

**THE CNA CORPORATION'S
CHINA STUDIES CENTER**

**BLOGGERS AND CENSORS:
CHINESE MEDIA IN THE INTERNET AGE**

**BREAKFAST AND A DISCUSSION
WITH
REBECCA MACKINNON**

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**THE CITY CLUB OF WASHINGTON
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DAVID FINKELSTEIN: Welcome to the City Club of Washington, which is the downtown headquarters for events sponsored by the CNA Corporation's China Studies Center. For those I haven't met before, welcome. I'm Dave Finkelstein, the director of the China Studies Center. The mission of our center is to provide the public, business leaders, and government officials with the best possible insights into the dynamics and implications of a changing China. Now, whether conducting public events such as our event today or producing written analyses, the Center adheres to the CNA Corporation's hallmarks of empiricism, non-partisanship, and the inclusivity that befits a 501c3 non-profit organization.

This morning we will continue our year-long expert lecture series. The entire series is entitled, China's Challenges and the Challenge of China. And over the course of the next year, we shall be inviting renowned specialists to speak to the many significant changes China is undergoing at home, domestically, as well as the changing face of China abroad and the implications thereof for a wide range of constituents in the United States and beyond.

Now, this morning we're going to turn to the subject of China's changing media, a topic we at CNA and the China Studies Center has been looking for a few years by now. And, in many ways, I think that the Chinese media as a topic is a microcosm of the contradictions inherent in today's China. As the government struggles to balance the needs of a citizenry that's hungry for information and an economy that demands information, balancing that against a traditional style of governance in which the Chinese government has owned a monopoly on information.

So today's speaker is going to help us navigate this important topic and she is going to focus on the Internet in China. And to properly introduce our speaker today who came all the way from Hong Kong, Rebecca MacKinnon, we're going to ask our deputy director, Kristen Gunness to come on up and tell us more about our guest speaker. Thanks. (Applause.)

KRISTEN GUNNESS: Thank you and good morning. My name is Kristen Gunness and I'm the deputy director of the China Studies Center. Today I have the great pleasure of introducing our guest speaker for this event, Ms. Rebecca MacKinnon. Many of you know Rebecca for her excellent and insightful reporting on critical China issues as CNN's Beijing correspondent and bureau chief from 1998 to 2001. In recent years, she has held numerous prestigious positions as a fellow at the Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics, and Public Policy at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government and most recently as a professor at the University of Hong Kong where she teaches classes on new media.

The title of Rebecca's talk today is "Censors and Bloggers: China's Media in the Internet Age." I can think of no better time to have this discussion than now, as we watch the Googles and Yahoos of the world navigate the stormy waters of censorship and of operating in a country with a largely state-controlled media while balancing public opinion in the West or as we witness the significant socioeconomic changes underway in

China today. The Internet and greater access to outside information in Chinese society are essential elements that enable a dynamic Chinese public discourse on a spectrum of social and political issues. What this discourse means for China's political system, how China's media policy is developing, and what these changes mean for U.S. policy towards China are topics on which we look forward to hearing Rebecca's insights. And without further ado, Rebecca MacKinnon. (Applause.)

REBECCA MACKINNON: Thanks very much. I'm going to try and liberate this thing. There we go. (Speaks in Chinese.) Before I get going, I just want to apologize if I'm sounding a little hoarse, if I happen to cough at some point or sniffle and so on, I promise you despite having come from Hong Kong, I do not have SARS and I do not have bird flu. It's just a common cold, so don't worry, don't be scared. Everything is fine, no need to panic, run away.

Anyway, just to start out, this talk is going to try and navigate a lot of the opposites and contradictions that we see in China today and the fact that one thing that I've always found reporting from China and then trying to analyze anything about China is that anything you say about China, the opposite can be proven true pretty much by somebody and various examples can be brought up. And so this always makes it very difficult to make any kind of definitive conclusion with confidence about anything going on in China, other than to point out lots of contradictory things and try and pinpoint some trends and raise a lot of questions.

And so one of the contradictions is that in China – of course, China is not a democracy. You have a state-controlled media; you have a large number of journalists in jail, the largest list of cyber dissidents in jail. Yet, at the same time, when you're surfing the Chinese Internet – oops, did I press the wrong button – you find this. No, I'm kidding. You get this. (Backstreet Boys song plays.) Notice the guy playing video games. These guys are the Backdoor Boys; they are Internet celebrities not only in China, but globally. And these are art students who just one day – they were horsing around with their webcam and they filmed this silly lip synch and they uploaded it onto the Internet and they became famous. And it went onto YouTube; it went onto all the Chinese video sharing sites and so on.

