Tradition and Dissent in China:

The Tuidang Movement and its Challenge to the Communist Party

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Abstract

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In the fall of 2004, a series of editorials appeared in a Chinese dissident newspaper run by Falun Gong adherents in the United States. The editorials served as the catalyst for what may be the largest dissident movement in China in over two decades. The movement, known as Tuidang ("withdraw from the party"), has seen as many as tens of millions of Chinese citizens publicly denounce the Communist Party.

Unlike the student movement of 1989 or the more recent Charter 08—both of which embraced the language of western democracy—the Tuidang movement employs distinctly Chinese language and meaning that is more Confucian than humanist. The movement calls to revive traditional moral virtues and to cast off the 'foreign' ideology of Communism, which is portrayed as antithetical to true Chinese values, human nature, and universal laws. The Tuidang movement offers an alternative ideology that is at once compelling and accessible, and levels a potent challenge to the Communist Party's claim over Chinese nationalism.

This study seeks to answer four basic questions about the Tuidang movement. First, it analyzes the ideological origins behind the movement, and seeks to discover what it has to say about issues like governance, morality, and nationalism. Second, it endeavors to shed light on the inner workings of the Tuidang movement, and illuminates the methods and motivations of its activists. Third, it makes use of a sample of Tuidang statements to assess who the movement's participants are, the nature of their grievances with the party, and the personal significance the movement has for them. Finally, I examine the direct and indirect responses to the Tuidang movement from Chinese officialdom in an effort to determine what, if any, impact the movement has had on contemporary Chinese politics.

The study finds that the Tuidang movement, driven by the efforts of Falun Gong adherents, has become a formidable challenge to both the Communist Party's legitimacy and what remains of its official ideology. The party appears to agree with this conclusion, describing the struggle to suppress the movement as a matter of its very survival and responding accordingly. The war now being waged between Falun Gong practitioners and the Communist Party is a battle to control the critical symbols of morality, tradition, and nationalism. It is a struggle for the very heart of China.

Table of Contents

Abstract iii
List of Figures v
List of Tables vi
CHAPTER ONE: Introduction 1
Protest and Dissent in 21st Century China 6
The Logic of Legitimacy 13
Research Challenges 19
Approach and Key Findings 24
CHAPTER TWO: From Tiananmen to Tuidang 31
The Qigong Boom 31
The Rise of Falun Gong 33
End of the Qigong Era 38
Challenges to Communist Party Legitimacy 39
Escalation of Tensions: 1996 - 1999 43
Suppression and Response 48
Analyzing Jiuping 56
CHAPTER THREE: Evolution and Organization of the Tuidang Movement 64
Digital Tools of Dissemination 67
The Tuidang Activists 69
International Network 74
Inside China 75
Assessment 79
CHAPTER FOUR: Composition of the Tuidang Movement 82
Statements from China 90
Demographics 92
Geographic Distribution 94
Party Affiliations 95
Grievances with the Party 96
Ideological Orientation 101
Personal Significance 104
CHAPTER FIVE: Party Response 106
Campaign to Maintain the Advanced Nature of Communist Party Members 111
Crackdowns on Internet and the Press 113
Role in Party Legitimation Discourse 118
CHAPTER SIX: Assessment and Conclusion 122
AFTERWORD 130
BIBLIOGRAPHY 131

List of Figures

Figure 1: Age of Tuidang participants……..…….……93

Figure 2: Party affiliations of Tuidang participants…..…….……95

List of Tables

Table 1: Tuidang activists by region.....75

Table 2: Geographic distribution of Tuidang participants.....94

CHAPTER ONE: Introduction

What would it take for the Chinese Communist Party to fall? What would a peaceful political transition look like in the world's most populous nation, and what combination of factors would be necessary to bring it about?

Such questions are worth asking, because no government can endure forever. Whether by slow decay or sudden, wrenching collapse, by peaceful transition or civil war, all states must succumb to this fate. Some meet it sooner than others, being destined to a short life by the overreach of their ambitions, by internal strife, poverty and corruption, or by an insufficient mandate. There are also those that continually defy expectations, stubbornly managing to hold off their end. The People's Republic of China is one such state. But while it has proven remarkably adaptive and resilient in the face of extraordinary challenges—including though not limited to the collapse of nearly all other Communist states—the future of China's Communist Party is far from clear.

This study focuses on one movement that seeks to undo the rule of the party, starting from the hearts and minds of every Chinese citizen. If the movement's claims to its size are accurate, or anywhere close, it could be the most sustained and successful challenge to the party in its sixty-plus year rule.

The movement in question began quietly enough on November 19, 2004, with the publication of a book-length editorial series titled *Jiuping Gongchandang,* ("Nine Commentaries on the Communist Party," hereafter referred to as *Jiuping*). The series was published by the overseas *Dajiyuan* (Epoch Times) newspaper, headquartered in the United States and founded by Falun Gong adherents. It symbolized the first direct and deliberate challenge by the Falun Gong to the Communist Party after over five years of persecution in China.

Jiuping offered a scathing assessment of Communist Party rule, and documented at some length human rights abuses under its various political campaigns. Yet the series was more than just a polemic historical narrative of horrors under communism; it was underscored by a cohesive ideology based on interpretations of China's Buddhist, Daoist, and Confucian traditions. Although the tone of the writing may seem tactless to some Western

audiences, its charges against Communist rule are simple and accessible, being grounded in deeply rooted ideas of virtue and morality. The writing has persuasive power, and the ideology is also open-ended enough to allow different individuals to project onto it their own interpretations. Most importantly, it levels a direct challenge the party's core sources of legitimacy. Jiuping espouses the existence of a higher and transcendent moral truth that, unlike the ideology held by the party, is unchanging and immutable. It argues that the Communist Party, as a representative of a foreign ideology, is not authentically Chinese. The series also posits that the social stability purveyed by the party is tenuous, being wrought from coercion, terror, and cynicism, and that through the embrace of virtue and the rekindling of China's ethical traditions, a more stable and prosperous nation will arise.

In a matter of days, Dajiyuan began receiving letters from readers declaring their desire to disavow and symbolically sever their affiliations to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). The process of disavowing the party is referred to as *Tuichu Gongchandang* (withdrawing from the party, hereafter referred to as *Tuidang*). It is sometimes alternately called *San Tui*, (three withdrawals, referring to the Communist Party, Youth League, and Young Pioneers), in acknowledgement of the fact that most of the individuals posting statements are not full Communist Party members. At first the statements numbered only a few dozen a day, and came mostly from Chinese expatriates abroad. But by March 2005, the newspaper was receiving and publishing Tuidang statements from an average of 20,000 people daily. As of March 2011, that number has grown to exceed 60,000 daily, totaling over 90 million.[1]

In spite of (or perhaps because of) the movement's extraordinary claims to have tens of millions of participants, it has attracted scarce attention in the West. Both journalistic and scholarly literature on Falun Gong for the period after 2005 is extremely thin, and literature on the Tuidang movement is all but nonexistent. It is largely for this reason that I have undertaken this study of the movement. In the course of my research, I have found the Tuidang phenomenon to be wholly unlike other protest movements in many respects, including in its scope and ambitions, the efficacy and weight of its challenge to party legitimacy, the organizational capacity behind the

[1] Daily logs of Tuidang participation can be found at http://tuidang.epochtimes.com/stat

movement, and the spiritual and moral significance attached to it. Most curiously, the movement's fundamental aim is not regime change per se, but rather it aspires to provide individual citizens with the means to find a measure of solace, moral redemption, and freedom by severing their psychic and symbolic ties to the Communist Party.

Whether the Tuidang movement will catalyze regime change is for posterity to decide, but in the interim, the movement has potential to overcome both the practical and ideological obstacles that have thwarted would-be opposition movements in the past.

Over the last several decades, there have been but a few notable instances of popular protest against Communist Party rule in China, and none mustered a significant, sustained resistance: the Democracy Wall protest of the late 1970s was suppressed with ease, and was followed by the arrest and sentencing of its top leaders, including Wei Jingsheng; the demonstration on Tiananmen Square in the Spring of 1989 was silenced in a single bloody night, its memory buried. The China Democracy Party, founded in 1998 to serve as a democratic challenge to one-party rule, attracted only several thousand members in China, most of them veterans of earlier pro-democracy movements. Charter 08, named after the Czechoslovakian Charter 77, represented to some observers a hopeful rekindling of the democratic movement in China, at least among intellectuals. But among the masses of China, the document gained only ten thousand signatories—impressive, but not exactly a popular mass movement.

There are numerous practical challenges standing in the way of an effective, grassroots opposition movement. First among these is that Chinese dissidents, resisters, and disenfranchised citizens are badly fragmented. Urban Chinese frustrated with labor conditions, unemployment, or with the privilege of the elites do not identify with the migrant workers who stream into cities in search of work,[2] and much less can they identify with the plight of the rural poor. Tibetans and Uighurs face an entirely different set of problems from most Han Chinese, and the latter are seldom sympathetic to the former's complaints of cultural imperialism. Even within various pro-democracy

[2] Teresa Wright, Accepting Authoritarianism: State-Society Relations in China's Reform Era, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010), p 4.

groups, there is crippling infighting. China's disaffected citizens are many, but they are weak, and more often than not, unable even to identify a common enemy. A successful movement, therefore, would need to provide a shared language and ideology around which disparate citizens can find common cause. The movement would likely be capable of assuring the safety of participants against punishment, lest would-be participants decide the costs of participation are too high. Given that some level of suppression is inevitable, a successful resistance movement would also benefit from a resilient organization, and have effective means of networked communication in China's censorship environment.

In addition to the practical challenges, an effective dissident movement would be pressed to produce a compelling ideology that is at once accessible and appealing to citizens of diverse social and educational backgrounds (including but not limited to elites), persuasive to those not already inclined to dissent, and yet also vague enough to be open to some interpretation. It would need to effectively challenge the party's legitimization narratives, such as its claims to possess a moral truth, its ability to ensure social stability and provide the conditions for prosperity and the good life of its citizens, and its claims as the hero of the Chinese nation. In order to sustain the momentum and enthusiasm of its participants, the ideology should be capable of inspiring people to look beyond immediate material benefits that may be derived through allying with the party.

The Tuidang movement meets these criteria. By invoking nativist language and appeals to China's past, the movement lays a challenge the party's claims to nationalism, and simultaneously shields itself against the charge of being anti-Chinese foreign propaganda—an accusation leveled against many opposition movements. Its ideology, articulated in Jiuping, supports a cohesive and complete philosophy rooted in traditional Chinese understandings of morality and virtue, human nature, good governance, and legitimacy of the sovereign. The Confucian, Buddhist and Daoist traditions it invokes are described as a superior epistemology to the scientific materialism and Marxist-Leninism espoused by the Communist Party, thereby challenging the underlying source of the party's legitimacy.

In order to neutralize the threat of punishment, Tuidang organizers encourage the use of aliases to disavow the party. While this frustrates the researcher trying to corroborate claims of millions of renunciations, it satisfies the need for participants to feel assured of their physical and professional security, and it means that the movement's barriers to entry are very low.

The organization behind the Tuidang phenomenon, amorphous as it may be, is also substantial. Falun Gong practitioners inside and outside China are its main backers, and possess a valuable combination of attributes and resources: they have substantial strength in numbers, a compelling salvationist drive, a resilient, networked (if informal) organization, and very little fear of imprisonment or reprisals. They also run media organizations that can broadcast their message into China via satellite, shortwave radio, and the Internet, and are responsible for developing powerful censorship-circumvention software, enabling immediate and constant communication across and within China's internet firewall.

This combination of factors has enabled the Tuidang movement to attract a sizable following and to resist attempts at suppression by Chinese authorities. Although authorities have publicly denounced the movement as amounting to nothing more than seditious rumors—a necessary move to head off the impression of popular dissent—party documents simultaneously prescribe harsh measures to crack down on the distribution of Jiuping literature. Official documents, as well as reports from Falun Gong sources, point to dozens of individuals being detained in China for possessing or promulgating literature on the movement, and some official documents speak of the Tuidang phenomenon as an existential threat to one-party rule. The party in its own words has declared that the handling of the Tuidang movement is question of its life or death. Anyone who wishes to understand the challenges confronting the modern Chinese state would be wise to understand why.

Protest and Dissent in 21st Century China

In order to assess the significance and impact of the Tuidang movement, it is first necessary to properly situate it within the broader landscape of Chinese dissent and political legitimacy issues.

In the two decades since pro-democracy demonstrations were brutally put down in Tiananmen Square, China has charted an incredible course that has continually defied conventional wisdom and challenged theories of modernization. In the early 1990s, the "end of history" seemed to be imminently approaching, evidenced by the collapse of the Soviet Bloc and democratization in East Asia. The CCP may have survived the tumult of 1989, but was nonetheless widely believed to be living on borrowed time, its rule sustained only by threat of force. Many observers maintained that economic liberalization would invariably lead to political liberalization, and promoted engagement with China on the grounds that trade and exchange would empower its people—and especially its middle class—to demand more from their rulers.

China's international trade has grown exponentially since then, and it now outranks Japan as the second-largest economy in the world. Hundreds of millions of Chinese citizens have extricated themselves from poverty, producing a large middle class. And yet, contrary to expectations, they have not made significant demands for political liberalization. Normally champions of democratization in other modernizing states, the middle class in China acts as a champion of the status quo. The Communist Party has not done away with the coercive capabilities in its arsenal, but it has shown itself far more adaptive and flexible than was once believed, proving—at least for a time—that another course of development is possible, and that economic liberalization can coexist with a Leninist polity.

In the time that has elapsed since the student-led demonstrations in 1989, there has not been a comparable public resurgence of popular opposition to Communist Party rule. Yet the absence of a significant opposition movement is not necessarily attributable to the satisfaction of the Chinese people with the ruling party. Many have benefited from the status quo, to be sure; China's economic gains and growing prestige are among the advances that

have helped keep the party in place at the pinnacle of power. But beneath a carefully cultivated appearance of popular support, tensions run high. The number of annual "mass incidents" in China, many of them responses to local corruption, unemployment, unpaid wages, land requisitions and rights abuses, hit 87,000 in 2005[3], and has risen since to over 100,000.[4] On occasion, when the cost-benefit calculation is right, protesters' demands against local authorities or businesses are met.[5] When negotiation or capitulation is not politically expedient, protests may be violently suppressed. Petitioners travel to the capital in a steady stream, hoping to find compensation for all manner of indignities and abuses that thrive in an environment without transparency, accountability in government, an independent press or systemized means of seeking redress. When they arrive, rather than finding justice, many petitioners land in black jails, or are sent back to the provinces to face punishment.[6] Ethnic and religious minorities, rural citizens, and migrant workers face pervasive societal discrimination. The economic policies pursued since the 1980s gave rise to gross inequalities, cancerous corruption, and a collusive culture between private enterprise and the party-state. Local corruption and poor oversight of industry have contributed to catastrophic environmental deterioration, pollution and waste; the waters of many rivers are toxic and undrinkable, and coal mines—poorly regulated and often illegal—blacken the skies and crops.[7] Human rights abuses remain endemic, and span from forced, late-term abortions and sterilization, to the widespread use of administrative detention and torture, and other forms of extra-judicial punishment and coercion.

These grievances are exacerbated by the absence of a transparent, accountable legal system. China's leaders have undertaken to develop a modern system of laws and train the judiciary, yet laws are applied inconsistently at the

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[3] The Economist, "Protest in China: The Cauldron Boils," Sept 29 2005.
[4] Reports on "mass incidents" have been inconsistent since 2005, but in 2006 the China Academy of Social Sciences of over 90,000, and noted further, unspecified increases in subsequent years; some reports indicate 2008 saw some 120,000 mass incidents.
[5] Cai Yongshun, Collective Resistance in China: Why Popular Protests Succeed or Fail, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010).
[6] Human Rights Watch, An Alleyway in Hell: China's Abusive 'Black Jails,' Nov 12 2009.
[7] See Elizabeth Economy, The River Runs Black: The Environmental Challenge to China's Future, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005).

whim of party officials, and the legal profession is expected to act in service of the political goals of the party.[8] Human rights defenders, who have sought to champion justice using the same language of rule of law and constitutionalism promoted by authorities, have themselves become victims. They face disbarment from the legal practice, imprisonment, or even extreme torture.[9]

Fears of labor protests, petitioners, ethnic tensions, democracy protests, independent press and unofficial religious activity have produced a mushrooming domestic security budget that in 2011 exceeded the country's declared military spending, already the second-highest in the world.[10] Authorities also must rely on an unwieldy and ever-expanding system of censorship and surveillance to control what information circulates. Terms from its own constitution—like "human rights" and "democracy"—are banned on the Internet, and following the 2011 protests in North Africa and the Middle East, electronic censorship grew yet more onerous—phone calls, it was reported, would disconnect at the mention of the word "protest."[11]

The party's Central Propaganda Department retains sweeping authorities over all forms of media, lest information percolate into society that contradicts the image the party wishes to cultivate. The legitimizing myth of a benevolent ruling party is sustained, in large measure, by a tenuous assortment of deceits and concealment. And to a certain extent, the people know it: censorship and party control of traditional media have so eroded public confidence in the press that in times of real or imagined crisis, wild rumors are often believed over official denials.

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[8] The constitution of the People's Republic of China enshrined the rule of law, but stipulates that it is subject to the leadership of the Communist Party. In an effort to disabuse human rights lawyers of the notion that the party is not above the law, in 2006 Luo Gan launched a campaign to educate the citizenry on the "socialist concept of the rule of law." The campaign made clear that the legal profession must submit to the authority of the party, and prescribed "forceful measures" against lawyers who use the constitution to "carry out sabotage." See Luo Gan, "Bolstering the teaching of the concept of socialist rule by law: Conscientiously strengthening the political thinking of the political and legal ranks," Seeking Truth, Issue No. 433, 16 June 2006.

[9] Human Rights Watch, Walking on Thin Ice: Control, Intimidation, and Harassment of Lawyers in China, April 28 2008

[10] Chris Buckley, "China internal security spending jumps past army budget," Reuters, March 5 2011.

[11] Sharon LaFraniere and David Barboza, "China Tightens Censorship of Electronic Communications," The New York Times, March 21 2011. This article relays anecdotes about individuals whose phone calls were automatically disconnected when they uttered the word "protest" in Chinese or English. In all likelihood, this was not done by voice recognition software, but may have occurred only to individuals whose communications were already being monitored—journalists, for instance.

A saving grace for China's rulers is that the country has seen stunning economic growth since 1978, when Deng Xiaoping initiated reforms to remove the "dead hand" of central planning and allow market forces to take effect. The reforms had the effect of improving the material conditions of the citizenry. Yet they also produced their own problems, including pronounced inequality. Where once China had one of the lowest Gini coefficients in the world, it now ranks near the bottom of the list in Asia in terms of income inequality.[12] Reforms, particularly under Jiang Zemin, overwhelmingly favored urban and coastal dwellers, while China's rural inland populations remain wrenchingly poor, with scarce opportunities for upward mobility or quality higher education, and fewer protections under the law. In the countryside, farmers and laborers live in what amount to shacks, while local officials build multi-story villas. Conditions in cities are not always much better; millions of migrant workers compete for low-paying, exhausting jobs. Even among those fortunate enough to land spots in China's post-secondary institutions, the future is not guaranteed. With the economy unable to produce enough white-collar jobs, many college graduates are left to dwell in "ant colonies" in major cities, crammed into tiny apartments and scrounging for menial work. Economic polarization is so severe that in recent years, the number of Chinese citizens who identify as middle- to upper-income earners has actually dropped.[13] The long-term prospects for China's economy are unclear; the export-oriented growth model is unsustainable, and though annual GDP growth has been remarkably high—upwards of 8% per year—the quality of GDP is low. Growth quotas and an influx of stimulus spending spur mammoth infrastructure and housing projects, producing, among other things, a housing bubble and potentially devastating misallocation of capital.

The combination of stresses placed on China's economy, political stability, environment, and on its people has long led to observations that China is akin to tinderbox, ready to ignite with just the right spark. Predictions of an

[12] Gini coefficient is a metric to measure income inequality, where 0 represents perfect equality, and 1 represents perfect inequality. In 2009, China's Academy of Social Sciences estimated the country's Gini Coefficient at 0.496. In the late 1970s, it was 0.15.
[13] Wright, Accepting Authoritarianism: State-Society Relations in China's Reform Era, p 7.

imminent regime change have been made consistently since the Tiananmen Square protests. In 2002, for instance, Roderick MacFarquhar characterized the Communist regime as fragile, and has predicted that its end will likely come within years, not decades. With all the elements in place for a collapse of party rule, he suggests it is not a matter of if, but of how the forces of popular discontent boil over.[14]

The Communist Party faces challenges on other fronts. With each successive generation of leaders, the absolute power of the Chinese leadership diminishes.[15] Far from being a dictator, today's rulers must delicately balance divergent views and opinions not only within the upper echelons of the party but also, to a certain extent, from the forces of public opinion. The interests of a county or township-level official are not always aligned with those of municipal or provincial authorities. The party still commands the resources to impose its will in forceful and dramatic ways, but the decision-making process can be complex, and implementation is often flawed and inconsistent, leading to an erosion of effective rule.

Despite the myriad challenges, many observers perceive that the party is not in imminent peril. Public opinion surveys in China are hard to take at face value, but a 2005 Pew Research survey of mostly urban Chinese found that 71 percent expressed satisfaction and optimism about their country's current conditions— a rate far higher than citizens of any other nation polled.[16]

Where there is discontentment, it often finds manifestation as grievances or protests against very specific, local circumstances, policies or officials, and citizens seldom aim to challenge the central authorities or overturn the political system. This owes in part to the fact that protests against specific issues have a far greater likelihood of achieving success than if they target more general, systemic problems.[17] It also owes to the dispersal of power in the

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[14] Roderick MacFarquhar, "China's Political System: Implications for U.S. Policy," in U.S.-China Relations: Fourth Conference (Aspen Institute) 17, no. 3 (2002).
[15] As Arthur Waldron put it in his Oct 11 2005 Washington Post op-ed "China's Coming People Power," "When a provincial leader received a phone call from Mao or Deng, he quaked in his boots knowing that his life might be in danger. When Hu Jintao calls, however, that leader will simply consider what bargaining strategy to adopt."
[16] Pew Research Center, China's Optimism, Nov 16 2005. http://pewglobal.org/2005/11/16/chinas-optimism/1/
[17] Cai, Collective Resistance in China: Why Popular Protests Succeed or Fail.

post-Mao era. While this trend of dispersed authority has created problems of inconsistent and ineffective policy implementation, it has also produced an interesting corollary, which is that it has diffused responsibility away from the center. The estimated 100,000 annual protests in China are overwhelmingly directed at the local level.

The parochial nature of China's protesters means that there is little that binds them together. As David Shambaugh describes it, "There is little 'connecting tissue' between these 'nodes' or pockets of unrest."[18] 100,000 protests are a lot, but as long as they do not unite against the central authorities, they do not have the capacity to meaningfully challenge Communist Party rule.

Shambaugh further observes that the party is insulated from threats by its growing economy and rising levels of personal wealth. The material gains enjoyed by large portions of the Chinese population are a disincentive from challenging Communist Party leadership. In her book "Accepting Authoritarianism: State-Society Relations in China's Reform Era," Teresa Wright observes that "Public pressure for systemic political change has been virtually absent, and public support for CCP rule has remained high."[19] Wright explains the Chinese people's apparent acceptance of authoritarianism stems in large part from the perception that the party has facilitated the country's—and therefore the individuals'—economic prosperity. Moreover, because the state retains control over many industries, and because of the collusive nature of the party in business, connections to the party can provide material benefits and security. Those who have benefited from the economic growth and connections to the party are on the winning end of growing inequality that they fear could be undermined by political transformation. These individuals therefore do not feel they share a common cause with the poor and disenfranchised, and are not motivated to press for their betterment, lest it result in demands for a redistribution of wealth. This helps account for the paradox of how a Leninist political system has been preserved alongside rising living standards, integration into the global economy, and privatization.

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[18] David Shambaugh, China's Communist Party: Atrophy and Adaptation, (Washington DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2008) p 32.
[19] Wright, Accepting Authoritarianism: State-Society Relations in China's Reform Era, pp 2 - 4.

In "Wealth into Power: The Communist Party's Embrace of China's Private Sector," Bruce Dickson similarly observes that by co-opting the "advanced productive forces" of society (i.e. intellectuals and entrepreneurs), the party has turned potential foes into allies. Where once party membership was reserved for peasants, workers and soldiers, under Jiang Zemin it began recruiting heavily from among social, professional, intellectual and entrepreneurial elites. Individuals in these groups tend to view party membership not in ideological terms, but rather as a means of advancing their personal and professional objectives.[20] The lifting of the ban on admitting capitalists into the party, and in particular Jiang Zemin's seemingly single-minded focus on elite interests, undermined the party's base of support. Yet this policy, coupled with rising incomes more generally, means that the party has quite effectively neutralized the likeliest source of challenge. In modernizing societies, pressure for democratization tends to come from the middle class; as personal wealth and economic freedom grows, people begin expecting and demanding more in the way of political freedom. But in China, the middle class perceives that it has so benefited from the current political system that they lack incentive to challenge it.

To the extent that Chinese authorities have warded off challenges to the party, much credit is owed to the efficacy of the security and censorship apparatus, and to other conventional tools of the authoritarian state. Coercion, censorship, and threat of punishment remain as very effective forms of deterrence. Yet while the party continues to employ repression, it is combined with a measure of responsiveness to public outcry and popular concerns. Pressure for greater political freedoms is also eased somewhat through the availability of limited, acceptable channels to voice opinions and grievances, including petitioning channels and village elections (however flawed those channels may be). The Communist Party has, quite effectively, advanced the notion that it is already a special (or "Chinese") form of democracy, one that is sensitive and responsive to the interests of the people. The

[20] Bruce Dickson, Wealth into Power: The Communist Party's Embrace of China's Private Sector, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

citizenry has, by and large, accepted this notion,[21] and possesses very limited awareness of the kinds of processes and institutions that characterize true liberal democracy[22]—a credit, perhaps, to the efficacy of censorship. Many citizens are not only uninformed about differences in political systems, they are ambivalent or fearful when it comes to political change. The aversion to engagement in politics, and particularly any form of organized protest or opposition movement stems from fear of repression, chaos, and a cynicism about the prospects of success.

Of all the strategies employed to adapt to changing environments and sustain the viability of one-party rule, the most important tool of legitimization is, and has always been, rooted in ideology. The notion that ideology would be so central among the party's adaptive strategies is somewhat counterintuitive; it has long since abandoned Communism in all but name, and the oft-repeated conventional wisdom is that its power now is sustained largely by material interests. Yet in its own discourse on legitimization, the party places overwhelming emphasis on ideology, rather than on liberalization or institutional reforms.[23] Ideology, moreover, has the effect of shaping how citizens perceive and understand their society, how they conceive of the national interest, how they view their relationship to the state, and how they evaluate the performance of their rulers.

The Logic of Legitimacy

For millennia, the right to rule the land of China was conferred by the mandate of heaven. Confucian philosophy provided the basis for understanding this notion of legitimacy: the emperor, the son of heaven, served as a link between man and divine, and as such was tasked with an obligation to observe and adhere to the Dao—the way and nature of the universe. Leaders were expected to observe proper rites and rituals, to cultivate virtues of benevolence, humaneness, integrity, righteousness and learning, and to strive perfect their own moral character.

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[21] Tianjian Shi, "China: Democratic Values Supporting an Authoritarian System," in Yun-han Chu, et al (eds.), How East Asians View Democracy (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), pp 209–37.
[22] Chu Yun-Han, "Taiwan and China's Democratic Future: Can the Tail Wag the Dog?," in China's Changing Political Landscape, Cheng Li, ed. (Washington DC: Brookings Institution, 2008).
[23] Heike Holbig and Bruce Gilley, "Reclaiming Legitimacy in China," Politics & Policy 38, no 3: 395–422.

Confucius shunned the use of force and coercion in favor of the practice of virtue, stating, "in administering your government, what need is there for you to kill? Just desire the good yourself and the common people will be good. The virtue of the gentleman is like wind; the virtue of the small man is like grass. Let the wind blow over the grass and it is sure to bend."[24] Through study of the truth or Dao, observance of rituals and practice of arts and music, and unflinching adherence to virtue, the ruler would be able to ensure harmony between heaven, earth, and man. The land would be prosperous and peaceful—the paragon of a flourishing and ethical culture. And if the inverse were true—that is, if a ruler failed to observe the rites, to value learning and study of the universal truth, or was unjust, inhumane and unrighteous—he would lose the mandate of heaven. Peace and order would be lost; floods, droughts, or other disasters would be visited upon the land, the empire would fall into disunity and chaos, and the people would be justified in rising up to overthrow him. The appearance of instability and natural disasters itself can be taken as evidence that a ruler has lost the mandate of heaven, and the presence of stability and peace as evidence that he retains it.

The Confucian paradigm of good and just government is incompatible with that of the Communist Party. It is largely for that reason that the party, in the early decades of its rule, went to devastating lengths to destroy and discredit China's moral and religious traditions as feudal superstitions. Yet while the substance of the party's legitimization narratives bear no resemblance to Confucian or Daoist morality, the party is still beholden to the need to justify its rule in similar terms.

Vivienne Shue, in her essay "Legitimacy Crisis in China?," attempts to distill the essential logic of legitimacy in China in the three core concepts of truth, benevolence, and glory. In imperial China, truth referred to the study and observation of the Dao. True knowledge, writes Shue, comes from participation in the Confucian cosmology and in the practice of ethics and rituals. Benevolence was taken to be the defining feature of good government; a ruler should be humane and magnanimous, forgiving, kind and compassionate toward his subjects. Contingent

[24] Confucius, The Analects, translated by D.C. Lau (New York, NY: Penguin Books Ltd., 1979), pp 115 – 116.

upon a ruler's successful cultivation of truth and benevolence, he would also bring glory to China by ensuring the conditions for harmony, prosperity, and the flourishing of culture and education.[25]

Shue argues that though the specific content of these core concepts have changed continuously under Communism, the Communist Party still employs some version of truth, benevolence and glory to justify its authority. To the party, for instance, truth is represented by modern scientific rationalism and historical materialism. Though not a rich or especially moral philosophy, it is supposed to be an objective truth, with its own understanding of human nature, of history, of goodness, and of justice. The Communist Party holds itself to have exclusive possession of this truth, and translates that into justification for its rule.

It is for this reason that the Communist Party cannot simply shed the trappings of the Marxist-Leninist ideology, no matter how obsolete it becomes. To admit the failings of the official ideology would be to admit that the party does not possess the truth, and has no cause ruling China. But while it cannot cast off the official ideology, each generation of Party leadership has continuously adapted, modified, and rationalized it to suit a changing environment.

In the context of post-Tiananmen China, the official doctrine of Truth espoused by the party is found in Marxist-Leninism, Mao Zedong Thought, Deng Xiaoping Theory, and the Three Represents (the latter of which has been recast somewhat under Hu Jintao to be less elite-driven and more "people-centered" than originally intended by Jiang Zemin). As articulated in the Constitution of the Communist Party, "Marxism-Leninism brings to light the laws governing the development of the history of human society. Its basic tenets are correct and have tremendous vitality."[26] Mao Zedong contributed to the official canon the lessons learned through the "concrete

[25] Vivienne Shue, "Legitimacy Crisis in China?" in Peter Hays Gries and Stanley Rosen (eds.), State and Society in 21st-century China. Crisis, Contention, and Legitimation, (New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004).
[26] Constitution of the People's Republic of China, as adopted on Oct 21 2007 at the Seventeenth National Congress of the Communist Party of China. Accessible at http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2007-10/25/content_6944738.htm

practice of the Chinese revolution" in its "prolonged revolutionary struggle against imperialism, feudalism and bureaucratic-capitalism."

The subsequent additions to the official ideology, those of Deng Xiaoping and Jiang Zemin, sought to reverse the economic devastation caused by Marxist-Leninsm and Mao Zedong Thought through market reforms and privatization, and then to elevate capitalists and entrepreneurs as the "advanced productive forces" of society, respectively. The ideology is almost comically self-defeating, yet there is some consistency in the emphasis on scientific and technological knowledge, historical materialism, and the value of modernization, which is treated as a virtue in and of itself. Though it has been adapted and amended into obscurity, and although true believers are a rare or extinct breed, the party's claim to be a representative and defender of this Truth continues to underlie its most basic claim to legitimacy.

