

From the Great Wall to Global Connection: How Globalization is Shaping Chinese Social Movements in the Post-Pandemic Era

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Abstract:

This paper intends to explore the multifaceted impact of globalization on Chinese social movements following the COVID-19 pandemic. It delves into how increased global interconnectedness has both empowered and challenged the movements, particularly in the context of China's evolving online censorship policies. The study examines the role of digital platforms in mobilizing and spreading awareness, the influence of international public opinion, and the economic factors that shape the trajectory of these movements. It also discusses the challenges faced, such as government control and resistance to external influences, and the opportunities for social movements to draw inspiration from global causes. The paper made the conclusion by highlighting the resilience of Chinese social movements in adapting to a world with globalization trend and advocating for legal reforms to address societal issues exacerbated by the pandemic.

Keywords: Globalization, Chinese Social Movements, Post-Pandemic Era, Digital Activism, International Solidarity

I. Introduction

Along with COVID pandemic, the world has witnessed a significant acceleration in terms of globalization, influencing various fields of society, including social movements. As the world becomes more interconnected, China's method to controlling online information has undergone some noted stages. Being a country which rich history and culture have shaped the nation's social essence, globalization has brought both opportunities and challenges to the post-pandemic era. Thus studying the influence of globalization on Chinese online censorship is important. It provides explanations about how external factors, such as international trade and cultural exchange, impact Chinese domestic policies. Understanding this influence helps policymakers, scholars, and businesses comprehend China's evolving online censorship landscape. This essay intends to find out the multilevel impact of globalization on online censorship from Chinese government in the post-pandemic era, explaining the intersection of international influences, advancements in technologies, and the everchanging landscape of information control within the state. Moreover, it will discuss about the challenges and opportunities for online digital communication home and abroad, human rights, and the balance between national sovereignty and international interconnectedness.

II. Main Body

In the post-pandemic era, the rapid spread of information and ideas across borders has influenced a lot in stimulating Chinese social movements. Since the Chinese government has carried out the lockdown policy, the active users of social media and other platforms skyrocketed. The social media platforms and improved internet connectivity has highlighted the situation of some minor groups especially those marginalized communities, startling unprecedented public awareness. From environmental activism to labor rights movements to feminism movements, from LGBTQ to the discussion about the COVID policies, the voices of Chinese citizens have reached far beyond national boundaries, creating a sense of solidarity and inspiring collective action.

II. a. Globalization's Role in Shaping Social Movements

Globalization has played a significant role in shaping Chinese social movements online and in reality in the post-pandemic era. Not only in terms of connectivity has increased, but also the individuals have been empowered with the ability to access to information with the help of Internet, so the globalization has facilitated a tunnel to exchange ideas and mobilization of groups. Global events, such as the pandemic, trade war, terrorism conflicts, all amplify awareness and trigger discussions, fostering a

sense of shared concerns from the public. Furthermore, globalization allows Chinese social movements to draw inspiration from these movements, adopting the up-to-date tactics and ideologies. Social media as a product of globalization, functions as a platform for organizing and spreading the information from all over the world, thus no wonder it giving rise to the emergence and spread of social movements. However, the attitude and response from Chinese government to these movements also indicates its desire to control and resist external voices. The connection among globalization, local dynamics, and government actions collectively explained the evolving landscape of Chinese social movements in the post-pandemic era.

Not only Chinese domestic social movements were engendered by the trend of globalization, but has also a sense of solidarity with international causes was cultivated. The interconnectedness brought by globalization has brought global issues, including climate change and concerns on emergent public health, has become the forefront of public discourse in Chinese society in the post-pandemic era. This kind of increased awareness has led to to diverse movements that strongly promote for sustainable development, responsible consumption, and equitable resource distribution. As a result, Chinese social movements have transcended the national boundaries, keeping the same page with the global endeavors together for positive change. Globalization has indeed achieved the exchange of cultures and values, creating a breeding ground for cross-pollination in Chinese social movements. The blending of Western notions of democracy, freedom, and human rights with traditional Chinese philosophies has birthed unique ideologies that fuel social activism. This interplay between diverse concepts and the intersectionality of cultures have provided Chinese social movements with a rich tapestry of perspectives, enriching their discourse and diversifying their approaches.

