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**“Becoming a Good Citizen for a Better Life:
Why Does the Middle Class Prefer Negotiation
over Rightful Resistance in Shanghai?”**

Abstract

“Rightful resistance” has become a mainstream theoretical framework for understanding social protests in contemporary China. However, the middle class in Shanghai is more inclined to protect its rights through “loyal appealing” than rightful resistance. The middle class has had to express its loyalty and its “voice” at the same time to minimize its political risk. Rightful resistance and loyal appealing differ in several respects. First, rightful resistance professes loyalty only to the central government, whereas loyal appealing professes loyalty to the local government. Second, rightful resistance considers the local government an object to confront, whereas loyal appealing considers it a potential ally. Finally, activists who engage in rightful resistance use central government policies as their weapon, whereas activists who engage in loyal appealing use the local government’s political performance as a bargaining chip. However, the middle class has not completely relinquished its right to rightful resistance; instead, rightful resistance is a backup to ensure the effectiveness of loyal appealing.