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SOCIETY AND THE MEDIA

China reports crackdown on cyber criminals

On 25 September, the Ministry of Public Security of the PRC (MPS) **announced** that public security departments had settled more than 1,200 criminal cases and arrested 3,300 suspects since the beginning of a crackdown on “crimes against the privacy of personal information” in April. More than 270 suspects were staff working in banks, schools and companies engaging in telecommunication, express delivery, securities and electronic commerce.

The campaign was the response to a nationwide upsurge of leaks of unlawfully gathered information. Criminals have divulged academic degrees, telephone call lists, bank account activities, birth control plans, flight schedules or mobile phone location data and used this information to commit fraud. One swindler reportedly even tried to **extort** money from an official of the Central Disciplinary Committee of the Chinese Communist Party. On 22 September, the public security departments in Foshan (Guangdong province) **arrested** 42 tele-fraud suspects who were engaged in defrauding more than 1,000 victims. On 26 September, a local court in Shanghai **sentenced** four leaders of a criminal gang involving more than 140 online fraud suspects.

According to the revised **Criminal Code** of August 2015, collecting or selling other citizens’ personal information carries a prison of up to seven years. Beyond this, no other data protection laws or regulations currently exist in China.

EN: http://www.china.org.cn/china/2016-09/27/content_39378602.htm

CN: http://news.xinhuanet.com/legal/2016-09/25/c_1119620725.htm

China tightens control over live-streaming industry

Live-streaming platforms are very popular in China, but from now on, they are only allowed to operate with state approval. The State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television, or SAP-PRFT for short (国家新闻出版广电总局) announced a drastic tightening of existing rules on live-streaming on 9 September. In the future, the state will only **grant licences** to state-owned enterprises with at least ten million yuan in equity (1.34 million euros).

China’s live-streaming industry is booming. Leading media platforms such as Ingkee (映客) and Douyu TV (斗鱼) regularly attract between 50 million and 120 million **users**. Live-streamers are engaged in all kinds of activities on the Web, from discussing unhappy relationships to teaching English and giving practical tips on cooking. **Gay men** use live-streaming apps to find partners. The most popular live-streamers are young women who record themselves flirting, singing and dancing. Official censors such as the **Cyberspace Administration of China** (CAC, 网信办), have repeatedly criticised vulgar and light erotic content on the Chinese internet.

Strict regulations that range from obtaining licenses to transmitting content are now intended to help the Chinese state get this growing market under its control. The main live-streaming platforms have already

put large teams of in-house censors in place to monitor content. Half of Douyu TV's 600 employees are currently employed as censors.

EN: <http://www.scmp.com/news/china/policies-politics/article/2019089/citing-eroding-standards-taste-china-says-all-live>

CN: http://www.sarft.gov.cn/art/2016/9/9/art_110_31601.html

Farewell to a Western lifestyle – Chinese censors target the entertainment industry

The State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television, or SAPPRFT for short (国家新闻出版广电总局), introduced new ideological guidelines on 29 August aimed at censoring the Chinese entertainment industry. Among other things, these guidelines prohibit TV shows from mocking Chinese traditions and ridiculing the country's literary heroes. Programmes are also not supposed to show people chasing after Western lifestyles. The administration claims that the ostentatious display of excessive wealth in reality shows and the media's obsession with the decadent lifestyles of a number of actors and singers set bad examples to young Chinese today.

The government agency called on TV broadcasters and web platforms to introduce internal control mechanisms to monitor TV programmes and rectify any ideological 'aberrations' at an early stage. In the case of infringements, broadcasters will be subject to fines and could even lose their licence to operate in particularly serious cases.

The stringent regulations have come at a time when the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress is debating a bill to regulate the film industry. The draft is meant to ensure compliance with 'professional standards and moral integrity' in the sector.

EN: <http://www.scmp.com/news/china/policies-politics/article/2011150/beijing-bans-entertainment-news-promotes-western>

CN: http://news.xinhuanet.com/politics/2016-08/29/c_1119474123.htm

POLITICS

Tibet aims to become a tourist magnet

The Tibet Autonomous Region wants to attract more tourists from other parts of China. The goal is to bring as many as 35 million tourists to the province each year by 2020, declared Wang Songping, deputy director of the Tibet Tourism Development Commission on 19 September. According to official figures, 24 million domestic tourists visited Tibet in 2015, six times more than in 2005.