And you know, do these guys look like they're repressed and oppressed and waiting for Americans to save them? (Backstreet Boys song plays again.) No, they are having fun. They are being creative. They're becoming famous. This is a fan site that was developed for these guys in which they did all kinds of versions. And they've now gotten entertainment contracts and they've been on TV and they're famous. Their careers are made. And this is one example of how in the past for somebody to become famous in China, you really had to wait for some cultural gatekeeper to let you on TV, to let you get published and so on. But increasingly, there are young people who are becoming celebrities just because they horsed around with a webcam in their dormitory and stuck it on the Internet and now they're famous and also economically, they're also set.

And so these guys, if you go to them and you ask them, do you feel that your freedom of speech is limited, they will probably say, no, because they're not very political people to begin with and they've benefited greatly from what they've been able to do.

China now has upwards of 50 million blogs and blogs are a kind of basically self-published website that you publish in reverse chronological order and I'll talk more about blogs. But many people in China first came to know about blogs because of this woman, Mutsa Mei (ph) who wrote openly about her sex life on her blog everyday and about all the men she was sleeping with. And again, this was another example of – you know, her book – she eventually wrote a book and it was not allowed to be sold in official stores and so on, but her career is made. She's so famous, it really doesn't matter.

You also have people like Yang-shun Gang (ph) who's a high school teacher out in a third tier city who put an mp3 song called "Mice love Rice" up on the Internet and he also has gotten record contracts and so on. You also have spoofs that are happening. There was a famous example last year where Chen Kaige, the famous director who had done "Farewell to My Concubine", he did this new movie called "The Promise" and basically people in China thought it was overpriced and not very good. And so a blogger made a spoof of this movie called "The Bloody Incident over a Steamed Bun" and basically revoiced it into an eight-minute video that turned it into a domestic dispute basically in which somebody kills somebody with a meat cleaver and so on. And Chen Kaige, the director, tried to sue this guy for copyright violation, but it turned out that basically the Chinese netizens were on this guy's side against Chen Kaige and Chen Kaige just kind of gave up.

And so these are all examples of how despite the fact that there are political controls, culturally increasingly the gates have been crashed by the Internet. And then we also have this example of the Supergirl, which is more kind of TV and cell phone voting where back in 2005, TV viewers got to vote for their favorite singer and Li Yuchun became number one and it was somewhat controversial because it had turned out that apparently she wouldn't have been the authorities' choice, but she was extremely popular. And some bloggers – actually, a Chinese blogger wrote that, well, you know, we can't vote for our leaders, but at least we can vote for a girl we like, and so that's at least something. But you know, he wrote this and nobody censored him when he wrote this.

And so we have this situation now with China where the cultural gates really have been crashed to a large extent. I mean, certainly, there are efforts to still control what's going on television and what's in the magazines and so on. But you are seeing popular icons becoming famous through the Internet.

What you are not seeing in China is you are not seeing political leaders emerging from the Internet. And you are not going to see that happening any time soon, I would argue. And the reason is because of what many people in China like to call the Great Firewall, which is the modern-day electronic version of the Great Wall and which is

basically China's system of censorship. And just as with the ancient Great Wall, it didn't actually keep all the barbarians out or all the Chinese in; the Great Firewall, electronically, doesn't keep everything out or everything in either. But the question is: is it effective enough? And I'm going to talk a bit more in a minute about how censorship works technically and socially and politically, but I think one thing that we need to think about is how do you define success of censorship and media control?

And I think a lot of times when people are analyzing or trying to define whether censorship in China is successful, I think sometimes we make the mistake of saying it fails if anything gets in or out, that if any information can get through, then censorship is a failure. Well, if that was the regime's definition of censorship's success or failure, China would be North Korea, right? And China's not North Korea. China, in '79, made a decision not to be North Korea and to open the door and that flies would come in. And I would argue, really, that the Internet is yet another open door and there's been a decision made that for the sake of economic development, there are going to be some more flies coming in and out and so on and you just need to sort out your screens and your fly swatters, but you're not going to get it 100 percent.

So the way I tend to look at whether or not censorship and media controls are successful is not whether, you know, is anybody getting any information from Human Rights Watch and if they do, then censorship is a failure, or is information getting around about – are people managing to complain about their leaders online in a certain forum and is that proof that censorship is a failure. I think really the ultimate definition of success is whether the Communist Party stays in power or not and the extent to which media controls and censorship prevent alternative leaders, alternative political organization from emerging out of the Internet in the way you see popular stars emerging out of the Internet, to the extent to which they're able to prevent that, the media controls are successful, combined with the fact that you need the Internet, you need free flow of information to a significant and sufficient amount in order for economic growth and business to happen.

