

The Discourse of Mass Incidents

Party-Press and Investigative Media Representations of the Weng'an Incident

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II

Abstract

This study will examine two different media representations of the Weng'an incident, a social riot that took place in Weng'an county in Guizhou Province during the summer of 2008. The aim of my thesis is to scrutinize how the party-press and the critical press cover the sensitive topic of mass incidents. For this purpose, I have carried out a discourse analysis of the media coverage by the provincial party-paper *Guizhou Daily* and the investigative newspaper *Southern Weekend*. This dual focus on both the party-press and investigative media texts is undoubtedly one of the strong aspects of the thesis, because such a comparative view can help highlight the media diversity one actually can find within state-dominated media systems, such as the one in China. The analysis of the party-press coverage will contribute to not only getting a better understanding of how the orthodox party-papers handle very sensitive topics in the discursive domain, but also making it easier to grasp and assert the role of investigative journalism and its significance in contemporary Chinese media. One of the most interesting findings in this thesis is how investigative newspapers conduct critical journalism under conditions of domination. My analysis shows the subtle discursive strategies of resistance used by the critical press in order to camouflage critical comments and discussions of sensitive aspects, therefore to make them politically acceptable and publishable. This thesis shows that one major discursive strategy of resistance is polyphony – a multitude of official and non-official voices, which is also a particular feature of critical investigative media representations. In this polyphony, the strategic use of the official voice and discourse plays an instrumental role in making non-official critical voices and views seem more legitimate and therefore less transgressive. Other subtle strategies of resistance include conscious lexical and syntactical choices that help to downplay the discursive representation of social conflicts by implicitly pointing to the contradictions between an illegitimate corrupt local government and the masses. My study shows how *Southern Weekend's* role and function are connected with the use of such strategies, which enable investigative newspapers to resist the traditional party-press style of journalism. I argue that *Southern Weekend's* media representation of the Weng'an incident can be understood as an example of how investigative journalism in China has created new spaces of media representations.

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Chapter I: Introduction

1.1 Thesis Statement

The aim of this study is to examine how China's traditional newspaper media cover mass incidents (*quntixing shijian*). I will use the Weng'an incident (*Weng'an shijian*) as my main case and do a discourse analysis of the coverage from two different Chinese newspapers. Even though coverage of such topics is considered a political minefield, such coverage is becoming commonplace in the Chinese media. However, the party-state's introduction and renewed emphasis on the construction of a harmonious society (*hexie shehui*) in the preceding and succeeding years of the Beijing Olympics illustrates the sensitive nature of this topic. Official propaganda postulates that contemporary China is in a period of approaching *shengshi*, "a traditional term used in dynastic politics to describe the years combining peace (*taiping*) and prosperity", but as Guoguang Wu points out: "only half of this term applies: China has achieved material prosperity, but without social peace".¹ Mass incidents as a social phenomenon encapsulates vividly most of the acute socio-political problems in contemporary China and its growing frequency underpins Wu's point. I will specifically look at a critical investigative media representation of the Weng'an incident, but to better understand the role of investigative journalism in China, I will also include an analysis of a party-press representation of this mass incident. This will be done by analysing articles from *Guizhou Daily*, a provincial newspaper embedded in the immediate power structures in relation to where the actual event took place. I will analyse *Southern Weekend* and its coverage to examine how critical investigative newspapers cover the sensitive topic of mass incidents. I think this dual focus on critical investigative discourse and its role in tandem with an in-depth analysis of a party-press discourse is one of the strong sides of this thesis. This is because there has been little research and textual analysis done on party-press texts and articles, in comparison with the abundant research done on investigative journalism. Another interesting feature of this thesis is its emphasis on discourse with the detailed analysis of media texts, which tries to explain the interplay between politics, social structure and journalism and how this actually plays out in the actual texts and articles. The reason why this is particularly interesting is because there seems not much research on media texts and the practical

¹ Guoguang Wu (2010) "China 2009. Muddling through Crises" in *Asian Survey*, p 29-30

consequences of working under conditions of party-state domination. Another strong point of my study is that the analysis will include a dual focus on looking at the micro- and the macro-levels of discourse. In other words, the analysis will range from detailed textual analysis of choices regarding words and syntactic structures to far above sentence-level, with the analysis of voices present and not present in the texts.

On one side, the analysis of the news coverage by *Guizhou Daily* will show how the party-press discourse organize meaning and knowledge and how it makes sense of mass incidents. On the other side, the thesis will examine resistance to such discourse, by looking at how critical investigative discourse provides an alternative media representation of the Weng'an incident. Analysing articles from the *tour de force* of investigative journalism in China, *Southern Weekend* will achieve this purpose. Such a comparative perspective will also help bring light to some of the diversity found within the Chinese state-dominated media system today. My thesis will thus examine some of the discursive strategies and means which critical investigative journalism can use to make critical comments on sensitive topics politically acceptable and thus publishable. One major finding in this study is the polyphony of critical investigative discourse, in which the strategic use of the dominant official discourse play a major role in camouflaging and neutralising critical comments in order to “bypass political minefields”² found in the coverage of mass incidents. In relation to *Guizhou Daily* and the party-press discourse of mass incidents, I argue that *Southern Weekend*'s media representation of the Weng'an incident can be understood as an example of how investigative journalism in China has created new spaces of media representations.³ This is done through discursive strategies such as polyphony and *infrapolitics* by “inserting elements of the hidden transcript into the public transcript [which] is a strategy of resistance which can create new spaces of representations”.⁴

² This phrase is borrowed from Jingrong Tong, a scholar who has done substantial research on investigative journalism in China.

³ Elin Sæther (2008a) *The Conditional Autonomy of the Critical Press in China*, (2008b) “A New Political Role? Discursive Strategies of Critical Journalists in China” in *China aktuell*

⁴ Sæther (2008a), p 9

With this in mind I propose the following research questions:

How do critical investigative newspapers in China cover mass incidents?

Which discursive strategies are employed to make critical comments safe and thus publishable?

How do party-papers cover mass incidents?

What are the role and function of party-papers and investigative newspapers respectively in contemporary Chinese media?

Research status

Yew-Jin Fang has conducted research and discourse analysis of Chinese newspaper articles, but she focuses on representations of social protests and riots in Chinese foreign news. Her research shows how the ideological orientation of a given newspaper influences the reporting of a particular event in construing a media representation that is congruent with party-state ideology and national foreign policy.⁵ Jingrong Tong has done some very interesting research on the transformation of news articles by looking at how reports on social riots and unrest are altered in the process of editing through comparing the original article submitted by the journalist and the published article. She further examines how editors bypass political minefields with discursive strategies, solving the paradox of making news reports politically acceptable, as well as commercially profitable.⁶ Tong devoted a chapter in her book, *Investigative Journalism in China*, on how investigative journalists cover social riots and mass incidents, using discourse analysis to pinpoint journalists' and editors' discursive strategies.⁷ Qing Cao has done some similar research but on a different field, analysing how Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has utilized Confucian discourse on the international scene to develop the concept of "the peaceful rise of China" and later "the peaceful development of China" in order to battle and debunk Western cold-war framework underpinning the perception of China as "the China Threat".⁸ The scholar Juan Li contrasted the official US and Chinese media coverage during the diplomatic crisis of 1999 and 2000 by looking at the discourse of national conflicts and the construction of national identities, using Fairclough's

⁵ Yew-Jin Fang (1994). "Riots" and Demonstrations in the Chinese Press" in *Discourse and Society*, (2001) "Reporting the Same Events? in *Discourse and Society*

⁶ Jingrong Tong (2009a) "Press Self-censorship in China: A Case Study in the Transformation of Discourse" in *Discourse and Society*

⁷ Tong (2009b) "Reporting on Social Riots: How Investigative Journalists Tell Stories" in *Investigative Journalism in China: Journalism, Power and Society*, p 154-191

⁸ Qing Cao (2007) "Confucian Vision of a New World Order?: Culturalist Discourse, Foreign Policy and the Press in Contemporary China" in *International Communication Gazette*

version of CDA where intertextuality is a crucial part of the analysis.⁹ Peter Sandby-Thomas has recently done an analysis of discourse of stability through detailed case studies. Sandby-Thomas asks the simple question how the CCP has managed to remain in power in post-Tiananmen China. He goes beyond the normal explanatory scheme of economic development coupled with nationalism filling the ideological vacuum of Communist and Maoist ideology. According to his research, the use of the discourse of stability (*wending*) has functioned as an essential legitimization strategy, postulating that the party-state led by CCP is the sole provider of continued political and material stability.¹⁰ Elin Sæther has done extensive work on explaining the “conditional autonomy” of critical journalism in contemporary Chinese media.¹¹ Her approach is twofold. On one hand, she explores the social strategies and journalistic practices of investigative journalists and editors through extensive fieldwork and in-depth interviews. On the other hand, she enriches her dissertation by looking at how this “conditional autonomy” plays out in empirical data in the articles from *Southern Weekend* on topics ranging from SARS to mining conditions. This is interpreted and analysed with tools from discourse analysis and discourse theory, specifically at the macro-levels of discourse. My research is perhaps particularly indebted to Sæther’s work, particularly on the notion of the polyphonic nature of critical investigative journalism. My emphasis is however exclusively on the discursive level trying to explain with discourse analysis of the media coverage of the Weng’an incident, what studies of media economics and ownership or research on the institutional and legal setup of the Chinese media system can only partially explain. This is particularly true when it comes to examining resistance to the party-press discourse, represented here with articles from *Southern Weekend*.

I argue that despite choosing a topic of such nature, it will still enable me to examine some of the diversity that one can find within the Chinese media, and also expose the blurry boundaries and ideological framework set by the party-state. More interestingly, the actual difference in the coverage can be substantial and even contradictory. Critical investigative journalism seems to be dependent on a string of factors, such as locality of the given news event in relation to the newspaper itself and the administrative boundaries of the party-state. In other words, how the decentralization of political, economical, cultural power along down

⁹ Juan Li (2009) “Intertextuality and National Identity- Discourse of National Conflicts in Daily Newspapers in the United States and China” in *Discourse and Society*

¹⁰ Peter Sanby-Thomas (2011) *Legitimizing the Chinese Communist Party Since Tiananmen: A Critical Analysis of the Stability Discourse*

¹¹ Sæther (2008a, 2008b)

the levels of government has lead to a situation where local power structures control its own media to be congruent with its own interests, even though these local interests often collide with the national ones from Beijing, marking what Tong has called “the crisis of the centralized media theory”.¹² Tong argues that this clash between the local and national has lead to a situation in which “disparity in aims of control has left a gap in media control, which allows certain space of media freedom”.¹³ My thesis will try to examine this space of relative media freedom, which arguably is exploited to the fullest by *Southern Weekend* with the practice of cross-regional reporting. This is another reason why I have chosen my particular approach of looking both at the coverage of the provincial party-paper *Guizhou Daily* and the coverage by *Southern Weekend*. As noted, the former is a party-paper embedded in the local power structures, whereas the latter represents an investigative newspaper outside the constituency and jurisdiction of localized power. As such, this thesis will in more abstract terms examine the party-press discourse and the critical investigative discourse by doing a discourse analysis of the two respective newspapers’ media coverage of the Weng’an incident.

1.2 Definitions of Terms and Concepts

Discourse and Discourses

Since this is a thesis about *The Discourse of Mass Incidents*, it is important to understand what *discourse(s)* and *discourse* signify when I use them. For instance, when I talk about “party-press discourse” or “critical investigative discourse”¹⁴, I draw upon Fairclough’s conceptualization of discourse(s) as “ways of signifying experience from a particular perspective”.¹⁵ In this way, discourses are the means to organize knowledge and meaning about a given topic from a particular point of view. Neoliberalist discourses would for example organize knowledge and ascribe meaning to the topic of globalization in a very different way than Marxist discourses would. My analysis will show how differently party-

¹² Tong (2010) “The Crisis of the Centralized Media Control Theory: How Local Power Controls Media in China” in *Media Culture Society*

¹³ Ibid, p 937

¹⁴ I use “party-press discourse” (and very sporadically “mouthpiece discourse”) to refer to *Guizhou Daily*. Critical investigative discourse refers to *Southern Weekend*

¹⁵ Norman Fairclough (2010) *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language*, p 95

press and investigative discourse organize knowledge and meaning, resulting in two quite different media representations of the same news event.

In the more abstract discussion of the discourse of mass incidents, discourse (as a singular noun) is “language use conceived as social practice”.¹⁶ This conceptualization of the term will only be used in discussion of the more general limits and the blurry ideological framework in the order of Chinese media discourse. When I talk about “order of discourse” it is “the sum of all the genres and discourses which are in use within a specific social domain”¹⁷, which in my case is the Chinese newspaper media. What is important to acknowledge in this respect is how the use of discourses and genres is controlled by this totality (order of discourse), because it is the order of discourse that “constitutes the recourses (discourse and genres) that are available” and thus “delimits what can be said”.¹⁸ In the Chinese media, the order of discourse is strictly constrained by the state, with old Maoist practices and concepts, such as “mouthpiece” (*houshe*). This practice is still a lingering and dominating one in the Chinese media, which consequently influences the repertoire of discourses and genres available for Chinese journalists to draw upon in order to make sense of and interpret social reality in an understandable way.

Mass Incidents – *Quntixing Shijian*

The specific social phenomena I am analysing the news coverage of is in Chinese official terminology called “mass incidents” (*quntixing shijian*). Technically speaking, mass incidents are any forms of social protests or unrest with a minimum of 100 participants. With such an unclear and ambiguous definition it is actually hard to make sense of Chinese official “newspeak” of what is meant by “mass incidents”. Mass incidents could in theory range from a relatively peaceful petition campaign to extreme violent outbursts of riots involving thousands of people.¹⁹ My chosen case study arguably belongs to the latter description. As Bjorn Alpermann, a scholar on rural governance pointed out: “official figures lump together all kinds of “collective incidents” (*qunti shijian*) ranging from peaceful group petitioning

¹⁶ Ibid, p 95-96

¹⁷ Marianne Jørgensen and Lousie Philips (2002) *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method*, p 72

¹⁸ Ibid, p 72

¹⁹ Bjorn Alpermann (2013) “Village Governance Reforms in China” in *Towards a New Development Paradigm in Twenty-First Century China: Economy, Society and Politics*, p 151

through sit-ins and traffic blockades to violent outbursts of public anger".²⁰ During the Hu-Wen administration the number of mass incidents has grown exponentially. Official data shows that there has been an increase from 8,700 mass incidents in 1993 to over 90,000 in 2006. After 2006 no official figures have been released, but sources indicate that this problem is increasing, with an approximation of over 120,000 mass incidents in 2010.²¹

The Weng'an incident was a serious mass incident with thousands of demonstrators and rioters. But the particularities of the Weng'an incident fit well with what the Chinese sociologist Yu Jianrong has called *shuhui xiefen shijian* or "anger-venting social incidents".²² According to his research on what is particular about this type of mass 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 behaviour.²³

The overall availability of new and improved tools of disseminating information "not only aid mobilization but quickly spread word of the incident far and wide, thwarting the efforts of local officials to suppress news".²⁴ I think the latter point interesting with regards to my own case. The relative media freedom when conducting cross-regional critical reporting (*meiti yidi jiandu*) represented here by *Southern Weekend*, did not just only address the inconsistencies of the official party-press discourse, but also pointed to the pitfalls of that style of journalism. As my analysis later will show, combined with slow government response and paternalistic party-press discourse, and categories such "the ignorant masses" (*bu ming zhenxiang de qunzhong*), the problem was exactly that the masses did not believe in the propagated truth (*shishi de zhenxiang*) from the government through the party-press. Yu Jianrong further points out two other factors in his research about mass incidents; the role of public security personnel and lack of belief in Chinese judicial system:

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

²⁰ Alpermann (2010) "Rural Governance in Times of Economic Stress" in *China and the World Economy China's Economic Rise after Three Decades of Reform*, p 94

²¹ Ibid, p 95

²² Joseph Fewsmith (2008) "An 'Anger-Venting' Mass Incident Catches the Attention of China's Leadership" in *China Leadership Monitor*, p 3

²³ Ibid, quoted in Fewsmith (2008), p 3

²⁴ Ibid, p 3

surprising if they turn to non-institutionalized social forces to achieve fairness and vent their anger. 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’”.²⁵

This is actually a quite fitting summary of what Guizhou provincial party committee secretary Shi Zongyuan pointed out as the deeper causes (*shenchengci yuanyin*) of the Weng’an incident. I will come back to this point in my analysis of the media coverage. The point is the Weng’an incident as an “Anger-Venting” type of mass incident started out rather randomly. The Weng’an incident’s blasting fuse (*daohuoxian*) was the suspicious death of a young schoolgirl, originally only concerning the family of the deceased and the local police. This evolved later into massive protests and riots supposedly involving 10,000 – 30,000 people.²⁶ As the coverage of the incident intensified, the escalation of the initial protest into a mass riot was perceived to be the result of the more normal (accumulated) grievances of the rural population. For instance, disputes over land requisition, relocation and questions of compensation, environmental degeneration of land and fields. In all, reflecting a longstanding and widespread discontent of the masses towards the local government and its style of governance.

Mouthpiece and supervision by public opinion

On the nature of the Chinese press and its function in China, the concept of mouthpiece (*houshe*) is of particular importance to help with this understanding. According to this concept, newspapers’ essential task should be to disseminate party policy, ideology and political propaganda on behalf of the party. Just like the party-state apparatus and the political system in China still retain its initial structure from the Mao-period, the Maoist legacy of *houshe* remains a significant force in the Chinese media field. This is especially true when it comes to the discussion of political matters (*zhengzhi*) in China today.²⁷ As Sæther points out “the political (...) is construed as a taboo and remains with the domain of propaganda journalism”.²⁸ As for more concrete implications of the mouthpiece role, there is for instance an “80-20 percent rule”. This means that media should disseminate a minimum of 80 percent of “positive news” and a maximum of 20 percent of “negative news”. Both previous and

²⁵ Ibid, quoted in Fewsmith (2008), p 4

²⁶ Ibid, p 1

²⁷ Sæther (2008a), p 162-164 and p 214

²⁸ Ibid, p 214

recent research has showed that this practice is still well and alive in contemporary China.²⁹ Hu Yaobang, one among the progressive reformers and a favourite among 1989 student-movement said in the conference “On the Party's Journalism Work” in 1985 that:

media's role as "mouthpiece" (*houshe*) of the Party and government, warned against too much attention to societal ills or controversy (with the admonition that no more than 20% of news content should be negative while 80% should be positive, and decreed that those who gathered and wrote the news were not entitled to the same latitude granted to writers of literary works.³⁰

This statement holds a lot of truth regarding the level of control over the media, especially in comparison with the more relaxed rules and regulations when it comes to the field of literature. The mouthpiece concept entails that journalists are supposed to be party-propagandists, working on behalf of the party by construing a positive image of the Party and the workings of the party-state. With regards to my research and case study, an understanding of the concept of mouthpiece is useful when discussing the role and function of the my two chosen newspapers. But it is also important to understand how the fragmentation of power and clashes of interest between different levels of government make the Western cold-war perception of the Chinese media as *one unified mouthpiece* seem very inaccurate. As such, *Guizhou Daily* is a mouthpiece for its own constituency, reflecting the needs and concerns of local power holders. As my analysis later will show, as a localized mouthpiece, *Guizhou Daily*'s primary role is to construe a positive representation of the provincial party-state.

Two other central concepts in the Chinese media connected with *houshe*-role are supervision by public opinion or media supervision (*yulun jiandu*, *meiti jiandu*) and cross-regional media supervision (*meiti yidi jiandu*). The concept of supervision by public opinion was originally coined by the central party-state, reflecting the need to expose local government corruption and malpractice. One way to view this concept could be that it function as “a mechanism by which the government uses the press as a tool for social and political control that provides an official framework for the coverage of controversial topics”.³¹ My analysis will show that such an assessment fails to see forms of resistance and the potential of agency within the critical investigative discourse. Another problem, as tools for Beijing to supervise local governments, is that this practise is often hindered by local protectionism and media at lower

²⁹ Judy Polumbaum (1990) “The tribulations of China’s Journalists after decade of reform”, p 33-68 and Sæther (2008a), p 171

³⁰ Quoted in Polumbaum (1990), p 41

³¹ Li-Fung Cho (2010) “The Origins of Investigative Journalism” in *Investigative Journalism in China*, p 165

levels is unable to serve their respective watchdog function.³² Jingrong Tong points to similar developments in her article “The crisis of the centralized media control theory”.³³ This has lead to a situation in which media outlets look outside their own turf to conduct what has been called *meiti yidi jiandu* (cross-regional media supervision), often with the “perk” of no interference from their regional/provincial propaganda departments. According to Li-Fung Cho this practice is underpinned by three kinds of “gaps”:

(1) The geographic gap, or *da kongjian cha*, by which an “out-of-town” reporter not subject to the direct administrative control of regional government officials enjoys much greater reporting freedom than does a local one”, (2) the self interest gap, or *da liyi cha*, by which local government officials willingly tolerate or avert their eyes from reporting on problems in other provinces by media under their jurisdiction, as it makes them less likely to focus on local problems; and (3) the information gap, or *da zixun cha*, by which local officials have a harder time “tracking” the activities of out-of-town journalists, thus giving them more time to publish stories before political pressure to prevent publication occurs.³⁴

This practice of cross-regional reporting and how critical investigative discourse is dependent on geopolitical factors and relation to the administrative boundaries of the party-state is important to understand. I see *Southern Weekend*’s coverage of the Weng’an incident dependent upon to this relative media freedom, provided by the practice of cross-regional media supervision. In this way, mass incidents that happen within *Southern Weekend*’s own constituency, namely Guangdong province, would in theory be much harder for *Southern Weekend* to critically cover. This is because the respective propaganda departments would impose much stricter guidelines and try to constrain media coverage as much as possible.

1.3 Domination and Arts of Resistance

A theory that can explain possibilities of agency and strategies of resistance under conditions of domination, that is similar to party-state’s control over the mass media in China³⁵, is Scott’s theory of domination and resistance, formulated in his book *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*.³⁶ I think this theoretical framework can give fruitful insights and provide a framework to explain *some* aspects of both the party-press discourse of *Guizhou Daily*, as

³² Ibid, p 169-170

³³ Tong (2010)

³⁴ Cho (2010), p 170-171

³⁵ For more on this, see chapter two “Media with Chinese Characteristics”

³⁶ James C. Scott (1990) *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*

well as the critical investigative discourse of *Southern Weekend*. This is particularly true in the discussion of discursive strategies, which for example, theories of media ownership and economics fails to explain and grasp. More importantly, in relation to my own research, it is precisely in the discursive dimension one can trace the actual resistance to the party-state's formal, structural and discursive domination over the Chinese newspaper media. In my case, this is be done by examining the discursive strategies utilized by *Southern Weekend* for bypassing political minefields without going *too* far to risk negative repercussions. I think it is quite fruitful and useful to transfer some of Scott's theoretical concepts to the analysis of Chinese media texts and discourse. However, this transfer is far from unproblematic. It should not be made without caution as Scott's theory is developed and based upon a reading of historical sources of institutional racism and accounts of blacks and slave-owners from late 19th century America. Scott also draws upon his own ethnographic fieldwork from agricultural communities in South-East Asia. More concretely, strategies of resistance by subordinate peasants against state-power and rich landowners in Indonesia. Despite obvious contextual differences, the similarities between my research and Scott's are in the investigation of resistance to dominance and how this plays out in discourse under conditions of dominance. Despite the inherent problems of transferring a theory and implementing it on a totally different empirical material embedded in the particularities of Chinese media system and its practises, I still find Scott's theory both applicable and useful. This elective move of using Scott's theory can help to explain material that may seem very contradictory, paradoxical and ambiguous in my analysis. One example is how Scott's concept of *infrapolitics* can help to explain *Southern Weekend*'s heavy reliance on official sources and prominent use of the official discourse and voice in their coverage.

In his book, Scott differentiates four types of discourses; *the public transcript* is "the self-portrait of the dominant elites and how they wish themselves to be perceived" and in which the goal is to "naturalize relations of domination".³⁷ In the Chinese setting, this is could be similar to the part-press discourse and the mouthpiece role, which produces and reproduces the official dominant discourse - a discourse that construes and organizes meaning and knowledge congruent with the interest of the ruling elite. As a localized mouthpiece, *Guizhou Daily*'s role is to serve the provincial government's self-interests and image resulting in very orthodox party-press coverage.

³⁷ Scott (1990), p 31

The second discourse is what Scott calls *infrapolitics* is of particular importance for understanding the critical discourse of *Southern Weekend*. *Infrapolitics* is the “the politics of disguise and anonymity that takes place in the public view but it is designed to have double meaning or to shield the identity of the actor”.³⁸ For Scott this is the “weapons of the weak” and the subordinates’ tool “for jabbing at the masters”. Examples include “anonymous letter[s], arson, stealing, rumours, gossip, disguise, linguistic tricks, metaphors, euphemisms, folktales, ritual gestures”.³⁹ I think his point how *infrapolitics* helps to create a double meaning is useful to the analysis of my empirical material. I have observed ambiguities and contradictions in the polyphony of voices and perspectives found in the articles from *Southern Weekend*. Scott shows in his book through extensive reading of historical sources on how afro-American slaves embedded in institutional slavery and under conditions of domination in the American-South, strategically utilized parts of the hegemonic discourse of dominant groups to pursue their own interests. This could be to make a good case for better living conditions, food, and treatment and so fourth.⁴⁰ I think Scott’s concept of *infrapolitics* can help me to explain *Southern Weekend*’s prominent use of officially sanctioned sources and the high frequency of quotes from officials intertwined within a myriad of non-official voices, to make up their own critical discourse. The concept of *infrapolitics* explains how subtle strategies of resistance help to enable ways of voicing critical views and perspectives into the public transcript.

I think Scott’s concept of *infrapolitics* could explain *some* aspects of my findings in the analysis of *Southern Weekend*’s coverage and show, despite being embedded in conditions of domination, how the agency of critical journalism can push the boundaries of expression in the order of Chinese media discourse. With this in mind, there is indeed a tacit play and tension between partially fulfilling an updated mouthpiece role and partially challenging it. In other words, inexplicitly refusing to be passive partners in subordination, while at least in the level of appearances to partially accept this subordination. I will come back to this discussion in the concluding chapter of my thesis.

³⁸ Ibid, 32

³⁹ Ibid, p 32

⁴⁰ Ibid, p 56

The third discourse in Scott's theory is the *hidden transcript*, which is located "offstage" and hidden from the *public transcript*. It is in this space we find the counter- narratives and thus explicit subversive discourse. In Scott's own words:

Every subordinate group creates, out of its ordeal, a "hidden transcript represents a critique of power spoken behind the back of the dominant. The powerful, for their party, also develop a hidden transcript the practices and claims of their rule that cannot be openly avowed. A comparisons of the hidden transcript of the weak with that of the powerful and of both hidden transcripts to the public transcript of power relations offers a substantially new way of understanding resistance to domination.⁴¹

According to Scott, both the dominant and subversive groups have their own respective *hidden transcripts*. One can for example view the system of internal channel (*neibu*) in which negative and sensitive news as *the hidden transcript* of the dominant – another practice and a legacy from Maoist time that still lives on in China today. One particular space where one could find such discourse easily is Chinese cyberspace, in which both the anonymity and the vastness of net make it a much harder place for the state to control and dominate.

The last form of discourse is what Scott calls *breaking the silence*. This is when subordinate groups "speaks truth to power" effectively moving the hidden transcript into the public transcript".⁴² However, under any conditions of dominance and systems of domination – such open confrontation and explicit display of insubordination are extremely dangerous and therefore very rare to be seen in the public transcript. It is much like choosing an "exit-strategy" of which the consequences of transmitting explicit transgressive discourse openly out into the public transcript can be anything from losing your job to long prison sentences for Chinese journalists. The last two forms of discourse, namely the *hidden transcript* and *breaking the silence* are then off less importance and relevance to me because they are very hard to obtain and almost impossible to find in the Chinese newspaper media.

To sum up, in the appropriation of Scott's theory, the localized mouthpiece discourse represented by *Guizhou Daily* could be regarded as a force dominating the *public transcript*, but at disrupted, challenged, and resisted by the relatively marginalized critical investigative discourse of *Southern Weekend*. Under conditions of dominance, such resistance has to be masked and camouflaged through the use of *infrapolitics*. My analysis will show that this is one major discursive strategy by which the polyphonic and critical expressions of *Southern*

⁴¹ Ibid, p xii

⁴² Ibid, p 32

Weekend seem less transgressive and appear more politically acceptable and thus publishable.

1.4 Chapter Outline

This introductory chapter has outlined the basic terms and concepts, theoretical framework and the relevant background for the study, as well as the idea and rationale behind this thesis.

Chapter two will go through the institutional particularities of the Chinese media system and the strategies securing structural and formal party-state domination over the Chinese media. In addition, I will also provide a short overview of the development of investigative journalism in China and briefly discuss how they operate under conditions of domination.

Chapter three will give a brief summary on how I analyse my corpus of media texts, as well some thoughts on my chosen empirical data and why I chose to exclusively focus on the traditional newspaper media.

Chapter four, which constitutes the main part of this thesis, will in its first subchapter provide a short description of the Weng'an-incident, and then an overview of the all the articles from *Guizhou Daily* and *Southern Weekend*, where I try to map out the main themes and topics in the coverage respectively. The following subchapters carry out main body of my analysis of the chosen articles from first *Guizhou Daily* and then *Southern Weekend*.

In the concluding chapter, I will summarize my findings and connect them with my research questions.

Chapter II: Media With Chinese Characteristics

The purpose of this section is to follow the general direction that the Chinese media has been going in the Post-Mao period and to provide the institutional setting of the Chinese media system. My reading of the literature shows that the party-state and Central Propaganda Department (CPD) have been quite successful in adopting methods of control and guidance of the media in a new commercialized environment and tackled new problems posed by such processes, as well as technological advances.⁴³ However this has not been a straightforward plan that is carved out in stone following a ten-point list. Anne-Marie Brady quotes in her book a Chinese authority on propaganda work, which I think sums up the much more incremental approach state-planners have adopted; “the old ways are not effective, and the new methods are not yet clear” (*Lao banfa bu ling, xin banfa bu ming*).⁴⁴ Brady’s book *Marketing Dictatorship* examines the overall propaganda system and the new high-tech propaganda strategies and techniques for controlling a much more diverse and information-rich environment. Brady has also recently edited another book on propaganda in contemporary China, called *China’s Thought Management*. This book follows the same vein as its predecessor, but presents detailed case studies from a wide range of contributors. Nonetheless, the conclusion of both seems to be that the party-state has been quite successful in adapting itself with updated tools, making up a tech-savvy and modernized propaganda system. According to Brady’s research, propaganda and thought work are not on the decline, rather even on the rise in China, just in new forms and changed content. In other words, propagated through new techniques and measures that seem to be more in tune with the sociocultural and political reality of contemporary China.⁴⁵ To some extent, the Chinese state has managed to stay along side the curves of social change facilitated by market reforms and rapid progress in the era of computer- and information technology. This is partially achieved with pro-active measures, such as institutional innovations, new rules and regulations, updated methods of censorship and control, as well as with media reforms and strategies designed to keep media profitable and politically acceptable. In short, this section will look at

⁴³ One notable exception is Daniel C. Lynch and his research. He argues on the contrary that the party-state has lost most of its control over the mass media largely due to processes of commercialization and technological advancements. For more in this see; Lynch (1999) *After the Propaganda State: Media, Politics, and Thought Work in Reformed China*

⁴⁴ Anne-Marie Brady (2008) *Marketing Dictatorship: Propaganda and Thought Work in Contemporary China*, p 65

⁴⁵ Brady (2008) and (2011) *China’s Thought Management* edited by Brady

the diverse strategies for maintaining structural and formal domination over the Chinese media by the party state. In the last section, I will elaborate on the other side of the coin from the focus on structure, with a short account of the trajectory critical journalism and how it is situated and operates under conditions of domination.