To support the push for more tourism, the region's government intends to expand its infrastructure. A motorway and two high-speed rail lines are to be completed over the next few years and will link the Tibetan capital of Lhasa with major cities in western and central China. Critics warn, however, that mass tourism will erode native Tibetans' ways of life and threaten the region's sensitive natural environment.

The publication of the government's plans comes at a time when political tensions between the People's Republic of China and the Tibetan autonomy movement are rising again. In the last two weeks, leading politicians in Southeast Asia and Europe have welcomed the Tibetans' exiled spiritual leader in spite of sharp protests by the PRC. Wu Yingjie, party secretary of the Chinese Communist Party in Tibet, called on China's state news channels to report more critically on the Dalai Lama.

EN: <http://atimes.com/2016/09/travel-china-unveils-new-hotel-in-drive-to-get-more-tourists-to-visit-tibet/>
CN: <http://www.rfa.org/mandarin/yataibaodao/shaoshuminzu/nu-09192016112912.html>

New provincial party leaders: Xi Jinping positions his allies before next Party Congress

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is preparing for its 19th Party Congress next autumn by putting a number of new people in office at provincial level. As state news agency Xinhua reported, the CCP changed its leadership team in a number of provinces at the end of August during its annual meeting at its coastal retreat in Beidaihe.

In China's political system, party secretaries are regarded as more influential than provincial governors as they are the ones who have good relations to the bodies that make political decisions in Beijing, and they confer with them closely. The CCP decided to appoint new party secretaries in six provinces: Hunan and Anhui are affected by the change in local leadership along with four of the Autonomous Regions, Xinjiang, Tibet, Yunnan and Inner Mongolia.

Many of the newly appointed officials are reputed to have close connections to Xi Jinping, chairman of the CCP and China's head of state. Observers see this reshuffle as an attempt by Xi to pave the way for close allies of his to obtain posts on the Central Committee. At next year's Party Congress, 92 of the 205 seats in this important party body are likely to find new occupants. The number of vacancies is unusually high this time, partly due to members being excluded from the Party in the course of the state's anti-corruption campaign. Besides, a considerable number of the current members will give up their seats for age-related reasons.

EN: <http://www.dw.com/en/why-chinese-president-xi-jinping-is-reshuffling-party-members/a-19513602>
CN: <http://news.china.com/domesticgd/10000159/20160110/21108941.html>