So talking a little bit about – let me just check my time here – talking a little bit about how the Internet censorship system works. This is a slightly oversimplified diagram, but basically the international Internet enters China at about nine points. And it's going through these state gateways, these state routers, which have the technology installed which will – the same technology on a Cisco Router that will filter out viruses and worms will also filter out political speech; in other words, you can plug into the router thousands of URLs, Internet addresses, that you want blocked and also key words and so on. And so at various levels, both at the national gateway level and then China has a lot of Internet service providers, within China they also have been told to plug in very sensitive words, sensitive addresses and so on, so that when you try to access certain websites within China, you'll get an error page like this. So this is what you get on your computer if you try to access Human Rights Watch from inside China. So that's kind of what the Great Firewall looks like.

There's also censorship that happens – it's basically outsourced to private companies. So for instance, this is the censorship that takes place on one particular Chinese blog-hosting service; this is basically the back end where the user gets to type in their content that they want to publish on the web on their own personal webpage. And what happens is that the software that these companies have set up for their users will have lots of keywords plugged into it, so in this case, one of the most sensitive key words is Falun Gong. When you try and publish an item on your blog that has Falun Gong in it, you'll get this error message saying that you've used a sensitive word in this item and we are trying to develop healthily and you should not use certain types of words and please try again without those words. And so this is something not being done by the government directly, but by the business that is hosting this content service for bloggers in China.

And most of China's upwards of 50 million bloggers are using Chinese-hosted blogging services because a lot of the internationally hosted blogging services are blocked or hard to access. MSN Spaces, run by Microsoft, also does some filtering of content for its Chinese language sites so that it doesn't get blocked inside China. So in the titles of blog posts, you also get these error messages if you're using certain overly sensitive words. Also, on search engines, this is Baidu, which is the main competitor to Google, and Baidu filters out a lot of sensitive URLs, websites, as well as key words, and so when I did a search for Dong Zhou, which is a village where police shot protesters in 2005, the results – I got results, but the results that came up did not include any sensitive information, whereas on Google, interestingly Google has a Chinese search engine inside China and also one – you know, it's regular google.com and you got some sensitive information on google.cn, but not as much as you got on the regular google.com. And this is again showing how all these different businesses are filtering different things to different degrees.

You are certainly seeing that Chinese Internet users to a certain degree are chaffing against this. This is Flickr, which is a photo-sharing service, an international photo-sharing service now owned by Yahoo! and there are quite a number of Chinese users on it. And as you'll see here, GFW is sort of the code word for Great Firewall and we've got some little obscenity referring to the GFW put up there by a Chinese blogger as a statement – a little protest there. This little voodoo doll here appeared on quite a number of Chinese blogs last year. There was a period around the June 4th anniversary when google.com got completely blocked for a period of time and on a bunch of blogs this little voodoo doll appeared basically saying that whoever is causing Google to be blocked, I've put a needle in their heart. (Chuckles.)

And so there's definitely a sense that people are a bit frustrated, at least certain people in China are frustrated by the censorship. But the question is: to what extent is the censorship successful or not? Technically, it's a failure because you can get around the censorship if you have the right technology to do so. There are proxy servers that you can use; there's other things.

But socially and politically, I think we're increasingly finding it's successful enough to be successful in the terms that I think the regime would consider important, which is no alternative leaders or movements are emerging from the Internet and the Communist Party's remaining in power. There was a – the Academy of Social Sciences recently did a survey to find out how many Internet users in China – well, they did a survey asking a lot of things, including how many Internet users use proxy servers to get around blockages. And they're finding that actually most Chinese Internet users are not using proxy servers and this is consistent with anecdotal evidence I've been getting from just asking a lot of Chinese Internet users and bloggers, you know, do the people around you use proxy servers very often.

And people tend to, when I ask them, they say – people tend to guesstimate that less than five percent of the people that they know actually do use proxy servers on a regular basis and that anecdotally, again, some of the reasons given are that – again, most people aren't that political and so they feel that they have plenty to do. And as you see, there's plenty of entertainment to be had on the Chinese Internet, plenty of things to talk about, plenty of things to do without having to go to the Human Rights Watch Chinese site. And so that's one issue.

The other is just that people don't know what they don't know. And they don't kind of come up against the lack of information until something happens to them. So this is one situation, this is a blog written by a woman named Nina Wu, whose brother Wu Hao (ph) got detained for about five months last year without charge, without access to a lawyer. She started writing about it about a month into the experience, talking about her efforts to get him released, her efforts to get him representation and so on. Her blog did get blocked within China fairly fast.

