

A Comparative Analysis of News Discourse

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Abstract

In December, 2012, two Tibetan monks involved in the immolation of a Tibetan were detained by Chinese police. The event drew considerable attention from worldwide news agencies. However, the event was presented differently in terms of the different ways of reporting and the different languages employed. This paper examines the two representations of the event that appeared in Chinese and US news media. Processes of text production and linguistic choices are discussed, along with the possible reasons underlying those choices. In this case, the interplay between discourse and ideology is illustrated. Also, it is argued that the comparative analysis of discourse can be considered as an effective way to decode the ideology embedded in a discourse.

Keywords: discourse, ideology, news, lexical choices

1. Introduction

Discourse analysis has been approached from different perspectives (e.g., Foucault, 1978; Stubbs, 1983; Lee, 1992; Cook, 1994). Among the various definitions of the term *discourse*, I take the view that discourse is involved with linguistic and ideological processes which are inseparably intertwined (Trew, 1979). This means: (1) discourse exists through language and comes into being as a text; (2) the formation of a discourse is accompanied by ideology; (3) ideology acts upon the use of language and consequently influences the construction of a discourse and, in return, linguistic features refract ideology in the form of a discourse. The term *ideology* has long been disputed (see Eagleton, 1991). However, for the purpose of this essay, I understand ideology as “a cluster of values and beliefs which are produced and diffused by agencies of the state, and which serve to reproduce the social order by securing the adherence of individuals to it” (Thompson, 1990, p. 75). In other words, an ideology is socially situated and normally shared by the dominant groups of people within a country.

In order to illustrate the interplay between discourse and ideology, I have selected two news reports that deal with the same events to compare and study. I intend to explore how and why the same events are represented in significantly different ways within the different ideological systems, and also attempt to investigate the purpose of discourse.

2. News Context and Text

The status of Tibet has been controversial for a long time. The Chinese government and most of the Chinese people insist that Tibet is an integral part of China, while a number of Tibetans maintain that Tibet should be governed by Tibetans themselves. This proposition is supported by some in the West including individuals, organizations, and governments such as the United States (see Goldstein, 1997; Powers, 2004; Sperling, 2004). Therefore, when it comes to occurrences relating to the Tibet issue, they are observed, understood and interpreted in different or even opposite ways. More specifically, these occurrences are differently represented by Chinese news institutions and Western media that tend to be more sympathetic to the argument for Tibetan autonomy since “the media are not a neutral, common-sensed, or rational mediator of social events, but essentially help reproduce preformulated ideologies” (van Dijk, 1988, p. 11).

On 10 December, 2012, two Tibetan monks involved in the immolation of a Tibetan were detained by Chinese police. In terms of this event, there was extensive coverage worldwide, among which I choose two online English news texts to show the interplay between discourse and ideology: one is produced by CNN (Cable Network News), an American news institution, and the other by CCTV (China Central Television).

A news text is composed of abstract, source attribution and story. The abstract, which consists of headline and lead, draws an outline of the main story (Bell, 1991). As to the two pieces of news that I use to demonstrate the discussion, the main story is that Chinese police detain a monk and his nephew because they encourage other people to set themselves on fire. Then, the news reporting describes details and relevant events. Both CNN and CCTV construct their reporting mainly in the form of indirect speech and sometimes with direct quotes; both of them name, in most cases, specific journalistic sources such as Xinhua news agency. What distinguishes these two pieces of news from the opinion article, in which the news institution explicitly states its own standpoint on an event, is that they only report what happened, at least ostensibly (Bell, 1991). It is noteworthy that these two pieces of news are more features than hard news. According to Bell (1991), hard news refers to the reporting which normally deals with unexpected incidents including the time and the place of the incident, while features are longer and provide background information as well as the writer's name but lack immediacy. As to the two pieces of news I selected, neither releases the exact time of the main event—that is, the time when the detainment occurred.

