**‘Class enemies hiding among the people’: China’s mass mobilisation mechanism during the Covid-19 pandemic**

Having recently published an edited volume entitled ‘Human Security in China: A Post-pandemic state’, I have been seeking to explore China’s handling of the pandemic and what it tells us about China’s approach to human security and human protection. China’s approach highlights a challenge in the discussions surrounding human security: how can we remain policy-relevant while proposing radical changes that might challenge the established power relations and mechanisms of control? China’s mass mobilisation during the pandemic is a good example to understand the relations between individuals, communities, and the state. Cases of overseas students bullied for returning home with the risk of spreading the virus have demonstrated the need for an extra layer of analysis – human security in China is not only about the contradictions between individual freedoms and the state’s need for control, but more importantly, how the meso-level communities have been mobilised and co-opted to help the state to enforce containment measures, often adopting much more heavy-handed approaches than the state.

As a further development of the edited volume, this paper builds on the interdisciplinary insights from politics and communication studies, and empirical evidence regarding China’s mobilisation mechanisms such as grassroots slogans that seek to prevent people from returning home (see Feng, 2020).

This paper argues that the concept of the enemies has been an essential element in Chinese political discourse, from Mao’s ‘two types of contradictions’ theory, to the ‘foreign hostile forces’ that never give up on containing China’s rise. The revival of the Mass Line ethos and continual power concentration under Xi conveniently feed into the current mechanisms of control. Relying on the masses, these mechanisms enable the state to justify and legitimate extraordinary containment measures during the Covid-19.

Feng J (2020) Hilariously aggressive Covid-19 propaganda banners in China. Available at: https://supchina.com/2020/02/11/all-the-hilariously-aggressive-coronavirus-banners-found-in-china/ (accessed 6 December 2021).

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