

## An “Anger-Venting” Mass Incident Catches the Attention of China’s Leadership

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On 28 June there was a major mass incident in Weng’an County in southwestern Guizhou, the poorest province in China. At least 10,000 people, and perhaps as many as 30,000, according to some reports, participated in the riot, in which police cars were overturned and burnt and the Public Security Bureau building set on fire. Video and still photographs of the event quickly made their way onto the Internet. Whether because of the inability to cover up the size of this incident, the approach of the start of the Olympics, or for other reasons, Chinese media coverage quickly switched to trying to explain the causes of this incident and to call for reforms to prevent similar confrontations in the future. Although the 28 June disturbance was particularly large in scale, similar incidents have been happening in China for at least the last four years. Unlike protestors over exorbitant taxation or land requisition, those participating in the Weng’an riot were not involved in the incident that set it off (the death of a girl), suggesting longstanding anger among the populace. Shortly after the Weng’an incident, another mass riot broke out in Menglian, Yunnan Province, showing that the conditions that brought about the Weng’an riot are not isolated. Preventing similar incidents in the future marks a serious challenge for the Chinese government.

On 28 June 2008, at least 10,000 and perhaps as many as 30,000 residents of Weng’an (瓮安) County in southwestern Guizhou Province converged on local government buildings, overturned and burnt police cars as they marched, and then set fire to the Public Security Bureau building. The Weng’an incident appears to have been the largest mass riot since the Wanzhou incident (in Chongqing) of 2004.

Weng’an County is located in central Guizhou, the poorest province in China, not far from Zunyi, the locale of the famous Zunyi meeting in January 1935 that marked Mao Zedong’s re-emergence as leader of the CCP. Like Zunyi, Weng’an is an old revolutionary area. It has a population of about 460,000 people, of whom about 20,000 are minority nationalities. It is an overwhelmingly agricultural area, with 90 percent of the population engaged in agriculture. The average income of the agricultural population is 2,000 yuan per capita. The main nonagricultural activity in the area is mining, particularly phosphorus; Weng’an is one of the three leading counties in phosphorus production. It also has coal.

This concentration of mineral wealth is at the center of Weng’an’s social and political problems. Local leaders have pushed for rapid exploitation of these resources,

and have done so at the expense of local residents. Residents that are in the way of expanding mines or hydropower facilities are routinely relocated with inadequate compensation. When the Goupitan hydropower station was built in 2004, more than 4,000 peasants were relocated while others refused to relocate. All complained bitterly about the low compensation they were offered. When county Party magistrate Wang Qi went to Jiangjiehe village, where most of the relocated peasants lived, residents blocked off the road and would not allow Wang and his entourage to leave unless he offered higher compensation. Soon the police showed up and over 30 villagers were injured. In 2007 the government, after demanding that all residents relocate, moved in with bulldozers and leveled houses and fruit trees. Fields were sprayed with herbicides to prevent crops from ripening. Some 1,000 villagers were thus forcibly relocated to Seven-Star village, where they continued to believe that their compensation was too low. Thus, tensions between cadres and residents have festered for years.<sup>1</sup>

As in many other mining areas, there is collusion in Weng'an between Party officials and mine owners, as well as much criminal activity. Gangs are apparently prevalent, with the Yushan ("Jade Mountain") Gang, formed in 1998, being the largest and most important. It is reported to have 50 big and small chieftains. According to *Southern Weekend*, gang members occupy the "top of the pyramid" in the mining sector. "Some mines would hardly proceed with their business operations if they didn't accept the gang's terms," one local resident was quoted as saying.<sup>2</sup> As reporting on the Weng'an incident brought out, much of the reason the Yushan Gang could not be rooted out was because of corrupt relations with the local police.

As this broad brush sketch suggests, the social order in Weng'an was problematic at best. In 2004 there were some 600 crimes committed, including murder, but only about half were solved, an unusually low rate for China. Even the schools were infested with gangs and gang-related violence. It was said the beating of teachers was not unusual.<sup>3</sup> Given such poor public order, people in Weng'an reported that they were afraid to venture out at night.