While globalization has propelled Chinese social movements to new heights, it also presents a set of challenges. The influx of external influences and ideas often clashes with China's complex political and cultural landscape, engendering tensions and resistance. The Chinese government, seeking to safeguard national stability and preserve its ideological sovereignty, has responded with varying degrees of containment and control. Strikes a delicate balance between fostering social progress and maintaining political harmony remains a formidable task for both social activists and the state.

II. b Public Opinion and Perception from Home and Abroad

Global public opinions and perceptions shape Chinese social movements by many approaches, including influenc-

ing diplomatic relations, economic considerations, and the level of support or criticism. These movements, according to their nature behind, have different kind of exposure on the international stage. The interconnectedness of the world plays a crucial role too in shaping the dynamics of social activism in the post-pandemic era. Global public support and solidarity have empowered Chinese social movements. When international audiences express unity or highlight certain issues, it can provide moral and symbolic support to their peer participants in China, reinforcing their causes and drawing attention to human rights concerns. Increased global awareness and opinions about social issues in China can also create external pressure for change. Public pressures and comments from the international internet community, whether it's about human rights, environmental concerns, or other social issues, can influence Chinese government and encourage them to address certain grievances to maintain a positive global image as the government is trying their best to do as one of the core strategies.

The way how global media describes Chinese social movements indeed can influence perceptions. Positive coverage and report may gain support for the movements, while negative ones could shape a more critical international image. Activists always aid international media like Twitter (now X, many similar apps were banned in mainland China) to convey their ideas and appeal, so to garner global attention on the movements. Chinese social movements are increasingly connected to global activism networks after the pandemic, since the digital platforms has took a firm part of people's life during the pandemic. Shared experiences and support from international activists bring about a sense of solidarity and endow movements with precious resources, strategies, and perspectives. The Chinese government, aware of global perceptions, may want to strategically engage in public diplomacy efforts to shape international opinions. This can influence how social movements are perceived globally, as well as impact the level of support or criticism they receive. Many official departments now have online accounts, some of those accounts even gathered thousands of fans, on one hand, they can actively engage in public discussions and express semi-official opinions; one the other hand, they can use the accounts, collaborating with platforms to achieve the censor on potential or ongoing social movements.

Public opinions in foreign countries can also influence economic relations. If global consumers or investors express concerns about certain practices in China, it may lead to economic consequences that may influence social movements as well as government strategies and policies. Chinese social movements may tap into global cultural

exchange and soft power dynamics. Engaging with international cultural trends, participating in global discussions, and aligning with universal values can enhance the movements' global appeal.

II. c Economic Factors in the Process

Economic factors intersect with social, political, and environmental considerations to shape the landscape of Chinese social movements in the post-pandemic era. The economic backdrop influences the issues that gain prominence, the strategies employed by social movements, and the responses they receive from both the government and the broader society.

Economic disruptions during the pandemic led to job losses and heightened job insecurity. This, in turn, contributed to an increase in labor movements and protests as workers sought to address issues related to working conditions, wages, and job stability. Economic disparities accentuated by the pandemic have fueled concerns about inequality. Social movements, particularly those advocating for social justice, have focused on economic disparities, calling for wealth redistribution and policies addressing income inequality. Certain economic factors disproportionately affected vulnerable communities. Social movements representing these communities, such as rural populations or marginalized ethnic groups, often center their activism on economic rights, land use, and fair distribution of resources.