However, no matter what kind of news, no news is an absolute factual account. Rather, it is always a story that the journalist writes from a particular perspective (Bell, 1991). The CNN news story that I am going to analyse is written by Katie Hunt, who is a Hong Kong-based journalist writing about current affairs, culture and business for CNN.com and other international media (see <http://katiehunt.net/about/>), while the author of my second source is Han Bin, a senior journalist at CCTV NEWS and one of the channel's chief editors (see <http://english.cntv.cn/20100424/102386.shtml>). The capacity of both journalists to collect information and write news stories may be a reason why their stories are published. Nevertheless, more importantly, they are functionaries of the institutions that they work for (Kress, 1983). In other words, their stories embody the values and beliefs of the institutions. Furthermore, the institutions expect to transmit their ideologies to readers through their stories. Although there is no way for the journalists to ascertain who will read the news, they can presume their “ideal audiences” (Fairclough, 1995, p. 40). Different from CNN news, that may be primarily designed for American readers, CCTV news is not oriented towards domestic audiences. Obviously, it addresses a western audience since it is published in English. However, no matter what categories of readers were on their minds while they were writing, Hunt and Han, like other journalists, must have made an effort to convince the reader to accept their reporting as a factual account. On the other hand, unlike the face-to-face interview, there is no immediate interaction between news audiences and writers due to the disjunction between the place and the time (Bell, 1991). This “quasi-interaction” (Thompson, 1990, p. 228) assists both CNN and CCTV news in functioning ideologically in an active way but makes their readers accept their coverage in a passive way.

From the perspective of the syntax, by virtue of the declarative statement by which the information is offered (Thompson, 2004), both CNN and CCTV disguise their viewpoints and portray themselves as reporting events from a neutral perspective, in order to persuade the reader to believe in their presentations of the event. In terms of the use of the vocabulary, my two examples differ from those news texts that are characterised by a mixture of colloquial and formal vocabulary. Rather, they are filled with formal vocabulary, particularly legal language which accords them with a sense of legitimacy. For instance, in a directly quoted statement CNN news uses the word “abetting” (See S17, Appendix A) to refer to the action urging a person to set themselves on fire. Likewise, in CCTV news, the word “instigate” (See S14, Appendix B) is used in the direct quotation from the Chairman of the Tibet Autonomous Region.

3. A Comparative Analysis of Two Texts

As discussed above, there are similarities between CNN and CCTV news. However, there are also distinctive aspects to their reporting, for example, the ways in which the events are represented. To examine these differences, the discussion below is based on a comparison of the two news texts.

3.1 *The Arrangement of News Events*

Bell (1991, p. 164) develops “a tree diagram” that enables different events to be reunified from where they are dispersed throughout the story. By means of his method, the CCTV news report of the self-immolation story (see Appendix B) can be regarded as consisting of at least three events:

- 1) The detainment of two monks by Chinese police (headline, S2-S3, S8-S10, S16-S20);
- 2) Previous attempts to self-immolate by clergy members (S4-S7, S11-S15);
- 3) The launch of a new regulation about self-immolation (S1, S21-S26).

In the same way, no fewer than three events can be reunited in the CNN news story (see Appendix A):

- 1) The detainment of two monks by Chinese police (headline, S1-S4, S8-S12);

- 2) The previous incidences of self-immolation (S5-S7, S13-S15);
- 3) The release of a legal document about self-immolation (S16-17).

When the news texts are redisplayed, it can be concluded that the events covered by CCTV and CNN news are almost the same in terms of the main points. Roughly speaking, the events are represented in a similar order. In other words, the representation of Event 1, between which Event 2 is sandwiched, starts from the beginning of the text, and finally Event 3 is illustrated. However, it is interesting to note that CCTV news does not begin to present Event 1 from the first sentence as CNN news does; instead, it is described from the second sentence. Normally, the lead summarizes the essential points of a news story and the headline is principally derived from the lead. In addition, the lead, structurally speaking, occupies the slot of the first sentence of a text (Bell, 1991). This means it is typical for the reader to know the main topic of the news by reading the headline and the first sentence. With regards to CNN news, as suggested by the headline, the main topic refers to Event 1 and the lead goes on to narrate the details of the major event. The headline CCTV news uses also identifies the arrest of the monks as its main topic. However, its lead is the exception that proves the rule: It deviates from the major topic and expresses the significance of Event 3. As van Dijk (1988, p. 43) puts it, “[...] news discourse is organized so that the most important or relevant information is put in the most prominent position, both in the text as a whole and in the sentences”. That is to say, the more essential the information is considered to be, the more salient its position is. Accordingly, CNN news may want its readers to focus on what the Chinese government has done to Tibetan monks. On the other hand, CCTV news intends to lay the emphasis on what the Chinese government has done to protect people.