To borrow further from Vivienne Shue's framework, the party's "benevolence" is equally important in justifying its authority. The appearance of benevolence comes from several sources. First, the party casts itself as the only thing standing between harmony and social stability and feudalism, backwardness, exploitation, and chaos. By providing the stable conditions necessary for economic growth and prosperity, the party can claim to be advancing the interests of the people. Or, to qualify that, it can claim that it is defending the interests of the "overwhelming majority" of the people, or at the very least, of the all-important "advanced productive forces" of society. Individuals who have benefited materially from connections to the party, or who have gained amidst its economic and social policies, may therefore be left feeling indebted to it. In this sense, the benevolence of the party is not tied to a particular moral code of conduct, but rather to its ability to foster the conditions for material progress.

Other dimensions of the party's benevolence manifest in the official rhetoric, which places great emphasis on asserting the magnanimity, high-mindedness, and compassion of the central authorities. But cultivating and maintaining this image hinges largely on the effective suppression of information. Lest the party's benevolence be called into question, the details about pivotal events in China's modern history remain carefully hidden from view.

The Great Leap Forward, Mao Zedong's disastrous program to expand economic output, produced the most devastating famine in recorded history. During the campaign, scarce food was wielded as a political weapon, and the threat of starvation brought would-be opponents into submission. All told, as many as 45 million people were killed.[27] Chinese authorities maintain the famine was the result of natural disasters and poor conditions. Mao, depicted in the memoirs of contemporaries as a sex-crazed psychopath who reveled in chaos and was indifferent to the deaths of millions,[28] is officially remembered as being at least 70 percent correct. Memory of the massacre of unarmed students and demonstrators in Beijing in the early morning of June 4, 1989, is similarly suppressed; authorities hold that students killed soldiers, not the other way around. The extreme, casual violence in the country's vast network of prisons and labor camps is largely unknown, except to those who have lived through it. It is to protect the appearance of benevolence that the party invests so heavily in the control of information. And it is for benevolence that a citizen attempting to publicize torture or injustice may meet with even harsher repression and punishment.

In broad circles of Chinese society, the belief in the benevolence of the party's central leaders is remarkably persistent. Its servants at the local level may be evil, but as the idiom goes, the mountains are tall and the emperor is far. Suffering peasants believe that if only Beijing knew of the indignities they endure at the hands of corrupt local officials, they would surely come to their aid. Cai Yongshun demonstrates this phenomenon in his 2010 study "Collective Resistance in China:"

> *Many Chinese villagers trust the Center and distrust lower levels ...villagers do not believe that grass-roots leaders are looking out for the interest of the populace, and they do not trust them to carry out beneficial policies. They instead find many basic-level cadres to be self-serving, predatory, and high-handed. [...] These same villagers tend to idealize top leaders and sometimes explicitly compare them to "wise emperors" (ming jun) of old. [...] The villagers are willing to believe in the Center, or at least give it the benefit of the doubt, even when they know little about what it has done. Many of our survey respondents admitted that they did not*

[27] Frank Dikötter, Mao's Great Famine: The History of China's Most Devastating Catastrophe, (New York, NY: Walker Publishing Company, 2010).
[28] See, for instance, Li Zhisui, The Private Life of Chairman Mao, (New York, NY: Random House, 1996).

know much about how well top leaders had performed but nonetheless insisted that the Center had their interests at heart.[29]

The corruption of local party and state officials is no doubt corrosive, but it can, ironically, serve to reinforce the perceived need for Communist Party. As Patricia Thornton writes, accounts of the criminal and decadent activities of local authorities in the popular press "serve as implicit reminders of the state's capacities for violence and extraction," and thereby tap into "pervasive anxiety that contemporary Chinese society hovers on the brink of chaos."[30] This justifies Communist Party rule because, in the face of endemic corruption and the threat of the unraveling of Chinese society, it appears to be the best hope of preserving stability. This dynamic is a powerful one, but it is effective only to the extent that citizens do not connect the corruption and injustice they experience at the local level to the central authorities.

Finally, by steering China's modernization efforts, overseeing its economic growth, sustaining stability, protecting the Chinese people from all manner of "hostile foreign forces," and returning China to great power status, the Communist Party has brought a form of glory to China. It is, again, not the glory that a Confucian ruler would strive for, wherein China would be a shining example to the world on the basis of its flourishing artistic, intellectual and spiritual culture, and its peaceful and prosperous civilization. Yet the party's narrative is nonetheless deeply resonant to the Chinese people, who have endured decades—indeed, centuries—of humiliation at the hands of imperialist powers, civil war, internal strife, and economic backwardness. As part of its legitimization narrative, the party has sought to link China's advances inexorably to itself, and his striven (with mixed results) to dominate nationalist discourse as a means of fending off challenges to its rule.[31]

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[29] Cai, Collective Resistance in China: Why Popular Protests Succeed or Fail, pp 42 – 47.
[30]Patricia Thornton, Disciplining the State: Virtue, Violence, and State-Making in Modern China. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), p 217.
[31] For a discussion of how the nationalism the party helped foster is increasingly being used to challenge its rule, see Peter Hays Gries, "Popular nationalism and state legitimization," in State and Society in 21st-century China: Crisis, contention, and legitimization, Peter Hays Gries and Stanley Rosen Ed. (New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2005), pp 181 - 194.

The party's legitimization narratives, carefully and continuously adapted and reframed, have enabled it to endure amidst immense challenges and rapid social and economic change. Yet the vocabulary and symbolic tools of legitimization also provide the basis for challenge and contradiction. Shue observes that Falun Gong—whose central tenets of truth, benevolence, and tolerance are almost a perfect parallel to truth, benevolence, and glory—represented a holistic challenge to party legitimacy. By all accounts Falun Gong did not have any political ambitions, and did not seek to challenge authority (certainly not in the 1990s). But as will be explained in greater depth in the following chapter, it nonetheless unwittingly represented a comprehensive challenge to the most fundamental sources of Communist Party authority in modern China. It offered an alternative truth to the official ideology that was, apparently, far more appealing to large numbers of citizens, including to the many Communist Party members that populated its ranks. It offered a different example of benevolence based on moral rectitude, and provided a vision of social stability that challenged the necessity of rigid social controls and an immense domestic security apparatus. It negated the party's narrative of progress, derided the pursuit of wealth, and it was—unlike the party—authentically Chinese. The ferocity with which the Communist Party has sought to eradicate the peaceful and apolitical Falun Gong is incongruous to many observes, but Shue argues that the campaign's intensity and scope is commensurate with the extent of the threat perceived by the party.

The Tuidang movement poses nearly the exact same threats to the party that Falun Gong did in the 1990s. But unlike Falun Gong, Tuidang's challenge is deliberate, and calculated to precipitate its demise.

Research Challenges

If the Tuidang movement's size is anywhere near what it claims—that is to say, if the 60,000 names added to the Dajiyuan website every day belong to real people denouncing the party—it deserves understanding and attention. Yet in the six-plus years since it began, almost nothing has been written in either journalistic or scholarly literature

about Jiuping or the Tuidang movement it catalyzed. The apparent reluctance to pursue a serious study of the movement can be ascribed to several factors.

The most significant challenges to studying this movement are the methodological problems it presents. Namely, the claim of mass withdrawals from the Communist Party is very difficult to independently corroborate. The individuals making Tuidang statements overwhelmingly opt to use aliases and rarely leave personally identifying information. David Ownby, arguably the leading academic authority on the history of Falun Gong, devoted only one page to the question of the Tuidang movement in his 2008 survey of Falun Gong's history and evolution. He justifies the brevity of his comments by saying that he would have no way to verify the movement's claims, and furthermore was doubtful that Dajiyuan could have sufficient influence to drive such a movement.[32]

The task of verification is made more difficult by the fact that most Tuidang statements originate from Mainland China, where research on such politically sensitive topics carries potential risks to both researcher and subject. In order to get basic information on the Tuidang movement—how it is organized, how Tuidang statements are sought, and how many statements are collected—fieldwork is almost a necessity, at a minimum outside China, and ideally inside as well. But for journalists and scholars working in China, the Tuidang movement easily falls into the category of forbidden topics, and by pursuing the issue the researcher risks losing access to key contacts, resources, and perhaps to the country itself.[33] Some of the research approaches that one might ideally like to adopt in pursuing a study of the Tuidang movement are unavailable. One cannot, for instance, recruit Chinese pollsters to conduct surveys on public awareness of or feelings toward the movement, nor can one freely seek interviews with Tuidang participants or activists inside China.

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[32] David Ownby, Falun Gong and the Future of China, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), p 222.
[33] For a discussion of self-censorship among China scholars, see Perry Link's "China: The Anaconda in the Chandelier," The New York Review of Books, April 11 2002, and Carsten Holz, "Have China Scholars All Been Bought?," Far Eastern Economic Review, April 2007.

Tuidang's organizers themselves, who profess to want to raise awareness of their movement in the Western world, do little to remedy the situation. In the course of my research, I found the Tuidang activists to be generally accommodating; most readily obliged my requests for interviews and some invited me into their homes to observe first-hand their process of soliciting renunciations from the Communist Party online or over the phone. At the same time, however, I also found them to be guarded in disclosing important information about the inner workings of the movement. The (not unjustified) concern over Chinese espionage has produced a tendency to err on the side of extreme caution in divulging information.[34] Many of the front-line activists involved in the Tuidang movement—those who make phone calls or adopt other approaches to solicit renunciations of the party—refuse to keep records of the names they collect (though a few do). After nearly two years of research, the true authorship of Jiuping remains unknown to me. I presume that the authors are a collection of Chinese Falun Gong adherents in North America, but even this could not be confirmed. Simple questions, such as how many people are subscribed to email lists for Tuidang activists, are sometimes met with prevarication. On a few occasions, I was given valuable insights into, for instance, some of the technology employed as part of the movement or the number of Tuidang activists in a given region, but was then asked not to disclose it.

Another deterrent to studying the Tuidang movement is that the movement's claims sound outrageous. Numbers that appear hyperbolic, coupled with the movement's charged and triumphalist rhetoric, can give the impression that the movement is undeserving of serious study. Part of the problem lies in the unfortunate English rendering of Tuidang embraced by most activists, who translate the term as "quitting the CCP." Most people who participate in the Tuidang movement are not and have never been full members of the CCP, but are instead making statements disavowing affiliations to the Communist Youth League or Young Pioneers—organizations to which a

[34] Soon after Dajiyuan published Jiuping, its Maryland-based editor-in-chief began receiving threats from Chinese authorities, who apparently believed she may have authored the articles. Her family in China was paid visits and interrogated by security agents. At least one individual in China was imprisoned on (misplaced) suspicions that they authored Jiuping, and public security bureaus have received directives to monitor the Dajiyuan website in search of people in their locales who are posting Tuidang statements.

majority of Chinese citizens have belonged at some time in their lives. Since the CCP has only slightly over 70 million member, it is only natural that the suggestion of 90 million having "quit the party" is met with incredulity.

And then there are the fraudulent postings, most notably one allegedly made by retired propaganda official Meng Weizai on behalf of 50 of his former colleagues. This event, which occurred in December 2004 and which is discussed later in this paper, was cause for Patricia Thornton to largely dismiss the movement's credibility as little more than an artifact of "cybersectarianism." Her treatment of the movement in the article "Manufacturing Dissent in Transnational China" centered mainly on the movement's first month, and unfortunately provides little original research into the phenomenon itself. Instead, Thornton's discussion of the movement appeared in the context of how Falun Gong and other qigong groups make use of the internet to produce "echo chamber"-type environments to promote their narratives and views, share information, and maintain a networked community amidst suppression. Thornton suggests the Tuidang movement is something that exists almost exclusively within this echo chamber, presumably with few real-world implications.[35]

The passing mention of the movement by Ownby and Thornton about encompasses the extent of scholarly attention that has been paid to the Tuidang movement. Even researchers working in closely related fields—studying, for instance, the party's legitimization issues and its concerns over defections, or Chinese protest movement—have not sought to study the Tuidang phenomenon. When I asked one such scholar for his assessment of the Tuidang phenomenon, he responded that, outside of Falun Gong-affiliated sources, he had seen no evidence that the movement was authentic or a cause for concern to Chinese authorities. If one seeks such evidence, however, it is available; hundreds of Chinese websites, including government and party websites, can be found discussing the threat posed by the Tuidang movement, and most of these are discoverable with a Google

[35] Patricia Thornton, "Manufacturing Dissent in Transnational China," in Popular Protest in China, Kevin J. O'Brien, ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007).

search. Therefore, while there are substantial methodological challenges to researching the Tuidang movement, it is not impossible to research, given the will to pursue it.

Another explanation of why the Tuidang movement has received so little attention is that it does not comport with the idea of a Chinese democracy movement that many observers in the West have looked or hoped for. The 1989 'goddess of democracy' in Tiananmen Square resonated with these audiences, as does the language of Charter 08—the smart, pragmatic 2008 dissident manifesto whose very name is modeled on a European democracy movement, and whose concepts and principles are distinctly Western. The Charter is likely better known outside China than within, and one of its authors has been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Jiuping and the Tuidang movement are just the opposite. A movement that looks mainly to China's past for inspiration, it is more Confucian than humanist, and places emphasis on individual, moral redemption. It does not explicitly prescribe democracy, or any other political system for that matter, and is therefore an unknown and unfamiliar entity.

After six years, there is no original research or serious analysis of the Tuidang movement in the scholarly literature. Ownby, in his brief discussion of Jiuping, writes: "I accept the idea that the Communist Party has, over time, inflicted extreme, unnecessary violence on the Chinese people, but as a professional historian I cannot sanction such one-sided depictions, which ultimately reveal more about the authors of their texts than about the subjects."[36] Indeed, the Jiuping's real value is not as a historical text, at least not for those with ready access to more complete sources. But even if, as Ownby argues, Jiuping reveals more about its authors than its subject, what does it say? What does it say about the Communist Party that it has responded to Jiuping and the Tuidang movement with such paranoid rhetoric, and such harsh punitive measures? And what should be made of the tens of millions of Chinese alleged to agree with Dajiyuan's assessment of the Communist Party, and with the values it advances?

[36] Ownby, Falun Gong and the Future of China, pp 221 - 222.

Approach and Key Findings

This study will attempt to answer some of these questions, exploring the Tuidang movement's origins and its ideological underpinnings, its organization and evolution, the motivations of its participants, and how the Communist Party has responded to the phenomenon. It is an admittedly ambitious task, and one better suited to someone far more capable than myself. However, in the absence of other research, I aspire here to at least provide a starting point for a broader conversation on the Tuidang movement.

The most important question I hope to shed light on is what the Tuidang movement means. In addressing this question, one must allow for the fact that it means very different things for different people, and it should ideally be considered from the perspectives of at least three distinct groups: Falun Gong practitioners who started the movement, the participants who populate its ranks, and the Communist Party itself. Each of these groups attaches different significance to the movement.

Outside observers have interpreted the Tuidang phenomenon in a variety ways and with reference to different historical events. It can be tempting to explain Tuidang in the context of the Chinese democracy movement, and not entirely without reason. Outside of China, Tuidang activists and organizers mingle closely with expatriate Chinese democracy groups, attending each other's rallies and roundtables and making shared appeals for freedom and an end to the one-party system. A number of the most prominent individuals who have signed their names to the movement—1978 "democracy wall" veteran Wei Jingsheng and Nobel Peace Prize-nominated lawyer Gao Zhisheng, for instance—are also democracy activists. In the United States, some Chinese democracy groups require their members to make Tuidang statements as a condition of membership, and a number of the Tuidang activists I have spoken with have suggested that if and when the Communist Party falls, they hope that righteous democracy activists will step in to fill the void.

David Ownby, in his brief assessment, offered a slightly different view, describing the movement principally as an anti-communism one, and comparing its rhetoric about the "evils" of Communism with McCarthyism.

Unfortunately, Ownby does not linger on the topic of the Tuidang movement, and does not offer further expansion upon this perspective.

There are undoubtedly people within the Tuidang movement for whom it serves as a conduit to express pro-democracy, anti-communist, or anti-authoritarian political views. But for the majority of individuals who identify with the movement, there is no evidence of strong pro-democracy leanings. Jiuping, which provides the philosophical foundation of the movement, does not advocate for democracy, or for any other political system or institutional reforms. Its challenge to Communism and prescriptions for China more closely resemble traditional Confucian ideas than liberal ones. To describe the movement as an extension of the Chinese democracy movement is therefore not quite fitting.

Some foreign observers, including a number of Eastern European politicians, have compared the Tuidang phenomenon to the anti-Communist movements that swept former Soviet bloc countries. Arthur Waldron makes a similar parallel, though he does not explicitly refer to the Tuidang movement. In a short essay on the significance of the Falun Gong's continued resistance to suppression, Waldron draws on his experiences in the former Soviet Union to argue that Falun Gong's place in China's history is comparable to that of Soviet dissidents in the 1970s and 80s. In a likely reference to Jiuping, he notes that Falun Gong practitioners' publications "espouse cures to the pathologies of communism, in the traditional Chinese values of truthfulness and human heartedness." He goes on to remind he reader that spiritual strength, such as that found in Falun Gong today, was a major factor behind the collapse of Soviet Communism, which met some of its fiercest opposition from the church.

In a contribution I wrote in 2009 for the Christian Science Monitor, I invoked another parallel to explain the cathartic significance that the movement holds for those who partake in it—that of the "truth and reconciliation" process. The analogy is not a perfect one, and there is much about the Tuidang movement that it cannot capture, but it has some explanatory value. One finds amid the thousands of Tuidang statements posted to Dajiyuan the accounts of victims and persecutors alike—the staff of a family planning office as well as the mother forced to submit

to a late-term abortion; the father who lost a daughter to persecution as well as the public security bureau officer seeking absolution and forgiveness for his sins. All use this forum to make sense of their lives under Communist Party rule, to voice their frustrations and pains, and find a measure of honesty and peace in the process. Within the Tuidang statements there is a recurring theme whereby participants express feelings of relief, freedom, purity, and redemption in writing their renunciation statement. Unlike in the truth and reconciliation process undertaken by South Africa, however, this process presumably does not end there. Tuidang participants may be able to make peace with themselves and their fellow citizens, but do not view the Communist Party in the same forgiving light.

In the search for meaning in the Tuidang movement, a natural starting point is with Falun Gong. Not only did Falun Gong adherents start the Tuidang movement, they are also its most active proselytizers, and the Communist Party's response to the movement has been closely tied to its crackdown on Falun Gong. The spiritual philosophy of Falun Gong profoundly informs the content and evolution of the movement, and they present very similar challenges to the Communist Party's legitimacy. The second chapter of this study provides a narrative and analytical account of Falun Gong's beliefs, the causes behind its suppression in 1999, and traces the evolution of Falun Gong's relationship with the party-state from 1992 to 2004, eventually leading to the publication of Jiuping and the start of the Tuidang movement. I do not attend to every aspect of Falun Gong's history or beliefs; Li Hongzhi, the practice's founder, has published many thousands of pages on topics ranging from atomic physics to Chinese medicine, natural history to the creation of music and art. I will seek only to describe those aspects of Falun Gong that are of some immediate value in understanding its relationship with the Chinese authorities and the Tuidang movement, which include its organization, moral and ethical values, certain aspects of its cosmology, and its teachings concerning governance, politics and law. I argue that Falun Gong prior to 1996 was viewed as a potential partner to China's leaders. Following Falun Gong's break from Chinese official oversight in 1996, however, it came to be viewed as competition to the party—not only on account of its size, composition and independence, but more importantly because of its ideological content; Falun Gong's philosophy is based on a belief in a transcendent and

universal truth which supersedes the official ideology of the Communist Party, and which is more authentically and traditionally Chinese than the party's. Falun Gong continued amassing more practitioners into the late 1990s, many of them party members and the elites of Chinese society. In this period, tensions grew and eventually boiled over in the spring and summer of 1999, leading to a nationwide campaign to discredit the practice, and imprison, torture, and "transform" Falun Gong practitioners. Though initially expected to be a short campaign, the practice survived, and its followers mounted a sustained resistance to the increasingly determined and brutal crackdown. The publication of Jiuping in late 2004 reflects the decision on the part of the Falun Gong community that all chances of dialogue or détente had passed. For years, practitioners sought to "appeal" to authorities for a reversal of the ban against them. When it didn't come, they waited for Jiang Zemin—who almost single-handedly initiated the anti-Falun Gong campaign—to step down, hoping his successor would prove more conciliatory. And when that approach failed, they resolved for the first time to issue a direct challenge to the Communist Party itself in the form of Jiuping.

The second part of the chapter discusses the content of Jiuping, and for the most part I have chosen to allow the document to speak for itself. Contrary to what one might expect of a movement that is known for calling for the destruction of the Communist Party, Jiuping is ambivalent to questions of institutional change, and never sets out to prescribe an alternative system of government, and does not even call explicitly for the overthrow of the party. And although on first reading, it can resemble a heavy-handed account of Communist Party history, much of its content deals with philosophical questions of human nature, ethics, natural laws, and so forth. Its attacks on the Communist Party are based largely on interpretations of Confucian, Buddhist, and Daoist morality, and center on the charge that the Communist Party is immoral, foreign to China, and is incapable of ensuring the conditions for lasting stability and peace.

Chapter three describes the evolution and logistics of the Tuidang movement catalyzed by the publication of Jiuping. Relying mainly on fieldwork and structured and semi-structured interviews with approximately two

dozen organizers and activists in the Tuidang movement, this chapter describes how its treatises are disseminated in China, how lists of dissenters are collected and organized, and what motivates the army of activists—most of them Falun Gong adherents—who are central to the process. This chapter is intended to allow the reader to understand the significance of the Tuidang movement to the individuals who are its most dedicated proponents. For them, the payoff in spending their own money and time to solicit Tuidang statements lies in the belief that they are providing a kind of deliverance or moral redemption to individuals who choose to sever their ties to the party. This quasi-evangelical drive is the best way to account for the tremendous human and material resources that have gone into propelling the Tuidang movement.

This chapter serves another, arguably more important function of providing some basis for an assessment of the claims made by Tuidang organizers. As described earlier, there are numerous methodological challenges associated with researching the Tuidang movement; its participants are anonymous, and some more conventional means of corroboration are unavailable. In the course of research for this chapter, I attempted to compensate by assembling as complete of a picture as possible of the organization of the movement. Some of the most enlightening experiences involved observing Tuidang activists make phone calls or chat online with Mainland China, or bring their message to the streets of Chinatowns and the dirt paths of Sun Moon Lake in Taiwan, attempting—often successfully—to solicit withdrawals from Communist Party organizations. In addition, I obtained estimates from Falun Gong or Tuidang organizers across multiple international cities to gauge the number of Tuidang activists in those regions known to be regularly engaged in the type of activism I had observed. Information was assembled on the variety and scope of other dissemination methods employed by Tuidang activists, such as the use of automated phone calls, mass emails, mailing and faxing campaigns, and television and radio broadcasts. Finally, I drew on articles published to the main Chinese-language Falun Gong website to provide a glimpse at the movement's dynamics within Mainland China. There, activists employ a combination of high and low-tech, connecting to the

Internet via proxy servers to download information on the Tuidang movement, printing the literature in underground "material sites," and then distributing it by hand, often at considerable personal risk.

A common mistake is to assume that Falun Gong or Tuidang undermines the party's legitimacy for the purpose of overthrowing the Communist Party, and/or that Falun Gong seeks to supplant the party. But Falun Gong continues to insist that it is not political. Observers, including those sympathetic to Falun Gong, have had difficulty reconciling the adamant insistence on this point with what is obviously very political language and activity. To reach a genuine understanding of Falun Gong and the Tuidang movement, however, it is vital that one grasp the origins and meaning of the Falun Gong's emphatic declaration that they are not politically motivated. One must understand that Falun Gong practitioners' objectives, including through the Tuidang movement, are not about catalyzing regime change per se, but are instead rooted in spiritual and religious imperatives. Challenging the CCP's legitimacy is just a means to an end, with the end being moral redemption, freedom, and healing for the people of China. This is reflected in the statements of the rank-and-file Tuidang participants themselves, who are the focus of chapter four.

The chapter begins by recounting the stories of several verifiable and relatively prominent Tuidang participants. All of them used their own names and wrote sometimes lengthy essays describing their decision to withdraw from the Communist Party. Unlike in the general population of participants, most of these individuals were bona fide CCP members, and most now live outside China.

Using both qualitative and quantitative analysis of a sample of Tuidang statements posted to the Dajiyuan website, this chapter then turns to the (mostly) anonymous Tuidang participants in Mainland China. It describes participants' party backgrounds, geographic distribution, the nature of their grievances, and ideological orientations. The statements were found to come mostly from middle-aged former Youth League and Young Pioneer members, and are heavily concentrated in the Northeast and provinces nearest Beijing. They reveal a great diversity of grievances, most of them citing the Communist Party's history of violence and killing, expressing shame and

frustration at having been deceived, and referring to the party's betrayal of traditional Chinese culture as their reasons for issuing Tuidang statements. Participants also frequently describe the personal significance they attach to the process of making a Tuidang statement, expressing feelings of relief and liberation. Although the small sample of verifiable Tuidang participants represents a more elite cohort, the experiences they convey are reflected across the sample of the anonymous statements from Mainland China.

The official response to Tuidang is described in chapter five. By making use of party and government documents, I seek to illuminate how authorities perceive the movement, how they have responded to the threat, and how the Tuidang movement has influenced broader party rectification and ideological education trends. Most of these documents were publicly available, and many were discovered with a Google search of .cn or .gov.cn domains. Most of the official documents fall within one of three categories: 1) Internal-facing directives describing the threat posed by the Tuidang movement and/or prescribing measures to crack down on the circulation of Jiuping; 2) Reports on the successful seizures of the Jiuping, shuttering of Falun Gong material sites, or arrests and "transformation" of Falun Gong practitioners; or 3) Public-facing directives informing people of how to respond if confronted with a Tuidang activist or a copy of Jiuping. This chapter also describes how the Tuidang phenomenon has become part of the curriculum in the "Campaign to Maintain the Advanced Nature of Communist Party Members," and has been tied to broader crackdowns on the press and the Internet.

Finally, a concluding chapter is offered to address the significance and impact of the Tuidang movement, dealing with the potential implications of the Tuidang movement for the future of the Chinese Communist Party.

CHAPTER TWO: From Tiananmen to Tuidang

The Tuidang phenomenon can be understood in various ways: as a movement aspiring to regime change in China, as a case study in the use of technology and the Internet in fomenting dissent, or as evidence of popular dissatisfaction with the regnant regime, to name a few. In this paper I offer a survey of the movement that touches on these points and several more. The narrative begins with the first public teaching of Falun Gong, the natural starting point for a conversation on Jiuping and the Tuidang movement, whose content and meanings can best be understood in the context of Falun Gong and its suppression in China.

I wish to accomplish three things in this chapter: Firstly, to provide an account of the relationship between Falun Gong and the Chinese Communist Party from the movement's inception in 1992 to late 2004, when Jiuping was published. Secondly, to explain the origins, content, and appeal of Falun Gong's philosophy, and illustrate its influence in Jiuping. Finally, to explore Jiuping's content, views on the CCP, and prescriptions (or lack thereof) for China's future.

The Qigong Boom

Falun Gong identifies with ancient cultivation methods, and claims to have been passed down privately from a single master to a single disciple since antiquity.[37] In the modern context, however, it appeared as an outgrowth of the *qigong* movement—a mostly urban expression of religiosity and mysticism that thrived for over twenty years from the end of the Cultural Revolution to the mid-1990s.[38]

Qigong is a modern term comprised of the two characters of *qi*—which can be interpreted as referring to breath, air, or to vital energy—and *gong,* which means achievement, result, or effect. The term is sometimes

[37] Li Hongzhi, lectures in Guangzhou, 1994 (audio available from www.falundafa.org)
[38] Gunde, Richard. "Culture and Customs of China," (Greenwood Publishing Group: 2002), p. 214

translated literally as "breath training," though less literal translations including such renderings as "energy cultivation."[39]

David Palmer traces the origins of the modern qigong movement to 1949 in Hebei province, where a group of Communist Party cadres apparently discovered ancient techniques of regulated breathing, meditation, and stretching that they believed had healing power.[40] As part of a nationalistic response to the "westernization" of Chinese medicine, Chinese officialdom explored the burgeoning field with alacrity, seeking out far-flung "qigong masters" with esoteric knowledge of cultivation techniques, and attempting to extract from them the specific methods that could achieve physical health, while discarding the "feudal superstitions" and religious elements.[41] The result was a set of practice systems that came to be known as qigong.

Despite that the term dates back only several decades, the traditions associated with qigong have their roots in China's ancient past: their creation is sometimes attributed to the mythical Yellow Emperor himself.[42] Buddhist monks, Daoist practitioners of internal alchemy, martial artists and Confucian scholars in history have embraced qigong-like techniques of meditation and regulated breathing as part of their process of spiritual cultivation, moral refinement, or development of combat skills.[43]

In the 1950s and 60s, the newly created category of qigong soon became integrated into the field of traditional Chinese medicine, and found practitioners among the nation's leaders. The growth of the nascent movement was halted by the launch of the Cultural Revolution, but toward the end of the period, it reemerged stronger than ever. In the late 1970s, charismatic masters could be found teaching their qigong methods in urban

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39 Gunde, p. 213
40 David Palmer, Qigong Fever: Body, Science and Utopia in China, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p 1.
41 Ownby, Falun Gong and the Future of China, p 10.
42 Kenneth Cohen notes, for example, that in the Yellow Emperor's Classic of Internal Medicine that his minister Zhu You preferred to heal illnesses through prayer, and practiced External Qi Healing while healing patients.See Kenneth S. Cohen, "The Way of Qigong: The Art and Science of Chinese Energy Healing" (Random House, Inc., 1999)
43 Palmer emphasizes the caveat that while such practices employed techniques similar or nearly identical to those used in qigong, they cannot necessarily be understood as forms of qigong. For one, they pre-date the creation of qigong as a category of practice. But more importantly, says Palmer, qigong cannot be understood only as a set of techniques, but as a movement that is also defined by the political and social context of modern China.

parks, promoting them mainly as healing methods. Coinciding with Deng Xiaoping's "Four Modernizations" drive, Chinese scientists "discovered" the material existence of *qi,* the vital energy that the practice seeks to harness.[44] This finding validated the "scientific" (as oppose to feudal or superstitious) nature of qigong, and enabled it to find a place with China's new modernization project as a source of national pride. Although wrapped in the language of science and modernity, qigong was also a way for Chinese citizens to reconnect with their heritage, and specifically to the ideals of spiritual cultivation that had been ruthlessly suppressed under Mao. Eternal yearnings for meaning in life and the universe were thus able to find expression through the qigong movement.[45]

By the 1980s, the "qigong boom" (*qigong gaochao)* was in full swing. With the sanction and participation of authorities, Chinese citizens filled parks at dawn to practice an array of meditation, stretching, and breathing exercises. An estimated 2,000 unique qigong disciplines were being taught.[46] The China Qigong Scientific Research Society (CQRS), an official body that helped organize qigong events, lectures and seminars (and, importantly, took a cut of qigong masters' fees), was established to oversee and administer the qigong movement. A handful of "grandmasters" emerged, amassing followings of millions, and traveling throughout China to give instruction on their methods.

By the late 1980s, the euphoria of the qigong boom showed signs of decline. Many qigong masters had departed from the mission of promoting qigong exercise techniques, instead peddling magic tricks and miracle cures, boosting their reputations and amassing personal fortunes along the way.[47]

The Rise of Falun Gong

It was against this backdrop that Falun Gong emerged in the spring of 1992, toward the end of the qigong boom. In the rustbelt city of Changchun, 40-year-old Li Hongzhi gave his first seminars on a system he called Falun Xiulian

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[44] Ownby, Falun Gong and the Future of China, 10.
[45] Nancy N.Chen, Breathing spaces: qigong, psychiatry, and healing in China, (Columbia University Press, 2003).
[46] Zhu Xiaoyang and Benjamin Penny (ed.), "The Qigong Boom," Chinese Sociology and Anthropology, Vol. 27, No. 1 (1994), p. 3.
[47] Palmer, Qigong Fever: Body, Science and Utopia in China, pp 2 - 3.

Dafa, better known as Falun Dafa or simply Falun Gong.[48] Up to that point, Li held various odd jobs—at a stud farm, as a trumpet player, a grain clerk—but his spiritual biography included stories of how he had received instruction from a young age in various Buddhist and Daoist cultivation methods.[49] Falun Gong, identifying as a qigong of the "Buddha School,"[50] represented Li's attempts to synthesize these methods into a form that could be taught to the public.[51] His biography is not unusual among qigong masters, according to David Ownby, nor his approach to teaching. Like others, he wrote and published books on his methods, traveling throughout China at the invitation of the CQRS or local government authorities, and gave lecture seminars on Falun Gong doctrine and the set of five meditative qigong exercises.

