

## China's state media lead coverage astray

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### Commentary

That is especially true for media relying on wire content. Canada's major newspapers including the Toronto Star, Globe and Mail, and Toronto Sun, have all run wire stories along those lines.

But the Chinese regime has gone a step further to massage the message. During the riots in Tibet, the regime stoked the ire of international media by keeping them locked out. In Xinjiang they have brought them in on guided tours, though reporters have not been allowed to interview anyone without their cadre handler.

"They're getting more sophisticated. They learn from past mistakes," Xiao Qiang, a journalism professor at the University of California who closely follows the regime's media controls told the New York Times. He said the new tactic aims to keep foreign media in check.

The success of that effort can be seen in a Globe and Mail headline for a story by a reporter there to cover the unrest. The headline read: "Internet restricted

to prevent organizing of protests."

Most experts on China's media, including Xiao, have framed the regime's efforts to cut off all communications in the region as an attempt to keep uncensored sensitive content—such as evidence of the attacks against Uyghurs—from getting out, much as it did at the beginning of the unrest. As the crackdown began, people in Urumqi posted videos taken with cell phones and digital cameras on the net that showed events in the city.

Tala Dowlatshahi, with Reporters Without Borders in New York, said more than 50 Uyghur-language In-

ternet forums were closed yesterday, and other communications including Twitter were cut back.

"The people of that region are completely cut off from the rest of the world," she said. "I don't have a lot of answers for you but I can tell you that we are not getting the real story."

Uyghurs in Canada say that friends and family have disappeared from instant messenger services, don't answer their cell phones or reply to e-mails, and their landlines register permanent busy signals.

They later said police went door-to-door arresting male inhabitants. That allegation was repeated by a crowd of Uyghur women in Xinjiang who approached police in front of visiting reporters and demanded their loved ones be released.

News reports about Xinjiang that sourced Chinese state media also failed to mention that these media are commonly regarded as propaganda tools of the communist regime.

"[News media] should be greatly concerned about the accuracy of any reports by Chinese state media because Chinese state media reports

one side," Dowlatshahi said, noting that all coverage serves the regime's political interests.

Also missing from most reports has been any real explanation of the cause of the Uyghur unrest.

The history of Xinjiang is remarkably similar to Tibet though not nearly as well known. Both regions were populated by distinct ethnicities with unique languages and religious traditions. Xinjiang, called East Turkestan by Uyghurs, has historically struggled against Chinese rule, at times being a part of some Chinese dynasties, at other times independent or under other rule.

When the Chinese Communist Party came to power in 1949, the new regime worked quickly to crush any independence of the region. Amnesty International says gross human rights violations have occurred since then.

In an effort to overwrite the region's distinct ethnic characteristics, the Chinese regime has suppressed traditional religious and cultural traditions. It has also made an intensive effort to have Han Chinese move to the area and displace the Uyghur minority. According to Amnesty, in 1949 the local Turkic population, the majority of whom were Uyghur, accounted for at least 93 percent of the region's population; today the population is roughly half Uyghur and half ethnic Chinese.

Restrictions in the area increased through the late 1990s and the Uyghurs watched their social, economic, and cultural rights steadily erode.

"Economic development in the region has largely bypassed the local ethnic population, and they have faced increased restrictions. This trend has exacerbated long-standing ethnic tensions between Uyghurs and Han Chinese in the region, and contributed to the escalation of violence," said A.I.

Recent policies have seen Uyghur families coerced into sending their children to inland schools and their young women to work in inland cities. Few of the women ever return and Uyghur activists say they are forced into prostitution.

"Over the years, attempts by Uyghurs to air their views or grievances and peacefully exercise their most fundamental human rights have been met with repression," said Amnesty, adding this repression has raised tensions.

Interestingly, this pattern is common throughout mainland China in recent years. Official reports of "mass incidents" grew by more than seven times over ten years to 74,000 in 2004. Since then, Chinese officials have been tight lipped about the details of unrest in China which suggests that the numbers have continued to rise.

Reports on other recent riots in China reveal a pattern: local people protest a perceived injustice linked to government corruption or police



Chinese soldiers patrol the area where Han Chinese gathered in the centre of Urumqi in China's Xinjiang Autonomous Region July 8, 2009. At least 156 people have been killed in rioting in China's northwestern Xinjiang region, with the government blaming exiled separatists for the traditionally Muslim area's worst case of unrest in years. REUTERS/NIR ELIAS

brutality.

The protest is quashed by police, while the perceived injustice is not addressed. The often heavy-handed response then triggers further protests, some of which become violent. The protests then turn more squarely against the regime and sometimes involve damage to government vehicles and buildings.

Riots with similar scenarios occurred in Shishou city in Hubei province in June and Longnan city in Gansu province last November. Uyghurs say this is also what happened in Urumqi.

Uyghurs in Canada and the U.S. say it has been disturbing to watch media in those countries follow the story lines of Chinese state media.

"Most of the media just show [the] Chinese side, take the Chinese media's pictures and photos," said Rukiye Turdesh, president of the Uyghur Canadian Society.

