

**Beyond Tiananmen:
Media and Social Stability in China**

By

Cuiping Zhang

A Thesis Submitted to
Saint Mary's University, Halifax, Nova Scotia
In Partial fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts in International Development Studies

September 2010, Halifax, Nova Scotia

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Abstract

Different countries have different priorities in their development approaches. For China, the precondition to development is social stability. This paper highlights, theoretically and empirically, how development and news media are closely linked by looking at the various and indispensable roles of Chinese news media on maintaining social stability. Conceptually, this thesis mobilizes western development theories, Chinese traditional social values and the Communist ideology to account for the complexity of China's development in the reform process. Empirically, by illustrating the significance of social stability in Chinese development model, and by demonstrating the necessity of uncensored media to maintain social stability, with special emphasis on its roles in economic, political and social development, the paper concludes that an open, freer media will serve China's development goal, and suggests that more appropriate methods to use the media as a tool to maintain social stability should be sought.

September 7, 2010

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Glossary of Terms

AFP	- Agence France-Presse
BBC	- The British Broadcasting Corporation
CASS	- Chinese Academy of Sciences
CCP	- Chinese Communist Party
CCPPD	- Chinese Communist Party Propaganda Department
CCTV	- China Central Television
GAPP	- General Administration of Press and Publication
GDP	- Gross Domestic Product
IRM	- Internal Reference Materials
MCA	- Ministry of Civil Affairs
MII	- Ministry for Information Industry
MPS	- Ministry of Public Security
NAPSS	- National Administration for the Protection of State Secrets
NBS	- National Bureau of Statistics
NCCCP	- National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party
PRC	- People's Republic of China
SARFT	- State Administration of Radio, Film and Television
SCIO	- State Council Information Office
SOE	- State-owned Enterprises
SPPA	- State Press and Publications Administration
UN	- United Nations
UNESCO	- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
USSR	- The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WTO	- World Trade Organization

Chapter 1 Beyond Tiananmen:

Media and Social Stability in China

This thesis studies the role of uncensored news media in maintaining social stability in China's reform era, through a case study of news reporting of the SARS outbreak. Fundamentally, this thesis aims to explore the multiple roles of media contributing to China's development.

In the title “Beyond Tiananmen, Media and Social Stability in China”, “Tiananmen” is a symbol. Tiananmen, meaning “The Gate of Heavenly Peace”, has remained the highest symbol of power in the land for over 500 years (since 1420). Representing national pride and strength, it is deeply embedded in ancient Chinese culture and modernization. Tiananmen Square is the largest public square in the world, associated with numerous historical happenings which had different but important impacts on China's history. For instance, on May 4, 1919, when the German colonies in Shandong province were taken over by the Japanese after the First World War, intellectuals and students demonstrated against the result of the treaty of Versailles and demanded the democratization and westernization of China; On October 1, 1949, Chinese leader Mao Zedong proclaimed the establishment of People's Republic of China (PRC) to an audience of 500,000 in

Tiananmen Square; and, in late Spring in 1989, Tiananmen witnessed the pro-democracy movement ending in violent confrontation between the students and the government.

These events, with many others, have had enormous social impacts in the Chinese society: the 1919 demonstration unveils China's movement of nationalism and political mobilization; the 1949 Declaration of Independence "We have stood up" set China on a modernization course with economic and political autonomy; the 1989 movement led China's development to "Socialism with Chinese Characteristics".

My thesis has the following "symbols" represented by Tiananmen: traditional Chinese cultures and values, modernization, nationalism, and the interaction between the political powers and the public. "Going beyond the frame of Tiananmen" implies two meanings: first, it means that we cannot examine China's development solely within a fixed frame of government control; instead, we should bear in mind that "Tiananmen" has its liberal values as well. Second, which is the topic of this paper, it means free from censorship, with which, Chinese media can foster China's development through maintaining social stability.

1.1 Justification of Study: Development, Social Stability, and Media

What does "development" really means with respect to different countries? Different

countries have different priorities in their development models. For developing countries, is the goal merely to increase economic growth and national wealth, or to improve the well-being and the quality of life of the majority of the population? Is the goal to reduce the cultural distance with the West or to resist western cultural hegemony? Is the goal to strengthen the state's power or to ensure people's freedom? Is the goal to restrict the freedom of expression and freedom of information regarded as threatening to national security and development, or to promote active participation, human rights, and judicial protection of these rights to ensure better governance and democracy? Within a broader framework of globalization, the integration of various development objectives into the development process - and thus into the theory definition, solution-seeking and implementation on various economic and social sectors - is imperative.

In the past decades, there has been a growing recognition of the nexus between media and development that includes human, social and international development. In order to achieve development, media should constitute an integral part of the development process and cannot be considered in isolation from it. The growing diversity of approaches to development results in various correlations between media development and development: economic, political, educational, environmental and civil society development. State actors, business organizations, aid agencies and NGOs are increasingly recognizing the

multi-level impacts of media in fostering development. By covering news, the media shapes the political, economic, cultural and social picture of society. The news media refers to “the section of the mass media that focuses on presenting current news to the public. These include print media (newspapers, magazines); broadcast media (radio stations, television stations, television networks), and increasingly Internet-based media” (News media, n.d.). By shaping different pictures of the society on a daily basis, news media play an indispensable role in development.

The Chinese government has reiterated that social stability is the precondition to the country’s development. There are many components to social stability and various threats to it. In China, this term assimilates modern ideas in particular Marxism, and it draws strategically from the traditional Chinese culture which is thousands of years old, essentially from the indigenous Confucian political ideology. “Social stability” is included and emphasized in numerous policies, laws and regulations, and it is reiterated by all levels of governments in different contexts.

Over the years, the nation has increased the breadth and frequency of use of this concept. Its overriding importance can be found in government reports, officials’ speeches, and all kinds of publications. Social stability has become a top priority for the government and an important social value in the society. This concept is also featured with ancient

Chinese values, Confucianism, which has been the de facto official philosophy in China for about 2,000 years. There is little discussion of this concept in the development literature in the West. Nevertheless, this concept is the basis of China's assertive development model with Chinese characteristics, which draws on the experience of western modernization and the lessons of other developing countries, and develops on China's historical and current social conditions.

By reporting news, Chinese media not only have to please the propaganda department, but also meet the public's demands. So, what is the nexus between media and development in China? What are the impacts of the media's integration in the development process? Considering the maintenance of social stability as the nation's development goal, how does news media contribute to achieving this goal?

1.2 Background and Hypothesis

Like many other developing countries, in order to handle various social contradictions and conflicting interests in the process of transition and structural adjustment, the Chinese government has to make every endeavour to sustain its economic growth, and to preserve political stability and a sound social order while forging ahead with reforms. Among these

endeavours, news media is an influential, or even dominant, mechanism (Shou, 2007, p.21).

This study is going to look at the role of news media in this development process.