3.2 *The Selection of News Sources*

Most news lacks “the immediate observation of news events” (van Dijk, 1988, p. 114), and therefore it has to be based on other people’s accounts that are either spoken or written discourses. This means the news writer has a choice to use one source text rather than another. When several source texts are available, the journalist tends to choose the source that seems the most authoritative to signify its credibility as well as reliability (Bell, 1991). Obviously, CCTV and CNN apply this selection criterion to the process of producing their respective news. They base their reports on Xinhua news agency which is run by the Chinese government and cite the statements of the officials. However, CNN and CCTV pick out different officials’ statements. CNN derives the information from the statement delivered by the U.S. special coordinator, while CCTV quotes the speech of the Chairman of Tibet Autonomous Region. It is clear that the officials do not speak as individuals. Rather, each speaker speaks as a group member and conveys the ideology of their group (van Dijk, 1988). By reproducing the special coordinator’s communication, CNN encodes the shared ideology into the texts and finally diffuses it throughout the society; and so does CCTV.

3.3 *The Representation of News Events*

Apart from different layouts of the events and different choices of source attributions, the textual organizations of events also differ. In respect of Event 1, both CCTV and CNN news present Chinese police and two Tibetan monks as the main participants of the central action: the detainment, and the Dalai Lama and his followers as indirect actors who were involved in inciting the self-immolation. The central action is expressed almost in the same way—“Chinese police have detained a Tibetan monk and his nephew” (see S1, Appendix A; S2, Appendix B)—but when the reason why the two monks are detained is offered for the first time, CCTV says that they are detained “for their roles in inciting a series of self-immolation” (see S2, Appendix B). In contrast, CNN reports that they are detained due to the Chinese police “accusing them of “goading” eight people into setting themselves on fire” (see S1, Appendix B). Although later in Sentence 7, CCTV specifies the number of incited people that CNN reports at the beginning, in Sentence 2 it initially takes advantage of the vague meaning of the phrase “a series” to, in a certain degree, magnify the amount of incited people. In this way, CCTV can create an impression that the influence of the monks’ actions is extensive and then indicate the severity of their actions. By contrast, CNN uses the number “eight” (see S1, Appendix A) to signal precision and therefore enhance the effectiveness of its reporting (van Dijk, 1988).

As for the subsequent reporting of the detainment, the confession about the incitement of self-immolation is presented in different ways. CCTV summarizes what the monks confess to doing by means of indirect speech, while CNN turns the source information into direct quotations as well as indirect speech. As Bell (1991, p. 208) points out, direct quotes enable CNN “to distance and disown, to absolve journalist and news outlet from endorsement of what the source said”. The disowning may show in an implicit way that CNN regards the source as one-sided. As far as it is concerned, it is reasonable to doubt the authenticity of the source information if it can only collect the information from Xinhua news agency. Actually, CNN clarifies this attitude later by saying that

“The Tibetan government-in-exile in India was not immediately available to comment” (see S9, Appendix A).

The second event in both CCTV’s and CNN’s reports is pertinent to the previous occurrences of the self-immolation, but the involved social actors and the ways of representing the event are divergent. In CNN news, the doers of the process of the self-immolation are Tibetans and their actions are presented in the active voice which appears to indicate that what they do is out of their own accord rather than by force. It is noteworthy that CNN specifies that Tibetans engaging in setting themselves on fire include men and women. Thus, it may refer to them as representatives of the entire population of Tibet. Also, CNN states specifically that the reason why the self-immolation continuously occurs is “against Beijing’s treatment of Tibetans” which derives from the account of the “campaigners” (see S5, Appendix A). In this way, CNN may intend to portray the action as an act of protest that is rational and worthwhile to defend. Whereas, in CCTV news, the previous episodes of the self-immolation are only briefly presented in the passive voice—“Most of the attempts are reported” (see S6, Appendix B). The Chinese description lacks the cause and the information provider. Furthermore, the clergy members are not expressed as the doers, instead, they are only the associated participants that are acted upon by some else’s performance. In the main clause “Nearly all victims are clergy members” (see S7, Appendix B), the word “victims” implies that the people who have self-immolated have been influenced or pressurized into doing this by the Dalai Lama and his followers. Therefore, although this clause is structurally in the active voice, the word “victims” encodes the clause with the meaning of passivization, of which the result is to place the emphasis on the effects of the self-immolation and thereby the reader may be feeling these effects. Thus, it is easier for CCTV to persuade the reader to agree that those clergy members should be more sympathized than blamed but that the Dalai Lama and his followers are those who should be condemned.