2.1 Party-state strategies of media control and domination

In Maoist-China the mass media was fully integrated into the party-state apparatus, both in terms of ownership and state-subsides as the only source of income. With the economic realities of the 1980s, state planners started to allow media outlets to experiment with other forms of funding, such as advertising, subscription sales and so fourth. The embracement of market reforms, in which the media's financial independence from the state was the aim, reflects the utilitarian motive behind such reforms. That is the state's need to cut down on government spending, leading to a much-needed commercialization and marketization of the mass media. Although the media has become financially independent from the state, newspapers were expected to serve both the party and the logic of the market, which means that China's media was caught in a tension between the party line and the bottom line.⁴⁶

The most significant changes within Chinese media were connected to the large social transformation with the attempt to create "socialism with Chinese characteristics" in Post-Mao China. This was done with importing elements and mechanisms from a market economy, but still lingering with practises from the old political system. But there is no doubt that the social change facilitated by the shift from Maoist China to Dengist reforms brought about immense changes in the field of media and its practices. In this new environment, media outlets had to strive for financial autonomy from the state. This meant that the logic of the market forced media in China to think about its audience and readers, not solely the party and the party line, which by now had lost its monopoly over media output and content. This process of commercialization and marketization was further accelerated with Deng's Southern Tour in 1992, which ended the debates regarding the exact nature and pace of the reforms. As a consequence, in terms of media-development, by the end of the millennium most media

⁴⁶ Yuezhi Zhao (1998) *Media, Market, and Democracy in China: Between the Party Line and the Bottom Line*

organizations were not only financially independent, but also extremely profitable.⁴⁷ However, in the backdrop of the internal and external crisis of Communism, respectively the crisis of 1989 and the downfall of Communism in Soviet and Eastern Europe, the incumbent elites in China connected such failures to the lack of control over the media. In post-Tiananmen China, the party-state found new strategies to keep the mass media under control, by both being economically profitable and politically answerable.⁴⁸ On strategy securing formal control over the mass media, also a distinctive feature of media with Chinese characteristics, is to prevent private ownership of the media. All media outlets and organisations “must be registered under a recognized institutional publisher or sponsor, which includes party committees, government bureaucracies, mass organizations, and other institutions of official standing above the county level”.⁴⁹ Technically speaking, all media outlets are regarded as *shiye* (public institutions), a type of organization that does not exclusively follow the logic of the market. News organisations are thus not regarded as *qiye* - or business enterprises, producing goods only for profits.⁵⁰ Consequently, all media outlets fall under the direct supervision of both their party-state sponsor and their respective propaganda department, with the Central Propaganda Department in Beijing at the top of the hierarchy.⁵¹ This selective lingering of old Leninist management principals, while at the same time opening up for commercialization exemplifies the state architects’ very pragmatic and non-dogmatic approach, epitomized with the grand scheme of building a “socialist market economy”. The media scholar Zhao Yuezhi has in her research tried to follow the intrinsic contradictions within this euphemism. She calls this “neoliberalism as exception” and “exceptions to neoliberalism”.⁵² The practical consequences entail an elective importation of fitting elements from capitalism and the consequent lingering of practices from Maoist-period, which helps to secure state-control and dominance over the Chinese media. The aim of this non-dogmatic pragmatic two-fold strategy is to prevent the media to function as independent businesses enterprises, which follow solely the logic and rationale of the market. A new institutional innovation marking media with Chinese characteristics, is this the media licensing system, which was designed to manage the rise of the messy commercial media outlets in post-Tiananmen China.⁵³ GAPP (General

⁴⁷ Chin-Chuan Lee et al (2007a) “The Case of the Shenzhen Press Group” in *Political Regimes and the Media in Asia*, p 13

⁴⁸ Zhao (2008) *Communication in China: Political Economy, Power and Conflict*,

⁴⁹ Zhao (2008), p 80

⁵⁰ Zhao (2004) “The State, The Market, and Media Control in China” in *Who Owns the Media*, p 196

⁵¹ For an extensive introduction to the workings of the CPD and the Chinese Propaganda system as a whole see Brady (2008)

⁵² Zhao (2008), p 6

⁵³ For more on such innovations and strategies see Zhao (2008, 2004)

Administration of Press and Publishing) with the power of issuing and withdrawing media licenses “thus, through its licensing power, the GAPP has managed to contain the commercial revolution in the Chinese press within the orbit of the party-state”.⁵⁴ Other older and newer institutions embedded in China’s domestic propaganda system, with CPD on the top, include the SARFT (State Administration of Radio, Film and Television) OFP/SCIO (Office for Foreign Propaganda/State Council Information Office), Spiritual Civilization Offices and Ministry of Culture.⁵⁵ OFP/SCIO was created in 1991 as a “recognition of the need to dramatically improve the CCP government’s international image in the wake of the events of 1989”. Its principal tasks are to control and supervise “the activities of foreign journalists in China, [and] monitoring foreign social science research on China, and controlling the Internet”.⁵⁶ This formation of these two offices might be examples of the Chinese propaganda system adjusting itself to a new environment. The offices of SCIO along side propaganda departments at different levels take the immense task of controlling and censoring the many forums and microblogs in Chinese cyberspace. In China, such digital propaganda workers are employed to battle anti-government and dissident views on the net by posting and disseminating official party-state views. These are called the 50-cent party members (*wumaodang*). To the millions of Chinese netizens this is, not surprisingly, quite a derogatory term.

Another strategy made to ensure political adherence to the party-state, in spite of pushing for further commercialization, was to look at management and modes of media ownership in the West. In post-Tiananmen China, state planners started to encourage the making of state-media conglomerates as the main part of media reform (*meiti gaige*).⁵⁷ As Chinese media scholar Ashley Esarey points out:

Under Jiang Zemin's leadership in the mid- to late-1990s, media management strategies became even more sophisticated, with the formation of media conglomerates intended to strengthen the media industry financially, and place it under more politically reliable leadership. After initial experimentation with media conglomerates, the Propaganda

⁵⁴ Zhao (2008), p 81

⁵⁵ Brady (2008), p 11

⁵⁶ Ibid, p 23

⁵⁷ Cao Peng (2004) “xinwen gaige de tupo: cong baoshe dao baoye jituan” (曹鹏 “新闻改革的突破：从报社到报业集团” <<http://www.people.com.cn/GB/14677/22100/41491/41503/3035719.html>> (15 April 2013). In this regard, it is interesting to note that concentration of media ownership in form of media conglomerates is one of the mechanisms in the Propaganda Model formulated by Herman and Chomsky in (1989) *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*

Department and SPPA decided to reorganize print media at the city, provincial, and central level into media conglomerates or media “groups” as they are called in China.⁵⁸

In retrospect, the main reason for the formation of state conglomerates was to strengthen the state’s political control over the media. This new strategy is also connected with the initial effects of Deng’s 1992 Tour, facilitating a faster pace in the pursuit of commercialisation and marketisation, resulting in an exponential growth in the number of newspapers. Such intense competition, leading to a massive, chaotic and thus uncontrollable commercial media environment became a serious concern for Beijing. But with the new media reform, which initiated the making of state conglomerates, media organizations and newspapers that were politically unreliable could now be closed down or merged with politically reliable ones. As Yuezhi Zhao points out, the central state started campaigns “aiming at media recentralization, and the creation of conglomerates to achieve the optimal integration of political control and market efficiency”.⁵⁹ In short, such state-owned media conglomerates, manifested in the so-called “socialist press groups”⁶⁰ in China were a part of a strategy which aims to strengthen the political control over the now profitable and highly commercialized mass media.

The formation of socialist press groups since the mid-90s in tandem with propaganda departments at different levels acting as the “guiding hand”⁶¹ of the party, has strengthened the state’s grip on the Chinese news media. Propaganda offices possess the power to sack and appoint editorial personnel at will, give informal and formal guidelines on what to write about, how to write about it (or what not to write about).⁶² Editors’-in-chiefs are especially vulnerable because they are accountable for decisions made by subordinate editors and journalists, which makes censorship and self-censorship an integral part of media organizations.⁶³ These indirect and direct, formal and informal mechanisms help to ensure party-state domination and control over the media at all levels. Political and ideological control was strengthened with the formation of profitable state-conglomerates, which helps to sustain a strange marriage between market forces and state power. Most news organizations thus adopt a strategy for securing profit by providing “infotainment” for the urban middle and

⁵⁸ Ashley Esarey (2005) “Cornering the Market: State Strategies for Controlling China’s Commercial Media” in *Asian Perspective*, p 60

⁵⁹ Zhao (2008), p 96

⁶⁰ Zhao (2000b) “From Commercialization to Conglomeration: The Transformation of the Chinese Press Within the Orbit of the Party State”, p 15-16

⁶¹ Term borrowed from Anne-Marie Brady. For more on this see Brady (2008), p 1-30

⁶² See for example China Digital Times (www.chinesedigitaltimes.com) who regularly publish translated memos and guidelines from CPD or what Chinese journalists call “the ministry of truth”.

⁶³ Sæther (2008a), p 215

upper classes, and at the same time, avoiding political minefields that could anger the incumbent elites. Through fieldwork and interviews by Lee, He and Huang, such an approach is epitomized in the words of a mid-level media worker:

Some newspapers play the 'edge ball'. They want to please a handful of readers and encourage individualistic heroism among some journalists. They misguide public opinion, offend the leaders, and suffer from punishment they deserve. We don't. We adhere to the political line and maximize our economic returns.⁶⁴

It is interesting to note that misguiding public opinion in this context could mean prioritizing exposure of corruption and illegitimate practices at cost of concerns regarding social and political stability. Journalists and editors from *Guizhou Daily*, as we later will see, share such a similar mindset. These words also illustrate the importance of media organization as profit-driven business enterprises ("Incs, "maximize our economic returns"). Most importantly for the state power is that such priorities are coupled with loyalty and partial subordination to the party-state ("adhere to the political line"). This marriage between political power and the market forces marks a change from earlier clear-cut ideological and propaganda type of journalism to a modernized version of the mouthpiece. The media scholar He Zhou coined the concept of "Party Publicity Incs" to describe the new role of a modernized mouthpiece, in which positive publicity of the workings of the party-state is central, along side sensationalised infotainment.⁶⁵ As Lee, He and Huang point out: "the media have abandoned the Maoist role as ideological brainwashers".⁶⁶ These "Party Publicity Incs" have on one hand managed to function as very profitable business enterprises following market logic and rationales. On the other hand, the organisational structure of socialist press groups makes it easier to conduct ideological and political control over potential newspapers that could stray away from the "party-line". That is why most newspapers in China stay away from political minefields, prioritizing infotainment, marking the new modernized mouthpiece role of being Party Publicity Incs.

All in all, there has been a state-led development from the commercialization to conglomeration of the Chinese media in order to cope with new problems posed by the initial transformation and change brought by the once much-needed commercialization of the media. In order to secure party-state control and domination over the Chinese media, the formation of

⁶⁴ Quoted in Lee et al (2007a), p 21

⁶⁵ Zhou He (2000) Chinese Communist Party in a Tug-of War: A Political-Economy Analysis of the Shenzhen Special Zone Daily" in *Power, Money and the Media*, p 112-151

⁶⁶ Lee et al (2007a), p 12

state-conglomerates has been placed as a top priority of media reform. The aim is to provide an overall framework that ensures the “Party Publicity Inc” function of the mass media. That is adhering to the political line on one side, and functioning as independent profitable economic enterprises on the other. The success of the Inc is due to the fact that big state-owned conglomerates secure profits due to conditions of monopoly, rather than through market competition. In conclusion, Chinese state architects have been relatively successful in controlling the “uncontrollable” commercial media by keeping it “within the orbit of the party state”.⁶⁷

Much of the aforementioned research shows that with “media with Chinese characteristics” that party-state has been relatively successful in allying itself market forces and controlling its own media. Increased political control was a favourable consequence of the construction of socialist press groups that was given top priority in state-led media reforms. The overarching goal is to make media outlets financially profitable and loyal adherents to the political line.⁶⁸ However, as this thesis later will show, despite such conditions of structural and formal domination secured by the strange marriage between political power and market forces, one can still find resistance to the being a modernised party-mouthpiece (even within this system and its many constraints and limitations). My thesis and analysis will show exactly such resistance to state domination through the use of discursive strategies and how critical investigative journalism, through the use of such strategies can, provide alternative media representations to the ones produced by the dominant party-press discourse.

2.2 Investigative Journalism in China

Despite party-state domination and control over the Chinese newspaper media, investigative journalism has since the early 90s developed and thrived. The development of investigative journalism made it a force that disrupted and contested the once top-down relationship between the state and the media. However, in the discussion of critical investigative journalism it is important to go back to the roots. As noted in Maoist China, the mass media was supposed to be sole throat and tongue of the party, but it is also important to recognize

⁶⁷ Zhao (2000b)

⁶⁸ Lee et al (2007a) and Lee et al (2007b) “Party-Market Corporatism, Clientism, and Media in Shanghai” in *The Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics*, Zhao (2000b)

the inherent contradictions within the mouthpiece concept from the beginning. In theory, journalists in Maoist China were supposed to serve the party by disseminating party line, official ideology, moral education and positive propaganda. Moreover, they were also supposed to serve the people by giving them a voice and reflect the concerns of the people (*qunzhong fanying*). However in practice, the latter became secondary to the former to the extent that “the mass media are the loyal servants of the state, the party (...) but not of the people”.⁶⁹ The forefather of Chinese investigative journalism, Liu Binyan, was caught in this tension between serving the people and serving the party. Liu Binyan became forerunner and creator of a new genre, a proto-type of investigative journalism within the order of Chinese media discourse. Based on in-depth interviews and observation *baogao wenxue* was “presented as literature” and characterized by “a hybrid style of writing that, at its best, involved detailed reporting and various levels of compilation of facts”. More importantly, within this genre, primacy was given to content and not style and delivery.⁷⁰ As a consequence of his proto-type of investigative journalism, Liu Binyan was expelled and labelled a rightist in 1957. He started writing again after the Cultural Revolution and became famous for his uncompromising articles on corruption and social injustice, epitomised by his most famous work “people or monsters” (*renyao zhijian*), published in 1978. He was expelled once again during the crackdown of bourgeois liberalism in 1987. But things were changing during the liberal times of the 1980s, with the introduction of the concept public supervision (*yulun jiandu*), which marked an official endorsement of investigative journalism. *Yulun jiandu* has been instrumental in creating a space in which the so-called watchdog journalism in China could develop and thrive. However, the period marking the pinnacle of critical journalism in China reached its end with the crushing of student demonstrations in June 1989. Oppressive measures in the aftermath of the demonstrations included purges of journalists and editorial staff of every major party papers. After the lost years between 1989 and 1992, critical journalism enjoyed a rapid development during the latter part of 1990s. Despite critical comments on the limits of this kind of journalism, Zhao Yuezhi identified this trend as one of the most prominent and significant ones in post-Tiananmen China.⁷¹ Even the central public broadcaster, CCTV started their own TV-program designed to accomplish the task of public supervision with the immensely popular programme, Focus (*Jiaodian Fangtan*) on prime-time television. Critical investigations of corrupt officials, crime, infringement of

⁶⁹ Lee (1990) *Voices of China*, p 5

⁷⁰ Ying Chan (2010) “The Journalism Tradition” in *Investigative Journalism in China*, p 7

⁷¹ Yuezhi (2000a) “Watchdogs on Party Leashes? Contexts and implications of investigative journalism in post-Deng China” in *Journalism Studies*

people's rights and interests were among the topics discussed. However, some research has argued that this type of public supervision to more or less extent also fulfils an updated mouthpiece role. This manifests itself by only taking up problems that are solvable, as well as strictly restricting the scale and scope of the investigations to the local level and individual instances. This helps to construe a good image of responsive and responsible central party-state, who fixes and addresses local and individual malfunctions and malpractices.⁷² Such a particular understanding of the rules of the game also seems to have been internalized by journalists in the written press. But one of the ways critical journalism used to expand their work and push the boundaries of accepted topics, content and reporting was the "depoliticise" critical journalism. This was achieved by channelling their reports under the category of "social news", which Elin Sæther, among others, argues as essential in normalizing critical journalism within the order of Chinese media discourse.⁷³ This was one way that critical investigative journalism could explicitly avoid "the political"; a particular space within the order of Chinese media discourse in which the mouthpiece role and orthodox party-journalism enjoy a much stronger position, entailing much more constraints and limitations in coverage and style. In connection to my own empirical data, it is interesting to note that none of the articles in *Southern Weekend* are under the banner of "social news" which seem to indicate that the category has played out its former role. The articles I analysed are either under the category of news (*xiaoxi*) and commentary (*pinglun*), and none under the category of politics (*zhengzhi*).

⁷² Xiaolin Zhang (2006) "Reading between the headlines: SARS, Focus and TV current affairs programmes in China" in *Media Culture and Society* and Sæther (2008a), p 210

⁷³ Sæther (2008a), p 207-208

Chapter III: Discourse Analysis

In this section I will first provide a short overview of my method of discourse analysis, before discussing my corpus of Chinese newspaper articles and why I choose to exclusively look at the traditional newspaper media.

3.1 Method of Discourse Analysis

My method of approaching media texts and articles is based upon some central concerns stemming from the tradition of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and perhaps in particular a reading of Norman Fairclough and his method of CDA. My method of discourse analysis is influenced by insights from his books, *Media Discourse* and *Analyzing Discourse: Textual Analysis for Social Research*⁷⁴, in which he provides specific examples of actual analysis, ranging from concrete text-analysis to the more abstract analysis of discourse as social practice. I have also picked up more practical inspiration for analytical categories in media text from Richardson's *Analyzing Newspapers: An Approach from Critical Discourse Analysis*.⁷⁵ This can be seen in my focus upon lexical and syntactical choices, types of narratives, sources and voices. These aforementioned are actually the main analytical categories in my analysis of media texts. However, I chose to call my method discourse analysis because some of the theoretical foundations of CDA are problematic to accept, due to being formative and politically biased. I am much more interested and inspired by the methodical aspect of CDA. But as a starting point, I will first include a very good definition of CDA, which is actually one of the theoretical aspects from the CDA-tradition I find useful and fruitful in relation to my own research:

CDA sees discourse – language use in speech and writing – as a form of social practice. Describing discourse as social practice implies a dialectical relationship between a particular discursive event and the situation(s), institution(s), and social structure(s), which frame it: The discursive event is shaped by them, but also shapes them. That is, discourse is socially constitutive as well as socially conditioned – it constitutes situations, objects of knowledge, and the social identities of and relationship between people and groups of people. It is constitutive both in the sense that it helps to sustain and reproduce the social status quo, and in the sense that it contributes to transforming it. Since discourse is so socially consequential, it

⁷⁴ Fairclough (1995) *Media Discourse* and Fairclough (2003) *Analyzing Discourse: Textual Analysis for Social Research*

⁷⁵ John E. Richardson (2007) *Analyzing Newspapers: An Approach from Critical Discourse Analysis*, p 46-71

gives rise to important issues of power. Discursive practices may have major ideological effects – that is, they can help produce and reproduce unequal power relations between (for instance) social classes, women and men, and ethnic/cultural majorities and minorities through the ways in which they represent things and position people.⁷⁶

This view on discourse is an elaboration on the definition of discourse as a singular abstract noun which I discussed in the introductory chapter. I think the notion of how discourse is both constitutive of the social (shapes the social) and constituted by the social (shaped socially) is of particular importance. Such view on discourse reflects a dual focus on how discourse is constrained by the context that it occurs in, while at the same time acknowledging the potential of agency and social change within discourse. In short, it is a perspective that pays attention to both structure and agency (which can explain social change regardless of context, be it authoritarian or liberal democracy). However, how social structure can shape discourse is perhaps particularly significant in the discussion of Chinese media discourse, which is situated and embedded in a particular form of media system, with its propaganda practices, rules and regulations. The social structure and political system in China, with its ambiguous boundaries (or lack of boundaries) between state and society are also factors that regulate and socially shape Chinese media discourse. However, this thesis shows that the party-state in China has only partial control over media content and order of media discourse. As noted, this double view on discourse as shaping the social, but also at the same time being socially shaped, opens up and acknowledges a space for change and agency within discourse. My analysis of *Southern Weekend*'s investigative discourse and its alternative media representation of the Weng'an incident will show the potential of agency within discourse, even under conditions of domination. I will discuss this in in-depth on the role and function of *Southern Weekend* in the concluding chapter. Nonetheless, the party-state in China possesses a range of informal and formal tools and means to shape and constrain media discourse.⁷⁷ The Chinese party-state has, comparatively speaking, much more leverage and control over its own domestic media, compared to the Western media and media systems. In the West, it is not the state, but rather the influences of a market and profit-driven environment that has gotten much attention from CDA-scholarship and in other fields.⁷⁸ In this respect, it is strange why many Western scholars have interpreted the embracement of commercialisation and

⁷⁶ Fairclough and Wodak (1997) "Critical Discourse Analysis" in *Discourse Studies: A Multidisciplinary Introduction* edited by T. Van Dijk, p 258

⁷⁷ For more on context and media system, see chapter two, "Media with Chinese Characteristics."

⁷⁸ One example is Jürgen Habermas who, among other things, was critical against the rise of commercialized mass media and the subsequent deterioration of the public sphere in his pioneering work originally published in 1962 (1989) *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*

market reforms in China and of the Chinese media system through an almost Aristotelian teleological framework, which views democratization and liberal democracy as the final and natural end of the aforementioned processes. As we have seen, on the contrary, the CCP has been quite successful in securing its monopoly over political power, as well at the same time pushing forward the construction of “socialism with Chinese characteristics” and a “socialist market economy”.

My method of analysis will range from the micro level, with detailed textual analysis, to the macro-level of discourse, with sources and voices. The analysis on the micro-level of discourse, including focuses upon both lexical- and syntactical choices, will show how such choices can help to underpin particular representations of social actors and social conflicts in the texts. One example is *Guizhou Daily*’s consistent choice of *qunzhong* with the modifier *buming zhenxiang de*, which I simply translate into “the ignorant masses”. Such lexical choice and collocation helps to construe the masses as irrational and mob-like. Syntactical choices, which I analyse under the category of agency, can also have a tremendous effect on particular representations of different social actors. In my analysis, I use the analysis of agency to comment upon blame and victimization in the texts. The following example epitomizes how the irrationality of the masses is reflected through syntactical choices and how the blame for the mass incident is pinpointed to the few lawless people through syntactical choices. This sample is taken from *Guizhou Daily*’s party-press discourse: “some people incited the ignorant masses to assault the county public security department”.⁷⁹ We can see that the primary agency of the few (inciting) pinpoints blame for the actions of the many (masses assaulting). This causative sentence construction with primary and secondary agency also helps to enhance the picture of “the ignorant masses” as a passive mob without their own ideas and thoughts. In this way, syntactical choices can influence how the different social actors are represented and perceived in the texts. However, it is important to not to overlook the overall context when analysing syntactical choices. For example, if the police is present as an agent in a paragraph and later in the same paragraph an agentless-passive construction is used, careful consideration should be given in such case. In other words, agentless-passive constructions are not interesting in themselves and should not simply be “read off” as a product of ideology. Moreover, some CDA research has been criticized for uncritically and too eagerly digging up agentless passive constructions without paying enough attention to the

⁷⁹ 一些人煽动不明真相的群众冲击县公安局

context such constructions occur in. Another concern for me as an analyst is that *bei*-sentence (a typical Chinese passive sentence construction) is used differently compared to English passives. Agentless-passives are comparatively speaking more common in English than Chinese, and this can explain why I did not find that many agentless passive constructions.⁸⁰ As a final note, these lexical and syntactical choices are not interesting in themselves, but rather interesting in how they can help to underpin particular representations in media texts. These choices are often interrelated and interconnected in creating and influencing the newspapers' overall media representation of a given news event. That is why, in my analysis, I often discuss different choices under some central themes in the two papers' respective coverage, such as rationality and irrationality, blame and victimization, suddenness and passiveness.

Another central concern and focus in my analysis is the analytical category of sources. Sources is a focal point in any analysis of media texts, but in addition to particular patterns of quotation techniques like reported speech versus direct quotations and the potential for misrepresentation by such choices, I will also look for voices and perspectives present in the texts (hereafter just voices). Which voices are dominant, and which are to some extent backgrounded or even excluded? In this sense, what is not said might be as important as what actually is said. My analysis will show that *Guizhou Daily*'s coverage is more monophonic compared to the polyphony in *Southern Weekend*, and illuminate how differently these two newspaper use and contextualise the same quotes.

3.2 Corpus and Newspapers

I will analyse six articles in total, three from *Guizhou Daily* and three from *Southern Weekend*, which are from a total corpus of 36 articles found on the topic. 28 articles are found in *Guizhou Daily* on the Weng'an incident in the time frame between 30th of June and 14th of July. Of the 28 articles from *Guizhou Daily*, three are used as corpus for the in-depth analysis on what I call the party-press discourse of mass incidents. All of these articles were found at

⁸⁰ For more on Chinese syntax see Edward Gunn (1991) *Rewriting Chinese: Style and Innovation in Twentieth-century Chinese Prose*

Guizhou provincial news service www.gog.com.cn⁸¹ by searching with the key word “Weng’an incident”.⁸²

Eight articles are found from *Southern Weekend* in the period from 2nd of July to 17th of July. Among the eight, two of these are more or less reprints from Xinhua and mistakenly similar to some of *Guizhou Daily*’s articles. Three articles are selected and analysed, making up the corpus for analysing the investigative critical discourse of the Weng’an incident. These articles are found on *Southern Weekend*’s webpage, www.infzm.com⁸³ by the same keyword as earlier. A total of six articles then make up my corpus of empirical data. To compensate for such narrowness in terms of scope, I have listed up an overview of all the headlines of 36 articles and tried to identify some major themes and topics in the chapter “4.2 Overview of the media coverage of the Weng’an incident”. I have in my analysis of media texts translated the Chinese texts into English and put the original text in footnotes. All translations are my own.

The reason for my choice of the three articles from *Guizhou Daily* lies in my initial inquiry on what the party-press’ immediate reaction is to a mass incident and how they handle this discursively. The two first articles from *Southern Weekend* were chosen because they are interrelated in terms of themes and topics. The last article “Weng’an – the Unstable Town” is chosen because it is the first genuine, in-depth investigative report published on the Weng’an incident. It is considerably longer than the other articles, but perhaps the most interesting among all of them.

The reason for my sole focus upon traditional newspaper media is three-fold. First, by only looking the traditional newspaper media helps to narrow down the scope of my thesis. Second, the newspapers in China have a bigger impact in terms of scale and seriousness than other types of media, which is also why the Chinese state controls its own traditional media much stricter than other kinds of media output. Even though blogs and microblogs such as Weibo are fascinating in terms of new ways to disseminate dissident views at unprecedented speed, it is nonetheless a phenomenon for the urban, middle-class, and highly-educated. Besides, just as in any other countries, the majority of the blogs in China is not politically

⁸¹ 贵州金黔在线贵州新闻网

⁸² 瓮安事件

⁸³ 南方周末

oriented, but rather about normal daily life, popular culture and so forth. Finally, newspaper reports are also not based solely on individual opinions, but more connected to the publisher's status and name, therefore having much more influence and impact on the Chinese society as a whole. That is why I choose to focus upon the traditional media in my research.

Chapter IV: Analysis of the Media Representations of the Weng'an Incident

I will start this main chapter with a short introduction and background information of the Weng'an incident. The next sub-chapter provides a short overview of the media coverage by my two chosen newspapers. Then what follows is the analysis of *Guizhou Daily* and its party-press discourse. I will then analyse articles from *Southern Weekend* before giving a summary and some last thoughts about the two media representations and forms of discourse.

4.1 The Weng'an Incident

This mass incident took place in Weng'an county in Guizhou province 28th of June 2008. The Weng'an incident or the "28.06"-incident as it was also labelled, started out from the suspicious death of a 16 year old school girl named Li Shufen. On the 22nd of June she allegedly went out to the bridge by Ximen river with three other persons and was found dead floating in the river later the same day. These three persons, according to later rumours, were connected to local officials through family relations and so forth. Weng'an public security bureau concluded quickly through an official statement that Li had committed suicide by jumping into the river. Li Shufen's father, Li Xiuhua started to have doubts regarding the cause of death when he found out that the three suspects already had been released from police custody. As soon as they were released they also showed up in grave rumours spreading around in Weng'an. Rumours included that Li Shufen was raped and murdered and that the police's handling of the case was a cover up for the culprits which had ties to local officials. Li Shufen's dad made an appeal for a full autopsy. Two days later Li Shufen's uncle, Li Xiuzhong went down to a local police station and came to clashes with a policeman for unknown reasons. Later the same day, Li Xiuzhong was reported to have been severely beaten up by a gang of unidentified people. Li Xiuhua wrote another urgent appeal to the police for resolving the case and bringing the culprits to justice. The case was never solved and it was believed through rumours that these unidentified people in reality were criminals in collaboration with the public security bureau, perhaps as officially hired thugs (in Chinese often referred to as *chengguan*). In order to preserve the remains of Li Shufen, her family

rented an ice coffin. People from all of Weng'an donated money to support the family. Citizen journalist Zola also made it possible for people to donate money through his blog. On the 28th of June, the police sent a notification stating that since Li Shufen's cause of death already had been asserted, following the regulations her remains should be buried and failure to comply would entail that the police would have to forcefully make sure it happened. This caused public indignation and anger. As the provincial party secretary, Shi Zongyuan later pointed out, Li Shufen's death was only the "blasting fuse" for the Weng'an incident. According to reports by *Southern Weekend*, later the same day, a couple of middle-school students started demonstrating under the banner of "seeking amendment for the injustice done to the masses" (*wei renminqunzhong shenyuan*). As the demonstrations moved along more and more people joined the protests, especially relocated peasants from the newly erected Seven Star Village, which had a long-withstanding conflict with the local government regarding lack of compensation and forced relocation. When the demonstrators reached the county government buildings, more than 10.000 people had allegedly joined in. Later the same day, these demonstrations escalated into full-blown riots and clashes between the police and the masses. As media attention evolved from purely a local or provincial matter into a national news event, questions and investigation of possible local government malpractice started snowballing. Investigative papers such as *Southern Weekend*, as we will see, played a crucial role in questioning local officials and the official media representation of the Weng'an incident initially produced by *Guizhou Daily*.

4.2 Overview of the Coverage of Weng'an incident

I have chosen to look at the media coverage of Weng'an incident from two newspapers; *Guizhou Daily* a provincial party-paper embedded in the administrative boundaries and power relations in which the actual news-event took place. On the other hand, we have *Southern Weekend*, a newspaper from the *outside*, affiliated with the Southern News Group and under the control of Guangzhou and Guangdong propaganda departments. As noted, different propaganda aims between the central- and the local-levels have opened a space of relative media freedom that is connected with the practice of cross-regional reporting. This is a

practice that, *Southern Weekend*’ as newspaper coming from outside the formal administrative boundaries and reach of the Guizhou province exploits to the fullest.⁸⁴

I will first give an overview of the main topics and themes in the coverage of Weng’an incident. Since *Guizhou Daily* is a daily newspaper, there are far more articles from them compared to *Southern Weekend*, which is a weekly newspaper. I have listed up all articles in the section under and tried to indentify main themes and topics, some more dominant than others. I have found eight articles from *Southern Weekend* between 2nd of July to 17th of July. However, the first two articles published are respectively a transcript from press conference hold in Guizhou and a reprint from Xinhua. The remaining six articles are then the full-fledged articles which make up *Southern Weekend*’ coverage of the Weng’an incident.

I have identified the following themes and topics in *Guizhou Daily*’s coverage of the Weng’an incident:

- (1) Destruction and havoc of the victimized local government by the lawless people. The masses was incited by the lawless few, one of the reasons why the situation escalated into a violent mass incident.)
- (2) Government’s successful cooperation between different levels of party-state (national, provincial, local) key factor for bringing down the situation, restoring normality and safeguarding social stability and harmony.
- (3) Unification through collective moral condemnation by the masses and against the few lawless people.
- (4) Propagating the truth of the matter (*zhenxiang*), and the consequent attempt to debunk rumours, e.g., autopsy-controversy, the suspects’ alleged connection with local officials through family ties and so forth.
- (5) Battle against organized crime, “crack down on crime, eliminate evil”-campaign.
- (6) Strengthen the masses’ and teenagers’ moral education (character-building) and their awareness of the law.
- (7) The united appreciation of the masses towards the armed police.
- (8) Investigation of leading cadres and the deeper causes of Weng’an incident.
- (9) Heroic actions of cadres and masses.
- (10) Information and propaganda management in the era of the Internet and news media.

The themes and topics that get the most attention are (1), (2), (4), and (5), whereas the topic that gets least attention is (8) investigation of leading cadres and deeper causes. *Guizhou Daily* published an article just stating the fact that some officials were sacked, but in their very limited coverage the reasons why they were sacked were not elaborated upon. Indeed, this topic of corrupt local officials and their alleged malfeasance of duty drown in the sea of other dominant topics. Furthermore, my analysis will show that there are some discursive nodal points or macro themes in the party-press representation, such as social stability

⁸⁴ For more on this, see “1.2 Definitions of Terms and Concepts”

(*wending*), social harmony (*hexie*), economic and social development (*shehui jingji fazhan*). These are powerful discourses in the Chinese context, marking the guiding principals for governance as well as main sources of legitimization for continued CCP rule. I argue in my analysis of the *Guizhou Daily*'s party press that these discourses provided a dominant framework for how the mass incident was understood and made sense of. All of these themes and topics can be observed with a quick look at the headlines in *Table I*.

I will discuss in detail some of the themes and topics in *Southern Weekend* in my analysis, but I have underneath schematically tried to list up some of the major themes and topics found in the critical investigative discourse:

- (1) General comments on state-society relations – problem of too much government power and the need for a functioning civil society, system of checking and balancing government power.
- (2) Elaboration of the deeper causes (*shenchengci yuanyin*)
- (3) Investigation of leading cadres and their malfeasance of their duties.
- (4) Problem with state propaganda and management of information.
- (5) Unsafe living conditions of Weng'an
- (6) Unstable Weng'an and the accumulation of discontent over time towards the local government.

