Voice of China's emerging hawks?
A critical analysis of the *Global Times*
*(A preliminary study)*

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I. Why Global Times (GT)?

- Published by the *People’s Daily* in April 2009 (The Chinese-language version *Huanqiu Shibao* launched in 1993).

- A conservative political tabloid: focusing on both international and domestic issues from a pro-government and national interest oriented perspective via a popular-sensational way.

- Appealing to an elite and strong nationalistic readership domestically, and allowing the West hear the voice of a rising and increasingly confident China clearly:

  GT’s readers “include ambassadors, business leaders, politicians, and intellectuals. China’s top universities use the newspaper as a teaching tool for the nation’s future elite”

  (GT “About us”: [http://www.globaltimes.cn/AboutUs.aspx](http://www.globaltimes.cn/AboutUs.aspx))

- Influential: a daily circulation of 1.5M (Chinese-language version), quoted frequently by leading Western media:

  … is a remarkable innovation … the English edition strays into realms once thought taboo.


  … the tone of the English version is less strident than its Chinese version and the paper has been developing something of a reputation for fairly insightful stories that don’t simply hew to the Party line and discussing topics such as the 1989 Tiananmen Square crackdown and Internet censorship. (Ryan Dutcher, 2 March 2010, *The Wall Street Journal*, [http://www.eastwestpr.com/2010/03/china-daily-redesigns-its-print-edition-to-remain-competitive/](http://www.eastwestpr.com/2010/03/china-daily-redesigns-its-print-edition-to-remain-competitive/))

- As part of Chinese-government’s efforts to build up its global media network and "present an international vision with a Chinese perspective”, which was directly triggered by (among other factors) harsh Western criticisms of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games.
Western criticisms of the Beijing Olympic Games:

- Media coverage of frequent interruptions in the torch rally in Western countries
- Boycott calls from some Western politicians, media and activists
- The Games as propaganda of a police state and was compared to the 1936 Berlin Games under Hitler
- Restriction to foreign journalists / hotel-taxi spying
- Good games without (or with little) fun/public participation
- Arrest of “human rights”/pro-Tibet activists
- Air pollution
- Massive spending (huge cost for propaganda purpose)
- Mass performance/volunteers (only China & NK can do)
- Fake singing / firework
- Ai Weiwei: Zhang Y. M. is a ‘an artist without soul’
In Particular: CNN’s Jack Cafferty really angered the Chinese government and the general public:

(while speaking about the US trade deficit with China):

"We continue to import their junk with the lead paint on them and the poisoned pet food and export, you know, jobs to places where you can pay workers a dollar a month to turn out the stuff that we're buying from Wal-Mart.

"So I think our relationship with China has certainly changed.”

"I think they're basically the same bunch of goons and thugs they've been for the last 50 years.”

(CNN: 9 April 08)
An official conclusion was drawn:

*The situation of Western domination of China’s international image must be responded quickly and effectively.*

On his June 2008 visit to the *People’s Daily*, Hu Jintao lamented the “West’s strength and our weakness” in global communication.

A strategic official response to this Challenge:

- Hu in Oct 2009 presided over China’s first “world media summit” (attended by global media giants such as Reuters, the BBC and News Corp)
- GT English-language version lunched in April 2009
II. This study: Examining GT’s editorial policy via a critical analysis of its editorials

- LR: seemingly no systematic academic research about it yet (though lots of online discussion of the newspaper)

- Testing the popular perception of the paper as a nationalistic voice of China’s emerging hawks; and if it is the case then its meaning and implications


- Initial findings: some basic statistics by placing the items into various categories

- An initial contextual analysis of the findings
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Geographic focus</th>
<th>Domestic</th>
<th>International</th>
<th>Domestic-international</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>86/173</td>
<td>73/173</td>
<td>16/173</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>48.6%</td>
<td>42.2%</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
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Engage in debate on controversial-important domestic and international issues

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
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<tr>
<td>Count</td>
<td>125/173</td>
<td>48/173</td>
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<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>28%</td>
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Approaches to controversial domestic issues including public criticisms of the government

- constructively echoing public criticisms
- defending government stance against populism / liberalism / radicalism
- smoothening public angers by putting things in context (finding good excuses)
- upbeat and optimistic: challenges and difficulties are temporary in a transition society like China; they are developmental issues; endure for a better future
- the current political system is not perfect but overall works well for China; we have been doing well by any standard
- being patriotic is glorious: national interest is above all; work with the government as a constructive partner for a powerful greater China
E.g., re the high-speed railway disaster that killed 32 in July, GT published 8 editorials in 40 days (13 July - 24 Aug)

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Tightrope between duty and public say</td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>Giving the rail system credit where due</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>Keeping the faith with Made-in-China</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>Truth will out - easing public doubts</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>Officials' arrogance results in poor PR</td>
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<td>6.</td>
<td>Safety should guide pace of development</td>
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<td>7.</td>
<td>Train crash lesson for railway progress</td>
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<td>8.</td>
<td>Criticism must be handled the right way</td>
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Similarly, GT interprets international issues from China’s national interest. E.g., a serials of editorials on Lybia crisis
Approaches to US-Western criticisms of China

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<th>Approaches</th>
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<tr>
<td>• ideologically biased and culturally arrogant: always think they are superior and intend to lecture China (and others)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• West-centred and liberal-fundamentalism oriented: giving no room for any alternative modernities</td>
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<tr>
<td>• politicise human-rights issues</td>
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<td>• for their own national interest: containing a rising and non-Western China</td>
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<td>• double-standard</td>
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<td>• media imperialism</td>
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## Taking on the USA:

Among the 73 items re international issues, relating to

<table>
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<th></th>
<th>USA</th>
<th>The rest of the world</th>
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<td>Criticising US or hitting back US (government or non-gover.) criticisms of China</td>
<td>33 (45%)</td>
<td>40 (55%)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>other</td>
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<td></td>
<td>28 (84.8%)</td>
<td>5 (15%)</td>
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Conclusion & discussion:

- Coherently conservative-nationalistic: serving China’s national interest, often though not always pro-government (under pressure from time to time)

- Has both enlightened and amused readers (“homeland of patriotists”; “coach of (new) Boxers”

- Representing the ideas of China’s rising conservatives collectively: The editorials were most written by its editor-in-chief Hu Xijin by consulting with a thank tank consisting of more than 100 top scholars, strategists and policy makers across China

- Dares to engage in debate from a conservative perspective and sensationaly outspoken and blunt: a drastic departure from China’s traditional low-key foreign policy and international communication: The time to passively respond to the USA’s/West’s lectures is over.

- From Propaganda to PR-Hegemony: A meaningful alternative voice on domestic and international affairs, often thought-provoking and certainly not boring

  The Chinese public is not satisfied with old orthodoxies and stale stories, and neither is the Global Times.” (GT “About us”: http://www.globaltimes.cn/AboutUs.aspx)

- “Commercial nationalism”: Find a smart editorial strategy that combines national interest (nationalism is safe and sellable), media interest (sensational political tabloid, competing with the China Daily) and reader interest (rising Chinese nationalism)

- “New World Information Order” debate; an Orientalist approach; commercial developmental journalism (partnership journalism); Asian/Confucian values

- Powerful-influential, but not the only, and certainly not the dominant voice in China: e.g., China’s leading liberal press outlet the Southern Weekend (Obama chose to hold his keynote interview with the paper during his Nov 2009 visit to China), takes on GT recently: openly challenges the GT’s editorial policy.

- liberalism, nationalism and new-left: three major social theories-movements in current China