boxer shorts

Daddy Xi

Kim Fatty III

Great Chinese LAN

Representative Rui

Cutlassfish Zhou Dama era

death by hide-and-peek

red second generation

voluntary fifty-cent

entrapment

APEC blue

serve the renminbi

reincarnation

foreign (hostile) forces

use the Internet scientifically

GuoMeimeibaby

Muddled Shit Times

kneeling country

TG

Introduction:

China at the Tipping Point?

From “Fart People” to Citizens

By Perry Link and Xiao Qiang

Of all the transformations that Chinese society has undergone over the past fifteen years, the most dramatic has been the growth of the Internet. Information now circulates and public opinions are now expressed on electronic bulletin boards with nationwide reach such as Tianya Club (since 1999); blog-hosting portals such as Sina.com (since 2007); and microblogging services such as Sina Weibo (since 2010). According to the official China Internet Network Information Center, Internet users in the People’s Republic of China (PRC) number 649 million out of a total national population of about 1.3 billion as of the end of 2014. Sina Weibo announced in May 2015 that it now has 198 million monthly active users, up 38 percent from the previous year. The rise of such online platforms has given Chinese “netizens” an unprecedented capacity for self-publishing and communication, albeit within a heavily censored environment. The instantaneous, interactive, and relatively low-risk nature of blogging has empowered netizens to voice political opinions, form social connections, and coordinate online (and sometimes offline) collective actions.

Nevertheless, Chinese netizens are still speaking in a heavily monitored environment, and so their demands for greater freedom of information and expression

often find voice through coded language and metaphors that allow them to avoid outright censorship. The government’s pervasive and intrusive censorship system has generated equally massive resentment among Chinese netizens. The Internet has become a quasi-public space where the dominance of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is constantly being exposed, ridiculed, and criticized by waves of jokes, videos, songs, poems, jingles, fiction, sci-fi, code words, satire, and euphemisms. As a result, Chinese cyberspace has seen the emergence of a new political discourse. Largely invented by young gadflies, a surprising number of these terms have begun to spread widely. Liberals, ultranationalists, and even the People’s Daily (the CCP’s official newspaper) have used them.

Will a new political discourse give birth to a new political identity? Old CCP assumptions about linguistic ritual as a tool to forge conformity remain in place. People are still trained to believe, for example, that *dang* (party) and *guo* (nation) are inseparable, or at least close enough that *aiguo* (patriotism) and *ai dang* (love of the party) need not be distinguished. In official language, *wodang* or “our party” implies “the party of everyone.” This makes it especially significant that, in today’s Internet lingo, terms such as *guidang* ([your] honorable party) are

beginning to be used in ways that put sarcastic distance between the speaker and the Party. As this kind of usage spreads, it begins to raise questions of national identity. If netizens are rejecting “party equals country,” what are they putting in its place? What does it mean today to be “Chinese”?

One reason why citizen inroads have reached further on the Internet than in other media is that linguistic innovations have helped the Internet to seem like a new, open realm. All human languages constantly evolve, of course, and in principle there is nothing “new” in having new terms appear on the Chinese Internet. But their production and spread there has been especially rapid. Some of the new terms grow from temporary code words that netizens have used in order to evade word filters. The term *zhengfu* (government), for example, counts as “sensitive,” and efforts to skirt it have given rise to a number of new terms. One of these is Heavenly Dynasty [translated in this edition as [Celestial Empire](#)], which, besides avoiding filters, delivers the mischievous suggestion that the government is hardly modern. In a nod to George Orwell, the CCP’s Department of Propaganda is referred to as the [Ministry of Truth](#).

One of the most famous Internet puns has to do with a character called the *caonima* or [grass-mud horse](#). The term literally contains those three words—there are grass-mud horse comics, videos, and stuffed animals that bring the character to life. The joke is that with only a shift of tone the words can easily be made to sound very much like a certain highly provocative and insulting profanity. Playful images of the grass-mud horse are novelties that circulate within the

relatively small circles of people who enjoy such things. But the term *caonima* as a spoken word has a much broader range and reaches many more people both on and off the Internet. In a famous photograph, the artist Ai Weiwei leaps into the air, naked except for a stuffed-animal grass-mud horse held over the middle of his body at crotch level in order to block his genitals from view. The photo is a jab at the CCP regime, for the expression “the grass-mud horse covers the middle” can mean, with a shift of tone, “fuck your mother, [Communist Party Central Committee](#).” The elegance of Ai’s art is that he can induce viewers to think that second phrase without uttering a single syllable. To the regime’s Internet police he can say, “You said it, not me!”

Another widespread term is *hexie*, which means “[river crab](#)” but is a near-homonym of the word for “harmony.” The regime of recently retired PRC president Hu Jintao, in its public rhetoric, put great stress on the idea of a *hexie shehui* or “harmonious society.” By recasting this official phrase to turn “harmonious society” into “river-crab society,” netizens are evoking Chinese folklore, in which the crab appears as a bully known for scuttling sideways. Netizens also use *hexie* as a verb as well as a noun. When a website is shut down or a computer screen goes blank, the victims might say “We have been river-crabbed!” or, in other words, “harmonized” into silence.

Does New Language Lead to New Thought?

In recent years, Chinese netizens have shown that they possess boundless creativity and ingenuity in finding such ways

to express themselves despite stifling government restrictions on online speech. Scholars and China watchers have argued about whether or not Internet repartee is a mere safety valve. By giving people a way to blow off steam, does it ultimately reinforce the status quo? Sometimes resistance does seem little more than a fun game: Reports from the official Xinhua News Agency will not say what really happened? Alright, we will. You close us down for doing so? No problem, we will jump around online and find another way. You keep doing it? Very well, we will lampoon you as a bunch of crotchety river crabs. The “safety-valve” theory holds that this kind of resistance, which is almost recreational, may be cathartic but hardly affects the way people think and behave in the offline world.

But others have argued that Internet sarcasm has deeper effects. Once it catches on, they say, it tends to spread. Satire of things such as bullying and corruption naturally extends just as far as the problems themselves extend—which is very far indeed, potentially into every corner of society. There, in those myriad corners, satire can begin to rot the foundation on which bullying and corruption rest, and “prepare the ground” for more significant change. One can even hope that regime change, when it eventually arrives, will be more likely to be peaceful than violent insofar as the ground for it has been softened.

An important shift takes place when sarcastic terms spread into general use: They come increasingly to lose their sarcastic bite and to seem just like normal terms. Talk of the CCP regime as the *Tianchao* or “[Celestial Empire](#)” began as barbed mockery, but once it spread and became

standard, the sarcasm drained away and it turned simply into a way of saying “government.” Similarly, the use of *pimin* (“[fart people](#)”) began as a bitter suggestion that powerholders see rank-and-file citizens as having no more value than digestive gas. Now it is just another way to say *laobaixing* (ordinary folks). But the seemingly innocuous process by which sarcastic terms are normalized can have profound consequences. It converts the terms from the relatively narrow role of expressing resistance to the much broader one of conceiving how the world normally is. When *Tianchao* is used specifically as a jab at the regime, it is a tool with a purpose and can be countered with a return jab. But when it reflects and expresses normality, much more is at stake. The question of an alternative worldview and new political identity emerges.

Worldviews that differ from the official one are not new in the PRC. They certainly preceded the Internet. In the past, though, such views were almost entirely confined to private spaces—either to the privacy of individual minds or to small groups that were beyond public earshot. People who share alternative worldviews have not been allowed to hold public assemblies. Internet language, however, has nurtured new sub-cultures in which style and camaraderie have become values in their own right, and in which “cyber-assemblies” have emerged. Through online consultation, they can do many of the things that physical assemblies do in a free society: debate issues, argue over the wording of petitions and manifestoes, sign statements, vote in polls, and bring public pressure to bear on specific issues—all while each member sits separately in front of his or her computer screen. Cyber-meetings resemble physical

meetings in some ways that have politically important implications. They are, first of all, autonomous assemblies that usually originate from the bottom up. Consider an example. On June 23, 2011, netizens came across Weibo postings by an attractive twenty-year-old woman named Guo Meimei. Even as she flaunted her ownership of pricey handbags and cars (including a Lamborghini and a Maserati), Guo claimed to be a “commercial general manager” at the Red Cross Society of China (described by the New York Times on July 3, 2011 as “[a government organization that is the country’s largest charity](#)”). After this netizen-discovered story went viral on the Internet, China’s official media began to discuss it too, and eventually it reached even the international media. Netizens not only broke the story but drove the public’s opinion of it. Online “assemblies” large and small denounced Guo, excoriated the Chinese Red Cross (which watched its donations plummet despite denying any link to her), raised suspicions about the entire world of philanthropy in China, and eventually decried the general decline in ethics across Chinese society as a whole. The Guo Meimei case faded out almost as quickly as it flared up, so it is hard to say that it has left behind any enduring instance of “cyber-organization.” In other cases, though, it is clear that online campaigns have indeed given birth to organizations. They have survived the issues that originally brought them together and have sometimes led to action “in real life” (or IRL, as the Internet acronym puts it).

In addition to forging some new group identities, Internet culture has subjected national identity to reimagination. What does it mean to be Chinese today, and how does netizen culture affect the question? The

CCP has always offered a ready answer to the question of Chinese identity, and has stressed it in the schools and the media: To be Chinese is to stand with the Chinese Communist Party. To depart from the Party is to be not only politically incorrect but un-Chinese.

On the Internet, however, these axioms are being drawn into question, and alternative answers to the national-identity question are beginning to appear. A few years ago, a netizen with a sly sense of humor began using the terms *guidang* (your [honorable] party) and *guiguo* (your [honorable] state). *Gui* literally means “noble” or “expensive” and has long been placed before nouns as a polite way of saying “your”: Thus *guixing* means “your honorable surname,” and so on. *Guiguo* has also, for a long time, been an established way of saying “your country” when people from different countries are talking to each other in a formal way. But now, in some circles on the Internet, *guiguo* has taken on the sarcastic meaning of “your state”—in other words, the state that belongs to you rulers, not to me. The question “What is *guiguo*?” has popped up in Internet chat rooms. In one of these, in October 2010, a netizen wrote: “It turns out that this *guo* is not our *guo*, but the *guo* of a certain *dang* [that is, the Communist Party]. This fact makes the terms *guiguo* and *guidang* appropriate.”

What Is It to Be Chinese?

But if netizens are putting ironic distance between themselves and “*your state*,” the question arises of what *they* do identify with at the national level. What is it, in the new day, to be Chinese? This is a big question,

and the answers that are beginning to appear are only tentative.

Consider *pimin* or “[fart people](#),” the playful tag that has come to stand in opposition to *guiguo*. The *pimin* usage originated from a notorious incident that took place on 29 October 2008, when Lin Jiaxiang, a fifty-eight-year-old Communist Party official, was eating and drinking at a seafood restaurant in Shenzhen City, near Hong Kong. He asked an eleven-year-old girl for directions to the men’s room, then told her to lead him to it personally. Once there, he grabbed her and tried to force her inside. She escaped and ran to her parents. Her father confronted the would-be molester and an argument ensued, during which Lin pointed at the father and yelled, “I was sent here by the Ministry of Transportation! My rank is the same as your mayor’s! You people are farts to me! You wanna take me on?! You wanna test what I can do to you?!”

Unfortunately for Lin, the entire episode was captured by a security camera and leaked to the Internet, where it went viral. Lin eventually was fired and “fart people” became a standard term. Gradually it morphed into a term of pride. Fart people came to mean “us” netizens and ordinary people, the ones on the receiving end of abuse, the ones who have no vote, the ones who empathize and identify with one another—the ones who, in short, form the polar opposite of *guiguo*, the country of Lin Jiaxiang and his entitled ilk.

The imbalance in power between *guiguo* and *pimin* is sometimes highlighted by the [satirical use of bei](#). *Bei* originally meant “quilt,” but has also been used as a verb to mean “suffer [an action].” It has been

useful in translating the passive voice from Western languages. An English sentence like “my wallet has been stolen” can be rendered in Chinese as *wo de pibao bei tou le*. Now, *wo bei hexie le*, or “I have been harmonized,” has become a standard quip when censors strike. The role of *bei* in this phrase is important. It signals that I suffered the action; it was done to me, and I in no way willed it. This “involuntarily passive” implication has led to a range of other sarcastic uses. One is *bei xingfu*, which literally means “happiness-ified.” In the Mao era, it was said that the Great Leader *mou xingfu* (sought happiness) for the people; to be on the receiving end of this search, then as now, is to be *bei xingfu*. We look at the officials who “represent” us and see ourselves as *bei daibiao* or “undergoing representation.” In each case, the point is that the “esteemed country” acts upon the “fart people,” not the other way around.

Guiguo, *pimin*, *bei hexie*, and other terms of this kind have powerful implications. They imply that the twenty-first-century answer to the question “What is it to be Chinese?” does not have to be the formula “China equals the CCP,” and that there is a terrain upon which people can explore alternative answers to questions of identity. Terms that suggest other ideas—ones that contain *min* or “people,” for example—are becoming more salient. “Fart people” or *pimin* is sarcastic and as such provides no concept with which people will identify for long. But another word containing *min* is *gongmin* (citizen), and it too has been spreading on the Internet. *Gongmin* is dignified. Like *pimin* it establishes a distance between the citizen and the party-state; but unlike *pimin*, it can be the basis of a new concept of national identity. *Gongmin* are people who

have *quan* (rights).

Talk on the Internet of rights of various kinds—the “right to know,” the “right to express,” the “right to monitor [officialdom],” and others—has been steadily increasing in recent years. In September 2011, a Tsinghua University law student named Li Yan—frustrated by the rejection of her repeated requests for research information on several government ministries—filed a lawsuit against the authorities on the basis of her “right to know.” For months after the July 2011 collision of two high-speed trains in Zhejiang province, netizens citing the same “right to know” flooded the Railways Ministry with demands that it publicly list the victims. In October 2012, a Google search for the combination of the phrases “right to know” and “high-speed train” produced 13.5 million results (just a year ago, the same search had generated 3.75 million results). From such figures we can glean an indication of how many people were concerned by the issue and how fast such language spreads.

The opening of space on the Internet for expression of authentic public opinion along with the use of that opinion to bring pressure to bear on the state-run media and on decision makers, has already become an established pattern in China. It is unlikely that it can be dislodged. A number of events in 2011 alone—the Guo Meimei Red Cross scandal, the crushing to death of toddler Wang Yue, waves of netizens making the journey to visit blind activist Chen Guangcheng at his home in Shandong province, and others—show how the mechanisms by which people can be heard and can exert pressure are not only in place but almost regular and predictable.

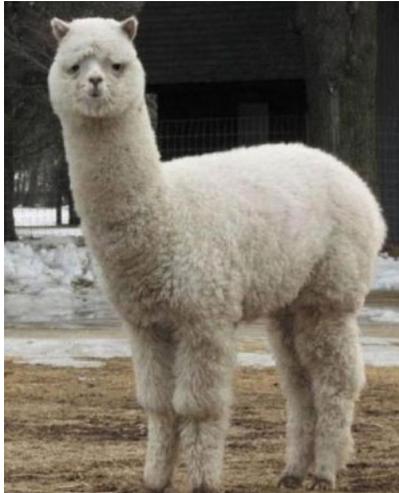
It is important to note as well that netizens who embrace the new online language also appear to embrace the political values of democracy, human rights, and freedom of expression. These netizens, with their growing numbers, expanding social networks, and increasing influence, seem to be evolving from “voices under domination” to “networked agents of change.” The government’s efforts to control online information, the implications and limitations of such control, and the capacity of Chinese netizens to advance free speech and facilitate political mobilization remain matters that are crucial to an adequate understanding of China. Are new forms of networked communication enhancing opportunities for social change and helping to move China toward a “threshold” for political transformation? Our study of the rise of a new Internet political discourse suggests that such possibilities are indeed increasing.



The Internet Ecosystem

grass-mud horse 草泥马 (*cǎonímǎ*)

De facto mascot of Chinese netizens fighting for free expression, symbolizing defiance of Internet censorship.



The grass-mud horse, whose name sounds nearly the same as “fuck your mother” (你妈 *cào nǐ mā*),

Originally conceived as a zebra, the grass-mud horse is now an alpaca. (shanti-phula.net)

was originally created to skirt government censorship of vulgar content. Film scholar [Cui Weiping](#) draws a direct connection between the launch of the “Special Campaign to Rectify Vulgar Content on the Internet” in early 2009 and the appearance of the [Song of the Grass-Mud Horse](#) in February of that year. The idea caught fire after netizens made a video depicting the grass-mud horse defeating the [river crab](#) (河蟹 *héxiè*), a homonym for the propaganda catchword “harmony” (和谐 *héxié*). Netizens continually expanded the lore of the grass-mud horse by composing [catchy songs](#), [photo albums of its natural habitat](#), and [fake nature documentaries](#).

The Communist Party is often described as “the mother” of the people, so “fuck your mother” also suggests “fuck the Party.” The grass-mud horse is one of many [mythical creatures](#) invented by netizens in response

to increasingly strict censorship measures.

A grass-mud horse is now someone who is web-savvy and critical of government attempts at censorship.

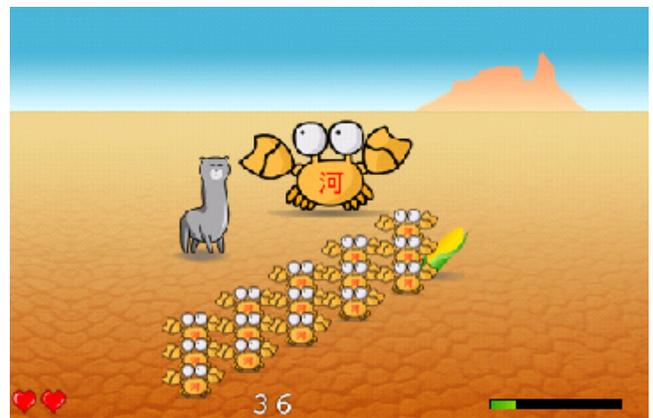
Example:

Tanlihanchaoren (@弹力啥超人): Uh ... # ¥% & * + “\$ & ...posting, getting deleted, and then reposting. I can no longer find the words to describe the number of **grass-mud horses** that are currently on my mind. (May 27, 2015)

呃...#¥%&*+ «\$&... (写了又删 删了又写, 然而我已经找不到话来表述我心中草泥马的数量了) [[Source](#)]

Mahler Gobi 马勒戈壁 (*Mǎlè Gēbì*)

Home of the mythical creature [grass-mud horse](#). Homophone of a Chinese curse word meaning “your mother’s fucking cunt” (妈了个逼 *mā le ge bī*).



A grass-mud horse encounters river crabs in the Mahler Gobi.

This mythical land, along with the grass-mud horse and the river crab, were popularized and politicized in 2009, when netizens created a very popular music video for the [Song of the Grass-Mud Horse](#). The video

used Mahler Gobi as a euphemism for the [state-controlled Internet](#). The word was then popularized to mock censorship and express discontent in general.

Example:

Kongzhiyong (@孔智勇): Some people reprimand our education system, but the Minister of Education Yuan Guiren just confirmed that “China has ensured no child would drop out of school due to poverty.”……
Mahler Gobi!!! [weak]

有人指责教育，但教育部部长袁贵仁证实：“中国基本做到了没有一个学生因贫困失学”。……马勒戈壁!!! [弱] [\[Source\]](#)

mystical country 神奇的国度 (*shénqí de guódù*)

Alternative name for China, a country which often seems to defy the laws of nature to some Chinese netizens.



In the “mystical country,” government officials can absorb information at meetings while asleep. ([club.china.com](#))

Remarking on egregiously illogical or ironic situations, netizens often explain that China must be a mystical country.

Examples:

We truly live in a mystical country; we can own our houses but the land upon which they sit forever belongs to the state!

这是一个神奇的国度！ 该国房子可以是自己的，但土地永远是国家的！

[...] This country is poor but also generous, always willing to pour vast sums into Africa.