## The Weng'an Incident

On 22 June, a 16-year-old girl, Li Shufen, went to the Ximen River with three others, variably reported to be connected to political leaders. Late that night, officials came to her house and reported that Li had committed suicide. The three that had accompanied her to the river were released. The next day, her father, doubting the cause of death, requested an autopsy. Two days later, Li Shufen's uncle clashed with police at the public security bureau. Subsequently he was attacked along a road and severely beaten by unidentified people. Chinese media have not, to date, identified the perpetrators, but the way they emphasize that the case has not been cracked seems to suggest that they were gang members in league with the Public Security Bureau.<sup>4</sup>

On the morning of the 28<sup>th</sup> the Public Security Bureau notified Li's family that "since the cause of death has been ascertained, the preservation of her body is no longer

necessary” and demanded that the body be interred that day or the police would handle the matter themselves.<sup>5</sup> By this time, rumors were rife that the girl had been raped and murdered, presumably by someone politically well connected. So rather than calm the situation, the notification angered the crowd that had gathered around Li Shufen’s corpse, which lay near the Ximen River in an ice coffin. Two middle-school students held up a white banner reading “Seeking Redress for Injustice Done to the Masses” and the crowd began to march along the road that ran around the city. The road passed through Seven-Star Village, and apparently many discontented peasants joined the protest. No member of Li Shufen’s family participated in the march; indeed her direct family had all left Weng’an.<sup>6</sup>

By the time the marchers reached the county Party and government buildings their numbers had swelled to at least 10,000. The procession went to the county government building but no one came out to receive them. The crowd went on to the Public Security Bureau building 100 meters down the road. Xiao Song, the deputy county head in charge of letters and visits, arrived at the Public Security Bureau office about an hour after the crowd had converged. The situation quickly became heated. Xiao told the crowd to select five representatives, as they were supposed to according to the Regulations on Letters and Visits. A young man rushed forward and shouted at Xiao, “Your mother’s ass!” A county official told the crowd not to use dirty language to the county head, to which the crowd responded angrily, “Dickhead county head!” Police appeared and soon shoving began between them and the crowd. The crowd broke into the public security building and began smashing things and throwing bricks at the police. Seeing they were being videotaped, the crowd became even angrier. By the time it was over, 47 offices of the county public security bureau and 104 offices of the county government building were burned. More than 10 police cars were destroyed.<sup>7</sup> Copyright laws prohibit attaching photos or video footage, but interested readers can watch a CNN report at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jMAIEkcz22E&feature=related>.

## ‘Anger-Venting’ Mass Incidents

The Weng’an case is a particularly serious instance of a relatively new social phenomenon, what Yu Jianrong, a sociologist at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS), calls “anger-venting social incidents” (*shehui xiefen shijian*). The main characteristic of these anger-venting social incidents is that they reflect generalized anger that has built up over time and then is released when an incident, sometimes a relatively minor one, occurs. In a short period of time, large numbers of people—most of whom have no relationship to those involved in the incident—mobilize quickly and engage in sometimes extremely violent behavior. Contemporary communications technology such as cell phones, short text messaging, and the Internet, not only aid mobilization but quickly spread word of the incident far and wide, thwarting the efforts of local officials to suppress news. Such was certainly a factor in the Weng’an case.

Perhaps the first widely published case of this sort of anger-venting incident occurred in Wanzhou, a city along the Yangzi River under Chongqing Municipality, in

October 2004. The Wanzhou incident was triggered when a porter bumped into a passerby. The offended passerby slapped the porter, but when the porter refused to apologize, the passerby's husband came over and pretended he was a government official. All of a sudden a crowd emerged, and when the passerby and her husband got into a police car (the police were apparently trying to calm the situation by getting the couple away from the scene), people started yelling that the police and the "official" were in cahoots together. One thing led to another, and by evening over 10,000 people had gathered. Some stormed the local government building, smashing windows and furniture.<sup>8</sup>

A similar incident occurred in Chizhou, Anhui, in June 2005, when passengers in a car got into an argument, and then a fight, with a pedestrian. A crowd gathered, apparently siding with the pedestrian, who it seems was a poor person, against the wealthier passengers in the car. When the passengers were taken to the police station, the crowd, now numbering over 10,000, gathered around it, just as in Wanzhou. Violence soon broke out, severely damaging the police station, destroying four vehicles, and injuring several police officers.<sup>9</sup> Similar incidents have occurred in Rui'an, Zhejiang, Dazhu, Sichuan, Shanwei, Guangdong, and elsewhere.