THE ECONOMY

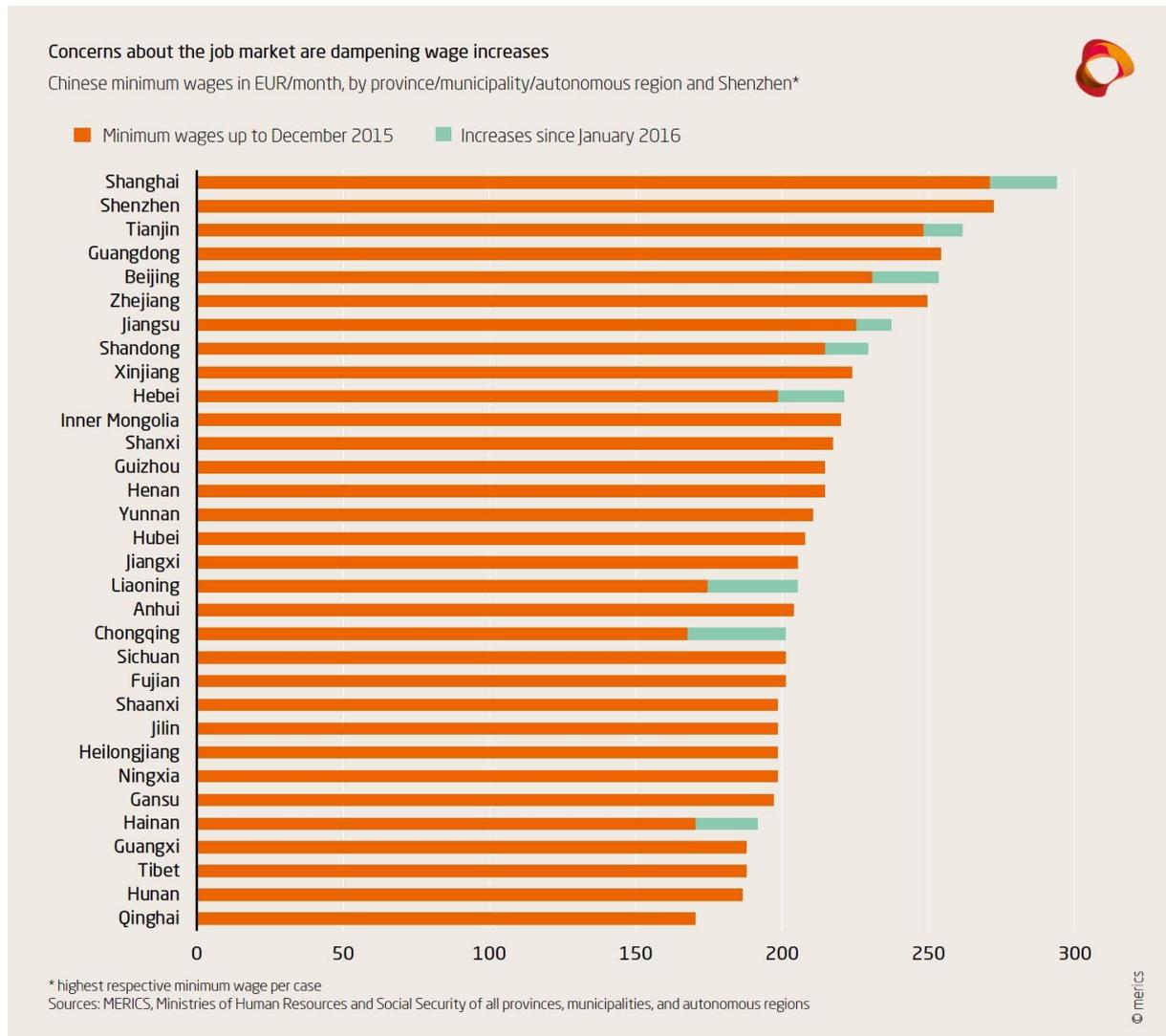
Economic slowdown in China suppresses wage growth

China's economic slowdown is increasingly affecting **the income development** on the mainland. An important indicator for this trend are the minimum wage levels set by the provincial governments. Between January and September 2016 wage levels were adjusted in only nine provinces, whereas a total of 20 provinces had raised the minimum wage over the same period in 2015. The adjustments in 2016 were also smaller than in the previous year.

China's shrinking industrial sector is causing a drop in demand for workers. Surplus capacity continues to exist in heavy industry and suppresses wage growth, especially for low-skilled workers and the about 280 million migrant workers. At a time when economic growth is relatively slow, the Chinese government is struggling to keep the job market stable and to maintain income growth. It is becoming apparent that the government will struggle to achieve its goal of **doubling net incomes of 2010 by the year 2020**.

EN: <http://www.scmp.com/news/china/economy/article/2018939/not-wanted-jobseekers-over-35-find-it-tough-slowdown-bites-chinas>

CN: http://news.xinhuanet.com/politics/2016-09/14/c_129280706.htm



INNOVATION AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Aviation: China sets up jet engine conglomerate to end dependence on foreign suppliers

The Chinese government recently merged three state-owned enterprises into a massive jet engine conglomerate. The new firm has 50 billion yuan in registered capital (6.6 billion euros, \$7.5 billion) and employs nearly 100,000 people. The newly founded state-owned Aero Engine Corporation of China, or AECC, will design and manufacture aircraft engines and gas turbines for commercial and military use. Although China is already able to build its own passenger planes, it still lags far behind other countries when it comes to aero engines, a core technology in the aviation industry. The purpose of the new company is to put an end to China's dependence on foreign-made aircraft engines and to challenge General Electric, Safran and Pratt & Whitney, currently the international leaders in the field.