Economic considerations, including industrial practices, have driven environmental activism. Social movements concerned with ecological issues advocate for sustainable economic practices, pollution control, and environmental protection, linking economic development with environmental responsibility. China's economic growth is closely tied to technological advancements. Social movements related to tech ethics, privacy concerns, and labor rights within the tech industry have emerged as economic factors shape the discourse around the social implications of technological development. The economic fallout from the pandemic has created a backdrop for social movements. Disruptions to businesses, changes in employment patterns, and economic uncertainties have influenced the issues social movements address and the strategies they employ. How the Chinese government addresses economic grievances can influence the dynamics of social movements. Policies related to economic recovery, welfare programs, and support for affected industries can either alleviate or exacerbate social tensions.

II. d Challenges Faced by Movements in A Globalized World

Despite these challenges, Chinese social movements con-

tinue to adapt, utilizing creative strategies, digital tools, and global networks to advocate for change. The evolving landscape presents both obstacles and opportunities for activists seeking to address social, economic, and political issues in the post-pandemic and globalized world. Chinese social movements face challenges in balancing diverse perspectives within a globalized context due to factors such as government control over information, censorship, and differing cultural values. Patriotic media campaign, launched after the official announcement of the epidemic, was proven to be led by the Chinese Communist Party to antagonize public criticism about media censorship during the time of the pandemic and maintain social stability. As a result, during the pandemic, China had successfully contained the first wave, Chinese internet users, as well as political and social elites, jointly engaged in the construction of a nationalist narrative to counteract international anti-Chinese discourse. Additionally, navigating international opinions and understanding diverse global perspectives can be hindered by language barriers and limited access to information. Striking a balance between local priorities and global considerations while fostering open dialogue remains a complex task for Chinese social movements in a rapidly interconnected world.

After the pandemic, witnessed the dissent comments and their influence in the pandemic, the Chinese government maintains tight control over physical society and online community, restricting the space for independent activism. Participants in the physical movements face more censorship, surveillance, and legal restrictions, accordingly making it more challenging to organize and express dissenting opinions. Digital activism is met with strict online censorship and surveillance too. Authorities actively monitor and restrict content on social media platforms, confining the effectiveness of online organizing and expression in a controllable range. Activists addressing issues regarded sensitive to national core security face even heightened risks. The government has a broad interpretation of what constitutes national security threats, and can lead to crackdowns on any movement deemed a threat to stability. Restrictions on access to information impede the ability of social movements to disseminate information and mobilize public support. Government control over the narrative makes it difficult for movements to raise awareness about their causes. The right to peaceful assembly is restricted, making it difficult for social movements to organize public demonstrations or protests. Strict regulations and the potential for government intervention limit the scope of public mobilization. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) face increased scrutiny and restrictions, making it challenging for them to operate independently. Laws regulating NGOs can limit their funding sources and hinder

their ability to address social issues.

Economic considerations, including job insecurity and inequality, can give rise to social unrest. However addressing economic issues might be sensitive, and social movements promoting for economic reforms may face negative responses from authorities if they are not in accord with macro narratives and policies. The diversity of social movements and their causes can lead to fragmentation. Different movements may have varying priorities, making it difficult to build a unified front and address overarching systemic issues. Activists often operate in an environment with limited legal protections. Advocacy for legal reforms may face resistance, and legal actions against activists are not uncommon, creating a climate of fear and uncertainty. Social movements that receive support or inspiration from global movements may face backlash. The government may view such movements as influenced by foreign forces, leading to increased scrutiny and repression.

II. e Post-Pandemic Dynamics

Though facing various challenges, Chinese social movements expressed precious resilience through their will and ability to adapt strategies, leverage digital tools, collaborate with global partners, and creatively navigate a complex socio-political landscape in the post-pandemic era. In the post pandemic era, Chinese social movements activists emphasized global collaboration and solidarity more, inspired by the application of controversial pandemic policies of Chinese government. Social movements in Chinese society have already forged connections with international movements and organizations due to habits formed in post-pandemic era which is extensive use of digital platforms connected with the world. This collaboration provides mutual support, shared resources, and increased visibility, contributing to a more interconnected and resilient activist network.

