

THE JASMINE REVOLUTION AND CHINA'S RESPONSE

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Executive Summary

1. China has not been spared the negative impact of the “Jasmine Revolution” that originated from some countries in North Africa and the Middle East. There have been calls for Jasmine rallies at designated spots in several cities in China.
2. The Chinese authorities have taken a serious view of these protest calls. The police were out in force at the designated protest venues. They have been quick and decisive in arresting the minuscule few who dared to protest.
3. More than 100 known dissidents and activists across China were rounded up. Foreign reporters in China were also instructed not to interview or take pictures at the designated protest sites. Information flows on mass media platforms such as the Internet and mobile phones were tightened.
4. Premier Wen Jiabao is the highest ranking Chinese leader so far to have publicly stated it is wrong to compare China with some countries in North Africa and the Middle East. For one, the Chinese people have benefited from the rapid socio-economic progress that China has achieved over the years.
5. Wen also highlighted the fact that the Chinese people are aware of government’s efforts to address their concerns that have arisen as a result of this socio-economic progress. Indeed, a key thrust of the recently approved 12th Five-Year Program was on improving people’s livelihood.
6. Separately, President Hu Jintao spoke of improving social management that includes not only serving the people but also managing them. This meant strengthening the Party and the government-led mechanism for the maintenance of public interests; improving the public security system; and, strengthening control of the Internet and properly guiding public opinion in cyberspace.

7. In the run-up to the 90th anniversary of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) founding in July 2011 and the 18th Party Congress in the second half of 2012, the emphasis will be on maintaining stability. While pressing on with improving people's livelihood, the CCP will take firm action against any perceived unruly elements.
8. Most Chinese are supportive of the current political set-up led by the CCP. They have benefited from China's open door and reform policies, and continue to do so. They also look to the CCP to address the problems they encounter in their daily lives.
9. To be sure, the ranks of the tech-savvy generation are swelling. Many of them can access information at the click of a button, bypassing Party and government censors. However, this does not mean that they will necessarily set themselves up against the CCP.
10. In fact, a large proportion of these youth use the Internet for entertainment, information acquisition and personal communication. There is very little incentive for them to use the Internet for political mobilization given the tight surveillance and political costs if they are caught for doing so.
11. China is expected to tide over the waves of upheavals that have occurred elsewhere. Its leadership is focused on the unenviable task of running a big and diverse country, together with the many pressing issues that come with it. The leadership is confident that what it has done so far is right and looks set to continue down this existing path.