As mentioned in *CLM 20* (Winter 2007), an investigation of a similar incident in Jintan, Jiangsu, found that 80 percent of participants had no connection to the incident (a financial scam) that had set off the protest. An exasperated official commented that these days, when a pedestrian slips and falls down on the street, instead of getting up, dusting himself off, and proceeding on his way, he is likely to get up and curse: "Those f\*cking cadres; they made the road out of doufu dregs!"<sup>10</sup>

Yu Jianrong attributes the emergence of these sorts of incidents to predatory development, the greater role security personnel are playing, and especially to popular suspicion of the judicial system. As Yu puts it, "The judiciary is the last resort for ordinary people who seek relief when their rights and interests have been violated. If the bottom line of judicial fairness is compromised, the public would lose the legitimate channel for voicing their views and demands, and it should not be surprising if they turn to non-institutionalized social forces to achieve fairness and vent their anger."<sup>11</sup> Where police and gangs work together and where the political system resorts too quickly to the use of force, residents cease to distinguish individual officials from local government and "considers the entire grassroots regime as an 'enemy'."<sup>12</sup>

## Political Reaction

The local official reaction to the Weng'an case was to dawdle, make excuses, and generally cover up what had happened. By 1 July, however, Beijing had intervened repeatedly and decisively. The tone of coverage changed, and, more important, coverage was extensive. Indeed, some very detailed reports have come out in the Chinese press and on the Internet. This marks a real change from the past, when such mass riots were covered mostly by the foreign press dealing with fragmentary information. It seems that

Beijing made a decision to look at the Weng'an case not as an isolated incident but rather as exemplifying a growing category of crisis that needs to be dealt with systematically. Although this change in the way the Weng'an case was covered by the media may reflect the proximity to the opening of the Olympics and, perhaps, the rapid dissemination of information about the case on the Internet, it appears that Beijing's considerations went beyond expediency. The Weng'an case raised issues of governance and "people-centered" policy in dramatic fashion, and these issues are central to Hu Jintao's populist approach.

The first Chinese report on the incident appears to have been a short, 308-character Xinhua accounting on 29 June stating that because some people were unsatisfied with the autopsy of the girl, they "had incited a crowd that did not understand the true circumstances"—a rather standard propaganda ploy downplaying the grievances of the crowd but an acknowledgement of the incident all the same. Nevertheless, a rather self-congratulatory report from July 2 noted that Xinhua did not often report on assaults on government buildings, but it had done so this time because of a change in attitude on the part of the Party and state about the handling of mass incidents, believing that they should no longer cover them up. Dealing openly with such incidents, it said, would prevent people from believing rumors and confusing truth and falsehood.<sup>13</sup> Indeed, this 2 July report probably reflected the changing tone in Beijing.

Local coverage in the *Guizhou Daily* began on 1 July, and, in highly unusual fashion, it made clear that China's top leadership had intervened directly in the case. According to the Guizhou provincial Party secretary, Shi Zongyuan, Hu Jintao had given "important instructions" regarding the handling of the incident; Zhou Yongkang, the Politburo member in charge of Political and Legal Affairs, had made "important written comments" twice; Meng Jianzhu, state councilor and minister of public security, had made "several" telephone calls to provide "direct guidance"; and Wu Shuangzhan, commander of the People's Armed Police Force, had made written comments and sent officials to guide the handling of the incident. These interventions must have come quickly; on the night of the incident, the provincial Party committee sent Cui Yadong, secretary of the provincial political and legal affairs committee, to set up a "frontline command post." The next day, it sent deputy Party secretary Wang Fuyu to lead a work group to take direct charge of the work in Weng'an, and on the 30<sup>th</sup>, Shi Zongyuan went to Weng'an.<sup>14</sup> This was an extraordinary amount of high-level attention, reflecting the seriousness of the incident, the proximity to the opening of the Olympics, and the effort to make the Weng'an incident a case study in local accountability.