Xi Jinping has called the founding of the Chinese company a 'strategic move' that will help the PRC become a leading player in the aviation industry as well as modernise its army. China's political leaders had declared the development of internationally competitive jet engines a national objective for the first time in 2013. Although the country is still in the early stages of this ambitious undertaking, its state-owned aviation companies have been trying to achieve this aim with all the resources at their disposal. AVIC International, for example, the state-owned aerospace and defence company, got its hands on pioneering technology by taking over Thielert Aircraft Engines, an ailing German firm, and by buying up American aero-engine builder Continental Motors.

EN: <http://www.dw.com/en/china-launches-own-aircraft-engine-maker/a-19510434>
CN: http://news.xinhuanet.com/politics/2016-08/28/c_1119467521.htm

THE EUROPEAN DEBATE ON CHINA

European Parliament risks confrontation with Beijing over Dalai Lama's trip to Europe

The Chinese government responded to the [Dalai Lama's visit to the European Parliament in Strasbourg on 15 September](#) and a private meeting with EP president Martin Schulz with strong criticism and threats of punitive action. The meeting was part of an [18-day trip around Europe](#), which brought the Tibetan spiritual leader to Poland, Belgium and France where he hosted a series of lectures and spiritual teachings.

The fact that Schulz received the Dalai Lama [in his capacity as a religious leader](#) did not prevent Beijing from denouncing a 'violation of China's core interests'. In an [official announcement made on 19 September](#), the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs confirmed that a planned visit to Beijing by the Economic Affairs Committee of the EP had been postponed indefinitely and declared there would be further consequences. Only a few days earlier, MEPs had also annoyed Beijing by [nominating the Uighur human rights activist Ilham Tohti](#) for the Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought – Tohti, a former economics professor, is serving a life sentence for 'separatist activities' in China.

The EP seems to be the only political body in Europe at the moment to take a public stand against China on politically sensitive issues. Unlike the US President, whose **meetings with the Dalai Lama** regularly trigger sharp protests from Beijing, no high-ranking European politician any longer wishes to be seen together with people who Beijing regards as undesirable. China's strategy seems to be having the intended effect: between 2007 and 2012, Beijing exerted **strong pressure** on individual EU member states, including Germany, France and the UK, in response to private meetings that their prime ministers and heads of state had arranged with the Dalai Lama.

An emotional debate is currently taking place **in the French media** over Beijing's alleged influence on the Dalai Lama's itinerary in France. Both the **cancellation of a planned talk at the elite university Sciences Po Paris** and the cancellation of pro-Tibetan events in Strasbourg beg the question of how far prominent political figures and institutions in Europe are prepared to bow to diplomatic pressure from China and censor their own behaviour just to keep the peace.

Even the Dalai Lama seems to have come to terms with the fact that most European leaders buckle under pressure from China. While the Dalai Lama **publicly criticised British prime minister David Cameron** for cancelling a meeting with him last year, saying Cameron had put 'money over morality', on the occasion of his latest visit to Europe, the Dalai Lama explained that he had chosen not to meet up with high-ranking politicians in Belgium and France because the **focus of his trip was on spiritual matters**.

EN: <http://www.politico.eu/article/china-postpones-meps-trip-after-dalai-lama-visit-european-parliament/>
CN: <http://af.reuters.com/article/worldNews/idAFKCN11L1ZP>

CONTROVERSIES BEYOND GOVERNMENT



Wang Baoqiang and Ma Rong, Image by Imagine China

The case of Wang Baoqiang: Chinese men and women question traditional family values

By Lea Shih

Ever since Xi Jinping took office as head of state and leader of the Communist Party of China, the Chinese government has been propagating the virtues of traditional family values. Families ought to serve as 'pillars of a harmonious society', it says. The reality is rather different: **around 3.8 million marriages were annulled in China in 2015**, roughly one in three.

Marital breakdowns among Chinese stars and other prominent public figures are often the subject of discussion in the media. Take the case of famous 32-year-old film star Wang Baoqiang, for example. On 13 August, he used Weibo, a popular, Twitter-like microblogging platform, to officially announce that he and his wife were splitting up after he had discovered that she was having an affair with his manager.