[...] 该国很穷，却很慷慨，经常有大手笔支援

非洲。

[...] Pornographic publications are illegal, but sex shops are everywhere. (August 5, 2009)

[...] 黄色刊物属于非法，但性用品商店到处都是。 [\[Source\]](#)

See also [expensive country](#) and [Celestial Empire](#).

river crab 河蟹 (*héxiè*)

Troublesome creature whose name echoes “harmony” (和谐 *héxié*); euphemism for censorship.

Coined by netizens as a reference to the government’s justification of censorship as an essential ingredient in constructing former president Hu Jintao’s “[harmonious society](#).” In pre-Internet language, a crab is also a bully.

Both “harmony” and “river crab” can be used as verbs. Instead of saying something has been censored, you can say it has been “harmonized” (被和谐 *bèi héxié*) or “river-crabbed” (被河蟹了 *bèi héxiè*).

In Chinese [Internet mythology](#), the river crab threatens the habitat of the [grass-mud horse](#), also a symbol of online deviance. A popular [cartoon](#) illustrates this struggle.

yax lizard 亚克蜥 (*yǎkèxī*)

A [mythical creature](#) derived from the Uyghur-language word meaning “good” (“*ياخشاي*” *yakshi*) as transliterated into Chinese (亚克西 *yǎkèxī*).

The word rose to fame after the CCTV

2010 Spring Festival Gala segment “The Party’s Policies are Yaxshi,” in which dancers in traditional Uyghur dresses praised the Communist



“The CCP’s policies are yaxshi.”
(Nie Bozi)

Party, a great irony in light of the inter-ethnic riots in Xinjiang the summer before. Netizens then began using the word to mock the absurdity of the state propaganda and to sardonically praise policies in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region.

Netizens dubbed the yax lizard “the first mythical creature of 2010,” joining the [grass-mud horse](#) and the [river crab](#) in the pantheon of [mythical creatures](#)

Note: The Uyghurs are a majority-Muslim Turkic people and the titular nationality of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region.

Example:

Ast\ro (@Ast\ro): Since yesterday afternoon, the famous photo-sharing software—in fact the international social media for photography—Instagram, has been blocked. Congratulations on having a new member in the social media family along with Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, Line and Snapchat! It’s really Yakexi to live in the Celestial Empire, and how I wish I could live in the “CCTV News Simulcast!” (September 29, 2014)

从昨天(28日)下午开始，著名照片分享软件，也算是国际摄影社交圈的Instagram无法访问。祝贺Facebook、Twitter、Youtube、Line和Snapchat的社交大家庭中又添新丁！住在

天朝真是亚克西啊，真想生活在《新闻联播》里！ [\[Source\]](#)



Party and State

Celestial Empire 天朝 (*Tiāncháo*)

Ancient name for China; netizens use the term sarcastically to refer to China under the current government. It often suggests that China's leaders are self-important, have a China-centric view of the world, and embody many of the imperial trappings communism was supposed to have thrown off.



Character combining “celestial” and “kingdom.” (Source)

“Celestial Empire” is also used in other sarcastic plays on words, such as [“Celestial Empire goes into the pot”](#) (天朝上锅 *Tiāncháo shàng guō*), which is a near-homonym for “Celestial Empire above all other nations.”

An alternate way of writing it has at times been [blocked from Sina Weibo search results](#), likely because “Celestial Empire” is often used in criticism of the government or state of affairs in China.

Example:

Zhenshidehuangyane (@真实的谎言e): Special characteristics of the **Celestial Empire**: corruption is its father, shamelessness is its mother! What a mystical country! (September 24, 2014)

天朝特色，腐败是爹，无耻是妈！ // @老王故

事会://@相思洋: 神奇的国度! [Source]

See also [mystical country](#) and [expensive country](#).

Crotch Central Committee 裆中央 (*Dāng Zhōngyāng*)

Chinese Communist Party Central Committee, the powerful decision-making body that comprises the most powerful Party leaders.

The character “party” (党 *dǎng*) is replaced with “crotch” (裆 *dāng*). Substitutes like “file” (档 *dàng*) or “block” (挡 *dǎng*) may also be used. “Crotch Central Committee” is [blocked from Weibo search results](#) as of June 19, 2015.

Example:

Caozhanglao (@草长老): Guo Meimei saved sugar daddies; Zhou Yongkang saved the **Crotch Central Committee**. (August 4, 2014)

搞臭郭美美，挽救干爹腿；搞臭周永康，挽救裆中央。 [Source]

cured meat 腊肉 (*làròu*)

“Cured meat” or “bacon,” used by netizens to refer to the mummified remains of Chairman Mao.

Describing the venerated former chairman's remains as a



Cured meat with Mao's tell-tale hairdo. (Weibo)

salt-cured meat product has been deemed disrespectful by China's censorship apparatus, making 毛腊肉 (*Máo làròu*) a [blocked search term on Sina Weibo](#).

The embalmed body of Mao Zedong has been on display at his [mausoleum in the center of Tiananmen Square](#) since 1977, where people converge to pay their respects to the communist revolutionary and founding father of the People's Republic of China.

Example: On his Blocked on Weibo Tumblr blog, Weibo watcher Jason Ng has translated and commented on a [popular joke recipe for preparing “Mao bacon”](#):

A fierce boar from the Huguang province [the pre-Qing name for Hunan and Hubei, where Mao lived—ed]: First, empty the internal organs and wash with 7 kg of salt, 0.2 kg fine nitrate preservative, 0.4 kg pepper. For the deboned meat, use 2.5 kg salt 2.5, 0.2 kg fine nitrate, 5 kg of sugar, 3.7 kg of baijiu and soy sauce mixed, 3-4 kg of water. Optional ingredients that can be added prior include salt and crushed pepper, fennel, cinnamon and other spices; dry and flatten, seal up well and bathe in Chinese medicine for three days, until the surface fluffs up, that way the seasoning penetrates through the meat. Then disinfect it with alcohol and dry in the sun. [followed by various descriptions of how to eat/what it tastes like; a recent re-post of this recipe adds this line: “Because of the special preservation, you can store it for up to a year; I’ve heard that families can even preserve Mao bacon in a jar for 40 years,” the being a reference to Mao’s glass enclosure. [\[Source\]](#)

expensive country 贵国 (*guì guó*)

Sarcastic reference to China.

Discontent over high prices spurred use of

this term, which implies that basic needs like housing, fuel, power, and health care are all too costly.

贵 (*guì*) is also the honorific form of “your”; literally “your honorable country,” is often used in diplomatic speech. Using “your honorable country” in reference to China separates the speaker from his country, in opposition



Character combining “expensive” and “country.” (Source unknown)

to 我国 (*wǒ guó*), “our country.” [Xiao Qiang and Perry Link explain](#) that in this turn of phrase, netizens imply that “the state...belongs to you rulers, not to me.”

Example:

@Athena_T: Google Maps is infinitely better than all the alternatives. Yet, for a variety of reasons, it can't be used inside this **expensive country**. (October 22, 2014)

Google map就是好用几万倍 贵国就是各种奇葩不能用 真是 [\[Source\]](#)

See also [Celestial Empire](#), [kneeling country](#), [mystical country](#), and [your country](#).

free from turmoil

不折腾 (*bù zhēteng*):

One of former president Hu Jintao's signature phrases speaking to his efforts promoting [harmony](#) and [social stability](#), which included the suppression of opinions not consistent with the government line.

This phrase originates from a northeastern dialect of Mandarin and was made popular by Hu in a [January 2009 speech](#):

As long as we remain immovable, as long as we do not become complacent, as long as we are free from turmoil and steadfastly push forward reforms, and steadfastly follow the path of socialism with Chinese characteristics—then we will certainly realize this great blueprint and win this grand struggle.

只要我们不动摇、不懈怠、不折腾，坚定不移地推进改革开放，坚定不移地走中国特色社会主义道路，就一定能够胜利实现这一宏伟蓝图和奋斗目标。 [Source]

Some netizens criticize Hu Jintao for only knowing how to be free of turmoil.

Example:

Shageqidexiaokule1 (@傻哥气得笑哭了1) : Why do I hate “Hu [Jintao and] Wen [Jiabao]?” Let’s start with “Hu.” If you don’t have a diamond drill then don’t work on porcelain. Why don’t you resign if you don’t have what it takes to do the job? Since you refuse to resign, then “do what you are supposed to do in the position that you are in!” You only know how to be “**free from turmoil.**” Isn’t this holding onto a post without doing the work and not letting anyone else take over? As the top official, are you only going to get the credit but not take responsibility? Now let’s talk about “Wen.” Your entire family became rich overnight since you came to power. Yet, you are not ashamed of saying that you have “never acted in your personal interest!” When you hurt decent people, you say, “that’s clearly impossible!” Typical scumbags! (August 1, 2014)

为啥俺恨 “虎纹”？先说“虎”，没有金刚钻别揽瓷器活，你没这个能力为啥不辞职？既然不辞职，那就“在其位谋其政”！你只会“不折腾”，这是不是占着茅坑不拉屎？当一把手难道只贪功不担责吗？再说“纹”，自你掌权后你全家暴富，你居然有脸说“从未谋私利”！陷害忠良你居然说“办铁案”！标准人渣！ [Source]

imperial capital 帝都 (*dìdū*)

Beijing. Often contrasted with the Demon Capital (魔都 *mó dū*), i.e. Shanghai.

The use of “imperial capital” to mean Beijing has increased as Internet users have increasingly come to rely on code words, homonyms, and creatively indirect references to avoid and circumvent censorship. “Imperial capital” is [blocked on Weibo](#) as of June 19, 2015.

Example:

Diyiweiwen (@第一微闻): In February I ate smog. In March I ate sand. In April I ate catkins. Today this damn meal has arrived!! Long live the **imperial capital!** (April 15, 2015)

二月吃霾，三月吃沙，四月吃絮，今天尼玛来了个套餐！！帝都万岁！ [Source]

Kim Fatty III 金三胖 (*Jīn Sān Pàng*)

Nickname for Kim Jong Un, Supreme Leader of North Korea.



Kim Jong Un inherited leadership after his father’s death in December 2011. While China’s [state media expressed condolences](#) for Kim

“How did North Korea get strong? Because of Kim Fatty III.” Inspired by a [Global Times Chinese dream ad](#). (Artist: [Cheng Tao](#))

Jong Il’s death, Chinese netizens immediately began lampooning his chubby son. Kim Jong Un quickly became “Kim Fatty III.”

China is one of North Korea's only allies. Over the years, the [Chinese public has grown increasingly uneasy](#) with this diplomatic relationship.

Example: Weibo users commented on [Kim Jong Un's 40-day disappearance](#) in 2014:

Xuanhuwencha (@悬壶问茶): I asked Uncle Doorman, "Why does Kim Fatty III have to play hide-and-peek? Uncle Doorman (*Menweidaye* @门卫大爷) says, "**Kim Fatty III** has three goals: one, to test the loyalty of his cadres; two, to see how the U.S., U.K., Japan, and South Korea react; and three, to slap Chinese intellectuals in the face. (October 14, 2014)

我问门卫大爷：金三胖为什么要玩捉迷藏呢？@门卫大爷说：三胖玩捉迷藏有三个目的：1、考考干部队伍的忠诚度；2、看看美英日韩的反应；3、打打中国公知的脸。
[Source]

See also [West Korea](#).

kneeling country 跪国 (*guì guó*)

A mockery term to describe a country where citizens feel compelled to kneel in order to get what they should be entitled to.



Two people kneel in front of a courthouse holding signs that read, "Return my wages, allow me to live," and, "The court has frozen the retirement funds of an 83 year old elderly person." (canyu.org)

Homophone to "distinguished country" (贵国 *guì guó*), a term frequently used on diplomatic occasions, and sometimes sardonically interpreted as "[expensive country](#)" by netizens.

Kneeling in front of a government building or government official is a way for petitioners to attract public attention and get their grievances heard.

Example:

Guchengyike (@孤城异客): A qilu poem — Culture of the **Kneeling Country**: Forget that a real man doesn't kneel easily; this divine land is always full of disabled men. Servile people kowtow at the red steps of the palace: ignorant masses kiss the ground at the government buildings. People kowtow to salute the emperor and cultivate themselves to be shitizens. A man shamelessly proclaims that Chinese people have stood up; we should all know it's merely a self-consoling fantasy.

七律 跪国文化 休说膝下有黄金，自古神州薺废人。 奴到丹墀头抢地，氓出衙署嘴蒙尘。 撅臀三尺朝天子，稽首千年做屁民。 不惭豪言称站起，当知自慰带意淫。 [Source]

See also, [Celestial Empire](#), [expensive country](#), [mystical country](#) and [your country](#).

Ministry of Foreign Assistance 援交部 (*Yuánjiāo Bù*)

Pejorative nickname for China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Netizens often complain about the government sending foreign aid money to other countries rather than putting resources into domestic problems

For example, in November of 2011, China donated a number of school buses to

Macedonia not long after a series of [school bus accidents](#) involving crowded, dangerous buses, as well as trucks re-purposed as buses.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has also earned this name with unpopular stances on international issues. A conciliatory statement by Ministry of Foreign Affairs Spokesman Hong Lei regarding Russia's capture of Chinese fishing boats in July 2012 resulted in websites decrying the stance of the Ministry of Foreign Assistance. On the Club China BBS forum, a People's Daily report on the incident was given the title "Ministry of Foreign Assistance: Russian Shelling of Chinese Fishing Boat an Isolated Incident" ([援交部：俄炮击中国渔船是孤立事件](#)).

relevant department 有关部门 (*yǒuguān bùmén*)

Ambiguous reference to the powers that be; government jargon and source of frustration for many Chinese people.

Sometimes the "relevant department" is clear from context, but more often it remains obscure. A government spokesperson may assure people that "the relevant department" is taking care of a particular crisis without elaborating which particular department that may be. Or a [request for information](#) may be turned down and the person



Relevant Department agent. (Weibo)

seeking the information directed to ask the "relevant department" without identifying which department that is.

Examples: From [Chinese Uncyclopedia](#):

The **Relevant Department** is the most powerful Chinese governmental body since the beginning of time. The **Relevant Department** takes care of everything other departments are unwilling to tackle, and is quoted by the media more than any other department. It is also the most inscrutable governmental body in the world. The **Relevant Department** does not appear under normal circumstances, and you will not be able to find it. Over the years, the **Relevant Department** has solved many problems and eased many worries for the government and the press.

有关部门，是中国有史以来权利最大的执政部门，跟相关部门全力并列，其他部门不愿做的事情，他们都做，媒体最热衷报料的部门。其中，他们又是世界上最神秘的部门，一般情况他们绝对的不会出现，你也不会找的到。多年来，有关部门为政府，为媒体，排忧解难，解决了不少烦恼。[[Source](#)]

On Sina Weibo, a fellow netizen jokingly asked a relevant department to investigate Hu Xijin, a journalist and editor of the state-owned Global Times:

Weikemanhua (@魏克漫画): Could the relevant department please look into this person named Hu Xijin? He spends all day trying to fool people to be patriotic, yet he is engaged in activities that hurt the country. (August 1, 2014)

请有关部门查一下这个@胡锡进，成天忽悠别人爱国，自己却在干这种损害国家的勾当 [[Source](#)]

serve the *renminbi* 为人民币服务 (*wèi rénminbì fúwù*)

Parody of Mao Zedong's political slogan, "[serve the people](#)," which appears in Mao's calligraphy above many government

buildings and [in front of the entrance to Zhongnanhai](#), the complex that houses the State Council and the Communist Party of China.

为人民币服务 毛泽东

“Serve the Renminbi.” Meme reimagining Mao’s famous quote. (Source unknown)

China’s currency, the RMB (*rénmínbì* 人民币), literally means “the people’s currency.” By adding one extra character, “serve the people” is transformed into “serve the *renminbi*.” The parody strikes a chord with those who feel that officials are more concerned with accumulating personal wealth than they are with actually serving the people.

Example:

Bupingzeming (@不评则鸣): A trait common to all Chinese Communist Party officials: serve the *renminbi*!!!! (May 6, 2015)

中国共产党的官员共性：为人民币服务！！！！
! [Source]

TG (Earthy Communists) 土共 (*Tǔgòng*)

The Chinese Communist Party. The first character (土 *tǔ*), can be a noun meaning “earth” or “soil,” or an adjective meaning “earthy,” “unrefined,” or “uncouth.”

There is some disagreement about the origin of this term. Some say that TG derives from “Earthy Eighth Route” (土八路 *Tǔ Bālù*), a [nickname for the Chinese communist military brigade during World War II](#) known as the Eighth Route Army. Others believe TG was [coined by Chiang Kai-shek](#)

to refer to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) after he and the Nationalists fled to Taiwan. Still others say the term was [invented in Hong Kong](#) in the 1990s to disparagingly refer to the CCP.

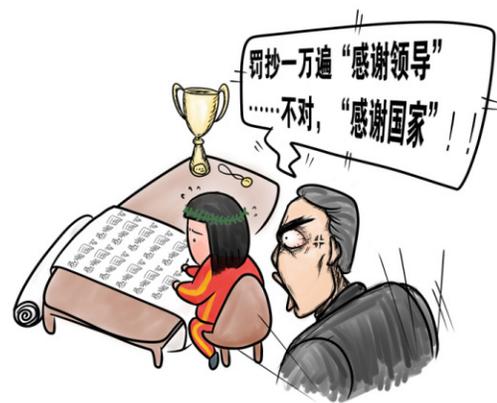
Example:

@rif76: To eat TG’s food and oppose TG is disloyalty; to be a Chinese person and hold out the TG’s rice bowl is an injustice. (April 8, 2015)

吃着TG的饭反TG，是为不忠；身为中国人，端TG的饭碗，是为不义。 [Source]

thanks to the country 感谢国家 (*gǎnxiè guójiā*)

A sarcastic Internet phrase used to imply that the thanks being offered is either forced or not merited.



“Write ‘Thanks to the leaders’ 10,000 times... no, ‘Thanks to the country!!’” (Artist unknown)

After Chinese speed skater Zhou Yang won the 1,500 meter event in the 2010 Vancouver Olympic Winter Games, she thanked her parents in a press conference. Yu Zaiqing, Deputy Director of the National Sports Bureau, criticized her for not first thanking her country. Heeding his advice, Zhou held a second news conference

during which she first thanked her country, then her parents and coaches. See also [Kim Fatty III](#).

Examples:



Tamendoujiaowozhuangchunchun (@他们都叫我装纯纯): I am about to die from the heat! I must first thank the government, thank the Party, and **thank my country** for letting me sit in a place like this to wait for the bus!

热死了！首先我要感谢政府感谢党感谢国家！让我在这种地方坐着等车！[\[Source\]](#)

The phrase can also be used after mentioning an action taken by the state with only minor benefits and substantial costs: “The world should really **thank the country** for spending US\$60 billion on such a great World Expo,” or “Kim Jong-il should really **thank the country** for showing him such a good time while he’s in China.” It can also be used when the government takes small measures to address a problem that it caused in the first place: “I have to **thank my country** for ending the Cultural Revolution.”

West Korea

西朝鲜 (*Xī Cháoxiǎn*)

Pejorative term for China, literally “North Korea of the West.”

Netizens complain about the similarities between North Korea and China: repressive rulers, lack of democracy, corruption, fear of the West, etc.

Example:

May I ask, how can a country that claims to be a democracy have hereditary rule? For example, could you discuss North Korea and West Korea? (undated)

请问如何在一个号称民主的国家，把世袭制玩的这么溜？请参考朝鲜和西朝鲜分析一下？[\[Source\]](#)

Society and Culture

APEC blue

APEC蓝 (APEC lán)

The color of the skies over Beijing during the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit in November 2014.



“Why is APEC blue so very blue?” (Weibo)

In an effort to [cut air pollution by 40%](#) for the summit, the city gave students and workers a bonus “Golden Week” holiday, halted factory and construction work, enacted alternate driving days for even and odd license plates, and even put a temporary stop to barbecues and cremations. The skies were indeed bluer, but the extent of the improvement was tough to measure—air quality data from the U.S. embassy, available to denizens on the [China Air Quality Index app](#) and considered more reliable than municipal reports, was [censored](#). “APEC blue” thus describes a hue reserved for foreign dignitaries that cannot be quantified.