According to an account circulating on the Internet, Shi Zongyuan inspected the burnt-out Public Security Bureau building and then went to a nearby massage parlor and asked its blind proprietor, "Why did you open your shop here? Was it that you felt safer being close to the Public Security Bureau?" The man responded, "It is not safe here either." Turning to another person, Shi asked, "How is public order in Weng'an?" The person responded, "Weng'an is chaotic. Even the Public Security Bureau has been burnt, so where is it safe?" A woman standing by said, "There's murder here in Weng'an. If you have money, you can buy your way out. The government needs to get to the bottom of

things.” Shi responded, “Murderers can buy their way out with money. You have said something honest. Is the head of the Public Security Bureau here? Did you hear that? A young girl is murdered and the case can’t be broken. How can the common people believe you?”<sup>15</sup>

Of course, the new openness, which would expand in the coming days, reflected the reality of modern communications. In less than an hour after the incident, video clips and photos were showing up on the Internet.<sup>16</sup> As early as 29 June, a reporter for Qiannan People’s Broadcasting Station, Wu Hanpin, went to Weng’an and posted photos and other material on his blog (which was shut down on 3 July).<sup>17</sup> These were the first of many Internet postings that made it impossible to suppress the news coming out of Weng’an. As the sociologist Yu Jianrong had pointed out long before, the suppression of news by local authorities is counterproductive: Modern communications made it such that “everyone in the world” would know about events, except the central government.<sup>18</sup> If the Internet made it impossible to hide events in Weng’an, the central government made a virtue of necessity, discussing events in considerable detail, even if not with complete honesty.

As noted above, *Guizhou Ribao* began reporting the incident on 1 July. Its accounts did not contain the sort of harsh comments about local order that were conveyed on the Internet and would soon be covered in the Chinese press, but it did report Shi Zongyuan as saying critically that “we know there must be underlying factors which turned a simple case into a serious mass incident of beating, smashing, looting, and burning.”<sup>19</sup> Other reports seemed to reflect a desire to manage the news in an effort to calm the situation. For instance, a report from *Guizhou Ribao* on 1 July refuted rumors that Li Shufen’s uncle had died, as had been widely rumored, and a report from 4 July featured an interview with a neighbor who refuted rumors and downplayed events.<sup>20</sup>

Despite this apparent effort by some media to downplay events, provincial Party secretary Shi Zongyuan held a press conference on 3 July and sharply criticized Weng’an County’s Party secretary, Wang Qin. After Wang gave a report to the media, Shi stated bluntly that there was “too little self-criticism, too much detailing of events, and not enough analysis of the causes.”<sup>21</sup> The next day, Wang was removed from office, as were Wang Haiping, county head of Weng’an; Luo Laiping, political commissar of the county public security bureau; and Shen Guirong, director of the county Public Security Bureau.<sup>22</sup> Obviously, the decision to shake up the local political structure reflected Beijing’s desire to confront the underlying issues in Weng’an and similar problem areas.

Beginning with the reports on 4 July that Weng’an’s top leaders had been replaced, Xinhua began more extensive and at least somewhat more open reporting. The 4 July report noted that the deeper causes of the 28 June incident included “frequent infringements of the people’s interest” because of the mines, resettlement of displaced residents, and “certain cadres acting brutally and simplistically.”<sup>23</sup> On 9 July, Xinhua carried a commentary stating that one lesson from this incident had been that “when it comes to issues concerning the masses, the government must never be indifferent, heartless, and do nothing about it.” Rather, “one must fully respect the masses’ right to

know, right to participate, right of expression, and right of supervision.” Spinning its conclusion to accord with the priorities of President Hu Jintao, the commentary said that the incident “cautions us that focusing only on economic growth, disregarding social harmony, and paying no attention to the building of spiritual, political, and social civilization will ultimately fail.”<sup>24</sup>

Perhaps the most interesting Xinhua report came on 9 July, when the Xinhua News Agency posted an interview with the deposed head of the Public Security Bureau, Shen Guirong. Without saying how many murders had been committed in Weng’an this year, Shen said that none of them had been solved. In September and October last year there were four explosions that, according to Shen, had been set by gangs trying to make an impact (he did not say what sort of impact), and these cases had not been solved either. Aside from the Public Security Bureau’s inability to solve serious crimes (presumably because of collusion between the police and local gangs, which Shen frankly admits in the interview), Shen blamed the non-police uses to which the public security forces had been put over the years for causing the deep social discontent. There had been five mass incidents “in recent years” in which more than 100 public security personnel had been dispatched on each occasion. These instances were occasioned by conflicts over mine rights, migration and relocation, and demolition of houses: “We have ‘infuriated’ almost everyone,” concluded Shen.<sup>25</sup>