CNN concentrates on the number of Tibetans who engage in self-immolating, the reason instances of self-immolation happen and the increasing frequency of the self-immolation. CCTV, however, emphasises the description of the place where the self-immolation occurs and moreover the description is positioned prior to the event itself. The word “historic” in Sentence 4 makes Kirti Monastery stand out as a place where Tibetans have worshipped for a long time. Yet, immediately it is portrayed as “a centre of self-immolations” in the following sentence (see Appendix B). The sharp contrast justifies that “it has taken on a darker meaning recently” (see S5, Appendix B) and attributes the negative meaning to the action of the self-immolation.

CNN and CCTV also significantly differ from each other in their representations of Event 3. CCTV news presents “China” as the actor and uses the action verb “issue” to construct the crucial part of the third event (see S21, Appendix B). In addition, “China” is particularized as “the Ministry of Public Security”, “the Supreme People’s Court” and “the Supreme People’s Procuratorate” (see S22, Appendix B); all of which stand for the highest authorities of China. Besides, CCTV particularly mentions that the regulation is made on the basis of “Criminal Law” (see S21, Appendix B). Thereby, CCTV preserves the legitimacy of the regulation and also implies that the self-immolation is considered as illegal from its perspective. By contrast, CNN news expresses the verbal action “release” in the nominal form (see S16, Appendix A). Fowler (1991, p. 80) argues that nominalization is “potentially mystificatory” and permits the writer to conceal their attitude. However, in comparison to the way in which CCTV news states the regulation, it could be argued that CNN deliberately deletes the maker of the regulation in order to decrease the authority of the regulation. In addition, the phrase “appears to” (see S16, Appendix A) invites the reader to question the regulation’s legitimacy. In terms of the content of the regulation, CNN and CCTV use similar direct quotes to define all actions relating to the self-immolation. However, when it comes to the consequence resulting from those actions, CNN only applies indirect speech to state it, while CCTV not only uses indirect speech to illustrate it but also details it by direct quotation. Superficially, it is presented in a verbose way, but the verbosity may enable CCTV news to justify what the Chinese government did to Tibetans involved in the self-immolation.

At the end of the text, by presenting the opinions of the Chinese government and the Dalai Lama about the status of Tibet, CNN apparently only offers the background to the events. Nonetheless, the contrasting representations of the two viewpoints expose its preference for the Dalai Lama. By contrast, CCTV news itself seems to privilege the Chinese government’s condemnation of the Dalai Lama and ask for the universal acknowledgement of the measures that the Chinese government have carried out.

3.4 Variation in Lexical Choices

Ideology not only determines the textual organization of an event, but even extends its influence to “syntactic items” (Kress, 1983, p. 125). The choice of words, for instance, can signify “the degree of formality, the relationship between the speech partners, (...) the attitudes and hence ideologies of the speaker” (van Dijk, 1988, p. 81). In this part, I will focus on the difference between the syntactic items in each report.

3.4.1 Orders vs. Instructions

When reporting the involvement of the Dalai Lama in the incitement of the self-immolation, “instructions” (see S2, Appendix A) is used in CNN news, but “orders” (see S3, Appendix B) is initially used by CCTV. Compared with “instructions”, “orders” connotes a stronger sense of force and hence stresses the participation of the Dalai Lama.

3.4.2 Campaigners vs. Victims

CNN calls those involving in the actions of self-immolations as “campaigners” (see S5, Appendix A), while CCTV regards them as “victims” (see S7, Appendix B). “campaigners” denotes that Tibetans voluntarily sacrifice themselves to accomplish a purpose. However, “victims” has negative as well as passive attributes and implies that the Dalai Lama and his followers should take responsibility for the tragedy. This word is also well joined with the word “order”.

3.4.3 Spiritual Leader, Terrorist vs. the Dalai Lama

In the full CCTV news text, the Dalai Lama is addressed by name (see e.g., S2, S10, Appendix B), whereas, CNN news call him “spiritual leader” (see S8, Appendix A) reflecting its own position, and when it reports the attitude of the Chinese government towards the Dalai Lama, it uses “terrorist” (see S18, Appendix A). In this way, CNN tries to invite the reader to sympathize with the Dalai Lama and reject the Chinese government's position.