Social movements have demonstrated adaptability by aligning with shifting priorities. For example, in the COVID era, social movements about addressing public health gained more attention ever, when the social movements also bring about issues like environmental concerns, and economic inequalities, they can have more exposure. Social movements incorporate global norms and values into their advocacy. Aligning their causes with universally recognized principles, such as human rights and environmental sustainability, enhances their appeal on the global stage. Other social movements have also choose to adapt their voices to echo with changing global dynamics and local needs. Some social movements strategically engage in legal advocacy to navigate the legal landscape, it will be discussed in the “future aspects” part below. By framing their causes within existing legal frameworks or

advocating for legal reforms, human rights activists also aim to operate within the normative constraints of the existing social and political system of capitalist oppression while simultaneously pushing for structural change in society’s status quo.

Activists believe economics as a lever they can use to influence policy - calls for consumers to boycott products made in slave-labour factories; support for ethical companies whose operations align with values; and talk about poverty and inequality show where the money goes. After the pandemic, seeing how powerful grassroots can be, social movements often mention grassroots mobilization in the activities and community engagement. Building long-term community support at the domestic or local level also helps create more resilient community networks that can withstand external pressures and contribute to more sustained activism on behalf of the community. Social movements sometimes strategically choose venue and time to address issues based on the evolving global context. This adaptability enables them to leverage moments of heightened global attention or align with broader global movements.

III. Case Studies

Since many cases had been discussed, the paper focused on a specific topic about the labor right movements in Chinese society. Before the pandemic, there were long been ongoing concerns about the labor conditions of delivery workers, including their long working hours, low pay, and lack of employment protections and benefits. response to intensified work pressures and concerns related to health and safety during the pandemic, delivery workers engaged in organized protests and strikes. They demanded better wages, improved working conditions, and increased legal protections. However, during and after the pandemic, the demand for food delivery and logistics services surged, emphasizing the essential role of these workers. This case highlights a swift change in the dynamics of the labor rights movement in China, while voices from delivery workers been heard more and they know how to organize to acquire for their rights, particularly in the environment of the challenges posed by the COVID.

Another specific case shedding lights on changes in the labor rights movement in China before and after the pandemic involves the protests by workers at the Jasic Technology factory in 2018. Before the pandemic, in July 2018, workers at Jasic Technology, a company producing welding equipment, began organizing for better working conditions and the right to establish an independent union. The labor dispute then led to the strike of workers and sparked a broader movement with students and activists

supporting the workers. The dispute actually began on 27 July 2018 when a group of workers of Jasic Technology Co., dissatisfied by low pay, poor working conditions, and long shifts, in this environment, they collectively formed a trade union. The tech giant responded to the workers requirements by firing some of the employees. Those negative responses sparked weeks of protests by factory workers in Shenzhen, as well as student members of the Jasic Workers Solidarity Group and other supporters. The protests consisted of public demonstrations, labour strikes, and direct action, and have been described as being largely Marxist and Maoist in nature.

After the onset of the pandemic, labor issues gained increased attention. Workers' concerns about job security, workplace safety, and fair treatment were magnified. The pandemic highlighted the vulnerability of many workers, prompting discussions and actions related to labor rights. The Jasic Technology case serves as a marker of the evolving labor rights movement in China, with increased awareness and activism surrounding workers' rights both before and after the pandemic, reflecting the ongoing struggle for improved working conditions and labor protections.

IV. Future Prospects

The Chinese social movements are likely to adapt to the post-pandemic and globalized world by applying technological advancements and maintaining a strong online presence. Various factors will make contribute to the adaptations, ranging from government policies to societal attitudes. As China continues to serving as a navigating role in the globalized world, social movements will probably evolve to meet new challenges and opportunities.