But she wrote an interesting post at one point in which she described how she's an investment banker and she speaks English and so on and that until her brother had gotten detained in this manner, she writes, before I did not believe in Internet censorship, this was because I used to visit mostly finance and investment websites which rarely had problems; only when I faced a serious predicament did I discover this was a real problem. This is a very educated woman, quite Westernized, and she didn't realize that there is the extent of censorship that there is because she hadn't gone looking for what might be out there.

And this is what one Chinese blogger named Isaac Mao describes as people don't know what they don't know. And so to that extent, if you are not casually running across information that presents a different point of view, you may not take the time to actually go looking for it because you just don't know that it's out there. You might also think that it's just going to be too troublesome.

This is an example of Zeng Jinyan. Zeng Jinyan was named in the Time 100 influential people – this is her blog – she's the wife of an AIDS activist, Hu Jia, and she was described by Arianna Huffington as Tiananmen 2.0 and that her blog talking about how her husband had been detained for a while and she's posting pictures of the cars that

are following them and so on and how this is kind of a great new form of resistance. The problem is nobody in China knows who she is because her blog is blocked. And if you do a survey of Chinese bloggers, most people don't know who she is at all. So not quite Tiananmen 2.0 if nobody's heard of the protester and doesn't know that the protest is happening.

Just to move along. This is a Chinese blogger conference that I attended in 2006 in Hangzhou. It was attended by a couple hundred people. It nearly got shut down because there was concern that perhaps some politically sensitive bloggers might be showing up, although it was very much focused on the non-political side of things. And so basically for two days, people got up and talked about how school teachers were using blogs to communicate with one another over curriculum and how the technology was enabling business to collaborate better, how charities were able to raise money through blogs, and really kind of a glass half full scenario, that people were not really talking about censorship or anything like that, but just talking about how the technology despite the fact that there's a line that you don't cross and there's a lot of unspoken things you don't talk about, a real discussion of the possibilities and the fact that these young people really felt that were able to do a great deal more than ever before, despite the fact maybe they can't do a hundred percent everything, but still it's a real gain.

And there was a real sense there that there were certain things they just weren't going to talk about. And it wasn't that they were feeling oppressed about not being able to talk about it, it was an acceptance that this was a reality, there are certain places you don't go in your discussions if you want to be able to have them, but a real desire to protect the gains that people had had and a real feeling of investment in not wanting to push things too far because many of these people also had businesses they wanted to protect.

This was the first annual Chinese blogger conference, which was run live on the Internet and there was a live online chat; people also from the conference covering it live with pictures which they were posting on the Internet. Now, to tie this in with journalism and what's happening in the professional media with China, there's this blogger and journalist named Jiao Jing (ph) whose penname online, his Chinese blog, is Michael Antee (ph) and he's actually going to be doing a Neiman Fellowship this year at Harvard. But he recently gave a talk in which he said, there's this contradictory thing going on in China right now, which is that media controls have grown tighter in the Hu Jintao era, as controlled to the Jiang Zemin era; in terms of what newspapers can do, in terms of what TV stations can do -- just in terms of what journalists can do officially in China, it's getting tighter.

But he said because of the Internet, because of all this discourse that is just proliferating online, people do not feel like there's less freedom overall; in fact, they feel like there's more freedom overall because there's a greater space for conversation that's been opened up by the Internet. And one thing he said, too, is that despite what he described as 1984-style control over journalists, he also pointed out that most Chinese journalists are quite liberal, that they really want to be professionals, they really want to

be real journalists as much as possible, and so that Chinese journalists are working within the system because they don't want to lose their jobs, but at the same time, are looking for opportunities to push things as far as they can, but without becoming dissidents because they don't want to become dissidents.

And one example of where this synergy really came up was many of you probably heard about the Nail House story where there was this couple in Chongqing who refused to leave their home and they resisted and they were the last house standing in the middle of this development. And basically this story became to be nationally known in China because somebody posted this amazing picture of this hold-out house on a – (audio break) – discussion board on a couple of them and then bloggers started reproducing it on their blogs and everybody was talking about this is the most awesome Nail House. Nail House is kind of the way that they describe hold-outs who are refusing to leave their homes in the face of developers.

And so it was kind of the bloggers and people in bulletin boards who brought this story to light. Media started to cover the story as well and lots of journalists went down to Chongqing and so on and there was this blogger whose penname is Zola who also went down. And there was a period of a few days where there was a ban on media coverage and Zola was one of the several bloggers who continued to report on events. But eventually the ban on media coverage got lifted because it was clearly so ineffectual.