The popular western view on the Chinese news media is that the Chinese government shapes, manipulates and censors news media with severe control (He 2006; Chen and Shi, 2001; Karlekar, 2004; U.S. Department of State 2008). In their opinion, as China is a country with an authoritarian tradition and a leading political party that upholds Marxism as guiding ideology, news media are performing with restrictions and guidance given by the propaganda department. News media and media workers (editors and journalists) are viewed as mere mouthpieces of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the government. The maintenance of social stability is also often translated into tight government control over the news media. Historically, these views are probably correct.

However, during the two-decade-long reform era, as a result of the enormous economic and social change, the media in China has held multiple roles in its transition to the market instead of just a mouthpiece. Its impacts are more complex. In the presence of tremendous market demand for information, with deepening economic and opening-up reform, rapid market liberalization, increasing privatization, administrative fragmentation, technological advancements and evolving trend of globalization, media has become one of China's key economic drives, as well as an effective channel for the more informed public.

In addition, in recent years, the Chinese media has been increasingly transformed to suit public priorities, and it becomes critical of the government sometimes. By breaking into the limits of the authority's censorship, media acts as "an inspector" or "a mirror", or "an agent of social change" that facilitates the building of other institutions for the country's economic, political, cultural and social development.

Such media effects have been recognized by the Chinese authority. However, marketization and commercialization in China is manoeuvred by the state, as is the media. According to the authorities, China is facing thorny domestic issues that challenge the government's ability to govern the populous country well. Both at home and abroad, much attention is pressuring China to be more open, transparent and democratic. Fearing an independent media that could cause social instability, the authorities keep control over the media – sometimes loose, sometimes tight control. The CCP monitors the news content; the media workers are under strict control; and many media companies, willing or not, under self-censorship, toe the official propaganda line (especially on some specific topics), so as to preserve social solidarity and a good international reputation. It is prohibited to publish negative, critical or sensitive news, which is regarded to be a threat to social stability.

It is acknowledged that access to information is so important for the individual and the

nation, that society would become chaotic without it. Many cases have shown that news blackout results in widespread rumours, disinformation and outages, which often lead to a stagnant economy, political instability and social disorder. My question is whether uncensored Chinese media helps or hinders the development goal of social stability. My hypothesis is that uncensored news reporting can maintain social stability in China.

1.3 Methodology

To support this hypothesis, I will look at media development by reviewing four waves of media evolution in contemporary China, with a focus on the time period of the reform era of the 1990s. The review of media reforms will provide a background on Chinese media, illustrating its traditional role as a “Party mouthpiece” and its development amidst the marketization reforms. Factors of commercial incentives, decentralization, globalization, technological advancement, and force of civil society will be discussed, all of which have furthered the openness of media in spite of being under control.

The reasons that focus is placed on the media development in the 1990s are, first of all, that although China’s marketization reform was unveiled in 1978, the economic reform starting from 1992 was more assertive and aggressive. Secondly, the pro-democracy

movement in 1989 instilled a liberal-democratic culture, which was influenced by western modernization ideologies and the growing civil society. Lastly, in the context of accelerated globalization, China also set an agenda in 1990s to play a more active role in the international community by establishing an image of modernity, power, and responsibility, and by fulfilling its international obligations and commitments. In this regard, the 15-year efforts to achieve accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the bid to host the 2008 Summer Olympics were the main focus in 1990s.

In order to show the media development in the reform era, I will discuss the media production and consumption from 1990 to 2000. On the media production side, the data will include: the statistics of the number of the newspapers, magazines, television channels and radio stations; the increased revenue from advertising; the popularity of Internet and mobile phones. These data show the impacts of marketization on media, illustrating a striking growth of media industry. On the media consumption side, as media have a tremendous influence on public opinions, I will provide data showing a preference for media content shifting to domestic news, which shows the consumerist angle in news reporting. Moreover, during the 1990s, investigative journalism returned to China. For example, CCTV programmes “Focus” (1994) and News Probe (1996), Southern Weekend, Southern Metropolitan Daily, Dahe Daily and the Beijing News, all started in this era and

they have been very popular.

With the data from both media production and media consumption sides, a rapid media development in the 1990s in China will be shown. I will not argue a propaganda state no longer existed, but I will prove it has been weakened, by using Chen and Shi's findings (2001) which indicate that since the early 1990s, government monopoly of news content had largely decreased.

The media development in China's reform era did promote social stability. Although there is no definition in the official government documents or survey done on social stability, I will borrow some of the previous attributes and related statistics to show how others have examined this concept. Berg (1998) has posited that such a method even may bring about some creation. First of all, I will look at how the growth of media industry contributes to the nation's economic development. Secondly, considering that during the 1990s, media enjoyed more freedom and independence, I will examine how the media shaped public opinions. By using the data in the 1999 Six-city Survey (Tang, 2005), I will assess the consequences of "Political mobilization" and "Political alienation" – the former includes "Regime support", "Official ideology" and "Nationalism", and the latter includes "Pro-Western tendencies", "Political activism", "Political efficacy" and "Support for civic values". I will also use this data to examine how media promotes liberalization. Thirdly, to

support the findings of the 1999 Six-city Survey and to further evaluate the level of public support in the government, I will use the fourth wave of World Values Surveys¹ to examine and compare the confidence and trust in the Chinese government with other survey countries from 1990 to 2000.

As my case study is about news reporting during the SARS outbreak in 2003, I will also give a picture of the social tensions and dynamics in the early 2000s, which caused the government to tighten its control over the media with the aim of preserving social stability. The social tensions can be seen from the striking increase in “mass incidents” (social unrest), one form of social instability.

I use news reporting on SARS during its outbreak from late 2002 as a case study because it is an unprecedented public health disaster, posing a serious threat to human security and social stability, especially in China. In such a global health emergency, the access to timely and accurate information is particularly necessary. The news blackout in the beginning clearly shows that, social stability will be at risk when the government monopolizes information and the news media cannot report the truth. In the later stage (after April 20), when government loosened its control, an information explosion on all

¹ World Values Survey: an ongoing academic project by social scientists to assess the state of sociocultural, moral, religious and political values of different cultures around the world.
<http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/>

kinds of media instantly stabilized the society. At the same period of time, while there were critical news reports blaming the slow response and irresponsibility of some government officials, there were also numerous “Role-model” reports inherited from Mao’s era to promote traditional spirits, values and moralities. By praising Party leaders, senior government officials, doctors and nurses, the propaganda managed to regain public support and re-establish social solidarity.

Three factors will be taken into account here: timeliness and accuracy, the content and tone of the reporting, and the online news coverage. Firstly, the news reporting is collected in contrast with the actual situations (reported by WHO or international media) according to the time sequence – by this we can tell how long the government imposed explicit control over the media (from late 2002 to April 2003), which not only delayed the world’s timely and proper handling of the outbreak, but also caused panic, fear and chaos in the society, as well as loss of confidence in the government. Secondly, the way of reporting is assessed, which often determines how a society reacts to the catastrophe. Then the online coverage of SARS outbreak is looked into, with the goal of understanding the impact of the use and popularity of technology in news media.

The impact of news reporting on social stability is thus discussed from four angles: the negative effects on the tertiary sector, export growth and employment situation; the trigger

effect of social tension, by creating panic, chaos and unrest; the decreasing trust in the government's accountability, and the damaging effect to China's international reputation.

