Channel Strategy Note: Restore the Function of “Push,” Not the Old Machinery—Reaching Readers Behind the Firewall in the Age of Spam Filtering and Censorship

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Three Books on Preparing for Transition, Part Two: Communication | Free China Movement

This note evaluates whether and how to restore a service that pushes information to mainland readers, in the tradition of the former Da Cankao, and proposes a contemporary channel architecture. It accompanies “When Does the Window for Transition Open?” This note addresses only public-facing channels, not any individuals, contacts, or internal channels.

I. The Problem

The old service served to deliver news, statements, recommendations, and guidance to mainland readers, helping them feel heard, supported, and educated, and preparing them for a moment of transition. That function is more valuable today than ever. But the old machinery for carrying it out—mass emails to mainland inboxes—no longer works. This note's conclusion is: **restore the function, not the machinery.**

II. Why Old-Style Push Distribution No Longer Works

1. Anti-spam systems have killed overseas bulk email. QQ Mail, 163/126, and Sina Mail heavily filter unsolicited bulk email from abroad. Globally, Gmail and Outlook rate senders based on authentication (SPF/DKIM/DMARC) and user engagement. Most unsolicited bulk messages sent to mainland addresses bounce, are greylisted, or land in spam folders that nobody opens. Collateral damage: a burned domain or IP address damages the sender reputation of legitimate lists. Press releases and subscriber distribution through the Brevo channel depend on that reputation; it must not be mortgaged to an ineffective channel.

2. The risk has shifted to recipients. During the Da Cankao era, Lin Hai was imprisoned for supplying it with email addresses. Today, under real-name registration and server-log retention, receiving sensitive mass email on the mainland amounts to storing evidence against oneself in one's own mailbox. A channel that makes readers bear the risk fails our organization's own test: the goal is to make people feel supported, not exposed.

3. Scarcity has reversed. In 1998, the scarce resource was banned information itself. In 2026, information is abundant; trust, attention, and the ability to coordinate are scarce. Pushing still more volume into a saturated, censored environment achieves almost nothing. The unit of measurement for

channel strategy must therefore change (see Section V).

III. Practical Mechanisms for Reaching People Today: Pull and Relay

1. Pulling information from beyond the firewall. A motivated minority inside the firewall—students, professionals, and even officials—use VPNs to visit YouTube, X, and open websites. The audience is not large, but its influence is disproportionately high, and its self-selection identifies precisely the people needed for transition. Three disciplines apply: be discoverable (friendly to search and citation); resist blocking through mirrors (rotating domains, GitHub/PDF copies, archive sites); and be excerptable (quotable at paragraph level).

2. Relay distribution. Produce abroad, carry inside the firewall. Content designed to "travel"—screenshot-native images, short PDFs, short videos, and one-page summaries—can be shared by WeChat and Weibo users during the window before deletion. A thousand trusted carriers offer better-quality reach than a million bulk email deliveries; a screenshot carries a credibility that unsolicited overseas email never can. Production standard: every important item should also have a "relay edition" (a long-form image, a one-page PDF, and talking points for a video script under 60 seconds).

3. Elite channels also depend on pull. People inside government already include banned overseas Chinese-language media in their information diet. Analysis intended for them should be written for such readers and placed where they already look. Do not bombard them with email: that only triggers security scrutiny and burns the channel.

4. Two-way listening (half of "being heard," and absent from the old model). Operate a secure inbound channel. After strict anonymization, voices from inside the firewall are published back into analysis and testimony after strict anonymization, allowing people there to see their reality represented and know they are not alone. This is the strongest signal of being supported. **Red line: a contributor's identity must never enter any shared register, shared document, or this system. Identity information and content must be physically separated in the workflow; review de-identification before publication.** This clause records principles only, not any specific channel arrangements.

5. Education is preparation. The Forty Questions series is the modern form of the old digest mission. What is delivered is no longer a collection of news clippings but constitutional literacy, an understanding of transition mechanisms, and knowledge of "what to do the next morning" (Questions 21–25). When a window opens, people will need not more anger, but prior understanding of how transition should work.

IV. Legitimate Uses of Email (Retain, Do Not Expand)

- Voluntary, double-opt-in subscriptions outside the firewall for overseas Chinese communities, media, and policy audiences. Continue the existing Brevo distribution channel, maintaining authentication and list hygiene.
- Distribution of press releases and statements to journalists and institutional lists. Keep the existing PR channel; do not mix its domains or sender identities with mainland outreach.
- **Do not:** send unsolicited mass email to mainland addresses; buy or exchange address lists; or disguise bulk mail as messages from personal email accounts. All three violate standards of effectiveness, safety, and sender reputation simultaneously.

V. Changing Strategic Metrics

The old metric, "number of messages delivered," is obsolete. The new metric asks one question: **When the moment arrives, will people inside the firewall already know who we are, trust what we say, and know what to do?** This can be operationalized through repeat visits and citations on channels accessed from beyond the firewall; publicly observable appearances of relay-edition content inside the firewall

(screenshots and reposts); the number of valid contributions to listening channels (count only, never identity); and completion rates for educational series. This asset—the perceived presence of a credible "receiving structure"—cannot be filtered out by a spam filter or erased entirely by a single blockade.

Implementation measurement and baseline. Establish baselines for these indicators from the date of publication of this note, with the first three months serving as the baseline period. Count repeat visits and citations monthly using site logs and public platform statistics. Sample publicly visible screenshots and reposts to count appearances of relay-edition content inside the firewall, counting repeated appearances of the same item only once. Count valid contributions received through listening channels by number only, never identity, and aggregate monthly. Use platform completion statistics to measure full reads of the educational series. After the baseline period, compare results quarterly with the baseline, reporting only trends and orders of magnitude rather than drawing conclusions from a single month's fluctuations. No metric may be measured by collecting personal information.

VI. Conclusion

Do not rebuild the email cannon. Build four things: (1) open publishing reinforced with mirrors and optimized for pulling information from beyond the firewall; (2) content formats engineered for relay inside the firewall; (3) a protected two-way listening channel (record principles, not details); and (4) a return of email to its legitimate uses—voluntary subscriptions and press distribution outside the firewall. In this way, the old service's function is restored under new physical conditions, without making any mainland reader bear risk merely for receiving our content.

(This note was compiled on October 31, 2026. It contains only public-facing material.)

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