Although Li belonged to the qigong establishment, he also frequently railed against it, seeking to differentiate himself from the profiteering "phony" qigong masters, the displays of magic tricks and pursuit of supernatural skills, and the excessive emphasis on healing methods. He rejected rituals or worship, and refused to establish formal systems of membership or hierarchy. Qigong could be used to improve health, Li said, but the pursuit of health cannot be divorced from individual moral rectitude and the nurture of virtue. Health was only a byproduct, but the ultimate goal of qigong cultivation is the pursuit of spiritual perfection, or enlightenment. In a sense, Li was reversing the work of the early qigong adopters who, in the founding years of the PRC, sought to extract the healing movements from the religious and spiritual cultivation methods.

While other qigong disciplines also included some moralistic elements, their sensitivity to the political climate meant that overtly religious doctrine was eschewed, and the meditative or callisthenic components took precedence. Li, by contrast, elevated spiritual and moral improvement to the position of primary importance, and

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[48] Falun Dafa Information Center, "Falun Gong: Timeline", http://www.faluninfo.net/topic/24/

[49] Benjamin Penny, "The Life and Times of Li Hongzhi: Falun Gong and Religious Biography," The China Quarterly, Vol. 175 (2003), pp. 643-661. Li also introduces his personal background in the first few minutes of the "lectures in Guangzhou," accessible at www.falundafa.org.

[50] Penny (2005) notes Li's idiosyncratic but important distinction between the "Buddha school" (*Fojia*) and "Buddhism" the religion (*Fojiao*). See Penny, Benjamin. "Falun Gong, Buddhism, and Buddhist qigong," Asian Studies Review, March 2005, Vol. 29, pp. 35-46

[51] Li Hongzhi, lectures in Guangzhou, 1994 (audio available from www.falundafa.org)

made physical exercises the adjunct. While other qigong masters may have given lectures or written books on the theories of their practice methods, their philosophies were ambiguous and did not feature into the daily lives of practitioners.[52] In Falun Gong, Li elaborated a holistic, internally coherent, and what was for millions of adoptees, a compelling explanation of the cosmos and human purpose in it.[53]

Falun Gong's is a moral and well-ordered universe. At the heart of its philosophy are the tenets *Zhen, Shan, Ren* (真,善,忍), often translated as truth, compassion, and forbearance. Falun Gong holds that these values represent the nature of the universe, the "highest manifestation of the Buddha Law," or the Dao. The adherent of Falun Gong is to assimilate to these virtues through improving his or her moral character (*xinxing)* while relinquishing desires and attachments such as to wealth, fame, lust, and jealousy, to name but a few.[54] In practical terms, practice of Falun Gong involves consciously suffering the troubles of the world while relinquishing attachments and wants, cultivating restraint and patience, putting others' interests above one's own, and responding to interpersonal conflicts through introspection. Not only should the student "not hit back when hit" when confronted with conflicts, he should also succeed in cultivating such forbearance as to be able to sincerely thank and feel compassion for those who have offended or harmed them.[55] The practice also counsels against the use of drugs and alcohol, gambling, and espouses a conservative sexual philosophy.

Through disciplined moral cultivation, the student of Falun Gong seeks to accrue or preserve virtue, and suffer to repay karma. Virtue (*de*) and karma (*ye*) are held to be real and materially existing substances that contribute to one's good or ill fortunes in this life and the next. Virtue is acquired through doing good deeds and sacrificing, while karma is accumulated through doing wrong deeds. The objective of the practice is to reach

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[52] Natsuko Munekage, "China's New Religious Movement: Falun Gong's Cultural Resistance and Political Confrontation," MA Thesis, Interdisciplinary Studies Program: Asian Studies, University of Oregon 2001, P 27.
[53] Scott Lowe, Chinese and InternationalContexts for the Rise of Falun Gong. Nova Religio 6 (2 April 2003), p 274.
[54] Li Hongzhi, Zhuan Falun (English Edition), (Taipei, Taiwan: Yih Chyun Book Co., 2000).
[55] Li Hongzhi, Zhuan Falun, pp 145 – 168.

enlightenment and be released from the cycle of rebirth, known in Buddhism as *samsara.* In the opening pages of his book Li states his purpose as providing the means by which a person may seek salvation.[56]

Some elements of Li's teachings can appear exotic to the Western reader, and they also contain elements that are distinct reflections of the cultural and social context of modern China. But as Benjamin Penny writes, core aspects of Falun Gong's doctrine would be recognizable to a Buddhist or Daoist cultivator in China a millennium ago.[57] In other words, though a product of the modern qigong movement, Falun Gong's cosmology and morality is rooted deeply in traditional Chinese understandings of life and the universe.

Soon after Li first began publicly teaching Falun Gong, in 1992, he was welcomed into the China Qigong Scientific Research Association, where he became an "instant star" of the qigong world.[58] Li and Falun Gong were the recipients of numerous awards from the qigong establishment; in September 1993, the People's Public Security Daily—a publication of the Ministry of Public Security—applauded Falun Gong for "promoting the traditional crime-fighting virtues of the Chinese people, in safeguarding social order and security, and in promoting rectitude in society." Later that year, Li was declared the "most acclaimed qigong master" at Beijing's annual Asian Health Expo, and in 1994, was named a grandmaster of qigong.[59] From 1992 to 1994, Li gave over 50 seminars across China, each spanning a week or more. All were at the invitation of qigong societies or local government. When the practice's central text was published in January 1995, the unveiling ceremony was held at the auditorium of the Ministry of Public Security.[60] In little over two years Falun Gong was well on its way to becoming the largest qigong practice in the country by virtue of its low costs, intellectual and spiritual content, health benefits and, finally, through support from Chinese officialdom.

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[56] Ibid, p. 2.
[57] Benjamin Penny, "The Past, Present, and Future of Falun Gong," Lecture at the National University of Australia, 2001.
[58] David Ownby, "The Falun Gong in the New World," European Journal of East Asian Studies, Sep 2003, Vol. 2 Issue 2, p 306.
[59] Falun Dafa Information Center, "Falun Gong: Timeline," May 18, 2008. http://faluninfo.net/topic/24/.
[60] Ownby, Falun Gong and the Future of China, p 89.

The early support Falun Gong received can be explained by the fact that it at first seemed to serve the interest of China's rulers, and even help advance some of its legitimization narratives. The practice gained a reputation for efficacy in easing health problems at a time when the state was dismantling its health care system. In March 1998, the State Sports Commission sponsored a survey, conducted by medical professionals, into the health impact of Falun Gong practice. Over 12,000 practitioners in Guangdong province were interviewed, and 97.9 percent said their health had improved through the practice.[61] For as long as Falun Gong operated under the auspices of the state-run qigong association and grew with the support of the party-state, the party could earn some credit for these benefits, thereby bolstering its claim of benevolence. As evidenced by the Ministry of Public Security publication's commendation that Falun Gong safeguarded social order and promoted "crime-fighting virtues," the practice's teachings were seen to have an effect in improving public morality, and advanced the cause of a harmonious and stable society. A peaceful and stable state, in turn, legitimizes the ruling party.

Li Hongzhi exhorted Falun Gong students to be, among other things, model workers, incorruptible, honest, and, importantly, disinterested in political and social affairs. In Zhuan Falun, the central text of the practice, Li implies that a Falun Gong student should go to work early and come home late, should not compete for promotions, and should seek to discard attachments to gossiping or commenting on social issues.[62] Again, these features of the practice made Falun Gong an appealing ally.

Falun Gong was also used by the authorities to promote the glory of Sinic culture. Just as qigong was embraced as a symbol of national pride to combat the "westernization" of Chinese medicine, Falun Gong was promoted as an example of Chinese culture and science. Li Hongzhi was invited to teach the practice by the Chinese embassy in Paris, and it was also taught in this era at the Chinese consulate in New York, alongside Chinese calligraphy.

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[61] Palmer, Qigong Fever, p. 256.
[62] Li Hongzhi, Zhuan Falun, p. 165, 342.

So appealing was Falun Gong to the authorities that several ministries and departments sought to formalize ties with the practice.[63] In 1995, The National Sports Commission, Ministry of Public Health and the CQRA approached Li with the proposal to jointly create an organization to oversee Falun Gong practice nationwide.[64] The CQRA also reportedly exhorted Li to charge money, of which it could take a portion.[65] The proposals would have required Falun Gong to formalize its organizational structure, establish a system of membership, charge for the practice, and would have furthermore entailed that Falun Gong become inextricably linked to the party-state. Li declined.

End of the Qigong Era

By the mid-1990s, the government's long honeymoon with qigong was coming to an end. The Chinese leadership had already begun attempts to curb the growth of qigong practices, some of which had amassed tens of millions of practitioners. Qigong's detractors in government—perhaps fearing that a popular qigong master could challenge the party—were gaining greater influence, and one of qigong's most stalwart defenders in the party passed away in 1994. Articles critical of qigong began appearing in the state-run press, contravening the "three nos" policy which had hitherto restrained media from criticizing qigong.[66] Falun Gong was initially shielded from the growing chorus of criticism, but not for long.

Following its refusal to formalize ties with the party-state, tensions continued to mount between Falun Gong and the CQRS. Li had stopped giving lecture seminars, and therefore no longer had much use of the organization, which he increasingly viewed as being interested only in profit, and as insincere in its mandate to research qigong. He had stopped charging fees for his classes in 1994,[67] and was emphatic that it must be free to

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[63] Noah Porter, Falun Gong in the United States, an Ethnographic Study, Master of Arts Thesis, Department of Anthropology, College of Arts and Sciences, University of South Florida 2003, p 81
[64] Palmer, Qigong Fever, p 247.
[65] Danny Schechter, Falun Gong's Challenge to China: Spiritual Practice or Evil Cult?, (Akashic books: New York, 2001), pp. 66 – 67.
[66] Ownby, Falun Gong and the Future of China, pp 165 – 167.
[67] Ownby, Falun Gong and the Future of China, p 86.

learn and practice. Qigong was a profitable business for many qigong masters, as it was for the CQRS, which took a generous portion of fees. Li's refusal to charge money led some other qigong masters to complain they were being undercut and were losing students to Falun Gong.[68] Some qigong masters were also presumably upset by Li's frequent references to "phony" qigong, which he accused of taking advantage of students and profiting in the process. Hastening Falun Gong's estrangement from the qigong establishment was the fact that Li declined to participate in a number of events sponsored by the CQRS, and rejected the new CQRS policy that all qigong denominations establish a Communist Party branch within their organizations.[69]

In March 1996, as condemnations of qigong were growing louder in the official press, Falun Gong withdrew from the CQRS.[70] At Li's request, a group of practitioners in Beijing attempted to register with other government agencies, including the National Minority Affairs Commission and United Front Work Department, but were rebuffed. Falun Gong was left completely without government oversight, making it possibly the largest independent civil society group in the history of the PRC.

Challenges to Communist Party Legitimacy

While it had been part of the official establishment, authorities could claim credit for Falun Gong and use it to help the cause of legitimization. But once Falun Gong was independent, it became a source of ideological competition to the party.

First and foremost, Falun Gong's morality, cosmology, its understanding of history, human nature, and even of the physical world, differed greatly from the official ideology of Marxist-Leninism, with its emphasis on scientific materialism. Hongyan Xiao asserts that the aspect of Falun Gong's teachings that worried China's leaders

[68] Schechter, Falun Gong's Challenge to China: Spiritual Practice or Evil Cult? p. 66.
[69] Palmer, Qigong Fever, p 247.
[70] James Tong, Revenge of the Forbidden City: The Suppression of Falun Gong in China, 1999 - 2005, (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 8.

most was its belief that "divine authority is superior to the human agency"—a view that is completely incongruent to atheistic Marxism.[71]

Another way in which Falun Gong challenges Party legitimacy was by reframing the meaning of glory. Following 1989, Deng Xiaoping urged Chinese citizens to end the debates surrounding China's economic reforms and embrace the pursuit of wealth. The ability to oversee and help generate economic growth in the post-Mao period is an important source of the party's claims to have achieved glory and prestige for China. Moreover, improved living standards are among the main reasons that China's middle class has so willingly endured Party rule. Li and Falun Gong, meanwhile, contend that real human purpose comes through transcending worldly desires. Falun Gong's teachings debated the value of China's economic reforms, arguing that they had brought moral decay along with wealth. Rather than celebrating the progress China had achieved, Li elaborated a thoroughgoing critique of modernity, saying that the world is in a state of decline and is increasingly estranged from the Dao. Falun Gong challenged the Communist Party's narrative of emancipation through economic reform, and tapped into the wider feelings of disquiet associated with China's all-out commercialization. With its rejection of the pursuit of power and materialism, it stood in opposition to "the entire value system associated with the project of modernization."[72]

The practice attracted those who had been left behind by the country's economic reforms, particularly elderly women who had few means to capitalize on the new opportunities. To these people Falun Gong offered moral succor, meaning, better health, and a vision of a well ordered, just, and moral universe that was no doubt comforting during uncertain times. Falun Gong also attracted a more important demographic: party cadres, entrepreneurs, and intellectuals—the elites of Chinese society who had benefited from the reforms, yet nonetheless found Falun Gong's intellectual and spiritual content more meaningful than the official ideology or the pursuit of

[71] Hongyan Xiao, "Falun Gong and the ideological crisis of the Chinese Communist Party: Marxist atheism vs. vulgar theism," East Asia: An International Quarterly, 19/1-2 (Spring-Summer 2001).
[72] Yuezhi Zhao, "Falun Gong, Identity, and the Struggle over Meaning Inside and Outside China," in Nick Couldry and James Curran, eds., Contesting Media Power: Alternative Media in a Networked World (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003) p. 211.

wealth.[73] The considerable overlap between the party membership and Falun Gong, and the suspicion that the latter commanded more loyalty and devotion, was among the main concerns cited by Jiang Zemin in his April 25th, 1999 letter demanding that Falun Gong be crushed.[74]

Falun Gong presented another challenge to the Communist Party in that it undermined the party's interpretation of and claims to Chinese nationalism. Falun Gong's teachings are replete with reference to China's past, and particularly to its spiritual and religious traditions. It employs the language of Buddhism, as well as Daoist and Confucian concepts, contains extensive references to Chinese folklore, and holds traditional Chinese science and medicine to be knowledge systems as valid as—and in some ways superior to—modern science.[75] For all the party's efforts to lay claim to Chinese history, it had been unable to effectively reconcile its ideology with China's traditional spiritual culture, and Falun Gong provided an appealing return to these roots.[76] According to David Ownby, Falun Gong's "evocation of a different vision of Chinese tradition and its contemporary value is now so threatening to the state and party because it denies them the sole right to define the meaning of Chinese nationalism, and perhaps of Chineseness."[77]

What Falun Gong did not do, at least prior to 1999, was level any overt or deliberate challenge to the party. The practice was staunchly apolitical; it never organized around particular social issues, and never commented on the merits of one-party rule.[78] Even as the party's hostility toward qigong groups grew, in 1996 Li Hongzhi

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[73] Lowe, p 267; George Bruseker also notes the composition of Falun Gong practitioners in China: "statistics indicate that the movement was not made up of the poor, disenfranchised, and unemployed malcontents of the new capitalist system of China. Rather, it was made up of literate, respectable, and clearly somewhat successful technocrats and retired officials, that is to say, the hypothetical bourgeoisie of Chinese society." Elizabeth Perry and others have noted that there was considerable participation in Falun Gong by Communist Party members; at least one-fifth of practitioners in the late 1990s had college degrees, far higher than the national average.

[74] Jiang Zemin. Letter to Party cadres on the evening of April 25, 1999, published in Beijing Zhichun (Beijing Spring) no. 97 (June 2001), pp 9-10.

[75] On Falun Gong's references to the Chinese folk religious tradition see Lowe 2003; on Falun Gong's claim to be superior to western science, see Richard Madsen, "Understanding Falun Gong," Current History (September 2000): pp 243–47.

[76] Jacques Delisle, "Who's Afraid of Falun Gong," Foreign Policy Research Institute, Aug 5, 1999.

[77] David Ownby, "China's War Against Itself," New York Times, Feb 15, 2001.

[78] Hu Ping, "The Falun Gong Phenomenon," in Challenging China: Struggle and Hope in an Era of Change, Sharon Hom and Stacy Mosher, ed. (New York: The New Press, 2007), pp 228-230.

encouraged his followers to view these events as opportunities for self-reflection, and admonished them not to get involved in political affairs, stating "Other than doing a good job with his work, a cultivator will not be interested in politics or political power of any sort; failing that, he absolutely isn't my disciple."[79] Li elaborated elsewhere, expressing the view that religions must not become involved in matters of the state, lest it become an "evil religion:"

> *Religion cannot be mingled with politics, or its leader will necessarily be preoccupied with worldly affairs. Paying lip service to teaching people's hearts to be good and leading people back to the pure land, these people's hearts are bound to be evil and hypocritical; what they pursue is surely fame and self-interest.[...]Because religion's goal is to teach people to be good so that they can eventually return to their heavenly paradise, the principles it preaches must be higher than those in human society. If they are applied to politics in the human world, it is the most serious corruption of heavenly principles. [...] Such a religion is bound to be used by governments to engage in violence and launch religious wars, thereby becoming an evil religion that harms mankind.*
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> *Having "all people practice religion" will not do, either […] There can be a large number of people learning [Falun] Dafa, but it isn't permitted to turn all of a nation's citizens into religious followers and make everyone take part in the unified activities of cultivation practice. Dafa cultivation practice is always voluntary. [...] Never get involved in politics, nor interfere with state affairs. Truly cultivate and become benevolent.* [80]

As is articulated here, Li objected to the politicization of Falun Gong on the belief that the transcendent objectives of cultivation practice or religion are at odds with participation in politics. Although he emphatically wrote that Falun Gong should not participate in politics or allow itself to be used by political forces, Li has, on occasion, discussed matters of governance and law. The views he articulates are consistent with a Chinese ideal of the golden age. Dating as far back as Confucius, the Chinese have held that during the golden age of great emperors Yao and Shun, the people were self-governed, being restrained not by laws or threat of punishment, but by an internal temperance and a concern for virtue. Laws, according to Confucius, only appeared as a necessary evil stemming from the decline in morality: "If the people are governed by laws and punishment is used to maintain order, they will try to avoid the punishment but have no sense of shame. If they are governed by virtue and rules of propriety [ritual] are used to

79 Li, Hongzhi. "Cultivation Practice is Not Politics," Sept 3, 1996.
80 Li Hongzhi, "Dafa Will Forever be Pure Like Diamond," Sept 7, 1996.

maintain order, they will have a sense of shame and will become good as well."[81] Li's limited writings on law and governance reflect this understanding. The following excerpt, taken from a lecture Li gave in San Francisco in 1996, is perhaps the most representative of his teachings on the subject:

> *...The laws humankind has made are in fact mechanically restricting people and sealing them off, including the lawmakers themselves. Humans are continuously sealing themselves off. [...] When too many laws are made, humans are controlled like animals and have no way out; then no one can come up with any solution.*
>
> *But I can tell you that the root cause of all humankind's ills is in fact the degeneration of human morality. Without starting there, none of humankind's problems can be solved. Starting from that, all of humankind's problems can be solved. Isn't that true? Think about it, everyone: If each individual deep down inside requires himself to be a good person, is able to exercise self-restraint, and considers others in everything he does, not harming others and instead thinking about whether others can handle it, imagine what society would be like. Would laws be needed? Would police be needed? Everyone would be restraining and disciplining himself. But political propaganda and ruling by force can't make morality return either—they only achieve the opposite. The world has developed to this day, where everyone regards the legal system as good. Actually, it's the last resort when there's no way out...*[82]

These teachings, once seen by the Ministry of Public Security as helping promote social stability, were now seen as a threat to Party's authority. Falun Gong was advocating a version of peace and harmony that was badly incongruous with the party's approach to stability, which depends on an immense and heavy-handed security apparatus. Finally, Falun Gong provided an example of extremely stringent moral practice that cast many government and party officials in a negative light. When held up to Falun Gong's teachings against promiscuity, gambling, violence, and deceit, a number of those in positions of power are put in stark relief, and the party may have felt therefore that Falun Gong undermined its claims of benevolence.

Escalation of Tensions: 1996 - 1999

[81] Confucius, The Analects.
[82] Li Hongzhi, "Lectures in the United States," 1997. http://www.falundafa.ca/library/english/usa/mgjf_e.html

In July of 1996, just months after it withdrew from the CQRS, Falun Gong's books—by then national bestsellers—were officially proscribed.[83] In June of 1996, it became a target of regular media criticism. Among the earliest criticisms came from the state-run Guangming Daily newspaper. Days after Zhuan Falun was listed as a bestseller in Beijing, the Guangming Daily charged that it was a work of "pseudo-science" which propagated superstition and swindled people.[84]

Falun Gong also attracted condemnation from the Patriotic Chinese Buddhist Association, one of five registered religions permitted in China, which answers ultimately to the party. For years, Li had leveled various charges against the Buddhist establishment, writing that most of Buddhism's true practitioners had departed, and that most who remained after the Cultural Revolution did not receive true teachings.[85] Elsewhere, he suggests that many monks are more concerned with money, politics, and upholding formalities than with genuine cultivation. Li regularly referred to the present era as the Dharma-ending period (*Mo Fa*), a time foretold of in Buddhist scriptures when the Dharma taught by the Buddha Shakyamuni would lose its power; the community of disciples would be corrupted, and the teachings would no longer be properly transmitted. In the Dharma ending period, the Buddhist Law would need to be taught anew to be set right and rectified. This was the context in which Li placed his teaching of Falun Gong, and needless to say, it was none too appealing to China's Buddhist authorities. In the latter half of 1996, Buddhist Association journals began condemning Falun Gong as heresy, charged that Li Hongzhi misinterpreted Buddhist scripture, and urged Chinese Buddhists not to take up the practice.[86]

In 1997, the Ministry of Public Security conducted a study to determine if Falun Gong should be deemed a heretical teaching (*xie jiao*). It concluded that no evidence had appeared of heresy or wrongdoing, but the following year, it launched another investigation. This time, the conclusion had been reached ahead of time that Falun Gong

[83] Schechter, Falun Gong's Challenge to China: Spiritual Practice or Evil Cult, p 68.
[84] Guangming Daily, June 17 1996.
[85] Li, Zhuan Falun, p 201.
[86] Consulate-General of the People's Republic of China in Chicago, "Falun Gong has long been denounced in the Buddhist circle," Oct 30, 2009.

was heretical; investigators were ordered to prove it.[87] The monitoring and harassment escalated, as Falun Gong meditation sites were doused with water canons, homes were raided, and phones tapped.

Falun Gong did have its defenders. The State Sports Commission continued to confer praise for its purported health benefits.[88] As rumor has it, a number of high-ranking officials, including Zhu Rongji and Hu Jintao, had friends and family practicing Falun Gong. In 1998, recently retired Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, Qiao Shi, lead his own study of Falun Gong as a counterbalance to the Ministry of Public Security Report. His investigation concluded that Falun Gong "has hundreds of benefits for the Chinese people and nation, and does not a bit of harm."[89] The conflicting investigations were evidence of the disagreement within the leadership over how Falun Gong was to be handled. In the spring of 1999, a strange series of events would determine the group's fate.

From 1996 onward, Falun Gong practitioners developed a highly predictable and somewhat audacious response to critical coverage in the official press that involved sitting quietly outside media or local government offices and requesting a retraction or correction. Dozens, if not hundreds of these demonstrations occurred from 1996 - 1999, most of them successful.[90] In April 1999, an obscure newspaper in Tianjin published an article by physicist He Zuoxiu arguing that Falun Gong was harmful to youth.[91] The article centered on a previously discredited story about a college student taking up Falun Gong, becoming despondent, abstaining from food, and falling ill. Falun Gong practitioners retorted that the student in question didn't practice Falun Gong. He Zuoxiu, perhaps significantly, is the brother-in-law of Luo Gan, then a member of the Politburo Standing Committee and

[87] Ownby, Falun Gong and the Future of China, p 168.
[88] As late as February 1999, the U.S. News and World Report quoted Wu Shaozu, head of the State Sports Commission and later chairman of the Chinese Olympic committee, praising Falun Gong for saving the country billions of Yuan in health care costs. See "An opiate of the masses?," U.S. News and World Report, February 22, 1999.
[89] Palmer 2007, p. 265
[90] Ownby, Falun Gong and the Future of China, pp 168 – 169.
[91] He Zuoxiu, "I Do Not Approve of Teenagers Practicing Qigong" (Wo bu zancheng qingshaonian lian qigong), Tianjin qingshaonian keji bolan, 11 April 1999.

one of the early antagonists of Falun Gong.[92] As they often did in such cases, Falun Gong adherents in the city gathered outside the newspaper's offices requesting that the editors publish a retraction for what they considered an unfair representation. Rather than getting a retraction, forty-five Falun Gong adherents were beaten and arrested on April 22nd and 23rd. They were told that the arrest order had come from the top, and that if they wished to appeal, they needed to go to the central appeal office rumored to be located in the maze of hutongs around Zhongnanhai.[93] In the early morning of April 25th, between 10,000 – 20,000 Falun Gong practitioners appeared in the heart of Beijing in search of the central appeal office. The narrative that has been embraced in most journalistic and scholarly accounts holds that Chinese authorities, notably Jiang Zemin, were "shocked" by the sudden appearance of the crowd, and angered that plans for such a large demonstration had fallen beneath the radar of the security forces. Yet there is evidence that not all were caught off guard. On the evening of April 24th, some of the practitioners seeking to travel to Beijing from nearby provinces were met by expectant security forces. The earliest practitioners to appear near Zhongnanhai noted that police seemed to have been waiting for them, and proceeded to corral the gathering crowds onto Fuyou Street, immediately in front of the Zhonghanhai government compound, where they sat eight rows deep on the sidewalk.[94] Jiang Zemin was quickly alerted to their presence by Luo Gan.[95] For the better part of the day, the Falun Gong demonstrators quietly meditated or read while awaiting news from their representatives who had gone to meet with Premier Zhu Rongji and other senior officials. By the end of the day, Zhu had apparently reached a consensus with the five Falun Gong representatives, some of whom held senior posts in the PLA or Ministry of Public Security themselves. He agreed that the Tianjin practitioners would not be prosecuted, and assured the Falun Gong representatives that the government did not oppose their practice or consider Falun Gong to be anti-government.[96] By 10 o'clock that night, the thousands-strong crowd outside had quietly left.

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92 Ethan Gutmann, "An Occurance on Fuyou Street," The National Review, July 1, 2009
93 Ibid
94 Ibid
95 Tong, Revenge of the Forbidden City: The Suppression of Falun Gong in China, 1999 – 2005, p 5-6.
96 Ibid.

That night, Jiang Zemin declared that Falun Gong must be crushed, and he began preparing for the eradication of the group. On June 10, 1999, Luo Gan and Li Langqing were appointed to helm the newly created "6-10 Office," a Communist Party-led extra-judicial body with sweeping authority to oversee the eradication of Falun Gong.[97] After months of preparation, on July 20, 1999, thousands of Falun Gong adherents in 22 cities were taken from their homes to detention facilities. Two days later, on July 22, the Ministry of Public Security forbade the practice of Falun Gong. Thus began an ongoing suppression campaign characterized by propaganda, the imprisonment of hundreds of thousands of followers, coercive reeducation, and staggering violence.

The announcement was accompanied in Xinhua and the People's Daily with editorials explaining the ban. In addition to charges that Falun Gong was threatening social stability and harming the health of practitioners,[98] the editorials focused on the idea that Falun Gong's philosophy was at odds with the cause of scientific rationality and socialism.[99] As noted by Chiung Hwang Chen, the articles "[posited] a binary opposition between materialism and idealism, Marxism/ Maoism and Falun Gong, atheism and theism."[100] One such article proclaimed "The so-called 'truth, kindness and tolerance' principle preached by Li Hongzhi has nothing in common with the socialist ethical and cultural progress we are striving to achieve."[101] Another stated that, "Falun Dafa as created by Li Hongzhi preaches idealism and theism and denies all scientific truth, and thus is absolutely contradictory to the fundamental

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[97] Congressional-Executive Commission on China, Annual Report 2008, Oct 31, 2008 ; Tong, Revenge of the Forbidden City, p 47.

[98] Among the most often recited allegations against Falun Gong in the early part of the campaign was that it had "caused the deaths" of 1,400 people (most of whom had ostensibly eschewed Western medical treatment in favor of Falun Gong), and driven 136 people to suicide from 1993 – 1999. Several of the cases cited in the official media as Falun Gong-induced deaths have been disputed by family members, who pointed out, for instance, that their deceased relatives dabbled in Falun Gong, stopped practicing, and died in hospital years later. Nonetheless, as Hu Ping points out, even if one takes these numbers at face value, and furthermore accepts the party's downgraded estimate of just 2.3 million Falun Gong practitioners, the numbers suggest a suicide rate among Falun Gong practitioners that is twenty times lower than the national average, and a death rate nearly eighty times lower than average.

[99] For an extended discussion of the CCP's appeal to science in its anti-Falun Gong propaganda see Lu Xing, "The Rhetoric of the Chinese Cultural Revolution," (University of South Carolina Press, 2004), pp. 269-269.

[100] Chiung Hwang Chen, "Framing Falun Gong: Xinhua News Agency's Coverage of the New Religious Movement in China", Asian Journal of Communication, Vol. 15 No. 1 (2005).

[101] Xinhua News Agency, July 27, 1999.

theories and principles of Marxism."[102] The People's Daily similarly observed that Li's teachings "fundamentally deny the progressive tendency of human history, deny the tremendous accomplishments China has attained in the two decades of reform and opening-up, and deny the significant changes and progress of the Chinese people's ideological and mental outlook."[103] The future of China's economic progress was tied to the fight against Falun Gong: "If Li Hongzhi's heretical theories spread, the party's foundation will be shaken, and the great cause will be undermined."[104] The survival of the party itself was said to depend on the fight against the corrosive effects of "theism" that Falun Gong represented.

Suppression and Response

In the first months following the ban, tens of thousands of Falun Gong adherents were taken into custody, and some were handed prison sentences in the range of 18 years. The state-run media embarked on a propaganda campaign against the group that has been described as "a study in all-out demonization"[105]; in the first month of the campaign People's Daily published over 300 articles—more than ten a day—denouncing Falun Gong. The judiciary, military, education system, and workplaces were similarly brought in line to struggle against the errant meditators.[106]

At the center of the party's campaign against Falun Gong was the coercive "transformation" of practitioners, whereby they are pressured, and often tortured, into denouncing their spiritual beliefs. Local authorities were given transformation quotas, and wide berth to achieve those quotas using any means necessary. In a matter of months, the first reports of torture deaths began emerging from China.[107] Under the full weight of the security, judicial and media apparatus, Falun Gong was supposed to die a quick death—some observers gave it three months. But one

[102] Xinhua News Agency, July 22, 1999.
[103] People's Daily, July 27, 1999.
[104] People's Daily, July 25, 1999
[105] Joseph Fewsmith and Daniel B. Wright, The Promise of the Revolution: stories of fulfillment and struggle in China (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003). p. 156
[106] Mickey Spiegel, "Dangerous Meditation: China's Campaign Against Falungong," Human Rights Watch, 2002.
[107] Ian Johnson, ""A Deadly Exercise: Practicing Falun Gong was a right, Ms. Chen said, to her last day," Wall Street Journal, April 20, 2000.

year on, Falun Gong was mustering "arguably the most sustained challenge to authority in 50 years of Communist rule."[108]

When the suppression was launched, practitioners' first response was to go to local appeal offices, where they hoped to explain the benefits they had derived from practicing Falun Gong, and suggest that the ban on the practice be reversed. The local appeal offices quickly became gateways to labor camps, however, so practitioners turned their attention to Beijing. Perhaps they believed, as do so many petitioners who make the pilgrimage to the capital, that the central government would heed to their pleas, even when local officials failed.

From 1999–2001, hundreds of Falun Gong adherents traveled daily to Tiananmen Square to protest the ban, staging meditation sessions or raising banners proclaiming Falun Gong's innocence.[109] Their quiet protests were shut down, often violently, by security agents who patrolled the square. Sometimes following a public beating, the practitioners would be led to waiting police vans, and sent back to the provinces from which they came to be dealt their punishment. Falun Gong adherents referred to their demonstrations never as protests, but as "appeals," implying that they still held out hope that the leadership would change its mind. Nonetheless, they were met with brutal reprisals, and the violence and the scale of the suppression only escalated.