Now, a love affair is nothing unusual, even in China, but by publicly admitting that his wife had cheated on him, Wang broke a social taboo. Most Chinese men would take pains to hide such a humiliation. Wang's family drama gained considerable attention on social media where more than 10,000 messages

were written on the subject on 14 August alone. Articles covering the news got around 700 million clicks from readers! According to a **survey conducted by the Chinese media research platform Hedgehog Commune** (刺猬公社), more men than women commented. The enormous response is striking – apparently, there are a great many netizens who feel news of this kind is more than just media gossip.

Wang's image is another factor contributing to the unusual amount of attention this news received. The actor, who was born in 1984, comes from a poor farming family. In many of his box-office hits, he either plays a migrant worker or a simple soldier. Since 2008, he has been actively promoting charitable projects involving migrant workers, which are run by the Chinese Red Cross. In the course of his successful career, Wang has become a wealthy man, earning hundreds of millions of yuan. He was generous with his money, buying his wife luxury presents, and he often posted photos of himself on Weibo giving gifts to her. In short, Wang personifies the dream that many simple men and women have in China who move to distant towns and cities in a bid to make their fortune and find happiness. Now this dream of moving from rags to riches has been destroyed.

In the online debates that developed on Weibo in August, the majority of the male respondents criticised the behaviour of Wang's wife, Ma Rong, as **'loose' and 'immoral'**. They said she had toyed with her husband, letting him fund her luxurious lifestyle while she cheated on him by seeing another man. She had not been a loyal or even grateful wife to him, they said. Interestingly, opinions of this kind were supported by a lot of female netizens as well, although they pointed out that **Wang and Ma's marriage would have broken down anyway at some point, mostly because of the social gulf that separated them** – at the end of the day, the relationship had been between a country schoolboy and a young female student from the city. The differing beliefs and moral values that result from such an unequal relationship could never be overcome by material wealth alone, the female respondents said.

Feminists, on the other hand, stood up for Wang's wife. They compared people's reactions to another affair that had come to light some time earlier in which the wife had been cheated on – in that case, the readers' reactions online had been much less aggressive. The feminists called this **a clear case of double standards** based on 'asymmetric power relations' in marriages, which favoured the male partner. They appealed for **'equality between individuals'**, regardless of their gender, status or wealth.

The discussions about Wang's marriage breaking down reflect on the concept of marriage in China, which is burdened by too many factors. The traditional understanding of marriage no longer matches the reality of modern life, nor does it reflect what many Chinese now wish for in life. Even so, more than 80 per cent of adult Chinese males wish to retain the traditional roles of men and women, while half of all females question them. It seems that at least as far as women are concerned, there is no turning back to traditional Chinese family values.

THE LATEST FROM MERICS

Latest publications

- [MERICS China Monitor No. 32: Information Control 2.0 – The Cyberspace Administration of China tames the internet](#), by Nabil Alsabah
- [MERICS Webspecial: Branding Xi: How the CCP creates a professional PR leadership package for the modern era](#), by Mareike Ohlberg and Jessica Batke

Latest blog posts

- [The pope and the party-state: an unholy union?](#), by Johannes Buckow and Kristin Shi-Kupfer
- [China's whitened White Paper on human rights](#), by George G. Chen
- [How to prevent a global economic crisis made in China](#), by Rolf J. Langhammer

MERICS in the media

- [How to Counter China's Global Propaganda Offensive](#), Op-ed by Mareike Ohlberg and Bertram Lang, New York Times, 21 September 2016
- [Rush of Chinese investment in Europe's high tech firms is raising eyebrows](#), Sebastian Heilmann on Chinese overseas investment, New York Times, 16 September 2016

Forthcoming events

- [Trier China Talks: "Caught between reform and control: China's leadership under stress"](#), 29 September 2016, Berlin
- [Discussion with Kevin Rudd: Shaping Our Relations with China in the 21st Century](#), 6 October 2016, Berlin
- [Hamburg Summit – China Meets Europe 2016](#), 23-24 November 2016 at the Hamburg Chamber of Commerce, Hamburg

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