SARS is just one of the cases in which social stability was lost due to control over the media. Although the SARS issue is unique, the impact of control on the media is common. From the case studies, we will be able to see the role of the news media in maintaining social stability.

1.4 Chapter Preview and Theoretical Framework

The purpose of the paper is to assess the relationship between Chinese news media and China's development, which is maintaining social stability. This thesis attempts to explore and examine the background, origins, dynamics, policies, processes and consequences of China's media development, with a focus on the period of time from 1978 to 2003. By doing so, the thesis seeks to understand and explain the impact of news media on maintaining social stability. An integrated approach will be taken so as to understand the complexity of China's development.

The paper is divided into 6 chapters. The first chapter introduces an overview of this paper. The "media", "development" and "social stability" are used in this thesis as an

orienting framework, and the correlations between “development” and “social stability”, between “media and development” and between “media and social stability” will be explored. Hypothesis is derived from these correlations, fundamentally from the correlation between “media and social stability”. Rationale and justifications are put forward to explain why media should be included in development, why “social stability” is used in the context of China’s development, and why the role of news media in maintaining social stability is important.

Chapter 2 looks at popular development theories - Modernization, Dependency, Structuralism, Marxism, and Civil Society in Another Development - in which media plays different, and important, roles in achieving respective development goals. These development theories are chosen because each provides an explanation for certain circumstances in the Chinese society due to China’s complex pattern of development, especially after 1978 when the economic reforms were unveiled. Under each section, it starts with a review of the basis and arguments of the theory by different theorists, followed by viewpoints and discussions in regard to the roles and effects of (news) media in the paradigm. This chapter then throws some light on endogenous Chinese theories: Mao Zedong Thoughts [*Mao Zedong Sixiang*] and Deng Xiaoping Theory [*Deng Xiaoping Lilun*], both of which attach great importance to media in ideological control. But the latter

endows media with multiple roles in maintaining social stability. Media is regarded as an agitator, an organizer, a mobilizer, a propagandist, and the Party's mouthpiece in Mao Zedong Thoughts. Deng Xiaoping Theory, which stresses commercialization, marketization, opening-up and technology in China's development, shifts the role of media to more diverse roles, in promoting the national economy, in informing, educating and entertaining the public, and in learning about western knowledge, cultures and technologies.

Chapter 3 consists of two sections. The discussion of social impacts of media from both "Development studies" perspective and "Media studies" perspective leads to the definition and analysis of the theory of "social stability" in section two. This section includes different definitions of this concept by different Chinese scholars, and analyses them in China's context with western development theories and ancient Chinese social values which have developed from Confucianism. The section outlines the functions of media as a tool for maintaining social stability.

Chapter 4 starts with an introduction of China's propaganda system, and then addresses Chinese media development and the overall situation of China's development process from 1949 to early 2000s, which includes modernization and socialist building-up. As China's media development was also part of the comprehensive reform, the discussion

revolves around the reform era starting from 1978, and the main focus is on the post-1992 era, when media development in China grew even faster and enjoyed significantly greater discretion over media content. The media reform process has been full of twists and turns. The factors of market incentives, political decentralization, the development of civil society, continued globalization and technological advancements, result in media's relatively independent position between the state and the public. Media acts as a stabilizer of the society in economic, political, and social development in China. Chen and Shi's findings (2001), Tang's studies of surveys (2005), and the World Value Survey will be discussed here, in support of my hypothesis. This data establishes the link between the news media and social stability. The last sector in this chapter depicts a picture of the Chinese media environment in the early 2000s: continued commercialization, advanced technologies, increasing civic awareness, and the reassertion of control over the media.

Beginning with an introduction of social tensions as the background to the SARS outbreak, Chapter 5 "Case Studies and Analysis" shows how this epidemic disease was reported, which mirrors Chinese media's dilemma in reporting critical, negative, or sensitive news. The chapter explains the reasons for the control over such news reporting, combining systemic and specific reasons for the government's control, due to concerns over social instability. This chapter presents and discusses the impacts of such untrue,

untimely and government-controlled reporting, which disrupted public order and unity, violated public interest, and adversely affected the economic development and the government's image home and abroad.

Chapter 6 presents the theories that have been applied to China's development and summarizes the country's development in reality. Based on the discussion, the chapter also proposes future research directions.

Chapter 7 provides a summary of findings and the theoretical contribution of the study.

Chapter 2 Theoretical Framework:

Media Impacts on Developing Countries

2.1 Theories Of Development And The Media

This chapter describes the theoretical framework of Modernization Theory, Dependency Theory, Structural Theory, Marxist Theory, the Theory of Civil Society, and theories initiated by Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping. These wide ranging western popular theories have had repercussions in China sooner or later. For example, Modernization Theory, which prevailed in the West in the 1950s and 1960s, did not become popular in China until the 1980s, while Civil Society Theory, which came to prominence in the West in the early 1970s, has been a hot topic in China since the mid-1990s. Due to the scale and complexity of development after China launched its economic reforms in 1978, these existing development theories could explain its complex pattern of development.

The time period of the texts that will be used in this chapter range from 1958 to 2007, and focus on the role of the news and other media in developing countries. This fifty-year period will allow sufficient time to track the theories and their application, so as to best establish the role of news media in development in contemporary China.

2.1.1 Modernization Theory.

In this section, my primary focus will be on the earlier modernization theorists Daniel Lerner and Wilbur Schramm, whose works, sometimes referred to as the dominant paradigm, are central to Modernization Theory. Attention will also be drawn to the late modernization theorists Denis McQuail and Anthony Giddens.

The early Modernization Theory emerged in the context of the Cold War, when the West used the notion of “modernization” to bring capitalism to the newly independent countries in Asia, Africa and the Middle East, which were regarded as “less developed countries” (LDCs). The modernization paradigm took shape when Hoselitz’s influential journal *Economic Development and Cultural Change* was founded in 1952 (Hettne, 1991). The theory posits that LDCs should learn from the experience of richer industrialised countries, emphasizing that the transfer of capital goods, technologies, industries and Western norms to the developing countries would bring rapid economic productivity and social development (Rostow, 1960).²

² The best known mainstream work on classic economic modernization theory is W. W. Rostow’s “The Stages of Economic Growth”. Rostow described five stages that all countries had to pass through: (1) traditional society, (2) the preconditions for take-off, (3) the take-off, (4) the drive to maturity, and (5) the age of high mass consumption. The conditions for a take-off could be

With regards to mass media, the conceptualization of mass media as both an index of development and an agent of modernization dates back to when the groundbreaking works of Daniel Lerner (1958) and Wilbur Schramm (1964) were released. They unravelled the complicated inter-relationships among general economic and social development and also the mass media, which followed the United Nations' clarion call in 1958 for "a program of concrete action to build up press, radio broadcasting, film, and television facilities in countries in [the] process of economic and social development" (UNESCO, 1964, quoted in Schramm, 1964, p. vii). Denis McQuail considers that this wave of Modernization Theory produced three variants (McQuail, 2000).