At the 2001 National People's Congress, the campaign to defeat Falun Gong featured prominently in the country's tenth five-year plan, tying China's economic development to the group's successful elimination.[110] The media blitzkrieg remained intensive; in 2001, for instance, an editorial compared Falun Gong practitioners to rats scurrying across the street in need of extermination.[111] The greatest propaganda coup for the party came in January 2001, when five people set themselves on fire on Tiananmen Square. Two of the self-immolators—a woman and her young daughter—died. The official media claimed they were Falun Gong practitioners, driven to suicide by the

[108] Ibid
[109] Ian Johnson,"Defiant Falun Dafa Members Converge on Tiananmen," The Wall Street Journal, April 25, 2000.
[110] Spiegel, "Dangerous Meditation: China's Campaign Against Falungong."
[111] Associated Press, "'Enemies of people' warned", January 23, 2001

promise of entering a heavenly kingdom, and relentlessly broadcast images of the charred bodies of the self-immolators. Falun Gong sources were quick to point out that the practice's teachings forbid killing—including suicide—and they proceeded to detail numerous inconsistencies in the official account.[112] Philip Pan, writing for the Washington Post, later went to the hometown of the two self-immolators who had died, but found they had never practiced Falun Gong.[113]

Most Chinese citizens, of course, did not read the Washington Post story, nor hear about the other problematic elements in the official narrative. Public opinion turned decisively against Falun Gong. Where once citizens questioned the necessity of the anti-Falun Gong campaign, believing it to be excessive or unwarranted, after the self-immolation resistance to the suppression was muted. The turn in public opinion cleared the way for authorities to openly sanction the use of systematic violence against practitioners.[114] The number of yearly torture deaths in custody reported by Falun Gong sources nearly doubled from 2000 to 2001, and continued rising for three more years.

By late 2001, Tiananmen Square was mostly abandoned by Falun Gong practitioners, tainted as it was by the self-immolation. Having failed in their attempts to seek reconciliation, practitioners took their cause to the people of China: If the people refused to be complicit, there would be no police willing to arrest practitioners, no teachers willing to turn in their students (or vice versa), no judges willing to be compromised or neighbors willing to act as informants. The daily protests on Tiananmen Square gave way to autonomous underground printing houses in nearly every county and district in the country—China's equivalent of the Soviet Samizdat, one could say. From their living rooms, adherents would establish Internet connections to proxy servers overseas, and access Falun Gong websites from which they could download literature on the persecution. These material sites, estimated by Minghui

[112] Several of these inconsistencies are described on pages 215 – 218 in Ownby, Falun Gong and the Future of China. Danny Schechter describes several of his own observations of problems with the official self-immolation narrative in Falun Gong's Challenge to China.
[113] Philip P. Pan, "Washington Post: Human Fire Ignites Chinese Mystery," Washington Post, Feb 4 2001.
[114] Philip Pan and John Pomfret, "Torture is Breaking Falun Gong," Washington Post, Aug 5 2001.

to number 200,000 in 2009, print stacks of literature that is then distributed far and wide.[115] Even more subversive tactics were adopted: in 2002, adherents in Changchun tapped into television broadcasts for nearly one hour, replacing official programming with their own content and inspiring numerous copy-cat attempts.[116]

Guiding Falun Gong practitioners' efforts in this respect is the belief in there inherent goodness of man, and their faith that if a person they can merely know "the truth" about Falun Gong, their consciences will steer them toward justice. Crucially, practitioners do not merely attempt to lessen the persecution against themselves. Indeed, it becomes clear in Li Hongzhi's writings and in interactions with Falun Gong adherents that they believe they are not the true victims of persecution; their persecutors and common citizens suffer equally, if not more. Therefore, the underlying goal behind much of Falun Gong practitioners' efforts is to provide a kind of deliverance to people who have been "misled" by the Communist Party. This deliverance can be understood as something like moral redemption. This term, *jiudu*, carries the character *du*, often rendered as "salvation," but also the term *jiu*, meaning "rescue." The "rescuing" or "deliverance" refers to an internal moral awakening, or enlivening of the conscience. Falun Gong adherents go forth in their activism with these goals of moral redemption and deliverance firmly in mind.

The resistance in China is buoyed by an active and well-educated contingent of Falun Gong practitioners in North America.[117] Frustrated by the Communist Party's far-reaching influence in the Chinese-language media

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[115] An excellent account of how Falun Gong practitioners in China work to resist suppression is found in Liao Yiwu's Corpse Walker: Real Life Stories, China from the Bottom Up, (New York: Anchor Books, 2009). For a more complete description of these efforts, see Levi Browde, "Righteous Resistance," June 7, 2007, available at http://www.faluninfo.net/article/493/?cid=141

[116] Ethan Gutmann, "Into Thin Airwaves," Weekly Standard, Dec 6 2010. According to Gutmann's detailed account of the television hijacking, for the 50 minutes that the city's television channels aired pro-Falun Gong content, the city erupted spontaneous celebration. Apparently believing the suppression had ended, or perhaps that Jiang Zemin had been deposed, police officers and neighborhood watch members congratulated Falun Gong practitioners, relieved to be free from the looming psychological pressure of being called upon to participate in the campaign. After 50 minutes, the television screens went blank. The Falun Gong practitioners behind the incident were captured, and all six are believed to have been tortured to death.

[117] Demographic research of North American Falun Gong communities by David Ownby and Susan Palmer found the group's practitioners to be highly educated; two-thirds held at least a bachelors degree, and 43 percent held a Masters or PhD. See Susan Palmer and David Ownby, "Field Notes: Falun Dafa Practitioners: A Preliminary Research Report," Nova Religio 4(1 October): pp 133-137.

overseas, and hoping to find a way of having their version of events heard above the din of the official propaganda, Falun Gong practitioners in New York set about creating their own media companies. In 2000 and 2001, they established their own Chinese-language newspaper (*Dajiyuan*) and television station (*Xintangren,* or New Tang Dynasty Television). The outlets started out modestly, being staffed largely by scientists, technicians and engineers who moonlighted as camera men, amateur journalists, and producers, and who funded their operating expenses out of pocket and with the help of donations from viewers. In time, the companies grew; Dajiyuan now bills itself as the most widely distributed Chinese newspaper in the world, with a weekly print circulation in excess of a million copies, and Xintangren broadcasts on several cable networks overseas and via satellite into Mainland China. Today they are able to cover most operating costs through advertising and private donations, though only because the staff remains overwhelmingly volunteer-based. With an editorial emphasis on Chinese human rights issues and other politically sensitive topics, these media serve as something of a unifying platform for Chinese dissidents, and provide a forum for opposition voices in the Chinese media.[118]

At roughly the same time that Dajiyuan and Xintangren were established, a small group of Falun Gong practitioners in North Carolina and Silicon Valley with computer science backgrounds entered into a virtual arms race with the Chinese state, creating powerful software tools that would let Chinese internet users bypass government censors and surveillance.[119] Originally created to enable Falun Gong adherents in China to send and receive information, these tools now have over one million unique users per day around the world, and have become a nightmare for China's censors.

Outside China, the Falun Gong community pursued other measures to mitigate the persecution suffered by their co-congregants in China. From about 2002 to 2004, dozens of lawsuits were filed in the United States and around the world against senior Chinese leaders for their role in the suppression of Falun Gong. Jiang Zemin,

[118] Kathy Chen, "Chinese Dissidents Take on Beijing Via Media Empire," Wall Street Journal, Nov 15 2007.
[119] Vince Beiser, "Digital Weapons Help Dissidents Punch Holes in China's Great Firewall," Wired, Nov 1, 2010.

believed to have almost single-handedly engineered the anti-Falun Gong campaign, was the main target of these efforts. Several courts, including in the United States, refused to adjudicate the cases on grounds of sovereign immunity,[120] but in 2009, courts in Spain and Argentina somewhat belatedly indicted Jiang for genocide and crimes against humanity in connection to the Falun Gong suppression.[121] In 2001, two district courts in the United States issued default rulings against lower-levels officials for ordering torture of Falun Gong practitioners. Much of what they hoped to accomplish was to use the threat of litigation abroad to deter authorities in China from participating in torture. But the lawsuits also reflected the Falun Gong community's belief that Jiang Zemin was the problem. A not unsubstantial number of adherents held out hope that Hu Jintao might actually rehabilitate them and reverse the campaign.

When Hu Jintao assumed control of the country's top leadership positions, the tone on Falun Gong did change. Jiang Zemin's crusade was excruciatingly public: out of character for a head of state, he raised the issue personally in international forums and kept up the attacks on Falun Gong in the Chinese media.[122] A visit to nearly any Chinese consulate or embassy in the world from 1999–2003 hinted at the importance assigned to the campaign; at that time the walls and literature racks inside Chinese foreign missions were dominated by invectives against Falun Gong. Yet the publicity of the campaign also translated into public criticism internationally, including in the media, as well as by non-government organizations and governments themselves. By keeping the campaign against Falun Gong so high on the public agenda, Jiang was essentially admitting that Falun Gong was resisting suppression, sending the message that the party's coercive powers may not be what they once were. As Hu Jintao assumed control, Falun Gong was quietly taken off the public agenda. References to it in important party documents

[120] Ebysd Murphy, "Head-of-State Immunity for Former Chinese President Jiang Zemin," The American Journal of International Law, Vol. 97, No. 4 (Oct., 2003), pp. 974-977.
[121] Reuters, "Argentine judge asks China arrests over Falun Gong", Dec 22 2009. ; Genocide Prevention Network, 'Spanish Court Indicts Chinese Leaders for Persecution of Falun Gong.' http://www.genocidepreventionnow.org/GPNSearchResults/tabid/64/ctl/DisplayArticle/mid/400/aid/151/Default.aspx.
[122] John Pomfret, "Cracks in China's Falun Gong Crackdown," Washington Post Foreign News Service, November 12, 1999

and speeches were replaced with watchwords like "feudal superstition," or "evil cult," as in "We will deepen our battle against cults."[123] The official name of the 610 Office was even changed to remove explicit reference to Falun Gong. Hu declined to speak about Falun Gong in public and international settings, and the racks of literature all but vanished from the lobbies of Chinese consulates.

This did not mean that Falun Gong had disappeared, nor did it imply that the party no longer considered it a threat. In some ways, the intensity and efficacy of surveillance and coercion grew more severe for several years under Hu. 2004 was the deadliest year yet for adherents in detention,[124] and hundreds of thousands are still thought to be detained in labor camps facing routine attempts at forced conversion and torture.[125] In 2006, when the United Nation's Special Rapporteur on Torture released his study on China, two-thirds of reported torture cases were against Falun Gong practitioners. Authorities have launched continuous strike-hard campaigns against Falun Gong under Hu; in a six-month span in early 2008, the Falun Dafa Information Center reported that over 8,037 practitioners were abducted by security forces in preparation for the Beijing Olympics.[126] The pre-Olympic crackdown on Falun Gong was referenced on the websites of security agencies in every province.[127] Some of those detained, like 42-year-old Beijing musician Yu Zhou, were tortured to death within days, and many more sentenced to prison sentences that ranged upwards of ten years. In 2009, Hu Jintao's chosen successor Xi Jinping, along with Zhou Yongkang, helmed an intensive effort to suppress potential dissidents around sensitive anniversaries, and

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[123] Wen Jiabao, Work Report to the 10th National People's Congress, March 5 2004.
[124] This is based on the number of deaths that have been reported by Falun Gong practitioners in China. Reports of torture deaths often include such information as the victim's name, place of last detention, date of arrest, and place and date of death. While most accounts have not been investigated by independent bodies, David Ownby notes that the of human rights reports produced by Falun Gong sources are generally regarded as "legitimate and trustworthy" by human rights groups.(Ownby 2008:ix)
[125] Congressional Executive Commission on China, Annual Report 2008, Oct 31, 2008. ;
U.S. Department of State, 2009 Country Report on Human Rights: China (includes Hong Kong and Macao), Oct 26, 2009 ;
Human Rights Watch, "We Could Disappear at Any Time," Dec 7 2005 ;
Leeshai Lemish, "How China is Silencing Falun Gong," National Post 7 Oct 2008
[126] Falun Dafa information Center, "Thousands of Falun Gong Adherents Arrested throughout China in run-up to Olympics," July 7 2008.
[127] Congressional Executive Commission on China, "Annual Report 2008," Oct 31, 2008.

Falun Gong featured prominently.[128] The latest suppression effort is a costly, nationwide campaign, spanning 2010 - 2012, which aims to "transform" the minds of the vast majority of known Falun Gong adherents, through coercion if necessary.[129]

After all they had done to appeal to the nation's leaders for an end to the suppression, to challenge the official propaganda against them, meaningful progress in the quest for political rehabilitation had not been made. For years, Falun Gong adherents sought to avoid anything that would give the appearance of getting involved in politics, preferring to cast themselves as law-abiding, apolitical spiritual enthusiasts rather than dissidents. But in 2004, there was a change in course. The first signal came when the main overseas Falun Gong website Minghui.org began using the word "protest," rather than "appeal," to refer to Falun Gong demonstrations. It was a small but significant indication that the Falun Gong community was done entertaining the possibility of compromise or reconciliation. Writing on the turn of events in this time period, Hu Ping notes that, "under the pervasive and incessant persecution of the CCP, Falun Gong practitioners had little alternative but to increase the strength of their opposition."[130] The problem, Falun Gong concluded, was not a particular leader, but the Chinese Communist Party itself.

Up to that point, Falun Gong had been the reluctant participant in a brutal game of attrition against the Communist Party. But in 2004, they decided to play to win.

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[128] Xi Jinping was appointed to head the "6521 Project," also called the "6521 group," a top-level Party effort to oversee increased monitoring and suppression of dissidents in connection with the 60th anniversary of the founding of the PRC, the 50th anniversary of the 1959 Tibetan uprising, the 20th anniversary of the Tiananmen Square massacre, and the 10th anniversary of the suppression of Falun Gong. In parallel, Zhou Yongkang headed a high-level committee to curb potential threats to social stability, including 'ethnic splittism' and Falun Gong.
[129] Congressional Executive Commission on China, "Communist Party Calls for Increased Efforts To "Transform" Falun Gong Practitioners as Part of Three-Year Campaign," March 22 2011.
[130] Hu Ping, "The Falun Gong Phenomenon," p 230.

Analyzing Jiuping

By 2004, Dajiyuan, the Chinese-language newspaper founded and staffed almost entirely by Falun Gong adherents, had established considerable global reach. Its website counted nearly one million daily page views, despite being blocked in Mainland China, and it distributed over one million print editions weekly in 28 countries.[131]

On November 19, 2004, a lengthy editorial appeared in Dajiyuan titled "On what the Communist Party is" (*Ping Gongchandang Shi Shenme*). Dajiyuan followed this first polemic with eight more consecutively published editorials, which came to be known collectively as the Nine Commentaries on the Communist Party (*Jiuping Gongchandang*, hereafter referred to as *Jiuping*).

Zhuan Falun, the core text of Falun Gong, bears many similarities to Jiuping. Not superficially, of course: The former is a spiritual tract describing Falun Gong's beliefs, cosmology, and methods of self-cultivation, and avoids the slightest mention of the Communist Party, while the latter resembles, at first glance, little more than anti-communist boilerplate. But a more careful reading of Jiuping, supplemented by extensive interviews of Tuidang movement activists and participants, reveals that it not only mirrors the philosophy of Falun Gong, but for many of its participants satisfied similar spiritual and intellectual needs that Falun Gong once filled in the 1990s. Both offer a partial rejection of, or at least ambivalence toward, modernity, positing the superior wisdom and virtue of Chinese traditions. They draw heavily on Buddhist, Daoist, and Confucian concepts to explain their worldview. Both documents argue that a decline in morality is the fundamental source of society's ills, and see a return to the primacy of moral conduct as the solution to these problems. And, albeit in different ways, both Falun Gong and the Tuidang movement seek to offer their participants some version of redemption. Unlike in Falun Gong practice, the barriers to entry into the Tuidang movement are very low: one need not give up alcohol and mahjong and carry out meditation every day, but only identify with the spirit of the movement and the version of right and justice it espouses.

[131] Stephen Gregory, "Falun Gong and China's Continuing War on Human Rights," Testimony before the House Committee on International Relations, July 21 2005.

Jiuping and Falun Gong's texts also present the same challenges to the Communist Party's legitimacy, by questioning its version of the truth, challenging its understanding of the role and value of spiritual faith, undermining the party's hegemony over nationalism, and offering an alternative understanding of the source and nature of social stability and peace. A difference between Falun Gong's teachings and Jiuping is that Falun Gong presented these challenges unwittingly, within a deeper spiritual project, whereas Jiuping makes them explicit, and does not venture to counsel on individual spiritually.

Jiuping begins in 1840, a natural starting point for a discussion on contemporary Chinese history, and lays out its thesis that China's chosen response to the new military challenges from the West—that is, the attempts at Westernization and modernization, and finally Communism—were flawed, misguided, and ultimately resulted in the total destruction of China's culture and civilization. It goes on to argue that Communism is a parasitic foreign ideology that has been imposed on China; that its ideology is badly and irreparably flawed; that wherever it takes hold it produces totalitarian rule characterized by violence, struggle, and deception; that the Communist Party supplants human nature and destroys normal and traditional social relationships, and that it opposes the very nature of the universe, or the Dao:

> *The Communist Party does not hold universal standards for human nature. The concepts of good and evil, as well as all laws and rules, are arbitrarily manipulated. Communists do not allow murder, except for those categorized as enemies by the Communist Party. Filial piety is welcomed, except for those parents deemed class enemies. Benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, and faithfulness are all good, but not applicable when the party is not willing or doesn't want to consider these traditional virtues. The Communist Party completely overthrows the universal standards for human nature, and builds itself on principles that oppose human nature. […]*
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> *The Communist Party does not believe in God, nor does it even respect physical nature. "Battle with heaven, fight with the earth, struggle with humans—therein lies endless joy." This was the motto of the CCP during the Cultural Revolution. Great suffering was inflicted on the Chinese people and the land.*
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> *The Chinese traditionally believe in the unity of heaven and human beings. Laozi said in Dao de Jing (Tao-Te Ching), "Man follows the earth, the earth follows heaven, heaven follows the Dao, and the Dao follows*

what is natural." Human beings and nature exist within a harmonious relationship in the continuous cosmos. The communist party [...] opposes nature, heaven, earth and mankind...[132]

The commentaries that follow contain a mixture of narrative history and scathing analysis. They trace the Communist Party's rule from its origins in the May 4th movement, through the Civil War, going on to detail the political campaigns launched before and after gaining power, from the Yan'an Rectification, to the Campaign to Suppress Counterrevolutionaries, the Great Leap Forward to the Tiananmen Square massacre, and the suppression of Falun Gong. An expansive commentary is devoted entirely to discussing the party's assault on religion and traditional culture generally,[133] and another to describing why the party "betrays" the nature of the universe, or the Dao.[134] Through it all, the party is described as violent, deceptive, and inhumane—the very antithesis of benevolence. These traits are assigned not to the specific acts of the CCP or its members, but to the party itself: in Jiuping, the party is understood not as a collection of individuals, but rather as an entity that endures even as its leadership and individual members change.

In its account of party history, Jiuping stresses that the CCP would not have succeeded had it not been for the advice and support of foreign parties, especially the Soviet Union. This, coupled with Marxism's roots in Western Europe, leads to the conclusion that the Communist Party is a foreign entity that has been "imposed"[135] on the people of China. Jiuping says that, unlike any former system of government in China, where central authority did not extend below a village or township level, the CCP penetrates to "every capillary and cell of the society."[136] The imagery is of a complex parasite that attaches itself to the nation of China, slaughters its people, extracts its vitality, and consumes its human, spiritual, cultural, and environmental resources.

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[132] Epoch Times, Nine Commentaries on the Communist Party, (Gillette, NJ: Yih Chyun Corp, 2004), pp 13-14.
[133] Ibid, pp 149 - 192
[134] Ibid, pp. 93 - 114
[135] Ibid, p. 4
[136] Ibid, p. 15

The accounts of political campaigns are generally well referenced and vividly described, if in forceful terms. It recalls how peasants across China subsisted on wild herbs or tree bark during the Great Leap Forward, and how those who tried to flee or hide grains were killed or labeled counter-revolutionaries.[137] It relays accounts of massacres and cannibalism, the razing of temples and shrines, the killing of unarmed civilians in 1989, and horrific torture committed in the Cultural Revolution and against Falun Gong adherents. For many readers, Jiuping serves to provide sobering new knowledge of a suppressed history. For others, it is reassurance that their memories of these events were real, that their experiences were shared, and that their suffering is acknowledged. Jiuping puts front and center the enormous ravages of party rule, and spends no time on exculpations. In so doing, it seeks to strip the party of its claim to benevolence.

In addition to providing a chronicle of unnatural deaths under the Communist Party, Jiuping begins to sketches the lineaments of what a proper political system should resemble: the state should respect human rights, allow freedom of the press, belief and association, institute a separation of church and state, and maintain a relatively limited reach. But these references occur in passing, and Jiuping stops short of prescribing the type of political system and institutions that should govern China.

Rather than challenging the Communist Party's legitimacy on the grounds that it does not have a democratic mandate, Jiuping invokes the Mandate of Heaven, a concept for which it finds abundant support in the Confucian traditions. It argues that the Communist Party rules without virtue, that it betrays the Dao, that it is at odds with China's traditional value systems, and that it is therefore fundamentally neither moral nor Chinese. The commentaries are teeming with references to traditional understandings of human life and the relationship with the divine, this always being contrasted to the values held by the Communist Party. On human nature, it states:

> *A human being is "first a natural being, and then a social being." 'Men at their birth are naturally good' and 'The heart of compassion is possessed by all people alike' are among the many guidelines that human beings bring with them at birth, guidelines that enable them to distinguish right from wrong, and good from evil.*

[137] Ibid, p 202

> *However, for the CCP human beings are animals or even machines. According to the CCP, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat are just material forces…*

Jiuping also defers to divine authority, and holds that "following the Dao" is one of the most important values that underpin Chinese civilization. Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism, described as a "very stable moral system, unchangeable 'so long as heaven remains,'" are said to be the basis for social stability and peace.[138] In contrast to a Marxist worldview, Jiuping posits human nature to be essentially good, and emphasizes a belief that wealth and rank in life are commensurate with virtue. By attacking China's spiritual and religious heritage in the 1950s and 60s, the party is said not only to have destroyed the basis for a harmonious society, but also "severed the connections between humanity and heaven, and cut the lifeline that connects the Chinese people to their ancestors and national traditions."[139]

According to Jiuping, the party's political campaigns have also robbed the Chinese people of their courage and integrity, their concern for the suffering of others, and their commitment to justice. It describes the Chinese populace as suffering a kind of Stockholm syndrome, rendering them indifferent and cynical:

> *Chinese people have personally experienced and deeply felt the CCP's brutal regime and have developed a profound fear of the CCP's violence. Therefore, people dare not uphold justice and no longer believe in the heavenly laws. First they submit themselves to the CCP's power. Gradually they become unfeeling and unconcerned about matters not affecting themselves.*[140]

Jiuping also goes after Party's legitimizing logic that it, and it alone, can provide social stability. "In reality," writes Jiuping, "with its several million troops and armed police, the CCP is the real source of turmoil. Ordinary citizens have neither the cause nor the capability to initiate turmoil."[141] In keeping with the Confucian

[138] Ibid, p. 154
[139] Ibid, p. 26
[140] Ibid, p. 301
[141] Ibid, p. 275

understanding, true stability is held to be a function of morality and the righteousness of rulers, and is not achieved through the imposition of laws or the use of force and coercion.

Perhaps the most incicive argument that Jiuping levels against the party is aimed at its claim to hold a monopoly on truth. Truth, or true knowledge, Jiuping argues, is unchanging and unalterable. The laws of history and the way of the universe are eternal. The Communist Party's ideology cannot be true simply because it is not unchanging; were it in fact correct, it would not demand radical revision every decade. The adaptability of the party is thus taken as a sign of its fallibility. Confucian and Daoist traditions, by contrast, endured for millennia — proof that they have the power of truth.

As to China's economic growth under the party's leadership, Jiuping says that the CCP has been "eager for quick successes and instant benefits" in order to legitimize its rule, and that this has resulted in severe environmental degradation: "A considerable portion of China's GDP is achieved by sacrificing the opportunities of future generations."[142]

Jiuping suggests that modernization and Westernization should not be regarded as definitive solutions to the country's problems; ancient Chinese morality and knowledge systems are implied to be superior, having given rise to a powerful and rich civilization that endured for millennia. Yet in spite of its reverence for tradition, Jiuping also rejects the dichotomy posited by the Communist Party of science vs. spirituality, and holds that the party's emphasis on science and rationality over religion is needlessly divisive. "In addition to scientific exploration," it says, "Why cannot religion, faith, and cultivation be accepted as other approaches through which to uncover universal truth?"

Similarly, though Jiuping exalts Chinese culture while deriding communism as a foreign ideology, it tempers this Sino-centrism with some important concessions. It argues that the virtues it upholds are not the exclusive domain of traditional China, but are universal. It also does not seek not to present a wholly idealized vision

[142] Ibid, pp. 278-279

of imperial China; the Chinese Communist Party, it writes, not only represents the worst of Western culture, but also inherited and exacerbated the most iniquitous qualities of imperial China.

Jiuping does not call for a radical reversion to imperial rule, nor for the rejection of modern science, and it does not promote an especially nationalistic perspective, let alone an anti-Western one.[143] And while it calls for an end to Party rule through the individual "awakening" of all its members and the Chinese people, Jiuping does not advocate the overthrow of the Communist Party at all, whether violently or otherwise.

This last point merits further exploration, as it is perhaps the most confounding in light of the often unbounded rhetoric found in the Tuidang movement. Instead, Jiuping offers a challenge to the individual reader, much as Falun Gong challenged each individual who came into contact with it in the 1990s: before you is a moral vision, do you accept? It challenges readers to "reflect on our innermost thoughts and examine whether our cowardice and compromise have made us accomplices in many tragedies that could have been avoided." The future envisaged both in Jiuping and by the activists and participants in the Tuidang movement does not involve the Communist Party, but the means by which this future is to be achieved is not supposed to involve revolt or rebellion.

In order for the CCP to ensure its rule, Jiuping states that it "needs a corrupt society as an environment in which to survive."[144] Traditional social relationships and moral codes were inimical to CCP ideology and behavior, so the party embarked on radical transformative campaigns to smash these obstacles. Jiuping views the party's political campaigns through this lens: The breaking down of social bonds and religious organizations in the 1950s and 60s undermined people's ability to organize independently and removed moral or ideological objections to party rule; the hundred flowers movement and anti-rightist campaign sapped the country's intellectuals of their courage; the Great Leap forward plunged the Chinese people into such abject desperation that their will to resist

[143] On the future, for example, Jiuping says "What will China's future be? What direction will China take? Such serious questions are too complicated to discuss in a few words. However, one thing is for certain—if there is no renewal of the nation's morality, no restoration of a harmonious relationship between humans and nature, and between humans, heaven and earth, if there is no faith or culture for a peaceful coexistence among humans, it will be impossible for the Chinese nation to have a bright future."
[144] Ibid, p. 310

was utterly exhausted; the Tiananmen Square Massacre produced cynicism and renewed fear of what the party can do to those who oppose it. More than anything, Jiuping argues, the Communist Party has produced a culture that promotes cunning, cynicism, and immorality.

If the party needs an environment such as this to survive, it stands to reason that if the environment changes—that is to say, if the Chinese people suddenly find themselves free of fear, and possessed of moral courage, hope, and honesty—the party would simply find its rule untenable, and would lose the foundation that supports its existence. To paraphrase emperor Tang Taizong, the water would sink the boat. Such is the approach embraced by Jiuping, and it is reflected consistently in the statements of people withdrawing from the party.[145] If, by contrast, the party were overthrown yet the culture not changed, China would simply find itself ruled yet again by a corrupt and authoritarian power.

Jiuping's prescriptions for the Chinese people are simply these: "examine ourselves without being influenced by hatred, greed, or desires," follow heaven's will, be compassionate, be bold in the defense of justice, and reclaim the cultural and moral traditions that once made China great. This, Jiuping has it, "is the first and essential step on the path toward a smooth transition to a society free from the Communist Party."[146]

[145] This becomes clear in the first pages, for example, where readers who are "still deceived by the CCP" are exhorted to "see its nature clearly, purge its poison from their spirits, extricate their minds from its evil control, free themselves from the shackles of terror, and abandon for good all illusions about it."
[146] Ibid, p. 312.

CHAPTER THREE: Evolution and Organization of the Tuidang Movement

When Jiuping was first published in November 2004, the Communist Party of China counted some 70 million members—approximately five percent of China's population.[147] By 2010, the party's Organization Department claimed 78 million members, 28 million of whom hold college degrees, and nearly 80 percent of whom are male.[148] According to Xinhua News Agency, 20 million people applied to join the party in 2009, and 2 million were accepted.[149]

The Communist Youth League and Young Pioneers are less exclusive organizations. The Young Pioneers, created in 1949 to coincide with the founding of the People's Republic of China, is open to children aged 6 - 14. Nearly all school-aged children join,[150] undergoing a ceremonial initiation in which they pledge to devote their lives to communism, and thereafter sporting unmistakable red kerchiefs around their necks. After members outgrow the organization, they may join the Communist Youth League, open to those aged 14 - 28. After age 28, members are automatically withdrawn from the organization. By the time they graduate from high school, most Chinese citizens belong to the Youth League,[151] and the organization's 2006 membership was over 73 million, according to Xinhua News Agency.[152]

Early Party members may well have joined the party for the purpose of advancing the socialist cause, but those who choose to apply for party membership today are more likely to do so for pragmatic reasons, not ideological ones. A slight majority of entrepreneurs surveyed in 2005, for example, cited economic benefit as their

[147] People's Daily Online, "The Communist Party of China (CPC)." Available at http://english.people.com.cn/data/organs/cpc.html
[148] Xinhua News Agency, "China's communist party members near 78 mln," June 28 2010.
[149] Ibid.
[150] Erik Eckholm, "After 50 Years, China Youth Remain Mao's Pioneers," The New York Times, Sept 26, 1999.
[151] People's Daily, "All Chinese Private Colleges to have Communist Youth Groups," July 23 2003.
[152] Xinhua News Agency, "China's Communist Youth League has 73.496 million members," May 4 2007.

main reason for wanting to join the party.[153] Others name access to political power and influence as their motivation for seeking membership. The party's ideology—an improbable combination of Marxist-Leninism, Mao Zedong Thought, Deng Xiaoping's modernization theory and Jiang Zemin's "Three Represents"—fails to command little more than feigned deference, yet for many Chinese citizens, membership in the Communist Party is still seen as having real, practical benefits.

But in spite of whatever advantages party membership may have, not two weeks after the publication of the first Jiuping editorial, the Dajiyuan website began receiving letters from readers expressing their desire to renounce their membership in the Communist Party. On December 4, 2004, 109 such statements were published on the Dajiyuan website.[154] Over the next two months, the daily number of Tuidang statements fluctuated from several dozen per day to slightly under one thousand—a steady and growing stream of dissent, but not yet a significant force.

Even within the Falun Gong community, the publication of Jiuping and the new movement that was evolving around it was not, initially, met with uninhibited support; Falun Gong had never before endorsed such an explicit challenge to authority, and some practitioners feared that confronting the CCP would undermine their long-standing insistence that they were apolitical meditators.

On February 15, 2005 the movement received a significant boost. Li Hongzhi published an article on a Falun Gong website giving his blessing to the Tuidang phenomenon, and suggesting its scope be expanded from just Party members to anyone who had once been a member of the Communist Youth League or Young Pioneers, exponentially increasing the potential size of the movement.[155]

Li sought to assure his followers that the Tuidang movement was not a sign that Falun Gong had betrayed its principles concerning involvement in politics. Instead, he argued that the party would meet with divine

[153] Bruce Dickson, Wealth Into Power: The Communist Party's Embrace of China's Private Sector, pp 93 - 97.
[154] Tuidang statistics for any week can be found here: http://Tuidang.epochtimes.com/stat
[155] Li Hongzhi, "Turning the Wheel Toward the Human World," Feb 15, 2005.

retribution for its sins, and that individuals who continued to identify with it would share in this fate. Propagating the Tuidang movement and encouraging Chinese citizens to denounce the party was therefore not about the pursuit of regime change, but was held to be an act of compassion.

This helps explain some of the more idiosyncratic features of the Tuidang movement. Dajiyuan accepts statements made on behalf of deceased relatives, and the majority of statements are ex post facto withdrawals from the Youth League or Young Pioneers. Moreover, individuals are permitted, and even encouraged, to sign their renunciations using aliases.

