

## MESSAGE FROM THE SPECIAL CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

This fall I have come back to Shanghai to teach at Fudan University. Although I have visited it many times since 1980—the year I first had the opportunity to teach at Fudan—it is these extended stays in the city of my youth that give me a chance to observe China from a native’s point of view. During the last three decades Shanghai has changed so much that most of the streets I used to know are no longer recognizable. On the other hand, however, the one-party political system remains firmly in place.

One aspect of life here rings a familiar bell: the Chinese Communist Party’s constant attempt to mobilize the people around national projects in order to give them a common purpose and forge national unity. When I was a child we were mobilized to “Aid Korea against American Imperialism.” When I returned in 1980, the “Four Modernizations” campaign was picking up steam. As always, in order to accomplish the clear objective of these national projects, Chinese people are expected to defer their wishes and reshuffle priorities so as to channel all the available resources. Any criticism of the projects and dissent are labeled opposition to the will of the people. The image of China as a “harmonious society” is achieved by the silencing of dissent.

Earlier this year, the nation was focused on making the Beijing Olympic Games a success, and now the focus has shifted to the 2010 Shanghai Expo. The theme of the Expo is “Better City—Better Life,” aimed at showing that China is not only the factory of cheap products to the world but has also arrived as a leader in science and innovation. But Shanghai is plagued by congestion, sub-standard working and living conditions for millions of migrant workers, and pollution. What lessons if any have the Chinese leadership learned from 2008? The record so far is not encouraging.

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