Chinese state media reports focused on Han Chinese, she said, and presented Uyghurs as violently attacking Han Chinese people. Western media then followed suit.

"They don't show any pictures of how Uyghurs are killed. They don't say anything about the Uyighurs, what happened to the Uyghurs, they

just say the Chinese were beaten, the Chinese were killed. What is this—it is not fair, right? They just copy the Chinese media," Turdesh said.

"Uyghurs are helpless, they don't have soldiers, they don't have guns, they have nothing. The Chinese have everything and the Chinese blocked the information. We don't know what is happening over there right now. Even if China killed all of them, massacred all of the Uyghurs, nobody could know."

Turdesh said it was unbearable to watch the footage that escaped China early in the crackdown showing Uyghurs being attacked and killed.

Alim Seytoff, general secretary of the Uyghur American Association, the umbrella group that the Chinese regime accuses of orchestrating the riots, said later coverage of the riots has improved, with more media talking to Uyghur sources. However he is still concerned that too many news sources give credence to Chinese state media.

"It is wrong for the international community to take words coming out of the Chinese media as facts. They should be cautious about that because it is always prejudiced and one-sided."

Like Tibetans, Uyghurs are con-

sistently portrayed as "barbaric, lazy, and stupid," said Alim.

The fact that Uyghurs are Muslim has further confused the issue, said D.J. McGuire, co-founder of the China e-Lobby and author of *Dragon in the Dark: How and Why Communist China Helps Our Enemies in the War on Terror*.

"The problem is that people have already been preconditioned to not believe what the cadres say on Tibet, so there was something of that in the Tibet coverage," said McGuire, referring to the fact that media coverage on the Tibet riots was more sympathetic to the Tibetans.

"But they don't understand that as much with what is going on in Urumqi [Xinjiang]," he added.

"After 9/11 it became much easier to paint any Muslim resistance as terrorist and anti-Western than it is to do the same with any resistance in Tibet, so that is what colours the coverage."

McGuire said any coverage that takes the Chinese regime's account at face value is not responsible.

"Until we are able to get people who speak without fear of reprisal from the communist regime, it is very difficult to find out what actually happened."

## Small Business Owners in the West Bank Struggle to Survive

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### SLOW ROAD TO RECOVERY

Seven years later, Nablus is slowly recovering and in recent weeks two nearby major checkpoints were either shut down or set to stay open for passage on a 24-hour basis. There are a total of 52 checkpoints throughout the West Bank.

But entrepreneurs like Sa'adi Mohammad Husein Ledawi still struggle with the simple logistics of doing business. Ledawi makes and sells iron bed frames to a neighboring company in Israel, and has been receiving microenterprise credit loans from UNRWA for the past several years.

"It's too difficult to go through checkpoints—it's a waste of time," said Mr. Ledawi in his shop on Salahadin Street in Nablus late last month. He makes such trips for business once or twice a week. "Yesterday I went to a checkpoint and it took me three-and-a-half hours."

Ledawi, who has been in business for 30 years, has a permit card from the Israeli government to go back and forth, but must reapply for it four times a year. The process takes at least one month, and sometimes he is denied a pass. But for Ledawi and many others in Nablus, suffering through administrative red tape is necessary for economic survival.

The disruption of trade relationships like Ledawi's were largely a result of Israeli policies following the second intifada, a Palestinian youth uprising against Israel which began in 2000 and heightened the clashes between Palestinians and Israelis. Checkpoint closures and access restrictions disrupted labor and trading relationships, as well as regional employment. Today, according to the CIA Factbook, the unemployment rate in the West Bank is a whopping 16.3 percent.

"In these days, the market in Israel is many times better than Nablus," said Mr. Ledawi. "Without the



UNRWA representative Ibrahim Jaber talks with clients in his office in Nablus, in the West Bank. GENEVIEVE LONG/THE EPOCH TIMES

market in Israel, I would have to close my business."

### AN ABUNDANCE OF CHALLENGES

Ledawi is not UNRWA's only client in Nablus who is having trouble staying afloat. Jawed Fayed Abdelqader Haj Mohammad operates a shoe factory with his two sons and sells the shoes through in Israel. Before 2002, he had 16 employees and sold to several Israeli clients. Now it is only him and his sons and he sells to one client. In 2005, Haj Mohammad started getting UNRWA loans in order to stay afloat.

"It is better than nothing—it helps a little," said Mr. Haj Mohammed from behind his desk on the top floor of his small factory in Nablus. All of the materials he uses in his handmade shoes are local, but that's not a very strong selling point these days. Haj Mohammed says after the intifada, cheap shoes from China started to flow into Israel, undercutting the profit he can make on his product. A pair of shoes costs about US \$8 (CA\$9.3) to make, and sells for about \$11 (CA\$12.8)—a profit margin Haj Mohammad calls "good" in light of competition from China.

"There is no control on imports," said Mr. Haj Mohammad.