Examples:

Songyingjie (@宋英杰): It’s said that Beijing only had two cases of smog this year: once before APEC, and once after. (November 19, 2014)

据说，北京今年其实只有两次雾霾：一次APEC前，一次APEC后。 [[Source](#)]

Caijingnǚjìzhěbuluo (@财经女记者部落): #APECblue tells us: It’s not that the

government can’t do it, it’s that you aren’t important! (November 6, 2014)

“#APEC蓝#” 告诉我们：不是政府做不到，是你们不重要！ [[Source](#)]

See also Chai Jing blue.

brickspert

砖家 (zhuānjiā)

Experts who are beholden to government or corporate interests. The first character in “expert” (专家 *zhuānjiā*) is replaced with “brick” (砖). Bricksperts often downplay health and safety risks and justify difficult economic conditions.

Examples: Take this response to the August 6, 2013 People’s Daily article “Experts Say Half of People Want to Delay Retirement; National Pension Increases 30 Billion RMB Annually” ([专家称近一半人想延迟退休 养老金年增收300亿](#)):

@zening: The **bricksperts** are wrong. They ought to say that no Chinese person wants to retire—they want to offer their entire lives to the Party as tribute!! (August 7, 2013)

砖家说的不对，应该是全体中国人都不想退休～～为党奉献终生！！ [[Source](#)]

Bricksperts are especially famous for their opinions on the real estate market:

Huangrihan-baihe (@黄日涵-白鹤): Those **bricksperts** who claim that low housing prices don’t meet urban standards, aren’t they lap dogs for developers? What about lap dogs for economists and scholars of international relations? (August 6, 2013)

那些说房价低不符合城市水准的砖家是不是地产商的宠物，有宠物经济学家，有没有宠物国际关系学者呢？ [[Source](#)]

Chai Jing blue 柴静蓝 (*Chái Jìng lán*)

Term and hashtag campaign used by netizens to praise former CCTV anchor Chai Jing after she released the air pollution documentary “[Under the Dome](#).” Also the color of the Beijing skies immediately following the release of the film and coinciding with the annual “[Two Sessions](#).”



Screenshot from the lecture portion of Chai Jing’s “Under the Dome.”

On February 28, 2015, Chai Jing released her self-funded documentary “Under the Dome,” an in-depth look at China’s infamously smoggy skies. The film was aimed at answering three questions: what is smog, where does it come from, and what can be done about it. Chai’s documentary was first launched on the website of the People’s Daily [along with an interview](#), and was viewed nearly 200 million times over the next few days. After the film went viral, censors ordered all media to [halt promoting it and to regulate online “public opinion”](#) concerning it.

The release of “Under the Dome” came just days before the launch of the Two Sessions, and subsequent propaganda directives emphasized that [neither Chai nor her film should outshine coverage of](#)

[the meetings](#). An anonymous online [essay explains officials’ likely reasoning](#) behind shutting down discussion of the film.

Officials have been known to tighten pollution controls ahead of important international gatherings, as they [did during the 2008 Beijing Olympics](#). Ahead of the [2014 APEC summit](#), enhanced regulations successfully scrubbed the sky, and netizens dubbed it “[APEC blue](#).” Mirroring that sarcastic term, netizens launched the hashtag campaign #ChaiJingblue (#柴静蓝#) to honor her effort in publicizing the critical issue. Many netizens asked if “Two Sessions blue” (两会蓝) would be more fitting a coinage, as the skies above Beijing at the start of the annual meetings were as clean as they were during the launch of the APEC gathering. Investigative journalist [Luo Changping, for example, said on Weibo](#), “Chai Jing Blue: Due to the efforts of concerned parties, the smog has been swept away just ahead of the Two Sessions, just as I earlier speculated they would. Should we call this ‘Chai Jing blue’ or ‘Two Sessions blue’?” (【柴静蓝】经过有关方面的努力，雾霾终于在两会召开前夕一扫而空，我说的是网上。这算是柴静蓝，还是两会蓝？)

Chai Jing has long been known as a person with great concern for the well-being of China, as demonstrated by a [speech she delivered in 2009](#) while still with CCTV. Chai [left CCTV in 2013, and went to the U.S. to give birth to her daughter](#)—a move that drew criticism in China at the time. In her People’s Daily interview and during the lecture portion of her film, Chai notes that her daughter being born with a lung condition was a major factor motivating her to make the film.

Example:

Huo Yanli (@霍彦立): Students and friends, please take a moment to watch Chai Jing's "Under the Dome"! If everyone could be a citizen in the style of Chai Jing, the people's well-being would increase a degree, as would the hope for our nation! Learn from Chai Jing, praise Chai Jing! When I look up at the blue sky, I think of Chai Jing—I call it "Chai Jing blue"! (March 2, 2014)

同学们，朋友们，请静心观看柴静的专题片“穹顶之下”！中国每多一个柴静式公民，人民就多一份福祉，国家就多一分希望！向柴静学习！向柴静致敬！再看到蓝天，我就想起柴静，我就叫它“柴静蓝”！[Source]

See also [APEC blue](#) and [smog the people](#).

Chaoyang masses

朝阳群众 (*Cháoyáng qúnzhòng*)

Volunteer "anti-terrorism" patrols in Beijing's Chaoyang district.



Volunteer security patrols in Beijing. (Source: Fu Ding/China Daily)

The central government launched a "people's war" on terrorism in 2014 in response to [attacks in Tiananmen Square](#) and train stations in [Kunming](#), [Guangzhou](#), and [Urumqi](#). Volunteer security patrols were recruited in cities nationwide as part of the anti-terrorism effort. [Hundreds of Beijing retirees signed up](#), earning cash rewards for information on illegal drug use and other social scourges.

Conflating the tip-offs from the volunteer "masses" and the arrest of several celebrities for drug possession in Beijing's

cosmopolitan Chaoyang district, the hip state media website ThePaper.cn posted a [humorous column about the "Chaoyang masses"](#) on March 11, 2015. The article was soon deleted, but the idea that the grannies practicing tai chi in the park were members of an elite intelligence agency caught on.

Similar volunteer patrol programs have operated in the capital during major events like the [2008 Olympics](#) and the [18th Party Congress](#) in the fall of 2012.

Example:

Zazheng (@昨整): The **Chaoyang masses** will teach you the true meaning of 'Big Brother is watching you.'

朝阳区群众都会让你了解到“老大哥在看着你”这句话的真谛 [Source]

compare fathers

拼爹 (*pīn diē*)

Social phenomenon in which a father's status is believed to give a more accurate prediction of future success than one's own ability or accomplishments. This term is a product of the [growing disparity between the rich and poor](#) in a society with limited social mobility.



Left: "My dad is a director!"
Right: "My dad is a section chief!" (Xinhua)

Young people with powerful fathers are members of the rich second generation cohort. In the past few years, there have been many incidents of [rich second generation](#)

youths relying on their fathers' wealth or power to avoid taking responsibility for their wrongdoings.

Perhaps most famously, in 2010, Li Qiming drove drunk and ran over a college student, killing her. When he exited the car, he famously declared, "[My dad is Li Gang](#)," asking which bystanders dared to sue him. His declaration became one of the year's most viral Internet memes.

More recently, Li Tianyi, the son of a general in the People's Liberation Army, was [arrested for involvement in a gang rape](#); it was widely believed that the younger Li felt he could get away with such acts because of his father's status and wealth.

People don't only "compare fathers" to escape justice. Many do so simply to enjoy preferential treatment or access to opportunities not available to the less connected.

Example:

Baiyangzuodexiaolili (@白羊座的小丽丽): Today's society is all about **comparing fathers**, comparing mothers, and comparing connections. For people like us who have nothing we can only rely on hard work. I believe as long as we work hard we too can have a future. (June 2, 2015)

现在的社会都是都是拼爹拼妈拼关系，，，像咋们这样啥都没有的，只能拼命啦/憨笑/憨笑/憨笑我相信，，只要自己足够努力，有一天也会看到未来的，，加油/示爱/示爱/示爱/示爱/示爱 [Source]

See also [my dad is Li Gang](#), [red second generation](#), [rich second generation](#), and [governing second generation](#).

demolish it 拆哪 (*chāi nǎ*)

Homophone of the English word "China," referring to the character for "demolish" (拆 *chāi*), a ubiquitous site on buildings slated for destruction.



Bulldozer with "demolish" written on it, an extension of the bureaucratic arm. (ycwb.com)

Demolition has a special meaning in contemporary China, as demolitions, often forced on tenants with little or no compensation, are a major source of social instability. Developers and the local government profit greatly from forcibly evicting people from their homes to build on the land. Anger over forced demolitions led the people of [Wukan](#), Guangdong to fight the local government, eventually laying siege to their village in December 2011.

哪 *nǎ* means "where" or "which." Hence, *chāi nǎ* also sounds like the question "Where/which to demolish?" mocking the ubiquity of demolition.

Throughout China, "demolish" is spray-painted or stenciled on the sides of buildings slated for demolition. People

who have had their homes demolished are called 拆迁户 (*chāiqiānhù*).

Chāi nǎ is included in Linguist Victor Mair's [collection of nicknames for China](#).

Example:

Yetan (@叶檀): The newly built housings are garbage and will have to be demolished after becoming ghettos. "Demolishing" will boost GDP. If we want our buildings to last a hundred years, we need to firstly, rely on good planning and secondly, rely on the quality of the architecture. The government didn't do its part, and now there is no use in issuing an administrative order to not demolish anymore. (September 26, 2014)

建成的新房就是垃圾，住成贫民窟，只能拆哪，拆了增加GDP。想有百年建筑，一靠规划，二靠建筑质量，政府该做的没做好，现在下行政不拆命令，没用。 [\[Source\]](#)

ditch oil 地沟油 (*dìgōu yóu*)

Cooking oil "refined" from leftover food, also known as "gutter oil."



"Refining" ditch oil. (news178.com)

The leftovers from homes and restaurants are usually fed to pigs, but some unscrupulous people will gather the slop and "recycle" it by selling it as low-cost cooking oil. Refining ditch oil is illegal because of its negative health effects; [it can be carcinogenic](#)

[and contain hazardous chemicals](#).

Ditch oil first became a known problem in 2010, when authorities revealed that [up to one-tenth of cooking oil used in China](#) might actually be ditch oil. Ongoing investigations have shown that ditch oil is widely used. Ditch oil is now a symbol of China's ongoing food safety issues. A 2012 study by the Pew Research Center found that [41% of Chinese considered food safety a very big problem](#) for the country, up from just 12% in 2008.

Example:

Yifushitang (@一夫食堂): Since using ditch oil also incurs costs, why not add a little less? It's not easy eating out. (May 25, 2015)

即使地沟油也要成本呀，能不能少放点儿，出门在外吃饭真是不容易。 [\[Source\]](#)

get soy sauce 打酱油 (*dǎ jiàngyóu*)

"No comment" or "none of my business." Humorous way for netizens to distance themselves from a sensitive or political topic.

The word came into popular usage after Guangzhou Television interviewed a local resident about the [Edison Chen photo scandal](#). The man answered, "What the fuck does it have to do with me? I was just out buying soy sauce."

打 *dǎ* means "to hit." Before soy sauce was sold in individual bottles, customers would bring an empty vessel to the store, which they would fill under with soy sauce under a spigot.

Example: The phrase can also be used

in an ordinary context, such as to express one's lack of interest in the World Cup:

Lulu318 (@璐璐318): The World Cup has started. Many people are immensely excited. I am just here to get soy sauce. (June 12, 2014)

世界杯开始啦啦，好多人激动不已，我是来打酱油的。[Source]

GuoMeimeibaby (Guo Meimei) @郭美美baby (GuōMěiměibaby)

Weibo handle for Guo Meimei, the wealthy Chinese woman who almost single-handedly destroyed the credibility of the Red Cross Society of China.

Guo flaunts her extravagant lifestyle online, posting photos of herself [reclining on her Maserati](#) or [clutching her lime green Hermes bag](#). In June 2011, then 20-year-old Guo [claimed that she was the “General Manager of Red Cross Commerce.”](#) Guo's self-identified connection to the Red Cross outraged netizens, who [already suspected that Red Cross donations were being misused](#).

Guo's affiliation with the Red Cross was eventually discredited, but her legacy continues to plague the charity. After a 6.6-magnitude earthquake shook Sichuan Province in April 2013, Guo [resurfaced in online discussions](#), while a sex tape allegedly featuring the young woman trended on Weibo. Suffering from a lack of donations, it was reported at the end of the month that the Red Cross would reopen the investigation into Guo—a promise the organization quickly [denied](#).

In August 2014, Guo again re-emerged in a [televised confession](#) in which she admitted

to working as a call girl and involvement in a World Cup Gambling Ring. The confession aired immediately after a factory explosion in Jiangsu and an earthquake in Yunnan. The choice to crucify Guo instead of focusing on these disasters prompted netizen speculation that the goal was either distraction or a massive PR campaign for the Red Cross. Later, the government [ordered media to cool down coverage of Guo](#).

patriotraitor 爱国贼 (àiguózéi)

A patriotraitor is someone who betrays his/her country's interests while outwardly professing patriotism—a play on “traitor” (卖国贼 *màiguózéi*) and “patriotic” (爱国 *àiguó*).



Cai Mingchao hiding behind a shield with the characters “patriot.” Cai is a prominent art dealer who defaulted in his 31.5 million euro commitment to purchase two bronze animal heads taken from the Ming Summer Palace. He claimed that he defaulted out of a sense of patriotism. Others sensed an ulterior motive. (blog.ifeng.com)

Netizens pejoratively refer to people who are uncritically nationalistic as either “patriotraitors” or “[shit youth](#)” (粪青 *fènqīng*).

Fudan University student [Tao Weishuo](#)

[earned the title of patriotraitor](#) in a 2009 town hall with Barack Obama after objecting to the president's discussion of Internet censorship in China. "I strongly disagree with what Obama said about the Internet firewall," the Washington Post quoted him saying. "I think all Chinese people have Internet freedom—we can speak out freely on the Internet about current social affairs."

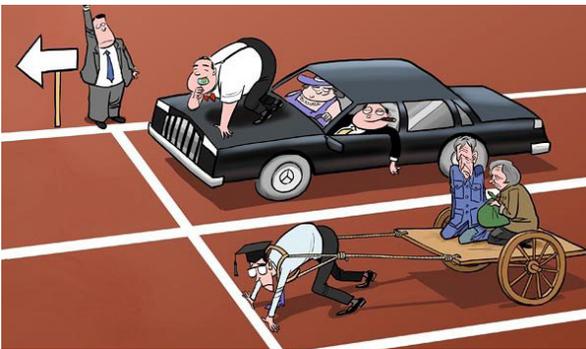
Example:

Chenyingsong (@陈应松): When the patriotraitors are scolding America, don't they know that the state leaders' children are in America now?

爱国贼骂米国时，不知道领导人的后代正在米国？ [\[Source\]](#)

rich second generation 富二代 (*fù èr dài*)

Sons and daughters of China's newly rich.



For the poor second generation, parents are more of a burden than an asset. For the rich second generation the opposite is true. (Source: baike.sogou.com)

Before China's [reform and opening](#), communism had substantially leveled the playing field, putting most people on more or less the same economic level. Since the launch of Deng Xiaoping's free market reforms in the late 1970s, the gap between rich and poor has become ever more apparent. The children of those who have prospered as a result of economic reforms

are called the "rich second generation" and the children of those who did not prosper are called the "[poor second generation](#)." Commentators complain that institutional barriers (for example, the high cost of education, or the value of connections) prevent the poor second generation from moving up.

The [bad behavior displayed by some members of this privileged young cohort](#) have caused much disdain in contemporary China.

Example:

Shizhehunfrh (@诗哲魂frh): The **rich second generation** lead a remarkable lifestyle. Recently quite a number of them have flaunted their wealth on social media websites. Now that you have seen the life of the rich kids, is there anything you would like to say?

富二代的生活尤其引人侧目，最近³社交网站上出现的 可谓是真正的炫富集中营。瞻仰完富孩子们的生活，你有什么想说的呢？ [\[Source\]](#)

See also [governing second generation](#) and [red second generation](#).

shit youth 粪青 (*fènqīng*)

A pejorative homophone for "[angry youth](#)" (愤青 *fènqīng*), young people who are extremely vocal with their nationalism.

"Angry youth" are known to whip up anti-Japanese and anti-Western fervor: they founded the website [Anti-CNN](#) in response to [CNN's coverage of the 2008 Tibet riots](#), and frequently catalyze [anti-Japanese street protests](#). "Angry youth" [cause the Chinese government considerable anxiety](#), as they may organize and resist the control

of the authorities. The derogatory “shit youth” implies that their fervor is irrational and even dangerous.

Example:

Maizangluopo (@埋葬落魄): Those who dismiss everything, cry and curse, are **shit youth**. Those who are discontent with reality, eager to create change, and cry out in anger are angry youth. Only those who move forward step by step are striving youths. Too many people carry the banner of thought and personality in the name of the angry youth, yet act in the manner of **shit youth**. Let's use our youth to accomplish something concrete; if we do not strive, what right do we have to “rage?!”

否定一切,谩骂攻击,哭爹骂娘,这是粪青。不满现实,急于改变,愤起而呼,这是愤青。只有一步步踏实走下去了,才是奋青。多少人扛着思想和个性的大旗,以愤青之名,行粪青之事。青春,还是干点儿实事吧。不奋,又有什么资格“愤”?! [Source]

smog the people 喂人民服雾 (*wèi rénmin fú wù*)

Literally “feed smog to the people.” This play on Mao Zedong’s motto “serve the people” offers commentary on China’s ever-worsening air quality.



Smogging the people. (Artist: [Yuanzi](#))

While “smog the people” has been in use for several years, the phrase gained currency in October 2013, when [smog stopped traffic and hindered tennis matches in Beijing](#) and [brought an “airpocalypse” to Harbin](#).

Around New Year’s 2014, many Weibo users called “smog the people” the [biggest “watchword” of 2013](#).

See also [APEC blue](#) and [Chai Jing blue](#).

tearfully urge 含泪劝告 (*hánlèi quàngào*)

Infamous appeal to victims of the [2008 Sichuan earthquake](#) to stop complaining about the shoddy construction of schools, which lead to the deaths of thousands of school children.

The 7.9-magnitude earthquake that struck mountainous Wenchuan County, Sichuan on May 12, 2008 [claimed the lives of over 5,000 children](#), whose poorly built “tofu dregs” schools collapsed on them. [Government buildings weathered the quake far better](#). Angry parents were [begged](#) to stop protesting. Some were [detained](#) at the scene or at protests, while others [called off memorials](#) at the warning of officials.

A month after the quake, literary figure [Yu Qiuyu](#) penned the essay “[A Tearful Request for the Earthquake Survivors](#)” (含泪劝告请愿灾民), in which he implored parents to stop their protests. He suggested the parents were being used by those with “[ulterior motives](#)”

and by “anti-Chinese forces.” Many netizens accused Yu of trying to protect the



Yu Qiuyu with a copy of his inflammatory essay. (Artist: Ah Niu)

corrupt politicians and contractors whose greed and negligence had led to so many deaths. Some “tearfully urged Yu Qiuyu to jump in a river” (含泪劝告余秋雨去投江).

Angered by the criticism and the parodies of his essay, Yu wrote a reply to his critics, “[You Are Not Permitted to Continue Insulting the Chinese People](#)” (不准继续侮辱中国人).

Blogger Huang Lin has written an [exposition on the “fashion of the tearfully urging writing style.”](#)

Artist Ai Weiwei lead an effort to collect the names of the schoolchildren, resulting in the performance piece “[Commemoration.](#)” He and the volunteers who came with him to Sichuan faced [police harassment](#). The activist [Tan Zuoren served a five-year sentence](#) for “inciting subversion of state power” after he tried to compile a list of the children’s names.

temporary worker 临时工 (*línshígōng*)

Whomever they may be, these workers are often used as a convenient scapegoat by officials.