Southern Weekend's media representation of the Weng'an incident differs quite a lot from *Guizhou Daily*. *Southern Weekend*'s coverage is much more problem-oriented and critical of the local governance of Weng'an. Another striking feature, which my analysis will discuss in detail, is the polyphony of *Southern Weekend*'s coverage – in other words, how this alternative media representation gives voice to a wide spectre of the different social groups. This is particularly true in the investigative article “Weng'an, the unstable town”. I will come back to this in more detail in the analysis of that article. It is also interesting to note how *Southern Weekend* also used the discourse of stability (*wending*), but differs immensely in their usage of it and the understanding of this discourse in connection with the Weng'an incident and how social stability can be maintained and secured. I will discuss this in more detail in “4.5 Analysis of Social Stability and Government Power”.

I have listed up all the headlines from the two different newspapers in *Table 1* (*Guizhou Daily*) and *Table 2* (*Southern Weekend*).

Table 1

Guizhou Daily's headlines

- 1.(我省依法妥善处置瓮安县“6·28”打砸烧突发事件) Guizhou province handles the Weng'an "6.28" hit, smash, burn sudden incident properly and according to the law
- 2.(瓮安群众愤怒谴责“6·28”事件打、砸、抢、烧不法分子) Masses of Weng'an indignantly condemns the "6.28" incident lawless persons' hitting, smashing, looting and burning
- 3.(做好“6·28”突发事件的善后工作处理好维护稳定和经济发展的关系) Do a good job in settling the aftermath of the "6.28" sudden incident, [and] handle properly the relation between safeguarding stability and economic development
- 4.(“我哪里死啦，希望不要乱传谣言了”) “I didn't die, please do not spread rumours anymore”
- 5.(我省有关部门召开新闻发布会通报“6·28”严重打砸抢烧突发事件有关情况), Relevant provincial departments of hold a press conference and gives a report on significant circumstances of the grave "6.28" hit, smash, loot, burn sudden incident
- 6.(瓮安“6·28”事件目击人的讲述), Narrations by Weng'an "6.28" incident witnesses
- 7.(有关方面人士就“6·28”事件相关问题答记者问 7.(瓮安干部群众希望珍惜平安美好生活环境), Cadres and masses of Weng'an wish to treasure peaceful happy living environment
- 8.(专访李树芬死亡案件直接办案人), Interview with the head of the investigation of Li Shufen's death
- 9.(黔南州严厉打击黑恶势力团伙), Qiannanzhou cracks down on criminal-networks
- 10.(省法医专家组第三次对李树芬遗体检验), Provincial medical expert's third examination of Li Shufen's remains
- 11.(初步分析“6·28”事件发生的深层次原因), The全省“打黑除恶”严打全省“打黑除恶”严打 initial analysis of the deeper causes of the "6.28" incident
- 12.(瓮安县群众代表发言摘登), Extracts from statements by Weng'an county People's representatives
- 13.(加强中小学生健康人格教育刻不容缓), Urgent needs in strengthening elementary and middle-school students' moral quality through education
- 14.(李树芬死因的三次法医鉴定), Li Shufen's third autopsy regarding cause of death
- 15.(李树芬父亲不赞成以野蛮方式解决问题), Li Shufen's father does not approve solving problems with barbarous means.
- 16.(“社会安定才能安心生活”), A stable society is prerequisite for a good life
- 17.(“我们是被迫参与打砸的”), We were forced to participate in hitting and smashing
- 18.(瓮安县公安局政委局长被免职), Head of the Politics committee Bureau of the Weng'an police station was removed from office
- 19.(全省“打黑除恶”严打整治行动电视电话会召开), Provincial "crack down on crime, eliminate evil" campaign television conference
- 20.(省委召开瓮安“6·28”事件阶段性处置情况汇报会), Provincial Party committee holds conference on the current report of the Weng'an "6.28" incident

- 21.(瓮安群众感激维稳武警官兵), The Masses of Weng'an appreciates the efforts of the armed police safeguarding social stability
- 22.(临危不惧 血写忠诚——瓮安干部群众“6·28”抢险救援记事), Face danger without fear, dedication with blood shedding - Accounts of Cadres and Masses of Weng'an rushing to help and rescue
- 23.(瓮安县党政主要负责人调整), Adjustements in the Weng'an party-government administration
- 24.(瓮安“6·28”事件已查获涉案人员116名), Weng'an "6.28" incident has already arrested 116 persons involved in the case
- 25.(省委召开在职在编和离退休省级党员领导干部会议), Provincial party committee holds a conference with working and retired provincial party members and leading cadres
- 26.(真相是消弭谣言的“良药”), The truth is "good medicine" to put an end to rumours
- 27.(李树芬第三次遗体检验结果公布), The result of Li Shufen's third autopsy made public
- 28.(“6·28”事件专案组通报工作进展情况), "6.28" incident special investigation team progress report

Table 2

Southern Weekend's headlines

- 1.(贵州省公安厅公布李树芬溺水死亡事件细节) Guizhou public security office publish the details regarding the drowning case of Li Shufen
- 2.(贵州省瓮安县发生一起打砸烧事件) A sudden hit, smash, burn incident in Weng'an, Guizhou province
- 3.(瓮安事件揭示稳定之道), The Weng'an incident shows the way to stability
- 4.(瓮安县公安局政委、局长被免职), Head of politics committee and the head of the police station of Weng'an removed from office
- 5.(瓮安新生请自公权谦卑始), New Weng'an hopefully marks the start of humble government power
- 6.(瓮安, “不安”的县城), Weng'an, the "unstable" town
- 7.(记者见地: “不明真相的民众”为何还不相信), Insights of a journalist: Why the "masses who are unaware of the truth" do not believe/trust
- 8.(6月28日7月14日: 贵州官员瓮安“大考”, 还原“6·28事件”中真实的政府反应和政府作为), 6.28-7.14: The "final exam" of Gouzhou's officials, give back a true government response and conduct during the "6.28" incident

4.3 Analysis of the Initial Party-Press Response of the Weng'an Mass Incident (*Guizhou Daily*)

I will begin my analysis with the coverage of *Guizhou Daily* and analyse the initial party-press response to the Weng'an incident by looking at the news articles “Guizhou province handles the ‘Weng'an ‘6.28’ hit, smash, burn sudden incident properly and according to law”⁸⁵ and “The masses of Weng'an indignantly condemns the ‘6.28’ incident lawless people's hitting, smashing, looting and burning”.⁸⁶ The former was published 1st of July 2008 while the latter was published two days later. Since this analysis is based upon these two news articles, I will refer to them as article I and article II respectively. Being the first articles published, this sub-chapter will show the party-paper's immediate reaction to the mass incident that broke out 28th of June.

Rationality and the notion of suddenness

A high frequency word in these two articles is “the masses” (*qunzhong*). This word often gets translated into English as “the masses, the masses of people, rank and file, crowd”.⁸⁷

According to *Hanyu da cidian* the word is quite archaic, appearing in the writings of Xunzi and Sima Qian. However, *qunzhong* in the modern sense refers to “people who are not party members or members of the communist youth league” and “people who are not exercising the duty of leadership”.⁸⁸ In this way it bears as a connotation of status implying reference to non-party members or officials in government. Media scholar Jingrong Tong points out that the use of this particular noun “in the Chinese context has the implication that (...) people are of lower status and are 'masses' and 'mobs' without their own ideas and rationality”.⁸⁹ As such, this particular lexical reflects (implicitly) a paternalistic view on people as mindless,

⁸⁵ 我省依法妥善处置瓮安县“6·28”打砸烧突发事件

⁸⁶ 瓮安群众愤怒谴责“6·28”事件打、砸、抢、烧不法分子

⁸⁷ Dennis J Doolin et al (1973) *A Chinese-English of Chinese Communist Terminology*, p 123

⁸⁸ 指不但任领导服务的人，指没有加入共产党，共青团组织的人

⁸⁹ Tong (2009a), p 599

irrational, easily affected and uncontrolled. The lexical choice of *qunzhong* may then have an effect on how the people (as non-party non-government) is being perceived and represented in these two texts. However, *Hanyu da cidian* also cites Mao praising the masses “as actually the ones who have/posses an amazing effect/function”.⁹⁰ There is an ambivalence in the party-press discourse when it comes to the perception of the masses as either a positive force that needs to be listened to or as a potentially dangerous and helpless one in urgent need of control and guidance for their own good. In these two articles the representation of the masses seems to be closer to the latter conception. This is evident considering that *qunzhong* is a part of a very frequently used collocation in *Guizhou Daily*’s coverage altogether. That is the collocation with the modification of the noun *qunzhong*, in the fixed expression *buming zhenxiang de qunzhong* meaning “the masses who are unable to grasp the truth” or “the masses who don’t know the facts”. I translate this into more natural English with “the ignorant masses”. In the initial party-press response the consistent use of *buming zhenxiang de qunzhong* could function to underpin one of the major understandings of this mass event presented in this party-press discourse. As we will see later, the sudden outburst of violent riots is understood as a result of the acts done by a minority of lawless people. I will later refer to them simply as “the few”. Indeed, such a representation of the masses as irrational, ignorant and mob-like is arguably needed to enable the mechanism of pointing to and blaming the few (“some people”, “few lawless persons”) for the actions of the many (“the masses”). At least it makes such an understanding more plausible. This is well illustrated in the following paragraph:

A few people incited the ignorant masses to assault the county public security bureau, county government and party-committee buildings. Afterwards, a few lawless persons seized the chance to smash offices and even set fire to many offices and cars.⁹¹

Even though the masses is the agent of assaulting party-state apparatus, they are not guilty-as-charged due to being used and led astray by an evil minority of lawless people. By representing the masses as a generic irrational entity helps to put emphasis on the role of the few lawless people as the main culprits in this incident. This emphasis on the few and the role of the few and the passivity of the masses will be discussed in more detail under the section of agency and blame.

⁹⁰ 毛泽东：“在中国共产党全国代表会议上的讲话：有了了不起的作用的还是群众

⁹¹ 一些人煽动不明真相的群众冲击县公安局、县政府和县委大楼，随后，少数不法分子趁机打砸办公室，并点火焚烧多间办公室和一些车辆

Even though the social actors responsible for inciting and provoking the masses, “some people” (*yixie ren*) or “few lawless people” (*shaoshu bufafenzi*) are perceived as cold cynics and schemers by taking advantage of the helpless masses, their actions are also depicted as an irrational outburst of extreme violence, seemingly without any rational cause: “but a few lawless persons nonetheless frenziedly beat up government personnel and police, broke into and smashed some offices and stole some office equipment, before finally going as far as to set on fire and burn the office building and cars”.⁹² The idiom *sangxinbingkuang* coupled with lexical choice of *ouda*, does not only imply a high degree of crazed cruelty and violence of their actions, but also bring connotation of insanity, loss of reason and rationality. The lexical choice of *ouda* (instead of, for instance *da*) also helps to intensify the degree of violence. Indeed, much of the emphasis in the first articles is put on the extreme degree of destruction and havoc. This emphasis on acts of violence and destruction is reflected in lexical choices describing the incident itself. In *Guizhou Daily*’s coverage in general, but in particular the paper’s immediate response to the event, it is often referred to as a “sudden hit-smash-burn incident” (*dazashao tufa shijian*). This exact phrasing comes from the headline but is also repeated in the main paragraph right below. As such, acts of destruction and violence without any apparent cause are foregrounded and given prominence just by their central position in these news reports by *Guizhou Daily*. The frequent use of “sudden occurrence” (*tufa*) embedded in the phrase “hit-smash-burn sudden-incident” (*dazashao tufa shijian*) stresses the perceived **suddenness** of this mass incident (in contrast with *Southern Weekend*’s coverage). This notion of suddenness helps to underpin that the incited masses and the lawless few suddenly and without any apparent cause decided to riot, loot and burn. This degree of suddenness combined with the role of the few and the incited masses helps to strengthen the party-press script of this mass incident as just a sudden expression of an irrational outburst of violence. Other explanations, such as the later deeper causes (*shenchengci yuanyin*) are excluded on a narrow focus on the acts of violent rioting. And to put even more emphasis on the seriousness of this sudden mass incident it is described as a siege and attack on party-state apparatus: “On the 28th of June in the afternoon a **serious besiegement of government buildings** and hit, smash, burn sudden incident broke out in Weng’an”.⁹³ Another key word

⁹² 但少数不法分子却丧心病狂地殴打政府工作人员和公安干警，并冲进一些办公室打砸一通，并抢劫了一些办公用品，最后竟放火焚烧办公楼和车辆

⁹³ 瓮安县城发生一起严重的围攻政府部门和打砸烧突发事件

here is *weigong* meaning to besiegement or attack from all sides. This lexical choice puts even more emphasis on the degree of destruction and gives connotations of war and battle.

It is interesting how the family of the deceased is represented as emotionally unstable (*sizhe jiashu qingxu fanfu*) and thus unwilling to accept the official autopsy which stated that Li Shufen committed suicide by drowning. What is more disturbing is the fact that the family's hesitation and lingering are being portrayed as an indirect cause of the escalation of the situation. As they were unable and unwilling to accept the official autopsy confirming the cause of death as drowning, some few lawless persons used this stir-up and incite the situation (*cishi hou bei shaoshu bufa fenzi shandong*).

As we have seen in this section, rationality or the lack of rationality helps to construe a particular representation of the masses, epitomized as the “ignorant masses”. The irrationality of the masses in combination with the manipulative few who stirred up the situation, resulting in an irrational **sudden** outburst of extreme violence all constitute a prominent focus in these two texts. Such a focus also helps to delegitimize the whole demonstration/riot by foregrounding the actual acts of destruction, and writing them off as totally irrational and without (seemingly) any rational cause, except as a part in the scheme by the few. However, as we will see in the next section, where I will focus upon the analysis of agency, the role of the few are consistently being foregrounded through particular syntactical choices. We will also see how the representation of the masses and their role in the incident is quite ambivalent because explicit reference to violent acts is strictly limited to the lawless few.

Agency, lexical choices and voices

In this section we are going to take a look at agency and how social actors are represented in the text through agency or lack of agency, and what consequences this might have in the representation of particular social groups. We will see the power of discursive strategies that have to do with agency and how the action of an agent can be foregrounded, backgrounded or even omitted. Consequently, these choices can have a tremendous affect on how the social actor and their actions in text are being represented. As a preliminary assumption one can assume that negative actions of an antagonist will be emphasized and their positive actions

backgrounded or omitted (and vice versa for the protagonist).⁹⁴ We will take a look at ways one can mitigate the agency of an agent, which are usually done by creating agentless passive constructions⁹⁵ or through nominalization (making a verb into a verb-like noun/process). We will also look at if the sentence in question is an active-or passive one and the ways such constructions could help to foreground or background an agent and their actions. As we will see later, such syntactical choices could help to pinpoint degrees of blame and victimization in the text.

The masses (*qunzhong*), as I have already pointed out, is construed as an irrational and mob-like entity without their own ideas or independent thought. Such a conceptualization of the masses could be reflected in the way that they are represented syntactically. In this text, the masses is very often placed in the position of the affected. In other words, the masses is very seldom the active agent of an action or a process, but rather the object of another agent's action. In the first paragraph, we can observe that the masses is positioned as the affected or the object of "some people's action": "some people stirred up/incited the ignorant masses to assault the county public security department".⁹⁶ The action of the masses attacking the government is actually the result of few people inciting them (the object of *shandong*). In this way, as a form of secondary agency and through a causative sentence construction the actions of the many (*qunzhong*) are ascribed to the workings of "the few". It is also interesting to note that "some people" and "the masses" and their respective actions are represented through active sentence constructions. This arguably helps to emphasize and foreground the evil acts of these antagonists. To sum up, the actions of the many are attributed to the few and the mass incident itself is perceived to be a consequence of the manipulative acts done by a minority of lawless people inciting the masses. In these text the main culprit is the few lawless people.

I think the following passage is illustrative with regards to the perceived degree of agency of cadres (*ganbu*) vis-à-vis the masses:

Provincial party committee and government demand each department and all leading cadres utilize their political superiority [skill], go down to the basic units to bring forth understanding of the situation, report the facts/truth about the incident, and engage in thorough and detailed

⁹⁴ In the way that positive actions are foregrounded and their negative are backgrounded or omitted.

⁹⁵ In Chinese this form is in most cases realized with the use of the passive marker 'bei' (被), but this is just one among many ways to create subjectless sentences. I focus upon the *bei*-constructions because they are easy to identify and locate.

⁹⁶ 一些人煽动不明真相的群众冲击县公安局

ideological work, **guide the masses to be self-conscious in upholding stability** and material stability and unity, adopt proactive measurements, put into practice tasks and duties to all villages and towns, departments, communities, and work hard to restore the social order as soon as possible.⁹⁷

In this passage, we can observe a lack of agency with regards to the masses. It is government officials and party members that have to work and guide the masses to be self-aware and self-conscious about maintaining social order and stability. This is apparently not something they can do by themselves. This passage is worth to quote at length because it also shows the perceived need for a responsible paternalistic party-state to guide and lead the masses. The passage also illustrates the party-state's high degree of perceived agency, in other words how they are imagined to fulfil their duties, report the facts, engage in deep ideological and political thought work and so forth. Such hard work is a prerequisite in order to restore the normal social order. It is also significant how the actions of party-state officials are always construed as fast and quick. For example, among a long list of other officials, "head of public security, Cui Yadong [all] quickly arrived at scene/site".⁹⁸ While the masses, or bystanders in this case, on the other hand are being construed as slow and docile, e.g.; "bystanders slowly dispersed".⁹⁹ Not only do representatives from the local government have much more active role and attributed a higher degree of agency, they are also depicted as fast and responsive. This contributes to an overall positive representation of the local government as a resolute and responsive government body by restoring social order and stability in times of crisis. The masses is not only depicted as irrational, ignorant and passive, but also when they actually get attributed some form of agency, their actions are slow and docile. In essence, they seem almost as in a desperate need of a paternalistic figure, or a strong government to guide them and protect them both from themselves and from the few lawless people.

Direct blame of the mass incident and the destruction that followed is largely attributed to "the few", as in a few lawless people (*shaoshu bufafenzi*) or some people (*yixie ren*). In paragraph three, direct blame for the escalation of the situation is put on the few lawless people: "Afterwards, this was stirred up by some lawless people, leading to the escalation of

⁹⁷ 州委、州政府要求各部门和全体领导干部发挥政治优势, 深入基层了解情况, 通报事件真相, 做深入细致的思想工作, **引导群众自觉维护稳定**, 维护安定团结的局面, 采取积极措施, 把各项工作责任落实到乡镇、部门、社区, 努力使秩序尽快恢复

⁹⁸ 公安厅长崔亚东迅速赶至事发现场.

⁹⁹ 围观人员缓慢散去. 围观群众 (...) 缓慢散去

the situation”.¹⁰⁰ This is an interesting sentence worthy of further analysis.¹⁰¹ Even though this is a case of passive sentence construction, the agency of the agent remains explicit because the agent is present in the clause/sentence. Indeed, the role of the agent is even emphasized and foregrounded by being placed right after the passive marker *bei*. However, it is important to stress that this is very often the case with Chinese passive *bei*-constructions, although one could also omit the agent completely in clause. This is not done here for arguably more or less obvious reasons. With the preliminary assumption, i.e., a conscious strategy of positive self-representation and negative representation of an antagonist’s actions, this is one way that their “bad” actions can be explicitly referred to through syntactically choosing to do so. The point is that there is a consistency in the representation of the few and how their “bad” actions are explicitly linked to them as a visible agent. Indeed, the role of the few lawless people gets more prominent later in this article and in article II as well. The masses is in these texts not an agent of violence, except in the sentence I already analysed in which they were only secondary agents. The primary agent of violence and rioting is the few, and in later descriptions of destruction and havoc it is repeatedly emphasised that this is the work of the few, not the masses. For example: “afterwards, few lawless people seized the chance to smash up offices, and set fire to some offices and cars”.¹⁰² Exclusive reference to the few continues in article II, but with new names and terms. For instance, blame is attributed explicitly to “unlawful people”, “hit-burn-loot people” and “troublemakers” (*feifa fenzi, da-shao-qiang fenzi, naoshizhe*).¹⁰³ I will come back to this in the analysis of the dichotomy of order and chaos in “4.4 Analysis of Social Stability and Economic Development”.

The next passage illustrates the explicit blame on the few and the victimization of the local government:

In interviews with county government officials, they explained that during the entire course of events, government personnel and public security police repeatedly tried to explain and persuade the masses at the scene, showing extreme self-control/restraint and patience in their work. **But** on the contrary, a few lawless people **regardless** frenziedly beat up government

¹⁰⁰ 此事后被少数不法分子煽动，导致事态扩大

¹⁰¹ There are to other instances of passive constructions in the journalist’s narrative about the experience coming to Weng’an (paragraph four). I argue that it is quite natural to use the agentless passive in her description of the aftermath as a passed event or fulfilled action. Analysis is then futile. For example: 县政府大楼不同程度被烧，数十辆被烧过的车辆

¹⁰² 随后，少数不法分子趁机打砸办公室，并点火焚烧多间办公室和一些车辆

¹⁰³ 非法分子，打砸抢分子，闹事者

staff and police, broke into and smashed some offices and office equipment, before finally went as far as to set on fire and burn office buildings and cars.¹⁰⁴

This passage sums up both the explicit role of the few as main culprits, the victimization of government and the ambivalent role of the masses, as well as the restrained, controlled and orderly role of government officials. What I mean with ambivalence is that the masses in the text earlier actually are “innocent” participants in violent riots due to manipulation. But later in the texts they are totally absent as agents of destruction and violence. In this sense, the masses is positioned and squeezed in the middle between the lawless few and the lawful local government. On one side, we have the representation of the masses as a generic irrational mob-like entity as “innocent” and an involuntarily participant of unlawful acts. On the other side, through a paternalistic party-press discourse, the masses is not perceived as the main culprits; they can for instance “be guided to become more self-aware and conscious on safeguarding stability and upholding unity”.¹⁰⁵ The masses as a social actor gradually disappears in the text as the role of the few become more prominent. In this passage, the masses is at the scene when officials and police try to sort out the situation, but they are not present when it comes to the subsequent description of acts of violence and destruction. Did the masses simply stand by and observe or did they also join the lawless few in violent acts?

It is interesting to see how the actions of the few in this aforementioned passage are being contrasted with the conjunction *dan* and the adverb *que* (both marked in bold) to further contrast the actions of the few against the good actions of representatives from the government. *Despite* impeccable behaviour and forbearance from the police and government personnel, the lawless still attacked them and continued loot and burn. Textual coherence with the conjunction *dan* also helps to construe the government and their representative as helpless victims of the extremely violent act’s done by the few (I have already analysed the lexical choices describing the few in this passage under the section of rationality). This representation of the helpless victimized government is further elaborated upon in the interview with the two police officers in article II:

¹⁰⁴ 采访中，县政府负责人介绍说，在事件整个过程中，政府工作人员和公安干警反复向现场群众作解释说明疏导工作，表现了最大的克制和忍耐。**但**少数不法分子**却**丧心病狂地殴打政府工作人员和公安干警，并冲进一些办公室打砸一通，并抢劫了一些办公用品，最后竟放火焚烧办公楼和车辆

¹⁰⁵ 引导群众自觉维护稳定，维护安定团结的局面

The two police officers told the journalist, during “6.28” incident, when they and another 30 or so police officers started to defend the entrance of the public security bureau, they did not have any protection equipment, while the unlawful people used iron clubs and sticks to beat them and flower pots and stones to pound them, *almost all* of the policemen got injured.¹⁰⁶

The adverb *jihu* and meaning almost, nearly or practically, and *suoyou* meaning all, helps to further strengthen the picture of the police as the victims of the actions done by the few. It is striking that any mentioning of casualties beyond that of representatives from the party-state is excluded in the coverage by *Guizhou Daily*. This is questioned in *Southern Weekend*’s coverage, where we do not only get to know that there were violent clashes and casualties on both sides, but also that county government had a long record of using police force to solve problems and disputes between local government and discontented citizens. Such information seems to constitute what is left unsaid in *Guizhou Daily*’s coverage. It should be noted that *Guizhou Daily* also reports on possible deeper causes (*shenchengci yuanyin*) and the sacking of local officials. But this sort of information is however very briefly touched upon and backgrounded in sea of other topics, such as the later provincial campaign against crime (*yanda*) and the need for more political and ideological education of school students.¹⁰⁷

If we look at imagined political reactions or demands in the text, we can observe that it is strictly limited to punitive measurements against the few. The headline and the preceding opening paragraph in article II states that:

The masses of Weng’an indignantly condemn “6.28” incident hit-smash-pillage-burn lawless people:

The Weng’an “6.28” hit, smash, pillage, burn incident has raised intense reactions from the masses of Weng’an, the great masses detest the actions of a small handful of lawless people who wilfully trampled on the law, assaulted government offices, burned and damaged public property, influencing [in a bad way] the social order, [the masses] believe 30 years of social and economic development since reform and opening up, the excellent situation of stability and unity were hard-earned, all demand that the government complete dredge work, and severely punish leading lawless people in order to give back to the common people a harmonious, safe and sound, good environment.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ 两位民警告诉记者, “6.28”事件发生的时候, 他们和30多位民警开始守卫在公安局大门口, 手上没有任何防卫工具, 非法分子用铁棍、木棒打他们, 用花钵、石块砸他们, **几乎所有的**民警受伤

¹⁰⁷ For more on topics and themes, see the subchapter “4.2: an overview of the coverage of the Weng’an mass incident”

¹⁰⁸ 瓮安群众愤怒谴责“6.28”事件打、砸、抢、烧不法分子: 瓮安“6.28”打、砸、抢、烧事件发生后, 在瓮安县城群众中引起强烈的反响, 广大群众对一小撮不法分子肆意践踏法律, 冲击国家机关, 烧毁、损坏公共财物, 影响社会正常秩序的行为深恶痛绝, 认为改革开放30年来社会经济发展, 安定团结的大好局面来之不易, 纷纷要求政府做好疏导工作, 严惩为首的不法分子, 还老百姓一个稳定、和谐、平安的良好环境

This passage is worth to quote at length because it demonstrates some of the discursive strategies at play in party-press discourse. Not only does it further demonstrate the separation of masses and the few in terms of blame, but also how the perceived demand from the masses reflect a paternalistic party-press discourse. The text construes the great masses (*guangda qunzhong*) as a uniform collective, speaking in one voice. The members of the masses one after another (*fenfen*) demand that the government should complete their work restoring normality and the social order by severely punishing leading figures among the group of lawless people. Any political demands or investigation of other possible causes are excluded on a narrow focus upon punitive action against the minority of lawless people. Lexical choices help to intensify the perceived degree of anger amongst the masses against the few and their actions, such as indignant (*fennu*), condemn (*qianze*) and detest (*shenwutongjue*). This anger towards the few is intensified even further when such lexical choices are coupled with the rhetorical trope on how the few “wilfully trampled on the law”¹⁰⁹. The few lawless people’s actions assaulting (*chongji*) the party-state apparatus are then contrasted and compared through a form of retrospective technique, with a historical perspective on the hard-earned social and economical progress and the period of relative stability and unity. In a way, their illegitimate actions are put up against what has been the main source of legitimacy for the CCP the last 30 years, namely stability (*wending*) and economic and social development (*shehui jingji fazhan*). The discourse of stability (*wending*) is perhaps one of the most powerful ones in contemporary China, especially in the post-Tiananmen-period. Peter Sandby-Thomas pointed to how the discourse of stability and the use of it have been instrumental for the CCP in strengthening their legitimacy, and in which the central notion is that it is CCP who is the sole guarantor of continued political and material stability.¹¹⁰ *Guizhou Daily* utilizes this discourse to provide a powerful discursive tool in their coverage of this localized mass incident. The discourse of stability, the role of party-state and demands for punitive measurements are further played upon later in the article, for instance in interviews with locals from Weng’an. Wang Guilin says after a long narrative of destructive acts done by the few that he “hopes that the government will strike a severe blow [severely punish] against those lawless people, otherwise we will not have good days [in the future]”.¹¹¹ The conjunction *fouze* connects the role of the government in punishing the few and the necessity

¹⁰⁹ 肆意践踏法律

¹¹⁰ Sandby-Thomas (2011)

¹¹¹ 希望政府要严厉打击那些不法分子，否则我们将不会有好日子

of doing so in order to secure good days in the future. Taxi driver Ceng Bin concludes after explaining how the mass incident has affected his business that “the beating, smashing, looting people should be handled as quick as possible, so that I can go back to my business without worries”.¹¹² Independent merchant You Hu blames rumourmongers (*zaoyaozhe*) for harmful influence done by propagating rumours to the masses. He hopes that everything goes back to normal so that he can ‘live and work in peace and contentment’ (*anjuleye*). These statements reflect a perceived trust in the government as paternalistic protectors and punishers, but also the importance of stability as a prerequisite for economic development. As such, the blame for the mass incident is put on the few, in which vivid descriptions of their violent acts are pitted against the discourse of stability (*wending*) and economic and social development (*shehui jingji fazhan*). The few are then not only to blame for violence and destruction, but also as disrupters of social stability, which again causes great harm to economic development.

In article II there is also an interesting interview with two police officers. Despite being unarmed and as almost helpless victims of the few’s extreme violence, they manage to stop the unlawful people due to perceived exceptional bravery: “the unlawful people once again rushed onto the second floor, and still wanting to go up to the third floor. But the policemen risked their lives to defend to the death the entrance to the third floor, the unlawful people charged four times without success”.¹¹³ This is a good example of a clear-cut positive self-representation and negative “other” representation often found *Guizhou Daily*’s coverage. Later in the interview, it is very interesting to note that one among the masses gets injured when trying to help a wounded police officer: “Police officer Cai Lei’s head was severely wounded by a troublemaker, a very serious injury, one among the masses carried him on the back and went out from the back door for the rescue, but as soon as they got once outside the troublemakers just started to attack and chase to beat [him] up”.¹¹⁴ That one among the masses is attributed agency through a positive act further strengthens my assessment of the ambivalent representation of the masses in these two texts. We can see that in both of these two passages, the agency of the few remains explicit and even foregrounded with active sentence constructions (*feifa fenzi you chongshang, chong le si ci*). In the last example two passive *bei*-sentences are used, but both with clear reference to the agent (*bei naoshizhe*

¹¹² 他希望尽快处理打砸抢分子，好让自己安心心的做生意

¹¹³ 非法分子又冲上二楼，还想往三楼冲，民警冒着生命危险死守在三楼楼梯口，非法分子冲了四次没有成功

¹¹⁴ 民警蔡磊头部被闹事者打伤，伤势很重，一名群众从后门背着他出去抢救，刚一出门，就被闹事者围攻追打

dashang, weigong zhuida). The bad actions of the few are even more intensified with the sentence construction *yi...jiu*, meaning as soon as something happens, something else happens. In this case as soon as the person carrying the wounded policemen out, he was immediately attacked and chased by the few.

With regards to blame, it is interesting to note that the two police officers give additional information on who the few lawless people actually could be. According to the two officers “these hit, smash, pillage, burn people (...), and among them many are known criminals and drug users who this public security bureau have tried to arrest on earlier occasions”.¹¹⁵ It is interesting that drug users, perhaps one of the weakest social groups in China are used alongside criminals to pinpoint blame. By pointing to marginalized groups, such as criminals and drug users, not only helps to distance the masses from the few and their perceived role in this mass incident, but as well as to delegitimize the demonstrations/riots as a whole. It is also interesting to note in article II, resident Wang Guilin mentions that “there were all sorts of people at the scene, there were student-looking people and youngsters and also some migrant workers”. He goes on saying; “their acts looked like it was arranged, like it was organized”.¹¹⁶ Claims that this mass incident was partly organized by the few, adds another dimension of fear, with an organized opposition against the party and the government. However it is little information about who the few actually could be. In this respect one cannot help to ask: Who or which groups of people actually constitutes this minority of lawless people? Is it drug-users and criminals? To what extent do students and migrant workers count as belonging to the few? What about workers, peasants and the average Joe of Weng’an; to what extent did they participate in violent riots? It was after all a mass incident, involving thousands of people. In essence, the few as a social actor is represented through impersonal and derogatory generic entities, such as “some people” or “few lawless people”. Such a vague generic referential strategy helps to obfuscate them and their role¹¹⁷ as well as to impersonalize them. I think this vagueness, as a referential strategy is of particular importance when it comes to blame and in construing the few as a distinct “other”, with a complete lack of reason, moral and respect for the law.

¹¹⁵ 这些打、砸抢、烧分子,(...)其中不少人是曾经本公安机关打击过的违法犯罪分子和吸毒人员

¹¹⁶ 他说, 事发现场人员很杂, 有学生模样的, 也有一些社会青年, 还有一些外来打工人员, 他们的行动看上去很有程序, 感觉是有组织的

¹¹⁷ To further elaborate on this: who are the “yixie ren”? Are they the same as the lawless people?

