

**CHINA'S RESPONSE TO LIU XIAOBO'S
NOBEL PEACE PRIZE**

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Executive Summary

1. On October 8, 2010, the Nobel Peace Prize Committee announced that Liu Xiaobo, a Chinese dissident currently in jail, won the Nobel Peace Prize. Liu was sentenced to 11 years in prison in December 2009 after a local court in Beijing convicted him of agitation aimed at subverting the Chinese government.
2. On the same day, the Xinhua News Agency reported Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Ma Zhaoxu's response to the event: "Awarding the Nobel Peace Prize to Liu Xiaobo desecrated the prize." The Chinese government made great effort to limit this event's exposure to a minimum.
3. It has also responded angrily to the award, saying the West is using it to undermine China. In particular, Beijing has singled out the Norwegian government for its "erroneous support" of the Nobel Committee's decision, cancelling several meetings with a visiting minister.
4. *Global Times*, a Chinese newspaper in Beijing, conducted a phone-call survey of residents in Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou on October 15 and 17. The report says that 75% of 955 interviewees view the award as an attempt to "put pressure on China to accept the political system of the West" and "permeate Western values into China."
5. The announcement of the award coincided with Premier Wen Jiabao's high-profile interview with CNN on political reform and democracy. Wen said that "no one can stop people's pursuit of democracy." Such a statement gave many people hope. However, some activists believe that such an expectation is not realistic and is wishful thinking.

6. The Chinese government has been quite skillful in conducting damage control, such as manipulating media, publishing articles criticizing the Peace Prize Committee, and expressing government's ideas in the name of the Chinese people. People are quite indifferent to the prize, although the reaction from some parts of the Chinese society is strong.
7. In terms of short-term consequences, the left-right divide is pronounced in China today, unlike in the 1980s. While the neo-liberals are excited, the "leftists" are wasting no time in problematizing the prize. Thus, those who wish for democratization may not gain from Liu's win.
8. In terms of long-term consequences, the society is moving towards materialism. There are more immediate concerns like job, housing, etc. than political pursuits, which are desirable but deemed remote. This may be the largest constraint to how much influence this event can have on China's political trajectory.