A temporary worker shields permanent employees from investigation. (Xinhua)

For example, when several sponsors of the [The Backbone Award](#) withdrew their money in 2011, they claimed their support had been granted through documents forged by “temporary workers.” In January 2013, one netizen quipped that [Beijing’s two million propaganda workers “outside the system”](#) must be temporary workers.

Example:

Shengzhongjiacishishangshenghuoguan (@盛中家瓷时尚生活馆): Chengguan officials are indeed cruel! Whenever something goes wrong they blame it on the temporary workers. (June 7, 2015)

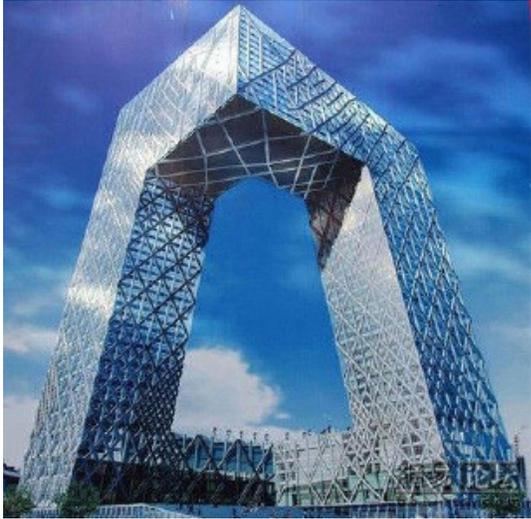
管城就是狠！一出事就说临时工 [[Source](#)]



Censorship and Propaganda

big boxer shorts 大裤衩 (*dà kùchǎ*)

Slang term given to the CCTV building designed by Dutch architect Rem Koolhaas.



CCTV building in Beijing. (Source unknown)

The building is said to variously resemble a pair of walking legs, a person squatting over a toilet, and female genitalia. In response to criticism over the building's design, the architect has denied any impure motives.

CCTV launched a large public relations campaign to popularize a more respectful nickname for the building. However, this effort only increased the popularity of “big boxer shorts.”

Beijing has been called an architect's playground due to the large number of oddly-shaped modern buildings that have been recently erected there. The city is also home to the Beijing National Stadium, known as the “Bird's Nest,” and the National Centre for the Performing Arts, known as the “Giant

Egg.”

Example:

Xiwangzairenjian-feng (@希望在人间-风): With only a few hours of free time in Beijing, I went to several neighborhoods with highrises, saw the **big boxer shorts**, the World Trade Center, explored 81 Chaoyangmen Inner Street, and then returned home. (May 27, 2015)

在北京仅仅几个小时自由而清醒的时间，晃了晃高楼密集区，看了大裤衩、国贸，溜了朝内81，回家。[Source]

See also [China Central Adult Video](#).

China Central Adult Video (CCAV)

Derogatory nickname for CCTV (China Central Television), the state-run national network. “AV” is Chinese slang for “adult video,” i.e. pornographic film.



“CCAV: Against pornography, violence and vulgarity.” (Artist: Chris Qie)

CCAV became a popular term after CCTV's evening news broadcast a piece about the need to crack down on pornographic videos. The term is often used to describe CCTV when the media organization's actions seem particularly hypocritical.

CCTV is often finds itself the target of netizen mockery. One Weibo user posted the following criticism of CCTV's reporters:

Baguaxiliyan (@八卦犀利眼): [Big Boxer Shorts](#) and **CCAV** reporters are always itching to strip others naked in front of the camera. A single speck of dust found is enough to send the reporters into a fit of mental frenzy and endless sexual agitation. Yet, their own flies are left wide open, exposing a hideous sight... (PS: In recent days, **CCAV** has incessantly covered [Guo Meimei](#) and her [involvement in prostitution](#). Yet, **CCAV** is afraid to disclose how many of their anchorwomen have been penalized by the Commission for Discipline Inspection for sleeping with high officials.)

大裤叉，CCAV记者，总恨不得把别人扒个精光用镜头仔细查过遍，发现一粒灰尘就精神异常亢奋自淫不息，却不管自己的裆已是门户大开，春光乍现，丑陋一览无余.... (PS: 近段时间CCAV不断拿美美卖淫的事来说，却不敢说自己有多少个女主持被高官包养而被纪委带走了) [Source]

[Han Han](#), China's most popular blogger, [took aim](#) when the new CCTV headquarters—then still under construction—[caught fire](#) in early 2009.

See also and [big boxer shorts](#).

China's Internet is open 中国的互联网是开放的 (*Zhōngguó de hūliánwǎng shì kāifàng de*)

The Chinese government's official position on the degree of Internet freedom within its borders.

Foreign Ministry spokesperson Jiang Yu famously [used this phrase in a January 14, 2010 press conference](#):

Q: Google announced that it might withdraw from the Chinese market and no longer cooperate with the Chinese Government on Internet censorship. What's China's response to that?

问：中国对谷歌公司宣布可能退出中国市场，不再和中国政府合作对网络内容进行审查

有何回应？

A: I want to stress that China's Internet is open. The Chinese government encourages the development of the Internet and endeavors to create a sound environment for the healthy development of Internet. Chinese law prohibits any form of hacking activities. As in other countries, China manages the Internet in accordance with law. The measures we take are consistent with international practice. I also want to stress that China welcomes international Internet corporations to do business in China in accordance with law.

答：我想强调的是，中国的互联网是开放的，中国政府鼓励互联网的发展，努力为互联网的健康发展营造良好的环境。中国的法律禁止任何形式的黑客攻击行为。中国同其他国家一样，依法管理互联网，有关管理措施符合国际通行做法。我还想强调，中国欢迎国际互联网企业在中国依法开展业务。

Q: Is YouTube blocked in China? Why?

问：Youtube网站是否在中国被屏蔽？为什么？

A: I do not understand the situation to which you are referring. What I can tell you is that the Chinese government manages the Internet in accordance with the law. It has clearly written rules about which information should be prohibited from being spread on the Internet. I suggest that you ask CNNIC for information about this issue.

答：我不了解你所说的情况。我可以告诉你的是，中国政府依法管理互联网，明文规定哪些信息应被禁止在互联网上传播，建议你向中国互联网管理部门咨询有关情况。[Source]

Jiang's was not the earliest mention of China's "open Internet." In 2009, Xinhua official Zhou Xisheng went so far as to say that "[China has the most open Internet in the world](#)." In 2010, Foreign Ministry spokesman [Ma Zhaoxu](#) threw the same retort at U.S. Secretary of State [Hillary Clinton's Remarks on Internet Freedom](#).

The spokesperson for Beijing's 2022 Winter Olympic bid has assured the public that foreigners would have unfettered Internet access during the event, but that, while China remains committed to an open Internet, Chinese citizens have [no need for services like Facebook and Twitter](#).

Chinese people need to be controlled

中国人是需要管的
(*Zhōngguó rén shì xū yào guǎn de*)

Infamous statement made by movie star and Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference member [Jackie Chan](#).

During a discussion of censorship, movies, and society at the 2009 [Boao Forum for Asia](#), Chan stated:

If you're too free, you're like the way Hong Kong is now. It's very chaotic. Taiwan is also chaotic... I'm gradually beginning to feel that we **Chinese need to be controlled**. If we're not being controlled, we'll just do what we want.

太自由了，就变成像香港现在这个样子，很乱；而且变成台湾这个样子，也很乱。所以我慢慢觉得，原来我们中国人是需要管的。[[Source](#)]

The comment set off a [firestorm of discussion and criticism](#), especially in Hong Kong and Taiwan. Even mainland newspapers felt obliged to criticize Chan. The state-run People's Daily [accused Jackie Chan of wishing to deprive the Chinese of their extensive liberties](#) and subject them to an oppressive regime.

While the statement can be translated

more mildly as “Chinese people need to be managed,” Chan has a history of making controversial political pronouncements. He has previously claimed that Chinese culture may not be compatible with democracy, and has called for [restrictions on protests in Hong Kong](#). In early 2013, he claimed that America was the “[most corrupt country in the world](#).”

Example:

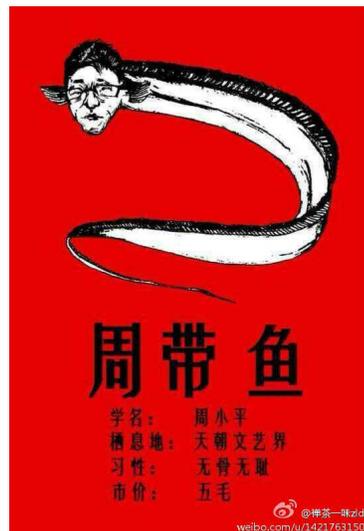
Diqi (@第奇): I think they should shut down Weibo. **Chinese people need to be controlled**. (May 14, 2015)

我觉得应该把微博封掉，中国人是需要管的。 [[Source](#)]

Cutlassfish Zhou 周带鱼 (*Zhōu Dàiyú*)

Nickname for nationalistic and anti-American writer Zhou Xiaoping.

Zhou, who is [loose with facts](#) and [quick to slander](#), has won the [praise of President Xi Jinping for his “positive energy.”](#)



Cutlassfish Zhou. (Weibo)

Zhou Xiaoping earned his nickname during the [crackdown on Big Vs](#) in 2013. In an August 26 blog post, [Zhou excoriated Charles Xue](#), the Weibo celebrity and Chinese-American businessman who was [detained for “soliciting prostitutes.”](#) only to [appear on CCTV days later apologizing](#) for his online behavior:

To promote sales of water purifiers, Xue Manzi [Charles Xue] claims China's water is poisoned. Because of this, Zhoushan's cutlassfish farms cannot sell anything, leaving countless fish farming households to face bankruptcy. Xue is guilty of a most terrible crime. Who will punish him?

薛蛮子为净水器促销，诋毁中国水质有毒，造成舟山带鱼养殖场滞销，当地无数养殖农户面临破产，罪大恶极，谁来追究？ [Source]

Cutlassfish, it turns out, cannot be farmed, and [netizens will not let Zhou forget it](#).

“Cutlassfish Zhou” is [blocked from Weibo search results](#) as of May 14, 2015, but searches for “Brother Cutlassfish” (带鱼哥) turn up several thousand comments.

Example:

Wenmanglishiwei (@文盲李世威): Because he refuted Cutlassfish Zhou point-by-point, Fang Zhouzi's Sina blog has been preemptively shut down. Soon we may not be able to see his Weibo or WeChat, either... (October 22, 2014)

方舟子因逐条反驳周带鱼所写正能量的文章，其新浪博客被预防性关闭，其微博、微信也可能即将看不见了…… [Source]

don't understand the actual situation

不明真相 (*bùmíng zhēnxiàng*)

A stock phrase often used by the government and official media to describe “mass incidents” (群体事件 *qúntǐ shìjiàn*) such as riots and protests. It suggests that those who participate in such incidents do so not because of any real grievances, but because they have been duped by a few schemers with “[ulterior motives](#).”

Even state-run media have questioned

this demeaning term. In July 2009, Xinhua ran an [editorial](#) suggesting that this phrase should not be the immediate explanation for all protests. The Southern *Metropolis Daily* [commented](#) in August of that year:



New character combining the four characters in the phrase “don't understand the actual situation.”

Whenever there is a mass incident, some government agencies will always issue statements to the effect that “people who **didn't understand the actual situation**” were incited by “those with ulterior motives.” But this pretext is lifeless and unconvincing.

每有群体性事件，一些政府机关的文宣必定是“不明真相”的群众是被“别有用心”的人蛊惑的。可这套说辞却是最苍白也没有说服力的。 [Source]

Netizens have since co-opted the phrase.

Example:

Zhongqingbaocaolin (@中青报曹林): A Tencent user asked me whether I feel sorry for Guo Meimei. My answer is: I don't feel sorry for Guo Meimei. I feel sorry for those of us who **don't understand the actual situation**, who have been fooled this entire time. In the beginning, we were fooled by Guo Meimei. Now, despite the fact that some people are telling us the truth, many still feel like they are being fooled.

一个腾讯网友问我，你觉得郭美美可怜吗？我的回答是：嗯，我觉得郭美美不可怜，可怜的是我们这些不明真相的公众，一直被人耍。开始是被郭美美耍，现在呢，虽然有人告诉我们这是真相了，但很多人还是有被耍的感觉。 [Source]

emotionally stable

情绪稳定 (*qíngxù wěndìng*)

Stock phrase used by state media to describe people affected by disaster, suggesting that the government has quelled the victims.



New character combining components of “emotion” (and “stable.” (Source unknown)

For example, official accounts of mining accidents, often written just days after the accident, will read something like, “The relevant leaders rushed to the scene to comfort the families. The families are now all emotionally stable (死者家属情绪稳定).” An account of an explosion might read, “The bodies have been taken care of and the families are all emotionally stable.” In the comment pages of these stories, netizens will often remark that “the deceased are now **emotionally stable**” (死者情绪稳定).

The phrase is also applied to social unrest. For example, Foxconn factory workers in Fengcheng, Jiangxi protested low wages and unfair treatment in January 2013. A number of protesters were arrested. The Jiangxi Daily soon reported that the dispute had been settled, “the workers are emotionally stable, and the factory grounds have returned to order” (员工情绪稳定, 厂区恢复秩序).

“Emotional stability” resonates with the government’s emphasis on social stability. When an official report suggests that people affected by the calamity are “emotionally

stable,” the government is saying that social stability has prevailed, when in fact it may be quite tenuous. Resentful netizens speak of being emotionally stabilized (被情绪稳定 *bèi qíngxù wěndìng*).

erotic and violent

很黄很暴力 (*hěn huáng hěn bàolì*)

Phrase that a young girl is believed to have been instructed to recite in support of the government’s position on patrolling Internet content.

In a December 2007 segment produced by **CCTV**’s flagship program “News Simulcast” (新闻联播 *Xīnwén Liánbō*) on the easy availability of “unhealthy and vulgar Internet content,” the girl fretted, “The last time that I got on the Internet to search for information, a web page popped up suddenly. It was very erotic and very violent. I hurried and closed the page.”

Netizens wondered how a web page could be both violent and erotic (sodomasochistic web pages are extremely rare in China) and how such a website could appear unless the girl was looking for such content (which would be unlikely given her age). People suspected that she had been fed her lines.

Her statement is similar to that of “university student” Gao Ye, who claimed that his friend had become very disturbed from viewing pornographic content on the web. Gao was later outed as a CCTV intern.

Example:

JonathanCeshiban (@Jonathan测试版): Taiwanese headlines are erotic and violent. (December 7, 2014)

台媒的标题很黄很暴力。 [Source]

five nos

五不搞 (wǔ bù gǎo)

Set of interdictions first presented in 2011 by then National People’s Congress Standing Committee Chair Wu Bangguo in the wake of the Arab Spring:

No system in which multiple parties govern in turn

No diversification of guiding ideologies

No separation of the “three powers” or creation a bicameral system

No federalization

No privatization

不搞多党轮流执政

不搞指导思想多元化

不搞“三权鼎立”和两院制

不搞联邦制

不搞私有化



Wu Bangguo and the five nos. (Weibo)

The five nos appeared soon after [unrest in the Middle East and North Africa](#) inspired some in China to attempt their own “[Jasmine Revolution](#)” to call for liberal democracy. The government promptly [cracked down on potential demonstration sites](#) and [detained online organizers](#).

“Five nos” was [censored from Weibo search results in the run-up to the 2013 National People’s Congress](#). Netizens invoke the five nos to mockingly chastise those who argue for liberalization. For instance, on

February 14, 2015, the businessman Ren Zhiqiang shared an essay on Weibo about his personal definition of Western values. One netizen commented, “[There’s no use in saying all this. One ‘five no’ and they’ll shoot you down](#)” (说这些都没用，一句五不搞就把你顶回来了).

five times better

好五倍 (hǎo wǔ bèi)

Phrase from an illogical argument that [Sha Zukang](#), former Chinese ambassador to the United Nations, [made to the press in April of 2004 in defense of China’s human rights record](#).

Sha stated:

I have openly remarked that the human rights situation in China today is better than that in the United States. The population of China is five times larger than the population of the U.S. If you look at it just in terms of comparing the populations, one would expect China’s problems to be at least five times greater than those of the U.S. in order for our human rights situations to be the same. But the reality is that our human rights situation is better than that of the U.S.—this shows that China’s human rights situation is **five times better** than that of the U.S... America has highly politicized the concept of human rights to serve the nation’s political aims. They have used human rights issues as a tool; this way of doing things goes against the will of the people.

我公开讲过，中国今天的人权状况就比美国的人权状况要好，中国人口比美国多五倍，如果按照人口比例来讲，我们问题至少应该比美国多五倍，那才说明我们人权状况和美国一样。但现实是，我们目前人权状况比美国的好，说明中国人权至少比美国好五倍。我在大会上讲这话引起会场上哄堂大笑，大家都鼓掌，也可以看出美国不得人心，他们把人权问题高度政治化，为本国政治服务，把人权问题作为工具，做法很不得人心。 [Source]

Sha is known for other less-than-diplomatic statements. He caused a stir in September 2010 when he [declared his distaste for Americans and U.N. General-Secretary Ban Ki-moon](#). “I know you never liked me, Mr. Secretary-General,” he told Ban. “Well, I never liked you, either.”

Example:

Renshengyaoshi (@人生药师): The people of South Africa finally have a Party school—at last have human rights that are **five times better** than America’s. Mandela can rest in peace. (August 5, 2014)

南非人民终于有了党校，终于有了比美国好五倍的人权，曼德拉终于可以冥目了。
[Source]

foreign (hostile) forces 境外（敌对）势力 *(jìngwài (díduì) shìlì)*

A catch-all scapegoat for any thought or action that does not conform with Chinese Communist Party (CCP) doctrine.

The central government has blamed “foreign forces,” sometimes called “foreign hostile forces,” for orchestrating the [1989 protests](#), stoking the [Hong Kong protests of 2014](#), and causing “[ideological problems](#)” at the [Chinese Academy of Social Sciences](#).

Netizens have co-opted “foreign forces” to satirize the Chinese state’s relationship with foreign countries. And when home-grown movements arise, like the Southern Weekly protests of 2013, Internet users will remark on [how “busy” the foreign forces must be](#).

Example:

Caige04 (@蔡哥04): The APEC summit makes one thing clear: the higher-ups use the so-called “foreign hostile forces” as special-order enemies to push shitizens around, but then see them as [sugar daddies \[for themselves\]](#). (November 5, 2014)

APEC会议使我们看清一件事：所谓的“境外敌对势力”是上层给屁民们定制的特供敌人，而上层则视“境外敌对势力”为干爹。
[Source]

Frisbee Hu 飞盘胡 (*Fēipán Hú*)

Nickname for Hu Xijin, chief editor of the state-run newspaper Global Times.

Hu is renowned for taking a positive spin on whatever facts the government throws at him. For example, amid the fallout of



the [Bo Xilai scandal](#), Hu issued an editorial titled “[Bo’s Case Shows Resilience of Rule of Law](#).” Netizens were scornful of the attempt to find a silver lining in the scandal, wondering why, if the rule of law was so resilient in China, Bo was not questioned earlier for a pattern of alleged misconduct that stretched over decades.

Example:

YunzeVictoria (@云泽Victoria): Netizens have summarized four characteristics of People’s Daily, Global Times, CCAV, as well as cynics

like Hu Xijin and Mei Ninghua. 1. China has problems but has a promising future too. You all should endure it. 2. People outside our borders are all enemies. You all should be careful about that. 3. The Party and the state are kind. You all should be thankful. 4. The Celestial Empire plays its diplomatic card very well. You all should learn from it. To sum it up: as for domestic affairs, they catch the **frisbee**; as for foreign affairs, they bark all the time; and altogether, they bully others based on their master's power. (April 3, 2014)

【网友总结人日、坏球、CCAV及胡锡进梅宁华等犬儒们的4个特点】 1、中国有问题但有前途，你们忍着点。 2、境外都是敌人，你们注意点。 3、党和国家是善良的，你们感恩点。 4、天朝对外战略是手段高超的，你们学着点。 总结：对内，接飞盘；对外，多犬吠；合着，仗人势。[Source]

Great Chinese LAN

大中华局域网 (*Dà Zhōnghuá Júyùwǎng*)

The filtered, monitored version of the Internet available in China.