3.4.4 Tibetan Government-in-exile vs. Dalai Clique

As to the organization led by the Dalai Lama, CNN names it as the “Tibetan government-in-exile” (see S9, Appendix A) but CCTV uses “clique” (see S19, Appendix B) which is encoded with derogative meaning. Again, this seems to identify their contrasting attitudes toward the Dalai Lama and his followers.

3.4.5 Telling vs. Promised

Regardless of the inflections of these two words, “promise” (see S12, Appendix A) may signal that CNN treats the self-immolation as a matter more positively as well as seriously than CCTV who uses “tell” (see S9, Appendix B).

3.4.6 “Goading”, “Heroes”, “Neutral”

“Goading” (see S1, Appendix A), “heroes” and “neutral” (see S9 & S25, Appendix B) are words with distinct meanings, but all of them are foregrounded by “scare quotes” (Bell, 1991, p. 208). The scare quotes signal that the writer negates what the source says. When using the information from Xinhua news agency to report the reason for the detainment of two monks, CNN uses “goading” to cast their doubts on the claim of Xinhua. On the other hand, when reporting the monk's comment on the self-immolation, CCTV negates the heroism of self-immolation by quoting the word “heroes”. Likewise, the word “neutral” is quoted by CCTV to deny the Dalai Lama's claim.

4. Two Texts: Social Practice

The opinions and attitudes that news discourse expresses are not personal but socially shared. They define the values and beliefs of a group of people (van Dijk, 1988). In other words, news is not the objective reporting of an event. Rather, it is in essence a social practice. Similarly, as a group paradigm, CNN news text does not reproduce the ideology shared by a group of Americans who subscribe to the proceedings of the Dalai Lama and his followers. In the opposite, CCTV news reproduces the ideology shared by Chinese people who are in favour of regarding Tibet as a part of China. More importantly, these two news texts not only confirm and reinforce their values and beliefs within their group but also convey them to other social groups and expect that they are widely accepted.

5. Conclusion

By examining CCTV and CNN news on a syntactical level, I have tried to illustrate how a discourse can be constructed within the framework of ideology. Specifically, the different arrangements of the same events by CCTV and CNN news are influenced by the ideologies these two institutions respectively represent (see Section 3.1). Their different ideologies also lead to different selections of new resources and different textual organizations of the events (see Section 3.2 & 3.3). Furthermore, by comparing each network's choice of words in their reports, to refer to the same actions and people, (see Section 3.4), this brief study has exemplified, from the semantic perspective, how ideologies are formulated, reproduced and bolstered until they eventually influence people. Unfortunately, my analysis cannot comprehensively present the relation between discourse and

ideology due to limitations. For example, it is impossible for me to obtain responses from readers since I do not know who would read these two news reports. Therefore, I cannot investigate the extent to which people are influenced. However, to a large extent, the comparative analysis of discourse can still be regarded as an effective way to apply discourse analysis to decoding the embedded ideology.

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Appendices

NB: I mark sentences with superscript numbers to provide easy lookup if necessary.

Appendix A

China Detains Monk over Tibetan Immolations

By Katie Hunt, for CNN

December 10, 2012—Updated 1224 GMT (2024 HKT)

Hong Kong (CNN)—Chinese police have detained an ethnic Tibetan monk and his nephew, accusing them of “goading” eight people into setting themselves on fire.¹

Lorang Konchok, a 40-year-old monk at Kirti monastery in southwestern Sichuan, had incited self immolations

