

**THE LITTLE PINKS: YOUNG ALLIES
OF THE CHINESE GOVERNMENT
IN CYBERSPACE**

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Executive Summary

1. A group of influential youth called “Little Pinks” had emerged in Chinese cyberspace in recent years. They are nationalistic-oriented and ready to defend their government on the internet.
2. At events that aroused Chinese nationalistic sentiments, such as the election of Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen, South China Sea arbitration and South Korea’s deployment of the American anti-ballistic missile defence system, the Little Pinks were often in sight.
3. Most of the Little Pinks were born in the 1990s, a period of China’s rapid economic growth, which makes them culturally and politically more confident than the older generations.
4. The Little Pinks are generally unstructured and capricious netizens in Chinese cyberspace. When they take collective actions, however, they often demonstrate impressive organisational capability.
5. The Little Pinks planned the bombardment of memes and comments on Tsai Ing-wen’s Facebook page with clear division of labour and seamless coordination. They even established action guidelines and discipline inspection mechanisms.
6. Such organisational capability is a product of the vibrant fandom culture in Chinese cyberspace where intensive online debates are very common among different fan groups.
7. Chinese authorities, mainly the Communist Youth League, were quick to step in, guide and mobilise the Little Pinks.
8. A loyal ally, the Little Pinks would voluntarily defend the Chinese government online. However, they are neither a subsidiary nor controlled by the Chinese government.

9. The nationalistic Little Pinks only represent one group of youth in China. China's young generation is generally less nationalistic and more pro-democracy than their seniors.
10. To date, the Chinese government still enjoys very high level of popular support and the Little Pinks is just one of the manifestations of this popularity. In the event that such popularity declines, it remains to see how the Little Pinks will develop.