A [local area network \(LAN\)](#) is a computer network covering a small geographic area, like a home or office. Computers in the LAN can share files and other information. A network administrator oversees activity.

Similarly, the Internet in China operates in many ways separately from the rest of the world. Major services like Twitter, Facebook, and Google are blocked, while home-grown services such as Weibo, Renren, and Baidu take their place. These Chinese web services monitor, filter, and censor content at the behest of the Chinese government.

Example:

Leidigagaxiaohaha (@雷帝gaga笑哈哈):
When [Google was blocked](#) the idiots said we have Baidu, and Google has “wheels”*

and should be blocked. Then when [Google Scholar](#), [Dropbox](#), and [Gmail](#) were blocked—tools which the global scientific community depend on—the idiots told us to spend a little on a VPN and quit whining. Now all the [VPNs are dead](#), but don't worry, the idiots always have something to say. In the future, the **Great Chinese LAN** will be more restricted than you can imagine, and the pile of censored content will only grow, because the Party takes care of everything that doesn't obey its rules. (January 26, 2015)

以前 google 被封时傻逼们说有百度，google有轮子，该封；后来google学术dropbox和gmail这些和世界科研生产力密切相关的都被封了，傻逼们说花点钱用vpn别抱怨；现在vpn全死了，但放心，傻逼们永远有话说。大中华局域网未来一定比能想像的更封闭，禁掉的消失的一定会越来越多，因为党专治各种不服。[Source]

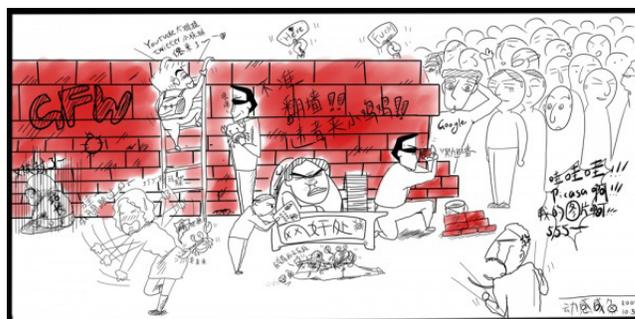
*[Falun Gong](#), literally “Dharma Wheel Practice.”

See also [Great Firewall of China](#).

Great Firewall of China

GFW/防火长城 (*Fánghuǒ Chángchéng*)

The nickname Chinese netizens have given to the Chinese government's system for blocking certain online content from view in mainland China, often abbreviated GFW.



“No wall scaling allowed!! Violators will have their penis nipped!!” (Artist: Donggan Chengyu)

A [firewall](#) is any mechanism which controls Internet traffic. Like its namesake, the Great Wall, the Great Firewall was built to keep unwanted foreign influences out of

China. The result is a balkanized Internet within China, known as the [Chinternet](#) or [Great Chinese LAN](#).

Chinese netizens who wish to access blocked content can attempt to [scale the wall](#), using software to mask their IP addresses and thus circumvent the censorship. However, authorities [continue to adjust and upgrade the Great Firewall](#), which results in a [game of cat-and-mouse](#) between censors and netizens.

Example:

Ermeiyaoxiaodao (@二枚腰小道): **GFW (Great Firewall of China)** has blocked all Google services, including Google Scholar, which is essential to research. If you think this is unacceptable, we request that you forward this page on Weibo and Wechat. In early 2013, after **GFW** blocked Github (a code-sharing site), a large number of programmers protested on Weibo as well as at the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology. As a result, **GFW** was forced to unblock Github. No struggle, no freedom! Please forward this page to pressure **GFW!** (June 13, 2014)

GFW(中国国家防火长城)屏蔽了所有谷歌(Google)的服务, 包括对科研至关重要的Google学术。如果你认为这是不可接受的, 请将本页面转发到微博, 微信。在2013年初, GFW封锁了Github(代码分享网站)后, 大量程序员在微博和工信部投诉, 最后GFW被迫解封。没有抗争就没有自由! 请大家转发此页面给GFW施压! [Source]

The “Father of the Great Firewall,” [Fang Binxing](#), is one of China’s most [reviled](#) Internet personalities. Fang openly [admitted to using six virtual private networks](#) (VPNs) to bypass the censorship apparatus that he himself engineered.

See also [Great Chinese LAN](#).

hurt the Chinese people’s feelings 伤害中国人民的感情 (*shānghài Zhōngguó rén de gǎnqíng*)

A common invocation used by Chinese diplomats referring to the people’s suffering, often used when another country or organization offends Party officials.



Arctosia.com

Map of countries which have “hurt the Chinese people’s feelings.” (Arctosia)

Meeting with the Dalai Lama is a classic way to hurt the feelings of the entire Chinese populace.

In 2008, blogger [FangK](#) searched through the electronic archives of the People’s Daily between 1946 and 2006 and discovered that 19 countries and organizations had been accused of hurting the feelings of the Chinese people in its pages. [Danwei later translated](#) FangK’s study. [Victor Mair considered the inverse at Language Log](#) in 2011, comparing the frequency of hurt Chinese feelings to those of Russians, Japanese, Jews, and other national and ethnic groups.

Columnist Kai Pan considered these hurt feelings on the discontinued blog CNReview:

The very notion of an entire country’s people having their “feelings” collectively “hurt” is

inherently idiotic. On one hand, there's the idiocy of the government proactively claiming such on behalf of all the Chinese without actually consulting them. On the other hand, there's the simple idiocy of "you hurt my feelings" being mistaken for a mature, rational response to any disagreement or criticism. [Source]

Examples: After [President Obama met with the Dalai Lama in July 2011](#), the state-run newspaper People's Daily complained:

To host the Dalai Lama at the same time China was celebrating the 60th anniversary of Tibet's liberation **hurt the feelings of all Chinese people**, including the feelings of Tibetans.

中国正在隆重庆祝西藏和平解放60周年，达赖堂而皇之成为白宫座上宾，不可能不伤害包括西藏人民在内的全体中国人的感情。 [Source]

In October 2013, China accused Japan of disregarding the feelings of the Chinese people when [Japanese prime minister Shinzo Abe visited the controversial Yasukuni Shrine](#), which honors Japan's war dead and class-A war criminals. Reacting to authorities' recourse to the Chinese people's feelings, a netizen made the following comment:

Shenshanyegui (@深山野鬼): Before we condemn Abe for visiting the Yasukuni Shrine and **hurting the feelings of the Chinese people**, isn't it about time for us to examine ourselves and face up to our own history? (July 26, 2014)

我们在谴责安倍参拜靖国神社，悍然伤害中国人民的感情的同时，是不是应该检查一下自己，从而正视历史？ [Chinese]

No matter how pained the Chinese people's feelings, international relations still manage to stay intact. When democracy activist [Hu Jia](#) was awarded the EU Sakharov Prize in 2008, the Chinese ambassador to Brussels wrote, "If the European Parliament should

award this prize to Hu Jia, that would inevitably hurt the Chinese people's feelings once again and bring serious damage to China-EU relations." To date, [China-EU relations](#) are still highly functional.

Jingde Town 景德镇 (*Jǐngdé Zhèn*)

The name of a town in Jiangxi Province known as the "porcelain capital of China," which is used as an online code word to refer to all of China.

When netizens write about China, the word "China" is often picked up by sophisticated Internet filters that look for [sensitive words](#) (also known as [sensitive porcelain](#)) and screen for political content. Because porcelain is often referred to as "china," the name of this township is used to get around Internet censorship.

For example, this innocuous sounding exchange has two entirely different meanings:

What kind of a place is Jingde?

景德镇是什么地方？

It's a small town that produces cups and dinnerware daily.

天天生产杯具和餐具的小镇。

To those in the know, this can be read as:

What kind of a place is China?

It's a small town that produces tragedy and misfortune daily.

"Cups" (杯具 *bēijù*) sounds the same as tragedy (悲剧 *bēijù*); dinnerware (餐具 *cānjù*) sounds nearly the same as misfortune (惨剧 *cǎnjù*).

Amid a massive [crackdown on Internet rumors in 2013](#), verbal play on the word

“rumor” established residency in Jingde. The Mandarin word for “rumor” (谣 yáo) sounds identical to the word for “kiln” (窑 yáo), an essential instrument in the porcelain-making process. As central authorities used their crackdown on rumor-mongering to gain control of online public opinion by targeting many [influential online personalities](#), netizens began to draw attention to many cases where public officials were responsible for spreading untruths. This underlined [two distinct types of rumors](#): 民谣 (mínyáo, literally “people’s rumors”), and 官谣 (guānyáo, literally “official rumors”). As such, the following sentence seems to merely explain two types of kilns in Jingde:

The kilns of Jingde Town produce sensitive porcelain. Some comes from people’s kilns, and some comes from official kilns.

景德镇民窑出敏感瓷，有的出自民窑，有的出自官窑。

“Official kilns” are a reference to the state-owned kilns of China’s dynastic period, many of which [can be seen today at heritage sights in Jingde](#). By replacing the character for “kiln” in the above sentence with the homophonic character for “rumor,” the sentence could be interpreted to mean “the rumor mills of Jingde Town make [sensitive porcelain](#). Some come from rumors spread by the people, and some come from rumors spread by officials.”

Another codeword for “China” is [Celestial Empire](#).

Ministry of Truth 真理部 (Zhēnlǐ Bù)

Collective name for the Central Propaganda Department and other government bodies involved in propaganda and censorship.

The Central Propaganda Department is an organ of the Chinese Communist Party and ensures that media and cultural content follow the official line as mandated by the Party. Its orders are enforced throughout the country via local offices at the provincial, municipal, and county level. The State Council Information Office (SCIO) is the primary administrative government office that oversees news media. The SCIO in turn manages the Internet Affairs Bureau, responsible for overseeing all websites that publish news. The Internet Affairs Bureau sends out specific instructions to all large news websites daily, often multiple times per day. These instructions range from interdictions against coverage of certain events, to restrictions on sources and requirements to [guide public opinion](#).



“Masthead” for the Ministry of Truth weekly bulletin, which quotes Nineteen Eighty-Four: “War is peace; freedom is slavery; ignorance is power.” (chinadigital-times.net)

China Digital Times publishes leaked propaganda directives in the series [Directives from the Ministry of Truth](#).

The name is borrowed from George Orwell’s novel “[Nineteen Eighty-Four](#),” in which the mission of the Ministry of Truth is to rewrite history and manufacture “reality.”

Muddled Shit Times 混球屎报 (Hùnqiú Shǐbào)

Play on Global Times (环球时报 *Huánqiú Shíbào*), the name of a daily Chinese newspaper produced under the auspices of the state-run [People’s Daily](#). Variations

include: Horrid 林松漫画
Ball Shit Times
(坏球屎报
Huàiqiú Shǐbào),
Horrid Servile
Shit Times (坏
球屎报 *Huàiqiú*
Shǐbào)



Chief Editor [Hu Xijin](#) holding
a copy of “Horrid Servile Shit
Times.” (Artist: Rebel Pepper)

Example:

Huangkongyang (@黄孔养): Hu Xijin thinks Chinese people shouldn't use iPhone6. Note: The Chief Editor Hu of the **Muddled Shit Times** uses iPhone5S. (September 30, 2014)

胡锡进反对中国用iPhone6 注:《混球屎报》
胡主编使用的是iPhone5S。 [Source]

See also [Frisbee Hu](#) and [Screwing People Post](#).

old friends of the Chinese people 中国人民的老朋友 (*Zhōngguó* *rénmín de lǎo péngyou*)

Official parlance for world leaders who have visited China and shown their support for the country.

The “friends” most discussed by netizens include the late Libyan leader [Muammar Qaddafi](#), former Iraqi president [Mahmoud Ahmadinejad](#), and Syrian president [Bashar al-Assad](#). The honorary descriptor was first bestowed on Canadian [James G. Endicott](#) in 1956 for his support of the revolution. Early on, “old friends of the Chinese people” were ideological supporters, but as China’s foreign policy has become more pragmatic and market-driven, the phrase has been used to describe trade partners and leaders of international organizations.

In 2012 the late Cambodian ex-king [Norodom Sihanouk](#) was called as an old friend of the Chinese people in state-run media. Netizens [objected when the government lowered flags to half-mast for Sihanouk](#) while failing to make a similar demonstration of sympathy for the many Chinese who had died in natural disasters and accidents around the same time.



Mourning an old friend: photoshopped image from the time of Mao's death. (Artist: Rebel)

While the phrase is most commonly used to describe dictators, Xi Jinping did use the phrase to [describe departing U.S. ambassador to China Jon Huntsman](#) in 2011.

China also occasionally describes its relations with other countries in terms of friendships, referring to Pakistan as an [“all-weather friend.”](#)

Example:

Laozitan Yue (@老子叹曰): Could the qualifications of Mubarak, an **old friend of the Chinese people**, be outdated? Befitting the high-flying international badass class? In the age of the Internet, for reasons everyone knows... the poor sap had no choice but to step down. Let this be a lesson! (October 3, 2014)

中国人民的老朋友穆巴拉克资格老吧？属国际级风云牛逼人物吧？在网络时代，众所周知的原因、、、狼狈下课了。教训啊！

[[Source](#)]

play a big game of chess

下一盘很大的棋 (*xià yī pán hěn dà de qí*)

Mocking of the categorical justification of any government action.

Originates in the 2008 article "[Understanding China's Strategy: Playing a Big Game of Chess](#)" (解读中国战略：下一盘很大的棋！). Here, the word "chess" (棋 *qí*) refers generally to any chess-like game, including chess, checkers, Chinese chess, (象棋 *xiàngqí*) and go (围棋 *wéiqí*). The article likens U.S. strategy abroad to [international chess](#), while Chinese strategy is more akin to go. The author contends that strategy in the Chinese game involves more cooperation between opposing players; go is more about spreading influence over a certain territory than annihilating one's opponent. The author asserts, for example, that while Taiwan is extremely important for China to eventually reclaim, the government leaves its "pawns" be. The article concludes, "It would be a great blessing to the world if competition followed the manner of go and not the manner of international chess" (以围棋而不是国际象棋的方式进行竞争，才是人类的大幸). The article has been used to justify inaction or poor decisions by the Chinese government as part of some larger strategy.

Example:

唯美、微小説: CCTV sent reporters into the storm to cover Hurricane Sandy. One netizen doesn't understand: "I didn't see them putting in that much effort to report on Ningbo!"

Another netizen explains, "Actually, they're broadcasting this for the leaders, because their kids are all over there!"

央视派出多路记者前往现场报道美国飓风。有网友不解：宁波的事也没见他们这么下功夫！另有网友解释：其实是播给领导们看的，因为他们的孩子都在那里！

FPC-田: **Playing a big game of chess**, I see.

下一盘很大的棋啊。 [[Source](#)]

preliminary stage (of socialism) 初级阶段 (*chūjí jiēduàn*)

China's current socio-economic state, according to leaders and state media. Rhetorical device which allows for a redefinition of orthodox Marxist theory, enabling the government to undertake whatever economic policies are needed to develop into an industrialized nation. It permits reformists to demonstrate loyalty to communist ideology while introducing capitalist measures to the centrally-planned economy.

[Socialism with Chinese characteristics](#) goes hand-in-hand with this ideological concept. Wen Jiabao penned the article "[Our Historical Tasks at the Preliminary Stage of Socialism and Several Issues Concerning China's Foreign Policy](#)" in 2007.

Another old joke is an imagined exchange between the leaders and the people:

"The **preliminary stage of socialism** is relatively poor; everyone should tighten their belts."

"First, give us belts."

社会主义的初级阶段比较贫穷，请大家勒紧腰带过日子。

先给我们腰带。

Many wonder when China will be considered to have passed the “preliminary stage.” Netizens often quip that police brutality, food safety scandals, and other public mishaps are all just part of the “preliminary stage of socialism.” The term is also used in other contexts to mock its absurdity.

Examples:

Sixiangshijiao (@思想视角): Some of us proclaim the great achievements of Reform and Opening-up in China on the one hand, yet hold up two shields on the other hand. One shield is “China’s actual conditions,” another is “**preliminary stage of socialism**.” Every time you criticize any negative aspect, the two shields will kick in. (September 30, 2014)

我们有些人一边宣扬中国改革开放取得的伟大成就，一边举着两个挡箭牌，一个就是“中国国情”，另一个是“社会主义初级阶段”。凡是批评任何不好的方面，这两个挡箭牌都能起作用。[Source]

xhyunzhongsanbu (@xh云中散步): Today I saw two quotes that made me pause for quite long. 1. If we don’t want constitutionalism, why did we overthrow the Great Qing in the first place? 2. The principle of distribution under **preliminary stage of socialism**: to each according to his dad.

xh云中散步: 今天看到的两句话让我沉默良久。1、如果不要宪政，何必推翻大清。2、社会主义初级阶段的分配原则：按爹分配。[Source]

Representative Rui 芮代表 (*Ruì Dàibiǎo*)

Nickname for Rui Chenggang, long-time host of the [CCTV](#) program Economic News.

At the 2010 G20 summit, hosted in South Korea, Obama invited the Korean press to ask him a final question at the end of a press conference. Instead, [Rui Chenggang raised](#)

[his hand](#). “I hate to disappoint you President Obama,” he began. “I’m actually Chinese, but I think I get to represent the entire Asia. We’re one family here in this part of the world.”



Rui set the Chinese blogosphere abuzz. “I represent Asia, I represent the world.” Rui is “wearing clocks” (*dài biǎo*), a play on “represent” (*dàibiǎo*) (Weibo) others heard another example of how the [Chinese government presumes to represent the Chinese people](#) without their consent.

Screwing People Post 日人民报 (*Rì Rénmín Bào*)

Parody of the People’s Daily (人民日报 *Rénmín Ribào*) created by moving 日 (*rì*), a character that literally means “day” or “sun,” but colloquially means “to fuck.”

The People’s Daily is a state-run newspaper overseen by the Central Committee of the CCP. Although the paper has a worldwide circulation of three million—a number certainly bolstered by [mandatory subscriptions at all official work units](#)—netizens mock its low readership, also calling it “The Paper the People Don’t Read” (人民不看的日报 *Rénmín Bú Kàn de Ribào*). Besides its [uncritical adherence to Party opinion](#) and the occasional but [spectacular gaffe](#), readers have accused the paper of making [misleading](#) and [harmful](#) claims. Netizens

have joked that the [only reliable information in the newspaper are the dates and page numbers](#).

Example:

Qingmeizhujiulang (@青梅煮酒郎): Screwing People Post will be wiped out in the foreseeable future. “People’s Daily,” how much credibility do you have left? (May 10, 2014)

日人民报，在可遇见的将来，会灰飞湮灭。//@草民总裁：//@南越冰峰侠：“人民日报”、还有多少公信力？[衰][衰][衰] [\[Source\]](#)

See also [Muddled Shit Times](#).

sensitive porcelain 敏感瓷 (*mǐngǎn cí*)

Sounds the same as “sensitive words” (敏感词 *mǐngǎn cí*). The list of terms deemed politically sensitive is ever fluctuating, and can include the [names of politicians](#), [religious movements](#), [events](#), or [subversive Internet language](#). Sensitive words are frequently [blocked from Internet search results](#) or [forbidden from media discussion](#).

When prominent Chinese blogger [Han Han](#) was nominated for the TIME list of the 100 most influential people, he invoked “sensitive words” in a blog post:

Yesterday, I saw a news report which said that I am a candidate for the list of the 200 most globally influential people from TIME magazine. **Sensitive word**, **sensitive word**, and **sensitive word** from China are also candidates... I often ask myself, what contribution have I made to this society which is full of **sensitive words**? In the end, maybe all I contribute is another **sensitive word**—my own name—and nothing more.