After Li's article was published in mid-February 2005, the number of Tuidang statements posted to the Dajiyuan website began to soar. According to the Dajiyuan website, in the two-week span from February 14th to 28th, the average number of Tuidang statements posted daily increased 100 times over, from 100 to nearly 10,000. The underground material sites in China, which for years had been producing literature on Falun Gong, were now also turning out copies of Jiuping and distributing them among neighbors, colleagues, and to the homes of distant villages.[156] By March 2006, the Hong Kong office of Dajiyuan had distributed seven million copies the commentaries, many of which they believe were then brought into Mainland China[157] Falun Gong adherents in Taiwan and North America began sending links to Jiuping to Chinese email addresses en masse, and did the same in online chat rooms. Overseas practitioners incorporated a new ritual into their daily 'truth-clarification' routine, making phone calls and faxes to Mainland China inviting participation in the Tuidang movement.

[156] In April, 2005, Xiao Zhigang, the CCP Committee secretary of Xixiangtang District, Nanning City noted that overseas "reactionary propaganda" centered around Jiuping and Tuidang was responsible for dramatic increase local Falun Gong practitioners' "distributing and posting flyers, painting slogans, sending faxes and making phone calls increased dramatically". See http://www.nanning.gov.cn/3878/2006_1_11/3878_100736_1136945904978.html.
[157] Stephen Gregory, "Thugs Smash Epoch Times Office in Hong Kong," The Epoch Times, March 2 2006.

Digital Tools of Dissemination

By February 2006, just fourteen months after the Tuidang movement began, Forbes reported that Jiuping had been promoted in Mainland China with 100 million emails (usually with mild encryption), along with "12 million snail mails, 10 million faxes and some 50 million phone calls."[158]

These figures are a testament not only to the commitment of Tuidang activists, but also to their technological capabilities. It is most serendipitous for Falun Gong that a disproportionate number of its North American adherents are scientists and engineers, having left China in the early- to mid-1990s to pursue graduate studies in the United States and Canada. According to demographic surveys of the North American practitioner communities, 67 percent hold at least a bachelors degree (compared to just over 25 percent of Americans as a whole),[159] and a majority of these have backgrounds in physical sciences or engineering.[160] Many of these skills are put to use in Falun Gong's struggle against the Communist Party, with impressive results.

Beginning in 2001, as China's great internet firewall was being fortified and refined, Falun Gong computer scientists in Silicon Valley and North Carolina began developing censorship circumvention software, setting off a virtual arms race that continues to this day. The two most successful of their products, Freegate and Ultrasurf, have nearly one million unique users daily, approximately half of them in Mainland China. The software runs as a small executable file that establishes an encrypted tunnel to proxy servers outside China, letting users evade both censorship and surveillance online. These tools have been vital in Falun Gong's counter-suppression and Tuidang promotion efforts, as they enable adherents to send and receive information freely both across and within China's borders. The software is also promoted aggressively outside the community of Falun Gong practitioners, and is one of the primary means by which Chinese citizens can access the Dajiyuan website to make Tuidang statements. In early 2006, the logs of Dynamic Internet Technologies, the company that runs Freegate, showed over 30,000 unique

[158] Richard C. Morais, "Cracks in the Wall," Forbes, Feb 27 2006.
[159] Ownby, Falun Gong and the Future of China, p 136.
[160] Porter, Falun Gong in the United States: An Ethnographic Study, p 121.

mainland China-based users per month using its system to post Tuidang statements to the Dajiyuan website.[161] This number has since increased, according the company.

The tech-savvy among Tuidang activists also developed an automated calling program, using cheap and readily available modem hardware, called "little helper." When I mentioned it among Tuidang activists, they would instinctively begin speaking in hushed tones, as though I had stumbled upon their Manhattan Project. Only one person was forthcoming on the inner workings of the system and its development, but asked that the more "sensitive" aspects of its operations not be disclosed. What can be known, however, is that a single one of these devices can call upwards of 600 Mainland Chinese phone numbers per day, and plays pre-recorded messages about Jiuping and the Tuidang movement. One of the main reasons the program was developed was to overcome the problem of out-of-service numbers. In times past, Falun Gong activists wasted much effort calling China because so many phone numbers were either busy, unassigned, or the recipient did not answer. The little helper can quickly detect busy or out-of-service numbers, saving time and money. It has other benefits: if the recipient of the phone call wishes to issue a Tuidang statement, they can do so through the automated system. If they indicate they wish want to speak with someone directly, their phone number is flagged to receive a call back by a Tuidang activist.

It is not known, at least not by me, how many little helpers are in operation. Based on limited surveys of North American and Australian cities, a sizable portion of practitioners operate at least one line. The more well-off may run five or six little helpers, and I have heard legends of one practitioner in Germany who operates 200 machines out of his home (other versions of the story say the number is in the thousands).

Finally, the high-tech dissemination methods employed by Tuidang activists are rounded out by the satellite television and short-wave radio stations operated by Falun Gong practitioners, which regularly feature documentary versions of the Jiuping and related news in their broadcasts into the mainland. Satellite dishes capable of receiving foreign signals are illegal in China, except for hotels and residential buildings hosting foreigners, but the

[161] Morais, "Cracks in the Wall," Forbes.

antiquated laws have not been able to prevent the open proliferation of tens of millions of black market satellite receivers.

The Tuidang Activists

The volunteers on the front lines of the Tuidang efforts—those who engage directly with Chinese citizens exhorting them to renounce the party—are organized loosely, if at all. They are self-selecting, are mostly practitioners of Falun Gong, and in my observation are comprised mainly of retired women. Some work independently, compiling their own telephone lists or even dialing Mainland Chinese numbers at random. Others coordinate in small groups, pooling and dividing up large collections of phone numbers. Still others work in a more organized fashion, connected by email lists that send them the phone numbers flagged by little helper lines.

Lisa Tao, a 68-year-old retired health care worker in Maryland, makes two to three dozen phone calls to China per week, and has been doing so since 2005. She says in this time, she has successfully solicited roughly 1,000 Tuidang statements. In February 2009, I spent an evening observing Tao make phone calls to Mainland China. After 15 phone calls made from her kitchen table, she had collected the names (or rather, the assumed names) of nine individuals. Her modus operandi involves a small stack of phone cards, two pages of ruled paper, and a pot of tea. On one page is written pre-prepared aliases, which she keeps on hand to spare people the trouble of thinking up names on the spot. She checks them off as they are assigned, and takes pains not to use the same name twice. On another page, she has about 30 phone numbers, including some called on a previous night. She equivocated when asked how the phone numbers were obtained, but based on her success rate it appeared they were numbers that had earlier received pre-recorded phone messages about Tuidang, where the recipient pressed the button soliciting a human tutor on the details of the movement. Ms. Tao did the job very capably, being driven by the conviction that she was offering something of tremendous spiritual significance to the people she spoke with. When I pressed her on

the use of aliases, she pointed skyward, saying simply that the heavens can see what is in people's hearts, and that is all that matters.

In North America, the heart of the Tuidang movement is found in the predominantly ethnic Chinese neighborhood of Flushing, New York, in a small second-floor office nestled between produce shops and beauty salons. This is the 'Global Service Center for Quitting the CCP,' a humble operation (despite its name) run by former USDA scientist-turned full-time dissident David Gao. The office is run on a shoestring budget, paid for out of the pockets of Gao and some others. It is home to stacks of literature and books, and three or four volunteers managing operations. The office gets calls almost daily from U.S. asylum-seekers wanting proof that they have disavowed communism, and the center sends certificates on elegant stock paper testifying to the fact.

More than anything, the office serves as a physical base for half a dozen volunteers who take the message to the Flushing streets every morning. Five groups of mostly elderly Chinese women spread out throughout the neighborhood in pairs or alone. They set up tables with literature about the Tuidang movement, ready to take down the names of anyone interested in withdrawing from Communist Party, Youth League or Young Pioneers. These volunteers are not especially well versed in contemporary political debates, and for the most part they stick to simple scripts, often centered around the notion that the Communist Party must eventually answer for its sins and that continued allegiance to it will bring bad fortune. On an average day, upwards of 30 people sign on to withdraw from the CCP or affiliated organizations. On the day of my visit, a particularly rainy and cold one in November 2009, the group collected more than 50 names. Over a third of these were collected by a single, stout Chinese grandmother. The logs of names (even here, most are aliases) and party affiliations reveal that only about 15 percent were actual party members; the rest were former members of the Communist Youth League or Young Pioneers.

In Taiwan, home to the largest group of Falun Gong practitioners outside Mainland China, I was told there are approximately one thousand volunteers soliciting Tuidang statements through telephone, chat programs and, increasingly, at tourist destinations frequented by a growing influx of Mainland Chinese visitors. I met four of

Taiwan's Tuidang activists in March 2010 at National Taiwan University. Wang Yunling, 56 and the only man in the group, is the owner of a chess instruction school. Liao Yanmei, 63, is a retired singer, and 60-year-old Lin Furong is a homemaker. 41-year-old Cai Peifang, a beautiful and deceptively young-looking woman, works as a chess instructor at Wang Yunling's school.

When asked why she began making phone calls to China to tell people about the Tuidang movement, Cai explains as follows:

> *China is a race that believes in Gods, in retribution. The Communist Party is anti-theist, it has destroyed Chinese traditional beliefs. As a result, Chinese society has become worse; morality has been corrupted … All these problems stem from the Communist Party's having no belief in God, in right and wrong. Communist Party members themselves are victims; they've also been lied to, and we hope they can learn the truth.*

Liao Yanmei echoed this idea, adding that she believes that if people can make a principled stand on the Communist Party, they will be redeemed: "I believe people will be saved when their conscience wakes up. When they can distinguish good and evil, right and wrong, and stop aligning themselves with something evil, I think they have returned to their true nature, which is innately good."

Ask Tuidang activists about what kind of government they want for China, and you will almost certainly get some variation of this answer: I don't care. Or, as it was put to me by David Gao, "that's not for us to decide." Gao and the other Tuidang activists expressed confidence that Chinese democracy activists could capably take up the task of ruling China someday, but that political affairs of this sort is not the business of Falun Gong practitioners. Li Hongzhi has said as much himself in 2005. In one of his first public speeches after the Tuidang movement began, Li declared that when the Communist Party falls, "We [Falun] Dafa disciples won't govern [China], for we are cultivators, people whose bodies are in the secular world but whose minds are beyond it. And we're not interested in

political power there anyway." As to who should take up leadership of China, Li predicts the task will fall on people with great aspirations, abilities, and "high moral values."[162]

For Tuidang activists, the payoff to spending their free hours asking people to denounce communism is not the promise of regime change; it is the belief that they affect some positive change in the lives of individuals. Cai explains that unlike democracy activists who concern themselves with institutional change, she and her fellow activists deal only in matters of moral and spiritual significance. "Institutional change is just on the surface," she says. "Morality can really change things. Not just the system, but also in the person's own life."

The methods and emphasis of each person in making phone calls to China differ. Cai collects phone books from around China, and enters the number into the little helper, ready to answer the call if anyone indicates they want more information. Like all Tuidang activists, she pays for the phone calls herself, but online calling keeps the costs acceptably low—2,000 NTD a month (about $66 USD).

On an average day, Cai says she collects 20 - 30 statements. One of her favorite stories to tell is of a Public Security Bureau chief in Hebei Province whose office frequently targeted Falun Gong practitioners. When she called, the man insisted he was not corrupt, and apparently expressed admiration for what Cai was attempting to do. By the end of the call, he agreed to make a statement withdrawing from the party. "I gave him the name Wang Ming'an."

Her boss at the chess school, Wang Yunlin, also claims an impressive record. In five years of calling China, he has collected 8,400 Tuidang statements. 200 of them came from a single village, where people had apparently been waiting on just such a phone call.

Liao Yanmen and Lin Furong, the older women of the group, are less concerned with quantity. They focus their attention on calling police stations and party offices, particularly those that are involved in the suppression of Falun Gong. When practitioners in China relay information about torture cases to Falun Gong websites, they often

[162] Li Hongzhi, "Teaching the Fa at the 2005 New York International Fa Conference," April 24 2005.

include detailed information of the place, time, and the names and cell phone numbers of the security agents involved. Anecdotal evidence would suggest the threat of public exposure on Falun Gong websites is an especially effective means of deterring torture; a police officer or prison administrator whose name is posted to Falun Gong websites spends the next several months of life being bombarded by phone calls from the likes of Liao and Lin.

Naturally, they don't boast of collecting thousands of statements. But they do have success stories. "I've had the experience of making 10 phone calls to police and having 11 people withdraw from the party," says Lin. "Of course, sometimes I get none, and sometimes people have already withdrawn."[163]

Evidence of the efficacy of these calls is scattered throughout the Dajiyuan website, where statements from current or former security agents occur with surprising frequency, like this statement from Hebei Province:

> *"I am the director of a police station, and arrest Falun Gong disciples. An overseas Falun Dafa disciple compassionately told me the truth, and now I recognize the evilness of the Communist Party. For my family, and for my future, I make this statement to withdraw from the Chinese Communist Party and all its affiliated organization, and I will treat [Falun] Dafa disciples with kindness."*[164]

The most unexpected Tuidang activist I encountered, and the only one who is not Chinese, is 24-year-old Oliver Perrett, a farm boy from central Queensland, Australia. Perrett began learning Falun Gong at age 17, and upon graduating from high school he went to China to teach English at a preschool. In 2005, his coworkers reported him to authorities for practicing Falun Gong, and the then-18-year-old Perrett was taken from his dorm by eight police officers, who interrogated him and attempted to have him sign a renunciation of the practice. By the grace of *guanxi* (he had apparently earned the favor of one of his student's teachers, a government official), he was able to stay for several more months after refusing to sign a renunciation. After earning a degree in Chinese, he returned to teach kindergarten in Hong Kong, spending his spare time hanging around tourist attractions and talking to Mainlanders about the Tuidang movement.

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[163] Interview with Wang Yunlin, Cai Peifang, Liao Yanmei, and Lin Furong. Taipei, Taiwan, March 1, 2010. Transcript available upon request.
[164] Gao, "Three Withdrawals," August 2, 2008. http://tuidang.epochtimes.com/index/showpost/id/2152262.

Perrett is possessed of rare humility, with no pretenses about him. He speaks calmly and sincerely, and also happens to be young, articulate, and boyishly handsome. This is evidently a useful set of traits when convincing Chinese tourists to withdraw from the Communist Party: Perrett has collected an estimated 2,000 Tuidang statements from tourists in Hong Kong, and more still chatting online with Mainland Chinese.[165]

International Network

In order to gauge the levels of participation of Falun Gong adherents in Tuidang promotion outside China, volunteer Falun Gong or Tuidang activists in several international cities were asked for estimates on the number of known individuals in their locales involved in Tuidang activism. Falun Gong practitioners are found in over 100 countries, and in most large- to mid-sized cities in Europe, East and Southeast Asia, Australia, and North and South America. This sampling includes cities in only five countries and regions, and is therefore not intended to provide a complete account of Tuidang activities outside China. The numbers cited here are provided by the cities' volunteer Falun Gong coordinators, and represent their best estimates on the number of the practitioners in their region who have known and regular involvement in the Tuidang movement, including those who make phone calls to China, chat online to Chinese about denouncing the party, or establish booths in Chinatowns or tourist destinations. In some instances (Calgary, Canada, and Washington DC), I was able to check these estimates against my own observations, and found them to be reasonable. In most cases, however, I was either unable to do fieldwork, or (as in Taiwan) the population of activists were too large and scattered to be able to observe first-hand in a short period of time.

[165] Oliver Perrett, email to Caylan Ford, Dec 15 2010 (full text available upon request) In addition to soliciting Tuidang statements face-to-face, Perrett also communicates electronically with Mainland Chinese users of chat programs like Skype. The option of having multiple simultaneous conversations enables him to collect upwards of 100 statements per day using this method.

New York is not included in this list, though it is by far the city with the most Falun Gong practitioners outside of Asia. This was because as I was unable to find anyone who felt they could produce a reasonably accurate estimate on the number of Tuidang activists. One person was able to tell me that every day, 10 - 20 people take to the streets to promote the Tuidang movement, though they could not say how many others were involved on a less frequent basis, let alone estimate the number who make phone calls or chat online to China.

Table 1: Tuidang Activists by Region	
San Francisco	30 - 50
Washington DC	10 - 20
Toronto	50 - 60
Vancouver	50 - 60
Calgary	10+
Sydney	50 - 60
Melbourne	20 - 30
Hong Kong	20 - 30+
Taiwan (all)	1,000+

Also not included in these estimates is the number of practitioners who run little helpers. Because the system requires minimal maintenance—only the input of phone numbers and some money for the internet calling—far more people run the system than speak directly to people about the movement. In Washington DC, for instance, approximately 40 people have a dedicated "little helper" line set up in their homes, but fewer than half that number are counted as Tuidang activists. The same ratio was observed in Calgary and Edmonton, Alberta, both of which have approximately ten Tuidang activists, but 20 little helper lines.

Inside China

Inside China, the number of Tuidang activists is more difficult to gauge, but participation is almost certainly much higher than outside China. In the Chinese diaspora communities, the number of Falun Gong adherents is probably "in the hundreds of thousands."[166] Although it is impossible to assert with any confidence how many Falun Gong practitioners remain inside China, the number was officially estimated at 70 million prior to the crackdown in 1999,

[166] Ownby, Falun Gong and the Future of China, p. 126

and some more recent estimates suggest it is still in the "tens of millions."[167] Not only are there more practitioners inside China than outside, but a higher proportion of them are engaged in active promotion of the Tuidang movement. Practitioners abroad who are compelled to activism, particularly in North America, tend to gravitate toward work that utilizes whatever specialized skills they may have—lobbying elected representatives, news writing for Dajiyuan, or coding to break through internet censorship, for instance. Tuidang activists outside China are, more often than not, individuals whose skills are less readily applied in these fields, whether it be due to advanced age or poor English language skills. Within China, by contrast, there are no Falun Gong practitioner-run newspapers or television stations, no performing arts companies or software start-ups. The Falun Gong practitioners in China engaged actively in counter-suppression efforts, whether they be illiterate housewives or engineers, focus most of their efforts on directly disseminating information about the persecution of Falun Gong and the Tuidang movement—a commitment that is evidenced both in the Tuidang statements themselves (statements often allude to learning about Jiuping from a Falun Gong acquaintance, or being given censorship-circumvention tools by a practitioner, for example) and in the official documents prescribing or detailing crackdowns on the movement.

Inside China, activists rely less on phone calls and other high-tech dissemination methods, but instead go mailbox-to-mailbox and bicycle basket-to-bicycle basket dropping off literature and DVDs, or speaking directly with coworkers, neighbors and acquaintances about the movement.[168] There are significant risks associated with Tuidang activism: Falun Gong sources point to hundreds of adherents who have allegedly been detained for disseminating Jiuping, and at least one was said to have been tortured to death.[169] Yet the accounts of activists inside China also

[167] Malcolm Moore, "Falun Gong 'growing' in China despite 10-year ban," Telegraph, April 24 2009 ; U.S. Department of State, 2009 International Religious Freedom Report: China (includes Tibet, Hong Kong, Macau)
[168] For an account of the process by which Falun Gong adherents relay information, create, and disseminate literature, see Patricia Thornton, "Manufacturing Dissent in Transnational China," in Popular Protest in China, Kevin J. O'Brien, ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), and Ethan Gutmann, "Tiananmen 20 years on," speech given at the National Endowment for Democracy, June 2 2009.
[169] Minghui.org, the main overseas Falun Gong website, compiled a report in 2006 detailing instances of imprisonment, criminal sentencing, and torture doled out to Falun Gong adherents for possessing or distributing Jiuping. See http://www.minghui.org/mh/articles/2006/7/14/132976.html

reveal some surprising dynamics in Chinese society, and demonstrate the openness with which the Tuidang movement has been received, at least in some circles.

Minghui.org, the main Chinese-language Falun Gong website, serves as the online nexus for the Falun Gong community, publishing articles daily that include first-person accounts of persecution, resistance, and essays. As I was unable to conduct fieldwork in China, I rely on these articles published to Minghui to shed light on the Tuidang movement in China.

One woman, writing in to Minghui from Hubei provinces, recounts how she opened a small shop in 2005 along with another Falun Gong practitioner, and made a point of telling every customer—whether they be bureaucrats, businessmen, students or police officers—about the Tuidang movement. She tells of how many customers themselves began actively soliciting Tuidang statements from their classmates and neighbors, and providing the lists of names to her. The woman writes that according to her records, she has helped over 20,000 people withdraw from the CCP, Youth League, or Young Pioneers. Her actions did not go unnoticed, however; her story also includes several anecdotes about being detained. She would invariably be released in short order, but not before trying (and sometimes succeeding) to convince the arresting officers to denounce the party:

> *The community police officer has taken me away many times. He has said, 'You're the person I admire the most, worry about the most, and sympathize with the most. We took you away because you were reported. It is our job, and we have to do it...' [...] I later told him to quit the CCP, and he agreed instantly, saying, 'I only joined the Young Pioneers. Please help me quit.'*[170]

Few people approach the 20,000 figure cited by the Hubei practitioner (the second highest number I have come across is claimed by a Seattle woman, who spends 4 - 6 hours per day making phone calls to China and says she has solicited over 11,000 statements), but many do tell of impressive records. One man, writing under the name Yi Xin from Jiangsu Province, claims to have assisted some 5,000 people in making Tuidang statements from 2007 -

[170] A practitioner in Hubei Province, "Ten Years of speaking the truth face-to-face," (Shi nian mian dui mian jiang zhen xiang jiu ren), Minghui.org, Nov 8, 2010.

2010. Yi Xin describes himself as a 70-year-old retired Party cadre, and something of a local celebrity. His article on Minghui describes how he travels daily by bicycle, train, or bus, to talk to people about denouncing the party. "Every morning and afternoon I talk to about a dozen people, and five to eight of them usually agree to quit the CCP. Sometimes more than 10 people agree to quit in one day," he writes.[171]

More humble tales are also found on the Minghui site, such as one published in March 2010 by a practitioner who writes only that they live in a "remote mountainous area." Though the practitioner had succeeded in convincing close family and friends to make Tuidang statements, they were comparably meek in soliciting statements outside this immediate circle. One evening, after paying several harassing visits to her house, local officers of the 6-10 Office asked the practitioner to join them for dinner. During the meal, much to the author's surprise, the officers explained that they did not want to harass Falun Gong adherents, that they were compelled by their superiors to do the work, and indicated that they thought very poorly of the Communist Party:

> *I encouraged the officers to quit the party, but none of them said anything. So I told them they could talk to me privately if they wanted to quit. The next morning, one of them came to see me. He wanted to quit the party...He urged me to be careful and promised that he would secretly protect [Falun Gong] practitioners.*

Outside her own family and friends, the 6-10 Officer was the first person for whom she issued a Tuidang statement.[172]

It is not only Falun Gong adherents who seek to advance the Tuidang movement. A number of Chinese Christians, prominent democracy activists and writers, *weiquan* (rights defending) lawyers[173] and Tibetans have adopted the cause as their own (though I have yet to meet any who rival the zeal of Falun Gong practitioners). One such activist is a Tibetan journalist now living in the United States. On a trip back to China he brought with him

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[171] Yi Xin, "Improving myself while explaining the truth" (Zai jiang zhen xiang de tongshi xiu ziji), Minghui.org, Nov 5, 2010.
[172] "Breakthrough in the "three withdrawals," ('San Tui' ling tupo), Minghui.org, March 14, 2010.
[173] Gao Zhisheng, Zheng Enchong and Guo Guoting are among the Weiquan lawyers who have issued Tuidang statements. In a December, 2009 interview with four other Weiquan lawyers from a law firm in Beijing, I was told that Jiuping had profoundly influenced the rights discourse in their circles. They also estimated that over half of China's population had at least heard of the Tuidang movement, and many had read some or all of Jiuping.

some extra copies of Jiuping, hoping to show it to friends and acquaintances in Tibet. He had guarded the copies jealously, apparently believing himself to be in possession of something exceedingly rare, valuable, and subversive. When he arrived back in China, however, he found copies of Jiuping were ubiquitous on the black market, being sold as booklets or DVDs by street vendors along with other illegal publications. Today, he continues actively promoting the Tuidang movement in the Tibetan community, believing it to be his people's best hope at finding freedom.

Assessment

Through the cumulative efforts of Tuidang activists, approximately 60,000 new names were added to the Dajiyuan website on an average day in 2010. These numbers are relatively constant, though there are occasional anomalies. Slight troughs sometimes coincide with "sensitive dates," such as October 1 National Day celebrations. This is presumably not because the country is awash in celebration, but because authorities step up disruptions aimed at the Freegate and Ultrareach software that may briefly succeed at paralyzing them. There are also small spikes in the data: in November, 2005, Tuidang statements began pouring out of Heilongjiang Province, apparently in response to an explosion at a chemicals factory, followed by an official cover-up, that temporarily left millions without drinking water.[174] After the Sichuan earthquake in 2008 and revelations of shoddy school construction, Tuidang activists tell me they witnessed a notable up-tick in renunciations from the earthquake-affected region.

By March 2011, Dajiyuan reported that over 90 million people had signed their names to Tuidang statements.

Numbers like these are naturally met with skepticism. By dint of the reporting system alone, it is impossible that the figure is precise. And though the Dajiyuan website has dozens of volunteers who screen every Tuidang statement received, they have few means to prevent fraudulent postings, as they do not require that the true

[174] Richard C. Morais, "Cracks in the Wall," Forbes, Feb 27 2006.

identities of posters to be disclosed. Identical postings made to the site are removed, and if a particular IP address is making a suspicious number of posts, it is blocked.[175] But Dajiyuan editors admit to being tripped up on occasion, despite their efforts to ensure authenticity. When the movement first began, for instance, they unquestioningly accepted Tuidang statements purportedly made by mid- to high-level officials, only to find that they had been duped when Chinese official media discredited them.[176]

The Tuidang site editors have since become more discerning, but damage has been done. In December 2004, Meng Weizai, formerly a high-ranking propaganda official and a Falun Gong convert, posted his Tuidang statement to the site using his real name. What followed was a bizarre saga of propaganda and counter-propaganda[177] that badly undermined the credibility of the Tuidang movement in the eyes of some academic observers.[178] Immediately after Meng's Tuidang statement, on December 10, Xinhua published a prominent article claiming to quote the "real" Meng Weizai, asserting that that he remained a devoted Communist Party member: "I, Meng Weizai, in the past was a Communist Party member, am now a Communist Party member, and will be a Communist Party member until I die; I will never betray the great Chinese Communist Party!"[179] Dajiyuan then published another statement from Meng disputing Xinhua's claims about his loyalties. Soon thereafter, it seemed Meng made another Tuidang submission, this time co-signed by 50 colleagues, all of them relatively prominent members of the party.[180] As it turned out, however, many of them were dead.[181] As expected, Dajiyuan editors insist the second statement was a piece of black propaganda intended to undermine the credibility of their movement in

[175] Xu Zhusi, "How CCP resignations are counted," The Epoch Times, May 2, 2005.
[176] Interview with Tuidang website editor Gaixin, Aug 28, 2010.
[177] Hai Tao, "The overseas temptest and contradictory reports concerning the true and false resignations of Meng Weizai" (Zhenjia Meng Weizai Tuidang fengbo he hubo jingwai), Voice of America, Dec 12 2004.
[178] Thornton, "Manufacturing Dissent in Transnational China."
[179] Qut in People's Daily Online, "Organization Department Directly Addresses Sensitive Issue, Responding to the So-Called 'Tuidang' Incident"July 12, 2005.
[180] Phoenix TV, "The truth about rumors by overseas websites that Meng Weizai has withdrawn from the party " (jingwai wangzhan zaoyao meng weizai Tuidang zhenxiang) Feb 28, 2005.
http://www.ifeng.com/phoenixtv/72931714371944448/20050228/510382.shtml
[181] For a full account of the Meng Weizai statements and counter-statements, see "The Case of Meng Weizai," EastSouthWestNorth, available at http://www.zonaeuropa.com/20050710_1.htm

general, and their claims about Meng Weizai in particular. But Communist Party ploy or not, the website did post it, and the incident highlighted some of the inherent flaws in Dajiyuan's reporting system.

Less nefarious deceptions also occur on the Dajiyuan site. In the course of reading through Tuidang statements, for instance, I encountered two posts in which the authors said they had previously made a Tuidang declaration over the phone or as part of a group, but when they had the opportunity to relay a written, personal statement, they issued another one. There are other scenarios in which multiple statements might be made—if someone received multiple visits or phone calls from Tuidang activists and agrees each time to denounce the party, for instance. The reverse is also possible, however: some people who wish to participate in the Tuidang movement do not have the means to do so, and the activists collecting names may occasionally lose their lists, or otherwise fail to upload them to Dajiyuan.

There are substantial obstacles to ascertaining exactly how many Chinese, and how many party members in particular, have submitted a Tuidang statement. The methods employed by Tuidang activists render independent corroboration impossible, and from their perspective, that's precisely the point—the harder for the Chinese authorities to track down participants. Yet what does become clear on spending time with Tuidang activists, watching them solicit statements and seeing their records, is that the movement does have considerable participation. Moreover, the statements that appear on the Dajiyuan website, however opaque their origins, provide a glimpse into the inner thoughts and feelings of disaffected Chinese citizens writing with a candor that is rarely expressed publicly. The following section deals with the participants themselves.

CHAPTER FOUR: Composition of the Tuidang Movement

Up until two years ago, Dr. Sun Yanjun was a well-respected professor at Jilin University. He was regarded as a pioneer in the field of religious psychology, and served on the board of Chinese academic journals. Sun had a familiarity with Western political discourse and admired from afar the intellectual traditions that thrived outside China, but he would hardly consider himself a dissident. He was, after all, a Communist Party member.

For the better part of the last decade, Sun had watched the crackdown on Falun Gong with detached ambivalence. He did not lend overt support to the Communist Party's position, though he had plenty of opportunities to do so. On more than one occasion, Sun and his colleagues were approached by party officials to contribute their expertise in the psychology of religion to help devise tactics for the 'transformation' of Falun Gong adherents. Sun was one of those who always refused, even when faced with threats that failure to cooperate would hinder his professional advancement. But neither did he reserve any special sympathy for the group. Like many in the ranks of China's intelligentsia, Sun considered Falun Gong practitioners to be kind, but also subscribed to the view that they were mostly uneducated, superstitious, and disenfranchised individuals who, having been left behind by China's modernization project, sought solace in the spiritual practice.[182]

Sun's views may likely have gone unchallenged, had it not been for the prodding of a colleague ahead of a trip to Hawaii. Before Sun was to depart, the colleague exhorted him to take the opportunity to view censored websites. "I told him I already knew about all the blocked content out there. He asked if I meant English language sites, and I said yes. Then he told me I needed to look at Chinese websites." This was revelatory to Sun, who had never considered that modern China could produce truly original or insightful works. But he took the friend's advice, and upon arrival in Hawaii, Sun opened the Dajiyuan website and began reading Jiuping.

[182] Sun Yanjun, interview by Matthew Robertson with transcripts made available to author, Washington DC, Oct 13 2010.

Within a month, Sun made the decision to radically uproot his life. The Jiuping was so compelling, so "advanced" in its thinking and approach, that Sun resolved to withdraw from the Communist Party, leave behind his plush career in Jilin, and defect to the United States. On a stormy February evening in Honolulu in 2009, Sun posted his Tuidang statement to the Dajiyuan website using his own name. Today he lives in the Washington, DC area and spends his spare time practicing Falun Gong.

Sun's story is exceptional, but he has company. Masha Ma was a graduate of the illustrious Peking University who left China to pursue a law degree from the University of Toronto. Ma grew up in Beijing, but was too young to remember the massacre on Tiananmen Square. She was raised to be a blue-ribbon Communist Party member, and recalls learning to recite slogans like "The sun is big, the earth is big, but nothing is bigger than the benevolence of the party." Ma was accepted into party ranks immediately upon turning 18.[183] Beautiful, vivacious and bright, Ma was also a loyal apologist for the party, and was occasionally chosen as a representative to meet with visiting dignitaries; she was selected to kiss Vladimir Putin on the cheek as part of an official welcoming party for a state visit, for instance.