First of all, media promotes the global diffusion of numerous technical and social innovations that are essential to modernization, particularly for economic development (Rogers, 1962)³. According to Schramm and Ruggels (1967), mass media growth is highly related to general economic and social development, which takes other elements of society into account, such as urbanization and per capita income.

Secondly, media can improve literacy levels and promote cultural development, which are favourable to the western concept of modernity. Both Lerner (1958) and

enhanced through the diffusion of Western culture, know-how, and capital, overcoming legacies of economic and cultural stagnation. This publication marked the birth of the modernization theory.

³ See Diffusion of Innovations theory.

Schramm (1964) believe that mass media would bring development to developing countries if people in these countries were exposed to the “modernized” world and values of the West, and gradually learned its new lifestyles, behaviour and culture. Lerner (1958), in his *The Passing of Traditional Society*, emphasizes “empathy” as one of the main effects of mass media, which means that people in the traditional societies would not only become civilized and active participants, but also could develop their mental capacity to imagine themselves as another person or in another role within the context of their own culture (Lerner, 1958, p. 69-70).

Thirdly, media can help to establish national identities in new nations⁴ and encourage democratic policies such as elections. Schramm (1964) regards free flow of information as one of the basics in the process of national development, the social effect of which is “to liberate men instead of manipulating them” (p. 36). He further proposes that “in the service of national development, the mass media are agents of social changes” (p. 114). Also, Lucian Pye (1967) considers media to be “an inspector” or “a mirror” that takes on the responsibility of facilitating the building of other institutions and benefiting the whole society with objective criticism (p. 35-56).

The above-mentioned variants in the modernization paradigm indicate that media is a

⁴ New nations refer to colonies.

most important element for individual and national development, because in new states, there are not only new customs, practices and social norms, but also substantial changes in people's attitudes, beliefs, skills and social relationships – all of these do not come easy. Media acts as an indispensable agent to bring modernization to the society and its values to people. Rogers' research in Colombia proves that mass media exposure is closely correlated with individual modernization variables (Rogers, 1965). Similarly, Lerner's research in 54 countries between the 1950s and 1960s finds a very high correlation among four of the measures of economic growth: urbanization, literacy, media participation and political participation (Lerner, 1958). As Schramm concludes later, there are three basic functions: the watchman function, which is to scan the horizon and report back; the policy function that is to decide policy, to lead and to legislate; and, the teaching function, to "socialize" the new members and to meet the needs of society in terms of skills, beliefs, etc. Furthermore, Schramm stresses that these three basic functions remain even when a society becomes civilized, more complex and more sophisticated.

More specifically, as far as news media is concerned, Schramm's viewpoint of its importance in "regulating the level of social tension" (Schramm, 1964) is explored later by different scholars. Schramm (1964, p. 56-57) proposes that "wherever dangers or opportunities need to be reported, decisions need to be made, new knowledge needs to be

distributed, or change is imminent – there information flows. These needs are especially urgent and widespread in developing countries”. Lakshmana Rao finds that increased information furthered economic development (Rao, 1963, as cited in Schramm, 1964, p. 50). Pye (as cited in Lerner and Schramm, 1967, p. 42) concludes three roles of news media: to form an internal pattern of relations, to constantly review role performances of other institutions within the society, and to point out the flaws and bring their flaws to the public the role of “inspector general”. As he explains, “if the press abandons its critical role it not only turns its back on its own potential development as a social institution but it also deprives the whole society of a most important element which is essential to national development”. Pye (*ibid*) uses Japan as an example: During the rapid modernization of Japan in the Meiji period, Japanese newspapers spared no efforts in revealing sensational feature stories such as corruption and officials’ sex lives, reporting new practices and institutions being introduced into the country, which help to make people understand the nation’s development process, and to build a sense of identity with their government with appreciation and political conscious (Pye, 1967; Huffman, 1997).

Why is the media endowed with such multiple effects? Modernization theorists attach great importance to the use of technology in development, which Rostow believes was one of the constructive and creative means in modernizing developing countries and which

Oshima (1976) considers to be “the most important medium of education” (cited in Schramm and Lerner, 1976, p. 17-30). The role of technology in media was also unanimously highlighted. Pye (1967), in his penetrating study of media in non-Western societies, concludes that western technology determined two distinct levels in the communication process within a developing society: the urban or elite level and the village or mass level. Pye’s comments fit with the observation of Professor Damle who studies the incidence of information in villages in India in mid-1950s. Damle explains that radio or newspaper did not contribute much to the information flow, and that this is largely because of a lack of electricity and a unreliable transportation system (Damle, 1956). This position is expanded by late modernization theorists, such as Giddens and van Dijk. Both of them explain that the popularity of the internet exerts much influence on modernity in contemporary society (Giddens, 1991) and Van Dijk adds the mobile phone as an important tool for modern life (Van Dijk, 1993, p. 108–20).

Theorists in this school also note various complicated obstacles in the way of media development in developing countries. Pye (cited in Schramm and Lerner, 1967, p. 36) finds that journalists are peculiarly vulnerable to outside pressures from other emerging institutions such as the government, patrons or political parties because the journalistic tradition was weak. Schramm (1964) finds this process of development chronic and painful

because it is a process that people are changing themselves. Traditions such as values, beliefs and customs bound people in a society together for centuries, thus it takes time and pains to change. In brief, one of the main development problems for a society in transition is to ensure the news media to be an effective smoother of transition instead of raising the social temperature.

As discussed, the powerful role of the media in modernization is clearly articulated by both early and late modernization theorists. Although this paradigm is questioned for its overwhelming western cultural and economic imperialism or dominance (Schiller, 1976; Hettne, 1991), media exerts distinct influence in economic, cultural and social development. There is no substitute for the news media in this process.

2.1.2 Dependency Theory & Structural imperialism⁵.

The development of a fairly systematic Dependency Theory can be traced to the work of Argentine economist Raúl Prebisch in the late 1940s, whose theory unveiled more

⁵ There are two dependency theory traditions (Dos Santos, 2002). The first dependency tradition is associated to the Structuralist school that builds on the work of Raúl Prebisch at the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). It has heavily influenced Structuralists such as Peter Evans and Osvaldo Sunkel. The second is the Marxist influenced by Paul Baran and Paul Sweezy. André Gunder Frank, Samir Amin and Theotônio dos Santos contribute important works in this theory tradition. In this chapter, I will focus on the former tradition because I will discuss Marxism in the next chapter.

complex and well-sustained explanation by different dependency theorists and structuralists. According to dependency theorists, there are two types of countries: “industrial, advanced, or central” and “underdeveloped, backward or peripheral countries” (Sunkel and Pedro Paz, in Seligson and Passe-Smith, 2008, p. 265). This centre-periphery paradigm serves as the cornerstone of structuralism (O. Rodriguez, 1977, in Kay, 1989, p. 29), which further demonstrates that the centre not only maintains its economic and political dominance over the periphery, but also gains support from the elite groups in the periphery nations. My standpoint to converge these two schools of thought here is that both attach great importance to government control, state intervention and comprehensive planning in the process of development. With regards to the control over domestic media, Sunkel and Pedro Paz conclude that the problem with the newly established media system is that the agents of capitalist domination, and that dependency does not serve as vehicles of progress and tools for overcoming underdevelopment (Schiller, 1971/92; Wells, 1972).