And so then the Chinese media ended up doing stories about this again. But what you did see was that there was a lot of exchange of information going on between the professional journalists and the bloggers and that journalists were frequently using the fact that the story was so big on the Internet as an excuse with their editors why they had to cover it: we have to cover this because it's all over the Internet, it's just too blatant if we don't cover this.

One thing to point out, though –

(Long audio break.)

– that was exposed for having some – oops, the mike's not working very well, it's probably my fault – but a Taiwanese company, Fox Con was – there was a story first in a British newspaper exposing some bad labor practices of this factory that was making iPod components, then a couple of Chinese journalists went and did a story that basically paralleled this British story, exposing bad labor practices. The Chinese newspaper that did the story, it wasn't such a great story, basically they just aped the British story.

But anyway, Fox Con, the Taiwanese company then went and sued these Chinese journalists personally for basically all their assets and got the court to freeze their assets and so on. and this created a huge outcry and the Chinese press kind of rallied behind the journalists, but also a lot of individual journalists on their blogs were actually saying a lot more in defense, and there were a lot of other people who were sort of rallying around, you know, getting the wave of public opinion to be such that there was no – that Fox

Con, the Taiwanese company, basically had no choice but to back out of this lawsuit because public opinion just went too far against them.

There have been a few other cases. There was recently, just about a month ago, there was a judge who died in custody under very dodgy circumstances and a blog appeared online basically with pictures of his corpse that showed that it couldn't possibly have been a natural death and that this actually ended up causing the story to get into the press in China. There have been a couple of cases with natural disasters in Hae Lin Jung (ph) in 2005, there was a case – there was a flood where basically a whole lot of schoolchildren died and there was a big investigation into how these kids were put in this position and so on. There was a journalist who wasn't allowed to put very much of his reporting in his paper, but he put it – he basically gave it to the blogs and the blogs kind of published all his notes and so on. And then this story was able to actually go much further and then kind of went back into the press afterwards.

And so there are a lot of examples. One further example was the typhoon last year. On one of the official Internet news portals, (cena.com ?), one of the editors discovered that a meteorologist down south had his own personal blog and was writing about the typhoon conditions. And then what this editor did was took this guy's blog and started publishing it on the front page of the website. And so you're also starting to see a lot of that kind of thing where editors of these news sites are starting to scour the Internet for eyewitness bloggers who are blogging about things.

So you're seeing, I think, a much more complex media ecosystem emerging, despite the fact that there's a lot of media control, despite the fact that if anybody does try to organize anything online that relates to – okay, for instance, Michael Antee (ph), a blogger – the blogger who's going to be the Nieman Fellow – his blog got shut down because he was calling for a boycott of the Beijing News after the editors got fired there in late 2005.

And so the moment you see people calling for action of that kind, they get shut down very fast and you also see situations with the censorship where there will be some issue that will take place or some breaking problem that will take place and there will be a window of about 12 to 24 hours before the censorship on that particular key word sets in on the blogging platforms and on the search engines and on the bulletin boards. And during that window, there are actually people – and there's one guy in Hong Kong, particular, a guy named Roland Sung (ph) who has a blog – whose mission in life is to capture stuff before it gets taken down in that initial 12 to 24 hour period, preserve it on his own blog, and translate it. So you're starting to see people trying to find ways to keep this stuff alive.

But you're seeing a couple of regulatory failures recently that are partially due to media and bloggers kind of joining forces and pushing back against certain attempts to regulate. One is there was a real push over the past year by government regulators to require all blog-hosting systems to require that anybody who has an account – so anybody who's going to publish their own personal website on this system – had to use

their real name and their ID number and this had to be verified. And so basically, it would have eliminated anonymous speech online. And the businesses fought back; they said, in order to make this technically doable, number one, it might not be technically doable, and, number two, even to try, it's going to be so expensive, it's going to kill our businesses. They fought it and it's failed and the news actually just came this week, that basically the regulators admitted that it's not going to work and they've got some face-saving voluntary thing. But it's just not going to happen.

There was also an effort to basically ban breaking news, that there was a draft regulation that was proposed last year. And the discussion both on the blogs and in the newspapers opposing this basically led to it going nowhere – kind of a law that would have said that you can't report breaking news until it's approved, essentially, by the authorities. And people just said, look, that's going to take our entire country backward, that's not where we want to go. And that actually got some traction.