This referential vagueness of the few and the ambivalence of masses with regard to their role as participants in the mass incident also helps to minimize the representation of social conflicts (*shehui maodun*) between local party-state and the people of Weng'an. In *Guizhou Daily*'s discourse the perceived social conflict seems to solely be between a minority of lawless people as a distinct "other" and the lawful local government. By comparison, in *Southern Weekend* the representation of social conflicts is perceived to be a general and deep-rooted conflict between the party-state and the people of Weng'an. I will come back to this later in the analysis of articles from *Southern Weekend*.

To sum it up, there seems to be a macro strategy and a generic structure of, on one side vivid descriptions of violence and destruction with explicit reference to the few and the subsequent victimization of the local government. Despite this and being perceived as an almost helpless victim of the few, it is precisely a strong party-state and the successful cooperation between the three levels of government (local, provincial and central) that can bring the situation back to normal:

After the event took place; important leaders from the provincial party committee and government demand a proper handling of the situation as soon as possible, Guizhou province standing committee member, missionary secretary of politics and law, and head of public security office Cui Yadong all quickly arrived at the scene, guiding local party and government officials in handling and quieting down the situation. 29 of June, bystanders slowly went away, the situation did not escalate any further, and the normal order in Weng'an had almost returned to normal.¹¹⁸

The successful response of the party-state as a functioning whole in handling the incident and bringing back normality and stability is attributed to all levels of government. This gives legitimacy to the party-state apparatus as a coherent and organic whole. In this passage, much of the legitimacy is attributed to the guidance from the provincial level, but later in the article there is a whole paragraph describing how this matter received the closest attention from the central level and how the centre gave instructions to the provincial level (*zuochu zhongyao pishi*) on how to handle this event. These nodal points can be found in the overview of article I, which I schematically have listed up as topics in brackets:

Headline (properly and lawfully handling of the mass incident by Guizhou Province)
First paragraph (background information, few lawless people inciting the masses, subsequent assault and destruction of government buildings.)

¹¹⁸ 29日, 围观人员缓慢散去, 事态没有进一步扩大, 瓮安县城秩序基本恢复正常

Paragraph two (success of party-state's response to the mass incident bringing back the normal social order.)
 Paragraph three (elaboration on the causes and how the situation got out of control by blaming the few)
 Paragraph four (the journalist's first-hand account of and elaboration on the destruction and chaos)
 Paragraph five (further elaboration on violence and destruction done by the few despite extreme forbearance and patience from government staff and cadres)
 Paragraph six (elaboration on the cooperation between the national, provincial, and the local government, successful response; setting up of different work groups)
 Paragraph seven (elaboration on instructions from the central/provincial-level to local levels, concrete solutions, such as ideological work and adoption of pro-active measures etc.)
 Wrap up (successful handling of the mass incident; everything back to normal and continuation of the hard work.)

Through a quick look at main topics and sub-topics, we can see that it is a focus on (1) the role of the few in inciting the masses and attacking party-state organs; (2) a victimization of the party-state and (3) the successful governmental response due to excellent cooperation between the levels of government, restoring order and stability. This generic structure is arguably quite representative of a party-press discourse on mass incidents

As discussed, other reasons or causes besides that of the few inciting (*shandong*) the many (*qunzhong*), which escalated the situation into a sudden mass riot, are excluded. In this sense, what is not being said can be more important than what is being said. To further elaborate on this, on the topic of blame and victimization, the roles of the victim and the victimized seems to be switched around in the coverage by *Southern Weekend*. As we later will see by analysing *Southern Weekend*'s coverage, it is the people of Weng'an that are actually construed as the victims of the local government's infringement of their lawful rights and interests. Illegitimate local governance is pointed out as one the deeper causes of the Weng'an incident. Blame is thus put on poor local governance and its illegitimate practices, resulting in a deep-rooted discontent towards the local government over a long period of time. As this short summary above shows, by having a basis for comparison between the two types of discourse, I think it enables me to see what said and what is left unsaid in both the party-press- and the investigative discourse of the Weng'an incident.

I think that *Guizhou Daily*'s headlines say a great deal about which voices or perspectives that are dominant in the articles. In article I the headline is as follows: "Guizhou province appropriately handles the '6.28 Weng'an hit-smash-burn sudden incident according to law'".¹¹⁹ Translation is always hard, but I have tried to translate it in a way that shows the original

¹¹⁹ 我省依法妥善处置瓮安县“6·28”打砸烧突发事件

connotations in the Chinese version. Parts of the connotation in the first word may actually be lost in translation. The lexical choice of *wosheng* has patriotic feel, in this case referring to Guizhou province as “our province”, just in the same way many Chinese say “our country” (*woguo*). This also epitomizes the *de facto* position of the newspaper; representing the official voice at the provincial level. This is why the headline also reflects the party-state’s perceived ability (governmental bodies as well as political bodies) and the success in their handling of this mass incident. *Guizhou Daily* has also an immense focus on the government’s lawfulness, i.e., on how the provincial party-state apparatus handled the mass incident according to law (*yifa*). This *yifa* does not only come up in this headline, but also comes up consistently in later articles. The voice represented and propagated by *Guizhou Daily* is not only clearly an official one, but also a lawful and righteous one. I will come back to the notion of the government’s lawfulness and the few’s lawlessness in the next sub-chapter in the discussion of the dichotomy of order and chaos.

We have now moved above the mere textual level to the macro-level of discourse by looking at the analytical category of voices. In these two texts we can see that there is an overrepresentation of official actors representing the party-state government. This is particularly true if one looks at paragraph six in article I. The whole paragraph (which is quite long) is dedicated to listing up all the officials involved from the central- down to the local level in the handling of this mass incident. If we take a look at sources in the texts it is predominantly official ones. In article I, much of the text is based upon insights from leading county government officials, or statements from local officials who is in charge on the matter.¹²⁰ The combination of official government sources and predominance of official news actors makes these texts very monophonic, authoritarian account of the “28.6” incident. The articles also feature a predominant use of indirect reported speech, i.e. summary of what was supposedly said. I say “supposedly”, because by using this form of reported speech, the journalist has much more room to distort and misrepresent what was actually was said. With regards to this, it is interesting to note that the family of the deceased is represented through an official government source in the form of indirect reported speech. In this way, non-official voices, in this case, the genuine voice of the family can be excluded and misrepresented.

¹²⁰ 记者从县政府有关领导处获悉，采访中，县政府负责人介绍说

As indicated, non-official sources and voices are underrepresented in these two articles. In article I we have what we can call a semi-official voice, namely the journalist's voice. However, this paragraph is nothing more than a first-hand account in retrospect of the destruction and havoc already done: "entering the county government yard, I saw the county public security bureau, party committee buildings and county government buildings were burned to different degrees, and about ten burned-out cars were laying in a rubble inside the yard".¹²¹ The journalist sums up the present situation (*qingkuang*) with the fixed expression *canburendu*, meaning "too horrible to look at". As we can see, the journalist's voice in the text does not give us much new information, besides what has already been emphasized before, namely violence and destruction.

In article II, there are actually interviews with three non-official representatives from the masses, along side an interview with two police officers. However, these testimonies are quite similar in content and style. Entrepreneur and shopkeeper You Hu and Taxi driver Ceng Bing both point to the grave economic consequences in the aftermath of the '6.28' mass incident. Resident Wang Guilin gives a yet another similar account of the few's destruction and violence. These non-official voices do not provide much new information. On the contrary, they arguably just help to reproduce the dominant official script of the violence and destruction done by the few. As such, I think these two articles are very monophonic – or one-voiced, which arguably is a characteristic of *Guizhou Daily*'s coverage as a whole. The prominent voice is the dominant official one, representing and reflecting the provincial government and their concerns with what to be said and what to be left unsaid.

We have in these two articles seen a general positive self-representation of local- and provincial- government officials and cadres, representing order, stability, law, and legitimacy. While on the other side, we have an overall negative representation of the antagonistic "other", with the almost animalistic violent lawless few and the mindless ignorant masses. The few represents the minority that is the responsible agent of chaos. In sum, there is an oversimplistic dichotomy of order and chaos in these two texts. Order is represented by a lawful and legitimate party-state, resembling a paternalistic figure as the provider and protector of stability and unity. Chaos and unlawfulness are solely represented by the few as the agents of destruction and havoc.

¹²¹ 进入县政府大院，记者看到县公安局、县委、县政府大楼不同程度被烧，数十辆被烧过的车辆横七竖八地躺在大院内

The predominance of the official voice in these two articles, underpinning a particular party-press representation of the Weng'an incident was later challenged and questioned by other accounts. Actually, such a discrepancy between official and alternative accounts might have contributed to making this initial local matter into a national matter. As we later will see, this somewhat simplistic paper-press representation of the Weng'an incident was later contested and questioned by the investigative reports of papers such as *Southern Weekend*.

4.4 Analysis of Social Stability and Economic Development (*Guizhou Daily*)

I will start the analysis of *Guizhou Daily*'s "Do a good job in settling the aftermath of the "6.28" sudden incident, [and] handle properly the relation between safeguarding stability and economic development"¹²² with focus on agency, lexical choices and themes of blame, ignorance and rationality. This is also connected to a discussion of the different social actors' degree of agency. I will then discuss an overall dichotomy of order and chaos in *Guizhou Daily*'s discourse and coverage. I will then take a quick look at the issue of suddenness, both in the positive and negative sense, before I turn the analytical category of voices.

Lexical choices and Agency

In this article we can find a string of new lexical alternatives describing the few, including "few people with ulterior motives", "evil criminals", "saboteurs", and "hit, smash, loot, burn-criminals".¹²³ Other new ways to refer to the few, as vague as the aforementioned are "organizers", "schemers" and "the violent"¹²⁴. As I pointed out in the first analysis, there is a tendency to be very vague in the reference to the few as a social group, except through the use of such negative epithets. Even though more lexical alternatives or terms describing the few are introduced, I argue that this vagueness still prevails and that such new derogatory terms are part a strategy of alienating the few as a particular social group from the masses. The few

¹²² 做好“6.28”突发事件的善后工作处理好维护稳定和经济发展的关系

¹²³ 少数别有用心的人员, 黑恶势力人员, 破坏分子, 打, 砸, 抢, 烧犯罪分子

¹²⁴ 组织, 策划和施暴者

as a social group is in this text still perceived as the main culprit, for example in this collective condemnation by county party- and government representatives:

(...) feel deeply distressed and bitter about the “6.28” incident, believe that the actions of the hit, smash, pillage, burn-criminals, severely damaged not only Weng’an, but also the whole province’s image, wrecked the excellent social and economic development of Weng’an county, destroyed conditions of stability and unity in Weng’an, as well as in the entire province. Everybody demands the party committee and government to severely punish and saboteurs, and safeguard social stability and harmony.¹²⁵

The acts of violence and riots done by the few are, as in previous article, put up and measured against macro discourses, such as “social stability and harmony” (*shehui wending hexie*) and stability and unity (*andingtuanjie*). I will come back the discussion of these in detail in the discussion of the dichotomy order and chaos.

Later in the text, lexical choices are employed to intensify and pinpoint the perceived conflict between the few and the local government. The few, in this case, ”people with ulterior motive” and “criminals” are depicted with the choice of the derogatory adverb as “brazenly” (*gongran*) going against the party and government. We can also see that there are some examples of foregrounding their bad actions through syntactical choices:

The cause of “6.28” incident was simple, but was stirred up and exploited by a few people with ulterior motives, even criminals meddled and got directly involved, this was a mass incident in which [they] brazenly and intentionally provoked the Guizhou party committee and government.¹²⁶

We can see here that the agency of the social actor is explicit through the use of a passive sentence construction with a present agent. The fact that it was the “few people with ulterior motives” that incited and took advantage of the situation is emphasised with this particular syntactical choice. Furthermore, salience and emphasis is also put on the actions of “evil criminals”¹²⁷ (*hei’eshili renyuan*) with an active sentence structure. In any case, the agency of their bad actions is explicit as they are both present as agents in their respective clauses. It is interesting to note that in addition to “stir up” (*shandong*), the verb “to take advantage of”

¹²⁵ 对“6.28”事件感到痛心疾首，认为打、砸、抢、烧犯罪分子的行为，严重损害了瓮安县乃至全省的形象，破坏了瓮安县良好的经济社会发展形势，破坏了全县和全省安定团结的大好局面。纷纷要求党委和政府要严厉打击破坏分子，维护社会稳定和谐

¹²⁶ “6.28”事件是一起起因简单,但被少数别有用心的人员煽动利用,甚至是黑恶势力人员直接插手参与的,公然向我党委、政府挑衅的群体性事件

¹²⁷ This word has also the connotation of being organized, as in “organized crime” or in this case “organized criminals”.

(*liyong*) has been included as acts done by the few. But it is quite vague what is meant by “the cause of the 6.28-incident was simple”? What is simple? Is it a reference back to circumstances around the death of Li Shufen? Anyway, the article continues with an elaboration on consequences of the acts done by the few: “The plot/circumstances were vile and abominable, serious destruction was done, which caused enormous material and economic damage, affecting the stability of the whole province and the image of Guizhou”.¹²⁸ These two examples are similar to the pattern of blaming the few and the victimization of the local government found in the analysis of the initial party-press response. However, further blame and demand for harsh punishment is channelled against leading figures among the few:

(...) must rigorously differentiate two problems of [completely] different nature, for the bystanders and participants self-criticism and education will be the main means to rely on, organizers, schemers and the violent [on the other side], will be ruthlessly dealt with [punished], [we] cannot show any leniency, [and will] make great effort to build a quiet and stable Weng'an, Qiannanzhou and Guizhou Province.¹²⁹

The blame for the incident is reflected in the punitive measurements against the few vis-à-vis what ought to be done with the many (bystanders and participants). The few is to and must be dealt with strict punitive measures in order to safeguard social order and stability of not only Weng'an, but the whole the province. However, the bystanders and participants (*pangguan xietongzhe*) should rather than being punished, undergo education and criticism. As I have earlier pointed out in the first analysis of the party-press discourse, the masses is not perceived as a main culprit, albeit a potentially dangerous force that has to be controlled and moulded. One solution imagined in this text on how to get the ignorant masses over to the lawful and right side, is to conduct ideological and educational thought work:

Even though the situation at the present is more or less under control, there is nevertheless a lot of work to be done. Among them, which is the upmost important task, **is to conduct thorough and detailed work with propaganda and education towards the great masses of whole county, and to explain the facts, and reassure the people**, in order for the situation to subside, as well as to uphold the overall situation of stability, and for pushing forward [social and economic] development.¹³⁰

¹²⁸ 情节恶劣，破坏严重，造成了极大的财产和经济损失，影响了全省稳定和贵州形象

¹²⁹ 要严格区分两类不同性质的矛盾，对旁观协同者，以批评教育为主，对组织、策划和施暴者，要重拳出击，绝不能手软，努力建设一个平安的瓮安、平安的黔南州、平安的贵州

¹³⁰ 虽然目前事态已得到基本控制，但还有大量工作要做。其中，**向全县广大群众做好深入细致的宣传教育工作，说明事实，稳定人心，是从根本上平息事态，维护大局稳定、努力推动发展的一项至关重要的工作**

This passage illustrates a general tendency in *Guizhou Daily*'s discourse to construe the local and provincial government as social actors with a very high degree of agency. On the other side, non-governmental actors, such as the masses is quite passive and absent, except for the agency of the few as the ones who incite, manipulate, loot and burn. The lack of agency with regards to the masses is reflected in that it is the government that has to educate, explain and reassure the masses. As a social actor in the text the masses is positioned mostly as the affected of an action. I argue that by often being placed in such a position and not that of an active agent, the masses is conceptualized in these media texts as an entity with very low degree of agency. However, the lexical choice with the collocation "the great masses" (*quangda qunzhong*) reflects on the other side, the Maoist conception of the masses as a potential positive force, if guided and educated correctly. A good example of this is one of most crucial tasks left to do according to the text, namely the work to conduct a thorough and detailed propaganda and education-campaign directed to the masses. In short, it is a responsible, paternalistic government that has to enlighten the ignorant, passive masses, who seems to be in need to be told the truth and reassured that everything is under control. Another similar example is how the government has to "tell and take the truth of the matter (in order) to talk sense to the masses, and educate the masses to prioritize stability above all".¹³¹ All of these examples underpin the pervious perception of the masses as "the ignorant masses" (*buming zhenxiang de qunzhong*); a passive, ignorant, irrational and mob-like entity without independent ideas and thoughts.

The Dichotomy of Order and Chaos

As the previous section has shown, one among the major themes in this text and in *Guizhou Daily*'s coverage in general, is how the few is perceived as a very dangerous, disruptive and splittist force. On the other side, we have the government and its role as a preserver and protector of "a stable and harmonious society"¹³². These discursive nodal points have been connected with the few and their sudden acts of violence and rioting, which is perceived as a direct attack on the local government and on social order in general, resulting in social instability and disunity. As such, one can find in *Guizhou Daily*'s discourse an overarching dichotomy of order and chaos, which I will discuss in the following pages.

¹³¹ 以事实真相说服群众,以稳定大局教育群众

¹³² 社会稳定和谐

In the party-press discourse, local and provincial governments are perceived as defenders and upholders of social order, and by logical extension, of social stability and harmony in society. We have also observed a similar division between the lawfulness of the local government as opposed to the lawlessness of the few. Such distinct dichotomies between the state and the few are not found in *Southern Weekend*'s coverage. Another interesting difference between the two papers is the different ways they employ the macro discourse of stability (*wending*). In *Southern Weekend*'s discourse this discourse is connected and collocated with the people's sentiments (*renxin*) and linked with the theme of rights and interests (*quanyi*). As such, it is the protection and safeguarding of people's rights and interest that can ensure stability, both on an individual- and a societal-level. It is striking that in *Southern Weekends*'s coverage there are no instances of drawing upon the official discourse of harmony (*hexie*). However, social stability, harmonious society (*shehui wending hexie*) and social and economic development (*shehui jingji fazhan*) are among the most frequent collocations in *Guizhou Daily*'s coverage. To illustrate this, we can take look at the headline and the following ingress:

Do a good job in settling the aftermath of the "6.28" sudden incident, [and] handle properly the relation between safeguarding stability and economic development

Shi Zongyuan arrives at Weng'an [to give] on-site command in the work dealing with the "6.28" incident, [and] stresses the importance of the aftermath work of "6.28" sudden incident [and] to handle properly the relation between safeguarding stability and economic development.¹³³

Salience is given to the government's successful response to an immediate crisis and its role in being able to preserve stability and economic development. The headline is quite illustrative of some of the key principles and rationale for CCP and the party-state's legitimacy in post-Mao China. The government is the guarantor and protector of (1) stability (*wending*), laying the foundation for (2) social and economic development (*shehui jingji fazhan*). Social harmony (*hexie*) although not present in this extract is also frequently used in *Guizhou Daily*'s discourse. The latter is a relatively new discursive tool and concept, and in fact has been one of the discursive trademarks of the previous Hu-Wen administration in pre- and post-Olympic China. Contrasting and linking this mass incident with concepts of stability, social harmony and economic development are arguably very efficient and powerful ways to

¹³³ 做好“6.28”突发事件的善后工作处理好维护稳定和经济发展的关系
石宗源到瓮安现场指挥“6.28”事件处置工作时强调做好“6.28”突发事件的善后工作处理好维护稳定和经济发展的关系

point to potential dangers of chaos, with political and social instability.¹³⁴ Instead of focusing on specific social problems and deeper underlying causes of the incident as *Southern Weekend's* discourse does, much of the attention in the party-press discourse is put on the potential dangers of the disintegration of the social order. It is precisely the government and its efforts that are seen as crucial in providing conditions of continued stability. *Guizhou Daily's* media representation of the Weng'an incident is very much positioned around and understood within the powerful discursive frameworks, such as social stability and harmony (*shehui wending hexie*), and social and economic development (*shehui jingji fazhan*).

In the following passage we can identify the whole spectre of the government hierarchy and how the successful cooperation and top-down integration of the levels of government are perceived to be crucial in order to reinstate normality and social stability:

After the incident, the central party committee and state council have paid the upmost attention, and have been very concerned about [it], general secretary Hu Jintao issued important instructions: standing committee member of the Politburo, secretary of the central political and legal commission, Zhou Yongkang has issued important **instructions twice**; member of the state council, minister of public security, Meng Jianzhu made repeated telephone calls to the frontlines to give direct guidance; Commanding officer of the People's armed police Wu Shuangzhan **issued instructions**, and dispatched personnel to get to Weng'an as fast as possible to give guidance and direct the work. **Provincial party-committee and the provincial government followed and implemented the important directives and instructions of the central leadership to the letter**, the situation subsided and safeguarding stability was given top priority, members of the provincial party committee, secretary of law and politics, and head of public security office, Cui Yadong has made up front-line commando post all through the night.¹³⁵

The fixed expression *buzhebukou*, functioning as an adverb with *de*-marker, meaning one hundred percent (ly) or doing something to the letter is of particular importance (in bold). This lexical choice illustrates best the perceived success in the cooperation between the central and local governments, and the party-state apparatus functioning as coherent whole. Another interesting word is *pishi* which I translate into "instructions". This lexical has also connotations of hierarchy, often being instructions or order given from a superior to an inferior. As such, it seems that this hierarchy is perceived to be fully functional without

¹³⁴ Instability is perhaps a perpetual concern for both ordinary Chinese and the government alike. The baggage of the Cultural Revolution and Tiananmen demonstrations in 89 can contribute to such a fear.

¹³⁵ 事件发生后，党中央、国务院高度重视，十分关心，胡锦涛总书记作出重要指示；中央政治局常委、中央政法委书记周永康两次作出重要**批示**；国务委员、公安部部长孟建柱多次打电话到前线直接指挥；武警总部司令员吴双战作出**批示**，并派人赶到瓮安指导处置工作。省委、省政府**不折不扣地贯彻落实中央领导的重要批示和指示精神**，切实把尽快平息事态、维护稳定放在第一位，连夜派出省委常委、政法委书记、公安厅长崔亚东组成一线指挥部

clashes of interests or conflicts. The next example also show how provincial and local governments were perceived to be successful in reinstating social order and normality due to hard work and impeccable behaviour, contributing to the role of the government as an orderly force, in the dichotomy of the order and chaos:

On the 29th of June, Provincial party deputy secretary Wang Fuyu [was] dispatched to Weng'an as the chief of the provincial work team to guide, supervise and give support to other relevant work with the case. In the process of handling [the situation], the People's armed police and the People's police showed and exercised the greatest degree of patience and self-control, adopting many kinds of safe, reliable, but vigorous measures, especially the People's armed police[']s presence] has worked like a cornerstone, quickly taking control over the situation, during the entire process there were no direct clashes with the masses, not even one person died, the situation is already, on the whole, under control. The overall situation has already gone back to normal, the handling [of the situation] has been both controlled/restrained and efficient.¹³⁶

Beside the successful cooperation between the different levels of government, there is also a connection with how the government punishing the few is seen as essential in order to safeguard stability: “**everyone demands** the party committee and government to severely punish and saboteurs, [to] safeguard social stability and harmony”.¹³⁷ In this example, we can see that the local and provincial government is construed as the protector of social stability and harmony by punishing the few. As we see from this translation, this is actually not only a wish, but rather a collective demand (*fenfen yaoqiu*).

With regards to chaos, blame for the incident is attributed to the few, both as the main participant in the actual riots but also the one responsible for the situation escalating into a mass incident. As such, the few is not only construed as criminals and rioters which committed acts of material destruction and violence, but also as a potential subversive force that could endanger the stability and unity of Guizhou province as a whole. Their actions are perceived to have:

Severely damaged not only Weng'an, but also the whole province image, wrecked the excellent social and economic development of Weng'an county, destroyed excellent conditions of stability and unity in Weng'an, as well as in the entire province.¹³⁸

¹³⁶ 29日又派出省委副书记王富玉为组长的省工作组，到瓮安指导、督促、监督相关工作。在处置过程中，武警官兵、公安民警保持了最大的忍耐和克制，采取了多种稳妥有力的措施，尤其是武警部队起到了中流砥柱的作用，迅速控制了事态，整个过程中没有与群众发生直接冲突，更没有死一个人，事态已得到基本控制，大局已恢复稳定，处置过程是克制和有效的

¹³⁷ 纷纷要求党委和政府要严厉打击破坏分子，维护社会稳定和谐

¹³⁸ 严重损害了瓮安县乃至全省的形象，破坏了瓮安县良好的经济社会发展形势，破坏了全县和全省安定团结的大好局面

The few are not only criminals violating the law, burning and looting and destroying material things, but also guilty of severely damaging the more immaterial and abstract conditions of stability and unity, as well as disrupters of social and economic development. As such, they are agents of chaos both on the level of the material destruction of property and physical violence, as well as disrupters of the more immaterial state of stability and unity. In this text and also in *Guizhou Daily*'s coverage in general, the political phrase “*andingtuanjie*”¹³⁹ is frequently used. I translate this into “stability and unity”. We can see in this text that the few is responsible for “destroying the excellent condition of stability and unity”.¹⁴⁰ As such, the few is perceived to be a splittist-force whose acts are seen as breaking up the unity and stability in Weng'an county and Guizhou province. This political phrase “stability and unity” was actually a part of a secret document and slogan coined by Mao Zedong in the backdrop of the Cultural Revolution: “Stability should be good at the present. The whole party and the whole army must unite together”.¹⁴¹ Later it was referred to as “Mao Tse-tung's directive on stability and unity”.¹⁴² At that point in time, apart from that the fact that it did not mean stability and unity in the sense that “the proletarian class and the bourgeois can coexist peacefully”, the obstacles and dangers for disrupting stability and harmony were perceived to be:

1) the bourgeois factionalism which disregards the situation of the country and is detrimental to consolidation of the dictatorship of the proletariat; 2) the erroneous tendency to commit acts of autonomism which harm the centralized leadership of the Party; 3) the class enemies at home and abroad who intend to disrupt the proletarian government and the social order, to confuse people's ideology and to carry out reactionary sabotaging activities.¹⁴³

First, it is interesting to note that the problem with “deviant” localities is not a new phenomenon as they had “the erroneous tendency to commit acts of autonomism” and thus going against the interests of the centre. Second, one can also see from this passage that much of the former essential Maoist discourse has lost some of its former relevance in contemporary China (the bourgeois, dictatorship of the proletariat, class enemies, reactionary and so fourth). Third, as a final digression one can perhaps assert that what the leadership in today's China actually want (but does not say out loud) is exactly what the old Maoist once categorically dismissed and fought against; namely stability and unity as means to ensure a peaceful coexistence between the proletarian class and the bourgeoisie, or more precisely the

¹³⁹ 安定团结

¹⁴⁰ 破坏了全县和全省安定团结的大好局面

¹⁴¹ Warren Kuo et al (1978) *A Comprehensive Glossary of Chinese Communist Terminology*, p 2-3

¹⁴² Ibid, p 3

¹⁴³ Ibid, p 3

coexistence between the disenfranchised groups¹⁴⁴ in contemporary China with the affluent urban elite. The Weng'an incident and the media representations of it can in be seen in this sense as different ways to deal with grievances of *laobaixing* regarding poverty, corruption, infringement of basic civil rights and interests and so fourth. This example with the use of “stability and unity” is worth mentioning in detail because it illustrates how political phrases, concepts and discourses often are recontextualised and decontextualised by being taken out of its original context and put into a new one to serve present purposes. As we have seen in with the example of “stability and unity”, the original meaning often gets altered in the course of this process.

We have in this passage discussed an overarching dichotomy between the lawful government and the lawless few as one of order and chaos. Similar dichotomies such as lawfulness and lawlessness and unity-split are for analytical purposes put together and seen as a part of the overarching one of order and chaos.

The Notion of Suddenness

In this article as in earlier articles in the party-press corpus, government and party officials are construed as fast, reactive and responsive. To distinguish this form of positive suddenness from the negative, I will rather call it “immediacy”. Shi Zongyuan and his actions are, for instance, represented through the following group of lexical choices:

Once [Shi Zongyuan] **arrived** in Weng'an [he] **promptly hurried** to the site of “6.28” incident to inspect, and **immediately** immersed himself among the masses to understand the situation, visited people's police and officers from the armed police. Around twelve o'clock secretary Shi Zongyuan left the site and **immediately** organized a meeting in Qiannanzhou (...).¹⁴⁵

In this example we can also see how the distinctively Chinese sentence structure (*yi-jiu*) helps to express a higher degree of immediacy in a positive way. In this context, how the second verb “hurried to” (*gandao*) comes straight after the completion of the first verb “arrived” (*dao*). This sentence construction along side the choice of adverbs *liji* and *zhijie* meaning “immediately” and “directly”, helps to construe Shi Zongyuan in a particularly positive way; as responsive, fast, quick and so forth. Another example of a similar representation of the

¹⁴⁴ For example, the poor urban working-class, the unemployed and impoverished peasants

¹⁴⁵ 石宗源书记一到瓮安县就立即赶到“6.28”事件现场察看；直接深入群众了解情况；看望公安民警、武警官兵。12时许，石宗源书记离开现场立即组织召开黔南州(...)

immediacy of officials is how "county and government representatives at the conference enthusiastically took the floor [made statements]".¹⁴⁶ This couple of examples show how choices regarding words, verbs and adverbs and sentence constructions can assist and underpin a particular representation of a particular social group, in this case party- and government officials at different levels. In here, positive representation is connected with degrees of immediacy, quickness and responsiveness. These examples illustrate how the dominant wishes himself to be perceived: as reacting quickly and immediately, as *responsible* leaders should.

The other side of suddenness, which represents danger and loss of control, is connected to *Guizhou Daily*'s constant use of sudden (*tufa*). Even though *Guizhou Daily* has changed from the very graphic reference with "hit-smash-burn sudden incident" to refer to the mass incident as the "6.28" sudden incident, the term "sudden" (*tufa*) is still very often used. Such a consistency in usage helps to underpin a dominant focus on the incident as a sudden eruption of violence and riots. As such, in this media representation of the Weng'an incident it seems that it is not rooted in any deeper causes or social conflicts, but rather exclusively connected to the sudden destructive impulses of the few. On some level it insinuates that this was only a *sudden* mass incident, without deeper and underlying causes. At least, the deeper and underlying causes of the mass incident do not receive much attention, because the immense focus on suddenness comes at the expense of elaborating on the deeper causes and looking at alternative understandings of this mass incident. According to *Southern Weekend*, this incident initially started out as a popular protest in form of demonstrations due to long withstanding and growing conflicts between the people of Weng'an and the local government. In the party-press discourse, the Weng'an incident is solely construed as a sudden irrational outburst of violent riots instigated by the few. By comparison, the discourse of *Southern Weekend* seems to understand this mass incident as result of a long withstanding conflict between the local government and the people of Weng'an. There is thus a very different representation and understanding of social conflicts in these two respective discourses.