Dependency Theory emerged as a result of changes in societal conditions in the 1950s in Latin America and then it spread to Africa and Asia, which included internal market and indigenous entrepreneurs who turned out to be weak in the face of foreign markets and international companies. Observing the failure of capitalism in much of the modern world, Dependency theorists suggest the development of a nation or region should be understood

in connection with the world's system – as Martinussen (1997, p. 88) states, “Develop in dependency” means that their development was dependent on or linked to the world market and the center economy. Andre Gunder Frank⁶ (1972) claims that disassociation from the world market resulted in the exploitation of the industrial countries. Prebisch (1984) argues that the center countries were making the best of the backward countries by impelling those on the periphery to adopt their technologies and lifestyles, to follow their ideas and ideologies, and to reproduce their institutions. Structuralist Michael P. Todaro (1989) view the argument of Theotonio Dos Santos of Latin America as the most forceful statement of the international Dependency school of thought, who posits “dependence is a conditioning situation in which the economies of one group of countries are conditioned by the development and expansion of others.... In either case, the basic situation of dependence causes these countries to be both backward and exploited” (cited in Todaro, 1989, p. 124-125). Propositions of this centre-periphery paradigm are of direct concern not only to Latin America as a whole but to the Third World in general (Kay, 1975), and have had a massive impact, not only in 1960s-1970s, but also in the 1990s in the context of globalization⁷ (Amin, 1997).

⁶ Andre Gunder Frank is one of the founders of the Dependency theory in the 1960s, and belongs to the Marxist tradition.

⁷ In early 1990, Samir Amin furthered the dependent theory in a context of globalization where international financial system played an important role, endowing center nations or Western power

Central to this school of thought is the view that trans-national corporations (TNCs) exercise control over developing countries⁸ in various aspects. As Mattelart (1979) finds, this is where the ideas of cultural and ideological imperialism lay, and within where the media imperialism falls.

Trans-national (or multinational) corporations not only control the markets and the world's natural and human resources, but also dominate the cultural trend (Schiller, 1969, 1976; Mattelart, 1979; Tomlinson, 1991). Schiller (1976), after examining the link between trans-national business and dominant states, concludes that big US-based TNCs undermine the cultural autonomy of the countries of the South by creating a dependency on communication hardware and software in developing countries. The free-flow doctrine simply "legitimizes and reinforces the capability of a few dominant economies to impose their cultural definitions and perspectives on the rest of the world" (1976, p. 98- 103). Herman and Chomsky (2002) later point out that such dominance is strengthened by international regulations and policies, as trans-national corporations gain support from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, getting an easier access to media markets across the globe. As a result of this "cultural imperialism,"⁹ as Schiller (1976)

dominance on developing countries (Amin, 1997).

⁸ These countries are referred to the formerly colonial countries.

⁹ Cultural imperialism has been used as a framework by scholars of different academic backgrounds and disciplines to explain phenomena in the areas of international relations,

reveals, social institutions in developing countries are shaped to correspond to, or even promote, the values and structures of the dominating center. Another result is that a globalized media system forms, exerting major effects on national media systems, cultures, and politics (Herman and McChesney, 1997). These newly established national media systems, according to many dependency proponents, including the Belgian Armand Mattelart¹⁰, the Norwegian sociologist Johan Galtung, the Canadian Dallas Smythe and the American Noam Chomsky, were in fact agents of capitalist domination and dependency rather than serving as vehicles of progress and tools for overcoming underdevelopment (Mattelart, 1977; Schiller, 1971, 1992). For instance, Armand Mattelart (1994), who, in his analysis of the Gulf War, observed that the media can go beyond ideological service to become a tactical weapon.

It is Oliver Boyd-Barrett (1977) who defines “media imperialism” as “the process whereby the ownership, structure, distribution, or content of the media in any country are singly or together subject to substantial external pressures from the media interests of any other country or countries, without proportionate reciprocation of influence by the country so affected” (Boyd-Barrett, 1977, p. 117).

anthropology, education, literature, etc. However, in an attempt to narrow the focus of the following analysis, I have chosen to focus on the communication aspect.

¹⁰ Armand Mattelart (1994), “Mapping World Communication”. In his analysis of the Gulf War, we see how the media can go beyond ideological service to become a tactical weapon.

While there is a heavy flow of exported media products from the US to, say, Asian countries, there is only a very slight trickle of Asian media products to the US. (ibid., p. 117)

The absence of reciprocation of media influence by the affected country combines both the element of cultural invasion by another power and the element of imbalance of power resources between the countries concerned. These two elements of invasion and imbalance of power resources justify the use of the term imperialism. (ibid., p. 118)

Seen in this way, the production, distribution and effects of news media in developing countries, as a result of dependence, would be vulnerable to forces from developed countries either through TNCs or the increasing globalized media systems. This position is further supported by structuralists such as Galtung, who, as an assertor of the centre-periphery paradigm, considers that domestic elites in peripheral countries stand closer to the elites in developed countries than with groups in their own country (Galtung, 1971). According to Galtung¹¹, news is a combination of cultural and communication exchange, and the combination of communication and cultural imperialism constitutes “news communication imperialism” (Galtung, 1971, p. 93).

It can be observed how problems of news media within one country are identical to

¹¹ Galtung distinguished five types of imperialism from the center nations: economic, political, military, communication and cultural imperialism.

those in the world community, from the perspective of the dependency and structuralist schools. It can be compared to one-way, chaotic traffic, going from the rich (country or elites) to the poor. Therefore, this school of thought emphasizes the importance of strong state intervention in the development process. As Kay (1989) concludes, the state should act as the crucial agent for economic, social and political change. Paul Baran (1968), who develops Dependency Theory from Marxian analysis, proposes the establishment of state-owned heavy industries as a precondition for evolution of the other industrial sectors. In a word, development from within is essential. Accordingly, dependent theorists and structuralists consider that a state-controlled media can prevent “imperialism” (cultural, ideological or media) from the center nations and the elite groups within the developing country, no matter that such dominance is direct or indirect.

Compared with Modernization, Dependency Theory places primacy on infrastructure, that is, structure and relations of production, while Modernization Theory sees society constituted by separate yet interdependent variables. In the study of media effects, Dependency literature describes its scope as an issue interwoven with other societal variables. Dependency Theory implies that intrinsic factors, such as the internal/national structures and the external/international environments, should be taken into account. A mixture of political, economic or ideological influence should be explored when looking at

the news media. As Kay (1989) concluded, it is necessary to examine the relationship to the world system so as to understand the internal dynamics of the Third World countries. This is an indispensable step in the formulation of the realistic strategies that make media a tool for development.

2.1.3 Marxist theory.

In the Marxist school of thoughts, the media is essential, illuminating part of the cultural, ideological and social field. Their active or passive affiliation to the dominant political power, their attempts to influence the public and the consequences of these attempts fall within this study. Ideology is seen as a tool of the dominant classes and propaganda is a key approach. In this section, I will look at how the theorists and practitioners in this school interpret the role of the media, by incorporating these two elements: culture and ideology.

