

Media freedom in china since 1949 assignment



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China has experienced several different stages of development since it founded in 1949; media control exists in every development stage to varying degrees. The Chinese Communist Party (ICP) has never fully given up media control due to its fundamental governing principle, which is to eliminate any different voices that hinder social and political stability. However, the increasing economic liberalizing in the recent decades has caused the media to be increasingly commercialese and decentralized, this new trend has forced the ICP to develop new strategies to monitor and control public opinion.

However, the situation is becoming more and more complex as proliferation of societal and market organizations outside the government's direct oversight makes public media harder to control. The rising of internet and other social networking technologies has made the conventional media censor techniques hard to employ and function as well. This interesting situation has created a "regime of uncertainty" in the future of Chinese media and surely deserves deeper look by both China scholars and organization theorists. (Hashish, 2008) Keywords: China, media, Chinese Communist Party, control

Sixty years after the communism "liberation" of the People's Republic of China, there have been a lot of changes taken place in this country, both economically and culturally. To keep up with the rapid developed economy and globalization, the Chinese political system is also evolving, adopting western ideas and criticisms, sending a significant numbers of Chinese students overseas to receive higher education. Over the last several decades, with the introduction of capitalism and a consequent relaxed

political environment, it appears that China is gradually becoming freer in a dynamic range of perspectives, and the communist party in

China seems to deviate from its ideology. However, one of the most important distinctions between autocracy and democracy was guaranteed freedom of media and speech, the first Chinese communist leader Mao Zee Dong has promised the Chinese people with the rights of free speech and media, has the communist party fulfilled its promise since then? In fact, media freedom has never truly taken place in China; the government has always trying to have the media under control with the prosecution and imprisonment of outspoken editors, the forced restructuring of editorial boards, and the suspension of liberal papers.

A new phenomenon which called “ public option supervision” is imperceptibly rising in the current communist state; grass-roots government has gradually become the central authorities’ watch dogs to monitor media and press. Even if the government attempts to control and restrict the outflow of media and public opinion, people can still make their way through the new communication technologies such as the internet and social networking, which makes the Chinese Communist Party (ICP) to establish new methods of internet censorship and surveillance. The picture of China’s media freedom has never been more complex than before.

The purpose of this article is to describe the overall status of expression freedom in China, with emphasis of the most recent decade in which media freedom has experienced the most complex censorship and surveillance by the ICP, the paper will summarize several examples to support this thesis

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such as the Southern Metropolis Daily incident in 2003, the withdrawn of Google in 2011 and the recent obstruction faced by Backbone to enter Chinese market, this article will then analyze the reason behind Chinese media control in the contest of both historically-rooted and politics elated concerns, identify the true purpose of “ public opinion supervision” and further explores the possible paths forward for the liberty of media in China. Since the foundation of People’s Republic of China by Chairman Mao in 1949, China’s media was considered as a revolutionary instrument, better known as the Scup’s “ mouth and throat. ” Lie Iguana, Professor and Executive Dean of the Thuggish School of Journalism and Communication, remarked that in those days, negative reporting was non-existent: “ good news is news, bad news is not news. According to the Scups ideology, the media was entrusted by the ICP with the task of preserving social stability and promoting specific policies, while this conception of the media sits uneasily with many Western observers, the Chinese government unabashedly used the term “ propaganda” to describe the media’s role in society (Cheek, 1989). During the Mayo’s ear (1949-1976), the state tightly controlled all outlets for media, restricting not only their numbers but also their content, length, and format. From 1949 until mid sass, all news providers were founded either directly by the state, indirectly wrought a policy of forced subscriptions that kept circulation numbers artificially high, or through “ back scratching” arrangements across organizations (Hashish, 2008).

The role of China’s propaganda media was a form of both “ hegemonic” and “ petitioners” communication, in which the people did not have ability to be suspicious of the Scups political system, because they didn’t know that in the

outside world, a different, worthier life even existed (Hashish, 2008). Thus, the media was a single-way channel that passes information from the Party to the people but not a mediator between them. The term “ public opinion supervision” was first coined by former Chinese Premier Shah Uzi yang, he pointed out that internal supervision within the ICP must go hand in hand with external supervision, the latter including supervision by media. In addition, the media is required to adhere to Party principles, to direct public opinion to the right course and to be aware of the social impact of public opinion supervision (Shah, 1987).

It was understood that under this system the media has served as the “ eyes and ears” of the government, only “ positive” information that served the interest of the ICP was allowed to be broadcasted. Public pinion has been deliberately manipulated to the direction of the party desire. However, China’s media experienced drastic structural and functional changes after 1978. In 1979, centralization was allowed for the first time in the guise of advertisements and market competition, and the number of news providers and range of acceptable content both dramatically increased (Hashish, 2008). In 1983, the broadcasting system was decentralized, leaving only China Central Television (CATV) under central party supervision (Hung, 1994).