¹⁴⁶ 县人大代表、政协委员在座谈会上踊跃发言

Voices

In this text, Shi Zongyuan is present both as an important social actor and source. Most of the paragraphs start with either Shi Zongyuan “points out” (*zhichu*) or “underlines” (*qiangdiao*). As all of these paragraphs are written in reported speech, it is therefore hard to assess what it is Shi Zongyuan’s own words, and what it is the journalist’s own view. Nonetheless, this article, as the previous two is very monophonic. The official voice of the provincial government voice is particularly prominent and dominant in this article. Other non-official voices, such as those from different sections of the masses, or the family of the deceased are excluded and not represented. But it is very interesting to see how the two different newspapers are using the same quotes differently for their own respective purposes. In the last paragraph before the wrap-up, we find a passage attributed to Shi Zongyuan where he touches upon some of the underlying factors or causes (*shenchengci de yuansu*) of the incident. The same quote or passage comes up in the articles from *Southern Weekend*, but plays a much more central role, almost functioning as the starting point of a critical discussion of these deeper causes. I argue this is a discursive strategy in *Southern Weekend*’s investigative discourse, namely *infrapolitics*, in which the strategic use of official discourse is used to make critical viewpoints seem safer and more legitimate to express. However, in this article, it is not only that this relatively critical passage is backgrounded by its position coming last in the article, but also how this passage is discussed and what conclusions and solutions are deduced from it. In other words, there is a substantial difference in how these two newspapers use and contextualise official quotes. In this article, this quote is actually preceded by a passage praising the work of local government under the guidance of the provincial government:

Shi Zongyuan stresses, [that] for a long time, party members at every level and the government of Weng’an, under the proper leadership of the provincial party committee and government and county party committee and government, have taken seriously the task of implementing a scientific development perspective, and quickened the county’s social and economic development, the results are obvious, and most cadres are good.¹⁴⁷

This extract illustrates that *Guizhou Daily* as the highest-ranking newspaper in its own constituency, which in theory is in the position to criticise lower level officials, is more interested in trying to put less focus on the potential malfeasance by local officials and rather

¹⁴⁷ 石宗源强调，长期以来，瓮安各级党委、政府在省委、省政府和州委、州政府的正确领导下，认真落实科学发展观，加快县 域经济社会发展，取得的成绩是明显的，干部队伍的主流是好的

emphasise the achievements of economic growth under provincial guidance. The discussion of potential problems of local governance is almost non-existent. As Shi Zongyuan says: “most cadres are good”. Another reason for such a strategy could be that as the provincial party-press paper it would delegitimize the provincial government if malpractice by local officials under their leadership were to be exposed and elaborated upon. The critical passage following this praise is as follows:

But from this incident [we] can see there must have been deeper causes/factors, [how could it else] it start out as a simple civil case [and later] develop into a serious hit-smash, loot and burn-mass incident. Social conflicts were accumulated over a long period time, many types of disputes intertwined, some did not receive the attention that they should have, and some [disputes] were not resolved in a timely and efficient manner, the ones that stick out are mining disputes, migrant disputes, and relocation disputes, [resulting in] tension in cadres-mass relationship, the public order and security is not good enough. In some places and departments there still exists different problems with way of thinking [mentality] and with cadres’ working style, manners and methods, that is why the masses is not content with our work yet.¹⁴⁸

In this passage, the three types of disputes are mentioned but not elaborated upon. It is quite vague what the problems are beside a very general comment on working style (*zuofeng, gongzuo fangshi*) and way of thinking or mentality (*sixiang yishi*). This vagueness is perhaps best exemplified with how there still exists “some problems of one kind or another”.¹⁴⁹ Rather than elaborating on the exact nature of these problems, this passage is followed up by and connected to a discussion regarding how the basic levels of the party has to be strengthened, how cadres’ working style has to be reformed and how on the more abstract level, they will “build party for the people” and “put people first”. In *Southern Weekend* the solution as well as the indirect cause of the mass incident, are perceived to be the peoples’ lack of rights and interests, functioning legal mechanisms that could ensure the interests of the people, and the need for a stronger civil society, which could help to absorb and mitigate social conflicts. These themes are virtually non-existent in the party-press discourse. I have translated some of the proposed solutions and visions in this passage attributed to Shi Zongyuan. It is also interesting to note the extensive use of political formulations and slogans (*tifa*):

¹⁴⁸ 但从这起事件来看，从一起单纯的民事案件酿成一起严重的打、砸、抢、烧群体性事件，其中必有深层次的因素。一些社会矛盾长期积累，多种纠纷相互交织，一些没有得到应有的重视，一些没有得到及时有效的解决，矿群纠纷、移民纠纷、拆迁纠纷突出，干群关系紧张，治安环境不够好。一些地方、一些部门在思想意识上，干部作风上，工作方式方法上，还存在一些这样那样的问题，群众对我们的工作还不满意

¹⁴⁹ 一些这样那样的问题

The problems revealed by this ought to make us think over, [we] should use this incident as a mirror, use it to push forward and adopt feasible and efficient measures, and to even more strongly and vigorously develop the basic structure of the party, strengthen the basic structure of the party, realistically improve the way of thinking and the work style of party members and cadres, and in the course of the good and fast economic development, bring into play the fortress function of the grass-root levels of the party and the vanguard model of the CCP member. Be loyal practitioner of the slogans to **“build a party serving the interests of the people”**, **“govern for the interests of the people”**, **“to build a party serving the interests of the people”** and **“to govern for the interests of people**, and [show that these are] not empty slogans, [we] will put words into action, [we] **will put people first** and persist in [fulfilling] the motto/aim of **serving the people**, [we] will put the masses and their struggles on the agenda. [We] will properly handle and resolve the relation between upholding social stability and accelerating the economic development, [and to] continue to improve the level of leadership and their ability to deal with sudden incidents, both do a good job with present work with upholding stability, as well as the aftermath work of “6.28” incident.¹⁵⁰

This quote or parts of it, is also found in *Southern Weekend*, but used to elaborate on the specific problems and concrete solutions. This passage tells a lot about how *Guizhou Daily* and the provincial government, at least on the discursive level, want to be perceived and how they want to resolve the issues at hand revealed by this mass incident. Beside working to strengthen party structure in rural China and punishing the culprits, there are not many concrete suggestions. Indeed, the whole discussion is of a much more abstract and idealistic character. Examples are “putting people first”, “building a party serving the interests of the people” and “governing for the interests of the people”. Indeed, the government wants to “show that these are not empty slogans”. However, how this is supposed to be done by concrete suggestions is not brought up and discussed. The stress and the perceived need to strengthen the grass-root party organization and put into effect “the fortress function of the grass-root levels of the party” reflects a common fear of social disintegration in rural China due to weak state presence. If the state and the party are not present in rural China, it is often assumed that this space will be filled by dubious organizations and “evil forces” (*hei’eshili*), such as criminal networks and organizations. The article concludes with another passage attributed to Shi Zongyuan:

Shizong Yuan stresses, the fact that the “6.28” incident took place, [should] makes us even more clearly realize the extreme importance of safeguarding stability. Especially under the

¹⁵⁰由此暴露出的问题应引起我们的反思,要以这起事件为镜子、为推动,采取切实有效的措施,更加扎实有力地开展好党的基层组织建设年活动,切实加强党的基层组织建设,切实改进党员干部队伍的思想作风和工作作风,真正在经济社会又好又快发展的进程中,发挥好党的基层组织的战斗堡垒作用和共产党员的先锋模范作用。要做立党为公、执政为民的忠诚实践者,立党为公、执政为民不是空喊口号,要落实到行动上,要以人为本,要坚持为人民服务的宗旨,把群众的冷暖放在心上。要正确处理好维护社会稳定和加快经济发展的关系。要继续提高领导水平和处置突发事件的能力,既要做好当前的维稳工作,又要做好“6.28”事件的善后工作

situation of Guizhou's "two shortcomings"¹⁵¹, there are many detrimental factors, stability has come hard earned, and stability is now even more valuable [important]. We should maintain a extreme consistency to comrade Hu Jintao's Central Committee, firmly placing safeguarding a stable and harmonious society at top priority before all other work. Take seriously [the task] of implementing the concept of scientific development, defend the people's livelihood, and ensure the people's livelihood, improve the people's livelihood, unite as one, stimulate vitality, and accelerate the good and fast economic development of Guizhou province.¹⁵²

All in all, we can see that the official voice of the local-, and in particular the provincial government is extremely dominant in this text. As noted, *Guizhou Daily's* party-press discourse is much more monophonic compared to the polyphony found in the discourse of *Southern Weekend*. We have also discussed and pointed to a general dichotomy of order and chaos and found a continuation of the few as main culprit, as well as the perception of the ignorant and passive masses on one side, and the reactive, responsive and thus responsible local government on the other. We have also looked at how official quotes are used and contextualized differently, and how solutions and suggestions in this text are expressed through extensive use of political formulations and slogans. As this last passage illustrates, concepts also include scientific development and defending the people's livelihood and so fourth. How and with which concrete measures this will be done is unclear. Uniting around Hu Jintao's directives and the importance of stability and unity are also repeated. As such, these general measures and lofty promises are perceived to be sufficient in addressing the problems revealed by the Weng'an incident. However, the exact nature of these problems is not elaborated upon. But *Southern Weekend's* investigative discourse provides another framework for understanding and making sense of this mass incident. The deeper causes are elaborated upon and possible solutions are discussed in a much more concrete, straightforward way, without extensive use of political formulations and slogans (*tifa*).

4.5 Analysis of Social Stability and Government Power (*Southern Weekend*)

¹⁵¹ The "two shortcomings" refer to the shortcoming of not being an economically developed place. The other shortcoming refers to a general lack of development of natural resources, infrastructure and so forth. In Chinese the two shortcomings are referred to as "欠发达和欠开发"

¹⁵² 石宗源强调,"6.28"事件的发生,使我们更加深刻地认识到维护稳定的极端重要性。尤其是在我省"两欠"省情下,各方面的不利因素多,稳定来之不易,稳定更加宝贵。我们要与胡锦涛同志为总书记的党中央保持高度一致,坚决把维护社会和谐稳定放在各项工作的首位,认真贯彻落实科学发展观,切实维护民生、保障民生、改善民生,团结一致,振奋精神,促进我省经济社会又好又快发展

The first published report in *Southern Weekend* on Weng'an incident was a reprint of a Xinhua news report, which was like a short summary of *Guizhou Daily's* initial news report.¹⁵³ The first independent news article on the subject from *Southern Weekend* is "Fangzhou commentary: The Weng'an incident reveals the way to stability"¹⁵⁴. I will in this section also analyse "New Weng'an hopefully marks the start of humble government power".¹⁵⁵ I put these two articles together because they are connected with similar themes and the latter is more or less the natural continuation of the former. After a short introduction, the analysis will because of spatial concerns and limitations, only focus upon the analytical category of voices and *Southern Weekend's* strategic use of official sources and quotes.

First of all, these two articles show that there is less emphasis upon the initial acts of violence, destruction and chaos and much more focus upon discussing the deeper and underlying causes of the Weng'an incident. These two texts are more reflections of both what seem to be the deeper structural causes of the incident, and constructive suggestions of what the government should do to prevent similar incidents happening again. These are for instance adopting measures to ensure basic civil rights and to create a channel where interests of the people can be properly negotiated through the means of "rightful resistance"¹⁵⁶, i.e., through the channels of a functioning legal system and so fourth. The text perceives the protection of these rights and interests of the people as a prerequisite to re-establish social stability. This is exactly the main theme and topic of these two articles; First, how the government has failed in their task to ensure the basic civil rights and interests of the people. Secondly, it is exactly that the lack of a system in which these rights and interests can be safeguarded that is argued to be one among the more underlying structural causes of the incident itself. This long withstanding situation is perceived to have lead to growing discontent and anger against local government in Weng'an and made the situation unstable and latent. These themes are further elaborated upon in the second article, "New Weng'an hopefully marks the start of humble government power". One major theme is how this mass incident shows the limits of the traditional model of governance, using the abuse of police force in Weng'an as an example pretext for further discussion. Like the preceding article, it oscillates between the discussion of the concrete conditions in Weng'an and reference to the local government, to the more abstract and

¹⁵³ <http://www.infzm.com/content/13990>

¹⁵⁴ 方舟评论：瓮安事件揭示稳定之道

¹⁵⁵ 瓮安新生请自公权谦卑始

¹⁵⁶ This concept is borrowed from O'Brian et al (2006) *Rightful Resistance in Rural China*

principal discussions of problems with the excessive concentration of government power and the lack of an efficient system of checks and balances. As this analysis will show, both of these two articles use official quotes as a backdrop to camouflage and make critical comments seem more valid and thus safer to express. This is a part of a discursive strategy of resistance I connect to Scott's concept of *infrapolitics*. I also argue that specific problems revealed by the exposure of the Weng'an incident are used to make implicit general and critical comments on some of the bigger issues in contemporary Chinese society.

Voices

We can see that both articles heavily drawn upon official sources and voices. Shi Zongyuan and other officials play an important role as sources in *Southern Weekend* as they also do in *Guizhou Daily*. In fact, these two articles exclusively draw upon official sources from high-ranking party-government members. In this first article "Weng'an shows the way to stability" there is actually one source: Shi Zongyuan, the party secretary of Guizhou. But it is interesting to note how implicit critical comments and opinions of the journalist¹⁵⁷ are centred on and around the official voice of Shi Zongyuan. I argue such strategic use of official statements and quotes is a part of an overall strategy to make critical comments safer by mixing them with official dominant discourse. This can arguably be linked and explained *infrapolitics*, and is identified as one of the major strategies of resistance in *Southern Weekend*'s investigative discourse.

Themes and topics taken up in the discussion of Weng'an incident in these two texts differ immensely from how *Guizhou Daily* perceived the event and its origins (see the preceding analysis for comparison). First of all, the article poses the question of how a simple "civil case" between police and the deceased's family could evolve into a mass riot involving thousands of rioters and demonstrators. This discussion begins with a quote from Shi Zongyuan (in bold) saying there must have been deeper causes and lists three types of disputes; disputes regarding development of local mine, settlement of migrant workers and resettlements and compensation in connection with property development:

Just like what Shi Zongyuan said, there must have been deeper conflicts for this simple "civil case" to evolve into a hit, smash, pillage, burn mass incident. What specific disputes

¹⁵⁷ I regard this as a type of voice for analytical purposes.

are we talking about? Shi Zongyuan listed roughly three types, first, mining disputes, second, migration disputes, and third, disputes in connection with construction work and relocation, the accumulation and intertwinement of these social conflicts, have not received attention it should, nor have it been resolved in a timely and efficient way, “the masses are not content with our work yet”.¹⁵⁸

Note how this quote is both used to make a critical comment upon the situation in Weng'an and at the same time connect it with the general situation in China in the following paragraph, with generalising these three specific disputes into disputes about interests (clashes of interests). According to the text, clashes of interest in transitional China are regarded as quite normal. However the ways the masses react and show their resistance in such conflicts are very different:

The fact that accumulated long-term conflicts exploded over the night is not unique for the case in Weng'an. During the transformation of a society, and under an unbalanced distribution system of interests/profits, this could happen everywhere. It is only that in the case of Weng'an it was expressed in the forms of disputes over mining, migration and resettlement, but in other places, it could be expressions over other kinds of disputes. But no matter how immensely the forms of expressions differ from each other, the rights and interests of the masses are nonetheless impaired. Therefore in an unfair system of unbalanced distribution of interests/profits, [the masses are] unable to fully enjoy the profits of social development, then very few are capable of being an exception (to extreme forms of expressions).¹⁵⁹

First, the lexical choice of “in the period of transformation of a society (*zai shuihui zhuanxing qi*) is intriguing. One can argue the choice of this vague term is one way to make general comments on problems in contemporary Chinese society safer. With regards to this, it would be much more sensitive to use the official term during the “reforms and opening up” (*gaige kaifang*) and connect this to problematic consequences and drawbacks of this policy. In any case, it is interesting how the text takes the specific discussion of Weng'an and connects it with the wider mechanisms of contemporary Chinese society. On one hand, it could actually be read as a very implicit critique of the status quo. On the other hand, it could be a strategy of carefully oscillating between the specific discussion of Weng'an and the more abstract discussion of principal problems and thus helps make the commentary more politically safe. In this way, the text avoids too extensive explicit criticism of the local party-state apparatus in

¹⁵⁸从单纯的“民事案件”，最终酿成一起打、砸、抢、烧群体性事件，如贵州省委书记石宗源所说，其中必有深层次的矛盾。具体有哪些深层次的矛盾呢？石宗源列举了大致三种，一是矿群纠纷，二是移民纠纷，三是拆迁纠纷，这些社会矛盾长期积累，相互交织，一直没有得到应有的重视、及时有效的解决，“群众对我们的工作还不满意”

¹⁵⁹长期矛盾一朝引爆，这不是瓮安一地的情况，在社会转型期，在利益分配不平衡之当下，这应有一定的普遍性。只不过在瓮安表现为矿群、移民和拆迁，而在别的地方，则可能表现为别的纠纷。但无论其表现形式如何千差万别，民众权益受损，因而在利益分配格局中不对等，不能充分享受社会发展的红利，则很少能够例外

Weng'an. Such caution could be needed because repercussions from angry local government can transcend administrative boundaries and actually penalize practitioners of critical cross-regional reporting.¹⁶⁰

The text continues with a principal discussion on the role of the government and how its most important task is to provide a balanced and fair system allocating interests and wealth. The more abstract theme of rights and interests is discussed by how the former is a prerequisite of the latter: "Rights and "interests" are interconnected, "rights" is the foundation of "interests", without "rights", there is no support [for safeguarding] "the interests".¹⁶¹ In the next section, the journalist suggests that government power should yield and make a space for a civil society, which in turn will bring mechanisms and dynamics in society that will help society to adjust itself, absorb and mitigate social conflicts. As a comparative note, this "solution" is very different from the one in the party-press, which focuses upon punishment, unity and harmony, and a stronger party organization and presence in rural China. In the next paragraph, the discussion is moved down from the abstract level to the concrete level of Weng'an and a focus upon the public's right to participate in process of negotiation over disputes over interests. The author connects this to the specific event in Weng'an by "proving" that the people of Weng'an had no say by rhetorically asking why the locals (people) should suffer environmental degeneration, which is a price paid by the development of the mine without getting any share of the wealth accumulated by the development of the local mine:

If the people could participate on equal terms in the negotiations, how could it then be that they have to suffer with the deterioration of environment as a result of mine development and not receive any of the profits from the development of the local mine?¹⁶²

In the wrap-up, there is yet another quote by Shi Zongyuan, which is also used in *Guizhou Daily's* coverage, but the way it is contextualized is very different in this article. In this text, it is linked to and understood within the framework of rights and interests (in particular the peoples' right to participate in negotiations) and how this right is the prerequisite for a "stability based on the foundation of peoples sentiments":

Shi Zongyuan said it well, the problems revealed by the Weng'an incident should make us reflect and rethink, and [we] should use this incident as a mirror and to push forward.

¹⁶⁰ Sæther (2008a), p 224-225

¹⁶¹ 而“权”与“利”是息息相关的。“权”为“利”之基，无“权”，“利”必无所依托

¹⁶² 如果民众可以对等谈判，那么当地矿产开发的红利，何至于与当地民众无缘，却让当地民众承受环境破坏的代价

There is a fundamental agreement [common knowledge] on the importance of social stability, but social stability must lay its foundation on the stability of the people's sentiments, only then [we will have] a genuine and sustainable stability. And to fully guarantee basic rights of citizens, especially to fully ensure the peoples right to participate in the process of negotiations [regarding conflicts of interests], this is exactly the prerequisite of a stability founded on the people's sentiments. This I'm afraid is the most important lesson we can obtain from our reflection of the Weng'an incident.¹⁶³

This is but another example of how investigative papers use the official discourse and voice as a backdrop to make comments on politically sensitive topics seem more legitimate and safe. We can also see from this passage how the use the discourse stability is used and understood differently vis-à-vis *Guizhou's* party press discourse. For instance, how stability (*wending*) is collocated with people's sentiments (*renxin*) as in "the urgent necessity to build/establish a stability on the foundation of people's sentiments".¹⁶⁴ There are no examples of a collocation with e.g., social stability and harmony (*shehui wending hexie*), which were among the most common collocations in the articles from *Guizhou Daily*. The focus in this text is that stability must start at the bottom level, with the common people's concerns and interests. Stability is in this way perceived to be dependent on the protection of the rights and interests of the people, and it is exactly the failure of such protection that leads to an unstable society.

The strategic use of the official voice is also very prominent in "New Weng'an hopefully marks a start for humble government power". This article starts with a summary of the major themes taken up in the text. These are limits of traditional model of governance and the problem with excessive concentration of state power. Then it oscillates back to the more concrete level, with the specific example of the arbitrary use and abuse of police force/power in Weng'an, which is used as a springboard for further discussion:

The exposure of the Weng'an incident shows the limits of the traditional model of governance. Under such a model, one aspect is the excessive concentration of government power, the other aspect is the lack of efficient checks and balances; its enviable outcome is the improper use of government power.

The use of police force in Weng'an can be regarded as a classical example.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶³ 石宗源说得好，瓮安事件暴露出的问题应引起我们的反思，要以这起事件为镜子、为推动。社会稳定的重要性是一个基本共识，但社会稳定必须奠基于心人的稳定之中，才是可靠的稳定，可持续的稳定。而充分保障公民基本权利，尤其充分保障利益博弈过程中民众的谈判权利，则是稳定人心的前提。这恐怕是我们反思瓮安事件所能得到的最重要的教训

¹⁶⁴ 稳定建立在人心稳定基础上的必要和紧迫

¹⁶⁵ 瓮安事件暴露出传统治理模式的局限。在传统治理模式之下，一方面政府权力过于集中，一方面缺乏有效制衡，其必然结果，是政府力量的不当使用。瓮安警力的使用方向，堪称一个经典注脚

We can observe a similar pattern in this text as in the former one of how the official voice and discourse are intertwined with the journalist's own voice and perspective. In the concrete discussion of the alleged practice of arbitrary use of police force, the former chief of the public security, Shen Guirong, is quoted through both reported speech and by direct quotes (in bold). These quotes are then intertwined with the voice of the journalist:

If the main force [resources] of the Weng'an police is not used to maintain the normal social order, what on earth is it used for then? Just like what the former chief of the public security bureau Shen Guirong, recently frankly admitted during media interviews, **the police force has been to a great extent, used on non-police affairs and activities. "For instance, whenever there is a mass incident, [we will] just dispatch policemen, this matter of violating and offending the common people, we had to do it all the time"**. Police force was used to handle disputes over mining rights, relocating migrant workers and relocation in connection with construction work. According to Shen Guirong's statistics, **merely in the last few years there here have been "five large scale operations involving over 100 policemen directed against [dealing with] collective incidents"**.¹⁶⁶

Later in the text the consequences of such abuse of state power is perceived to be a complete lack of trust and respect towards the local government. As such, it became quite commonplace with attacks on government bodies. In the next passage, we can again see the pattern of how the prominent official voice and discourse are mixed with the journalist's own critical perspective:

The improper use of government power harms fundamental civil rights, as well as endangers the government itself at the same time. The result of abuse of police force by the local government of Weng'an is **just like what Shen Guirong honestly admitted, "we offended almost everyone"**. This certainly wrecked the local masses' trust and respect towards the government through and through, and yet the cruel reality, which made Shen Guirong feel even more shameful/humiliated: **"Our authority was lost a long time ago. Our offices often got attacked."**¹⁶⁷

Southern Weekend's understanding of social conflicts and contradictions is connected with the government and their role as a protector of basic civil rights. As such, it is actually the government's failure in fulfilling their role, which is the source of social conflicts. Therefore, the representation of social conflict in *Southern Weekend* is perceived to be a long withstanding conflict between a corrupt and illegitimate local government and the people of

¹⁶⁶ 瓮安警方的主要力量不是用来维持社会正常秩序，那么究竟用到哪去了？正如前任公安局局长申贵荣近日接受媒体采访时坦承的，警方力量很大程度上用于非警务活动。“比如，遇到群体事件就出动警察，这种‘得罪’老百姓的事，都得我们去做。”矿权纠纷要动用警力，移民搬迁要动用警力，房屋拆迁也要动用警力。据申贵荣统计，仅仅数年之间，“针对群体事件，我们出动百人以上的大行动就有五次”

¹⁶⁷ 政府力量的不当使用，在危害人民基本权利的同时，事实上也危害着政府自身。瓮安地方政府滥用警力的结果，一如申贵荣所坦承的，“我们几乎把人都‘得罪’完了。”这必然从根子上摧毁当地民众对于政府的信任和尊重，而有令申贵荣倍感羞辱的残酷现实：“我们的权威早就没有了。我们机关经常被冲击”

Weng'an. This is arguably a discursive nodal point in *Southern Weekend's* coverage.

In the next paragraph, we can see that the official discourse and voice through quotes by party secretary Shi Zongyuan are used to further comment upon the practice of the improper use of government power and how this leads to a widespread fear among the people of Weng'an:

Is it not a monstrosity to threaten the people with the means of a dictatorship! But such monstrosity ended up as a common phenomenon in Weng'an. Pretending to be fair, but being unfair during conflicts of interests, and then using state force to treat the people at the slightest provocation is bound to bring about widespread fear among the people. **Guizhou Party secretary, Shi Zongyuan said with a sigh: "We are responsible for the fact that the people does not dare to speak the truth".** This sigh of sorrow does not come without reason. The local masses has no way to rid themselves of the fear, and the lack of basic rights and local government's improper use of its power, all of these are obviously interconnected."¹⁶⁸

The article concludes with yet another reference to Shi Zongyuan, which later becomes the headline of *Southern Weekend's* next article, an extensive investigative report which I will analyse in the following sub-chapter. Shi Zongyuan's quote is followed by the journalist's own concluding thoughts and comments on the matter. It is pointed out that a reliable and sustainable stability must take the people's concerns and their sentiments (*renxin*) as the starting point. It is also interesting to note that an analogy of the human race's interference with nature and its disastrous consequences was used to compare the grave consequences of the abuse of government power, both on the individual-level and in society in general:

Unstable Weng'an, just like what Shi Zongyuan repeatedly has pointed out, "Weng'an party committee, government, public security bureau and leading cadres from relevant departments are all responsible for this [the unstable Weng'an]." What exactly are the local officials responsible for? Obviously, the main one is the improper use of government power. Any government needs authority, but this type of authority has to first be established on the basis of the people's good sentiments. This requires the government to venerate the people's sentiments and requires the government to be humble to serve the people and protect fundamental civil rights. Otherwise, just like human race's excessive interference with nature, which leads to an unbalanced environment and extreme and disastrous climate; the improper use of government power similarly will lead to the loss of peoples' sentiments, [and] in the end it is hard to avoid to pay the high held social costs, and especially the human costs.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁸ 用专政手段对待人民岂非咄咄怪事！但如此咄咄怪事，在瓮安竟成普遍现象。在利益冲突中拉偏架，动不动就用国家暴力对待人民，必然造成人民的普遍恐惧。贵州省委书记石宗源感慨：“老百姓不敢讲真话，是我们的责任。”这种感慨不是没有来由的。当地民众没有免于恐惧的自由，基本权利匮乏，与地方政府不当使用其力量，显然有着内在的逻辑联系

¹⁶⁹ 瓮安不安，诚如石宗源一再指出的，“瓮安县委、县政府、县公安局和有关部门的领导干部负有不可推卸的责任。”地方官员不可推卸的责任到底是什么责任？显而易见，主要是不当使用政府力量的责任。任何政府都需要权威，但这种权威必须首先建立在人心的基础之上。这就需要政府对于人心的敬畏，需要政府对于人民的谦卑，需要政府对于人民基本权利的呵护。否则，正如人类对于自然的过度干预必然导致生态失衡，导致极端性的灾害性气候；不当使用政府力量同样会导致人心失衡，最终不免付出高昂的社会成本尤其是人心成本

It is interesting to see how the journalist concludes, again using the specific case Weng'an and the lessons of it to make a case for what the government and, indeed China as nation, should learn from the Weng'an incident:

All in all, why not just start from Weng'an? What if we turn to the present program (*dajiefang*) in Weng'an county, to a permanent upgrade, innovation of the system and to put democracy and rule by law into practice, put into practice the people's right to know, right to participate, right to expression and right of supervision, then the people [and their] knowledge can automatically have an effect, [and help to] practice checks and balances of government power, cleanse government power, in that case, this embryonic stage [start phase] of contemporary service-minded government, could be born from Weng'an and set a good example for all of China.¹⁷⁰

What is particularly interesting beyond general comment and measures the journalist list up is actually the way these examples are phrased. The lexical choices of “people’s right to know”, “right to participate”, “right to expression” and “right of supervision” (*renmin de zhiqing quan, canyu quan, biaoda quan, jian du quan*) are all concepts which are much less sensitive than concepts taken from Western human rights discourse. In this paragraph it could be relevant to talk about media freedom and independence, or how media as the fourth estate could help to check and balance state power, but this is clearly off-limits. I think these aforementioned lexical choices illustrate that investigative journalists and editors are very conscious about the overarching framework they work under and its blurry line between the acceptable and unacceptable. The use of these concepts at the expense of concepts from the much more sensitive human rights discourse is an example of the thin line investigative journalists and editors often balance upon when conducting their work. Like Elin Sæther points out, they often adopt a strategy of “partial opposition and partial loyalty to the mouthpiece role”.¹⁷¹ In fact, she also writes about the party-state’s suspicion against human rights discourse, for instance, the freedom of expression is regarded as a “liberalist imperialist individualistic concept” and a part of the “peaceful evolution towards capitalism”.¹⁷² That is why the use of “people’s right to know” (*renmin de zhiqing quan*), which Sæther connects to the process of commercialization, market discourse and public’s demand for information, is

¹⁷⁰ 这一切，何妨就从瓮安开始？如果当下瓮安城乡的大接访，能够升级为长期的制度创新，把民主法治落到实处，把人民的知情权、参与权、表达权、监督权落到实处，人民就能够自动地起作用，良知就能够自动地起作用，以切实制衡公权力、净化公权力，那么现代服务型政府的雏形就不难从瓮安降生，而垂范全中国

¹⁷¹ Sæther (2008a), p 153

¹⁷² Ibid, 152

less politically sensitive and a much more accepted term.¹⁷³ In this way, such conscious lexical choices with “people’s right to know”, as we seen in this text, is a necessity in the discussion of sensitive matters.

In contrast to *Guizhou Daily*, where we in the first articles find a macro strategy of a victimization of the government by the few lawless people, in these two articles by *Southern Weekend* we can see that it is the people of Weng’an who are perceived to be the victims of a corrupt local government. It is inexplicitly pointed out that the government is the culprit responsible for “harming the rights and interests of the masses”.¹⁷⁴ As such, in these two articles the government has moved from the being the victim of the lawless few, to being a social actor which has neglected concrete responsibilities and duties resulting in harming the common people and their rights and interests. In this commentary, Shi Zongyuan’s quote plays a much more central role by being placed in the beginning of the article. There is also a vast difference in how the two papers use and contextualise the same quotes from high standing officials. In *Guizhou Daily*, these relatively critical quotes were not only backgrounded by coming last in the article, but also drowned in an immense focus on the role of the few and how successful the government has been in restoring the normal social order. In the party-press, these quotes were not used as they have been in these two articles, namely to elaborate on the specific problems, but rather contextualized in the more abstract discussion about how the they will “build a party for the people” and “put people first”. In these two articles these quotes are used as the stating point of the discussion, bringing up topics of illegitimate governance, harming the people’s rights and interests, lack of a functioning civil society and re-establishing stability on the foundation of people’s sentiments. By mixing and intertwining the dominant official voice and discourse with the journalist’s own critical voice helps to make the sensitive matter of discussing the deeper causes of the mass incident seem safer and more legitimate. I argue that this is a discursive strategy utilized by *Southern Weekend* to make a relatively politically sensitive discussion more politically safe. This strategy can be explained with Scott’s concept of *infrapolitics*, strategically using the discourse of the dominant, in this case high-ranking officials, to camouflage and make critical views seem more legitimate and thus safer to express.

¹⁷³ Ibid, 152-153

¹⁷⁴ 民众权益受损

In the next sub-chapter one the analysis of *Southern Weekend*'s article "Weng'an - the unstable town", we will see how the same discursive strategy of the strategic use of official voice and discourse, but now mixed and intertwined with a myriad of other non-official voices. This polyphony as the mix of non-official and official voices is, as the next analysis will show, a very distinct characteristic of investigative journalism in contemporary Chinese media. This type of polyphony is also one of the major means and discursive strategies of resistance for enabling investigate journalists and newspapers to critically comment upon political minefields in contemporary Chinese media.

4.6 Analysis of Weng'An - The Unstable Town

"Weng'an - the unstable Town"¹⁷⁵ was the first genuine investigative report on the Weng'an incident, published 14th of July 2008, over two weeks after initial the riots and demonstrations broke out. My major findings in this analysis are how polyphony and the strategic use of the official voice and discourse constitute the most important discursive strategy of for investigative journalism to voice critical perspectives and comments on politically sensitive topics. This analysis will examine, on one hand, how sensitive parts are made politically acceptable with polyphony and strategic use of the official discourse. On the other hand, it will try to pinpoint the limits of critical investigative discourse and examine the discursive constraints imposed upon the critical journalism within the order of Chinese media discourse.

