

## **The Language and Politics of Discontent in New Millennium China**

Christopher J. Smith

Department of Geography and Planning

University at Albany, State University of New York

### *Abstract*

This paper is the first part of an ongoing interrogation of the “narrative of success” that has accompanied the modernization project in China. There are many reasons to endorse and even celebrate what has occurred in China in recent years, but this paper explores a less celebratory realm. A look at the Western media suggests that other stories are being written about contemporary China, pointing not only to the successes of the modernization project, but also to the many difficulties associated with it. In light of these other stories it is reasonable to assume the existence of a “narrative of discontent” in China, but at the present time we know little about how widespread it has become, or whether it is being openly reported by the domestic media. To answer such questions this paper looks firstly at the language of discontent, by exploring what is being communicated in the press about the less salutary events associated with the economic reforms. Assuming that discontent exists, it is also reasonable to expect some response from the Chinese people, either to accommodate it or to try to bring about change. The second part of the paper looks at the politics of discontent, the way discontent is being articulated through public acts of resistance, and the reporting of such acts in the mainland newspapers.