The Marxist view is referred to by a variety of terms. Generally, the Marxian views of media influence depend on an understanding and elaboration of the operation of the notion of culture and ideology. As discussed in this section, classical Marxists and late Marxists both agree that the media is a state apparatus, functioning like others such as the

government, the army, the courts and the prisons, all of which contribute to maintaining good social order, so that economic activity and progress can be guaranteed. The difference between classical Marxists and late Marxists is the latter tag an “ideological” feature to the function of the media.

Classical Marxists Karl Marx and Fredrick Engels assume a dynamic and progressive role for capitalism and capitalist imperialism in creating the material preconditions for socialism (Brewer, 1980, p. 16-17). Their influential “base/superstructure” model considers the economy as the base of society, and cultural, political and legal forms, philosophy, religion, science, and the media are “superstructures” that are built on this base and solidify it (Ritzer, 2004, p. 171). It is deducible that culture and ideology are formed as the forces and relations of production cemented the economic base, resulting in the dominance of ruling social groups. Marx explains that the ruling class not only owned the means of material production but also mental production, such as newspaper, publishing houses and the electronic media. As a result, “the ideas of the ruling class are the ruling ideas of the age” and they are “from the dominant ideology” (cited in Garner, 2010, vol. 1, p. 31, 46). Marx considers the meaning of peace as the absence of opposition to Socialism, and he attaches great importance to ideology. He makes frequent affirmation on the “solidity of popular beliefs” as a necessary element of a particular situation and on “a

popular conviction” as a powerful force as an energetic material force, both of which are extremely significant (Gramsci, 1971, p. 355 -357).

Antonio Gramsci (1971, p. 244) then pays much attention to “hegemony”, which turns out to be a central concept in his work, meaning a form of rule where the ruled in society have to consent to the exercise of power. Gramsci expands upon the concept of “hegemony” from economic dominance to political and cultural power throughout different institutions of the society. He points out that even for the proletariat, once in power, they have to establish their political power and moral authority as a new ruling class (Garner, 2010, vol. 2, p. 279), and impose their will on the subordinate class (Thussu, 2000). Gramsci formulates that the state, manipulated by the hegemonic classes, does not only have and request consent of the governed, but also seeks this consent through manipulation by education (Gramsci, 1971). In the media, he notes that the press is “the most dynamic part of the ideological structure” (Gramsci and Boothman, 1995), acting as a dominant instrument of producing ideological influence and legitimating the existing institution and social order (Kellner and Durham, 2006). According to this gramscian formulation, media acts as a tool to maintain the structure of the symbolic environment for the state, and to impel the subjugated to accept their situation.

Another notable Marxist theorist, Louis Althusser¹², disagrees with Marx in economic determinism, and sees ideology as an effect of the structure of society and a determining force shaping consciousness, which is embodied in the material signifying practices of “ideological state apparatuses” (ISA). Althusser (1971, p. 80) calls the media, university, the discipline of literary studies, and the publishing industry, as “ISA”, which perpetuate the ruling ideology of the society. To clarify, he cites an example that the Army and the Police function by ideology both to ensure their own cohesion and reproduction and the values they propound externally. Althusser (1971, p. 146) firmly believes that “no class can hold state power over a long period without at the same time exercising its hegemony over and in the State Ideological Apparatuses”. Also, he emphasizes that an ideology always exists in an apparatus and its practice(s), which each individual could not avoid but accepts as a subject (ibid, p. 166). Hence, Althusser’s concept is viewed as “structural Marxism” (Kellner and Durham, 2006, xx.).

It is necessary to discuss the views of communist ideology. Vladimir Lenin, a communist facilitator, theorizes that imperialism is the highest or “monopoly” stage of capitalism and advocated cultural imperialism and propaganda¹³ (Lenin, 1901). His

¹² Louis Althusser, a French philosopher, and a Marxist revisionist.

¹³ According to a well-known definition, propaganda is “the deliberate and systematic attempt to shape perceptions, manipulate cognitions, and direct behavior to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist” (Jowett and O’Donnell, 1992: 4).

affirmation that the press should not only serve as a collective propagandist and agitator but also as a collective organizer of the masses became well-known in public because many Soviet publicists quoted it (ibid). He established *Pravda* (also known as “Truth”, a Bolshevik daily) as one of the most important tools of a propaganda state - other tools for propaganda include posters, cinema and songs. *Pravda* did achieve his goal of Bolshevik propaganda: Kenez (1985) observes that the distinctive features of Soviet Propaganda did not surface until the Bolsheviks controlled the media and built their own coercive apparatus. The Leninist propaganda places media as the organ of the Party, which has exerted much influence at home and abroad. During the dictatorship of Joseph Stalin, Propaganda was focused on both justifying this dictatorship through praising Stalin’s image and opposing groups that were considered menacing to Soviet ideology. Outside the Soviet Union, in China, after the communists took over the country, they imported the Soviet model in the 1950s. Especially during its “Cultural Revolution” from 1966 to 1976, an extremely intense purge and severe control over media managed to rule the people after decades of chaos, and firmly restored Mao Zedong’s power. As Kellner and Durha (2006) conclude, in the Soviet communist bloc, where state-controlled media prevailed, media systems were intended to produce dominant national culture or state ideology, while serving as instruments of social integration and conformity.

Marxist approaches to the mass media have been dominant for decades, especially from the mid-60s to the mid-80s. Thussu (2000) finds that the propaganda model that Herman and Chomsky present in their famous *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media* in some ways follows the role of ideology and state power articulated by some Marxist theorists. Although Herman and Chomsky are non-Marxists, their “Propaganda model” demonstrates what Marxist theorists have proposed. After examining a range of detailed case studies, they reveal five essential ingredients of the model, i.e., a set of news “filters” (Herman and Chomsky, 2002, p. 2). These “filters” include heavy reliance on business and governmental sources for information, and the overall dominant ideology within which they operate¹⁴, which includes market forces and anticommunism (ibid, p. 156).

These “filters” are what news media are confronted with today. Today’s news outlets rely upon major sources of news, particularly the government. In some countries, news media agencies have to report news in favour of the government, for example, United States (Herman and Chomsky, 2002), Japan (Ito, in Kaid, 2004), and many developing countries. News media in these countries would lose their position in news leadership and

¹⁴ Other “filters” are ① the size, concentrated ownership, owner wealth, and profit orientation of the dominant mass-media firms; ② the advertising license to do business; ③ “flak” and the enforcers. Note: “Flak” refers to negative responses to a media statement or program, such as letters, phone calls, petitions, lawsuits, speeches, and other modes of complaints, threat, and punitive action (Herman and Chomsky, 2002).

readership if they disobey the rule, which result in a loss of advertising revenue. Without this primary income for most media corporations, no news agency can survive in the increasingly competitive market.

In conclusion, from the ideological perspective, the role of the mass media as an instrument of cultural and ideological imperialism and propaganda for the state power is highly placed. The news media thus becomes a guard of the ruling state to ensure its hegemony.