Narrative, Analepsis and Rationality

I will start by looking at how the trajectory of the narrative in this text helps to construe demonstrators as rational people who have a legitimate cause. The narrative starts with describing the start-up of a small student-demonstration and follows its way down through Weng'an. It is interesting is how, using a retrospective technique (analepsis), the narrative goes back in time and provides us with additional background information exploring the deeper causes (*shenci yuanyin*) of the mass incident. The use of retrospective technique is perhaps another strategy for the investigative discourse to elaborate and dig into the background and tell the story of about illegitimate corrupt government practices. In this text

¹⁷⁵ 瓮安, "不安"的县城

the initial cause for the demonstrations is a perceived anger against the government handling of the Li Shufen-case, specifically how the local government inexplicitly threatens to take the remains of Li Shufen by force:

One the morning of the 28th of June, the public security bureau sent a “notice on urgent handling of remains” to Li Shufen’s family, which stated that Li Shufen “committed suicide by jumping into the river [and] died by drowning”, “cause of death has already been proved, there is thus no longer any need for preserving Li Shufen’s remains”, The Li Family has to come and bring back to bury [cremate] Li Shufen’s remains by 14:00, “otherwise, the public security bureau will handle it according to the law”. This caused discontent among the bystanders, and at around 15:00 the same day, two middle school students walked in the front, with several scores of people following behind, holding up a white banner “seeking to redress of an injustice for the masses”, their intent was to demonstrate and present a petition for Li Shufen. Among these people, not one was Li Shufen’s family or relatives.¹⁷⁶

The narrative continues with the trajectory of how this small-scale demonstration and how this evolved into a mass riot involving thousands of people. First of all, the lexical choice and the consistent use of *youxing*, meaning demonstration or march, construes people involved in a more positive light compared the frequent usage of “hit-smash-pillage lawless people” in the party-press. On one hand, *youxing* connotes some form of legitimacy, making the actions of participants seem more legitimate. As such, it helps to construe them in a much more neutral way. We can also see from this passage that their initial plan was to present a petition (and not start a violent riot), a strategy of “rightful resistance” and this also helps to construe the people/masses as a much more rational entity. Indeed, as the narrative develops, it is almost a story of their rightful struggle against government oppression and illegitimate practices. The narrative of the demonstration begins by describing the route it takes and how people from diverse social groups joined in, such as the migrant workers and farmers who reside in that area. The most interesting part is how the narrative goes back in time, describing how and in which manner the representatives from the local government infringed upon interests and rights of these social groups. This representation of participants marching in the demonstration marks a crucial difference in the organization of meaning and knowledge of this mass incident. The party-press discourse is limited to construing the people involved either as “the few lawless people or people with an ulterior motive or “the ignorant masses” (*yi xie bufa fenzi, you bie yongxin de ren, buming zhenxiang de qunzhong*). By only using

¹⁷⁶ 到6月28日上午, 瓮安县公安局向李树芬家属发送了《尸体处理催办通知书》, 里面提到了李树芬是“自己跳河溺水死亡”, “死因已查明, 李树芬尸体没有继续保存的必要”, 限李家于6月28日14时前将李树芬尸体领回安葬, “否则, 公安机关将依法处理”。这激起了围观者的不满。到这天下午3点左右, 两名高举“为人民群众伸冤”的白色横幅的中学生走在前面, 数十人跟随, 他们打算为李树芬游行请愿。这些人当中, 没有一个是李树芬的亲属

such categories this effectively helps to delegitimize the actions of demonstrators/rioters and put a subsequent focus on the acts of violence, instead of the deeper causes. In this text, the categorization of demonstration (and demonstrators) and the additional background of the deeper causes (*shenci yuanyin*) elaborated upon in retrospect helps to construe the masses as much more rational social actor with a just cause. And in this text, compared to the irrational generic category of “the masses” (*qunzhong*) mostly as “the ignorant masses” (*buming zhenxiang de qunzhong*), we will later see that this generic category is broken down, and that there is a much more fragmented and polyphonic representation in this through the social categories of “farmers”, “students”, “emigrants”, “villagers”, “citizens” and so forth. In this way, the representation of the masses is in this text constituted through a myriad of voices from people of different social backgrounds and class. In the next section, I am going to take a closer look at how this narrative develops under the sub-headline “the helpless village, the emigrants who joined in the demonstrations” (*wuzhu de cunzhuang, jiaru youxing de yimin*).

The narrative starts out with describing how the demonstration started out and later how emigrants joined in:

After setting off from Da Yan bridge, going around for a while, demonstrators marched onto the old ring road yelling slogans. In the Seven-Star village situated in the area around the old ring road, live over thousands of emigrants affected the hydroelectric station-project.¹⁷⁷

With an analepsis, the narrative goes back in time and we get to know that over 4000 people had to relocate due to the construction work and that 3000 among these were farmers. In 2004, settlements regarding compensations and disputes arouse between villagers and government personnel. According to a source, the compensation they got was far lower than the national standard for Orchard trees. Apparently they got only 100 yuan for each tree in contrast with neighbouring peasants who got 1000 yuan per tree. The whole situation got out of hand in 2004, when representatives from the government came to discuss the matter of low compensation, but because of a deadlock and seemingly unwillingness from the official side to resolve the problem, the villagers took to drastic measures. They refused to let officials go by detaining cars and sealing of roads. Over 1000 people went to Jiang Hejie to demand an explanation from the representatives. Even though government officials, including the head of the county, were forced in containment for three days no agreement was reached. This

¹⁷⁷ 从大堰桥出发，折行一段，游行队伍喊着口号，走上了老环城路。在老环城路一带的七星村，住着上千水电站工程移民

developed into a mass incident, as the solution adopted by government officials was to use police force. The armed police and the police were both called in to “solve” the problem. According to a villager, even women and children were among many of the injured in the clashes with the police. The same villager also said that the local hospital got instructions from the top to refuse medical treatment to injured villagers, and leave the wounded to buy medicine and treat the injuries themselves. After a year, even though the villagers got some compensation for medical expenses, the problem of low compensation still remained unresolved. In March 2007, the official answer and solution to the problem was a notification stating that the people who had not accepted the terms of compensation had to move before the end of the month, or else bear the consequences themselves. Unwilling to accept low compensation and to relocate, the villagers’ houses, crops and harvests were forcefully destroyed. The narrative continues by elaborating on the immediate and the longstanding consequences of being forcefully relocated, which helps to give sympathy to the helpless villagers:

(...) “the grieved villagers had to endure a sleepless night”. The spot where the village was is just a big piece of rubble and debris and overgrown with weeds today. Even to this day, 54 households, over two hundred emigrants are still staying behind in the village. They have not accepted any compensation from the government, and have set up temporary sheds on the water level-line, entire household live in the narrow and small shed with no water and electricity, only relying on the few cropland and fruit trees left to make a living. Even when they went to government the village government hoping to get some temporary construction work, they were informed that emigrants such as them are not needed. “We only want political transparency, standard compensation and live life and work in peace on the water level-line. But they can only, as before, wait in vain for the problems to be resolved.”¹⁷⁸

We also get to know that most of the emigrants who accepted the terms and moved to the Seven Star village, also voiced their discontent towards the government complaining about the compensation being too low. The narrative goes then back to the day of the demonstrations, describing how this social group appeared among the troops and ranks of demonstrators. All this background helps to construe villagers and emigrants, now included in the category of demonstrators, in a much more rational light. In other words, they are not just helpless ignorant masses incited by the few. With the story told of their long withstanding dispute and conflict with Weng’an county government makes them, as a social group seem rational and having a legitimate cause.

¹⁷⁸ “伤心的村民们度过了一个不眠之夜。如今原有的村居一片瓦砾，杂草丛生。

时至今日，仍有54户二百多位移民留守村中。他们没有接受政府的任何补偿，在水位线上搭起临时草棚，全家人住在狭小的窝棚下，无水无电，仅靠水位线上幸存的田地和果树为生。甚至去乡政府做临时建筑工，也会被告知不需要他们这样的移民。“我们只是希望政策透明，补偿到位，可以在水位线上，安居乐业。”但他们只能依然在无望中等待问题的解决

The narration then continues under the sub-title “active criminal gang, tapped out mining area”¹⁷⁹ and starts out how and why students from the school Li Shufen once had attended, started the demonstrations:

Passing through the old ring road, this student-led demonstration turns onto the northeast road. Weng’an middle school No. 3 is located here, exactly the school the departed Li Shufen used to attend.¹⁸⁰

According to an anonymous student, the atmosphere and environment around the local school had been very detrimental. Students getting involved with criminal gangs became common, both including the troublesome and achieving students. This claim is even further supported through the voice of two teachers that says “teachers being hit by students are nothing new here in this school”. This topic, about criminal networks penetrating schools is also discussed in *Guizhou Daily*’s later coverage, with focus in the perceived need for students to engage in political and ideological thought work and self-criticism of joining the violent few. In this article however, the students are construed as rational demonstrators and initial starters of this, at first, small-scale demonstration. But criminal penetration at the local school is not the main focus in this passage. By first bringing up this less controversial topic, which *Guizhou Daily* included in their coverage, the article can use this as a pretext to comment upon a much more serious problem. According to the text, criminal activity in school only constitutes the lowest level of the criminal network in its totality. According to one who once invested into the development of the mine, there is collaboration between the government and criminals forces:

At the upper end of the “structure of the pyramid”, criminal forces are either covertly or openly active in mining area, **even in collaboration with official power**, to seek profits and benefits. “If one is to refuse the conditions of the gang, some mines will be very hard to continue to develop”. The same person goes on saying that the conditions include protection money, or control over mining ore sales, or owing share of stocks in the mining enterprise and so fourth, some gang members develop mines themselves.¹⁸¹

This is arguably one of the most sensitive parts of the text, giving a first-hand account of corrupt local governance. The practical consequences of these illegitimate practices are

¹⁷⁹ 活跃的黑帮，困顿的矿区

¹⁸⁰ 通过老环城路，这支由中学生领头的游行队伍拐到了北东路。北东路上坐落着瓮安三中，正是死者李树芬生前就读的学校

¹⁸¹ “金字塔形的结构”的上端，黑恶势力或隐性或张扬于矿区，甚至与官权相勾结，以谋取利益。“如果不接受帮派的条件，一些矿很难能开下去。”上述人士说，条件包括收取保护费；或者控制矿石的外卖，或者在矿企里享有干股等等，有些帮派成员则自己开矿

further elaborated on by explaining how villagers from the mining area are caught in the mix between mining businesses and gangsters. Villagers' interests are in conflict with the mining development and the government. An example is the subsequent pollution of the drinking water due to the development of the mine, resulting in the deterioration of villagers' crops and harvests. However, the causal links here are only implicitly touched upon. Least explicitly is the link between why villager's petitions get refused and by the government. Even though the article states that representatives from the local government have vested interests in the mine, this is not explicitly discussed, which could be one the reasons why petitions got refused. The text simply states that both the government and mine enterprise seem to ignore the villagers: "But the villagers' petitions to the government did not get any response, the mining enterprise completely refused to pay attention [to this problem]".¹⁸² More explicitly is the causal link between the mining enterprise and the negative consequences of soil erosion for the villagers. As such, it seems less sensitive to explicitly show causal linkages between business malpractice and how this affects the masses. The social conflict between business interests and the masses is then less sensitive than the representation of social conflicts between the government and the people. This is shown in how we get to know that many peasants did not receive any compensation for the loss of land from the mine company. Later, the villagers also found out the groundwater level was becoming lower and lower to the extent that a well in the village completely dried up. And again, petitions were ignored. So in desperation, villagers cut the electricity effectively blocking further development of the mine. After disputes with the new developers, negotiations lasted for three days without any result. Later, village representatives were invited to a "to solve the problem" meeting with leading officials. But "the meeting was turned into a *Hongmenyan*".¹⁸³ This metaphor is interesting, because it is a historical reference to the use of a banquet hold by Xiang Yu as pretext to kill his rival, Liu Bang, the coming emperor. In this abstract way and perhaps implicit way, the local government comes off as traitors in collaboration with the police. 11 representatives were arrested and when the villagers hurried down to the public security bureau to voice their discontent, they were only met by a security line. This later evolved into violent clashes between the two parties. A total of 22 people were arrested and accused of attacking government bodies and institutions. Seven among the representatives were deemed guilty of a very serious crime, namely "assembling a crowd and disrupting social order". The practical legal consequences of such crime are at best a two-year prison sentence while the longest

¹⁸² 但村民们向政府的投诉得不到回应，矿企则完全不予理睬

¹⁸³ 协调会变成了鸿门宴

could be up to six years. All this background on the social injustice and suffering of the helpless villagers through the narrative helps to construe them as rational, as well as having a legitimate claim for joining the demonstrators. The narrative continues:

When the demonstrators passed through [this area], the villagers in the mining area who had to silently forbear, over a long period of time, the integral collaboration of government personnel and organized gangs, suddenly also got incited, more and more people started to follow behind.¹⁸⁴

Not only has this section given concrete examples of corrupt governance and malpractice, it also touches upon the negative consequences of this, by presenting a clear picture of the degree of helplessness (*wunai*). This *wunai* comes from how the peasants' "rightful resistance" is futile, and how they repeatedly try to work within the framework of the law without any results, leading to the inevitable situation of adopting illegal and unlawful forms of resistance. However in this context, the blame for this is not pitted upon the peasants, but rather on the local government, the mining enterprise and to some extent the criminal gangs. There is also no moral condemnation of the acts done by the peasants. The social injustice, epitomized by these examples, particularly where representatives from the villagers were lured into a trap at the meeting and then seized by the police, can help to explain the accumulation of public discontent over time towards the local government. These two examples are exactly what Shi Zongyuan calls deeper causes, but through conducting investigative journalism and extensive fieldwork, these causes are for the first time extensively elaborated upon. This is one distinctive characteristic of *Southern Weekend's* alternative media representation of the Weng'an incident.

Agency and lexical choices

I will in this particular section analyse agency and take a look at how social actors are present or not as agents in a clauses/sentences. I argue that the analysis of agency will show some of the very subtle strategies of bypassing political minefields by only *implicitly* pointing out causal links between illegitimate practices and representatives from the local government. I will also look at how the masses as a social actor in this text has much higher degree of agency compared to their passivity manifested in their position as the affected of another agent's action, which was a common discursive practice in the party-press discourse.

¹⁸⁴ 当游行队伍经过，对于纠结一体的政府工作人员与黑帮组织隐忍已久的矿区居民也被瞬间点燃，尾随的人越来越多

With descriptions of illegitimate and corrupt practices and so fourth, the section “the helpless village, emigrants joining the demonstrations”¹⁸⁵ is one of the most sensitive parts of the article. With regards to the analysis of agency is it interesting how government actors are present in the preceding passage (*Weng'an xian zhengfu*), but not directly linked to the (illegitimate) destruction of houses. For instance in:

4th of April 2007, under the **guidance of persons-in-charge from Weng'an county government**, including migration, development bureau, public-security organs, procuratorial organs and the People's Court, troops of over a hundred people came to Jiangjiehe Village, all houses and buildings in this village were forcefully demolished by the excavator, the demolishers even set fire on some of the wooden houses.¹⁸⁶

Even though it's clear that agency and overall responsibility is attributed to the Weng'an county government and the people in charge, the causality of the actual destruction is attributed the excavator machine and the vague category of demolishers (*chaiqianzhe*). Who are exactly these demolishers? Other illegitimate practices done by the demolishers include sawing down fruit trees, pulling up crops, as well as poisoning crops with herbicide. Casual linkages to the actual actions of destruction are in this way implicitly linked to the Weng'an county government. This could be a part of a strategy to avoid explicitly pointing the finger at the local government, reducing explicitness in the overall representation of social conflicts between the government (*guanfang*) and people (*minfang*). It may seem a very peculiar detail, but I think it is quite illustrative of some of the discursive constraints imposed upon critical journalistic discourse. In this example, the representation of social conflicts (*shehui maodun*) between local government and the people of Weng'an are being pointed through implicit casual linkages. This is done because it is too sensitive to explicitly point out social conflicts between the government and the masses. One reason why this is particularly sensitive is because official party discourse, which still is a relatively dominant force in the order of Chinese media discourse, often organize meaning of social reality based on a orthodox Communist understanding, entailing that there should be no social contradictions between the party and the people. As such, the party's representatives always represent and act according to the will of the people and wholeheartedly serving the people (*wei renmin fuwu*).

¹⁸⁵ 无助的村庄，加入游行的移民

¹⁸⁶ 2007年4月6日，在瓮安县政府负责人带领下，包括县移民开发局和公检法在内，逾百人的队伍开进江界河村，该村所有房屋被挖掘机强制拆除，拆迁者还将部分木屋点火焚烧

Another strategy of downplaying the representation of social conflict between the local government and the people of Weng'an can be connected with the lexical choice and consistent use of "government personnel" (*zhengfu gongzuo ren yuan*) throughout the article. Jingrong Tong shows in her analysis of the coverage of social riots how the lexical "government staff" (*zhengfu gongzuo ren yuan*) was preferred and chosen by editors at the expense of the journalist initial lexical choice of "official" (*guan yuan*).¹⁸⁷ According to Tong, this particular lexical connotes:

"hierarchy" and in describing the locality of the conflicts between the rioters and the police/officials, the shift of "officials" to "government staff" show the newsroom's intention to mute the presentation of conflict and opposition.¹⁸⁸

These subtle lexical choices, such as in this case "excavator machine", "demolishers" and "government personnel" can be understood as alternative means to mitigate and play down the discursive representation of social conflicts between the local party-state and the people. In this way, the skill of conscious lexical and syntactical choices, constituting a form of self-censorship, could paradoxically play a very essential and important part of how to conduct investigative journalism with success, by making critical news reports politically tolerable and thus publishable.¹⁸⁹ As Tong and Sparks point out: "Other tactics (...) to increase their chances of publishing politically and economically sensitive stories involve attempting carefully to manipulate self-censorship in order to present material that would otherwise be spiked".¹⁹⁰ Another aspect they take up is how important the institutionalization of critical journalism has been. This is well reflected in the words of a deputy Editor-in-Chief in a famous investigative newspaper: "Our policy should not be to reject reports with political sensitivities out of hand. Instead, we need to know how to present the report in a way in which the political sensitivities are minimised".¹⁹¹

As implied earlier, this article is perhaps the best example of the polyphony of critical investigative discourse, which I will discuss in detail in the next section under voices. But the analysis of agency can tell us more about how the *fragmented masses* in this text are represented through agency or a lack of agency. In this text, the critical investigative discourse seems to attempt to go beyond party-press discourse and its practice of construing

¹⁸⁷ Tong (2009b), p 180 and p 177

¹⁸⁸ Ibid, p 180-181

¹⁸⁹ Tong and Sparks (2009) "Investigative Journalism in China Today" in *Journalism Studies*

¹⁹⁰ Ibid, p 346

¹⁹¹ Ibid, quoted in Tong and Sparks (2009), p 347

the masses as very passive, voiceless and helpless entity. My examples will show that the lack of agency in party-press representation is replaced by a much more complex representation, through less generic categories and how the masses are attributed a significant higher degree of agency. The passage below illustrates the popular support and growing discontent towards the local government on one side, and how people from the whole social stratum donates money to Li Shufen's family in their struggle for redressing a perceived injustice on the other side:

This narrow and cramped place turned into a stage. An endless stream of people came to visit upon hearing the latest news all day long. People came with their own discontent in life to view the controversy around the death of this girl. They made generous money contributions, placing hope on Li Shufen in their wish for justice, donating money in either big or small amounts to Li Shufen's family. Many townspeople told me [the journalist] they learned that the biggest amount of a donation was of up to 3000 yuan, and that the donator told the family: "take the money and go to court, we support you all the way, if you don't sue just give back the money". Donators also include people from the lower classes. "Some peasants, selling vegetables all day, barley making any profit also donated the little money they had. According to one eyewitness, the total sum of donations exceeded ten thousand."¹⁹²

This passage illustrates well a higher degree of agency attributed to the fragmented masses. In *Guizhou Daily*, the agency of non-party/government members is limited to the few and their bad acts of rioting, beating and smashing. In this text the masses as a social actor is construed as a much more active entity.

Another big difference between the party-press and investigative reports is how the police as a social actor is represented. The next passage gives an account of what happened when the demonstrations started to get out of hand in front of the public security bureau. This is probably the best concrete example of conflicting regimes of truth between the party-press and investigative media representations. As we have seen in *Guizhou Daily's* coverage there is an overall positive representation of the police, with the repeated emphasis on how the police did and how they were completely defenceless when the few fiercely attacked and besieged the local police station. In here, through the first-hand account of a citizen, participating in the demonstrations, we get a different version of the events:

¹⁹² 这个逼仄的地方，成为了一个舞台。从早到晚，闻讯而来的人群络绎不绝。人们带着自己生活中的不满来看这个死因不明的女孩。他们慷慨解囊，在她的身上寄托了寻求公正的愿望，拿出或多或少的钱捐给李树芬的家属。多位市民对记者称，他们听说有人最多捐了三千。“那人对她的亲属说‘钱你拿去打官司，我们支持你到底，不打官司的话就退给我’。”如同亲眼所见。捐款者包括贩夫走卒。“有的农民，卖一天的菜，也没有多少钱，十块八块的全部拿了出来。”一位目击者说，捐款总数过万

Hu Shifu, who stood near the front lines the whole time, saw the police pull up the security line in front of the gate, allowing two students to enter the big hall in the office building to talk. “They grabbed the banner from the students, and [when] the students resisted and tried to take back the banner, the two parties clashed and there were scuffles between the students and the police”. Hu Shifu said, “seeing the students take a beating, even more people broke through the security line, rushing in to help [the students].¹⁹³

We can see here that the negative acts of the police are included in the coverage. The police grabbed the banner and during the scuffles beat up the students. In another example in which the police is present as a social actor, we can observe a similar strategy of implicitness as we have seen before: “At this time, riot-preventing squads [People’s armed police] in full arms appeared in the middle, they poked their batons towards the crowds”.¹⁹⁴ This sentence shows that the police violence is not explicitly mentioned, but rather only implied upon and insinuated by the careful wording of “poke”. I think these subtle choices of words and syntax epitomize some of the ways that investigative journalists and editors use to only implicitly represent and connect illegitimate practices with the local party-state.

Illegitimate practices and blame are, as we have seen, in this text attributed through varying degrees of implicit casual reference to the local government. The next passage will illustrate how blame is attributed to the fact that the local government failed to come out and actually talk to the masses of Weng’an:

Hu Shifu says, in the county Party Committee and government buildings, the head student of [of the demonstrations], looked from the first floor to the fifth floor, and did not find government personnel in charge. That day was a Saturday. “If persons in charge at this time could come out and try to communicate, even just one with a loudspeaker taking command of the situation, then what happened later might not had happened”, Hu Shifu thinks.¹⁹⁵

With this background, and the elaboration on the deeper causes of the growing discontent towards the local government, the blame for the exaltation to the mass incident is put on dysfunctional local governance. Solving disputes with force and hiding behind an army of police is seen as the main reason for how this demonstration evolved into an anger-venting mass incident. The article wraps it up accordingly:

¹⁹³ 一直靠前的胡师傅看到，警察在门前拉起了警戒线，让两位学生进办公楼大堂沟通。“他们一把扯过了条幅，学生不允，伸手夺回了条幅，双方发生了冲突，学生和警察之间，发生了扭打。”胡师傅说，“见到学生挨打，更多的人冲过警戒线，冲进去帮忙

¹⁹⁴ 这时候，全副武装的防暴队员出现在视野中，他们的警棍伸向人群

¹⁹⁵ 胡师傅说，在县委和政府办公楼，带头的学生从一楼走到五楼，并没有找到相关的人员。当天是星期六。“如果这时候有负责人出来和大家协调沟通，哪怕有个人拿喇叭喊几句疏导一下，都可能不会发生后来的事件。”胡师傅认为

The uproarious crowds, seeing students being hit, are so furious that they to grasp mineral bottles and flowerpots in front of the public security bureau, [or] anything they could get hold of to throw at the building. “Then it is over”, Hu Shifu said. At that moment he realized that, the crowd already had lost their mind, the situation was out of control. At this time, the blasting fuse [the death of Li Shufen] was not important anymore, the important thing is, just like how a volcano that has been waiting to erupt suddenly will find a tiny little crack to go off, the “unstable” town exploded just like this.¹⁹⁶

These last examples here point the topic for the next section, namely voices. We have seen how the non-official source of Hu Shifu has been essential in providing an alternative account of the events, compared to the ones found in the party-press. Such inclusion adds to the polyphony of this text, but as we will see, the official voice, especially that of Shi Zongyuan is perhaps as dominant here as it was in *Guizhou Daily*. For instance, in the very sensitive passage describing the scene in front of the public security bureau and how the police hit students, in which Hu Shifu is an essential non-official source, is followed up by a quote from Shi Zongyuan on how the local government of Weng’an has used police force at will. I think this is a good example of the polyphony of critical investigate discourse and *infrapolitics* as the strategic use of official discourse and voice, manifested with this mix between non-official and official voices. This is what I will analyse and discuss in detail in the coming section.

Voices

There is a myriad of sources, voices and perspectives represented in this article. I have listed up the sources and voices that are being quoted directly in the text, contributing to overall polyphony in the article:

Shi Zongyuan (Guizhou provincial party committee secretary)
Wang Fuyu (deputy secretary)
Li Xiuhua (Father of the deceased)
Li Xiuzhong’ father, (*qi fu*)
Lu Suzhen (Li Shufen’s grandmother)
Xie Qingfa (Li Shufen’s “godfather”)
Many townspeople
One Eyewitness
Villagers

¹⁹⁶人群哄然，见到学生被打而愤怒的人们操起手中的矿泉水瓶、公安局办公楼前的花钵和随手能触及的任何物品，砸向县公安局大楼。

“完了。”胡师傅说，那一刻他意识到，人群已然失去了理智，局面再也无法控制了。这时候，导火线是什么已经不重要了，重要的是，如同积聚已久的火山偶然找到一条原本微小的缝隙，一座“不安”的县城就此爆发

Anonymous schoolmate (of Li Shufen)
 Two teachers
 Another student
 Local earlier investor in the mining development
 Villagers
 Anonymous villager
 Villager on the scene/spot
 Wu Tingshu (Commissionary secretary of Qiannanzhou)
 Informed person
 Taxi driver (1)
 Feng Zhongming (Father)
 Jing Tiemin (shopkeeper)
 Mr Shi (Father)
 Taxi driver (2)
 Hu Shifu (Resident of Weng'an)

In this text, 21 of a total of 41 sources are non-official ones. This marks a substantial difference in the discursive practices between *Southern Weekend* and *Guizhou Daily*. The latter drew upon official sources or government friendly-perspectives voiced through handpicked members of the masses. In this text, the often so voiceless masses is now directly represented and enabled to voice their concerns and perspectives regarding this incident. And the range is quite wide in voices included from a wide variety of social groups. From the directly concerned, Li Shufen's family to schoolmates and teachers, taxi-drivers and entrepreneurs, villagers and investors, and other residents of Weng'an. And these, until now "suppressed" voices are actually voices that really confront and question the party-press representation. As earlier noted, some controversial aspects are only briefly touched upon in quotes from Shi Zongyuan, saying that there must be underlying causes (*shenci yuanyin*) triggering the incident. In this article, these causes are for the first time extensively elaborated upon and given an alternative representation through a multitude of sources. The use of sources and especially the high frequency of direct quotes as a discursive practice should in this context be discussed briefly. On one hand, it enables a journalist to mediate information to its audience in a more direct way, perhaps reflecting a commitment to media professionalism. For example, in the beginning of the article the voice of the father is represented through a direct quote:

"The whole family sunk into deep grief and sorrow. [we] had not at all thought about the crucial questionable aspect before the drowning, that is why [we] did not request a laparotomy of the lower parts [autopsy]." This is how Li Xiuhua described the initial state [situation].¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁷ "亲人都陷于沉痛的悲哀中，一直没考虑到死者溺水前的关键性疑点，故没有提出剖腹及对下部分身体尸检。"李秀华如此描述最初的状态"

Not only does this help to construe a much more rational picture of the reaction from Li Shufen's relatives with this direct quote. We also get details about how they later got suspicious because once the involved suspects had been released from police custody they started to come up in morbid rumours spreading around in Weng'an. The consistent use of direct quotes could also be a strategy of attributing critical content to the source, rather than to journalists themselves, and then a discursive strategy of using these quotes to develop the narrative. This strategy could be one component in an overall strategy of protecting the journalists as well as the newspaper from negative repercussions from the party-state. Tong writes in her chapter "Reporting on Social Riots" that the use of direct quotations by critical journalists could be a way to make articles more politically safe, to "shake off responsibility" and as a part of a "self-protection strategy".¹⁹⁸ There is a quite consistent pattern of using direct quotes in *Southern Weekend* compared to *Guizhou Daily*, which seems to rely on reported speech, especially when the sources are non-official ones.

Another perspective, which adds to the polyphony in the text, is the emphasis on the rumours (*chuanyan*) being spread around in this small town. For example: "the main culprit is the niece of the county Party secretary, and another the two schoolboys [suspects] have family relations to the head of the local police station, the departed [Li Shufen] was raped and murdered".¹⁹⁹ Such rumours were bluntly denied by the official party-press, stressing the importance of propagating the truth of the matter (*shishi de zhenxiang*). As interesting comparison, the specific problem with lack of credibility of the local government was discussed in another article by *Southern Weekend*, called "Insights of an journalist: Why the 'ignorant masses do not believe'"²⁰⁰. Anyway, the party-press exercise of propagating the truth seemed even more futile because more rumours started to circulate:

Some bystanders swear that they heard a horrified shrilling voice in the middle of night; "help me!" Some people say that they saw a condom and bloodstains on the river bank. The grassy area by the river was believed to be the crime scene. Rumours regarding the death of young Li Shufen, officials, corrupted policemen and injustice got all mixed up together, and spread widely around in this small county town.²⁰¹

Some of the more serious accusations in the rumours include the alleged connection between

¹⁹⁸ Tong (2009b), p 73

¹⁹⁹ "元凶是县委书记的亲侄女，另两个男生和派出所所长有亲戚关系，死者是被奸杀"

²⁰⁰ "记者见地："不明真相的民众"为何还不相信" (<http://www.infzm.com/content/14797>)

²⁰¹ (有围观者信誓旦旦说暗夜里听到过令人毛骨悚然的凄厉"救命"声；有人说在岸边看到避孕套和血迹；河沿的一处青草地，被认为是作案现场。少女李树芬之死，和官员、无良警察、冤情的传言裹挟在一起，传遍了那个不大的县城。)

the perceived culprits and local officials making aforementioned rumours even more latent:

More and more distorted rumours spread all over town: “16-year-old Li Shufen was murdered because she refused to give school test to another girl in class for copying”; “the neck has scratches all over! It is obvious that she’s been strangled to death”; The son of the vice-county mayor, in league with another youngster, obscenely raped and ruthlessly murdered and threw a school girl from Weng’an into the West-Gate river.....”²⁰²

As these two examples show there are also a lot of anonymous sources in this investigative article. Looking at the table of sources we can see the use of both vague and anonymous sources, include “many townspeople, one eyewitness, villager, anonymous schoolmate, two teachers, another student, local investor, anonymous villager, villager on the scene, informed person” and so forth. By Western journalistic standards, to publish such serious accusations through the attribution to such vague sources would probably be condemned and detested. This is perhaps one the backsides of Chinese investigative journalism, which is dependent on the market and revenue, and press ethics becomes less important than sensationalised stories securing readership and profits. However, within the context of the Chinese media, Elin Sæther has noted that attribution to anonymous and vague sources could be ways for the journalist to voice their own views and perspectives in the text.²⁰³ Referring to vague or anonymous sources could then be a discursive strategy of voicing alternative views that are suppressed in the official party-press discourse.

Li Shufen’s maternal grandmother Lu Suzhen is also quoted directly in the article saying for sure “there was no water in the stomach at the time of the autopsy and there were pills in the throat”.²⁰⁴ All of these rumours constitute another clash of between different regimes of truth. This clash between official accounts based upon official sources (*guanfang cailiao*) is further contrasted with first-hand accounts from non-official sources. For example, Li Xiuzhong, the uncle of Li Shufen, who was reported to have been involved in a clash at the police station with Zhang Ming, a police officer. While official sources denied that Li got severely injured, this article quotes directly from Li Xiuhua’s appeal, sating “that his little brother Li Xiuzhong, before formal talks with the police, was severely wounded by a policeman using a baton and

²⁰² 越来越变形的传言，流传在瓮安的大街小巷：“16岁的李树芬，因考试没给同班的一个女生抄写而被杀害”；“死者脖子多处伤痕！显然是被掐死的”；“瓮安副县长的儿子伙同另一个社会青年把瓮安县三中的一女生淫秽强奸并残忍杀害丢入瓮安县西门河……”

²⁰³ Sæther (2008a), p 150

²⁰⁴ “尸检时“肚子里没有水，咽喉处有药丸”

kicking [him]”.²⁰⁵ According to this investigative report, Li Xiuzhong was also later the same day attacked and given a sound beating by unidentified men on his way to another round of formal talks. Li Xiuhua wrote on his urgent appeal that “Li Xiuzhong was severely beaten, and remains unconscious, blood coming out mouth, nose and ears, and his condition is critical”. He also wrote; “[my] beloved daughter Li Shufen was murdered and drowned, and the police won’t file the case for further investigation to solve the crime”.²⁰⁶ By not commenting on or evaluating these appeals, which would be too sensitive, the journalist leaves it up to the reader to interpret what to make out of these first-hand non-official sources. In this way, critical journalistic discourse gives more room for interpretation by *presenting* an alternative media representation bases upon a multitude of official and non-official voices and perspective. The party-press discourse is much more monophonic and authoritarian media representation, in which *propagating* the official truth is central.