“on the instructions of the Dalai Lama and his followers,” state news agency Xinhua reported on Sunday.² Xinhua said a police investigation and a confession from the monk showed he had recruited eight people since 2009.³ Three of the protesters died, the report added.⁴ Campaigners say that more than 90 ethnic Tibetans—men and women—have set themselves on fire since 2009 in a series of dramatic protests against Beijing’s treatment of Tibetans.⁵ Because of Chinese restrictions on reporting in Tibetan regions, these acts have been difficult to confirm.⁶ The self-immolations have increased in frequency during recent months, with 28 setting themselves alight in November alone.⁷ Xinhua did not detail what evidence police had of the involvement of the Tibetan spiritual leader.⁸ The Tibetan government-in-exile in India was not immediately available to comment.⁹ The monk used his position at the monastery to encourage others to self-immolate, saying the act was not against Buddhist doctrines and those who did it were heroes, the report said.¹⁰ Konchok recruited his 31-year-old nephew, Lorang Tsering, to help and the pair collected personal information and took pictures of those who agreed to go ahead with the self immolations, it added.¹¹ The monk also promised to “spread their deeds abroad so they and their families would be acknowledged and honored,” Xinhua cited a police statement as saying.¹² Last week, Maria Otero, the U.S. special co-ordinator for Tibetan issues, said in a statement that tough Chinese policies in Tibetan areas had exacerbated tensions, including the immolations.¹³ “Chinese authorities have responded to these tragic incidents with measures that tighten already strict controls on freedoms of religion, expression, assembly and association of Tibetans,” she said.¹⁴ The statement provoked a harsh reaction from Beijing.¹⁵ The arrests also follow the release of a legal document last week that appears to stipulate that anyone caught helping someone self-immolate should be held liable for intentional homicide.¹⁶ “Organizing, plotting, inciting, coercing, enticing, abetting, or assisting others to carry out self-immolations is, at its essence, a serious criminal act that intentionally deprives another of his or her life,” the Gannan Daily newspaper said in a commentary on December 3, according to a translation by the Dui Hua foundation.¹⁷ Beijing says Tibet has been a part of China since the 13th century and regards the Dalai Lama as a terrorist.¹⁸ The Dalai Lama, who fled to India in 1959 after a failed uprising, has long denied China’s assertion that he’s seeking Tibetan independence.¹⁹ He says he wants only an autonomy that would offer protection for their traditional Buddhist culture.²⁰

Appendix B

Police Detain Two Monks for Inciting Self-Immolations

12-10-2012 13:32 BJT

By CCTV reporter Han Bin

China has launched a new regulation to curb self-immolations after several Tibetan monks burned themselves to death in recent years.¹

State-run Xinhua News Agency says Chinese police in southwest China’s Sichuan Province have detained a monk and his nephew for their roles in inciting a series of self-immolations.² Xinhua also reported that the two monks confessed to encouraging and publicizing self-immolations, under orders from the Dalai Lama and his followers.³

The Kirti Monastery in Aba country, is a historic site for Tibetan Buddhists.⁴

But it has taken on a darker meaning recently, becoming a center of self-immolations over the past three years.⁵

Most of the attempts are reported in this Aba Tibetan-Qiang autonomous prefecture.⁶ Nearly all victims are clergy members that belong to the Kirti Monastery.⁷

The statement says that monk Lorang Konchok, and his nephew, goaded eight people to set themselves on fire, three of whom died.⁸

According to his confession and police investigation, Lorang Konchok encouraged others to self-immolate, telling monks that self-immolation was not against Buddhist doctrines and those who did it would be considered “heroes”.⁹ He added that he acted on the instructions of the Dalai Lama and his followers by contacting some key figures from a Tibet Independence organization within the Dalai Group.¹⁰

Tibetan officials have on various occasions condemned those who ignited the self-immolations.¹¹

Padma Choling, Chairman of Tibet Autonomous Region, said, “I feel very distressed over the self-immolations of Tibetan monks.¹² Every life is precious, self-immolation goes against Buddhist doctrines.¹³ Those who support, instigate and do these acts are immoral and should be severely punished”.¹⁴

Many Tibetans believe that self-immolations disturb the harmonious social order.¹⁵

The Chinese government says it has protected freedom of religious activities and improved the well-being of Tibetan areas through rapid economic development over the past decades.¹⁶ It accuses the Dalai Lama of “inciting” more suicides.¹⁷

Foreign Ministry spokesman Liu Weimin said, “Self-immolation activities are “cruel and inhuman”.¹⁸ Members of the “Dalai clique” not only fail to condemn the incidents, but also publicize them to inspire more such acts.¹⁹ I hope reporters seek truth from facts.”²⁰

China has issued a new regulation, stating that based on Criminal Law, people who in any form incite or help others perform self-immolation will be tried for homicide.²¹ This regulation has been jointly drafted by the Ministry of Public Security, the Supreme People’s Court and the Supreme People’s Procuratorate.²²

“People who in any form plan, organize, incite or help others perform self-immolation will be tried for homicide.”²³ “To incite and help others commit self-immolation is in essence a criminal act depriving people of their lives,” reads the regulation.²⁴

By resolving the issues behind self-immolations through legal means, the Chinese government is expected to help the public understand the truth, as well as the Dalai Lama’s so called “neutral” stance on self-immolations.²⁵ But the key is to look into the root causes of these extreme acts, and aim to save more lives in the future.²⁶

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