In 1992, after Eden Shaping’s famed visit to the southern regions of the country, the State Press and Publications Administration required that all major newspapers, apart from a few central party organs, become financially self sufficient by 1994, which also is the first time that the media is introducing the market elements into its structure. Under the influence of the <https://assignbuster.com/media-freedom-in-china-since-1949-assignment/>

market, the media now has to serve two masters and thus has two goals: to avoid offending the Party and to please the market. Chin-Chuan Lee, Professor Emeritus of the School of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Minnesota writes that China's schizophrenic market-oriented media has a capitalistic body that wears a socialist face (Hashish, 2008).

Having to dance between the party line and the bottom line, these papers seek a middle road between satisfying the traditional party organs and creating a propagandist-commercial model of Journalism that pleases the leaders and the ordinary readers at the same time. This formula is required for the survival of all of China's commercialese media. Lee cynically describes China's media as having changed from being a Party mouthpiece to a Party publicity corporation. Rather than brainwashing people, the media is now assigned tasks to resolve social conflict, to promote Party legitimacy and to check rising corruption at the lower levels of the government (Hashish, 2008).

Thus, the economic reforms have gradually but effectively transferred a degree of media control from the Party to the market and indirectly expanded the scope of media freedom. Although economic liberalizing has translated into some expression freedom; there still remains no independent press in China. The author has conducted an interview to a certain group of Chinese nationals; the general view of the current status of press freedom is that certain freedom is provided with limitations. On a practical level, individually owned or civilian organized newspapers are not allowed. Rather, China's print media is largely divided into party and non-party organs. " The <https://assignbuster.com/media-freedom-in-china-since-1949-assignment/>

leading Newspapers are the Party papers, directly controlled by and responsible to the ICP, and each province has its own Party paper.

Non-party media still belong to and are supervised by major Party organs, government departments or their sub-units or semi-official organizations such as women's associations or trade unions. Also, more strict censorship is being applied to those non-party presses; this was done by banning wayward publications, ailing dissident Journalists, and attempting to consolidate control under huge government-run conglomerates (Hashish, 2008). One of the best known examples of this phenomenon is the fallout that resulted from the Sun Shining case in 2003. Early that year, designer Sun Shining, originally from Huber Province, moved to the southern Chinese city of Guanos to begin working for a garment company. In April 2003, he was detained by Guanos police for not carrying his temporary residence permit.

While in police custody in an internal migrant detention facility, he was beaten to death by the facility staff members. After the aggressive non-party paper - Southern Metropolis Daily reported the circumstances of Sun's death on April 25, newspapers all over the country reprinted the article, in the face of a national uproar. Ultimately, the pressure on the government to act was so great that the 20- year-old law authorizing the use of such internal detention facilities was repealed in what amounted to a major victory for a watchdog press. However, a few months later, police raided the Southern Metropolis Daily and detained the top editor and six other officials in what many Journalists regarded as retribution for aggressive reporting on Sun's case.

Ultimately the managing editor and one other official were sentenced to prison time on clearly weak evidence of alleged corruption. The Southern Metropolis Dialysis top staff have been replaced by ICP appointees, and the paper has never regained its prominent pre-arrest reputation (Hashish, 2008). Another example of media control the author learned from the interview is the Southern Weekly in incident which happened Just recently. Southern Weekly is one of the most liberal Chinese newspapers, it is also a sister publication of the Southern Metropolis Daily. The paper is famous for its investigative reporting and reporters there have insistently pushed the boundary to what is publishable by the ICP.

Thus, they are constantly fighting against the government censorship and try to provide freedom speech to its readers, however, the department of propaganda has cracked down on them quite often, they constantly face the harassment of the Chinese government, then even replaced their top editors to pro-government officials, the editors have to often deal with the situations as their stories being changed by the publisher, sometimes not only their words are cut and edited into a paeon to the government, there are also basic factual errors in the copy. The Southern Weekly has recently undergone an protest against government control, in early 2013, the editors were furious about their editorial column, originally titled " China's Dream, the Dream of Constitutional Government," being manipulated and renamed " Chasing Our Dreams. They saw this ridiculous alteration as illegal act and demented an investigation. When this investigation was stalled, they decided to come out on strike, which had absolutely go ground to the party stance. The Department of Propaganda quickly responded with action, but

instead of dealing specifically with Southern Weekly, they attacked the entire body of the Chinese press corps. The department released an urgent notice emphasizing that “ Party control of the media is an unwavering basic principle” and that “ external hostile forces are involved in the development of the situation. ” They asked that every media outlet’s “ editors, reporters, and staff discontinue voicing their support for Southern Weekly. The department has also called all media and websites in all locales to prominently republish an article emphasizing the need for freedom of the press to be subservient to the government and the party. The government also threatened to close down the press if it does not “ fully respect the Part’s control over the media. ” Finally as the demonstrations have died down from constant political pressure, Southern Weekly is sure to remain a crucial battleground between liberal editors and the ICP press censorship. The above two examples simplify shows us how ICP censors and pressurize the local non-party owned press media. Although the local news press was strictly under the control of ICP, new technologies such as internet and online social networking have transformed the structure of Chinese mass media to a new era.