On the other side of town, Amir Abed Sayed's paper product factory has been in business for 22 years, but just last year starting making a profit again after 7 years of slow and laborious economic recovery. The sheer cost of jumping through administrative and security checkpoints makes it difficult for him to compete. There are also challenges with delivering products, as Sayed does not have permission to cross into Israel.

"Sometimes goods get destroyed from loading and unloading because of being lifted with the forklift," said Mr. Sayed, who adds that the cost of transport is almost prohibitive. "Sometimes the cost from here to Israel is more than bringing raw goods from Turkey."

Sayed also faces challenges with the most basic of business practices: meetings. Since he can't cross into Israel he has to find other ways to meet with clients.

"Sometimes we meet in the street, most of the time we communicate by phone and email," said Mr. Sayed. "Sometimes we find a gas station and ask if they have chairs."

## Ousted Honduran Leader Demands Rivals Give Up Power

SAN JOSE, Costa Rica—Ousted Honduran President Manuel Zelaya said on Wednesday he expected the leaders of last month's military coup to announce in the next 24 hours they were quitting power to allow his reinstatement.

Arriving in Costa Rica for talks on Thursday with his rivals, under the mediation of Costa Rican President Oscar Arias, Zelaya repeated his position that he would only discuss his return to office in the poor Central American country.

"My presence here is not a negotiation," Zelaya, wearing his trademark white cowboy hat, told reporters. He noted that the world had widely condemned his June 28 ouster, which installed Roberto Micheletti as a caretaker president.

Zelaya, who insists only his immediate return to office can restore order in his coffee and textile exporting nation, called Micheletti a "coup-monger" and said he expected his rivals to announce they were surrendering power within a day.

He said doing so would be "the most honorable thing for democracy in Latin America."

Arias, a Nobel Peace Prize winner and an experienced regional mediator, will host the talks on Thursday aimed at finding a solution to the crisis triggered by the Honduran coup, which has stoked tensions in Central America.

Both the United States, facing a major test of President Barack Obama's promise to improve U.S. ties with Latin America, and the Organization of American States are backing the mediation.

Venezuela, whose firebrand leftist President Hugo Chavez is an ally of Zelaya, said it was halting oil supplies to Honduras until the toppled president was reinstated. Micheletti, who was installed by the nation's Congress, agreed to the talks in San Jose but was coy about whether he would attend in person or send envoys. He said he was consulting aides about security.

### GIVING DIALOGUE A CHANCE

The interim Honduran leader, a former Zelaya ally who opposed his shift to the left, said on Wednesday he sought dialogue and a solution that would bring peace to his country and "sustain democracy".

Micheletti has said he will not negotiate the ousted president's return to power, insisting his removal was a defense of the constitution and that Zelaya was acting illegally by trying to remove presidential term limits.

"This isn't a situation that can be resolved in a blink of an eye," Carlos Lopez, designated by Micheletti as envoy to the United Nations, said in the Honduran capital Tegucigalpa. He repeated the coup leaders' assertion that Zelaya would face charges if he returned.

Obama's administration has condemned the coup and supported Zelaya despite expressing misgivings about his policies and political allegiances. But it faced criticism at home from some Republican senators who questioned what they called "one-sided support" for Zelaya.

The United States appears to have persuaded Zelaya to give the talks a chance and refrain from trying to return to power by force. He tried to fly home on Sunday, but authorities in Honduras stopped his plane from landing while his supporters clashed with troops.

At least one person was killed on Sunday in the unrest, and U.S.-based Human Rights Watch said it had evidence suggesting the soldiers may have opened fire on unarmed demonstrators. It called for an independent investigation.

The OAS on Saturday suspended Honduras after the caretaker government refused to reinstate Zelaya.

The Honduran coup has stoked tensions in Central America, where Arias won a Nobel Peace Prize in 1987 for helping to end a series of civil wars and insurgencies tied to the Cold War.

Lopez gave an apparent warning to Zelaya's leftist allies, which in-



A truck waits to pass through a barricade erected by supporters of ousted Honduran President Manuel Zelaya on the road that leads to Nicaragua, during a protest against the military coup in the outskirts of Tegucigalpa. ELMER MARTINEZ/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

clude Venezuela and Cuba, against trying to restore him to office by force. "We hope there's not going to be interference by outside countries," he said.

Zelaya's opponents say the logging magnate, who took office in 2006 and was due to leave power in 2010, had increasingly allied himself with Chavez and that his presidential term limit effort was influenced by the Venezuelan, a fierce U.S. critic.

Zelaya told Chilean television he had never proposed his own re-election, adding that he could be pushed forward the next elections, which are scheduled for November.

Some analysts expressed skepticism about the talks. "It is difficult to see how this mediation will succeed so long as the coup government knows that they can stall out the rest of Zelaya's term," said Mark Weisbrot, co-director of the U.S.-based Center for Economic and Policy Research think tank.

Seventeen Republicans in the U.S. Senate, which is controlled by Obama's Democratic Party, sent a letter to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton asking the administration to reassess its position on the coup and urging it not to cut assistance to Honduras.

U.S. officials say the aid is under review.