This higher level of reporting appears to have opened the door for harder-hitting articles in other papers. *Southern Weekend* carried a long, detailed report on the Weng’an incident on 10 July, accompanied by a hard-hitting commentary. “Under the traditional model of governance,” it said, “government power is excessively centralized and effective checks and balances are lacking.”<sup>26</sup> Similarly *Liaowang* (Outlook) carried a long article on 7 July declaring that “certain legitimate interest demands of the masses have not been fundamentally resolved.”<sup>27</sup> *Caijing*, the often bold financial affairs magazine, reported the Weng’an incident in stark terms. Although it never contradicted official accounts, it repeated the beliefs of Weng’an residents as if acknowledging their credibility. For instance, it said of Li Shufen’s death, “Police say it was suicide. Relatives call it murder.” Similarly, the journal cites official denials of murder and the involvement of three youths who were related to officials, but it nevertheless reports that “Word among locals in Weng’an, however, was that Li was raped and killed, and that government officials were protecting” the three youths. Finally, the journal adds, almost gratuitously, that Weng’an “remembers well last summer’s late-night attack on a schoolgirl by the Ximen River. The boy was beaten and the girl raped by four of the five attackers. Two hours passed before police arrived.”<sup>28</sup>

Some of the most interesting reporting appeared in *China Youth Daily*, the newspaper affiliated with the Communist Youth League. For instance, one article blamed incidents like that in Weng’an on the “hard targets” faced by local cadres. In order to accumulate political achievements (*zhengji*), they must follow the orders of their superiors, which often means carrying out construction plans. And the only way cadres can execute such plans is by allying themselves with local investors and construction companies on the one hand, and ignoring the complaints of residents on the other. The

fact that most local officials, like Weng'an's Party secretary, Wang Qin, are outsiders with no "local feeling" makes it easier to use oppressive measures to deal with popular resistance.<sup>29</sup> Another article called for making the Weng'an incident a "template" for channeling popular anger. As the author put it, "just as in dealing with the barrier lakes [during the Sichuan earthquake], it is necessary to have a special viable channel to guide people's feelings and not always using high-pressure tactics, stopping up [people's feelings], and deceiving both higher-ups and the local people."<sup>30</sup>

Another article said that one survey showed that 77.4 percent of people believed that "speaking the truth easily results in retaliation" and concluded that it was the government's responsibility to prevent such retaliation so that it could hear the truth.<sup>31</sup> Yet another decried using police as industry security personnel.<sup>32</sup>

Another commentary in *China Youth Daily* hailed the "direct and severe criticism" of Weng'an County Party Secretary Wang Qin as a "breath of fresh air." The writer decried the tendency to spare people's feelings that has grown up in the Party. There are "hidden rules," in the Party, the author wrote, that call for "planting more flowers and less thorns." But the author's call for accountability seems to contradict efforts to build inner-Party democracy. Indeed, the author attributes the weakening of inner-Party criticism to the fact that "everyone wants to save face" and superiors have to take into account their own personal popularity "so as not to lose votes during critical moments."<sup>33</sup>

Of course, none of this openness or emphasis on building better governance at the local level should be taken as indicating that the Chinese government is abandoning the use of force. There have been a variety of reports about the number arrested. An early report from Hong Kong's Information Center for Human Rights and Democracy alleged that 300 had been arrested in an early sweep;<sup>34</sup> Xinhua later said that 317 people, including 111 gangsters, had been arrested.<sup>35</sup> And, in the end, the third and final official autopsy report maintained that Li Shufen had not been raped and had drowned.<sup>36</sup>