As the introduction of the internet took place in the late ass’s, in a very short time, China has owned the world’s largest internet users - over 450 million. Internet voices are quickly emerging in favor of democratic reforms in China, which has caught great attention of the government. Thus, the ICP has developed very sophisticated technology for intercepting and censoring internet content. The government blocks many topics and online posts which it considers sensitive or controversial and often punishes those who try to

get around those restrictions. They censor content transmitted through Web pages, blogs, forums, bulletin boards and e-mail.

Media regulation and state secrets laws, cybercaf???? regulations, and controls over service and content providers are designed to support filtering. The Central Propaganda Department makes sure content providers stick with material that is consistent with Communist Party ideology (Chinese Censorship, 2004). The famous internet filter currently used by the ICP is called " the Great Fire Wall of China" definitely has its irony meaning.

According to the data collected through the interview, some internet posts were deleted 5 minutes after posting, the ICP has hired a lot of people as network monitoring agent, they are paid to find suspicious posts, delete blogs and seize online accounts.

In addition, the ICP hires hackers to steal private information from other overseas servers and constantly attack servers outside of China who offers services to Human rights activities or anyone who might pose a threat to the Party interest. The withdrawn of Google in 2011 is a very good example to portray the Scups increasing desire to " gate keep" the internet, Google is the world's biggest online media many today, through its search engine and through its Youth, Flogger, and Resort services, Google has become the world's most important platform for disseminating information, earning more than half its income outside the United States (chanced, 2011).

When Google began offering its service from servers in China in 2006, the company agreed to the censorship request demented by the Chinese government, however, after more and more people were using Google as

their primary search engine, the Chinese government was demanding more strict filters to be added to the engine which had caused the service to degrade, Google officials had to constantly consult with ICP officials to just keep the search engine running. Also, Google has identified China as the source of attacks on prominent U. S. Web properties and e-mail accounts belonging to human rights activists, though it has not revealed the specific people behind them. After months' debate with Chinese Government, Google finally decided to withdraw its services from mainland China.

On the day that Google left its main office in Beijing, there were well-wishers who showed up to lay flowers and candles at Google's Beijing headquarters, in mock- mourning. However, the security guard informed them that they would need " apply for permits from the authority before laying flowers; otherwise they would be conducting an ' illegal flower tribute' [(Cunningham, 2010)]. On a different note, the world's current most popular social networking website- Backbone is not planning to offer service in China, Passbook's most immediate hurdle in China is the demand by the ICP to limit free speech and allow officials access to company data. In return for a license to operate, local internet companies are required to employ censors at their own expense.

Given Passbook's high-profile role in monopolizing people and facilitating protests, such as those that helped topple the Egyptian government in 2011, it seems unlikely that the Chinese government would be interested in granting Backbone a license to operate locally [(Hempen, 2012)]. China's current biggest networking service providers, Q, Sina are successful because they have become experts at navigating an ever-changing relationship with <https://assignbuster.com/media-freedom-in-china-since-1949-assignment/>

the government. As the services grow more popular, attempts to censor them grow more aggressive. Starting 2012, the Chinese government began to require any user posting on a social-networking count to register using a real name [(Hempen, 2012)]. Over all, The ICP has stumbled upon a strategy that works very well in controlling large numbers of independent media both locally and online.

Media may function as the Party has always intended, as a form of public opinion supervision, while simultaneously serving its own interests. The ICP will implement new media policies to control media flow at any cost, which would be dependent on how it felt each related to its fundamental desire to minimize the threats to its continued rule at a given moment in time. The good news is, despite the government blockage, it has been an increasing trend that more and more Chinese citizens are looking for alternative political views other than the mainstream news thru more ingenious ways. More and more internet users start to find ways to bypass “ the Great Fire Wall” and seek for truth.

Consequently, the liberalizing force of the market has triggered a quiet media revolution, and has opened up a new breathing space for the general public. China’s media outlets are no longer a mere conduit of propaganda from the Party to the people, but are instead assuming a significant new role in China’s political and social courses. Bibliography Anderson, P. J. (2009). China, News Media Freedom and the West: Present and Future Perspectives. *Europe Studies* , 209-224. chanced, A. (2011). Gogging Freedom. *California Law Review* , 99. Cheek, T. (1989). Redefining Propaganda: Debates on the

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