Soon after her arrival in Toronto, Ma attended an event on Sino-Canadian relations, and was seated next to Jason Loftus, a young civil engineer, Falun Gong practitioner, and archetype of the unassuming, polite, hockey-playing Canadian. On learning that her tablemate practiced Falun Gong, Ma was initially terrified; the depiction of Falun Gong in the Chinese media was of anti-social, dangerous and violent criminals. But the interaction made Ma question, for the first time in her life, the official Chinese media. She started seeking out information on the events of June 4, 1989, and was embarrassed and ashamed to learn that she had been lied to. Less than a year later, she had married Loftus, and withdrew from the party.[184]

[183] Kevin Steel, "Revolution Number Nine," The Western Standard, July 11 2005.
[184] Masha Ma, interview by author, Toronto Ontario, May 16, 2005.

In June, 2005, Chen Yonglin, a promising young Chinese diplomat in Sydney, Australia left the Chinese consulate with his family in tow and applied for political asylum. On June 4, he posted a one-sentence Tuidang statement on behalf of himself and his wife and to Dajiyuan.

The date had special importance to Chen, who had been a student in Tiananmen Square sixteen years earlier. But like so many others, in the early 1990s Chen tried to put his past behind him, and eventually landed a job as the political consul in Sydney. His job, he said, heavily centered on monitoring, harassing, and attempting to turn public opinion in Australia against the "five poisons"—Tibetans, Uighurs, democracy activists, advocates of Taiwanese independence, and Falun Gong.[185] As Chen neared the end of his term, he grew increasingly disillusioned, and eventually came to be convinced of the innocence of the groups he was targeting. Chen decided the weight on his conscience was too much to bear, and he went public with evidence of a vast Chinese espionage network targeting Chinese dissidents and their supporters overseas. On June 13, Chen elaborated on his motivations for renouncing the Communist Party:

> *My conscience propelled me to leave the Chinese Communist regime and free myself from the evil control of the party. [...] I have been struggling for freedom for years. My action demonstrates the ruling CCP is unable to control the conscience of the people of China.*
>
> *Those innocent souls caged in the CCP machine should free themselves out of the spirit bondage and the party's chains. Now it is the time to smash and break the chains holding your body and soul, and embrace a life of freedom, as I did, walking out of shadows into a new life, no matter how difficult it is. Let the justice and human rights prevail. Let us be brave and join hands together to shake off all the fear, terror and grief laid upon us by the ruling Communist regime in China. Democracy and human rights are what we Chinese need urgently. Let us free ourselves at last.*[186]

Chen's defection soon inspired copycats, the first of whom was Hao Fengjun, an agent of the 6-10 Office in Tianjin. Hao, then 32, had been interested in police work from a young age, being driven by a desire to protect the

[185] A full review of Chen Yonglin's claims and asylum case is provided on the Parliament of Australia's website at http://www.aph.gov.au/Senate/committee/FADT_CTTE/completed_inquiries/2004-07/asylum/report01/index.htm
[186] Chen Yonglin, "Statement of Chen Yonglin," June 13, 2005. http://www.theepochtimes.com/news/5-6-13/29531.html

innocent and serve his compatriots. In the spring of 1989, as the masses of protesters grew in Tiananmen Square, Hao familiarized himself with the grievances of China's laborers, and developed a disdain for corruption and inequality. Though he was not there, he discovered that he could relate to the feelings and demands of the students in Tiananmen Square, and when their movement was brutally crushed, the seeds of rebellion were planted in Hao Fengjun's heart.

Still believing that policing could provide him with the means to defend and protect the people, Hao began work for the Tianjin Public Security Bureau in 1994. He quickly discovered, however, that his principal obligation was not to the people, but to the party. Hao was perplexed by many of his assignments; in 1996, for instance, he was called to the scene of a non-fatal stabbing at a brothel. The victim was apparently there to rescue his daughter from a life of prostitution, but the brothel's owner was well connected to high-ranking party leaders in Tianjin, some of whom were patrons. Hao recalls that he was ordered to take the stabbing victim to a detention center for disturbing public order, but found the assignment so morally questionable that he requested reassignment. In April of 1999, Hao received another unusual assignment: he was among those sent to break up peaceful Falun Gong demonstrators in Tianjin, and he witnessed as dozens of them were beaten and detained—an event that set off a chain reaction, eventually leading to the ban on Falun Gong three months later. As the campaign against Falun Gong geared up, Hao found himself right in the middle of it. In 2000, he was selected in a random draw to join the 6-10 Office. Hao continued to grapple with the ethics involved, occasionally arguing with superiors about the treatment of practitioners, but his obligations to his family kept him at the job. One night in February 2002, Hao was called to a detention center to bring a Falun Gong practitioner to a doctor. When he arrived, he found Sun Ti, an old woman who resembled his own mother, lying on a table, her face swollen with bruises. A detention center guard had beaten her with a steel rod tipped with a screw, which was covered in blood. Electric cattle prods were on the table next to the old woman, whose back was black and covered in 8-inch lacerations. Hao took the woman to the

infirmary, and as he tended to her, he learned of her family's tragic backstory. From then on, Hao developed difficulty sleeping, and says that he cried regularly when he recalled Sun Ti.[187]

In February 2005, Hao and his family flew to Australia on a tourist visa to request asylum, and he brought with him troves of internal documents. On June 8, inspired by Chen Yonglin, he posted his own Tuidang statement. Like the vast majority of Tuidang statements posted to Dajiyuan, his was short and unremarkable. Only a few sentences long, the statement expressed his disappointment with the lack of human rights in China, declaring that he no longer wanted any affiliation with the Communist Party.

Hao was then followed by Han Guangsheng, a former Judicial Bureau Chief in Shenyang city. Han oversaw four labor camps and two prisons which housed, among others, upwards of 500 Falun Gong prisoners. Han claimed to have attempted to rein in the use of torture in his camps, but it was nonetheless commonplace. Unwilling to carry on, Han defected to Canada in 2001,[188] keeping a low profile until the defections of Chen Yonglin and Hao Fengjun inspired him to break his silence. In July 2005, he shared his story with the Canadian Press,[189] and made a Tuidang statement:

> *I joined the CCP on March 5, 1980, and have devoted myself to my work for the party. As more and more facts about the CCP came to light, I painfully realized that it has never put the good of the people first. On the contrary, it is a vested interest group that puts power first; it is autocratic, cruel, extremely corrupt, deceitful and weak. This party is completely incompatible with my own ideals and beliefs. Therefore I solemnly declare: I withdraw from the CCP.*[190]

[187] Hao Fengjun provides a detailed account of his experiences working for the Tianjin Public Security Bureau and 610 office in a three-part series published by Dajiyuan and translated for the Epoch Times in June, 2005, titled "Hao Fengjun: Why I Escaped from China." Part one of the series is found at http://english.epochtimes.com/news/5-6-9/29414.html.
[188] Han was readily embraced by Canadian Falun Gong adherents, who love a good story of repentance. But his role in overseeing the torture of Falun Gong prisoners resulted in the rejection of his application for asylum, with the Canadian Immigration and Refugee Board ruling Han had been a willing accomplice to crimes against humanity. His case is still on appeal.
[189] Jim Bronskill, "Chinese defector warns Canadians of Beijing's spy operations," Canadian Press, June 29, 2005.
[190] Han Guangsheng, "Tuidang Statement," June 30, 2005, http://tuidang.dajiyuan.com/index/showpost/id/463873

Li Fengzhi joined the ranks of prominent defectors on March 11 2009, when the then-41-year-old made a public Tuidang statement in front of the Chinese embassy in Washington DC, and spoke to the press and members of U.S. Congress about his prior life as an agent of the normally impenetrable Ministry of State Security.

Like Chen Yonglin and Hao Fengjun, Li traces the origins of his disdain for the party to the events of June 4, 1989. He had been among the students advocating for greater accountability and democracy, and says he was spared punishment in the days and weeks that followed the massacre only through the protection of two of his teachers. He joined the MSS regardless in 1990, believing that it would enable him to advance the interests of the country. After completing his training, Li was sent as a spy to the University of Denver to pursue graduate studies in international politics and diplomacy. Somewhere along the line, however, he became disillusioned with the MSS. He increasingly came to believe that its mission was not to advance the interests of the Chinese people or nation, but rather to protect the Communist Party, through terror and suppression of the citizenry if necessary. In 2004, Li decided to defect, and began a six-year process to gain political asylum. In that time, he kept a low profile, and was in occasional contact with the CIA and FBI, who confirmed his role in the MSS. In 2009, Li says the frustration and anger he harbored toward the CCP became irrepressible, and he decided to break his silence by withdrawing from the party.[191] After making his Tuidang statement, Li said he finally had peace in his heart.

A number of high-profile human rights lawyers are also among the known Tuidang participants, having made their statements using their real names. "Thomas" Guo Guoting was a legal veteran and partner at the Tian Yi lawfirm in Shanghai. After earning his law degree in Jilin in 1984, he spent nearly two decades working in commercial and trade law. In 2003, Guo's career trajectory veered off the rails and into the minefield of civil rights lawyering. Among the earliest of China's "weiquan" (rights defending) lawyers, Guo defended jailed journalists, religious devotees and dissidents, including journalist Shi Tao. As a result of his work, Guo's law license was suspended, his offices raided, and he was put under house arrest. In May 2005, he flew to Canada on a tourist visa

[191] Bill Gertz, "Chinese Spy Who Defected Tells All," Washington Times, March 19 2009.

and applied for asylum.[192] On June 4, 2005, Guo issued a Tuidang statement, hoping to add momentum to the then-nascent movement and hasten the coming of a "new China."[193]

Fellow weiquan lawyer Zheng Enchong had worked with Guo on Shi Tao's case. Zheng, like Guo, had defended a panoply of disaffected citizens, and his advocacy for labor rights and work on behalf of displaced families resulted in his receiving a three year prison sentence in 2003. Upon his release in 2006, he was put under house arrest, but continued pursuing human rights advocacy. The Tuidang movement began while he was in prison, but Zheng said he asked a colleague to make a statement on his behalf using an alias. In November 2008, on the fourth anniversary of Jiuping's publication, Zheng issued another Tuidang statement, this time in his own name.

Zheng recalled how his father, a member of the Shanghai Federation of Industry and Commerce, had been labeled a rightist in 1957, presumably in the aftermath of Mao's Hundred Flowers movement. Zheng's father opposed the Communist Party, and had been victimized at its hands, but was loathe to see his children suffer the same fate. With his father's encouragement, young Zheng became a captain in the Young Pioneers, playing harmonica to entertain visiting dignitaries in Shanghai, and later joined the Youth League, thinking it would protect him from the party's wrath. Instead, he soon found himself in the midst of the Cultural Revolution, and was sent down to a camp in a remote rural area. Like millions of others in his generation, Zheng was forced to forfeit schoolwork in favor of manual labor, and when he returned to city, he found it difficult to find a job. The reforms under Deng Xiaoping did little to assuage Zheng's anger at the system, as they brought with them social and economic inequality, lay-offs in the state-run industries, the dismantling of the public health care system, and home demolitions. Zheng had ample reason to despise the Communist Party, and furthermore seemed convinced that his bitterness was widely shared across generational lines, later saying:

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[192] Human Rights Watch, "Walking on Thin Ice: Control, Intimidation, and Harassment of Lawyers in China," April 28 2008.
[193] Kevin Steel, "Revolution Number Nine," The Western Standard, July 11 2005.

The younger generation, around 40, grew up with the CCP's most corrupt system. They have long abandoned the CCP. After I announced my intent to withdraw membership in the CCP with my real name, many Shanghai people congratulated me. A lot of them have renounced the CCP, some with their real names, and others with an alias. During my previous trip to Hong Kong, I met more than 30 people who had withdrawn from the CCP, and about a dozen of them did so with their real names. [...]

Shaanxi Province is poor. Most workers don't have access to the Internet; only a few youngsters have computers. When they saw my name appear on the CCP withdrawal list, the middle-aged Party members were quite excited. They indicated their intent to withdraw from the CCP with their real names as well. They also believed that strikes and the petitions have to continue and that they have to take the lead. I was deeply touched when I heard their feedback.

I hope members of the Standing Committee of the CPC Central Committee will pay attention to what the general public's view is of the CCP. Wake up! Otherwise, when the time comes for the party to disintegrate, they will not even have a clue as to how, when, or why. That would be a pity.[194]

Gao Zhisheng is undoubtedly one of the most well known participants in the Tuidang movement. A self-taught lawyer, Gao lifted himself out of poverty to become one of China's most celebrated lawyers. He defended the full gamut of disaffected Chinese—villagers whose land had been taken from them, underground Christians, laborers, AIDS victims, and others. In late 2004, he began taking the cases of Falun Gong practitioners, and investigating reports of abuses by authorities.[195] Gao's investigation led him to write a series of letters to the Chinese leadership sharing his findings of torture and sexual abuse against Falun Gong prisoners, and also inspired him to issue a Tuidang statement on Dec 13 2005:

[...] Over a dozen days' close touch with Falun Gong believers was a shocking experience to my soul. Together with Professor Jiao Guobiao. I stayed 24 hours a day with these Falun Gong adherents, a group that is suffering inhumane persecution and has won eternal life.

Professor Jiao said, "I feel like I am dealing with ghosts because everyone of them has died several times." I said, "Well, we are associated with a group of saints. Their indomitable spirit, noble character, and ability to forgive the violent perpetrator are not only China's hope, but also the reason why we should continue to persevere!

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[194] Zheng Enchong, video statement prepared for a Tuidang forum in Flushing, NY, on December 14, 2008. A transcription can be found at http://www.theepochtimes.com/n2/content/view/10338/.

[195] See Gao Zhisheng, A China More Just: My Fight as a Rights Lawyer in the World's Largest Communist State, (Flushing, NY: Broad Press, 2007).

During these past 15 days I have come to know of indescribable violence done to our kind people. Ms. Wang Yuhuan, a peaceful old woman, was tortured for six years in body and spirit hundreds of times by police and CCP officials with horrible methods. Each time, over twenty police kept torturing her for over 24 hours until they all got exhausted and desperately mad. The entire set of major torture instruments was used to torture the old lady Wang three times in only 17 days. She was once put on the Tiger Bench for three days and two nights.

Eventually these more than a dozen days ended! And I had lost my hope for the Chinese Communist Party completely. This CCP has employed the most barbarous and most immoral and illegal means to torture our mothers, our wives, our children, and our brothers and sisters. It has made this kind of torture part of the party members' job and raised the political standing of torture. It continuously persecutes and torments the conscience, character, and kindness of us, the people!.

From now on, Gao Zhisheng, a party "member" who hasn't paid the membership fee for a long time and has been absent from the "party activities" for many years, declares that he quits the cruel, untrustworthy, inhumane, and evil party.

This is the proudest day of my life.[196]

Statements from China

In several obvious respects, most of the individuals described above are exceptions. Sun Yanjun, Masha Ma, Guo Guoting and their ilk belong to a small cohort of highly educated Chinese, and in that respect they are not representative of the Chinese population as a whole. Hao Fengjun, Li Fengzhi and Chen Yonglin had unique positions in the party or security apparatus that afforded them rare insights and experiences, and Gao Zhisheng, Zheng Enchong, and others not mentioned here were already strongly predisposed to risky forms of civil rights activism when they became involved with the Tuidang movement. But in other respects, their stories are surprisingly unremarkable, and the experiences, themes, and sentiments they represent are widely shared by Tuidang participants in Mainland China.

[196] Gao Zhisheng, "Celebrated Chinese Lawyer Quits Chinese Communist Party," The Epoch Times, Dec 14 2005.

There is no shortage of challenges in surveying the Mainland participants of the Tuidang movement, who overwhelmingly use aliases and leave behind no contact information. The Tuidang statements themselves offer the best insight into the movement's participants, but their value as a research tool is undermined by the extraordinary variation in the information that individuals choose to offer.

Some participants, for instance, list their geographic location down to the village. More often than not, though, people simply say they live in "Mainland China." Some people document the history of their involvement in the Communist Party, providing such details as the month and year they joined particular party organizations, and the circumstances that led them to it. Others leave no indication of which organization they are trying to leave. And while some provide lengthy accounts of disillusionment or victimization, or of hope and renewal, more are concise denunciations of the evils of Communism, if that. Indeed, the overwhelming majority of statements posted on the Tuidang website are little more than names. The Tuidang activists responsible for collecting names seldom take the effort to transcribe and publish the stories of participants. In cases where the participants write their own Tuidang statements, they are typically brief, and often read as though they were written from a standard template. This is the case even for prominent participants like Chen Yongling and Hao Fengjun.

In order to extract useful information on participants of the movement, a sample of over 500 Tuidang statements was drawn at random from a special section on the Dajiyuan website containing featured statements.[197] The statements that appear in this section of the website number around 30,000 and are selected daily by website editors on the basis of their containing somewhat richer content than the simple lists of names that usually populate

[197] To create a study sample, every fiftieth statement from 2004 - 2007 was pulled. After 2007, the number of statements posted daily to the featured section of the website began to decline. Therefore, from 2007 - 2009, every 49th and 50th statement was collected for the sample.

the site[198]. Dajiyuan editors say the statements they pull are representative of a range of views; the editors like to highlight a diversity of opinions in the hopes that readers might find someone with whom they can relate.[199]

Using the information gleaned from this selection of Tuidang statements, three overarching questions were asked: Who are the Tuidang participants, why are they denouncing the party, and what values, ideas, or aspirations are expressed in their statements.

Where available, information on the participant's age, occupation, party affiliations, and location were noted. Many of the statements specify particular grievances with the Communist Party, such as corruption, inequality, personal victimization, or citing past political campaigns, and these references were recorded.

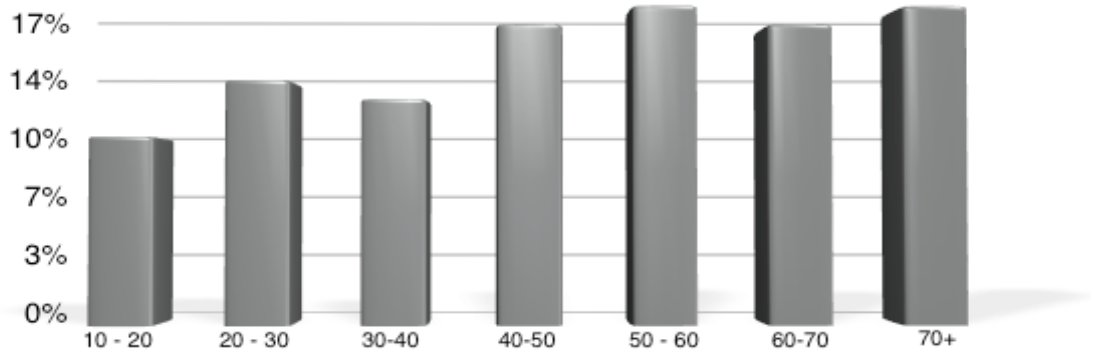
The ideological content of the statements was also observed. One of the questions this study sought to answer was whether the ideology of the Jiuping was being internalized and reflected among Tuidang participants, or whether they were instead drawing inspiration from democratic and liberal ideals (or both). Statements were evaluated for references either to liberal democratic ideas and institutions or to concepts of virtue, traditional morality, the mandate of heaven, and the divine. Statements that advance a counter-hegemonic reclaiming of Chinese nationalism were also noted.

Demographics

Fewer than one fifth of statements include an indication of the author's age. Among those who do volunteer their ages, or whose statements otherwise suggested a general age range (ie. "I was born in the Cultural Revolution"), it is found that they skew somewhat older. The age breakdown observed in the statements is as follows:

[198] Another section of the site, which begins at http://tuidang.epochtimes.com/index/showpage/page/1, contains a complete collection of all 90 million+ names that have been submitted and approved by site editors. Because many of these names are submitted as part of large lists, the number of unique postings is only between 2 and 3 million.
[199] Interview with Tuidang website editor 'Gaixin,' Aug 28, 2010

Figure 1: Age of Tuidang participants



The occupations and educational attainment, when they are described, vary wildly, and include a number of students, police officers, agriculture workers, teachers and professors, civil servants and office workers. Most of those who volunteer their educational attainment attended college or grad school, no doubt volunteering the information *because* they attended college, and not because this is representative of the group as a whole. Moreover, the statements examined likely represent a population that is somewhat more affluent and tech-savvy than average; in order to post personal statements directly to the Dajiyuan website, the individual must have access not only to a computer, but also to censorship-circumvention software. Failing that, they would likely need to have a family member or friend able to post statements on their behalf.

In the first year of the movement, Falun Gong practitioners accounted for a sizable proportion of Tuidang statements. In 2005, in my estimation at least one quarter of Tuidang statements were from Falun Gong practitioners. The ratio drops off significantly over time, though statements from declared Falun Gong adherents are a constant.[200]

[200] Most statements from Falun Gong adherents that appear after 2005 and 2006 are submitted by newer students of the practice, who are surprisingly numerous, even in Mainland China.

Many statements—I estimate as many as ten percent—are made on behalf of deceased party members who had grown disenchanted by the end of their lives. This practice, too, is encouraged by Dajiyuan editors as long as the deceased was a close relative of the individual making the statement.[201]

A typical example comes from a man who identified himself only as "Ping." Writing on behalf of his father, a party cadre who had died two years earlier, Ping describes how his father was full of idealism when he first joined the CCP. After living through decades of political campaigns, however, Old Ping was disabused of his enthusiasm for the party.

"My father became more and more quiet," writes Ping. "In the last few years my father would listen to more and more shortwave radio broadcasts, and he would often tell us two brothers that good and evil have returns." By the end, Old Ping would tell his sons: "The greatest mistake I made in my life was to believe in the Communist Party." To Ping, the act of denouncing the Communist Party on his father's behalf is a matter of filial piety: "I think if my dad could see how his son understands his troubled heart, he would be happy in the afterlife."

Table 2: Geographic distribution of Tuidang participants in sample	
China (province unspecified)	195
Hebei	36
Liaoning	26
Sichuan (includes Chongqing)	25
Shandong	24
Beijing	19
Jilin	13
Henan	12
Guangdong	9
Shanghai	9
Inner Mongolia	9
Hunan	8
Anhui	7
Fujian	7
Guangxi	7
Heilongjiang	7
Shanxi	5
Zhejiang	5
Guizhou	4
Jiangsu	4
Tianjin	4
Gansu	2
Jiangxi	2
Hong Kong	2
Yunnan	2
Hainan	1
Ningxia	1
Qinghai	1
Shaanxi	1
Xinjiang	1
Total	461

Geographic Distribution

Of 552 statements in the sample, 481 volunteered their geographic locations. Of these, 461 (96 percent) identified as being in China (including Hong Kong), and 20 (4 percent) outside China (including Taiwan).

[201] Interview with Tuidang website editor Gaixin, Aug 28, 2010.

Among those inside China, 266 further specified their province or city. A high concentration of participants are from Beijing (19) and the provinces nearest to it: Hebei (36), Liaoning (26), and Shandong (24). Sichuan province also accounted for a disproportionate share with 21 statements (25 if Chongqing is included). Western China—Tibet, Xinjiang, Qinghai and Gansu—showed the lowest participation, not surprising given the region's lower population. The geographic distribution of Tuidang participants is closely correlated with the number of Falun Gong practitioners in those regions, with Falun Gong populations being heavily concentrated in the Northeast, in provinces near Beijing, and to a slightly lesser degree, in Sichuan.

Party Affiliations

Through interactions with Tuidang activists and in witnessing their process of collecting Tuidang statements, I arrived at the estimate that no more than 25 percent of Tuidang statements, and probably closer to 15 percent, come from current Communist Party members, while the majority are ex post facto withdrawals from the Communist Youth League or Young Pioneers. The statements in the sample group confirm this estimate. The authors of 38 percent of statements clearly identified which organization he or she was renouncing, and of these, 15 percent identified as withdrawing from Party itself. When considering that some of those withdrawals were made years after the person had stopped paying party dues, and some were made in the name of deceased relatives, the number of active party members represented in the sample drops slightly further.

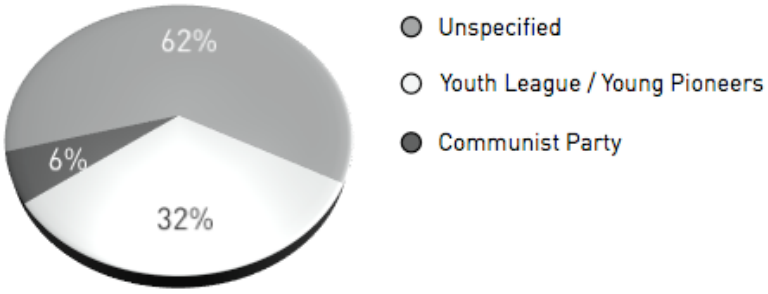


Figure 2: Party affiliations of Tuidang participants

Grievances with the Party

Most statements, even those that had little else to say, referred to the Communist Party in general terms as evil, dark, violent, or deceitful. Many statements also provide more detailed accounts of why the person is choosing to issue a Tuidang statement. Among the most common complaints with the party is that it is corrupt. This characterization appears in 23 percent of the statements in the sample analyzed, often paired with more specific charges, such as that corruption is leading to inequality, exploitation, and mistreatment of the citizenry, or gross neglect for the environment or public safety.

Another frequent reason given for denouncing the party is its political campaigns and the human rights abuses often committed in their name. References to the party's violence, brutality, and killing of tens of millions appear in approximately one quarter of Tuidang statements examined.

More specific references to political campaigns and human rights issues are also common. Not surprisingly, given who has been most active in advancing the Tuidang movement, the most frequent reference is to Falun Gong, which appears in 28 percent of the statements, though not necessarily in the context of the suppression. They include people whose friends or family members were imprisoned for practicing Falun Gong, people who learned about the suppression of Falun Gong and decided they did not want to associate with such policies,[202] policemen or others who had a role in the suppression,[203] or in the statements of Falun Gong practitioners themselves. Like all references to specific events, the suppression of Falun Gong also sometimes appears as part of a longer list of abuses. In some cases, such as that of Sun Yanjun, reading Jiuping served to catalyze a person's conversion to Falun Gong.

References to the Cultural Revolution and the June 4th massacre also feature prominently in the statements examined, appearing in 15 percent and 13 percent of statements, respectively. One young man named

[202] See, for example, Wu Jinwen's statement "Withdraw," August 11, 2007, http://tuidang.dajiyuan.com/index/showpost/id/2186391.
[203] Xin Ci, "Three Withdrawals Statement, April 24, 2007, http://tuidang.dajiyuan.com/index/showpost/id/1799387.

Jiang Zeli described how he had joined the Communist Youth League and Young Pioneers, but because he had never personally experienced victimization, he did not know the "true nature" of the Communist Party. This changed when he spent a night in the countryside visiting an older relative who had been in Tiananmen Square in 1989. The relative told him how he had gone to Beijing with his classmates, and watched as the tanks came rolling through the city, crushing a young woman as he stood nearby. After hearing this story, Jiang could not longer reconcile his involvement in the party with its actions on Tiananmen Square, and issued a Tuidang statement.[204]

Other campaigns, such as the Great Leap Forward, the anti-rightist campaign, or the three-anti and five-anti campaign also appear, but far less frequently. I suspect this is because fewer people who lived through these campaigns are around to tell of them, yet it is puzzling —even a little troubling—that the Great Leap Forward was mentioned in only 3 percent of the statements.

Other Tuidang statements referred to the tainted milk scandal of 2008, inequality and unemployment, land seizures, and environmental damage, as in this statement from Hong Kong resident Li Ruiquan: "The Communist Party doesn't respect heaven and earth. They wantonly destroy the natural environment and pollute waterways, making natural resources more and more scarce, eventually leaving the people with no means of livelihood."[205]

For many Tuidang participants, issuing a statement is a chance to tell personal stories of suffering under the Communist Party. Five percent of Tuidang statements in the sample I selected described personal or familial victimization by the party.

Ding Weikun, a 75-year-old party veteran from Zhejiang Province, tells of the collusion between his village's party leaders and private developers that resulted in the forcible relocation of himself and his neighbors. When the villagers protested, thugs were paid off to crush the protests. "I witnessed the killing and injuring of dozens

[204] Jiang Zeli, "Withdraw from the Party, Youth League, Young Pioneers" March 12, 2005. http://tuidang.dajiyuan.com/index/showpost/id/95400.
[205] Li Ruiquan, "Declaration of Withdrawal from the Young Pioneers," Feb 15, 2009, http://tuidang.dajiyuan.com/index/showpost/id/4659192.

of villagers, on the spot," he wrote. Ding, a typical rightful resister, saw it as his duty to "uphold the country's laws" and "protect the people's right to subsistence."[206] When he appealed to higher authorities, however, he was sentenced to seven months in detention. He summarized his feelings about modern China as follows: "lawsuits with nowhere to submit them, injustices with no redress, laws to which no one abides, duties that no one fulfills."[207]

39-year-old Pang Junmin uses her statement to tell of how the family planning unit aborted her baby, against her will, when she was 8 months pregnant. The baby was to be her second, but she believed herself to be in compliance with the family planning policies because her first child was born disabled, and was destined for a short life. Sure enough, not long after the forced abortion, Ms. Pang's other son died at age ten. Left childless, she fled to the United States in 2008, where she awaits the CCP's downfall.[208]

Several of the declarations found on the Dajiyuan website come not from victims of abuse, but from perpetrators seeking forgiveness and absolution from their crimes. In one statement, 35 people identifying themselves as staff of the Jiangsu Province family planning unit—the office whose responsibility is to ensure that women like Pang Junmin do not have more than one child—collectively denounce the party. "We do not want to be accomplices to this kind of evil work ever again," they write.[209]

Among the most extraordinary Tuidang statements of this nature is that of Chen Xiaoye from Shanxi Province. In his earlier years, Chen had served with the military in Xinjiang Province. His service there left him grappling with nightmares for the rest of his life:

> *Many years ago I served in the military in the Xinjiang Autonomous Region. At that time I was forced to take part in an operation that annihilated an entire Hui village. Facing the innocent men, women, elderly and even nursing infants, I was simply unable to pull the trigger. Yet there was another, far better-equipped*

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[206] See Kevin O'Brien and Lianjiang Li, Rightful Resistance in Rural China, (New York and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).
[207] Ding Weikun, "I Want to Withdraw from the Chinese Communist Party," Aug 8, 2009, http://tuidang.dajiyuan.com/index/showpost/id/5550115.
[208] Pang Jumin, "Statement of Withdrawal from the Youth League by a victim of the Communist Party's Family Planning Policy," May 11, 2009, http://tuidang.dajiyuan.com/index/showpost/id/5095799.
[209] Hao Tianming et al, "Collective Tuidang Statement," April 16 2007. http://tuidang.dajiyuan.com/index/showpost/id/1772094.

and more vigorous unit that had encircled us, and if we didn't open fire, the other unit would have opened fire on us. Facing the situation where if we did not shoot we would be killed and our Hui countrymen still not spared, we opened fire whilst shedding tears. I will never forget that extreme cruelty and tragic scene, which cannot be described with words.

When I returned to the countryside, I was decommissioned and dared not to go to Hui communities. Whenever I saw Hui people I could not lift my head and was full of remorse and sorrow. I was raised as an honest and kind person, and I could have passed a happy and peaceful, normal life, but the demon robbed me this happiness I should have had. [...] If gods hear my repentance, please grant me peace of mind so that I will no longer be terrified by this recurring nightmare. Today, I solemnly declare that I withdraw from the CCP and any of its affiliated organizations.[210]

Another man, identifying himself only as "a policeman from Yichun City, Heilongjiang Province," wrote the following in his statement:

We [policemen] are forced to suppress the common people. We have to intercept petitioners appealing for their embezzled pension, light industry enterprise workers appealing for payment and arrest innocent Falun Gong practitioners. We have done those assignments without conscience. This year the party and government leaders of Yichun demolished people's houses in collusion with money-hungry developers in the name of "government development projects." [...] Because I have lost hope with everything the CCP has done and have been an accessory to its crimes for the past 30 years, my conscience can no longer take the huge pressure. With the help of Falun Gong practitioners, I am publishing my withdrawal from the CCP and its affiliated organizations.[211]

Statements of this sort are not in the majority. Most participants in the Tuidang movement have more mundane experiences with the party. They were neither persecuted themselves nor ordered to persecute their compatriots. They are people like Xiaopi, a former Young Pioneer and Youth League member whose statement reads as follows:

Chinese people truly possess an enormous capacity to forbear. I wanted to renounce the party a long time ago, but I still didn't take this step because I was afraid of persecution...My dad said you should just concentrate on doing business, don't worry about that political stuff. But having done business for so many years, I still have to have dealings with these corrupt officials. These officials look down at people like dogs. Seeing society's morality sliding downward so fast, I truly don't want a living environment like this. Each of us is repressing our true

[210] Chen Xiaoyu, "Solemn Statement," Jan 14, 2008, http://tuidang.dajiyuan.com/index/showpost/id/2788740.
[211] Dajiyuan, "Police Officer: Why I want to withdraw from the party" May 20, 2008. http://www.theepochtimes.com/news/8-6-27/72594.html (note: this statement was not a part of the sample selected for analysis).

thoughts and just putting up with [the party], going about our lives extremely cautiously. This declaration is to let my years of pent-up frustration come forth.[212]

Anger at the control of information is often cited as a catalyst behind Tuidang statements. The experience of reading Jiuping, watching a documentary about the Tiananmen Square Massacre, or simply going overseas, can lead to the unraveling of a person's beliefs about the Communist Party, and this is another recurrent theme. In their Tuidang statements, these people may refer to the party's violent political campaigns, but the real source of their indignation is not merely that these campaigns happened, but that they did not know about them. The realization that one has been deceived is commonly described in Tuidang statements as shameful and humiliating. While a person may be shocked to learn of the famine in the 1950s or the Tiananmen Square Massacre, they are not themselves the victims. Censorship, by contrast, is an affront to them personally, and is an insult to their intelligence and pride. Fully 33 percent of the statements examined made at least passing reference to the party's deceit, or to feeling deceived.