The other side of polyphony, as we saw in the first analysis of *Southern Weekend*’s coverage, includes giving voice to official sources. In this article, official discourse is mostly represented through quotes from Shi Zongyuan (Guizhou provincial party committee secretary), Wang Fuyu (deputy secretary) and Wu Tingshu (Commissionary secretary of Qiannanzhou). Indeed, even though the majority of sources in this article are non-official ones, prominence is given to the official voice in many ways. The headline itself “Weng’an – the unstable town”²⁰⁷ is derived from a quote by Shi Zongyuan. The sub-headline “the ‘6.28’ incident may look like random, but was inevitable, and would had happened sooner or later”²⁰⁸ is also a direct quote of his. In the editorial note, which precedes the actual report, Shi Zongyuan and the deputy secretary are also represented through direct quotes and reported speech. I argue these and the following examples constitute what Scott calls *infrapolitics*, which entails the strategic use of the dominant official discourse. Not only does this prominence of the official voice in this text help to legitimize the most critical content by seemingly accepting a subordinate position in relation to the provincial party-government, but through this use of *infrapolitics* mixed with a polyphony of non-official voices helps to create

²⁰⁵ 在公安局，李树芬的幺叔李秀忠和民警张明发生冲突。事后，官方的材料说“两人发生扯皮李被打伤并不存在”，而李秀华在申诉上却说，他的弟弟李秀忠“在接受公安干警询问前就惨遭警察施以警棍与脚击伤”。

²⁰⁶ 李秀华自己在《加急申诉》中写道：“李秀忠被打……七孔流血，昏迷不醒，生命垂危。”并称，“爱女李树芬被他杀溺水，公安不予立案侦破……”

²⁰⁷ 瓮安“不安”的县城

²⁰⁸ ‘6.28’事件看似偶然，是属必然，迟早都会发生

a double meaning. This rich mixture of both official and non-official voices camouflages the most sensitive parts in this text. We can for instance observe how quotes and the pretext of these quotes from high standing officials are being used to elaborate on the deeper causes (*shenchengci yuanyin*). As Shi Zongyuan points out; “Weng’an is not safe, the masses don’t have feel safe, and the people do not dare to speak the truth”.²⁰⁹ This statement and statements about the deeper causes (*shengci yuanyin*) are also found in *Guizhou Daily*’s coverage, but not elaborated upon beyond the comments made by Shi Zongyuan. In this text, we can see that these exact comments are being used to introduce alternative perspectives on the same topic, but going beyond and further than the original quotes. This use of the official discourse to make critical content more safe is perhaps most evident in the elaboration of one of the deeper causes, namely the settlements of migrants (*yimin anzhi*). The official voice can be spotted right before some of the more critical perspectives under the section of “the helpless village, migrants joining the demonstrations”. The next example is one that I argue epitomize the strategic use of official discourse as a pretext for commenting and elaborating on the most politically sensitive issues. In this case, the bad governance regarding the handling of migrants and the journalist only elaborates on this particular deeper cause, after quoting Shi Zongyuan’s claim about how the controversial death of Li Shufen was only the superficial “blasting fuse”:

(...) but the backdrop of the **deeper causes** is in the local handling of the settlement of emigrants, relocation in connection with construction work, and development of mineral resources, there has been repeated occurrences with infringements of interests of the masses. **What Shi Zongyuan called “settlement of emigrants”**, include the thousands of emigrants in the Seven Star village.²¹⁰

Particularly the last sentence functioning as the connection between Shi Zongyuan’s quote to a concrete elaboration of a deeper cause is a good example of *infrapolitics*. The same strategy is utilized again, in the last part of the section “active criminal gangs,...” which is one of the most sensitive parts of the article. As we saw in the sample sentence in the analysis of agency, this part touches upon the alleged cooperation between local government and criminal gangs. In this example Shi Zongyuan’ voice is present through reported speech and as a part of the strategic use of the official dominant discourse:

The 3rd of July, Guizhou party secretary, **Shi Zongyuan believed that**, in dealing with

²⁰⁹ “瓮安不安，群众没有安全感，老百姓不敢讲真话”

²¹⁰ (...) 但背后**深层次原因**是当地在移民安置、建筑拆迁、矿产资源开发等工作中，侵犯群众利益的事情屡有发生。石宗源所称的“移民安置”，便包括七星村的上千移民

conflicts and disputes and during the mass incident, some cadres' style of work were rough/crude [brutal] and simplistic [derog.] even using police force at will (...) whenever there is an incident, the public security bureau is at once called out onto the frontlines, the masses' has many complaints, [and this] does not only lead to strained cadre-mass relationship, but also spur a strained relationship between the police and the people.²¹¹

Deputy secretary Wang Fuyu is also quoted straight after, saying “I believe that some cadres are corrupt and are in collaboration with criminal forces, serving as the “signalman” and a “protecting power” for the criminal forces”.²¹² So after exposing government officials' alleged collaboration with criminals, and examples of corrupt governance and repeated infringements of the rights of villagers, reliance on solving problems with the brute force of police, this very sensitive part of the article is concluded with the official voices of Shi Zongyuan and Wang Fuyu. This is yet another example of *infrapolitics*, with the strategic use of the official discourse and voice.

The polyphony of this investigative news article, expressing perspectives of both official and non-official character and mixing them all up makes the article much more open for interpretation. The journalist does not as much evaluate the truth of these different voices and perspectives, as just comparing them and contrasting them. It is much more up to the reader to interpret and make independent judgments. This might also be one of the crucial differences between the two discourses. *Guizhou Daily's* monophonic and authoritarian account is much more about *telling* and *propagating* an official version of the truth, leaving the reader little room for alternative interpretations. While on the other side, one of the distinguished characteristics of the critical journalism and *Southern Weekend's* discourse is its polyphony, which forces the reader to make his or hers own interpretations. But the most important finding in this analysis is the strategic use of the official discourse and voice in the mix of a multitude of non-official voices. This strategic use of the dominant official discourse constitutes a type of discourse which Scott calls *infrapolitics*. Drawing upon this, we can argue that the use of this particular discursive strategy of resistance, along side analepsis, conscious lexical and syntactical choices, help to mask the real intentions of investigative journalism, which is to go beyond the party-press style of reporting and get highly sensitive information published.

²¹¹ 7月3日, 贵州省委书记石宗源认为, 在处置一些矛盾纠纷和群体事件过程中, 一些干部作风粗暴、工作方法简单, 甚至随意动用警力 (...) 一出事, 就把公安机关推上第一线, 群众意见很大, 不但导致干群关系紧张, 而且促使警民关系紧张

²¹² 贵州省委副书记王富玉认为, 有的干部队伍不纯洁, 与黑恶势力相互勾结, 充当黑恶势力的“通信兵”和“保护伞”

4.7 Summary

My analysis has on one side shown how *Gouzhou Daily* and the party-press discourse organized knowledge and meaning of the Weng'an incident around the immediate acts of extreme violence and destruction done by the few. I have pointed out some exclusive categories only used in the party-press discourse, such as the vague and derogatory generic terms "some people" (*yixie ren*), "lawless people" (*bufafenzi*), "people with ulterior motives" (*bie yongxin de ren*), "hit-smash-loot-burn people" (*da-za-qiang-shao fenzi*), "evil criminals" (*he'eshili renyuan*). I argue that these were used to describe a social group I simply have called the few. In one of the important themes in my analysis, blame and victimization, the few is not only perceived to be the culprit, with the foregrounding of their violent acts through consistent syntactical choices, but also as the one causing the mass incident to happen. Not only did the few in an animalistic and irrational sense go on a violent rampage, seemingly without any rational cause, but they were also blamed for "stirring up the ignorant masses". In this respect, we saw that the masses as a social group was in different ways construed as irrational, unconscious and passive, and very often placed as the affected or the object of another agent's action. I argue in my thesis by being placed in such a position, the masses come off as a social group with a very low degree of agency. This helps to enhance and underpin the perception and representation of them as irrational and ignorant mob-like entity without own ideas and thoughts. Another crucial finding in my analysis is the particular representation of social conflicts in the texts, which I argue the immense focus on the role of few as main culprit helps to underpin. In the party-press discourse this is perceived to be mainly a conflict between the lawless few and the lawful government. *Guizhou Daily's* party-press discourse also explains this mass incident within the powerful and well known discursive frameworks, such as social stability (*wending*) and harmony (*hexie*) and social and economic development (*shehui jingji fazhan*). In this respect, the few is not only also responsible for material destruction and physical violence, but also for wrecking more the more immaterial and abstract conditions of stability and harmony. Through a comparative view, we also saw how the two papers use and contextualize official discourse and voice in two completely different ways. In here, official discourse was used to propagate the official line through an authoritarian monophonic party-press representation of this mass incident.

Southern Weekend with its critical investigative discourse provides an alternative media representation of the Weng'an incident. First of all, the roles of the blamed and the victim have been switched around. It is the local government and officials who are perceived to be blamed for infringing upon the rights and interests of the people. *Southern Weekend* places and understands the Weng'an incident within a legal framework and connects it to the topics, such as the lack of a functioning legal system that ensures the people means to *rightfully protest* and voice their discontent. On this level, my analysis shows how two different discourses organize knowledge and meaning of the same news event in two radically different ways. We have also seen how *Southern Weekend's* discourse carefully oscillates between the concrete examples of government malpractice in Weng'an and the more principal and abstract discussions of government power, fundamental civil rights, a functioning civil society and so forth. The Weng'an incident is then used as a pretext to comment and *implicitly* touch upon overarching, systemic problems. My analysis has also shown how the representation of the social conflict in *Southern Weekend's* media representation is much more complicated than the distinct dichotomy between the lawful government and the lawless few found in the party-press discourse. In this critical investigative discourse, the social conflict is perceived to have evolved from a long withstanding one between the government of Weng'an and its people. Another central theme and analytical category in my analysis is voices present and absent in the texts. One major finding in this analysis and a distinctive characteristic of *Southern Weekend's* critical investigative discourse is its polyphony. In the critical investigative discourse, many non-official voices are mixed and intertwined with official voices. This is how voices of the family of the deceased, peasants and migrant-workers can be genuinely represented in *Southern Weekend's* coverage. In addition, I also found that the official voice, especially that of provincial party secretary Shi Zongyuan was very dominant in *Southern Weekend* as well. I argue that this strategic use of official discourse can be understood and explained with Scott's concept of *infrapolitics*. This is a discursive strategy of resistance that makes the most critical and sensitive passages seem more politically tolerable and thus publishable. My analysis of *Southern Weekend* has shown how this manifests itself, with a find a pattern in which an official quote often precedes or follows a more critical and sensitive passage. Polyphony in tandem with the strategic use of official discourse and voice is one distinct discursive strategy by which *Southern Weekend* can get sensitive and critical information published.

Some Last Thoughts about the Two Forms of Discourse:

Party-Press Discourse versus Investigative Discourse

Christian Gobel points out that there are two main strategies of government propaganda on rural China, providing two different frameworks for understanding rural China and its problems. He identifies one strategy as “rule by division”, which entails a similar mechanism, to what we have seen in my analysis, of blaming the local and praising the national. The other strategy is called “strength through unity”.²¹³ I think these two strategies on rural propaganda can help to understand both the party-press and the investigative discourse of the Weng’an incident better.

Gobel asserts that “strength through unity” “imagines rural China as an organizational whole. The centre, local cadres, and peasants are imagined as integral parts of a comprehensive modernization project led by the center”.²¹⁴ In addition, the negative aspects of the ongoing social transformation in Post-Mao China are understood through an orthodox Marxist framework: “uneven development is narrated as a force of history (“primary stage of socialism”)”.²¹⁵ My analysis shows that *Guizhou Daily*’s party-press discourse share many similar ways of discursively understanding rural China. In the party-press discourse we have identified a consistent focus on the successful cooperation between local levels of government and the provincial- and the national levels. The best example is how orders from the center were followed completely to the letter by the provincial and local government, which was perceived to be instrumental in securing social stability and harmony. One of the main reasons why *Guizhou Daily* draws upon this particular discursive framework is that local governments and cadres are not perceived to be main culprits of rural problems and “peasant burden”. This because, as earlier noted, that prosperity and social harmony will come to rural China in due time being in the primary stage of socialism.²¹⁶ “Strength by unity” provides an understanding that does not entail an explicit focus upon the illegitimate practices of a corrupt local government.

The immense focus on the lawless few and fear of social disintegration we found *Guizhou*

²¹³ Christian Gobel (2012) “Government Propaganda and the Organization of Rural China” in *Organizing Rural China — Rural China Organizing*, p 51-58

²¹⁴ Ibid, p 51

²¹⁵ Ibid, p 53

²¹⁶ Ibid, p 59

Daily could be connected to drawing upon the old fear of imagining rural China as a “loose plate of sand” (*yipan sansha*)²¹⁷. My analysis of *Guizhou Daily* has shown that this fear, manifested in the focus upon role of the lawless few was one of the discursive nodal points in the coverage. Indeed, one of the solutions imagined in the party-press discourse was the perceived need for building a stronger party organization “securing” the precarious social space of rural China. The overwhelming focus upon the “evil criminals” and organized crime reflects a common fear shared by most Chinese and Western scholars:²¹⁸ a weak state and party presence in rural China will result in the growth of dubious organizations, such as criminals networks and gangs. This fear is undoubtedly drawn upon and used in the party-press discourse of *Guizhou Daily*. The function of this fear is to make it more plausible to point to a minority of lawless people, their prominent role and the perception of them as a very dangerous disruptive force, endangering “the excellent conditions of stability and unity” not only in Weng’an, but also in the entire Guizhou province. “Strength through unity” is a fitting discursive framework because social unrest is not perceived to be the result of corrupt local governments. That is why this discursive framework provides an understanding in which corrupt local government and cadres can be overlooked as main culprits. “Strength through unity” provides *Guizhou Daily* with powerful tools and well-known discursive references to interpret and ascribe meaning to this particular mass incident to be congruent with the provincial government’s concerns and interests. Consequently, such a framework limits what can be said on local malpractices and corruption. It also simplifies the complex relationship between the different levels of government, by propagating and imagining the party-state apparatus as a harmonious coherent whole, without any clashes of interests.

I argue that *Southern Weekend*’s investigative discourse could be better understood with reference to a discursive framework Gobel calls “rule by division”. This strategy “entails a verbal alliance of the center with the peasants against “several local cadres responsible for rural instability” and “enables the center to shed blame for systemic problems in its local agents, but harms peasant-cadre relations and turns local officials against the center”.²¹⁹ This way of understanding rural China enables critical journalists to pinpoint blame and causes to corrupt local officials and local governments. As such, it creates a discursive space to actually discuss some of the more sensitive and controversial aspects of party-state governance in

²¹⁷ Stig Tøgersen (2012) “Organizing Rural China: Political and Academic Discourses” in *Organizing Rural China Rural China Organizing*

²¹⁸ Ibid, p 20-40

²¹⁹ Gobel (2012), p 51

post-Mao China, as well as the downfalls of thirty years of reform and opening up. However, this critical coverage and exposure must be limited to the local and individualized instances of illegitimate government practices. As Gobel points out: “this strategy enables the center to shed blame for systemic problems on its local agents”.²²⁰ In other words, “rule by division” and *Southern Weekend*’s discourse share the same narrow scale and scope in limiting explanatory schemes of social problems in rural China strictly to the local, by only focusing on the “moral degradation of the local leadership” and overlooking possible “systemic deficits”.²²¹ For example, any critical investigation of local problems connected with a commentary upon systemic problems is clearly off-limits. One example could be the inherent urban bias in the macro economic policies designed and put in practice by the center. As Gobel points out: “income inequality, however, can hardly be blamed on rural officials, as it is a direct result of the center’s very conscious macro-policy designed to let “some get rich first”.²²² Comments upon systemic problems constitute a part of what have to be left unsaid in the critical investigative discourse.

My thesis shows, on the contrary, to view critical investigative discourse and journalism as just a part of a necessary state-sanctioned supervision on local malpractices is inaccurate. Such a view ascribes too much agency to the state and its ability to control and dominate, as well as putting too much emphasis on the social structuration of discourse. Media output, and especially that of an investigative newspaper, cannot simply be read off and understood solely as products of their economic and systemic conditions and contexts. As one of my major findings in this thesis has shown, critical investigative discourse makes use of particular discursive strategies of resistance under conditions of dominance, such as the strategic use of the official discourse in tandem with an inclusion of non-official voices in order to express and critically comment upon the status quo. This is how investigative journalism can create alternative and new spaces of media representations. This will be further discussed in the final and concluding chapter.

²²⁰ Ibid, p 51

²²¹ Ibid, p 51

²²² Ibid, p 59

Chapter V: Conclusion

This thesis has shown how party-papers and investigative newspapers cover the sensitive topic of mass incidents through analysing the media coverage of the Weng'an incident by *Guizhou Daily* and *Southern Weekend*. With this dual focus we have seen both how different these two media representations are (representing the same mass incident), and how different their respective discourses organize knowledge and meaning of the Weng'an incident.

One focal point in my thesis has been locating resistance to party-state domination and orthodox party-press style of journalism in the discursive dimension. But the analysis of *Guizhou Daily*'s coverage has also contributed to a better understanding of the discursive strategies at play in the party-press discourse. Such strategies help to construe this particular mass incident to be congruent with the concerns and interests of the provincial government, and to some degree to the local county government of Weng'an. The strategies used for this purpose include referential vagueness and dehumanisation of the lawless few through vague and derogatory lexical choices of terms, such as "some people", "some lawless people", "people with an ulterior motive", "evil criminals" and so forth. The lawless few as a social actor is also responsible and blamed for the happening of the incident and its escalation from the initial situation into a mass incident by inciting the "ignorant masses". We have also seen how syntactical choices were employed to foreground the role of "the few" in this mass incident, by explicitly showing the casual links as the agent of material destruction and the subsequent victimization of the local government. One finding that epitomizes this is how through a causative sentence construction, the primary agency of the few takes to the ignorant masses' is its object, forming a form of secondary agency: "some people's action": "some people stirred up/incited the ignorant masses to assault the county public security department".²²³ This is a discursive strategy used to explicitly point and blame the few for the actions of the many. This strategy also helps to enhance the picture of "the ignorant masses" as a passive mob without their own ideas and thoughts. But the lawless few as a social actor was perceived to also be the disrupter of the more immaterial conditions of stability and unity, social harmony (*wending*, *andingtuanjie*, *hexie*) and social and economic development (*shehui jingji fazhan*). These well-known and powerful discourses functioned as the

²²³ 一些人煽动不明真相的群众冲击县公安局

overarching discursive frameworks drawn upon in order to underpin a particular party-press representation of the Weng'an incident. One example of this is how concerns of social stability and unity were prioritized at the expense of elaborating on "the deeper causes" (*shenchengci yuanyin*). The strategy of putting an immense focus on the lawless few also underpins the construction of a particular understanding of social conflicts and contradictions in these texts. In the party-press discourse, this mass incident was solely seen as grounded in a conflict between the lawless few, their impulsive irrational destructiveness and a lawful local government.

My thesis and analysis of the coverage by *Southern Weekend* has also shown resistance to such party-press discourse and its particular media representation of the Weng'an incident. The discursive strategies of resistance employed in *Southern Weekend*'s coverage include retrospective techniques and analepsis in the narrative of "the deeper causes". This particular way of construing the narrative, especially significant in the article "Unstable Weng'an" is one crucial way to critically comment and tell the story about illegitimate and corrupt government practices stretching years back in time. The analysis of *Southern Weekend*'s media coverage also brought light to other subtler strategies, such as conscious lexical and syntactical choices. These choices help to downplay the particular and very sensitive representation of social conflicts in these texts. In the critical investigative discourse social conflicts are perceived to be one between a corrupt local government and the masses of Weng'an. These aforementioned strategies are instrumental in creating a balance between the right amount of implicitness and explicitness in order to point to the causal links between the illegitimate practices, the role of the local government and its representatives. But the major finding in this thesis is the polyphonic expressions found in the critical investigate discourse, and in which the strategic use of the dominant official discourse and voice is essential in neutralizing critical non-official voices and views. This multitude of official and non-official voices mixed up together constitutes a central feature of *Southern Weekend*'s investigative discourse. I have explained *Southern Weekend*'s heavy reliance upon official sources and its strategic use of the dominant official discourse with Scott's concept of *infrapolitics*. Polyphony and *infrapolitics* help to make the critical and sensitive parts of the texts seem subordinate, as well as to camouflage transgressive aspects. As Sæther points out, "in order to avoid party-state sanctions, critical journalism must appear as non-subversive".²²⁴ That is why

²²⁴ Sæther (2008b), p 13

polyphony in tandem with *infrapolitics* is a major discursive strategy of resistance under conditions of party-state domination over the order of Chinese media discourse. Furthermore, the successful use of *infrapolitics* can enable investigative journalism to get subversive and counter-hegemonic views out into the public transcript. In this respect, I think the critical investigative discourse of *Southern Weekend* plays an instrumental role in questioning and addressing the inconsistencies in the party-press representation of the '6.28' incident by creating an alternative media representation of the Weng'an incident.

It is also interesting to note how my thesis brings to light how discourse (abstract noun) as social practice is both constituted by the social and arguably constitutive of the social. For instance, *the discourse* of mass incidents seems to be dependent on a string of factors, such as where the actual event took place, the newspaper's physical location and how it is situated in relation to the administrative boundaries of the party-state. *The discourse* of mass incidents, and in particular, the critical investigative discourse, seems to be closely tied to and dependent on the practice of cross-regional reporting. This practice provides a certain space of media freedom due to the clashes of propaganda aims and interests between the national and local levels of government. As such, *Southern Weekend's* media coverage of the Weng'an incident owes credit to how well it can exploit this relative space of media freedom provided by cross-regional reporting.

My thesis has also shown how discourse can shape the social and possibilities of agency within discourse, despite being under conditions of domination. As earlier noted, this is connected to the practice of cross regional reporting that provides the most important space in which critical investigative journalism can conduct their work. It is precisely in this space they can challenge and contest the boundaries of the acceptable in order of Chinese media discourse. I think my analysis of *Southern Weekend's* coverage shows how investigative journalism resists party-press style of journalism and the concept of being the party's mouthpiece. The role and function of *Guizhou Daily* is closely connected to this concept. As a localized mouthpiece, *Guizhou Daily's* primary role and function is to construe a positive representation of provincial party-state, and to protect the self-interests and the image of the official provincial government. *Guizhou Daily's* party-press coverage is a very authoritarian and monophonic media representation, of which the goal in this case is domination and control over the meaning of the Weng'an incident. This can explain *Guizhou Daily's* very orthodox and conventional style of party-press journalism. Being a party-paper strictly

adhering to the Maoist concept of mouthpiece, this discourse tries to legitimate, reproduce and naturalize the existing relations of domination. As such, concerns regarding social stability, unity and harmony overrules any critical exposure of the local government in this party press discourse.

Southern Weekend and its role and function is much more complicated. I think it would be over simplistic to understand it only as copying Western ideals of journalistic autonomy and media independence. It should be understood within the Chinese context, which is completely different from the liberal democracies in the West. As I also point out in my analysis, critical and investigative exposure is strictly limited to the local levels of government and separate individual instances – in this way, central and provincial levels of government often come off as responsive and responsible, correcting and addressing individual failures at the local level. On this level, one can say that investigative journalism partially fulfils an updated mouthpiece role by giving legitimacy to higher levels of party-state government. Despite this, I argue that even though the goal of such state-sanctioned supervision by public opinion is to play this blame-game, such an assessment fails to see the agency of critical journalism. *Southern Weekend's* alternative media representation of the Weng'an incident should be historicised and put in the context of critical journalism in China, a force that has changed and disrupted the once completely asymmetrical relationship between the media and the state. By this I mean that although the party-state in China has been relatively successful in controlling its own commercial media and still is a relatively dominant force within its media system, I agree with Elin Sæther's assertion that not only has investigative journalism normalized critical discourse since the 1990s - a relatively new discourse within the Chinese media field - but it is also in subtle ways creating new spaces of media representations and thus constantly challenging and pushing the boundaries of the acceptable in the order of Chinese media discourse, which now is a very contested space and site of constant struggle over the control of meaning and knowledge. As Elin Sæther points out, this is based on a "conditional autonomy" in which critical journalists as producers of investigative discourse create new spaces of representations:

Through [the use of] social and discursive strategies they frame criticism in ways subtle enough to be allowed publication, and direct enough to suggest existence of severe social problems in Chinese society. The ability to do this secures a conditional autonomy resulting in new spaces of representation".²²⁵

²²⁵ Sæther (2008a), p 254

My thesis has shown how *Southern Weekend*'s role and function are connected with the use of diverse discursive strategies of resistance, enabling investigative newspapers to resist the traditional party-press style of journalism. I conclude that *Southern Weekend*'s alternative media representation of the Weng'an incident can be understood as an example of how investigative journalism in China has created new spaces of media representations.

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Appendix 1 (*Guizhou Daily*)

I.

我省依法妥善处置瓮安县“6·28”打砸烧突发事件

<http://www.gog.com.cn> 金黔在线—贵州日报

金黔在线讯 6月28日下午，瓮安县城发生一起严重的围攻政府部门和打砸烧突发事件。一些人因对瓮安县公安局对该县一名女学生死因鉴定结果不满，聚集到县政府和县公安局，在县政府有关负责人接待过程中，一些人煽动不明真相的群众冲击县公安局、县政府和县委大楼，随后，少数不法分子趁机打砸办公室，并点火焚烧多间办公室和一些车辆。

事件发生后，贵州省委、省政府主要领导要求尽快妥善处置，贵州省委常委、政法委书记、公安厅长崔亚东迅速赶至事发现场，指导当地党委、政府处置和平息事件。29日，围观人员缓慢散去，事态没有进一步扩大，瓮安县城秩序基本恢复正常。

记者从县政府有关领导处获悉，该女生溺水身亡后，县公安局依法进行调查验证，并作出检验鉴定，但因死者家属情绪反复，拖延数天后仍不接受死亡原因鉴定结论。此事后被少数不法分子煽动，导致事态扩大。

6月28日深夜，记者赶到瓮安县城。在大街上看到随地有乱石块、砖头、碎玻璃渣，有两辆被焚烧的车辆翻在路中。在县政府门口，围观群众在宣传车的劝说下缓慢散去。几个路口，民警和武警战士正维持现场秩序。进入县政府大院，记者看到县公安局、县委、县政府大楼不同程度被烧，数十辆被烧过的车辆横七竖八地躺在大院内，情况惨不忍睹。

采访中，县政府负责人介绍说，在事件整个过程中，政府工作人员和公安干警反复向现场群众作解释说明疏导工作，表现了最大的克制和忍耐。但少数不法分子却丧心病

狂地殴打政府工作人员和公安干警，并冲进一些办公室打砸一通，并抢劫了一些办公用品，最后竟放火焚烧办公楼和车辆。

事件发生后，中共中央政治局常委周永康，国务委员、公安部部长孟建柱作出重要批示；公安部，贵州省委、省政府，黔南州委、州政府高度重视。省委书记、省人大常委会主任石宗源、省委副书记、省长林树森要求，尽快依法妥善处置；省委决定成立处置瓮安“6·28”事件工作组，省委副书记王富玉，省委常委、副省长黄康生，省委常委、省委政法委书记、省公安厅长崔亚东，副省长刘晓凯，省武警总队长周爱民，省武警总队政委张生枝及时赶到瓮安，与州委书记吴廷述、州长李月成等领导亲临现场指挥；县委、县政府迅速成立了以县委书记为指挥长的事件应急指挥部，下设劝说疏导组，事件调查组、政策舆论法规宣传组、交通管控组、信息上报组、后勤保障组、医疗救护组、善后建设组等8个应急工作组开展相应工作。武警总部副参谋长薛国强从北京赶到瓮安指导处置工作。

29日晨6时，为发动全县广大干部群众参与突发性事件的处置，州委书记吴廷述在瓮安召开了各乡镇、各部门主要负责人会议，传达了中央、公安部、省委、省政府领导的有关批示精神。州委、州政府要求各部门和全体领导干部发挥政治优势，深入基层了解情况，通报事件真相，做深入细致的思想工作，引导群众自觉维护稳定，维护安定团结的局面，采取积极措施，把各项工作责任落实到乡镇、部门、社区，努力使秩序尽快恢复。

经过州县各级干部、公安民警、武警官兵大量辛苦的基础工作，至29日下午，县城秩序基本恢复正常。瓮安县委、县政府表示将在省、州的领导下，努力稳步推进各项工作。

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II.

瓮安群众愤怒谴责“6.28”事件打、砸、抢、烧不法分子

<http://www.gog.com.cn> 金黔在线—贵州日报

金黔在线讯 瓮安“6.28”打、砸、抢、烧事件发生后，在瓮安县城群众中引起强烈的反响，广大群众对一小撮不法分子肆意践踏法律，冲击国家机关，烧毁、损坏公共财物，影响社会正常秩序的行为深恶痛绝，认为改革开放30年来社会经济发展，安定团结的大好局面来之不易，纷纷要求政府做好疏导工作，严惩为首的不法分子，还老百姓一个稳定、和谐、平安的良好环境。

6月30日，记者在瓮安县城采访了部分群众和公安民警，他们向记者表达了心声。

在瓮安县城兴隆大道上做服装生意的个体商户游虎告诉记者，平时他每天的营业额都比较可观，6月28日，打、砸、抢、烧事件发生后，社会秩序十分混乱，他看到一些人拿起管制刀具在街上横冲直闯，担心发生意外，不得不关门停业。两天时间，他的营业额损失达3000至5000元。他说，这两天，整个兴隆街上关门停业的商户就达近百家，给大家造成的损失可想而知。游虎说，当时社会上的不少传言和他知道的事情真相有出入，一些谣言在群众中传播，起到很坏的影响，他对那些造谣者十分愤慨，希望事态尽快平息，能安居乐业，正常从事自己的经营活动。

家住金龙社区的王桂林对28号发生的事件还记忆犹新。他说他亲眼看到那些不法分子用矿泉水瓶、花钵、石头往公安局里面砸，放火烧毁停在公安局门前的警车和民用车，把警车推进公安局大厅内焚烧，烧燃了公安局大楼、县委、县政府大楼，现场实在令人震惊。他说，事发现场人员很杂，有学生模样的，也有一些社会青年，还有一些外来打工人员，他们的行动看上去很有程序，感觉是有组织的。他说，发生这样的事件他十分痛心，那些不法分子给瓮安人民在社会上造成了很坏的影响，希望政府要严厉打击那些不法分子，否则我们将不会有好日子。

在瓮安县城开了3年出租车的驾驶员曾斌深受“6.28”打、砸、抢、烧事件之害。过去每天能收入500元的他，这几天生意远不如常，每天少收入200余元。他说，事件发生后，县城的交通秩序出现混乱，正常的交通秩序受到影响，同时，自身的安全感也大大降低。他希望尽快处理打砸抢分子，好让自己安心心的做生意。

采访中，记者见到了两位“6.28”事件时正在公安局执行任务的公安民警，他们是瓮安县公安局巡逻大队大队长黄成和瓮安县公安局巡逻大队三中队中队长张奎。两位民警告诉记者，“6.28”事件发生的时候，他们和30多位民警开始守卫在公安局大门口，手上没有任何防卫工具，非法分子用铁棍、木棒打他们，用花钵、石块砸他们，几乎所有的民警受伤。为了安全，他们只好退到公安局大厅，非法分子又把公安局大厅的玻璃门窗砸烂，焚烧外面的车辆，放火烧公安局大楼，民警退守二楼，他们又冲进大厅，把外面的车子抬进大厅焚烧，被烈火和浓烟包围的民警被迫再退到三楼，非法分子又冲上二楼，还想往三楼冲，民警冒着生命危险死守在三楼楼梯口，非法分子冲了四次没有成功，于是又加紧放火焚烧大楼。陈明兰和聂俊两个女民警被浓烟呛得几乎晕倒，用餐巾纸沾水捂住嘴爬到七楼才得以脱险。许多民警把衣服打湿水捂住口鼻，坚守在楼梯口。民警蔡磊头部被闹事者打伤，伤势很重，一名群众从后门背着他出去抢救，刚一出门，就被闹事者围攻追打。公安民警从28日下午4点过钟一直坚守到29日凌晨1时许，武警部队赶到，才得以脱险。

两名公安民警告诉记者，这些打、砸抢、烧分子，经他们现场观察发现，其中不少人是曾经本公安机关打击过的违法犯罪分子和吸毒人员。他们表示，将认真履行自己的职责，坚决依法严惩这些不法分子。

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III.