So I guess there's a lot of discussion and there's been – James Mann's got his book and – I'm just about done – (chuckles) – James Mann has his book out and various people are talking about various scenarios of where China is going and should we be assuming that the Internet is going to bring democracy to China. I think we should – I mean, Nick Kristof, the editor, about a year or so ago wrote an article in which he said the Chinese Communist Party is digging its grave by bringing the Chinese people broadband. I think that's somewhat over-simplistic. I think that what we're actually seeing here is a system in which the regime is managing to prevent the rise of any kind of viable alternative leadership, any viable political movements from happening, via the Internet. We're seeing nothing that remotely looks like the seeds of an Orange Revolution coming off of the Internet. That's basically – censorship and media controls are preventing that from happening so far.

But what we are seeing is –we are seeing a much larger space for discussion on a much broader range of other things. And what that really points to is not some kind of regime change that might be driven by Internet and media, but really what we may be seeing is that obviously there are problems, but might this greater space for discussion and negotiation enable a regime over time to become what we might call more participatory, which may not have anything to do with voting, but may have to do with other mechanisms through media, through the Internet, through technology, of soliciting views and getting people – finding ways to have a dialogue with the public in different ways and finding ways to be more accountable or, at least, to give people the sense that they have a place to blow off steam so that they won't go into the streets. So you could also take the more cynical view that this is basically giving everybody a place to talk so that they don't have to go outside and talk.

So that raises a lot of questions just, I think, also in terms of how we're looking at China's future and where the U.S. plays into that and how people in the States want to engage in that conversation that's very alive and very diverse online in China at this point. With that, I'll stop and I'm sure there's lots of people who have lots of ideas and thoughts and so on. Thanks. (Applause.)

MS. GUNNESS: (Off mike.)

Q: Julia Chang Bloch, U.S.-China Education Trust. Rebecca, that was a fabulous presentation as usual. My question is what is your view of the international media companies, like Yahoo! and Google, sort of complying with Chinese government regulations on censorship?

MS. MACKINNON: Yeah, well, I think – this is where I think some of these assumptions about what the Internet does and doesn't do, I think, very much comes into play. Yahoo! has – just so everybody, I'm sure probably most of you are familiar, but Yahoo! has handed over the information of at least four dissidents who used Yahoo!'s Chinese-hosted email service, resulting in at least four people going to jail in China. They also censor their search engine. Microsoft has censored Chinese bloggers in China; they also have a censored Chinese language search engine. Google is censoring its google.cn search engine. Google has made, actually – both Google and Microsoft have said that they have made a conscious decision not to provide hosted email services in China because they don't want to put in the same position that Yahoo! found itself in.

All of these companies say, though, that they're engaging in China because ultimately the Internet – it's better to be bringing the Internet and Internet services to China than not and there's a certain amount of – particularly coming from Yahoo!, this idea that China's going to democratize anyway and we're helping them do that just because we brought them the Internet and so the small details don't matter, and sort of the implication being that Shir Tao (ph) and these other three guys are just adequate collateral damage for China's ultimate democratization led by the Internet. That's a pretty naïve and weird view.

But yeah, there's also, though, a recognition by these companies that they kind of messed up a little bit or that they need to be thinking these things through a bit more, that when Yahoo! went in with its email service, it's pretty clear that they were not thinking through the implications of, okay, if you're going to offer an email service hosted on Chinese computer services, inside the PRC, you're in Chinese PRC jurisdiction which means you have to adhere to Chinese law. It's unreasonable to expect tekkie IT employees to be making judgments about whose data to hand over to the police and whose data not be handing over to the police.

So you're going to be in there; you're going to have to adhere by Chinese law. If the law defines crime to include political speech in certain cases, then it's inevitable that you're going to be contributing to what we consider human rights violations. And so basically you're going into a place like that essentially either saying you don't care or you just haven't thought it through. And it does seem probably – my sense from just talking to people I know at Yahoo! was that they just kind of went in there and they hadn't thought it through.

And companies coming later are trying to think this through a bit more. But there's a process actually going on right now that Google, Yahoo!, Microsoft, and Vodafone have signed on to publicly with a number of human rights groups and also academic institutions to try and develop a set of basically principles for human rights – basically for freedom of expression and privacy. That would be global because the point being that there's this global issue right now that you have Internet and technology companies that increasingly, they control our communications, they control our identities; they're here, governments are here, and the users are here. And increasingly, not just in China, but in pretty much every country, governments kind of – (audio break, tape change) -- can't be inconsistent from market to market; they've got to figure this out. And so, in a way, this whole situation with China is precipitating a rethink in a lot of companies about how to approach this globally. So it's going to be interesting to see where it leads.