Perhaps the best articulation of this sentiment comes from a man calling himself Zhan Zhang, "an awakened web master." The web master works as an administrator for a Chinese website, possibly a chat room or blogging platform, and as such is subject to the self-censorship requirements mandated by the party.[213] Apparently frustrated over a new round of online censorship, the web master wrote an essay-length statement denouncing the Communist Party, and in particular, its censorship apparatus:

...Maybe some people will say: incumbent regimes need to control public opinion lest there be chaos. I say: America, Europe, Canada, Japan, all mainstream countries in the world, I've never seen them treat their own people in this shameless manner, so crazily controlling expression. Are those countries in chaos? Actually, it's a very simple logic: if you are upright and dignified, do you fear people speaking [about you]? If someone says something, then they say something, so what? The facts are laid out there, if you didn't do it then you didn't do it, and at that point you can say that with dignity; but if someone has done something bad he fears

[212] Xiaopi, "Declaration to Renounce the Youth League, Young Pioneers," April 30, 2006, http://tuidang.dajiyuan.com/index/showpost/id/999510.
[213] See Freedom House, "Freedom on the Net: China," 2009 http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=384&key=197&parent=19&report=79.

people speaking about it, so he thinks up every kind of way, using every kind of reason to stop them speaking—isn't it just this principle? [...] Being tolerant in the face of evil is committing a sin against conscience! We all share a common lot: the June 4 suppression, the persecution of Falun Gong, the suppression in Tibet, etc., we have tolerated all this, and next time we will be the target.

I solemnly declare: I renounce the evil Communist Party! I love my motherland, I love the Chinese people, but I resolutely do not want this evil political regime![214]

Ideological Orientation

An analysis of the Tuidang statements shows close alignment with the ideology articulated in Jiuping—that is, an emphasis on virtue and morality, frequent references to the divine and the supernatural, and a recasting of cultural pride based on Chinese traditions.

The movement's broad appeal is due in large part to how accessible its ideology is, particularly in the cultural context of China. Jiuping, which serves as the main ideological thrust of the movement, calls for virtue, honesty, sincerity, and harmony with the Dao, positing an inherent goodness in human nature—all these are reassuring, positive ideas rooted in Chinese tradition. As is the corollary: belief in the divine, and in divine retribution—another theme that serves as inspiration for many Tuidang statements. Finding common ground in Jiuping would seem to be far more natural than attempting to grasp the ideas of Kant, Rousseau, or Jefferson (let alone attempting to reconcile the doctrines of Marxism-Leninism, Mao Zedong Thought, Deng Xiaoping Theory, and Jiang Zemin's 'Three Represents').

To participate in the Tuidang movement, a person does not have to be well educated. They do not need to have a developed understanding of political theory, and they do not need to know anything about the world outside China. By attaching itself firmly to traditional Chinese culture, the Tuidang movement makes itself accessible to Chinese citizens who, for various reasons, may have a much more difficult time identifying with other dissident movements. Surveys of Chinese citizens have shown relatively little understanding or appreciation of the processes and institutions that characterize democracy, so it is useful that Tuidang does not rely on such an understanding.

[214] Zhan Zhang, "Internet Censorship Tightens, 100,000 Websites Blocked Overnight," Feb 24, 2009, ID: 4706727.

Not only are some movements more intellectually demanding (Charter 08, for instance), they have also been tied in the popular perception to hostile, foreign "anti-Chinese" forces. Jiuping may have originated with Chinese-Americans, but it is unmistakably Chinese. That it does not stake its legitimacy on recognition from the Western intelligentsia only helps its cause.

Jiuping's rejection of the Communist Party as the arbiter of Chinese nationalism is reflected strongly in the Tuidang statements, as is the emphasis on the importance and value of traditional morality and the relationship toward the divine. In the statements evaluated, participants were nearly four times as likely to reference traditional concepts of morality or spirituality than they were to reference liberal values or institutions like democracy, rule of law, constitutional government, and press freedom (it is worth noting that many statements discuss both tradition and liberalism). Morality is not only discussed as a prescription for China, but the destruction of China's spiritual and ethical traditions is also among the most commonly cited grievances with the party, appearing in 14 percent of statements, such as this one: "The Chinese Communist Party, this spectre from the West, doesn't venerate heaven, earth, gods or buddhas; it has ruined Chinese traditions, destroyed Chinese culture, cheated the sons and daughters of China, harmed my Chinese peers."[215]

Another typical statement declares that "The CCP does not represent China, and it even less represents the Chinese people ... I wish the five thousand years of Chinese civilization, traditions, and moral excellence, to be returned to the nation of China!"[216]

The sentiment that the Communist Party does not equate to the people or nation of China is found throughout the statements, and features prominently in no less than 7 percent of the statements in the sample. Among the most definitive repudiations of this type came from a man identifying himself as Fu Shou, who declared:

[215] Yang Qingfa et al, "Youth League Withdrawal Declaration," Nov 6, 2009. http://tuidang.dajiyuan.com/index/showpost/id/6011765.
[216] Ping Hua, "Three Withdrawals Statement," Sept 21, 2009, http://tuidang.dajiyuan.com/index/showpost/id/5772354.

"I love China, I am descendent of the dragon, not a descendent of Marx. I'm a descendent of Yan Di and Huang Di, not a grandchild of the Communist Party."[217]

Similar sentiments are found in a statement from 'Citizen Zhao' of Jinan Province. Writing one of the longest Tuidang statements in the sample, Zhao lacks Fu Shou's concision, but what he lacks in brevity he more than makes up for in elegant, classical prose, interspersed with nostalgic references to Zhao Ziyang and the 1980s. Concerning the party's relationship to China, he writes the following:

> *Many people always speak of the Communist Party and the government in the same breath they speak about China. But essentially speaking, the Communist Party is a thing from outside: it is a foreign political system and set of symbols forced on China. It has no shared connection with China, the Chinese people, government officials, or society as a whole. China's thousands of years of excellent civilization never had a Communist Party. It's the Communist Party that has distorted Chinese history, slandering past sages and men of virtue. The way it has destroyed the development of our outstanding traditional culture with its all-penetrating Party culture has created the situation today, with its numerous long-standing mistaken concepts. The purpose of the party's culture is to confuse our clear thinking and conceptual judgment, maintaining the soil for the Communist Party's existence.*

Zhao offers the following prescription for China to return to its historical greatness:

> *The hopes that people place in the CCP, apart from imperceptibly strengthening and lengthening the life of the CCP, and create further disasters, have no benefit. The way out for China, the way for officials to extricate themselves, is firstly not about a change in material conditions, and it is not about the formulation of laws, but it's about abandoning and casting aside the Communist Party. The reason is, it is the fundamental enemy of the Chinese people and Chinese society, including government officials. This abandonment doesn't require too much effort in society, it just needs courage and foresight. It's merely a matter of people keeping a cool head, a kind of internal awakening, a requirement for oneself to fundamentally stop being an accomplice to evil.*[218]

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[217] Fu Shou "Renouncing the Young Pioneers and Youth League," Sept 7, 2009, http://tuidang.dajiyuan.com/index/showpost/id/5702894.

[218] Zhao Gongmin, " Thoroughly Withdraw from the evil Communist Party and all affiliated organizations," Feb 11, 2005. http://tuidang.dajiyuan.com/index/showpost/id/21872.

Personal Significance

Other statements echo the primacy of change at the personal level: "What the Chinese people need now," reads one statement, "is not violent revolution but spiritual salvation."[219] Certainly, many remark in their statements that they hope to speed the downfall of the party, or that they look forward to a future without the Communist Party, but just as common are statements that emphasize the personal value and significance that the process has for the individual. In this light it can be said that the Tuidang movement provides a kind of truth and reconciliation forum, where both victims and perpetrators and all in between can speak openly about the past, voice their frustrations with the present, and share their hopes for their country's future. They seek forgiveness, condemn evil and injustice, and attempt to move forward, both in their own lives and as a people.

For Lao You, who says she fled to Canada to escape religious persecution, issuing a Tuidang statement is a chance to affirm her faith:

> *As a Christian who believes in God, I cannot believe the Communist Party ... I publish my renunciation of membership in the Youth League and Pioneers, and abolish the toxic oath to 'struggle my whole life for communism' that I once made. I devoutly believe in God.*[220]

Expressions of freedom and release are common in Tuidang statements, such as this one issued in the name Li Su'ai:

> *After I woke up to the reality [of the Communist Party], my mood felt especially happy and trouble-free. I have finally broken free from the shackles of the CCP. From today forth I want to be an upright and dignified, clean and pure Chinese person.*[221]

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[219] Yanan, "I Want to Withdraw from the Young Pioneers," Dec 30, 2004, http://tuidang.dajiyuan.com/index/showpost/id/7330.
[220] Lao You, "Renounce the Youth League and Young Pioneers," July 26, 2009, http://tuidang.dajiyuan.com/index/showpost/id/5473648.
[221] Li Su'ai, "Youth League Withdrawal Statement," Feb 18, 2005, http://tuidang.dajiyuan.com/index/showpost/id/25768.

Statements of the same order are numerous, and their concise and powerful expression of the essential aspects of the Tuidang experience make them worth quoting at some length:

> *I have always thought that I was a good man, but looking back I realize that I had gradually lost myself. My mind and heart slowly became corrupted due to a long history of lies and deceit from the Chinese Communist Party.*
>
> *Later (perhaps due to divine intervention), I had the honor of learning the truth of the CCP's years of violence, suppression and its persecution of Falun Gong. Therefore, I would like to quit the CCP, which is an evil organization, and give up my belief in communism (although I had never really believed it). […]*
>
> *I am just a human being, and I do not want to be God, but I believe in God's existence, no matter what form it may take. Therefore, I beg God not to give up on my family and friends. Please give me some time. I will try my best to let others know of this great deception so that they may recognize the truth and come back to you.*
>
> *[…] God, please give me this chance! I have gone through a long, arduous soul-searching, and I intend to change my ways and make up for what I have done.*[222]
>
> ***
>
> *The CCP's ten year persecution of Falun Gong is simply unbearable to behold, and it makes ones hairs stand on end in indignation. I'm already 70 years old, without many years left, and now I don't fear anything. So I can peacefully enter heaven after I die, or pass into reincarnation, and for the welfare of posterity, I solemnly declare my renunciation of the Chinese Communist Party.*[223]
>
> ***
>
> *I hereby solemnly declare: I renounce the party, I will follow the will of God to cleanse myself of sin. I will be a Chinese person of conscience. I will live an upright and dignified life.*[224]
>
> ***
>
> *I declare my formal renunciation of the party, and I cleanse its venom from my soul. I thank Dajiyuan's Jiuping for saving me, and allowing me to pass the evening of my life in tranquility and peace.*[225]

[222] Xiao Shanbo, "Whole family renounces the communist party, welcomes a new Chinese epoch," April 4, 2009 http://epochtimes.com/gb/9/4/4/n2484922.htm. (note: this statement was not part of the sample selected for analysis)
[223] Xie Huazhang, "Withdrawal from the Party Statement," Aug 31, 2009, http://tuidang.dajiyuan.com/index/showpost/id/5672409.
[224] He Guang, "Renounce the Communist Party," Dec 19, 2005, http://tuidang.dajiyuan.com/index/showpost/id/18761.
[225] Zhang Rong, "My Tuidang Declaration," Dec 25, 2004. http://tuidang.dajiyuan.com/index/showpost/id/6788.

CHAPTER FIVE: Party Response

The response to the Tuidang movement by the Chinese Communist Party has been characterized by attempts to suppress the movement's spread through a combination of censorship (particularly online) and surveillance, arrests, and "reeducation" of individuals found to be propagating the movement's message or possessing its literature. The party's efforts to suppress the Tuidang movement have also become inseparable from a number of broader campaigns meant to reinvigorate loyalty to the CCP, such as Hu Jintao's crackdown on the press, the "campaign to maintain the advanced nature of party members," and the party's efforts to combat "color revolutions."

Among the more prominent individuals to denounce the CCP was Hao Fengjun, a former Tianjin-based police officer and agent of the 6-10 Office who defected to Australia in 2005.[226] He brought with him a trove of documents from the 6-10 Office in Tianjin, many of them referring directly to the Tuidang movement. These documents provide a rare glimpse at some of the earliest directives issued by central authorities against the Tuidang movement, and are consistent both with publicly available documents that have appeared on low-level party and government websites, as well as with censorship efforts as they play out on the ground and in cyberspace.

One of these documents was issued by the Ministry of Public Security on January 24, 2005, just as the Tuidang movement was beginning to gain traction. The document, titled "Special action plan for nation-wide public security offices on the prevention and suppression of Falun Gong's reactionary propaganda to incite the public to read the Jiuping," (1.24 Special Operation, for short) was followed soon after by the appearance of similar documents issued by provincial and city-level Public Security Bureaus.

Tianjin City's "Notice on carrying out the 1.24 Special Operation" ordered that any instance of the distribution of Jiuping must immediately be reported, the pamphlet confiscated. If phone calls, letters or faxes are received containing Jiuping, detailed reports should be written and an attempt made to identify their origins. The

[226] Ethan Gutmann, "Hacker Nation: China's Cyber Assault," World Affairs Journal, May/June 2010.

document mandated that agents should "thoroughly collect inside and deep-level information about the download, production and spreading of Jiuping by local Falun Gong practitioners. In particular, pay attention to the reaction of key Falun Gong persons to Jiuping and their call for damaging activities." Agents were further instructed to write weekly reports on their progress in containing the spread of Jiuping for the city's Public Security Bureau.[227]

The Tianjin Public Security Bureau issued another directive on January 12, 2005, "Notice to check on persons renouncing the CCP (or Youth League) on overseas Falun Gong websites." The notice prescribed measures to investigate individuals making Tuidang statements on the Dajiyuan website, and in particular, to identify Tianjin City residents participating in the movement.[228] It stands to reason that Public Security offices in other cities and provinces were engaged in similar activities.

The arrests of actual and suspected participants in the Tuidang movement began in early December, 2004, with the abduction of Zhang Yichun, a poet and political commentator in Liaoning Province who authorities apparently suspected was a possible author of Jiuping. Tuidang organizers allege that in 2005, dozens of individuals were arrested, detained, or otherwise persecuted in conjunction with the movement, two of whom were then beaten or tortured to death. Guo Lifang, a 60-year-old Falun Gong practitioner from Hunan Province, was found in possession of Jiuping in March 2005, and was reportedly tortured to death as authorities attempted to ascertain the source of the documents. Han Xinlei, a police officer, was allegedly tortured to death for making a Tuidang statement in the summer of 2005.[229]

Others included democracy activists and dissident writers like Zhang Lin, arrested in February 2005 after writing articles in praise of Jiuping, and Xu Wanping, who made a statement withdrawing retroactively from the

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[227] Tianjin City Public Security Bureau, "Notice on intelligence work in 1.24 Special Operation," Feb 6, 2005 (available upon request).
[228] Tianjin City Public Security Bureau Anti-Cult Office, "Notice to check on persons renouncing CCP or CCYL on oversea Falun Gong website", Public Security Office Secret Document No. 2 [2005], January 12, 2005 (available upon request).
[229] Global Service Center for Quitting the CCP, "List of Chinese people abducted, detained or persecuted related to spreading The Nine Commentaries on the Communist Party or Withdrawing from the Chinese Communist Party and its affiliated organizations." Available on request.

Communist Youth League in April 2005.[230] These early arrests are credited with prompting the use of aliases in place of real names for Tuidang statements.

On July 20, 2005, copies of Jiuping were found to have been distributed in Zhalantun City, Inner Mongolia. The discovery prompted a coordinated crackdown by the autonomous region's Public Security Bureau, leading to the March, 2006 arrest of 40 Falun Gong practitioners and the confiscation of over 100,000 copies of Jiuping and related documents.[231] In November 2005, a Falun Gong practitioner in Ningxia Autonomous Region was sentenced to 4 years prison for distributing Jiuping in a supermarket.[232]

A number of Chinese municipalities cultivate informants to assist them in the capture of Falun Gong practitioners found distributing Jiuping. In Xuanwei city, Yunnan province, for instance, authorities offer a reward of 10,000 Yuan for information leading to the successful arrest of practitioners distributing "reactionary propaganda."[233]

A document from Ningguo City, Anhui Province issued in 2006 declared that the spread of Jiuping and the Tuidang movement was a new challenge to political stability, and mandated that the city's public security forces focus on the suppression of the production and distribution of Jiuping:

> *Hostile-forces change their strategy in their subversion and infiltration activities. They are now gaining people's hearts, and the competition with us in this area is becoming fierce. Hostile-forces both inside and outside of China are trying to win people's support, in the name of "caring about people's lives" and "helping the weak to fight for their rights." They utilize our internal conflicts to incite resentment, so as to bring about chaos in the society. The activities of Falun Gong and other evil cult organization are relentless. In particular, Falun Gong is widely spreading the Jiuping and other reactionary articles, and instigating people to*

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[230] Ibid
[231] Inner Mongolia Public Security Bureau, "'7.20' Falun Gong Case Solved" http://www.nmgga.gov.cn/show.asp?id=1141, accessed May 10, 2006.
[232] Ningxia Page on People's Daily Online, November 17, 2005 http://nx.people.com.cn/GB/channel65/152/206/200511/17/39107.html, accessed Oct 1, 2006.
[233] Xuanwei City People's Government Shuanglong Subdistrict Office, "Shuanglong Subdistrict Special Action Implementation Plan for Guarding Against and Striking Against 'Falun Gong,'" June 4, 2008.

participate in the Three Withdrawals [withdrawals from the Communist Party, Youth League and Young Pioneers] and has thus become a potential threat to our political stability. [234]

Other references to Jiuping are scattered across the websites of local government and Public Security Bureau offices. On May 30, 2006, in Anhui Province, authorities were instructed during a political-judicial operations conference to "harshly deal with the reactionary political activities of production and distribution of Jiuping-type propaganda."[235] In January 2006, the Harbin City government website published an article on intensified efforts to combat Falun Gong "reactionary propaganda," which stipulated that it should be an "utmost top priority to prevent and crackdown on production and distribution of Jiuping." [236]

On May 9, 2006, at a county-wide Political-Judicial Operation Conference, Jiao Yongle, the Political and Judicial Committee secretary of the Huoqiu County, Liuan City, Anhui Province proposed that "strike hard" tactics be used to stem the spread of Jiuping. [237] In August of the same year, the propaganda office of the Tianchang City CCP Committee reported that "Our city had set 'Falun Gong' illegal criminal activities as a major target for Public Security organizations, especially emphasizing attacking the reactionary political activities of production, and distribution of Jiuping [...] All cases related to spreading Jiuping propaganda must be solved quickly to avoid negative influence, and strike at their arrogance."[238]

A number of agencies and departments that would seem only peripherally involved in public security matters have also issued directives for suppressing the proliferation of Jiuping. In Guangdong Province, the Coastal

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[234] Wu Chungeng, "Further advance safe and peaceful construction, strive to build a harmonious society, and constantly create the new phase of political and judiciary comprehensive management work in the city," speech given at city Political-Judiciary Operation conference, April 7, 2006. http://www.ngzf.gov.cn/2006-4/200641481415.htm.
[235] Guangde Political-Judicial Comprehensive Management Website: "County Wide Political-Judicial Operations Key Point", May 30, 2006. http://www.gdzf.gov.cn/jgwj/zfw/200605/20.html, accessed Oct 1, 2006.
[236] Harbin City Government, "Nangang District has intensified the effort to prevent and control evil cult during 'Three Holidays and Two Meetings' period," Harbin, China, January 13, 2006 http://www.harbin.gov.cn/hrbzfw/hrb_zwdt/display.php?id=1038, accessed Sept 4, 2006.
[237] Jiao Yongle, Speech at the County Political-Judicial Operations Conference", May 10, 2006 http://www.hqsf.cn/ReadNews.asp?NewsID=536, accessed Oct 1, 2006.
[238] Xia Daolin and Yu Ying, "Prevent and Guard against Cult Organizations to Maintain Social Stability",Tianchang City CCP Committee Propaganda Department. http://www.tianchang.gov.cn/xwzx/news_view.php?id=4106, accessed Oct 1, 2006.

Affairs Bureau issued directives on handling the movement, demanding in a 2005 year-end meeting that staff must "guard and strike against the Jiuping-type reactionary propaganda material."[239] On November 25, 2005, the financial office of a municipal district in Guizhou Province published an order to "firmly stop the spreading of Jiuping." It emphasized the need to "educate our employees and officials not to listen, believe, read or spread the Jiuping," and warned that those who possessed or distributed Jiuping would be punished, and possibly face criminal charges.[240]

In 2009, a document titled "How to oppose and resist evil religions" appeared on the Chinese internet. The document advises people on what to do if they encounter literature on Falun Gong, or if they receive pamphlets, DVDs, phone calls or text messages about the Tuidang movement.

In the document, the suppression against Falun Gong is referred to as "a struggle between justice and evil, civilization and ignorance, progress and regression." The document proclaims that "every citizen should uphold science, reject evil religion, and consciously resist Falun Gong." If a person encounters "reactionary propaganda," they must not "listen, look, believe it, or disseminate it." This includes deleting emails and SMS messages containing reactionary propaganda, hanging up on phone calls from Tuidang activists, and turning in bank notes with Tuidang-related slogans. The document further recommends that "In the event that anyone propagates 'Falun Gong,' 'Three Withdrawals,' 'Jiuping,' or similar content, or hands you 'Falun Gong' evil religion propaganda (CDs, books, other printed material), it is imperative to immediately report it, and assist the public security office to stop such behavior."[241]

Since its earliest appearance in 2009, the directive has appeared on over 300 websites across China, including those of local governments, universities, and news outlets. A screen grab of the document is provided below:

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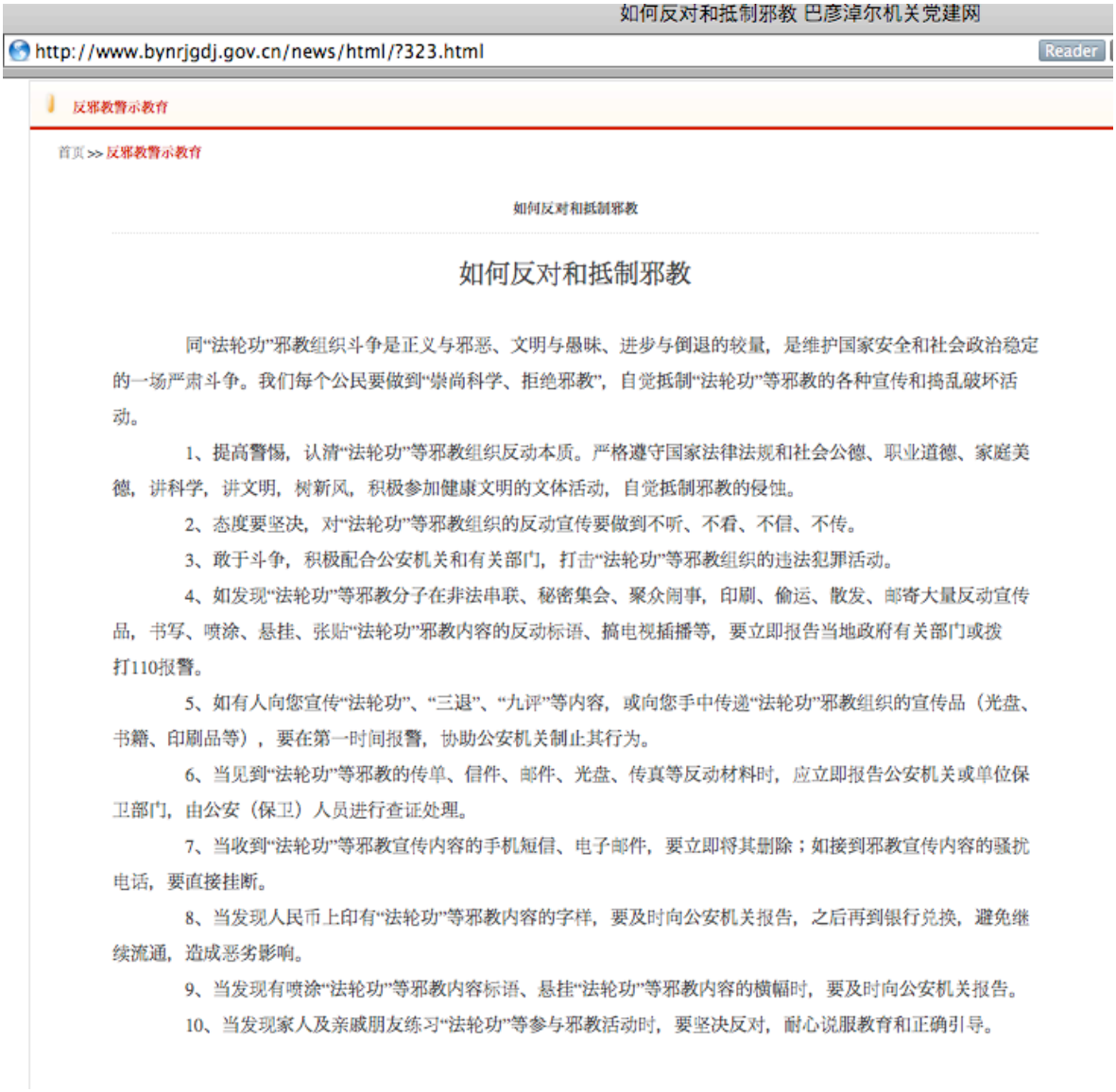
[239] "Guangdong Province CAB Public Security Comprehensive Management Conference Material", May 19, 2006 http://www.zqmsa.gov.cn/zqdj/readarticle.asp?art_id=296, accessed Oct 1, 2006.
[240] Xixiu District Financial Department, "Order to implement the key points in the district's Social Stability Maintenance Document No. 6 [2005], Nov 25, 2005.
[241] See, for example, http://www.bynrjgdj.gov.cn/news/html/?323.html


如何反对和抵制邪教 巴彦淖尔机关党建网

http://www.bynrjgdj.gov.cn/news/html/?323.html

Reader

反邪教警示教育

首页 >> 反邪教警示教育

如何反对和抵制邪教

如何反对和抵制邪教

同"法轮功"邪教组织斗争是正义与邪恶、文明与愚昧、进步与倒退的较量，是维护国家安全和社会政治稳定的一场严肃斗争。我们每个公民要做到"崇尚科学、拒绝邪教"，自觉抵制"法轮功"等邪教的各种宣传和捣乱破坏活动。

1、提高警惕，认清"法轮功"等邪教组织反动本质。严格遵守国家法律法规和社会公德、职业道德、家庭美德，讲科学，讲文明，树新风，积极参加健康文明的文体活动，自觉抵制邪教的侵蚀。

2、态度要坚决，对"法轮功"等邪教组织的反动宣传要做到不听、不看、不信、不传。

3、敢于斗争，积极配合公安机关和有关部门，打击"法轮功"等邪教组织的违法犯罪活动。

4、如发现"法轮功"等邪教分子在非法串联、秘密集会、聚众闹事，印刷、偷运、散发、邮寄大量反动宣传品，书写、喷涂、悬挂、张贴"法轮功"邪教内容的反动标语、搞电视插播等，要立即报告当地政府有关部门或拨打110报警。

5、如有人向您宣传"法轮功"、"三退"、"九评"等内容，或向您手中传递"法轮功"邪教组织的宣传品（光盘、书籍、印刷品等），要在第一时间报警，协助公安机关制止其行为。

6、当见到"法轮功"等邪教的传单、信件、邮件、光盘、传真等反动材料时，应立即报告公安机关或单位保卫部门，由公安（保卫）人员进行查证处理。

7、当收到"法轮功"等邪教宣传内容的手机短信、电子邮件，要立即将其删除；如接到邪教宣传内容的骚扰电话，要直接挂断。

8、当发现人民币上印有"法轮功"等邪教内容的字样，要及时向公安机关报告，之后再到银行兑换，避免继续流通，造成恶劣影响。

9、当发现有喷涂"法轮功"等邪教内容标语、悬挂"法轮功"等邪教内容的横幅时，要及时向公安机关报告。

10、当发现家人及亲戚朋友练习"法轮功"等参与邪教活动时，要坚决反对，耐心说服教育和正确引导。

Campaign to Maintain the Advanced Nature of Communist Party Members

In January 2005, editorials in the People's Daily and Xinhua New Agency announced the launch of a program to "maintain the advanced nature of CCP members" (*baochi dangyuan de xianjinxing*), a rectification campaign that would span a year and a half and focus on the education of party members. The editorials and opinions stated that the campaign's goal was to increase party members' awareness of Marxism, improve inner-party democracy, and

combat corruption.[242] The campaign was deemed necessary to combat social contradictions that were threatening the ruling status of the Communist Party.[243] Over the next several years, millions of party members were made to attend compulsory ideological education and self-criticism sessions to strengthen their dedication to the cause of the Communist Party.[244]

Though it was launched in January 2005, the new rectification campaign was announced during the Fourth Plenum in September of 2004, and had been planned for some time before that.[245] It therefore cannot be considered a response to the Tuidang movement. However, the suppression of the Tuidang movement was later linked to the campaign to maintain the advanced nature of Communist Party members, and has influenced the content and ideological emphasis of the education sessions.

This connection was apparent during a rare press conference organized by the State Council Information Office and headed by a highly ranked member of the Organization Department on July 12, 2005. The conference focused on three issues: 1) the new campaign to maintain the advanced nature of party members, and whether or not this constituted a 'rectification campaign' or political purge, 2) The occurrence of "mass incidents," and 3) the Tuidang movement. The event was significant in that it was said to have been the first time that a representative of the party's Organization Department directly addressed the media. It was headed by vice-minister of the Organization Department Li Jingtian, and Ou Yangsong. Li also serves as the vice-chair of the Central Leading Small Group on maintaining the advanced nature of the Communist Party, and Ou is a member and office director for the same leading group. During the press conference, Li explained with reference to the Tuidang movement that, "According to investigations, this is a rumor made up by people with ulterior motives. We looked into the

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[242] Xinhua News Agency, "A Basic Project for Strengthening the Building of the Party's Ability to Govern," January 5, 2005.
2 Xinhua News Agency, "CCP Opinions on Party-Wide Education to Maintain Party Members' Advanced Nature," January 9, 2005.
[243] Joseph Fewsmith, "CCP Launches Campaign to Maintain the Advanced Nature of Party Members," China Leadership Monitor, No. 13, p 1.
[244] Shambaugh, China's Communist Party: Atrophy and Adaptation, p 130.
[245] Fewsmith, "CCP Launches Campaign to Maintain the Advanced Nature of Party Members," p. 3.

circumstances of some of these published statements about people renouncing the party and discovered that there was no such person, or that some people with ulterior motives made up stories about people who have already settled down outside China."[246]

On April 17, 2006, Hefei City CCP standing committee member Zhang Xiaolin wrote an article calling for "In-depth investigation and attack on the Falun Gong organizations; stern penalty for Internet crime, as well as production and distribution of Jiuping and similar reactionary political propaganda."