2.1.4 Civil society and Another Development.

The industrial age not only brought technological advancement, and a pursuit of unlimited material progress and economic growth, but also recognition of individual responsibility, freedom and equality. The on-going globalization witnessed these changes and a movement of civil society in these processes. This section will focus on the role of media as an actor or a form of civil society, with a particular emphasis on the function of social solidarity.

The emphasis on civil society received widespread acceptance after 1970s when the search for “Another Development” (AD) was taking step, as a result of the limitations of

conventional approaches to development and the failures of implementation of development policies (Veltmeyer, 2008). Amartya Sen (2001) considers development to be a process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy, which include political, economic and social opportunity as well as transparency guarantees, and protective security. This definition of development gained wide support in the school of AD. Unlike the other development schools, AD moves its path of development beyond the market and the state, and holds a belief that people should have a part to play in determining their own development. As Veltmeyer and O'Malley (2001) conclude, AD is socially inclusive, equitable, sustainable, initiated from below and within civil society, and based on individual's own agency - in particular, the poor should be empowered".

From this perspective, on the one hand, many development theorists and practitioners agree that development has multiple faces, and in order to tackle development problems, such as poverty, health, education, etc., different pathways must be looked at. On the other hand, "development with a human face" (Santosh and Jolly, 1997, p. 30) leads to a particular prominence in development discourse on "civil society", which is regarded as the agent of change.

Civil society is defined "as an area around the family, state and market where people work together in order to promote common interests" (London School of Economics,

2004). It includes non-governmental organizations, educational institutions, research centers and the media. It functions “as strategic catalysts of national - and global - level change” (Korten, 1999, p. 318). To elaborate, civil society has three main functions. Firstly, it can establish cross-sectoral alliances among organizations in the society, such as non-profit associations and media (UNDP, 2003). Secondly, it can build social integration that reconciles the individual pursuit of self-interest within a common or public good, advocating greater inclusion with different purposes (Howell and Pearce, 2001). Thirdly, it can help catalyze democratic processes in various fields, promoting freedom, transparency, human rights and accountability of the government, so as to strengthen governance mechanisms and lead to more open and transparent decision-making processes (Cole, 2006). An example is Japan, where media contributes to political social solidarity and civic awareness. In brief, the role of civil society in strengthening political stability and social solidarity is significant, bringing people, organizations and governments together with shared information, common goals and fair benefits. Such a process requires people’s participation.

Civil society needs to include the popular and full participation of people as a basic element in order to perform the above-mentioned three functions. Participation is not only a means to an end in the development process but also a goal in itself (Gran, 1983). By

means of participation, everyone would have a chance of obtaining the public good (Finkel et al. 1989, cited in Eager, 2008, p. 7), and equity or social justice (Korten, 1984, p. 299 - 309). Human needs are material, social, political and cultural; therefore, development should be built on participation.

The concept of “civil society” and “participation” has gained widespread popularity not only in developed countries but also developing countries. Media is a part of the civil society arena (USAID, 1999), and its role is highlighted in building up a strong civil society and in making development work. Some scholars like Chappell H. Lawson (2002) views an independent press in mid-1990s in Mexico as “the fourth estate”. He attributes the rebirth of civil society to the media coverage during the 1980s and 1990s, with effects on political strategies and liberation, on the operation of pro-democracy groups and on giving legitimacy and constancy to social movement activity.

News media is indispensable in empowering citizens and in creating a strong and socially-responsible civil society. Guy Gran considers that citizens, as knowing and active participants, should have a deeper understanding of the social reality, that is, “conscientisation” (Gran, 1983). Lawson researches a number of newspapers in countries in transition, and concludes that there is an undeniable correlation between the transformation of the mass media and the rebirth of civil society (Lawson, 2002). Similarly,

Chien-chuang Wang (2006) observes that, in Taiwan, the rise in the mid-1980s of independent newspapers and magazines outside the dominant Kuomintang political party, which focused on social problems, criticism and promotion of Western democratic concepts, was a key force in bringing about more civil participation. Both of them agree that by providing accurate and timely information, the media can enable more effective participation in a civil society framework so as to turn the civil society principles into action.

However, civil society is theoretically able to have an impact on political stability, sustainability of the environment, economic activity and community and social development, and there is little doubt that the nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) have become an essential condition of development at global and local levels, as a means of executing programmes and as a strategic partner in the process (Hulme and Edwards, 1997). Despite this, there are numerous institutional or non-institutional difficulties hindering the participation of civil society in developing countries. Fidel Valdez Ramos, the former president of the Philippines, has noticed the political challenge was not just to “replace authoritarian regimes by democratic ones”, but to have all citizens participate (cited in Sen, p. 155). Fowler (1996, p. 23), when he studied the difference between civil society in the West and civil society in the South and East, finds that in the latter, where

ideology of public ownership and central planning made the state the primary force for economic and social development, it allows little in the way of autonomous action in many areas, such as those concerning human rights, labour issues and environmental protection.

Fowler is right, and the reasons lie in both civil society and the state. On the one hand, the intentions of NGOs are doubtful, because they work with agendas postulated by their donors, mostly from developed countries (Wallace, 2003). Petras and Veltmeyer see them as “stalking horses for global capitalism and Neoliberalism” and “Trojan horses to facilitate the entry of foreign investment and the domestic operations of multinational corporations and, in the process, to help them realise the imperial dream of some for world domination” (Petras and Veltmeyer, 2005). On the other hand, many developing countries in the South and the East have authoritarian traditions, which make it harder to promote the concepts of political freedoms, democracy and people’s participation. As a result, those in power are worried about their loss of control with the emergence of NGOs, and are suspicious about their intentions¹⁵ (Howell, 1997). Under such circumstances, the impact of civil society is not firmly rooted, vulnerable to external and internal pressure.

In conclusion, a healthy civil society contributes to sound governance, political civilization and social solidarity. News media acts as a form of civil society especially in

¹⁵ For example, as Howell observes, in China, NGOs are treated with suspicion, with relatively little leverage over the Chinese government (Howell, 1997).

developing countries where the state retains a tight grip over traditional and modern institutions. A corollary of its strength is a healthier society.

In China, the concept of “public sphere” from Habermas’ most famous work “The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere” has exerted a significant influence upon Chinese academic circles since the 1980 (Cao, 2006). These topics of these papers include “media theory, history, law, society, politics, and education”, with unique research perspectives in the area of media research (ibid). According to Cao, in modern China, with capitalism coming into being and the aggravation of the consciousness of the political and national crisis, “the traditional academies, associations organized by intellectuals and newly arising newspapers become the important outlets for people to express their opinions on the current situations,” and these independent channels are able to acquire “some characteristics of the public sphere described by Habermas.”

Some scholars disagree, like Philip C.C. Huang (1993), who suggests the term “Third Sphere” in China’s context instead of “public sphere.” Because he does not think there is any substantial antinomy between society and state in China, it would cause misapplication and confusion if using Habermas’ concept of Public Sphere. In spite of different arguments, most scholars, as Cao (2006) finds, agree that a new force emerges between the state and society in China. Xu Jilin (2003) points out that in modern times, schools, associations, and

newspaper constituted the “trinity” of the Public Sphere in the beginning”, then the “newspaper gradually took charge of creating public opinions by themselves.” He further states that in China, the participants of the “public sphere” are not citizens but social elites. Zhan Jiang, a well-known scholar on Chinese media and its role in the public sphere, posits that the development of market economy leads to fast growth of commercial media. In spite of some degree of political power, the news function of the news media noticeably changes from reporting, animadverting and forming public opinions to reporting, explaining, and reflecting public opinions; as for the news content, there is increasing coverage about current news, events and process to meet the demand of the public, and there is more reflecting public thinking (Zhan, 1998).