在昨天，我看到了一条新闻，新闻说我候选了时代周刊的两百个影响全球的人物，中国同时入选的还有敏感词，敏感词和敏感词等人...我经常自问自己，我为这个充满着敏感词

的社会做出了什么贡献，可能到最后我只贡献了一个以我的名字命名的敏感词而已 [\[Source\]](#)

CDT maintains a [bilingual list of sensitive words](#) which have been blocked from Weibo search results.

seven don't mentions 七不讲 (*qī bù jiǎng*)

Seven politically sensitive topics that the government has prohibited university professors and lecturers from discussing with students, enumerated in a [directive](#) allegedly issued by the General Office of the Party Central Committee to institutes of higher education in May 2013.



"Chicken Republic" (Artist: Hexie Farm)

The directive, which was leaked on Weibo and [subsequently censored](#), outlined seven topics that were forbidden to be raised with students: universal values, press freedom, civil society, civic rights, historical mistakes by the Communist Party, elite cronyism, and an independent judiciary.

The “seven don't mentions” appear to have been distilled from the “Communiqué on the Current State of the Ideological Sphere,” also known as [Document Number 9](#), which lists [seven threats to the legitimacy of the Chinese Communist Party](#). In April 2015 investigative journalist Gao Yu was sentenced to seven years in prison for “leaking state secrets” for allegedly sending

Document No. 9 to Mingjing News (Mirror Media Group). [Gao maintains her innocence](#), claiming that her earlier televised confession was coerced.

The CCP has sought to contain dissent in institutes of higher education. Student movements, such as the [1989 protests](#), have historically been major sources of unrest. A [campaign against “Western values” in higher education](#) began in January 2015.

“Seven don’t mentions” was [blocked from Weibo search results](#) as early as May 10, 2013, and remains blocked as of June 21, 2015.

small bunch

一小撮 (*yī xiǎo cuō*)

Literally a pinch, a scoop, or a measurement equivalent to a millimeter; used figuratively since at least the Cultural Revolution to denote a group of wrongdoers. “A small bunch” appears in official reports on both the [Tiananmen Square protests](#) and the [Weng’an Riot](#).

An official report will often say something to the effect that “a small bunch of ‘baddies’ with [ulterior motives](#) had a hidden agenda to ‘fan the flames,’ thus ‘deceiving’ the masses who [don’t understand the actual situation](#) (一小撮别有用心的人“怀着”不可告人的目的“煽风点火”，而“不明真相”的群众则受其“蒙蔽”)。Critics complain about the use of stock phrases like this because they minimize the underlying social factors that lead to disturbances, and portray the aggrieved populace as simply being duped by a small group of trouble-makers.

An explanation from [Baidu Baike](#):

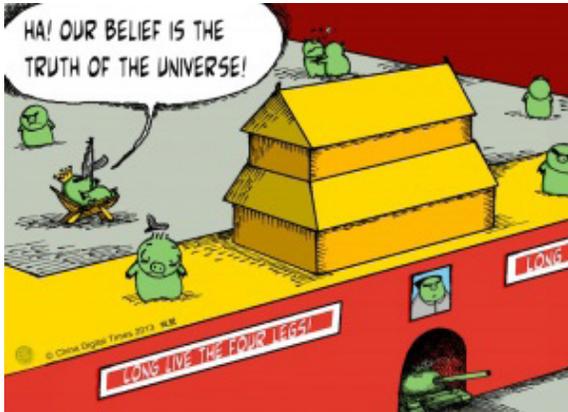
Emotions are always incited, the actual situation is never understood, and every crowd is a **small bunch**. I’ve heard this once, twice, thrice, four times, an infinite number of times. “Bunch” is a measurement. Dust is in a bunch, but dust can’t be bunched up. Salt is also in a bunch. A bunch makes you feel sparse, small, not worth a mention. It’s the tone of voice of the person you love deeply, but who doesn’t love you, beckoning you to come. It makes you feel so minuscule as to be weightless. And yet, except for the Creator, what kind of person can use this measurement? Who deserves to use it? Where there is no justice, there is the small bunch. Where there is no equality, there is the **small bunch**. Where there is no freedom, there is the small bunch. One small bunch on top of another. A **small bunch** scattered by the wind. A **small bunch** washed away by the rain. But if it is not here, it will be there. The people who use this word think it’s the perfect insult. The people who hear this word think it’s the greatest praise. When this word is repeated once, twice, thrice, four times, an infinite number of times, there will be countless **small bunches**, and then I must ask: in the end, who really is the **small bunch**?

情绪都是煽动的，真相都是不明的，群众都是一小撮的。这样的话，我听过一遍，两遍，三遍、四遍乃至无穷遍。撮是个量词，尘埃是撮，粉尘是撮不过，盐，也是撮。撮让人觉得很少，很小，微不足道像是你深爱却又不爱你的那个情人用这种口吻提起你来，让你觉得自己渺小到无可称量然而，除了造物主之外，还有什么人可以用这个量词？配用这个量词？哪里没有公义，哪里就会有一小撮。哪里没有平等，哪里就会有一小撮。哪里没有自由，哪里就会有一小撮。一小撮又一小撮，风吹散了的一小撮，雨淋散了的一小撮，然而它不在这里出现，就在那里出现用这个词的人觉得是个完美的羞辱听到这个词的人觉得那是莫大的赞美当这话重复一遍两遍三遍乃至无穷遍的时候也就是有无数个一小撮那么，要问一句：最后谁才是真正的一小撮？[\[Source\]](#)

truth of the universe

宇宙真理 (*yǔzhòu zhēnlǐ*)

Tongue-and-cheek reference to China's political system.



“What We Believe In.” (Artist: Hexie Farm)

The phrase “truth of the universe” first appeared in the PLA Daily in the May 22, 2013 article “Where Is Confidence in the Chinese Dream?” ([中国梦的自信在哪里](#)), written by the paper's assistant chief editor, Sun Linping:

Faced with today's complex and variable international environment, the task of formidable and complicated domestic reform and development, and the real trials and dangers confronting the Party, serious strengthening of our single-minded cooperation in building faith in the Chinese dream first requires holding fast to our belief in socialism with Chinese characteristics and sincere faith that “the doctrine in which we trust is none other than the truth of the universe.”

面对当今复杂多变的国际环境、艰巨复杂的国内改革发展任务、党所面临的严峻考验和危险，极大地增强同心共筑中国梦的自信，首要的是始终同心坚守中国特色社会主义信仰，笃信“我们信仰的主义，乃是宇宙的真理”。[\[Source\]](#)

“Truth of the universe” gained cultural currency as it stood in contrast to Fudan University professor Su Changhe's

declaration in the May 28 edition of the Guangming Daily, “Western Democracy Must Be Demoted from Universal Idea to Local Theory” ([需将西方民主从普世知识降级为地方理论](#)):

Western democracy is already showing signs of decay. This should put on guard those developing countries still searching for a path to building a political system... We must pull apart the language of Western democracy. To have a truly free spirit and an independent national character, we must first take the idea of democracy promoted by a minority of Western countries and demote it from universal to local.

西方民主已有退化迹象，应为那些仍然在摸索政治制度建设道路的发展中国家所警惕……要从西式民主话语体系中解套，真正具有自由之精神，独立之国格，首先需要将少数西方国家宣扬的民主知识从普世知识降级为地方知识。[\[Source\]](#)

These two contradictory pieces of propaganda gave rise to the sardonic use of “truth of the universe” in online discussions of China's political system.

ulterior motives

别有用心 (*biéyǒuyòngxīn*)

A phrase often used by the official media to blame foreign forces and domestic dissidents for social unrest and criticism of the Chinese government.

Netizens sometimes twist this phrase to mock the government.

Example:

Wengtao2015 (@翁涛2015): If you yell on the street, “Diaoyu Islands belong to China!” you are a patriot. If you instead yell, “Outer Mongolia and Vladivostok belong to China!” you may be arrested as a mad person or someone who has **ulterior motives**! Why is that? (February 14, 2015)

如果你站在街上喊：“钓鱼岛是中国的！”你就是爱国者；你若喊：“外蒙、海参崴是中国的！”，你就是有可能被当作疯子或者别有用心抓起来！这是为什么？[Source]

use the Internet scientifically 科学上网 (*kēxué shàngwǎng*)

To navigate around the [Great Firewall](#) and reach the free Internet. Parodies former president Hu Jintao’s “[scientific outlook on development](#),” a slogan meant to embody Marxist ideology as well as material development. Netizens talk about “using the Internet scientifically” in order to discuss circumvention techniques while on Chinese platforms, such as Weibo.

A Google Chrome [app called Use the Internet Scientifically](#) was launched on March 21, 2015.

Example:

BenbenbendeBenny (@笨笨笨的Benny): Oh no! No wonder I’m trapped behind the wall! A whole bunch of tools to **use the Internet scientifically** have almost all stopped working. Can’t they let a guy live? I just want to check Google+... (March 25, 2015)

糟糕！难道我是要被困在墙内了么！一把的科学上网工具几乎全部失效，这还让不让人活了啦！我就是想去下Google+嘛... [Source]

See also [scale the wall](#).

volunteer fifty center 自干五 (*zìgānwǔ*)

Internet user who defends the Chinese government of their own free will, as opposed to a paid member of the [fifty cent party](#); abbreviation of “fifty center who brings their own provisions” (自带干粮的五毛 *zì dài gānliang de wǔmáo*).



“Volunteer fifty center.” (Weibo)

Undercover commentators who write in favor of government policies are often called “fifty centers,” after the fifty cents they allegedly earn for each post. Volunteer fifty centers are instead self-identified and claim their pro-government opinions as their own. Volunteer fifty centers emerged as a reaction to criticism of the government and liberal intellectual commentary.

Over time, the line between fifty centers and volunteer fifty centers has blurred. Any pro-government comment may be disparagingly labelled as the work of either the “Fifty Cent Party” or the volunteer fifty centers. Meanwhile, the government encourages the unremunerated spread of “positive energy” online through programs such as the Communist Youth League’s [Youth Internet Civilization Volunteer Campaign](#).

Example:

Jiangyanhang (@姜雁航): Some people say **volunteer fifty centers** are brain damaged, but I think they’re the highest form of the fifty cent species. (March 29, 2015)

有人说自干五是脑残，可我觉得自干五是五毛类生物的最高境界。 [Source]

whether you believe it or not, I do 至于你们信不信，我反正是信了 (*zhìyú nǐ xìn bú xìn, wǒ fǎnzhèng shì xìn le*)

Notorious statement by former Railway Ministry spokesman Wang Yongping about the [Wenzhou high-speed train crash](#). Implies that Chinese citizens have no choice but to believe what the authorities claim, even when it makes no sense.

During a press conference held by the Railway Ministry on July 24, 2011, a reporter asked why the government had attempted to bury portions of the [high-speed train that crashed in Wenzhou](#) the day before. ChinaGeeks' George Ding [translated Ministry spokesman Wang Yongping's response](#):

Why was the train car buried? Actually, when I got off the plane today, the comrade who picked me up from the airport said that he already saw this kind of news online. I was on the plane so I didn't have a good handle on things. I wanted to ask him, "Why would there be such a foolish question? Can an event that the whole world knows about really be buried?" He told me, "It's not being buried. Truthfully, this news cannot be buried." We have already tried through countless ways to broadcast this information to society.

But about burying [the train car], [the people who picked me up from the airport] gave this explanation. Because the scene of the rescue was very complicated. Below was a quagmire. It was very hard to perform rescue operations. So they buried the head of the car underneath, covered it with dirt, mainly to facilitate rescue efforts. Right now, this is his explanation. Whether or not you believe it; either way, I believe it.

车体为什么被掩埋，其实我今天下飞机的时候接待的同志说在网上已经看到有这样的信息。在此之前，我在飞机上还没有掌握到我

要问他，为什么会问出这样愚蠢的问题呢？这样一个举世都知道的事故，难道能掩埋的吗？他告诉我，不是在掩埋，其实上这个事故是无法掩埋的，我们已经不断通过各种途径向社会传递这方面的（信息）。

但是掩埋，他们后来做这样的解释，因为当时在现场抢险的情况，环境非常复杂，下面是一个泥潭，施展开来很不方便，所以他把车头埋在下面，盖上土，主要是便于抢险。目前他的解释理由是这样。至于你信不信，我反正是信了。 [\[Source\]](#)

Wang appeared exceptionally eager to engage in self-deception and accept such an absurd explanation. Whether the rest of us allow ourselves to be similarly fooled, Wang suggests, is our own problem. Shortly after making the statement, [Wang Yongping was fired](#).

"Whether you believe it or not, it's up to you, but I do anyway" has also spawned the saying "I negative positive believe" (我反正信了), based on the character-for-character meaning of "anyway" (反正 *fǎnzhèng*). "I negative positive believe" (in English) has become a meme in its own right.



"I negative positive believe" meme. (Source unknown)

Examples:

Wuyisuifengpiao (@无意随风飘): This crash was a drill! No one died! **Whether you believe it or not, it's up to you, but I do anyway.** (July 25, 2011)

这次事故其实是一次演习！~并没有人员伤亡！~ 至于你信不信，由你，我反正是信了 [\[Source\]](#)

@huhunv1111: The Railways Ministry claims that several hundred people were picked up by a UFO. **Whether you believe it or not, it's up to you, but I do anyway.** (July 25, 2011)

铁道部称还有几百号人被UFO接走。至于你信不信，由你，反正我是信了 [[Source](#)]



Leadership

Daddy Xi 习大大 (*Xí Dàda*)

Term of endearment for President Xi Jinping.

In an effort to bring Xi closer to the people, state media often call him “Daddy Xi.” “Daddy” comes from the Shaanxi dialect of Mandarin. Xi’s father, Xi Zhongxun, was born in Shaanxi, so “daddy” is a nod to this heritage. The same term can also mean “uncle,” but either way connotes familiarity and warmth.

See also [have everything but daddy](#) and [Dama Era](#).

Dama era 大麻时代 (*Dàmá shídài*)

Playful contraction of “Daddy Xi and Mama Peng,” terms of endearment for President Xi Jinping and first lady Peng Liyuan; literally means “marijuana era.”



Cartoon of Xi Jinping and Peng Liyuan from the viral music video “Daddy Xi Loves Mama Peng.” (Qiwen.lu)

On November 18, 2014, four men in Henan posted a [music video](#) paying homage to

the marital bond between Xi Jinping and Peng Liyuan. Within a week, the video had been viewed more than 20 million times. The video shows images of Xi and Peng stepping onto tarmacs and visiting foreign dignitaries, while urging listeners to learn from “Daddy Xi” and “Mama Peng.” At the New York Times, Austin Ramzy offers a [translation of the lyrics](#).

In the song, Xi is called “[Daddy Xi](#)” (习大大 *Xí Dàda*), where *dàda* is a term of endearment from Shaanxi, the province of Xi’s father’s birth. State media often refer to the president as “Daddy Xi,” lending intimacy and warmth to Xi’s image. Meanwhile, Peng Liyuan is called “Mama Peng” (彭麻麻 *Péng Mámá*), with the playful use of 麻麻 *mámá* instead of the standard 妈妈 *māma*.

Uncharmed by the music video or the familiar appellations for Xi and Peng, netizens created a clever contraction of the “glorious era” of “Daddy Xi” and “Mama Peng” in the invention of “Dama Era.” 大麻 *dàmá* means marijuana, lending the abbreviation a mischievous undertone. “Marijuana” is [blocked from Weibo search results](#) as of June 26, 2015.

Examples:

[@hansontangbc](#): A reporter recently learned that at the upcoming National People’s Congress working conference, in order to fully express the masses’ love and admiration for Daddy Xi and Mama Peng, a resolution will be adopted to make “**dama**” the national flower of China. (November 25, 2014)

记者日前从全国人大得到消息，在即将召开的全国人大工作会议上，将通过决议，将“大麻”定为中国的国花，以充分表达人民群

众对习大大和彭麻麻的热爱与崇敬。 [Source]

Wenshanwa (@文山娃): And so we enter the Dama era. (November 24, 2014)

就这样进入了大麻时代。 [Source]

See also [have everything but Daddy](#).

egg fried rice 蛋炒饭 (*dàn chǎo fàn*)

What is said to have killed Mao Zedong's oldest son, Mao Anying.

The younger Mao, who had studied abroad in Russia, volunteered to fight in the Korean War and was assigned to be [Peng Dehuai](#)'s Russian translator. According to legend, Mao Anying cooked fried rice with eggs in the daytime, against military regulation. The eggs were a rare delicacy at the time and had just been sent to Peng Dehuai from Kim Il Sung. Spotting the smoke from the fire, an American plane dropped napalm on the site. Unable to escape, Mao perished in the flames.

Regardless of the truth of the story, Mao Anying did in fact die in 1950 when his camp in a Korean cave was napalmed.

Netizens credit egg fried rice for saving them from North Korea's fate as a country ruled by dynastic autocrats, as it destroyed Mao Zedong's heir.

Weibo users need only write "If it weren't for egg fried rice" to invoke the alternate history China has avoided.

Example:

Boqilai (@勃起来): I heard that, if it weren't for egg fried rice, you wouldn't be able to get online today; if not for **egg fried rice**,

you would be sent to the countryside to for reeducation as a poor farmer...? (June 11, 2012)

听说如果没有蛋炒饭，你今天上不了网；没有蛋炒饭，你现在会在上山下乡插队落户接受贫下中农再教育。。。。。。???? [Source]

governing second generation 官二代 (*guān èr dài*)

The children of officials, also known as [princelings](#) or members of the [Crown Prince Party](#).

Just as families [hand down wealth](#)

[from generation to generation](#), they also pass down the keys to political power. [Bo Guagua](#), the son of former Chongqing Party Committee Secretary [Bo Xilai](#), epitomizes all that ordinary people disdain about this generation. The younger Bo attended the British public school Harrow, then went on to Oxford, where he threw extravagant parties and arranged for lectures from the likes of [Jackie Chan](#). After his father fell afoul of the Party in spring 2012, Bo Guagua's lavish lifestyle came under close scrutiny by netizens.

Example: On Sina Weibo, one user criticized China's princelings and the country's rich second generation for their lack of work ethic and sensibility:

Majinghaoshuokuaiji (@马靖昊说会计): In addition to being born as the **governing second generation** and [rich second](#)



Bo Guagua, son of former Chongqing Party Secretary Bo Xilai, is a prime example of the governing second generation. (Source: thatsmetro.com)

[generation](#), those guys have no clue how to work hard and act with diligence. They are simply too insensible. They are destined to become losers!

那些不是出身官二代、富二代，并且还知道刻苦努力的家伙，真是太不懂事了，注定成为屌丝一族啊！[Source]

See also [rich second generation](#) and [red second generation](#).

have everything but daddy 五行缺爹 (wǔ xíng què diē)

A mockery of the official nickname for Xi Jinping, [Daddy Xi](#) (习大大 *Xí Dàda*), as well as those who slavishly follow him.



On September 10, 2014, students at Beijing Normal University held up banners to welcome Xi Jinping. (Weibo)

五行缺爹 is a play on the traditional

Chinese concept of “Five Elements ([五行 wǔ xíng](#)), which include gold, wood, water, fire and earth. If one lacks one of the five elements by birth, he or she must make up the difference by incorporating that element into his or her life in other ways.

Netizens coined this term as a response to official use of a colloquial term of endearment for the leader. In an effort to bring Xi closer to the people, state media often call him “Daddy Xi” (习大大 *Xí Dàda*). “Daddy” (dada) comes from the Shaanxi dialect of Mandarin. Xi’s father, Xi Zhongxun, was born in Shaanxi, so “daddy” is a nod to this heritage. The same term can also mean “uncle,” but either way connotes familiarity and warmth. When ordinary citizens give Xi a sycophantic reception, netizens will joke

that these devotees “have everything but daddy.”

In celebration of China’s 30th Teachers’ Day in September 2014, Xi Jinping visited Beijing Normal University. State media focused on the [rockstar reception](#) Xi enjoyed, when 500 students and teachers gathered to cheer. China Youth Daily reported students shouted slogans like “The Secretary-General has worked hard for us!” (总书记辛苦了!). One teacher said Xi’s reception was like a “superstar concert.”