The article linked the fight against Falun Gong and Jiuping with the ongoing rectification campaign for Communist Party members, stating that anti-Falun Gong education should be included in the third phase of the city's education sessions for maintaining the advanced nature of Communist Party members. Zhang also called for more anti-Falun Gong "preventive education," for "middle school and primary school students, as well as peasants."[247]

Crackdowns on Internet and the Press

Jiuping has been an important target in the party's crackdowns on pornography and "illegal publications." In February, 2006, Changde city authorities in charge of cracking down on pornography ended a year-long investigation into the production of Jiuping and Falun Gong literature. The investigation resulted in the confiscation of some 3,000 copies of Jiuping and related literature, and the arrest of dozens of Falun Gong practitioners.[248] In Jing'an County, authorities were put in the unusual position of trying to prevent Falun Gong from "using RMB to

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[246] People's Daily Online, "Organization Department Directly Addresses Sensitive Issue, Responding to the So-Called 'Tuidang' Incident"July 12, 2005.
http://politics.people.com.cn/GB/3535880.html.
[247] Zhang Xiaolin, "Advance peaceful construction of Hefei City and provide safeguard for leapfrogging development", Hefei City CCP Committee Policy Research Office, April 17, 2006.
http://swzys.hefei.gov.cn/ContentDir/20064/1785542265.shtml.
[248] Wan Changming, "Speech at the Work Conference on City-wide 'Crackdown on Pornography and Illegal Publications' and News Publish Copyright," February 16, 2006.
http://www.cdppa.gov.cn/cdppa/28935627605855436 8/20060221/97278.html, accessed Oct 1, 2006.

carry out reactionary propaganda."[249] This refers to the practice of writing or stamping Tuidang slogans on paper bank notes, then releasing them into circulation. The periodic crackdowns launched by Chinese authorities on "illegal publications" routinely place primary emphasis on Falun Gong publications. In 2008, for instance, the General Administration of Press and Publication issued a notice requiring customs officials to focus on confiscating "illegal publications" and "Falun Gong propaganda materials."[250]

One interesting incident in September 2009 showed the lengths that authorities went to in order to prevent news of the movement from getting out: On September 27th, the lead image of the Jinzhou city newspaper showed a street lined with red flags in preparations for national day celebrations. In the corner of the image, eight tiny characters could be seen. A Tuidang activist had written on a bike rack ""Heaven condemns the Communist Party; denounce it and be saved." The characters were clear, yet barely visible. The following day, the Jinzhou newspaper came under investigation. Its website was shut down, and the paper taken out of circulation.[251]

Research into China's censorship practices confirms the seriousness with which authorities are seeking to clamp down on dissemination of Jiuping and the spread of the Tuidang movement. In 2005 a group of researchers from the University of Toronto, the University of Cambridge, and Harvard University examined the rate at which the top 100 Google search results for politically sensitive terms were censored by Chinese authorities. They found that "Jiuping" was the most intensively censored term on the Chinese Internet, being blocked at a rate five times higher than "democracy."[252]

In another study released in the fall of 2008, University of Toronto researchers found that the Chinese version of Skype, TOM-Skype, had been monitoring and archiving thousands of private chat conversations

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[249] Jing'an County People's Government (Online), `Gaohu Launches Warning and Education Plan To Prevent `Falun Gong' Cult Organization From Using RMB To Carry Out Reactionary Propaganda," Jan 8 2010.
[250] General Administration of Press and Publication, ''To Meet 'Two Holidays' and 'Two Sessions' Strengthen Watch Over Publishing Market,'' Dec 31 2008.
[251] Caylan Ford, "An Underground Challenge to China's Status Quo," Christian Science Monitor, Oct 21 2009.
[252] Jonathan Zittrain et al, "Internet Filtering in China in 2004-2005: A Country Study," April 15 2005. http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=706681

containing politically sensitive words. Conversations where users referred to Tuidang or Jiuping were among the most frequently captured, totaling 1,730. References to the June 4 Tiananmen Square crackdown, by contrast, occurred in 748 conversations.[253]

The Green Dam Youth Escort, a software program that authorities sought to mandate for all Chinese computers in 2009—purportedly to block pornography—was analyzed and found by researchers from the University of Michigan to be designed to filter tens of thousands of terms related to Falun Gong, Jiuping, and Tuidang.[254] Three of the program's files contained a collection of blacklisted words that included a total of 174 pornography-related terms, and 79 terms related to Falun Gong and/or Tuidang (intriguingly, other politically sensitive terms did not appear on these blacklists). Another far more extensive collection of blacklisted terms and phrases was found in a 37,000-character file called FalunWord.lib. As the document's title suggests, the terms and sentences contained within it relate almost exclusively to Falun Gong, and over 1/3 of the document deals specifically with Jiuping and Tuidang. When Green Dam detects the words in this file, it not only stops the user from accessing the offending site, but also kills their internet browser entirely.[255] Taken together, the four files of blacklisted terms suggest that the principle function of Green Dam was not to combat pornography, but to filter information on Falun Gong and the Tuidang movement, to the near total exclusion of every other politically sensitive issue.[256]

2009 was a year full of politically charged anniversaries, including the 60th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic, the 50th anniversary of the 1959 uprisings in Tibet, the 20th anniversary of the Tiananmen Square Massacre, and the 10th year since the suppression against Falun Gong began. In order to ward off efforts to

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[253] Matt Hartley, "How a Canadian cracked the Great Firewall of China," The Globe and Mail, Oct 2 2008.
[254] Scott Wolchok et al, "Analysis of the Green Dam Censorware System," University of Michigan Computer Science and Engineering Division, June 11, 2009. http://www.cse.umich.edu/~jhalderm/pub/gd/
[255] The complete text file "FalunWord" can be viewed here:
http://www.cse.umich.edu/~jhalderm/pub/gd/data/falunword.php
[256] The preponderance of words in the file are related to Falun Gong, Tuidang, or Jiuping. However, there are a small handful of references to June 4 and, inexplicably, to Jiang Zemin's "Three Represents."

commemorate these events, a top-level committee was created by the Communist Party to increase monitoring and suppression of dissidents. The group was termed the "6521 project," a reference to the anniversaries listed above, and it was helmed by none other than Xi Jinping, the heir to Hu Jintao.[257] In parallel to the 6521 project, politburo standing committee member and former chief of the Ministry of Public Security Zhou Yongkang led a central committee for the "Comprehensive Management of Social Order." These initiatives revived the network of volunteer informants in neighborhoods, schools and workplaces, and enacted a joint responsibility system that would hold the heads of households, employers, and local governments responsible in the event of disruptions to social order — the hanging of a Falun Gong banner on a tree, for instance. Zhou's committee identified a number of challenges to social security, including ethnic separatism, protests over unemployment, land grabs, tainted products, corruption, crime, Falun Gong activities, and illegal publications and illicit home satellite dishes.[258] The publications targeted for closure, according to research by the Congressional Executive Commission on China, were mainly those related to Falun Gong, Tibet, Xinjiang, and some others that did not obtain government licenses.[259] In April 2009, local governments across the country issued directives for a crackdown on "illegal publications" and "pornography," though the document's contents seemed far more concerned with Falun Gong than with pornography. One such directive, issued by the Fujian Provincial Transport Administration Department, emphasized the need to strike hard against publications that "incited ethnic splittism," and that "slandered the country's political system, distorted the history of the party, the country's history, the military's history, slandered the party and the country's leaders, [and] publicized 'Falun Gong'..."—a thinly veiled reference to Jiuping.[260]

Periodic crackdowns on illegal satellites, such as was referenced by Zhou Yongkang's central committee, can also be construed as being directed largely at Falun Gong and the Tuidang movement. Satellite dishes are

[257] Cary Huang, "Taskforces Set Up To Keep Lid on Protests," South China Morning Post, Feb 28, 2009; Michael Wines, "Anniversaries for Tibet, Tiananmen Square Have China on Edge," New York Times, March 10 2009.
[258] Ching Cheong, "China Acts to Defuse 'Crisis Year,'" Singapore Straits Times, March 3 2009.
[259] Congressional Executive Commission on China, 2009 Annual Report, Oct 10, 2009, p 44.
[260] Fujian Province Department of Administration for Transportation Circular Regarding Deeply Carrying Out "Sweep Away Pornography and Strike Down Illegal Publications" Operation, April 30, 2009.

banned in China, but have proliferated on the black market, and can be used to receive broadcasts from Voice of America and the Falun Gong practitioner-run Xintangren, among others. In addition to its regular programming, Xintangren routinely broadcasts documentary versions of Jiuping and reports on developments in the Tuidang movement. In March 2009, the State Administration for Industry and Commerce issued a document detailing its success in cracking down on illegal satellite dishes, which are capable of receiving international broadcasts. The document boasted that taskforces in 18 provinces dealt with illegal vendors, removed dished from 342 households, seized 4089 television sets, 7375 satellite dishes, 7547 antenna, and over 11,000 other pieces of equipment. The purpose of the crackdown, as described in the document, was to guard against foreign reactionary propaganda and Falun Gong. Li Changchun, the current propaganda chief, was said to be very pleased with this.[261] An October 2008 article in the People's Daily similarly boasted about the success of a crackdown on illegal satellite receivers, saying that in the first half of the year, authorities had confiscated 110,000 small satellite dishes. In so doing, they had made great progress in protecting national security from "Falun Gong" and other "foreign religious, political, and separatist forces."[262] A document from Yunyang County explained that Falun Gong "has increasingly been using multiple media channels to broadcast programs, making the satellite management situation even more grim." In order to prevent Falun Gong's "reactionary propaganda" and safeguard social stability, the directive outlined the new measures that must be taken in the ongoing battle against home satellite receivers.[263] Much as some American observers would like to believe that the crackdowns on foreign satellite receivers target CNN and Voice of America, there is no mention of either in this and similar articles.

[261] State Administration for Industry and Commerce, "Statistical analysis: 2008 Basic Conditions of Fair Trade Law Enforcement," March 20, 2009.
[262] Pang Geping, "China's fight against the sale of illegal satellite receivers achieves significant results," People's Daily Online, Oct 17 2008.
[263] Yunyang County Information Center, "Crack down on illegal sales and installation of satellite antennas," July 2 2009.

Role in Party Legitimation Discourse

In addition to being linked in official documents to crackdowns on the press, to the Scientific Development Concept and the campaign to maintain the advanced nature of communist party members," efforts to suppress Jiuping and the Tuidang movement are also articulated alongside the party's fears of 'color revolutions.'

Beginning in 2005, alarmist warnings of color revolutions came into fashion among Chinese analysts and leaders. David Shambaugh explains the term's appearance in official discourse as stemming from the party's hand-wringing over the color revolutions that swept through former Soviet states in 2003 - 2004. In particular, the party was apparently concerned about the possibility of color revolutions being fomented domestically.[264] Titus C. Chen writes that the party viewed the color revolutions as the product of internal grievances and external manipulation by Western powers, and, sensing that it might be susceptible to similar forces, the party responded by strengthening its coercive capacity and reining in civil liberties, cracking down on the Internet, and restricting foreign NGOs and media operations in the country.[265]

The strongest link made between color revolutions and the Tuidang movement is found in a speech dated June 30, 2005 and credited to Liu Jing, deputy minister of the Ministry of Public Security. A transcription of the speech was leaked by one of the attendees. In the speech, apparently delivered in a secret Public Security Bureau meeting, Liu devotes considerable time to drawing lessons from the color revolutions in Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan. His exegesis mirrors what is available in published party documents, which attribute the color revolutions to opposition political factions having seized advantage of electoral politics, "media propaganda" promoting opposition views, and intervention from "foreign forces." What is unique about Liu Jing's speech, and what is not found in public documents, is the equation of the Tuidang movement with a color revolution. "After releasing the Jiuping...they [Falun Gong] brought up the 'velvet' action, which is completely equivalent to a 'color

[264] David Shambaugh, China's Communist Party: Atrophy and Adaptation, pp 87-88.
[265] Titus C. Chen, "China's Reaction to the Color Revolutions: Adaptive Authoritarianism in Full Swing," Asian Perspective, Vol 34, No. 2, 2010, pp 5 - 51

revolution.'" says Liu. He further postulates that Jiuping may have in fact been a plot by the Taiwanese or American government to thwart China's rise.[266]

In June 2006, Beijing released an eight-episode TV documentary series produced by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences concerning the lessons learned from the collapse of Soviet Communism. The series, which Party members were encouraged to follow closely, observed that "From January 1989 to January 1991, within merely two years, more than 2.9 million CPSU (Communist Party of Soviet Union) members declared their resignations from the party. Those who stayed had mostly lost their trust in the party." [267]

The Communist Party fears this fate greatly, knowing that it lacks either a democratic or revolutionary mandate to rule. Under Hu Jintao, a variety of methods have been pursued to attempt to ensure that the party retains the loyalty of its members. Some of these measures have already been touched upon, such as the campaign to maintain the advanced nature of CCP members. Another manifestation was the flourishing from 2005 onwards of articles in Party school journals that aimed to assess the sources of challenges to Party authority and explore ways that it could restore its legitimacy. In their study of the discourse appearing in these journals, Bruce Gilley and Heike Holbig find that ideology—not reforming institutions or embracing elements of liberalism—was the most frequently mentioned strategy of legitimization pursued by these authors.[268] Interestingly, in explaining this observation during a speech at the American Enterprise Institute, Gilley noted that the party is "concerned about defections, and ideology is a very important part of how they're trying to maintain some sort of guard against defection." [269] He did not elaborate on what the defections are that the CCP is worried about, but given the timeline, it is not unreasonable to assume that the Tuidang movement contributed to Party officials' nerves.

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[266] Liu Jing, Speech delivered at a Public Security Bureau meeting, Jun 30 2005. Available upon request.
[267] China Academy of Social Sciences, Eight-Episode TV Documentary Series: Preparing for Danger in Times of Safety, Episode Four. Available at http://chinascope.org/main/content/view/2071/92
[268] Heike Holbig and Bruce Gilley, "Reclaiming Legitimacy in China," Politics & Policy 38, no 3: pp 395–422.
[269] Bruce Gilley, Speech given at the American Enterprise Institute, May 26, 2009. Audio is available here: http://www.aei.org/event/100060

There are numerous and diverse challenges facing the Communist Party, of which the Tuidang movement is just one. But to the extent that the Tuidang movement speaks to Chinese people's sense of frustration at what the Communist Party and its modernization efforts have wrought, it provides a rallying point for millions of disenchanted citizens who may previously have expressed their grievances only privately or in protests directed at local governments or enterprises. Tuidang gives these citizens a common enemy beyond the petty local officials, and provides an accessible and appealing ideology in which to express their grievances. In other words, Jiuping and the Tuidang movement is not only fomenting dissent; more often than not it is simply an outlet through which already dissatisfied citizens find common cause and expression. Given this, a Party strategist worth his salt would know that suppression alone is insufficient, as it does not address the original sources of frustration (and indeed, could exacerbate them).

To some degree, Jiuping (and Falun Gong itself) can be seen as representing a backlash against the social and economic contradictions produced by reforms and opening up, which produced inequality, persistent corruption, a culture of voracious materialism, and a left an ideological vacuum. Given that Jiang Zemin's strictly coercive approach to suppressing Falun Gong failed in its objective to eradicate the group, it is worth considering that blunting the appeal of Falun Gong, and later to Tuidang, is one of many factors that informed Hu Jintao's focus on more equitable "people-first" development, and the comparatively more ideological orientation of his government.

Among the most resonant arguments of Jiuping is that the Communist Party is incompatible with and has sought to destroy China's Confucian moral tradition, and that this has produced a national culture without moral or ethical anchor. Falun Gong's appeal is likewise tied to its revival of traditional Chinese spiritual and moral traditions.

In order to dampen the appeal of these movements, then, the party would have to attempt to recast traditional Chinese virtues as its own and co-opt the symbols of traditional culture. In February 2005 Hu Jintao, as the crownpiece of his vaunted Scientific Development paradigm, made his ultimate contribution to the Chinese

Communist theoretical canon: the concept of the 'Harmonious Society.' The harmonious society concept uses quasi-Confucian language and places emphasis on "public morality," "honesty in social relationships," and "harmony between man and nature." The "Eight honors and Eight Disgraces" (*Barong Bachi*) concept unveiled by Hu Jintao in March 2006 comprised of eight rhyming couplets meant to educate Chinese in the art of differentiating between correct and improper behavior. It stressed, among other things, patriotism, honesty, and the need to "uphold science" and "discard ignorance"[270]—language that is strikingly similar to what is found in anti-Falun Gong propaganda (one of the main slogans of the campaign against Falun Gong in the early years was "uphold science, discard superstition"). According to Xinhua News Agency, "the concept, which stresses the value of patriotism, hard work and plain living, belief in science, consciousness of serving the people, solidarity, honesty and credibility, and observation of the law, is a perfect amalgamation of traditional Chinese values and modern virtues."[271]

For all Party's efforts to suppress the Tuidang, as the movement enters its seventh year, the number of names added daily to the Dajiyuan website continues to grow. Tuidang activists universally observe that the Chinese citizens they speak to on the phone or encounter at tourist sites have become increasingly receptive and trusting as the years have gone by. In the words of one Party document issued in 2010, Falun Gong "is fighting with us to win the masses, and the struggle to win the people's hearts is very intense."[272]

[270] Xinhua News Agency, "New moral yardstick: "8 honors, 8 disgraces," April 5, 2006 http://www.gov.cn/english/2006-04/05/content_245361.htm
[271] Xinhua News Agency, "PLA to Carry Out 'Socialist Concept of Honor and Disgrace," March 17, 2006
[272] Laodian Township CCP Committee, "2010-2012 work plan to educate, transform, and conquer key targets to solidify the overall battle," Laodian Document (2010): No.20, May 15 2010. Index number: hx875-3001-2010-0008

CHAPTER SIX: Assessment and Conclusion

In the six years since the publication of Jiuping produced the Tuidang movement, the phenomenon has attracted scant attention from observers in the West, who have generally been inclined to dismiss the rumors of mass withdrawals from the Communist Party as agitprop or wishful thinking on the part of a handful of disaffected Chinese. The Communist Party, for its part, has met the movement with public proclamations that it is little more than a rumor.

Yet look beneath the surface, and one finds the Tuidang movement to have the ingredients of a potent challenge to the Communist Party. Its ideology, articulated in Jiuping, is at once accessible, compelling, and supported by philosophical traditions that are authentically Chinese. It does not call for an overthrow of the party, but instead undermines its legitimacy by attacking its morality and benevolence, questioning the nature of the social stability it provides, and debating its claims to Chinese nationalism, hoping to erode support for Communist rule from the grassroots level. The movement is supported by a veritable army of dedicated volunteer activists, inside China and out, equipped with technological sophistication and a salvationist zeal. Jiuping and the Tuidang movement give a shared language and ideology to millions of disparate Chinese citizens, whose grievances may hitherto have found expression only around dinner tables or in isolated protests. They find in the movement a common enemy in the Communist Party, and a common cause for hope.

Since the inception of the Tuidang phenomenon in late 2004, I have followed the movement with considerable interest. In this time, I have come to know several Chinese expatriates (not Falun Gong adherents, I should add), for whom the experience of reading Jiuping was a thoroughly transformational and decidedly positive moment in their lives. It not only catalyzed a reconsideration of their views on modern Chinese history, but gave them hope for their nation's future (hope, however broad its meaning, is expressed abundantly in Tuidang statements). More than that, for some of these individuals, reading Jiuping inspired them to radically reconsider

their personal value systems, change the course of their lives, and find happiness and personal fulfillment in the process. In pursuing this study, I found the stories of my real-life acquaintances echoed in the Tuidang statements, where participants often write movingly of finally being able to make sense of their own experiences, of being stirred from complacency and cynicism, of finding relief, comfort and forgiveness, and of having their faith in the Chinese people and nation restored.

Regardless of the implications for the Communist Party, the Tuidang movement is fascinating simply for what it is. If for no other reason than for what it says about the Chinese people who populate it, it is worth understanding.

As has already been explained at some length, considerable challenges exist in attempting to verify the claims made by Dajiyuan about the size of the Tuidang movement. After conducting interviews with Dajiyuan editors and Tuidang activists, seeing their records, and witnessing them soliciting Tuidang statements, I have come to believe that they are not deliberately making misleading statements. It is entirely possible that somewhere, someone is doing so, making large numbers of Tuidang claims for non-existent people. But if there are such people, I do not think I have met them. The language and rhetorical flourish embraced by Dajiyuan in describing the Tuidang movement can be excessive, and could be seen as overstating the influence of their movement. But at the level of individual activists, I did not detect real boastfulness, even among the most prolific and successful of them. If anything, I found the activists to be cautious about overstating their personal impact. What is also obvious is that the scale of the efforts exerted by Tuidang activists is astonishing. An incalculable number of phone calls, faxes, emails, and SMS messages have been made or sent to Chinese citizens imploring them to read Jiuping and renounce the party, and inside China, practitioners produce and distribute mountains of literature on the subject.

Qualitative analysis of Tuidang statements also appears to support that the participants are real people. their statements, specifically the grievances with the party, are consistent with expressions of discontent found outside the Tuidang movement. Taken together with the official literature that describes the crackdown on

Tuidang, there is certainly a strong case to be made that the Tuidang movement has a significant and growing following. I would even say that I find Dajiyuan's figures of over 90 million people withdrawing from Party organizations to be plausible, though not precise.

But even if Dajiyuan's figure is true, given that only 10 - 15 percent of participants are active and current Party members when they make Tuidang statements, there are perhaps only 10 million true party members among Tuidang participants. In the time since the Tuidang movement began, the Organizational Department claims the CCP has grown by 8 million members. Looking at the numbers alone, divorced from the broader context, this is not dire news for the party. It even could be argued—though not by me—that by weeding out individuals who no longer support the leadership, the Tuidang movement is actually helping the party to become more ideologically pure and effective. Given that Tuidang participants seem to be somewhat older, it could stand to reason that Tuidang is expediting the party's efforts to mold itself into a younger, more elite organization.

These suggestions are problematic for several reasons: First, the numbers taken on their own do not tell the full story of what the Tuidang movement means to China's leaders. The party's perceptions of the movement must be understood in light of its ongoing struggles to maintain legitimacy and ideological support. I have a difficult time conceiving that the party would see a benefit in having its membership undercut by a large-scale dissident movement whose ideology represents a comprehensive challenge to the party's sources of authority, and indeed, there is no evidence that the party perceives any such benefit. Second, it is surely more troubling to the CCP leadership when a Party member or cadre makes a Tuidang statement than when a factory worker in Anhui denounces their decades-old membership in the Youth League. But this does not mean that the latter is insignificant; the renunciations of the Youth League or Young Pioneers still amount to public, organized, and large-scale rejections of Communist Party rule. Since it was published Jiuping and Tuidang have been two of the most important targets of online censorship, next only to Falun Gong itself. According to both Falun Gong and official Chinese documents, dozens of Tuidang activists and participants have been arrested, with some given lengthy

prison terms. The suppression of the Tuidang movement has been linked in some way to nearly all the party's major campaigns, legitimization efforts, and censorship measures under Hu Jintao's rule, and top leaders like Xi Jinping, Zhou Yongkang, and Li Changchun have taken part. Party documents reflect a profound concern with Tuidang's potential, and some officials certainly seem to believe that they are losing hearts and minds to the movement.

But the important question remains: What does this mean for the future of China? The answer depends on, first, whether the movement's momentum can be sustained. If it can continue attracting participants at the current rate as alleged by Dajiyuan—and especially if those participants are individuals who had not previously considered themselves dissidents—the movement could become a significant challenge. If, on the other hand, it reaches a saturation point and plateaus, or if authorities can effectively suppress it, the impact will be limited.

The Communist Party has historically proven resilient in the face of major crises on account of the flexibility of its ideology, its ability to adapt to changing circumstances, and the efficacy of its coercive techniques. In particular, it emerged from the Tiananmen Square protests through tightening restrictions on the press, imprisoning dissidents, co-opting symbols of nationalism, overseeing economic growth and co-opting intellectuals and elites. In so doing, the party dealt a near-fatal blow to the Chinese democracy movement from which it has only recently begun to recover momentum. In the case of Falun Gong and the Tuidang movement, by contrast, coercion has not succeeded at crushing them, nor have heightened restrictions on underground media, satellite dishes, or the Internet stopped the flow of information into the Mainland. The party continues pursuing heavy-handed repressive measures, but implementation and enthusiasm at the local levels is spotty; 6-10 officers themselves are among those issuing Tuidang statements. As of yet, Dajiyuan offers no indication that Tuidang movement has peaked.

Even if tens of millions more join the Tuidang phenomenon, it is unclear what participants do after they make their statements, and the answer to this question will be one of the main determinants of what lasting impact, if any, the Tuidang movement has in China. After issuing a statement, does a person feel absolved of the responsibility to take further actions against the party? Are they more, or less likely to attend a demonstration, or petition for

justice? Do they stop attending Party meetings, or do they continue on with the belief, as one Tuidang activist said, that the heavens can see their true heart?

Once again, there is no definitive answer to this question—not yet. Outside China, there are prominent examples of people whose Tuidang statements coincide with concrete action against the Communist Party. Chen Yonglin, the promising young diplomat in Sydney, made a Tuidang statement and defected to Australia in June 2005. He proceeded to dominate national headlines with exposés on alleged espionage and intimidation of Chinese dissidents in Australia. Sun Yanjun, described in chapter four, broke very dramatically from the party when he made his Tuidang statement, and subsequently appeared in public forums criticizing the party's thought reform methods. Masha Ma, the graduate of Beijing Daxue and once a model Communist Party member, was similarly galvanized. After she made her Tuidang statement, she was featured in national radio broadcasts and news magazines describing her process of disillusionment.[273] These examples indicate that some of those who are moved to participate in the Tuidang movement *do* seek to translate their dissatisfaction with the party in the real world. These are also exceptional instances, of course, and speaking out against the party is much easier after the person has left China. Still, the Tuidang statements from Chinese participants provide some indication of how they will act later, or at least, how they want to act later. The numerous statements provided by security agents, for instance, usually contain promises to no longer arrest innocent petitioners or persecute Falun Gong. Other Tuidang statements contain vows to no longer believe the Communist Party or cooperate with it.

Insofar as the Tuidang movement was initiated to help mitigate the worst of the abuses metted out to Falun Gong adherents, there is also evidence of some success, though causation is difficult to establish. According to reports published on Falun Gong websites, the number of alleged torture deaths of Falun Gong adherents has declined steadily every year since the publication of Jiuping in late 2004, falling from a height of over 500 persons annually in 2004 to approximately 100 in 2010. This is not attributable to a shift in the Party's position; as evidenced

[273] Kevin Steel, "Revolution Number Nine," The Western Standard, July 11 2005.

by the 6521 project and the subsequent three-year "transformation" campaign, the elimination of Falun Gong remains as an important objective of the party. Neither can it be easily described as stemming from an overall decrease in the number of Falun Gong adherents, or to the success of reeducation efforts; the number of Falun Gong practitioners dropped precipitously in the first years of the campaign, but the anecdotal evidence overwhelming points to Falun Gong growing its ranks in Mainland China since 2004. Instead, the trend of fewer reported torture deaths would seem to be a manifestation of lower-level officials losing the will to implement top-level orders with respect to Falun Gong.

Among China scholars who foresee dark days ahead for the party, there is considerable disagreement over how events will play out. Gordon Chang, one of a number of ethnic Chinese scholars who writes forebodingly of the Communist Party's future, has made one of the most direct predictions of regime change, which he believes is likely to come through some form of imminent, popular revolution. Chang holds that the party is impotent in addressing the basic needs and rights of its people, being weighted down by corruption and erosion of popular support: "The Communist Party has become incapable of reinvigorating itself," writes Chang. "It has been eroded by widespread disenchantment, occasional crises, and the enervating effect of the passage of time. The party may be big, but it is also corrupt, reviled, and often ineffective."[274]

Richard Baum does not offer a prediction of how and when the party will fall, but concurs with the assessment that it has little further room to redefine and reinvigorate itself:

> *The regime's Marxist-Leninist philosophical underpinnings have been diluted virtually beyond recognition by 25 years of market reform and rationalization; and the party is no longer able to offer an inspiring vision of China's future. Increasingly, the party is seen by many groups and individuals in society as largely irrelevant in their daily lives—an annoyance to be avoided where possible and endured where necessary."* [275]

[274] Gordon Chang, "Halfway to China's Collapse," Far Eastern Economic Review 169, no 5 (June 2006): p 28.
[275] Richard Baum, "China's Road to 'Soft Authoritarian Reform,'" U.S.-China Relations and China's Integration with the World (Aspen Institute) 19, no 1 (2004).

Minxin Pei is similarly pessimistic, writing "The CCP's base of social support has substantially eroded, and is now an elite-based Party. The party suffers from an acute identity crisis and has no values or ideology, causing widespread cynicism and disenchantment among the masses towards the ruling elite."[276] Rather than popular revolution, Pei predicts that the Communist Party will continue the trend of becoming increasingly ineffectual as it loses popular support, leading to a period of grinding, protracted stagnation.[277]

If the Tuidang activists do as they promise—refusing to take orders to arrest innocents, for instance, and ceasing to partake in party activities these are still only passive means of resistance—they are withdrawing support, but not necessarily making overt challenges. As of yet, there is no evidence that Tuidang participants are preparing for a more proactive assault on the foundations of the party's power, and the movement's organizers have not advocated for public protests. If this state persists, it could expedite the process Minxin Pei describes, wherein a withdrawal of enthusiasm and support for official policies and initiatives leads to the party decaying and losing effectiveness.

If anyone could describe how Tuidang organizers themselves hope to see change come about, Thomas Jefferson probably came closest when he declared: "Enlighten the people generally, and tyranny and oppression of body and mind will vanish like evil spirits at the dawn of day."[278] That is to say, Tuidang organizers do not have a specific vision of how to manifest regime change, and as explained earlier in this paper, they do not explicitly seek it; they simply hope that as people choose to put conscience over expedience, the party will no longer hold dominion over them, and will collapse. For this reason, I believe it is unlikely that the Tuidang movement will directly lead to a popular revolt or even large-scale protests against the party. Though I might be disproven, I cannot simagine Dajiyuan deciding one day, when conditions are right, to issue calls for Tuidang participants to take their frustrations

[276] Minxin Pei, qut in Shambaugh, Atrophy and Adaptation, p 29 - 30.
[277] Minxin Pei, China's Trapped Transition: The Limits of Developmental Autocracy (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), pp 210-212.
[278] Thomas Jefferson, letter to P. S. du Pont de Nemours, April 24, 1816.

to the streets. It is entirely possible, however, that some of its individuals participants may choose to partake in such activities at some point in the future. And if so, perhaps many of them would not protest were it not for having read Jiuping or issuing a Tuidang statement.

At the current scale, passive resistance is not going to precipitate the downfall of the CCP, and the Tuidang movement probably needs hundreds of millions more participants before that tipping point can be reached, wherein the withdrawal of popular support for the party becomes so acute and crippling that regime change becomes unavoidable. Reaching that number may take many more years, if it can be reached at all. At the very least, however, the Tuidang movement has shown that it has the ability to endure official suppression and to continually inspire and unite Chinese citizens under its banner. For now, at least, Tuidang participants continue waiting for the day when the water sinks the boat, and the Communist Party retreats from the stage of history. Whether they should have their wish fulfilled, and whether it can be accomplished peacefully, "will depend on the changes made in the heart of every Chinese citizen."[279]

[279] Nine Commentaries on the Communist Party, p. 312

AFTERWORD

When I began this project, I hoped to uncover something of the workings, the scope, and the impact of the Tuidang movement. I wanted to understand why and how people participate, and perhaps contribute to the wider discourse on protest and dissent in China. I did not expect that in this process my own deepest assumptions and feelings about China would change, yet that is precisely what happened.

I have long held a deep admiration for China's history, arts, literature and above all else, its rich moral and spiritual traditions. Yet I have always been at a loss of how to reconcile such an extraordinary history with the madness and cruelty of modern China. Who were these people, I would silently wonder, who beat their teachers in the streets in the Cultural Revolution? Who were they who would tear down centuries-old temples and shatter their treasures? How could they have watched, once upon a time, their classmates shot down on Chang'an Avenue, only to turn around to defend the ruling party? And who are they who could report on their elderly neighbor for practicing meditation, knowing that in so doing, they are sending them into the embrace of torturers. I could not answer these questions, and dared not ponder them aloud, fearing what the answer would be. In the depths of my mind, I worried that there may not be hope for a free China, and more troubling than that, I worried that many of China's people may not be worth hoping for.

After months spent poring over hundreds of Tuidang statements, I changed my mind. I can say now that whatever the end result of the Tuidang movement, I am convinced that China's people are worthy of their name. I have found in the Tuidang statements evidence in abundance of their courage, perseverance, and integrity, and I end this research project with a deeper appreciation of all that they have endured. The Chinese citizens who have denounced the Communist Party, however many of them there are, have rekindled my hope for the China's future. Though their country is not yet free of the Communist Party, their hearts are.

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