

subsequently more powerful military, could all seriously challenge the US for global military, economic and geostrategic primacy in the 21st century.

Be forewarned: this is a dense book. Some sections, such as the chapter on MCF, are a particularly deep dive, full of acronyms, policy pronouncements, government initiatives, graphs, matrixes and case studies. That said, this volume ploughs a lot of new ground, especially when it comes to assessing China's efforts to exploit MCF (easily the best chapter). Overall, Cheung makes an important contribution to understanding China's building of a new and potentially sinister national security state.

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The Wuhan Lockdown

Guobin Yang. New York: Columbia University, 2022. 328 pp. \$28.00; £22.00 (pbk). ISBN 9780231200479

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Guobin Yang's book is a vivid and highly readable account of the first months of what became the COVID-19 pandemic in Wuhan as revealed through the online diaries of Wuhan residents. Materials from the diaries are lightly contextualized in existing scholarship on issues ranging from civil society and health system reform through nationalism and authoritarian resilience. Yang's core interests, though, are in Wuhan citizens' experiences and on the state's interactions with those citizens during the lockdown, a subject to which he brings much expertise from many years of research on the internet, media and activism in China.

The book begins with three scene-setting chapters. The first summarizes the 20 days of state pre-variation during January 2020 before the "Wuhan lockdown" began on 23 January. Here Yang emphasizes how local government efforts to give the appearance of prosperity and developmental success overrode concerns about "unknown pneumonia" and led them to cover up the extent of the outbreak. Chapter two recounts the tightening restrictions on civil society and the internet in the period from the Arab spring of 2011 and after Xi Jinping took over the leadership of the Communist Party. This, argues Yang, meant that the pandemic erupted in "a political environment hostile to free expression" where whistle-blowers were silenced, thus enabling the cover-up and subsequently requiring – as set out in chapter three – the lockdown of Wuhan and a "hardcore" response using "blunt force" and national mobilization.

The core, and strength, of Yang's book is the online diaries he collected as events unfolded. In chapter four he introduces the diarists – mostly more educated Wuhan residents, including professors, schoolteachers, students, health care workers, writers, lawyers and officials. A notable exception is "Old Ji," a delivery driver who provides insight into the experiences, bravery and humour of people on the frontlines. Chapter five then focuses on hospital experiences as revealed through the diaries of doctors and patients. Here moving accounts show their encounters with a terrifying and still little-understood virus at a time when protections were limited and vaccines unavailable. Subsequent chapters focus on civil society and the online activities of China's netizens. Despite the limits on NGOs by 2020, Yang shows how civic organizing did emerge, whether to rescue



animals, provide psychological counselling or expose domestic violence. Chapter seven similarly shows how, despite censorship and propaganda, netizens' counter-censorship activities sometimes prevailed. But the overriding message here is of a party-state determined to create an appearance of harmony and cooperation by promoting "positive energy" and decrying critics for their "negativity."

In chapters eight and nine, Yang deals with the important topics of COVID nationalism, and "mourning and remembering." As the party-state sought to avoid blame for the lockdown and for the death of whistle-blower Li Wenliang in early February 2020, it shifted the narrative to heroic medical professionals, the people's war on the virus and then to national pride in the successes of "prevention and control" – taking advantage of the many dismal government responses internationally. Again, Yang reminds us of how this narrative draws on rising nationalism and "wolf warrior" trends before 2020. But he also argues that erratic censorship, at least in the early phases of the lockdown, did allow "plural voices" to be heard, even if they have subsequently been silenced and erased.

For this reason, and because it collates and contextualizes voices as they emerged in early 2020, *The Wuhan Lockdown* is a valuable document. Drawing on a wealth of material – over 6000 diary entries – it is a sympathetic account of the experiences of people trapped in Wuhan and an example of the rich work that can be produced using such sources. But of course, it could never be a complete account of citizens' experiences or a panoramic window onto Wuhan society. Given the digital divide, online material inevitably tends to reflect the experiences of the better off and better educated as well as younger citizenry. There is very little here on the lives of migrants trapped in Wuhan, on the experiences of farmers in Wuhan's rural hinterland, or on the difficulties experienced by people on low incomes.

Yang's book therefore both demonstrates the importance of documenting history and reminds us of how much we do not know. This is particularly true of experiences of the pandemic in China since the Wuhan lockdown, which includes the privations of millions in Xinjiang due to apparently stringent lockdowns from August to November 2022 – a period longer than the 76 days endured by the citizens of Wuhan. Despite the efforts of scholars such as Yang, with China so isolated during the pandemic, it seems we may only ever have a patchy understanding of its effects on people's lives and livelihoods. While this book is an important contribution to that understanding, many more stories are left untold.

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Trafficking Data: How China Is Winning the Battle for Digital Sovereignty

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Trafficking Data: How China Is Winning the Battle for Digital Sovereignty, by Aynne Kokas, is a timely engagement with debates on the extraction, commodification and protection of data amidst sharpening US–China tech relations. The book sheds light on how pervasive exploitative data-gathering practices by both Chinese corporations and the Chinese government constitute an arresting challenge for the US government and the conventional understanding of sovereignty in the