But this process actually – the people involved with the process right now, it's mainly Western companies, but they're hoping to engage Asian companies, Chinese companies, and so on, with the idea being that this is a rule of law issue, this is kind of an accountability issue, that it's not necessarily a zero censorship issue, but it's how do you do this – how do you provide services to people in a way that's honest so that if somebody's signing up with your Internet, with your email service, they're very clear what you will do with their data and what they won't do so that, okay, maybe you are going to provide an email service in China, but Shir Tao (ph) would know before signing up that it's not a good idea for him to send political information via that service because the service will have made him aware of how his data is going to be used.

And so that's part of the problem as well, is that companies just need to be more honest and clear with users about how their stuff is being used. And as Chinese technology companies are going to globalize – and Baidu's already moving to Japan and – (unintelligible) – moving all over – I think they are going to want to find ways to reassure users globally that they can be trusted as well. And so again, this is kind of a good opportunity to establish some universal principles on that. It's a long answer, but it's an issue that I kind of care about.

Q: Rebecca, I'm Roy Kamphausen. I direct the Washington, D.C. office of the National Bureau of Asian Research and I was a military attaché in Beijing the same time you were bureau chief there. And thank you for your presentation; it was really intriguing and thought-provoking. Your last slide talking about the potential for participatory space, if only in a virtual way; I'm wondering if you might transport yourself back in time to eight years ago last week and sort of superimpose the phenomenon we have now on that series of circumstances after the inadvertent bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade. Does the space allow for things to be considered? Or is it a megaphone that makes things worse in a crisis?

MS. MACKINNON: That's a really good question and if that did happen today would the debate be more reasonable? That's hard to say. I guess the question is: how does one engage with that debate in a way that helps to bring – I mean, just to – I

remember because we were both there in Beijing after the bombing of the embassy in Belgrade and the riots outside the U.S. embassy and so on and that there were some Internet chat rooms at that time that were really quite vociferous that this couldn't possibly be a mistake and kind of – you found a lot of situations – and this is, again, I guess, one of the dangers as well because there were a lot of people in China at the time who could have accessed The New York Times; they knew how to use proxies; they knew how to get information from around the world. But they were choosing to believe what they were seeing in their national media.

And I think we continue to see that a lot. We see people have – they know that they can go and seek out alternative viewpoints and they're choosing not to seek out alternative viewpoints. And we're actually seeing in some surveys that the level of trust that people have for the national media versus overseas media is actually quite high in a number of surveys. And so I think that's a nationalism that continues to be live and well.

A couple years later during the spy plane situation, had it been up to the people – had it been up to China's netizens, that crew would still be in China in jail, I think – (chuckles) – and the foreign ministry was trying to be as reasonable as possible, despite the fact that much of the public thought they were being way too soft. And so yeah, you definitely do see that possibility for the megaphone for the echo chamber. And if there were a conflict with Taiwan, I think most of the people on China's Internet would probably choose to believe their government a lot more than they would choose to look for alternative points of view.

And I think part of it has to do with who people trust and who they trust to listen to. And on domestic issues, I think it's much easier because when people are being lied to, it becomes – you hear from people who you know who say, no, I saw something else, and okay, I trust that guy because I know where he's coming from so if he thinks that actually it happened differently down in whatever village, then maybe I'm more likely to believe it. So in a way, it's probably harder for very black and white views about domestic situations to perpetuate.

But I think with international situations, I think people get very nationalistic. I think people in China, particularly the people who are online, who are the educated elites for the most part at this point, they want to feel good about Chinese; they don't want to feel bad about being Chinese. It's sort of the same reason why people watch Fox News – (laughter) –

Q: Yeah, actually –

MS. MACKINNON: – they want to feel good about being American, rather than not. So there's definitely some of that as well.

Q: Yeah, I was going to mention – this is not a question, but a statement – that I'm glad you mentioned that, Roy, because it was actually the Internet activity around that event that actually got those of us at CNA interested in media studies because clearly

this was for us – I wasn't paying attention as much, but all of a sudden it was clear that something different was happening in the Chinese media and Huangsho Shibao (ph) and the Shaobaos (ph) and what was going on.

But what was really interesting about that particular moment in time was not just about the Chinese netizens and how they reacted to the incident itself, the bombing, the errant bombing, but that the Chinese netizenry were actually able, with other Chinese intellectuals weighing on, to question whether Deng Shao Ping's (ph) key note of The Times, Peace and Development – (speaks in Chinese) – was still operative in the international order. And when it got to that point –

MS. MACKINNON: Interesting, yeah.

Q: – then they had to cut off the debate. (Chuckles.)