## Conclusion

The Weng'an incident was not the only recent mass incident. On 19 July, there was a serious incident in Menglian County, Yunnan, in which 500 rubber farmers clashed with public security forces, resulting in injuries to 41 police officers and 15 farmers, two of whom died after being hit by bullets from anti-riot guns. The official reaction appears to have been rapid, as the provincial authorities immediately sent a task force to the scene to listen to the farmers.<sup>37</sup> On 17 July, more than 100 migrant workers stormed government buildings and destroyed police cars in Boluo County, Guangdong, when a taxi driver from Hunan was beaten to death, allegedly when he refused to pay 200 yuan "protection" money to village guards.<sup>38</sup> It is apparent that such "anger-venting" mass incidents will be a continuing, and perhaps growing, problem, particularly in poorer areas in which local authorities seem to exploit local residents unmercifully.



The Weng'an incident clearly had a major impact, attracting the attention of China's highest authorities and extensive commentary on the Internet. It is clear that China's leaders would like to use this event to promote greater professionalism and accountability by China's local leaders, forcing them to deal with social complaints before they get out of control. It seems likely that these mass incidents will play into China's ongoing discussions on political reform, with some arguing that only political reform can prevent local tensions accumulating to the point of bursting out in violence. Others will no doubt agree, but will stress the importance of maintaining social stability. In any event, professionalization of China's sub-county government will not come quickly or easily; the issue of predatory local government has plagued China throughout modern times. But clearly the issue of building competent sub-county government is one that China's leaders will have to confront.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> This account of the background of the Weng'an incident is drawn from Ding Buzhi, "Weng'an, 'bu an' de xiancheng" [Weng'an, an "unsafe" county seat], *Nanfang Zhoumo*, 10 July 2008; and Wang Weibo, "Fengbao yanzhong de Weng'an guanyuan" [Weng'an officials in the eye of the storm], *Zhongguo Xinwen zhoukan*, 14 July 2008, retrieved from <http://www.chinanewsweek.com.cn/2008-07-16/1/9658.shtml>.

<sup>2</sup> Ding, "Weng'an, 'bu an' de xiancheng."

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., and Luo Changping, "Weng'an '6.28' shijian liubian" [Complete account of Weng'an's "28 June" incident], retrieved from <http://www.caijing.com.cn/20080704/73116.shtml>.

<sup>7</sup> Wang Weibo, "Fengbao yanzhong de Weng'an guanyuan."

<sup>8</sup> *South China Morning Post*, 21 October 2004.

<sup>9</sup> *South China Morning Post*, 29 June 2004.

<sup>10</sup> "Shehui maodun xin jinghao" [New alarm about social contradictions], *Liaowang*, 16 October 2006, pp. 10–13.

<sup>11</sup> Yu Jianrong, "Shehui xiefen shijian fansi" [Reconsidering anger-venting social incidents], *Nanfang chuang*, 19 July 2008, retrieved from <http://www.nfcmag.com/view-918.html>.

<sup>12</sup> Yu Jianrong, "Zhongguo saoluan shijian yu guanzhi weiji" [Unrest incidents and governance crisis in China], *Zhongguo xuanju yu zhili*, 30 October 2007, retrieved from <http://www.chinaelections.org/NewsInfo.asp?NewsID=118361>.

<sup>13</sup> "Guizhou weng'an shijian: ganyu miandui cai shi zunzhong minyi" [Guizhou's Weng'an incident: Daring to face it is really respecting public opinion], retrieved from <http://politics.people.com.cn/GB/80291/7460520.html>.

<sup>14</sup> Luo Huashan, Chen Zhikuan, and Li Yong, "Shi Zongyuan dao Weng'an xianchang zhihui '6.28' shijian chuzhi gongzuoshi qiangdiao zuohao '6.28' tufa shijian de shanhou gongzuo chuli hao weihu wending he jingji fazhan de guanxi" [While directing work of handling the "28 June" incident at the scene, Shi Zongyuan stresses need to handle well the aftermath of the sudden "28 June" incident and handle well the relationship between preserving stability and developing the economy], retrieved from <http://gzrb.gog.com.cn/system/2008/07/01/010298432.shtml>.

