

**OPENING STATEMENT BY CHAIRMAN C. RICHARD D'AMATO**

**U.S.-China Economic & Security Review Commission  
Hearing on China's State Control Mechanisms and Methods**

**April 14, 2005  
385 Russell Senate Office Building**

Today's hearing on "*China's State Control Mechanisms and Methods*," will examine internal dynamics within the People's Republic of China. Quite often, this topic is discussed under the heading of China's political reform – but I think that today's hearing will demonstrate why the use of that heading would be misleading to a considerable extent. It entails the assumption that China is reforming, has been reforming, and will continue to reform. Instead, one of the key questions that we will ask today is "To what extent is China reforming?"

One way to address that question is to look at the government's control of information flows. To do that we must assess China's efforts to control news media, the internet, and other forms of communication. A fundamental human right is the right of free speech and exchange of information, and China's status within the global community of nations necessarily will be largely affected by the extent to which it offers and guarantees this basic freedom.

The Commission's last hearing to address China's media and internet control was held as Beijing backed out of its untenable efforts to block reporting on the SARS crisis in the Spring of 2003. A common refrain at the time was that China's leadership might draw a permanent lesson from the severe criticism it received for its censorship in that episode and move toward greater media freedom and openness. Two years later, it seems clear that China has not changed its basic stance on free speech and control of the media. The narrative the Congress heard in the months proceeding the granting of permanent normal trade relations (PNTR) to China in 2000 held that mass communication technologies would ensure unfettered information flows which would in turn encourage political reform. But I expect the testimony we will receive today will show that China's government has found and is widely employing ways to stifle use of the internet and other information media.

Control over information is a very powerful tool. China has worked to establish and maintain that control over a wide range of information exchange media. As a result, China's government is particularly well positioned to influence popular perceptions of the U.S. and its policies. Today's hearing will take up the question of how Beijing uses its influence, and how resulting public sentiments affect U.S. interests. We will look at how nationalism appears to be growing in China, and how it is primarily built around antagonism toward the U.S., Japan, and Taiwan.

One predictable consequence of this development is that any existing or future difficulties between the U.S. and China are likely to be more complicated to resolve than necessary. For example, in a situation of high tension— such as occurred after a U.S. reconnaissance plane and a Chinese fighter collided – popular demands attributable to the PRC government’s long-term fanning of nationalist flames among the Chinese people may produce irresistible pressure on China’s government to reject otherwise tenable resolutions.

Our panels today will explore how China’s government wields its information control systems as a tool for building and redirecting Chinese nationalism, how much control the central government has over nationalism, and whether nationalism is used as a distraction from other social concerns. Many observers anticipate political reform in China because they believe that decreased state participation in the economy will lead inexorably to the expansion of civil society and growing restraint of the state’s power in the political realm. Our panels will address this questionable assertion, examining how China’s human rights and labor practices play into its system of social control.

All we see in China today adds up to a picture of concerted state control over society. Information control can be and appears to feed nationalism, which in turn can be harnessed to support the government or can surge out of control, as has been the case in recent anti-Japanese protests. Both information control and nationalism help distract the Chinese people and dissipate efforts to catalogue and eliminate human rights abuses, exploitative labor practices, corruption, environmental degradation, and other important societal concerns. It is our hope that today’s hearing will help us develop a more sophisticated understanding of China’s mechanisms for societal control – which can and should serve as a basis for the United States to develop and adopt realistic policies to safeguard U.S. interests and empower those Chinese individuals and organizations that are engaged in the struggle to obtain greater freedom of expression for the Chinese people.