On September 10, 2014, Weibo user [AKTulip](#) responded sarcastically to the rockstar treatment of President Xi, “If you don’t know what ‘daddy’ means in dialect, look it up on Baidu. Shouting in the streets like this, do you have everything but daddy?” (方言里”大大”什么意思不懂可以去百度，这样满街乱叫，你们是五行缺爹吗?)

Example:

Tanggula (@唐古拉): Those people “**have everything but daddy**.” Mao, Deng, Jiang, Hu, Xi, whoever enthroned, makes them full of hope. Then they project all their illusion and hope to the newly enthroned, good emperor. They would kneel down and shout out “daddy” (it doesn’t make a difference whether you call him “long live”, “daddy” or “grandpa”). Anyone who doesn’t shout out “daddy” like they do is viewed as their enemy. And ten years later, the daddy has reached his term limit, they will chase after a new daddy. (August 15, 2014)

那些人”五行缺爹“，毛邓江胡习，无论谁登基他们都满怀希望，把自己的幻想期盼都投射到新登基的明君身上，恨不能下跪喊爹（喊万岁喊大大喊亲爷爷之类，都一样）。任何不象他们一样喊爹的，都是他们的敌人。然后十年后，爹的任期满了，他们再去捧新爹。[Source]

leaders first

让领导先走 (*ràng lǐngdǎo xiān zǒu*)

Sarcastic command to put the interests of Party officials before the needs of the people; quotation from an official during the horrific [Karamay Fire of 1994](#).

On December 8, 1994, about 500 school-children gathered in a theater in Karamay, Xinjiang to watch a variety show. Top students had been invited. During the performance, a fire broke out on stage. As it spread, a woman shouted, “Everyone sit down. Don’t move. Let the leaders leave first!” (大家坐下，不要动，让领导先走). Three hundred twenty-five people died, including 288 children. Twenty Party officials were said to have escaped, among them vice-secretary for educational training at the Xinjiang Petroleum Management Department Kuang Li, who was accused of giving the deadly command.

Then-CCTV president Yang Weiguang [admitted to stopping reporters from airing a broadcast](#) about the fire due to the sensitive nature of the tragedy and how it reflected on the Party. Yang also described how the Central Propaganda Department later gave orders banning coverage of the incident.

Ordinary people did not forget Karamay, however. Beijing-based poet and folk singer [Zhou Yunpeng](#)’s song “[Don’t Be a Child of the Chinese](#)” (中国孩子) opens with the tragedy. Netizens invoke the command “leaders first” whenever disaster response seems to favor officials over victims.

In the aftermath of an [earthquake in Yunnan in August 2014](#), Premier Li Keqiang

reportedly instructed the injured to be evacuated first while on his visit of the area, an apparent attempt to prevent a repeat of the same criticism that the government received following the Karamay Fire. The premier’s attempt to make himself appear like he is on top of rescue efforts was greeted with skepticism by netizens:

Daian-Diane (@黛安-Diane): The wounded struggled to sit up from the stretcher as he called out: “Let the leaders leave first...” (August 2014)

伤员挣扎地从担架上爬起来，呻吟地说“让领导先走” ... [\[Source\]](#)

[News of a fire in Karamay on March 26, 2015 that claimed six lives was also suppressed](#), prompting netizens to post “leaders first” to [Weibo](#) and [NetEase](#).

See also [yax lizard](#).

Master Kang

康师傅 (*Kāng Shīfu*)

Code name for Zhou Yongkang, former public security chief and close ally of



Zhou Yongkang as Master Kang (renminbao.com)

fallen Chongqing party secretary [Bo Xilai](#); a popular brand of instant noodles.

The 康 *kāng* in the brand name is the same as in Zhou Yongkang 周永康. Netizens [began calling Zhou “Master Kang”](#) in the spring of 2012, when he was reported to be the sole supporter of Bo Xilai on the Politburo Standing Committee. A [corruption investigation on Zhou began](#) after his retirement, ending with his conviction and a [life sentence meted out at a secret trial](#) in

June 2015.

“Master Kang” is simultaneously a historical, political, and pop cultural reference. It is the brand name used by packaged food company [Tingyi \(Cayman Islands\) Holding Corporation](#), the largest instant noodle producer operating in mainland China. Tingyi markets their products under the English name Master Kong. “Master Kang” is occasionally [blocked from Weibo search results](#), prompting netizens to refer to Zhou Yongkang simply as “instant noodles” (方便面 *fāngbiànmiàn*).

Master Kang also alludes to Kang Sheng (康生), one of Zhou’s predecessors as security chief. A first generation official and close ally to Mao Zedong, Kang was [post-humously disgraced and expelled from the Party](#) for his role in the Cultural Revolution and his early criticism of Deng Xiaoping.

Example:

Jiupianweibo (@九片围脖): To see Master Kang stand there, his hair snow-white, making his final statement with natural poise, as if he were speaking in the Great Hall of the People—it makes me shudder. (June 11, 2015)

康师傅满头白发的站在那里，做最后陈述时自然沉稳，仿佛又在万人礼堂演讲一般，造化弄人，这一上一下的境遇，居然让我感到不寒而栗。 [[Source](#)]

movie star 影帝 (*yǐngdì*)

Nickname for former Premier Wen Jiabao, with a nod to his many “performances” in photo opportunities with ordinary people, especially at disaster zones. His charisma and expressions of concern for the down-trodden made Wen extremely popular.

However, critics perceived his words and actions as disingenuous, designed to conceal the repressive nature of the Party.

In 2010, democracy activist Yu Jie published the book “China’s Best Actor: Wen Jiabao” ([中国影帝温家宝](#)), literally

China’s Movie Star: Wen Jiabao. Yu was [detained in Hong Kong before publication](#). He fled to the U.S. in January 2012 under threat of being “buried alive.”

After the April 2013 Sichuan earthquake, Wen’s successor, [Li Keqiang, was photographed eating instant noodles](#) in a tent and viewing the damage with local officials. Now he is China’s “movie star.”

my father is Li Gang 我爸是李刚 (*wǒ bà shì Lǐ Gāng*)

Massively popular catchphrase from a tragic [car accident that killed Chen Xiaofeng](#), a college girl in Hebei in October 2010.

Chen had been in-line skating with a friend when they were both struck by a speeding car driven by intoxicated 22-year-old Li Qiming. The driver attempted to flee but was intercepted by security guards. Undeterred, he yelled, “Sue me if you dare, my dad is Li Gang!” and gave birth to one of China’s most [popular Internet catch phrases to date](#). Li Gang was the deputy police chief



Wen Jiabao wins for “best actor.”

in the Beishi district of Baoding, Hebei; his son's supposed immunity is an example of how the behavior of the [governing second generation](#) can lead to popular outrage.



After Chen's death, Chinese blogger Piggy Feet Beta started a [contest inviting entrants to incorporate the phrase "my dad is Li Gang" into classical Chinese poetry](#). The contest received over 6,000 entries and helped propel the phrase to memedom.

In January 2011, Li Qiming was [sentenced to 6 years in prison](#).

"My dad is Li Gang" was one of the first Internet memes to permeate offline language. People would use the phrase to shrug off responsibilities, from doing homework to turning out the light. It even found its way onto road signs, reminding drivers to drive carefully—after all, "your dad is not Li Gang."

Example:

@Salsac: Another **my father is Li Gang** has appeared in Jiangmen! An old lady named Li Gong was hit by a car while crossing the street. She later died after failed attempts to revive her. The driver was no where to be found. Instead, a number of senior government officials contacted the victim's family asking for them to forgive the driver...is there any justice left? (June 4, 2015)

江门又出现我爸是“李刚”了! 老太太丽宫过马路被撞飞 抢救无效死亡 - 老太太丽宫过马路被撞飞 抢救无效死亡! 司机一直没再出现, 反而是镇长、所长、行长打电话给死者家属, 内容都是要求放过司机..... 这还有公理吗? [\[Source\]](#)

See also [compare fathers](#).

naked official 裸体做官 (*luǒtǐ zuòguān*)

Government official who funnels illegally obtained public funds to family overseas. These officials appear to be "naked" (without assets). Usually abbreviated 裸官 *luǒguān*.

Naked officials are no aberration. The Ministry of Commerce [estimates](#) that about 4,000 corrupt officials left China between 1978 and 2003, taking with them at least USD\$50 billion.

Former Chongqing Party Secretary Bo Xilai is perhaps China's most notorious naked official. Although his income was just US\$1600 per month, he managed to send his son Guagua to an elite British boarding school, then Oxford and Harvard. Bo received a [life sentence in October 2013 for bribery, embezzlement, and abuse of power](#).

On August 7, 2014, the People's Daily published an [article explaining that official figures for the exact number of naked officials cannot be released](#) due to concerns for political stability. In response, one netizen commented on Weibo:

Bolianshemaxiaolin (@博联社马晓霖): Political Earthquake: Isn't the headline of the People's Daily Online article a bit too ridiculous? Announcing the number of **naked officials** would trigger a "political earthquake?"

They sure lack the “[three confidences](#).” I think the public is already numb. How could you make a political earthquake? (August 7, 2014)

【政治地震】 人民网这篇文章的标题是否很雷人？公布裸官数量就可能引发“政治地震”？太没有“三个自信”了。我感觉群众已经麻木了，哪里来的政治地震？ [\[Source\]](#)

4, 2014)

大电婊，快降价！ [\[Source\]](#)

Zuoyeke (@作业课): It is not a real anti-corruption campaign without investigating into the Power Whore. (June 25, 2014)

不查电婊，不叫反腐。 [\[Source\]](#)

Power Whore 电婊 (*Diàn Biǎo*)

Nickname for Li Xiaolin, daughter of former premier Li Peng.

Li followed in her father's footsteps to study power generation, serving until 2015 as CEO of China Power International Development Ltd., a Hong Kong-listed arm of China's state-owned power monopoly and subsidiary of the China Power Investment Corporation (CPI). She was [transferred to vice presidency of the China Datang Corporation](#) in June 2015.



Li Xiaolin, the “power whore.” (Artist: Badiuciao)

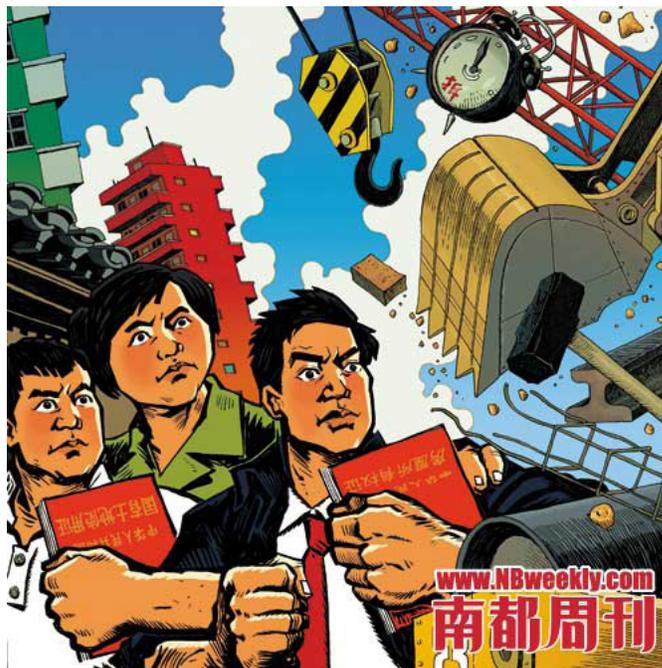
Li is also a deputy of National People's Congress, where in 2012 she was ridiculed for appearing in a [luxury suit, jewelry, and handbag](#). She has [attributed her success to her own efforts](#), rather than her family background. But her [attire](#) and general [ostentation](#) continue to draw netizen ridicule.

Examples:

Wangqisheyingshi (@王麒摄影师): Big Power Whore, lower the electricity price now! (July

red second generation 红二代 (*hóng èr dài*)

Children of the founders of the Chinese Communist Party, empowered politically and economically by their parents. Also known in English as “second generation reds.”



The progeny of Chinese Communist Party founders leading a [real estate revolution](#). (NBweekly)

The sons and daughters of the Party came of age during the Cultural Revolution. They were raised on Maoist ideology, and many were [red guards](#). Today, however, many of them are not only politically powerful, but also among the greatest [financial beneficiaries of the post-Mao market economy](#). In contrast to the classless society their family purported to be establishing, the red second

generation is seen to have benefitted unfairly from their pedigree. Notable members of the red second generation include former prime minister Li Peng's daughter [Li Xiaolin](#) and President [Xi Jinping](#).

Example:

Shuangshuangyan (@双双燕): Muddling through inside the system is called skill. Muddling through outside the system is called true skill. Muddling through both inside and outside the system is called Chinese skill. Doing well both inside and outside the system without any need to muddle is called the red second generation. (May 3, 2015)

能在体制内混得好，叫功夫;能在体制外混得好，叫真功夫;能在体制内和体制外混得好，叫中国功夫;能在体制内外不用混就很好，叫红二代。 [[Source](#)]

See also [governing second generation](#) and [rich second generation](#).

reigning emperor 当今皇上 (*dāngjīn huángshang*)

Allusion to the sitting president of China in general, and at present to Xi Jinping. Implies that the head of state was anointed, not elected, to a position far more powerful than “president.”



The reigning emperor. (Apple Daily)

In a September 2014 speech, Xi Jinping touted “[consultative democracy](#)” as a way for Chinese citizens to participate in government without elections.

CDT first detected that “reigning emperor” was [blocked from Weibo search results](#) on August 21, 2014. It [remains blocked](#) as of July 6, 2015.

Example:

Yushenghai (@余胜海): Crazy “Steamed Buns”: Ever since [Daddy Xi ate at Qingfeng Steamed Buns](#) on Yuetan North Road, this classic capital restaurant has become a national sensation. Demand has outstripped supply for pork buns and stir-fried liver. Yesterday’s everyday buns have become today’s tribute to the **reigning emperor**. (January 24, 2014)

【疯狂的“包子”】自从习大大到月坛北街庆丰包子铺就餐后，这家京城老字号在全国一夜成名，庆丰猪肉包子和炒肝供不应求，身价百倍，昔日大众化的包子变成当今皇上贡品。 [[Source](#)]



Rule of Law

check the water meter 抄水表 (*chāo shuǐbiǎo*)

Euphemism for a house call from the police. Instead of demanding to be let in, police have been known to pretend to be from the water utility to coerce residents into opening their doors. Also appears as 查水表 (*chá shuǐbiǎo*).



Top: "We're here to check the water meter!" Bottom: "He says their water meter is outside."

Example:

Shahulongmeier (@沙狐隆美尔): Deutsche Welle published an [interview with Ai Weiwei](#), but I dare not post it here. Otherwise... killers will come a long way here to **check the water meter**. (April 3, 2014)

德国之声发了对ai wei wei的采访，可惜不敢发，不然就。。。杀手远程上门抄水表。
• [\[Source\]](#)

See also [drink tea](#).

(death by) hide-and-seek 躲猫猫 (死) (*duǒ māomāo (sǐ)*)

To die in police custody under suspicious circumstances.

In 2009, farmer [Li Qiaoming died while in](#)

[detention for illegal logging](#). The prison authorities claimed that Li died of a head injury sustained while playing hide-and-peek with other inmates. Netizens balked, saying they suspected Li had instead been beaten to death by the police.

To assuage online anger, the provincial authorities called for volunteers for an inspection of the prison. Fifteen inspectors were "randomly selected" from a pool of about a thousand. The inspection backfired when the public learned that the ["volunteers" were former employees of state-run media](#).



Prison hide-and-peek competition. (Artist: Kuang Biao)

The "hide-and-peek incident" (躲猫猫事件 *duǒ māomāo shìjiàn*) now symbolizes cover-ups of police brutality.

Examples:

Meitirenrendongjie (@媒体人任东杰): Hunan: Suspect Dies at Public Security Bureau, Police Say He "Died in His Sleep"

湖南：嫌犯公安局身亡 警方称系“睡死的”

Lizhuang (@李庄): Died in his sleep? After death by face washing, death by hide-and-peek, death by meal, and death by drinking water, now there's a new way of dying.

(October 16, 2014)

睡觉死? 继洗脸死、躲猫猫死、吃饭死、喝水死后的新死法。 [Source]

drink tea

喝茶 (*hē chá*)

Euphemism for police interrogation. Guests invited to “tea” are asked about their political activities and warned against further involvement. Those compelled to attend these tea sessions are said to have been [tea-drinked](#).

Read about tea drinking experiences during the [2010 World Expo](#), the [anniversary of Tiananmen](#), and the [Jasmine Revolution](#).

In July of 2014, author Murong Xuecun issued a “[statement of surrender](#)” to Chinese authorities as an expression of solidarity with [friends who were detained for attending a weekend gathering](#) marking the 25th anniversary of June 4th, 1989. Several days later, the outspoken novelist was asked to tea by the local police in Beijing:

Huoguangweiyu (@火光微语): @郭玉閃又曰 Brother Murong Xuecun “surrendered” himself to the police. At 5 p.m. today he was summoned to the Zizhuyuan police station for questioning. He’s still **drinking tea** with the police, and I’m waiting for him at a bar outside the station. (July 9, 2014)

@郭玉閃又曰 慕容雪村兄“投案”，今天下午五点半左右紫竹院派出所约谈。现在他还在派出所里面喝茶，我在派出所门口喝酒等他。 [Source]

See also [check the water meter](#).

entrapment

钓鱼执法 (*diàoyú zhífǎ*)

The inducing of a person to commit an

offense they otherwise would not have by law enforcement; literally “enforce the law by fishing.”

Perhaps the best known example of entrapment in China is the 2009 [case of Sun Zhongjie](#). A new driver for a Shanghai construction company, Sun was stopped by a man on the side of the road, shivering in the cold. The man asked for a ride, and Sun complied. Though Sun did not request it, the man handed Sun money when he reached his destination. Next, the man revealed his identity as an undercover police officer and detained Sun for driving an [unlicensed taxi](#). Sun’s conviction was overturned after netizens let loose a torrent of discontent.

The Sun Zhongjie case is parodied in the video “[War of Internet Addiction](#).” A nearly identical case, dubbed “[Fishing Gate](#)”, occurred a month earlier in Shanghai.

Example:

Wugou (@吴钩): Survey: 1. [Soliciting a prostitute as a result of entrapment](#); 2. [having your private dinner conversation uploaded to the Internet](#) and turned into fodder for gossip. Question: Which of these are you more afraid of, given that you can only select one of the two options? (April 9, 2015)

小调查：1、被人设局被嫖娼，钓鱼执法。2、酒席上的私议被人传上网络，被陷入舆论漩涡。请问，哪种更让你感到恐惧、恐怖？设定只可二选一。 [Source]

law is not a shield

法律不是挡箭牌 (*fǎlǜ bú shì dǎngjiàn pái*)

Excuse used by a Chinese government spokesperson to defend authorities’ [treatment of foreign reporters](#).

In early 2011, foreign journalists attempting to cover short-lived Jasmine Revolution protests in China were [roughed up by police](#). At a press conference, journalists asked which law they had violated. Foreign Ministry Spokesperson [Jiang Yu](#)'s reply went down in Chinese Internet history. The exchange, as translated by Human Rights in China:

Question: Can you clearly tell us the specific clause of Chinese law that we have violated?

你能明确告诉我们违反了中国的哪项法律的哪个条款吗?

Answer: The violation is of relevant regulations regarding the need for an application when going places to interview people. **Don't use the law as a shield.** The real problem is that there are people who want to see the world in chaos. They want to make trouble in China. For people with these kinds of motives, I think no law can protect them. I hope everyone will sensibly recognize this problem. If you truly are reporters, then you should behave in accordance with the journalists' professional standards. While in China you should respect China's laws and regulations. Looking at the past two situations, those journalists who were waiting for something to happen did not get the news they expected. If during those two days there were people who incited and instigated you to go somewhere for an illegal assembly, I suggest that you promptly report that to the police, in order to, one, protect Beijing's law and order, and two, protect your own safety, rights, and benefits.