<sup>15</sup> "Guizhou shengwei shuji sanci daoqian, cheng zhengfu buzuo wei rang baixing shouku" [Party secretary of Guizhou apologizes three times, tells the government to not make the people suffer], blog entry of 6 July 2008, retrieved from <http://news.cnhubei.com/ctdsb/ctdsbsgk/ctdsb12/200807/t364600.shtml>. It should be noted that this account has been widely circulated on the Web and depicts Shi Zongyuan in a highly laudatory light, suggesting the account is quasi-official. But it should also be noted that Shi's statement about a girl being murdered, an apparent reference to Li Shufen's death, contradicts official accounts, which maintain she committed suicide.

- <sup>16</sup> Wang Weibo, “*Fengbao yanzhong de Weng’an guanyuan.*”
- <sup>17</sup> “Guizhou Radio Reporter’s Blog Closed Down; Latest Development in Weng’an Cannot Be Disclosed,” posted on the website of Hong Kong’s Information Center for Human Rights and Democracy on 7 July. Retrieved from <http://www.hkhkhk.com/engpro/messages/2408.html>.
- <sup>18</sup> Yu Jianrong, “*Zhongguo saoluan shijian yu guanzhi weiji.*”
- <sup>19</sup> “*Zuohao ‘6.28’ tufa shijian de shanhou gongzuo chuli hao weihu wending he jingji fazhan de guanxi*” [Do the rehabilitation work well following the 28 June sudden incident and handle well the relationship between economic development and maintaining stability], retrieved from <http://www.gzrb.gog.com.cn/system/2008/07/01/010298432.shtml>.
- <sup>20</sup> “*Li Xiuzhong: Wo nala sila, xiwang buyao luanchuan zaoyan le*” [Liu Xiuzhong: I am not dead; hope that rumors will not be wildly circulated], retrieved from <http://politics.people.com.cn/GB/1026/7458025.html>; and “*Weng’an xian chunzhong daibiao fayan zhaideng*” (Representatives of Weng’an’s masses speak out and clarify matters), retrieved from <http://gzrb.gog.com.cn/system/2008/07/04/010301009.shtml>.
- <sup>21</sup> “*Guizhou shengwei shuji pi Weng’an xianwei shuji: Wanchuan shi zai wei ziji kaituo*” [Guizhou provincial Party secretary criticizes the Weng’an Party secretary: Completely making excuses for himself], retrieved from <http://politics.people.com.cn/GB/14562/7470603.html>.
- <sup>22</sup> Xinhua, 4 July 2008, translated by OSC, CPP20080704074010; and Xinhua, 4 July 2008, translated by OSC, CPP20080704074002.
- <sup>23</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>24</sup> Xinhua, 9 July 2008, translated by OSC, CPP20080709172015.
- <sup>25</sup> Retrieved from [www.chinanews.com.cn/gn/news/2008/07-09/1306991.shtml](http://www.chinanews.com.cn/gn/news/2008/07-09/1306991.shtml).
- <sup>26</sup> Xiao Shu, “*Weng’an xinsheng qingzi gongquan qianbi shi*” [Weng’an takes the lead in moderating government power], *Nanfang Zhoumo*, 10 July 2008.
- <sup>27</sup> Huang Yong, Wang Li, Liu Wenguo, and He Ynjiang, “*Fansi Weng’an ‘6.28’ shijian*” [Reflections on the Weng’an ‘6.28’ incident], *Liaowang*, no. 27 (7 July 2008), pp. 14–15.
- <sup>28</sup> Luo Changping and Chen Zhongxiaolu, “A Sad Drowning, a Summer of Discontent), *Caijing online*, retrieved from <http://english.caijing.com.cn/20080710/73981.shtml>.
- <sup>29</sup> Wang Miao, “*Weng’an shijian tishi jiceng zhengfu zhuanxing zhi poqie*” [The Weng’an incident reveals the urgency of transforming grassroots government], retrieved from [http://zqb.cyol.com/content/208-07/08/content\\_2254616.htm](http://zqb.cyol.com/content/208-07/08/content_2254616.htm).
- <sup>30</sup> Hu Yinbin, “*Weng’an shijian yinggai chengwei shudao minyuan de fanben*” [The Weng’an incident should become a template for channeling popular anger], retrieved from [http://zqb.cyol.com/content/2008-07/08/content\\_254601.htm](http://zqb.cyol.com/content/2008-07/08/content_254601.htm).
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