Firstly, the digital activism will played a crucial role in the adaptations. Social movements in China can continue to organize and raise awareness among the public with the aid of digital platforms. Internet spaces facilitate a tunnel to avoid certain restrictions and censorship from the government, at mean time reach a wider audience, allows activists to share information, organize support, and coordinate with other related actions. Chinese social movements indeed faced challenges related to censorship, especially after the pandemic, the censorship was even more strict, but digital platforms provided a method to bypass some restrictions. The Chinese netizens creatively invented some coded language, such as referring to other words for substitution, and virtual private networks (VPNs) to share information that might be limited in traditional media. Secondly, social movements engaged in digital advocacy campaigns, utilizing online petitions, hashtags, and viral content to raise awareness and build public support.

These campaigns allowed participants to reach a broader audience and generate supporters for their causes. Thirdly, digital platforms also made it possible for Chinese activists to coordinate with other organizations remotely. Social media platforms, messaging apps, and online discussion websites allowed organizers to rapidly spread information, organize protests, and coordinate campaigns without physical gatherings. It is rather useful and important during periods of lockdowns and social distancing.

In the post-pandemic era, legal reforms advocated by social movements have aimed at addressing issues exacerbated by the pandemic, such as labor rights, healthcare access, and social welfare. The voices asking for legal changes became more urgent as the pandemic exposed the vulnerabilities and inequalities within society. Necessary legal reforms can help the society to strengthen human rights protections, safeguard the digital rights in the social movements and keep up with the international standards. Social movements promoting for legal reforms often emphasized on strengthening human rights protections. In the post-pandemic era, concerns about civil rights, freedom of expression under the authoritarian regime, and protection against discrimination have gained attention, giving rise to calls for legal regulations that better protect these deserved rights. Chinese social movements have tried to find legal reforms to protect digital rights and privacy due to their increasing reliance on digital technologies thanks to the lockdown policies. Calls for laws to balance the use of technology for surveillance and individual privacy rights have become more urgent in the post-pandemic online landscape. Moreover, some social movements have aligned their advocacy with international legal standards, emphasizing the importance of complying with global norms and treaties. This approach aims to bring about legal changes that align with broader international expectations.

The younger generation in China has also expressed a strong interest in social activism. In the post pandemic age, there may be a endless emphasis on youth involvement in social movements, since younger activists leveraging technology and social media to drive change better and respond quicker. The active participation of young people has infused energy, innovation, and a global perspective into Chinese social movements, contributing to their ability to adapt to the complexities of the post-pandemic and globalized world. Youth involvement facilitated rapid online mobilization and connectivity. Social movements could quickly organize and coordinate actions through social media and on websites, making it possible for more nimble responses to emerging issues in the post-pandemic digital landscape. Young activists have also been active in forming global connections and solidarity.

With the help of social media and online networks, they engage with international movements, share experiences, and draw attention to common global challenges, contributing to a more interconnected and globalized activism. Youth involvement has brought diverse perspectives and a wide range of causes to the forefront of social movements. Topics like climate change, LGBTQ+ rights, and social justice have been brought to the society more often, reflecting a broader understanding of interconnected global challenges. The younger generation tends to place a strong emphasis on social justice and equality. Their involvement in social movements has led to a greater focus on addressing systemic issues, advocating for marginalized groups, and pushing for reforms that promote a fair and just society.

V. Conclusion

The post-pandemic society has amplified the impact of globalization on Chinese social movements. While globalization connects Chinese participants online and in reality to the world and offers rich resources and opportunities, it also presents challenges to maintaining traditional cultural values and perspectives. Through building international alliances, leveraging global resources and knowledge, and engaging with transnational civil society, Chinese social movements can effectively navigate globalization. Balancing global influences with preservation of China's unique identity paves the way for impactful and authentic change. As the world becomes more interconnected, Chinese social movements have the potential to make profound contributions on a global scale. By embracing globalization while keeping true to their roots, Chinese participants in social movements can push their movements forward, paving a path towards a more inclusive and just society.

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