违反了去那个地方采访需申请的有关规定。不要拿法律当挡箭牌。问题的实质是有人唯恐天下不乱，想在中国闹事。对于抱有这种动机的人，我想什么法律也保护不了他。希望大家能够明智地认识这个问题。如果你们是真正的记者，就应按照记者的职业准则行事，在中国要遵守中国的法律法规。从前两次情况看，那些去蹲守的记者也没有等到他们想等的新闻。如果这两天还有人煽动、鼓动你们再去什么地方非法聚集，建议你们及时报警，一是为了维护北京的治安，二是为了维护你们自身

的安全和权益。 [\[Source\]](#)



Jiang Yu's quip is applied beyond its original context to other murky decisions from above. (Artist: Hexie Farm)

Jiang's comments were [extremely controversial](#), leaving many netizens asking, "[If 'the law is not a shield,' what's the point of the law?](#)" ("法律不是挡箭牌" 还要法律干什么) Among the most notable responses to Jiang Yu's comments was Attorney Chen Youxi's editorial in Southern Weekly (translated by China Media Project):

During the "Cultural Revolution" there was nothing left of the law, and this caused the entire nation to slide into civil strife. Injustice prevailed everywhere, and even the chairman of the republic (Liu Shaoqi) could not be protected. To a large extent it was in drawing lessons from this tragedy that our past 30 years of opening and reform have been not just 30 years of economic reform, but also 30 years of rapid development in building a legal system.

"**The law is not a shield**" is perhaps just a momentary slip of the tongue, but it gives the impression that China's legal system is little more than a slogan or an accessory, something that can be used when it suits the purpose. When the government requires the law, the law can serve as a set of mandatory rules the population must respect; when it seems the law restrains one's hand, it can be set aside. It's as though the law is one-directional,

serving to check the population but not to check power. If the law comes to be used as a tool, then clearly it is seen as something without sacred importance and not deserving of reverence—just as something utilitarian. [Source]

This turn of phrase has also been related to more recent events, such as [Al-Jazeera reporter Melissa Chan's expulsion from China](#) in 2012.

national treasure 国宝 (*guóbǎo*)

Homonymous nickname for the Domestic Security Department (国保 *Guó Bǎo*), a branch of the police force within the Ministry of Public Security that handles political dissidents, human rights activists, petitioners, religious groups, and “subversive” activities.

DSD officials are more feared and reviled than the regular police, since they are not subject to the same oversight. They have been known to beat and illegally detain dissidents. Activist Hu Jia and artist Ai Weiwei have both been detained by the DSD before, while Liu Xia, wife of Nobel-prize winning democracy activist Liu Xiaobo, [remains under their watchful eye](#) as she endures illegal house arrest.

The panda, China's “national treasure,” is often used as a symbol of the DSD. Because of this association, [innocuous Weibo posts about pandas](#)



Panda police. (Artist: Hexie Farm)

[are sometimes deleted](#).

Example:

Zhengmin (@郑敏): Surely [the Butcher](#) is also a “new media representative.” Is the technique for uniting these voices for fifty centers to interact with them offline, and the **national treasure** to visit them offline? (May 21, 2015)

屠夫也算是“新媒体中的代表性人士”吧，团结这类人士的手段难道是“线上五毛互动，线下国宝往来”？ [Source]

pursue across provincial lines 跨省追捕 (*kuà shěng zhuībǔ*)

Practice by local government agents of traveling to other provinces to make arrests, a practice often used against journalists or netizens who write critically about local officials. Sometimes used by netizens as a form of mockery and self-censorship. Often shortened as Cross Provincial Lines 跨省 (*kuà shěng*).

In April 2009, netizen [Wang Shuai was arrested in Shanghai](#) for posting pictures that mocked the illegal seizure of land by officials in Lingbao, Henan Province. Wang's post implied that local officials took measures to ruin the land so that they could buy it at a lower price. Wang's arrest led to a public outcry. The Henan provincial police chief eventually apologized to Wang, who was later compensated for the ordeal.

After this case and [other incidents of cross-provincial arrests](#), the phrase “pursue across provincial lines” became a popular Internet meme. Many [sensitive posts](#) end half-jokingly, “Please don't pursue me across provincial lines,” or, “I don't really understand what I just wrote; I just copied

it from someone else, so don't pursue me across provincial lines.”

Examples:

Meiticundexiaobai_xiaobaCO (@媒体村的小白_小疤CO): I'm just an “antizen!” But I think I have the right to do this! I hereby propose: the Party Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping at its core and the People's Government shall carry out this biggest action since the founding of China! Dissolve the “Relevant Department!” Eh... Welcome to check my water meter. Welcome to **cross the provincial lines!** (October 28, 2014)

我只是一个蚁民！但我觉得我应该有这个权利做这件事！我在此倡议：以习近平同志为核心的党中央，人民政府，做中华人民共和国开国以来最大的一个举动！取消“有关部门”！（呃。。。欢迎查水表，欢迎跨省！）[\[Source\]](#)

push-ups 俯卧撑 (*fǔwòchēng*)

A coded critique of any unpersuasive police excuse.

The common calisthenics exercise took on new meaning in 2008 when police claimed the son of a government official had not raped a girl, alleging instead that he had been “doing push-ups.” [Backlash against this suspected cover-up](#) resulted in the [Weng'an riot](#).

The young man was alleged to have raped and killed a 16-year-old girl. In an attempt to quell the outcry, police claimed that the boy and girl had been arguing along the bank of a river. When they had calmed down, the boy began to do some push-ups. After he had done three, he heard her say, “I'm going,” after which she jumped into the river and drowned herself.

Few believed the police account, and a riot ensued involving tens of thousands of people. As the phrase “I was doing push-ups” spread, it has shed much of its political connotation. It no longer has just one definition: sometimes it means “minding one's own business,” while other times it refers to a nonsensical cause of death.

Other [official police accounts of individuals' deaths have attracted similar scorn](#).

Example:

Quzhihang (@区志航): There are too many corrupt officials among the vice governors and equivalents. They are merely “big flies,” no need to arrange “**push-ups**” for them... (February 18, 2014)

副省级太多，属大苍蝇而已，不值得“俯卧撑”。。[\[Source\]](#)

See also [\(death by\) hide-and-seek](#).



Resistance

fart people 屁民 (*pì mǐn*)

Originally an insult, now a label of pride adopted by netizens for self reference.

The term comes from a 2008 [incident involving Lin Jiexiang, former Party Secretary](#) of the Shenzhen Maritime Administration, who was [caught on surveillance camera](#) harassing an 11-year-old girl. He had asked her where the bathroom was, then cornered her after she showed him the way. After the girl escaped, her parents confronted Lin. Angrily pointing at the girl's father, Lin shouted:

Do you people know who I am? I was sent here by the Ministry of Transportation. I'm on par with your mayor. You people are worth less than a fart to me! How dare you mess with me? Just see how I deal with you.

我是交通部派下的，级别和你们市长一样高。你们算个屁！敢跟我斗，看我怎么收拾你们。 [Source]

“You people are worth less than a fart to me” was picked up by netizens, giving rise to the designation “fart people.” Netizens have remarked that “without the ability to vote, we matter less than a fart” (没有选票，我们就是个P!).

Example: In addition to their lack of political power, shitizens are also denied access to the specially-produced safe foods available only to government officials. With regard to this disparity, one Sina Weibo user sarcastically jokes:

Qiwenna (@齊文納): I finally figured out why people share pictures of their food before they eat it. They are actually not trying to show



“The great Party Secretary Lin teaches us, ‘I did it, so what? You people are worth less than a fart to me! How dare you mess with me? Just see how I deal with you.’” (Source unknown)

off... In a situation in which food safety is in jeopardy and **fart people** are not qualified to eat specially-supplied foods, taking pictures before meals is a good habit. In case something happens, you would have direct evidence since the picture on your cellphone would match the food uncovered during your autopsy. In addition, since these photos have been posted to Weibo and shared with your circle of friends, those who have seen the pictures can provide additional evidence based on the time you published those posts!

终于知道为何人们这么吃饭前拍照分享了。其实他们不是显摆……在食品安全成大患、且屁民没资格吃特供的当下，吃饭前先拍照是个好习惯。也许万一出点什么意外，你手机里的照片和尸检胃里的食物相吻合，就是直接证据。且已分享到微博、朋友圈，看到的好友都会根据你发表的时间而提供有力的证据！ [Source]

eye-field

目田 (*mù tián*)

“Freedom” (自由 *zìyóu*), minus the topmost portion of each character in the word.

“Eye-field” was invented by World of Warcraft (WoW) players in China. In the summer of 2010, gamers were dismayed to learn that many words were blocked in the latest version of the WoW Chinese server, including some that were part of their characters’ names. This caused difficulty logging in, annoying many who had spent considerable time developing their characters. “Freedom” was among the newly blocked words, so “eye-field” was used as both a substitute and a veiled jab at the government.

Netizens sometimes write about the “eye-field clan king” (目田氏王), who, with one small change made to each character in his name, becomes “freedom and democracy” (自由民主). The “clan king eye-field” (氏王目田) appears frequently as well.

Example:

Shengluhaojijiaqiangxing (@省略号级加强型): Ocean sails rely on the helmsman. Living things rely on the sun to grow. Hong Kong shitzizens rely on “clan king **eye-field**” thought. (November 3, 2014)

大海航行靠舵手，万物生长靠太阳，港灿P民靠的是氏王目田思想 [Source]

give the people some tape

给人民一个胶带 (*gěi rénmin yí ge jiāodài*)

Shut people up, as you would with duct tape over their mouths. Sounds the same as “give the people an explanation” (给人民一个交代).

In July 2011, Premier Wen Jiabao called for a speedy investigation of the [Wenzhou high-speed train crash](#) in order to “give the people [an explanation](#).” Meanwhile, the government aggressively [limited reporting](#) on the accident. Netizens joked that what the government really wanted was to “give people some tape” to keep them from talking about the accident and the government’s botched response.

Example:

Jiangyanhang (@姜雁航): In the face of rising oil prices, you give the people tape, but you can’t cut off the people’s voice; you make the [Fifty Centers](#) chatter, but you can’t represent the people’s will. In other words: even if it’s blunt, it’s still the most truthful. Those under the roof know that it’s leaking; those under the government know its faults. (November 29, 2014)

面对油价止跌，你给人民一个胶带封不住民声；你让五毛嘈杂也代表不了民意。最质朴的语言——尽管有点粗鲁，但那才是最真实的写照。知屋漏者在宇下，知政失者在朝野。 [Source]

See also [whether you believe it or not, I do](#).

passive era

被时代 (*bèi shídài*)

A time when euphemistic labels are given to actions that belie the underlying compulsion behind those actions—that is, the present.

In Chinese, the grammatical construction 被X (*bèi-X*) means “to be X-ed,” and implies that the X-ed party is unwilling or will suffer from the effects of X. For example, someone invited to [drink tea](#) (i.e. called in

by the police for interrogation) could say she “was tea-drunked” (被喝茶 *bèi hé chá*). The current frequency of such situations has given rise to the term “passive era.”

reincarnation 转世 (*zhuǎnshì*)

The creation of a new social media account after one’s prior account has been deleted by the Internet company running the social media platform.



Cartoonist Kuang Biao has “reincarnated” on Weibo dozens of times. (Weibo)

Netizens who post about sensitive issues may have their social media account deleted by the company running the platform, wiping out that user’s posts and network. A user may then “reincarnate” on the same platform to continue speaking out. Their new username may be a combination of the old name and the word “reincarnation” to make the new account easier for previous followers to find. Political cartoonist [Kuang Biao has reincarnated dozens of times](#) on Weibo, and for several years has included his reincarnation count in each successive username. His latest incarnation as of May 10, 2015 is “Uncle Biao Fountain Pen Drawings 47,” or *Kuangshugangbihua47* (@[鸚叔鋼筆畫47](#)).

scale the wall 翻墙 (*fān qiáng*)

Circumvent the Great Firewall of China.

The Internet as it exists within the [Great Firewall](#) is known as the [Great Chinese LAN](#) or the Chinternet. In an effort to escape from these limitations into the expanses of the World Wide Web, many Chinese [use software such as VPNs](#) to mask their IP addresses. However, authorities are constantly working to [block the use of such software](#), making it increasingly difficult even for tech-savvy netizens to scale the wall.



Blogger Zuola “scales the wall.” (High Tech Low Life)

Example: One user explains on Weibo why it has become necessary for netizens to scale the wall:

Zuimosuifeng (@[醉墨随风](#)): Google is blocked, Yahoo is blocked and I can’t even find a server to get on foreign websites. Isn’t this what forces people to **scale the wall!**?

Google不能用, Yahoo不能用, 上个外网也找不到服务器, 这是逼人翻墙的节奏吗!? [[Source](#)]

“Scale the wall” was [listed among the Top Ten Neologisms of 2009](#) by the popular liberal newspaper Southern Metropolis Weekly. The term came into use at that time as China began to block big-name foreign websites such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube.

See also [China’s Internet is open](#).

surround and watch 围观 (*wéiguān*)

An invocation for a crowd to gather around someone or something, online or in the real world, and observe. It implies that an incident is receiving public scrutiny.

The 2010 Southern Weekend article “Scrutiny is Power: How ‘Surrounding and Watching’ Has Changed China” ([关注就是力量—围观改变中国](#)) popularized this sense of the term. Journalist Xiao Shu wrote, “What’s important was that public scrutiny was effective. They could no longer view it as being immaterial—they had to respond to the public scrutiny” (重要的是，围观起作用了，他们不能再视围观为无物，他们必须回应围观).

Example:

Kuerleilingjuli (@库尔勒零距离): On June 9th, Ms. Yang from Li city posted on Weibo pictures of a newly-installed self-service car wash equipment outside her residential home. The price for one wash is five yuan. The post spurred a large number of netizens to **surround and watch**. On the same day, a reporter also arrived on site to check out the situation. (June 9, 2015)

6月9日，梨城市民杨女士在微博上晒出了她家小区外新安装的自助洗车机，5元/次的清洗价格，吸引了众多网友围观和热议。当日，记者来到位于石化大道家满福超市旁的银泰小区一探究竟。 [[Source](#)]

take a walk 散步 (*sànbù*)

A new form of resistance. In China, it is difficult to strike, applications for protests are routinely denied, and petitioning the government often brings dire consequences. As such, workers and citizens have

adopted new methods that tread the fine line of legality.



“Walking” in central Beijing, February 2011.
(Source: Jordan Pouille)

Protesters in [Xiamen began “taking walks” in 2007](#) to protest the construction of a polluting paraxylene (PX) processing plant. In February 2011, an online source [attempted to stage a “jasmine revolution”](#) by organizing groups to [“walk” the central Beijing shopping district](#) of Wangfujing.

In 2014, a series of [state-led anti-Christian campaigns to demolish churches and remove crosses](#) generated fierce [resistance among Chinese Christians](#). Taking a walk is one of the tactics that Christian groups are evoking to defend their religious freedom:

Liaomulinchuandao (@廖木林传道): If Zhejiang authorities do not immediately stop the illegal removal of crosses, tens of thousands of Christians will put on protest t-shirts and voluntarily **take a walk** on the streets to protect their rights. We will hold protest signs to express our voice to the entire world. (July 15, 2014)

浙江当局若不尽快停止非法拆十字架，基督徒集体维权，自发式几万人身穿抗议体恤衫街头散步；街头手拿抗议标语向全世界表达心声已成为可能 [[Source](#)]

[Yu Jianrong](#), a researcher at China’s Academy of Social Science known for his social activism, gives a vivid description of

this method:

Workers' methods of resistance include petitioning higher levels of government, sit-ins, strikes, demonstrations, and blocking traffic. Two extremely important recent methods of resistance include "taking a walk" and "going sightseeing." (PowerPoint slide) Take a look, these are workers from Baoding "**taking a walk**" to Beijing on April 3, 2009. It is 137 kilometers from Baoding to Beijing. When I learned the news (of the workers' "walk") and rushed over, they were almost at the Xushui County toll station. At the time Beijing was very tense; Shijiazhuang was very tense; Baoding was very tense. A lot of people and workers were sent to negotiate; they said, "You can't go to Beijing like this." The workers answered by saying, "Is there a problem with us going to Beijing to go sightseeing? There's nothing wrong with it. What law says we can't go to Beijing to do some sightseeing?" Those (sent to) persuade them said, "You can't all of you go to Beijing to go sightseeing." The workers immediately responded, "And what law exactly says that this many people can't go to Beijing to do some sightseeing?" Those sent to persuade them against going insisted, "In any event, you can't all walk to Beijing to go sightseeing like this." The workers said, "We don't have any money, why can't we walk to Beijing?" The situation was extremely tense. Finally, the Baoding City (government) had no choice but to state right there to the workers, "We'll resolve all your problems." The workers said, "We don't have any problems. Our only problem is a sightseeing problem. Look for yourselves, we haven't brought materials to petition the government, we're not shouting slogans, we don't have any problems, we're not petitioning the government, we're not lodging complaints. We are going sightseeing." In the end, their actions at the scene caused their company's chairman of the board to be taken away (by the police). Only then did they return. [Source]

you understand 你懂的 (*nǐ dǒng de*)

Hint at sensitive topics as if one were addressing a higher power. Originates from chatter about [Li Yuchun](#), 2005 winner of China's Super Girl singing competition.

Li attracted a cult following not just for her musical talent, but also for her androgynous appearance. She became the object of online satire and adoring praise. She is often called "Brother Chun" (春哥 *Chūn Gē*). She became so popular that netizens began [depicting her as a savior figure using Christian and Buddhist iconography](#).



"Believe in Brother Chun and receive eternal life." (Source unknown)

In 2010, netizens began posting a series of "prayers" invoking Brother Chun:

Brother, I'm going on a blind date tomorrow.
You understand...

哥，明天我要去相亲，你懂的。。。。

Brother, I heard you have real power. My probability test is tomorrow. **You understand...**

哥，听说你很灵的，明天就要考概率论了，你懂的。。。。

Over the years, “you understand” has become a verbal wink to fellow netizens, replacing reverence for Brother Chun’s omnipotence with respect for the reader’s power of comprehension:

Qidaishuguang168 (@期待曙光168): Don’t get get too excited. The key thing is that President Xi’s prescription for the country demands a powerful, all-knowing executor—and that person is Old Hottie. **You understand!**

也别太兴奋，关键是习总书记的治国良方需要一个强有力的智慧的执行者---这个人就是老师哥，你懂的！ [Source]

Before the investigation of former security czar [Zhou Yongkang](#) went public in July 2014, a government spokesman said at a press conference that corrupt officials would be held to account regardless of status. [“I can only say that much.” he concluded. “You understand.”](#) The Chinese media took “you understand” to mean that they could probe further into Zhou’s case without fear of being censored.

your country

你国 (*nǐ guó*)

Play on “my country” (我国 *wǒ guó*), a common reference to China.

Calling China “my country” is not new or uncommon; [Japanese and Korean use the same reference](#) for their respective countries. But netizens have taken to subverting the literal meaning of “my country,” as CDT founder Xiao Qiang explains at Foreign Policy:

The phrase has been popping up as a hashtag in posts or embedded as a subversive barb. But Xiao said the term is mostly used by “politically liberal, pro-human rights” and pro-democracy netizens, and that it is deployed against opponents who are “pro-[party],

nationalistic netizens.” Xiao said it’s a way to battle the propaganda that assumes a Chinese citizen is a party supporter. In short, it’s a way of saying, “**Your China** is not my China.” [Source]

Terms like “your country” separate the Chinese Communist Party from the state, which are often conflated in official rhetoric.

Example:

@showmethepath: **Your country** regards itself as an ancient civilization with five thousand years of history, but now all your reality TV shows are copied from the [bangzi](#). And you have the nerve to say the *bangzi* have no culture. (July 2, 2015)

你国作为一个据说有五千年历史的文明古国，现在像样一点的真人秀全部是抄棒子，还好意思嘲笑人家棒子没文化。 [Source]

See also [expensive country](#) and [kneeling country](#).



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