MS. MACKINNON: Yeah. Well, and I think this is an interesting dichotomy and I'm really glad this question came up because I think increasingly we're seeing, I think, the masses online being more hard line than the regime on foreign policy in a lot of cases. Recently, there have been some incidents in Africa with Chinese workers and so on and in some of the forums, you see a lot of people saying, yeah, we should go in there, it's time to start sending troops out. Of course, the government's not going to do that anytime soon, but there's a lot – I think that, yeah, the public, at least the vocal public who are talking online, are more hard line than the regime. And one can continue to cite many, many examples of that.

When it comes to domestic stuff, then the push is the other way. So it's interesting: you have kind of a hard line, I think, bias on the Chinese Internet when it comes to foreign policy; with domestic stuff, you're seeing more space for debate, more questioning of a lot of things. And so that's – what does that mean for where China's going? Could you see a more pluralistic country? I mean, this again also challenges the assumption does a more pluralistic China necessarily mean it's going to be more friendly to the United States? Hard to say. (Chuckles.)

MR. : We have time for one more question.

Q: Okay, thank you. My name is Katherine Altoine (ph); I work for Radio Free Asia. Thank you, Rebecca, for this very incisive presentation of the state of censorship in China, which is extremely relevant to us at Radio Free Asia. You have not spoken, however, of the use that the Communist Party is making of the Internet. For example, is there really so-called Internet police that answers under-secret, undercover the chat rooms and other forums and seed the debate with pro-regime ideas?

MS. MACKINNON: Yeah, well, there's a figure going around somewhere between 30,000 and 40,000 Internet police and there's some dispute about where that number comes from. But I mean, certainly, there are Internet – there are in in all kind of various levels of the government, there are people who handle Internet issues, including

in the Public Security Bureau and the State Security Bureau and also in the – in all government bureaus. But I think a lot of the people who are – so there are people who are in charge of monitoring and following things on various levels and the most famous is in Shengen (ph) where the government website there has Jing Jing and Cha Cha and they are watching you and so on.

But a lot of the stuff that's happening in the chat rooms, like, for instance, in a lot of universities now, it's not police who are seeding the debates; it's student volunteers. And so, like a lot of the bulletin boards in a number of universities – and there was an article about this that I think it was Howard French did last year in which he interviewed a young woman who was one of the volunteers – I think it was at Fu Dan (ph) University or something – who spends a certain number of hours a day following the debates on the bulletin board chat rooms in her university, run by her university. And when she sees the discussions going in an overly negative way, she does her best to steer them in a more positive way. But she's not a policeperson; she's a volunteer and she's very proud of what she does. And by no means has she been coerced. I mean, I'm quite sure she very legitimately feels that she's doing her duty.

And I think this is one of the things that I think a lot of Americans misperceive or find it hard to understand that there are lots of young Chinese who are very proud to be helping their countrymen correct their thinking and proud to be helping their government guide their countrymen in correct thinking. And this is something that – it's not that everybody's being coerced to doing this. And I think there's a lot of reasons why. I think part of it is that these young people have not come into – have never come into contact with anything ugly about the regime. And so when they read stuff that's published by Human Rights Watch about Falun Gong people who got tortured, they say, oh, that's got to be negative propaganda, anti-Chinese propaganda coming from the West because I've never seen anything remotely resembling this in my life here in China.

And so the people who are online in China are those who are, in a way, least likely to believe stories of human rights abuses. And until they run across – like with Nina Wu, suddenly her brother disappears for five months and suddenly she's like, oh, wow, there's all this other information out there that I didn't know, but this, I think, one example of how it's really a light touch, it's not a heavy touch. It's not that Chinese netizens are out there just dying for all the information that they're failing to be given and waiting to be saved. It's very much that most people feel that they're freer than ever before and they're having a lot of fun and they're making videos and they're getting famous and they're meeting their future spouses online and they're playing games and they're too busy to think about what else might be there that they're not getting somehow.

MR. : (Off mike.)

(Applause.)

MR. FINKELSTEIN: Thank you for a wonderful and interesting and also thought-provoking talk, for coming all the way from Hong Kong to be here at breakfast on a Friday morning. As a token of our appreciation, you will receive the most coveted – (unintelligible) – with the China Studies Center logo on it –

MS. MACKINNON: Oh, wow.

MR. FINKELSTEIN: – to be cherished forever.

MS. MACKINNON: Absolutely.

MR. FINKELSTEIN: And as a save-the-date piece of information, our next event here at the City Club will be on the 19th of June; it will be an afternoon event where Elizabeth Economy from Council of Foreign Relations will be coming to speak about China's environmental challenges. You will be getting email invitations and please, if you have other folks that you think ought to be on our email list, do let us know. Thank you so much. (Applause.)

(END)