做好“6.28”突发事件的善后工作处理好维护稳定和经济发展的关系

<http://www.gog.com.cn> 金黔在线—贵州日报

石宗源到瓮安现场指挥“6.28”事件处置工作时强调

做好“6.28”突发事件的善后工作处理好维护稳定和经济发展的关系

金黔在线讯 6月30日，省委书记、省人大常委会主任石宗源专程赶到瓮安县，现场指挥“6.28”事件处置工作。省委常委、省委秘书长张群山，省委常委、省委政法委书记、省公安厅厅长崔亚东，省高级人民法院院长孙玉璞，省人民检察院检察长陈俊平一同前往。武警总部副参谋长薛国强，武警总队政委张生枝参加。

上午11时许，石宗源书记一到瓮安县就立即赶到“6.28”事件现场察看；直接深入群众了解情况；看望公安民警、武警官兵。12时许，石宗源书记离开现场立即组织召开黔南州、瓮安县有关领导干部会议，听取有关“6.28”事件处置情况汇报；召集瓮安县有关负责同志、部分学校校长和县教育局局长听取情况汇报；邀请瓮安县23个乡镇5个社区部分县人大代表、政协委员共100多位同志召开座谈会，了解情况，听取意见。县人大代表、县政协委员在座谈会上踊跃发言，对“6.28”事件感到痛心疾首，认为打、砸、抢、烧犯罪分子的行为，严重损害了瓮安县乃至全省的形象，破坏了瓮安县良好的经济社会发展形势，破坏了全县和全省安定团结的大好局面。纷纷要求党委和政府要严厉打击破坏分子，维护社会稳定和谐。当晚7时许，刚刚与县人大代表、政协委员座谈结束的石宗源书记，又在县城所在地的雍阳镇，组织召开有老干部、群众代表、个体工商户、中学生及教师等现场目击者参加的群众座谈会。

石宗源指出，“6.28”事件是一起起因简单，但被少数别有用心的人员煽动利用，甚至是黑恶势力人员直接插手参与的，公然向我党委、政府挑衅的群体性事件。情节恶劣，

破坏严重，造成了极大的财产和经济损失，影响了全省稳定和贵州形象。事件发生后，党中央、国务院高度重视，十分关心，胡锦涛总书记作出重要指示；中央政治局常委、中央政法委书记周永康两次作出重要批示；国务委员、公安部部长孟建柱多次打电话到前线直接指挥；武警总部司令员吴双战作出批示，并派人赶到瓮安指导处置工作。省委、省政府不折不扣地贯彻落实中央领导的重要批示和指示精神，切实把尽快平息事态、维护稳定放在第一位，连夜派出省委常委、政法委书记、公安厅厅长崔亚东组成一线指挥部。29日又派出省委副书记王富玉为组长的省工作组，到瓮安指导、督促、监督相关工作。在处置过程中，武警官兵、公安民警保持了最大的忍耐和克制，采取了多种稳妥有力的措施，尤其是武警部队起到了中流砥柱的作用，迅速控制了事态，整个过程中没有与群众发生直接冲突，更没有死一个人，事态已得到基本控制，大局已恢复稳定，处置过程是克制和有效的。

石宗源指出，在事件的处置过程中，瓮安县各级党委、政府和广大党员干部，是高度重视、努力工作的。县人大、县政协也积极派出干部开展宣传教育和动员说服工作，工作是有成效的。虽然目前事态已得到基本控制，但还有大量工作要做。其中，向全县广大群众做好深入细致的宣传教育工作，说明事实，稳定人心，是从根本上平息事态，维护大局稳定、努力推动发展的一项至关重要的工作。县、乡人大代表、政协委员和广大基层干部、治安积极分子要充分发挥自身人熟地熟的优势，发挥重要作用，积极配合党委、政府，抓紧开展工作，分片包干，承包到户，以事实真相说服群众，以稳定大局教育群众，以一人一户、一村一乡的稳定确保全县的稳定。

石宗源强调，长期以来，瓮安各级党委、政府在省委、省政府和州委、州政府的正确领导下，认真落实科学发展观，加快县域经济社会发展，取得的成绩是明显的，干部队伍的主流是好的。但从这起事件来看，从一起单纯的民事案件酿成一起严重的打、砸、抢、烧群体性事件，其中必有深层次的因素。一些社会矛盾长期积累，多种纠纷相互交织，一些没有得到应有的重视，一些没有得到及时有效的解决，矿群纠纷、移民纠纷、拆迁纠纷突出，干群关系紧张，治安环境不够好。一些地方、一些部门在思想意识上，干部作风上，工作方式方法上，还存在一些这样那样的问题，群众对我们的工作还不满意。由此暴露出的问题应引起我们的反思，要以这起事件为镜子、为推动，采取切实有效的措施，更加扎实有力地开展好党的基层组织建设年活动，切实加

强党的基层组织建设，切实改进党员干部队伍的思想作风和工作作风，真正在经济社会又好又快发展的进程中，发挥好党的基层组织的战斗堡垒作用和共产党员的先锋模范作用。要做立党为公，执政为民的忠诚实践者，立党为公，执政为民不是空喊口号，要落实到行动上，要以人为本，要坚持为人民服务的宗旨，把群众的冷暖放在心上。要正确处理好维护社会稳定和加快经济发展的关系。要继续提高领导水平和处置突发事件的能力，既要做好当前的维稳工作，又要做好“6.28”事件的善后工作。要严格区分两类不同性质的矛盾，对旁观协同者，以批评教育为主，对组织、策划和施暴者，要重拳出击，绝不能手软，努力建设一个平安的瓮安、平安的黔南州、平安的贵州。

石宗源强调，“6.28”事件的发生，使我们更加深刻地认识到维护稳定的极端重要性。尤其是在我省“两欠”省情下，各方面的不利因素多，稳定来之不易，稳定更加宝贵。我们要与胡锦涛同志为总书记的党中央保持高度一致，坚决把维护社会和谐稳定放在各项工作的首位，认真贯彻落实科学发展观，切实维护民生、保障民生、改善民生，团结一致，振奋精神，促进我省经济社会又好又快发展。

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Appendix 2 (*Southern Weekend*)

I.

【方舟评论】瓮安事件揭示稳定之道

来源:南方周末

作者: 南方周末评论员 [笑蜀](#) 最后更新: 2008-07-03 13:11:00

瓮安事件突如其来，令人震撼，突显把社会稳定建立在人心稳定基础上的必要和紧迫。

瓮安事件是由偶然事件引爆的。正常情况下，这样的偶然事件不过是简单的“民事案件”，完全可以循着法制的轨道而得到妥当解决，本不至于为人所趁，骤然升级；也就不至于付出今天已经付出的社会成本尤其是人心成本。

从单纯的“民事案件”，最终酿成一起打、砸、抢、烧群体性事件，如贵州省委书记石宗源所说，其中必有深层次的矛盾。具体有哪些深层次的矛盾呢？石宗源列举了大致三种，一是矿群纠纷，二是移民纠纷，三是拆迁纠纷，这些社会矛盾长期积累，相互交织，一直没有得到应有的重视、及时有效的解决，“群众对我们的工作还不满意”。

这样，地方政府就不免消减应有的公信力。因为公正供给不足，积怨长期不能纾解，一旦有机会就要发泄，与偶然事件并无利益关联的旁观者，就容易被煽动，容易卷入其中，导致危机的蔓延和局势的失控。

长期矛盾一朝引爆，这不是瓮安一地的情况，在社会转型期，在利益分配不平衡之当下，这应有一定的普遍性。只不过在瓮安表现为矿群、移民和拆迁，而在别的地方，则可能表现为别的纠纷。但无论其表现形式如何千差万别，民众权益受损，因而在利益分配格局中不对等，不能充分享受社会发展的红利，则很少能够例外。

问题的关键，在于政府的自我定位。在现代社会，政府主要是提供公共产品以及平衡利益分配格局，维持一个公共产品供应充分且财富分配公平公正的格局。而“权”与“利”

是息息相关的。“权”为“利”之基，无“权”，“利”必无所依托。要维持一个公平公正的财富体系，就必须以充分保障公民基本权利为前提。否则，政府的权威必然以社会自我调节机制的萎缩为代价。政府权力边界过大的同时，必然把所有社会矛盾和冲突都集中到自己身上。政府就会成为社会矛盾和冲突的当事方，难于做到应有的超然中立，难于平衡利益格局，这对政府公信力无疑是莫大伤害。但如果政府明确自己的权责，将主要力量用于充分保障公民基本权利，那么在公民权利充分保障、公民社会健康成长的基础上，就不难发展出成熟的社会自我调节机制，社会矛盾就不难有多种出口，一旦矛盾出现，社会自我调节机制就会起作用，可以随时就地消化，不至于潜滋暗长，一发难收。

具体到瓮安，无论矿群纠纷，拆迁纠纷，还是移民纠纷，说穿了都是利益纠纷。瓮安事件产生的一个重要原因，是利益结构不平衡导致的人心不稳定。而利益结构不平衡，则缘起于公民基本权利保障不足。这里的公民基本权利，主要就是利益博弈过程中的谈判权利。如果民众可以对等谈判，那么当地矿产开发的红利，何至于与当地民众无缘，却让当地民众承受环境破坏的代价？其他诸如拆迁、移民等等问题，也是如此。利益博弈中民众的缺位，主要是民众谈判权利的缺位，造成了利益分配的不均衡，也为人心的不稳定准备了条件。

石宗源说得好，瓮安事件暴露出的问题应引起我们的反思，要以这起事件为镜子、为推动。社会稳定的重要性是一个基本共识，但社会稳定必须莫基于人心的稳定之中，才是可靠的稳定，可持续的稳定。而充分保障公民基本权利，尤其充分保障利益博弈过程中民众的谈判权利，则是稳定人心的前提。这恐怕是我们反思瓮安事件所能得到的最重要的教训。

II.

瓮安新生请自公权谦卑始

来源：南方周末

作者：南方周末评论员 [笑蜀](#) 最后更新：2008-07-10 10:23:12

瓮安事件暴露出传统治理模式的局限。在传统治理模式之下，一方面政府权力过于集中，一方面缺乏有效制衡，其必然结果，是政府力量的不当使用。

瓮安警力的使用方向，堪称一个经典注脚。

保护人民基本权利是政府天职。但就媒体已经披露的情况不难断言，瓮安警方在这方面乏善可陈，导致黑势力横行，人民难于安居乐业。

瓮安警方的主要力量不是用来维持社会正常秩序，那么究竟用到哪去了？正如前任公安局局长申贵荣近日接受媒体采访时坦承的，警方力量很大程度上用于非警务活动。“比如，遇到群体事件就出动警察，这种‘得罪’老百姓的事，都得我们去做。”矿权纠纷要动用警力，移民搬迁要动用警力，房屋拆迁也要动用警力。据申贵荣统计，仅仅数年之间，“针对群体事件，我们出动百人以上的大行动就有五次”。

用专政手段对待人民岂非咄咄怪事！但如此咄咄怪事，在瓮安竟成普遍现象。在利益冲突中拉偏架，动不动就用国家暴力对待人民，必然造成人民的普遍恐惧。贵州省委书记石宗源感慨：“老百姓不敢讲真话，是我们的责任。”这种感慨不是没有来由的。当地民众没有免于恐惧的自由，基本权利匮乏，与地方政府不当使用其力量，显然有着内在的逻辑联系。

政府力量的不当使用，在危害人民基本权利的同时，事实上也危害着政府自身。瓮安地方政府滥用警力的结果，一如申贵荣所坦承的，“我们几乎把人都‘得罪’完了。”这必

然从根子上摧毁当地民众对于政府的信任和尊重，而有令申贵荣倍感羞辱的残酷现实：“我们的权威早就没有了。我们机关经常被冲击。”

瓮安不安，诚如石宗源一再指出的，“瓮安县委、县政府、县公安局和有关部门的领导干部负有不可推卸的责任。”地方官员不可推卸的责任到底是什么责任？显而易见，主要是不当使用政府力量的责任。任何政府都需要权威，但这种权威必须首先建立在人心的基础之上。这就需要政府对于人心的敬畏，需要政府对于人民的谦卑，需要政府对于人民基本权利的呵护。否则，正如人类对于自然的过度干预必然导致生态失衡，导致极端性的灾害性气候；不当使用政府力量同样会导致人心失衡，最终不免付出高昂的社会成本尤其是人心成本。

我们需要对于治理模式的深刻反思，所幸，这样的反思已经从瓮安发端，正在瓮安展开的轰轰烈烈的大接访是这方面的标志性事件。大接访的宗旨是要给公众提供讲真话的空间，提供申诉和公力救济的空间，以此重建人心，在重建人心的基础上重建政府权威。这样的努力无疑代表了历史的正确方向，值得赞赏。但仅仅这样做仍然是不够的。传统治理模式积重难返，不是一时之间就能够根本扭转的，它需要持续的努力，需要制度化的安排。而这种持续的努力、这种制度化的安排需要一个试验田。

这一切，何妨就从瓮安开始？如果当下瓮安城乡的大接访，能够升级为长期的制度创新，把民主法治落到实处，把人民的知情权、参与权、表达权、监督权落到实处，人民就能够自动地起作用，良知就能够自动地起作用，以切实制衡公权力、净化公权力，那么现代服务型政府的雏形就不难从瓮安降生，而垂范全中国。

III.

瓮安，“不安”的县城

来源：南方周末

作者：南方周末记者 丁补之 发自：贵州瓮安 最后更新：2008-07-14 16:36:11

“‘6·28事件’看似偶然，实属必然，迟早都会发生”

编者按：“瓮安不安”，贵州省委书记石宗源在瓮安“6·28”事件后如此评价。一个少女的非正常死亡，如何演变成一座县城的震动；在这座“不安”已久的城市，群众的不满因何长期积累？事件处置工作领导小组组长、贵州省委副书记王富玉分析：“瓮安县党委、政府在长期的工作中，没有正确处理好当地经济发展和社会稳定的关系，没有正确处理好群众正当的利益诉求的问题。”长期治理失当，正是群众对当地政府失去信任甚至产生对立的原因所在。正如石宗源指出：“我们必须对这一事件进行深刻反思。”

从一个初中女生的非正常死亡，到县城震动，举国关注，中间不过短短六天。在贵州瓮安县三中初二六班女生李树芬6月22日死亡当天，法医初步鉴定后，其家属被告知死因为“自杀溺水身亡”，三位现场当事人被释放。

第二天，其父李秀华提出质疑，提请再度全面尸检，并呈上急案侦破申请。

李树芬死后第四天，小城里传言四起。她的幺叔李秀忠在县公安局和民警发生冲突后，在路口被多名不明身份人员殴打，案件至今未破；其父加急申诉，要求政府“破案惩凶，以平民愤”。

死后第七天，从数十人高举条幅的游行，到瓮安县委县政府和公安局办公楼被烧砸，逾万人聚集现场。

李树芬的家人现在已不愿过多谈论她的死因。少女李树芬不会想到，她的死，会让贵州省委书记石宗源直指：“瓮安不安，群众没有安全感，老百姓不敢讲真话。”

在这短短六天中，围绕一个女生的死亡，逐渐累积的冲突和随之四起的流言如何引爆了一座城市？在这六天背后，又是怎样一座“不安”的县城？

沉默的西门河，四起的传言

事件的发生在最初并无征兆。李树芬死亡当天，她的家人并没有更多的质疑。同一天上午，三名事发时在场的当事人因被警方认为没有作案嫌疑，而被释放。

当李的家属去派出所找当事人时，发现都已经不在派出所。几乎同时，这三个人开始出现在传言中，“元凶是县委书记的亲侄女，另两个男生和派出所所长有亲戚关系，死者是被奸杀”。

“亲人都陷于沉痛的悲哀中，一直没考虑到死者溺水前的关键性疑点，故没有提出剖腹及对下部分身体尸检。”李秀华如此描述最初的状态。

为保存遗体，李树芬的“干爹”谢青发为她租了一口冰棺，每天120元，冰棺被摆放在出事的大堰桥桥头。这座宽不到1.5米的水泥桥，两侧护栏高约半米，桥下约数十米宽的西门河流过，河中水草摇曳，最深处超过两米。河边并没有开阔地，冰棺被放在一个临时搭建的油布棚内。

有围观者信誓旦旦说暗夜里听到过令人毛骨悚然的凄厉“救命”声；有人说在岸边看到避孕套和血迹；河沿的一处青草地，被认为是作案现场。

少女李树芬之死，和官员、无良警察、冤情的传言裹挟在一起，传遍了這個不大的县城。

李树芬的家人开始认为有冤情存在，他们在6月23日提出再度尸检。现场见证尸检过程的外婆陆素珍肯定地说，尸检时“肚子里没有水，咽喉处有药丸”。

越来越变形的传言，流传在瓮安的大街小巷：“16岁的李树芬，因考试没给同班的一个女生抄写而被杀害”；“死者脖子多处伤痕！显然是被掐死的”；“瓮安副县长的儿子伙同另一个社会青年把瓮安县三中一女生淫秽强奸并残忍杀害丢入瓮安县西门河……”

这个逼仄的地方，成为了一个舞台。从早到晚，闻讯而来的人群络绎不绝。人们带着自己生活中的不满来看这个死因不明的女孩。

他们慷慨解囊，在她的身上寄托了寻求公正的愿望，拿出或多或少的钱捐给李树芬的家属。多位市民对记者称，他们听说有人最多捐了三千。“那人对她的亲属说‘钱你拿去打官司，我们支持你到底，不打官司的话就退给我’。”如同亲眼所见。

捐款者包括贩夫走卒。“有的农民，卖一天的菜，也没有多少钱，十块八块的全部拿了出来。”一位目击者说，捐款总数过万。

6月25日，发生了新的意外。在公安局，李树芬的幺叔李秀忠和民警张明发生冲突。事后，官方的材料说“两人发生扯皮李被打伤并不存在”，而李秀华在申诉上却说，他的弟弟李秀忠“在接受公安干警询问前就惨遭警察施以警棍与脚击伤”。

接着，李秀忠被主管单位县教育局叫去问话。随之在瓮安保险公司附近，李秀忠又遭到飞来横祸：他被几个身着便装的人暴打一顿。

李秀华自己在《加急申诉》中写道：“李秀忠被打……七孔流血，昏迷不醒，生命垂危。”并称，“爱女李树芬被他杀溺水，公安不予立案侦破……”

这段经过又马上出现在传说中：“死者家属去报案，公安局反将死者亲叔叔打成重伤，放出后再唆使黑社会毒打，致其下午4时许医治无效死亡。”

“冤情”愈发渲染扩大，传言愈烈，但这些被政府明显忽视了。西门河水无声流淌，没有人注意到这里发生了什么，但一些幽微的变化却在酝酿积蓄之中。

到6月28日上午，瓮安县公安局向李树芬家属发送了《尸体处理催办通知书》，里面提到了李树芬是“自己跳河溺水死亡”，“死因已查明，李树芬尸体没有继续保存的必要”，限李家于6月28日14时前将李树芬尸体领回安葬，“否则，公安机关将依法处理”。

这激起了围观者的不满。到这天下午3点左右，两名高举“为人民群众伸冤”的白色横幅的中学生走在前面，数十人跟随，他们打算为李树芬游行请愿。

这些人当中，没有一个是李树芬的亲属。

无助的村庄，加入游行的移民

从大堰桥出发，折行一段，游行队伍喊着口号，走上了老环城路。

在老环城路一带的七星村，住着上千水电站工程移民。“6·28事件”之后，7月3日，贵州省委书记石宗源说，这次事件，表面的、直接的导火索是女中学生的死因争议，但背后深层次原因是当地在移民安置、建筑拆迁、矿产资源开发等工作中，侵犯群众利益的事情屡有发生。

石宗源所称的“移民安置”，便包括七星村的上千移民。这些移民，来自贵州省最大的水电站——构皮滩水电站工程。该工程涉及瓮安县内水库移民逾4000人，其中农业人口3000多人。早在2004年，因为安置补偿问题，移民核心来源区江界河村村民与政府工作人员之间就发生过纠纷。

村民回忆，2002年下半年，移民安置工程开始启动，整个江界河村九百多人都属移民之列，当时移民局列出的生产安置费约每人1.9万元，村民们普遍认为这个价格过低，移民局有截流相关费用。

另外在土地补偿方面，村民们也认为，果木的补偿价格太低，按照国家标准，果园每亩补偿1.6万多元，而他们得到的补助是每棵100元，折算每亩约7000元。一个对比是，邻近水文站获得的补偿是每棵1000元。

2004年12月，在时任县长王勤带领下，包括省、州、县三级移民系统和长江委人士在内，来到江界河村。“我们问他们补偿为什么这么低。”村民说，“双方没有谈拢，他们讲不清楚，我们就不放他们走。”

群情激昂的村民们扣住了车，封锁了路。因为江界河村邻近余庆、湄潭、遵义、开阳四县，其他四县的水库移民闻风而动，共有逾千人赶到了江界河以期“讨一个说法”。当时五县共有二三千移民驻扎在了江界河村。

包括县长在内的政府官员们被迫在此逗留了三天三夜，双方依然未能达成谅解。最后，当年12月16日，村民们等到的是大批的武警和公安。

冲突一触即发，据村民自己统计，有包括妇女儿童在内多人受伤。

“我们打120，没有人管。自己把伤员送到乡卫生院，他们也收到命令不允许收留病人。最后还是我们自己买来药品，给伤员包扎治疗。”上述村民说。

最后在武警、公安的护送下，官员们最终得以离开。

事发半年后，经多次协商，政府提供给34名伤员共计5000元医疗费，方才了结此事。但移民安置补偿问题依然悬而未决。

两年多后，2007年3月底，江界河村民们都收到乡政府通知，被要求在3月31日前搬迁完毕，“逾期不迁，后果自负”。

2007年4月6日，在瓮安县政府负责人带领下，包括县移民开发局和公检法在内，逾百人的队伍开进江界河村，该村所有房屋被挖掘机强制拆除，拆迁者还将部分木屋点火焚烧。

不仅如此，拆迁者锯断了水位线下所有的果树，扯掉了全部的庄稼，未长成的青苗则被喷洒除草剂毒死。当时，桃李已经开始成熟，还来不及采摘。“当天晚上下起了大雨，东西全都被淋湿，人只好随便拉一些油布躲雨。”伤心的村民们度过了一个不眠之夜。如今原有的村居一片瓦砾，杂草丛生。

时至今日，仍有54户二百多位移民留守村中。他们没有接受政府的任何补偿，在水位线上搭起临时草棚，全家人住在狭小的窝棚下，无水无电，仅靠水位线上幸存的田地和果树为生。甚至去乡政府做临时建筑工，也会被告知不需要他们这样的移民。“我们只是希望政策透明，补偿到位，可以在水位线上，安居乐业。”但他们只能依然在无望中等待问题的解决。

搬到七星村的上千移民，虽然接受了补偿安置，但他们同样认为，当时的补偿过低，他们目前依然为此而奔走。

6月28日，在游行队伍经过后，一些原本为了补偿问题而奔走的移民就此出现在了队伍中。

活跃的黑帮，困顿的矿区

通过老环城路，这支由中学生领头的游行队伍拐到了北东路。北东路上坐落着瓮安三中，正是死者李树芬生前就读的学校。

“学校安全感不够，一些同学也加入到帮会，他们还拿来显耀，耀武扬威。”李树芬所在的三中初二六班，一位不愿意透露姓名的男同学说。

他说，在三中校门口，下午5点多放学后，几乎每天都有人打架。群架或者单挑，带着马刀、匕首、木棍等凶器。打架者包括学生和游荡在社会上的“小混混”，来自盘踞县

城的各帮派。而据三中教导处的两位老师称，“学生打老师在这里也不是新鲜事了。”

另一名学生介绍，加入帮会不仅是差生和男生的“专利”。在瓮安，要想安心学习，不为人欺，也必须要加入帮会寻求“靠山”，女生也是如此。

帮派成员并非仅活跃在学生间，这仅仅是帮派的最底层。据一位曾投资开矿的当地人介绍，在“金字塔形的结构”的上端，黑恶势力或隐性或张扬于矿区，甚至与官权相勾结，以谋取利益。

“如果不接受帮派的条件，一些矿很难能开下去。”上述人士说，条件包括收取保护费；或者控制矿石的外卖，或者在矿企里享有干股等等，有些帮派成员则自己开矿。

在矿企和帮派夹缝中尴尬生存的，是矿区的村民。

在李树芬的老家、磷矿丰富的玉华乡，记者在牛宫村看到，流经村子的水，呈灰白的混浊。村民们说，从2002年开始，开矿就污染了村子的水源，并导致人畜饮水困难，庄稼绝收。但村民们向政府的投诉得不到回应，矿企则完全不予理睬。

不仅如此，开矿还带来水土流失，失去田地的村民只能得到很少甚至得不到矿企的赔偿。

在玉华乡岩根河村田坝组，随着矿井的掘进，村民们发现，地下水位越来越低，至2007年，一口农井完全干涸，他们失去了主要的水源，人畜饮水以及灌溉用水发生困难。

一位不愿透露姓名的村民介绍说，田坝人找矿企理论，但对方称水位是自然下降，他们又多次找县、乡政府，但诉求得不到回应。他们无奈之下一度对矿企采取断电、堵井的行为，双方发生纠纷。

同年2月，新的开矿者来到田坝组，田坝村民提出开采前应达成协议，如果开矿过程中，影响了另一处仅剩水源的水位，须进行相关补偿，双方协商无果，村民们组织起来堵住了矿井。

这位村民说，随后3月15日瓮安县组织的工作组前来调解，村民们提出“一天不解决水源问题，一天不放人”，工作组被堵在村中三天三夜后，才得以离开。

到了去年4月29日，县政府通知村民代表前去开会“解决问题”，当天共有包括村长、支书在内的14位村民代表前往县政府大楼会议室。但据一位在场村民说，会至中途，县公安局突然来人，带走了11名代表。

协调会变成了鸿门宴。“村里的人听说代表被抓了，几乎全组人赶到了县城。在公安局，他们拉起警戒线，不让我们和代表见面，混乱之中，双方发生冲突，连代表在内，全组共有22人被抓。”上述在场者说，事后，这些村民被认定为冲击政府机关。

死者李树芬的“干爹”谢青发，正是玉华乡田坝组人，也曾参与上述事项。

几乎同样的行为，不知是江界河村民的幸运还是岩根河村民的不幸，上述村民代表中，最后有7人被以“聚众扰乱社会秩序罪”判刑，最短的两年，最长的六年。

当游行队伍经过，对于纠结一体的政府工作人员与黑帮组织隐忍已久的矿区居民也被瞬间点燃，尾随的人越来越多。一位目击者说，道路两边的许多商家甚至临时停止了营业，拉下卷闸门，紧紧跟随。

7月3日，贵州省委书记石宗源认为，在处置一些矛盾纠纷和群体事件过程中，一些干部作风粗暴、工作方法简单，甚至随意动用警力……一些干部工作不作为、不到位，一出事，就把公安机关推上第一线，群众意见很大，不但导致干群关系紧张，而且促使警民关系紧张。

贵州省委副书记王富玉认为，有的干部队伍不纯洁，与黑恶势力相互勾结，充当黑恶势力的“通信兵”和“保护伞”。

“6·28事件”后，贵州警方迅速成立专案组，并在一周内排查出分属六个帮派的涉案黑帮人员共计249名。其中最大的“玉山帮”组建于1998年，有大小头目五十多人。存在于瓮安10年的黑帮，一朝倾覆。

7月3日，瓮安县公安局局长和政委被建议免职；随后，7月4日，该县县委书记王勤、县长王海平被免职。

不安的小城，脆弱的干群关系

当游行队伍离开北东路，来到文峰中路时，人群已经从最开始的数十人，聚集成千人之众。

事后总结此次突发事件的教训时，7月2日下午，在黔南州深化打黑除恶专项斗争动员大会上，该州州委书记吴廷述质问在座12县市的党政负责人，事情6月22日发生，瓮安也重视了，并成立了工作组，一直到28日上午还在谈，“怎么到了下午3点，突然就变了呢？”

吴廷述表示，想不通怎么开始是两三百人打横幅，到了县政府已有四五千人的过程中政府怎么就没人知道，没有人疏导？

沿着文峰路，沿街商铺中最多的是“寄卖行”和“休闲按摩”，一位知情者说，“寄卖行”的实质是当铺和高利贷，背后则是帮派，甚至公职人员隐没其中。

瓮安官方资料对该县的介绍说，瓮安是革命老区县、全国绿化造林百佳县、全省双拥模范县、全省社会治安综合治理平安工作红旗县。

但一位出租车司机称，瓮安是个不安的城市，“晚上11点钟后我肯定要回家了，那时候就是帮派出没”。一位名叫冯中明的家长则向记者哭诉，自己9岁的儿子在去年被人毒死，但至今求告无门。

就在6月28日前两天，6月26日晚10点多，文峰路上“长沙水泵专营店”的老板敬铁民就遭遇了一起蒙面持枪抢劫。“两个人各拿一支枪，大模大样就走了进来。”敬铁民说，两把枪指着他的头，要他拿出所有的家当。歹徒放下卷闸门，撕开床单将敬家三口绑住，抢走敬家两部手机和敬铁民身上的1000元钱后离开。“我拨打110，四十多分钟后警察才赶来。”敬铁民认为警方动作太慢。

前年的一天晚上，三中的一名学生刚出校门就被杀了。上个月，一名女中学生突然“不在了”，最后在梅子树的一块玉米地里找到了尸体，是被人勒死的，至今案子也没有破。

“我每天都要去接孩子回家，否则我会不安心的。”一位石姓家长说，虽然孩子上高中了，但是社会太乱，不放心。当地流传着“好人散了伙，坏人结了帮，治安搞不好，难以奔小康”的顺口溜。

公开资料显示，据该县警方通报：2007年9月12日、9月19日、9月22日和9月26日，在瓮安县城区的县审计局宿舍、金龙花园、北门水井、步行街等处，连续发生4起爆炸案，系列案件至今未破。

贵州省委副书记王富玉认为，瓮安发生“6·28”事件的一个深层次原因是社会治安状况差。对县城有组织的帮派虽有打击，但未从根本上铲除，“两抢一盗”、打架斗殴案件时常发生，年发刑事案件达600-800起，破案率仅为50%左右，发生的一些刑事案件不能及时侦破，积案较多，群众缺乏安全感。

在街上的汽车被点燃时，公安人员劝阻不了，但一个商店的小老板对人们说：“那辆车是我的，要用，你们就不烧了”。打砸人员果然放过了这辆车。

黔南州委书记吴廷述据此感叹：“为什么打砸人群不听我们的话，却能听他们的话？为什么干群关系会紧张成这个样子？”

“6·28”之后，在瓮安，每天从早到晚，县城里督促打砸抢烧人员自首的广播一直不断，大街上列队的武警和警察不时走过，在县党委和政府大楼路口，有武警24小时站岗。一位出租车司机对记者说，“这是瓮安治安最好的时刻。”

最生动的对话发生在省委书记石宗源和一家盲人按摩店从业人员之间。当问起店主住在县公安局旁边觉得是否安全时，面对店主欲言又止的回答，石宗源表示歉意说，“我们党委和政府的工作没有做好，瓮安不安，群众没有安全感，坏人越来越多。”

而该店中一名打工人员不愿透露姓名时，石宗源再次自责：“瓮安不安，老百姓不敢讲真话，是我们的责任。……政府不能打击坏人，让老百姓受苦了。瓮安不安，正不压邪。”他为此三度向瓮安人民道歉。

“事件发生时先是有学生游行，然后聚集了上千群众围观，但事前党委、政府和公安机关都没有任何信息。信息不灵，思想准备不足，应急预案没有，以至于事件发生时束手无策。”7月3日的会议上，王富玉认为，“概括地讲，当地积案过多，积怨过深，积

重难返。”

“‘6·28事件’看似偶然，实属必然，迟早都会发生！”石宗源说。

愤怒的人群，一触即发的现场

6月28日下午3点半，在文峰路上，瓮安市民胡师傅看到，游行的队伍浩浩荡荡，人们高喊着口号，向县委和政府大楼进发，他加入了这个队伍。

当队伍来到县委和政府办公楼时，人群已汇聚了逾万之众，里面有学生、移民、店主、碰巧在县城的村民、服务员、按摩女，甚至公务员、警员家属，男女老幼——这个县城的所有阶层。

胡师傅说，在县委和政府办公楼，带头的学生从一楼走到五楼，并没有找到相关的人员。当天是星期六。

“如果这时候有负责人出来和大家协调沟通，哪怕有个人拿喇叭喊几句疏导一下，都可能不会发生后来的事件。”胡师傅认为。

因为李树芬事件是由公安局处理，游行的人群转而前往县公安局“讨一个公道”。

一直靠前的胡师傅看到，警察在门前拉起了警戒线，让两位学生进办公楼大堂沟通。“他们一把扯过了条幅，学生不允，伸手夺回了条幅，双方发生了冲突，学生和警察之间，发生了扭打。”胡师傅说，“见到学生挨打，更多的人冲过警戒线，冲进去帮忙。”

这时候，全副武装的防暴队员出现在视野中，他们的警棍伸向人群。

贵州省委书记石宗源此后指出：“决不能动不动就把公安政法机关推到第一线，更不能用人民民主专政的手段来对待人民群众。否则，岂非咄咄怪事！”石宗源并要求，要严查彻究在此次事件中严重失职渎职的干部特别是领导干部的责任。

人群哄然，见到学生被打而愤怒的人们操起手中的矿泉水瓶、公安局办公楼前的花钵和随手能触及的任何物品，砸向县公安局大楼。

“完了。”胡师傅说，那一刻他意识到，人群已然失去了理智，局面再也无法控制了。

这时候，导火线是什么已经不重要了，重要的是，如同积聚已久的火山偶然找到一条原本微小的缝隙，一座“不安”的县城就此爆发。

（钱昊平、郑廷鑫、罗道海、王霞对此文亦有贡献）