

Explaining the Changes in Contentious Politics of China: A Comparative Study of Falun Gong and 'Diaosi'

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Abstract : Falun Gong is a self-proclaimed religious group that has been under crackdown by Beijing for more than two decades. Diaosi, on the other hand, is an emerging community with members loosely connected on the internet through different online social platforms, centering around the sharing of different hobbies and interests. Diaosi community has been transformed from a potential threat to the Chinese authority for different causes to a pro-government force. This paper seeks to explain the different strategies adopted by the People's Republic of China (PRC) regime in handling these two potential threatening communities. Both communities share some obvious similarities: (1) both have massive nation-wide participation; (2) both have attempted to challenge the PRC's authority through contentious means; (3) both have high level of mobility, online or offline; and (4) both have at first been unnoticed until the threat against the PRC have taken form. But the strategies the PRC endorsed against the communities were, in many ways, different. The question is: if the strategy against Falun Gong has been an effective one, why used other strategies against Diaosi? The authors argue that the main reason for using different strategies lies in the differences between the two communities in terms of (i) the nature of the groups, and (ii) the group dynamics. Lastly, based on this analysis, the authors attempt to explore the possible strategies that the PRC would adopt against the Hong Kong cyber-world political community in light of the latest national security law in Hong Kong.

Keywords : contentious politics, Diaosi, Falun Gong, Hong Kong, People's Republic of China

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