Scholar Xu Ying (2002 b) finds that the Chinese public have made a successful democratic control on state action, as there are many public forums on the Internet and the public engage themselves actively. Digital technology has been greatly improved, which brings about more netizens¹⁶ and helps establish an excellent foundation for Chinese Public Sphere (Xu, 2002 b).

From the above-discussed and variable perspectives, we can find a common standpoint: the civil society in China has come into being and it acts actively particularly in

¹⁶ A netizen is a person actively involved in online communities. ()

the fields of media and the Internet. The theories can be re-explored as the society changes, so as to be applied to new conditions.

2.2 Theory Development and Application

2.2.1. Endogenous Chinese Theory: The Features of Mao Zedong Thoughts.

The vocabulary of Marxism, derived from a long political tradition but modified in its new context, has served as the principal medium of political discourse in China since the founding of the People's Republic (PRC) in 1949. In contemporary China, social theories are formed by the political leaders, discussed and developed further by Chinese scholars and promoted by the Party. The Communist Party and Chinese scholars consciously used the lexicon of Marxism-Leninism, Mao Zedong thought and Deng Xiaoping theories in their social analysis. These theories not only provide the guidelines for the policy-making, but also for the governance.

The following two sections include discussions on the theories of Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping. Both Mao and Deng used Marxism to guide the revolutions in China, by adapting it to Chinese circumstances. Mao's theory stresses the dialectic between class

struggle and building socialism. Mao believed in the power of struggle in keeping people on “the correct course toward a new and selfless society.” Through the Great Leap Forward in 1958 and the “Cultural Revolution,” Mao sought to promote what he called “continuous” or “uninterrupted” revolution. Deng Xiaoping’s arguments are different. According to Deng, the goal of the revolution was for people “to get rich, for everybody to get a good life.” Deng argued that socialism can only be built on a highly developed economy, and the key of doing this lies in the dialectic between political reform and economic development.

Mao Zedong, also known as Mao Tse-tung, was the leader of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) from 1935 until his death in 1976. He was a practical politician who exerted enormous day-to-day influence on the conduct of the Party, the government, the military department and the masses, by his inspiring slogans, eloquent speeches and productive writings. His thinking reflects a mixture of influences, which embodies his background in a rich peasant family in a small village in central China, his own thinking rooted in Chinese traditions, especially Confucianism, and the historical materialism of Marxism-Leninism. Mao’s four-volume *Selected Works* is regarded to be the key canon of doctrine, which was required reading for all the people during the Cultural Revolution (1956 - 1966). For decades, Mao’s thoughts were taken as the state ideology, serving as the guiding principle for all the work of the Party. In the post-Mao era, in spite of Deng Xiaoping’s systematic

correction of Mao's mistakes, Mao's theory is still an influence, in particular, and its emphasis on the power of the press still remains. Also, to understand the political environment, cultural background and social development in today's China, Mao's theory is undeniably a key. In this section, I will discuss Mao's "Thought Work" [*sixiang gongzuo*] and "Mass Line" [*qunzhong luxian*], and his views on the press.

After 1840, the invasion by Western imperialist powers reduced China to the status of semi-colonial and semi-feudal society and subjected the Chinese people to a two-fold repression by imperialism and feudalism. This bequeathed to the intellectuals in the early Twentieth Century an ideological vacuum and a desire for the way out. As a result, the traditional Chinese values, Western liberal democratic ideas and Soviet-style socialism were attached with significance at different levels.

Like many others, Mao Zedong was influenced not only by the idea of the social equity of Confucius but also by the Western bourgeois concepts of democracy and freedom of enlightening thinkers such as Liang Qichao¹⁷ (Liang, n.d.). Before the CCP seized the state power, he used freedom of the press as his weapon to criticize his enemy Kuomintang

¹⁷ Liang Qichao is a Chinese scholar, journalist, philosopher and reformist during the Qing Dynasty (1644–1911). He inspired many Chinese scholars with his writings and reform movements. He is regarded as "the greatest personality in the history of Chinese journalism" (Yutang Lin) and "a brilliant scholar, journalist, and political figure" (Joseph Levenson, author of *Liang Ch'i-ch'ao and the Mind of Modern China*). (Liang Qichao, n.d.)

(National People's Party)¹⁸. In an article Mao wrote in February 1942, *Ten Proposals for the Kuomintang*, he demanded that the Kuomintang government should "lift the ban on other parties and provide support for a free expression of public opinion" (Mao, 1942). Also, his speech in April 1945, known as "On Coalition Government", emphasized that "the freedom of speech, the press, assembly, association, political conviction and religion are the people's most important freedoms" (Mao, 1945). However, his attitudes towards freedom of the press seemed to alter after 1949 when the PRC was established. Mao made his position clear by saying that "The 'freedom of the press' that the bourgeoisie touts is a lie. There is no such a thing as total objectivity in news reporting" (Mao et al, 1992, p. 371)". However, what remains consistent in Mao's thought with regards to the media was his famous "Thought Work".

In all practical work of our party, all correct leadership is necessarily 'from the masses to the masses'. This means: take the ideas of the masses (scattered and unsystematic ideas) and concentrate them (through study turn them into concentrated and systematic ideas), then go to the masses and propagate and explain these ideas until the masses embrace them as their own, hold fast to them and translate them into action, and test the correctness of these ideas in such action...Such is the Marxist theory of knowledge. (Mao, 1965, cited in Zhao, 1998, p. 24.)

¹⁸ Kuomintang (National People's Party) is the political party of China organized by Sun Yat-sen and Song Jiaoren after the Republican Revolution in 1911-1912.

Actually, Mao's attitudes towards the masses never changed, no matter before or after the establishment of the state. The above-mentioned "Thought Work" was used as a tool to rectify Communist Party cadres and correct cadre deviance, which posed great impacts on the formulation of policies and regulations during the wartime and in the post-Mao era. Qinglian He (2008, p. 64) summarizes Mao's four principles that the Party had to adhere to, which were to ① propagandize Party policy, ② force the media to act as the Party's mouthpieces, ③ unify public opinion and ④ ban objective journalism. These principles worked well in the revolutionary period of time because China had been embedded in a foreign imperialistic invasion and a later internal fight for decades. Therefore, the control over media must be vital, as public opinion could be turned to fight against the enemies. To Mao, a follower and practitioner of Marxism-Leninism, once said, "Our system does deprive all counterrevolutionaries of freedom of speech.... But in an era in which classes and class struggles still exist both at home and abroad, we must not allow counterrevolutionary elements to use freedom of speech to further their own aims" (Mao, 1967). Instead, the Party must manage popular opinions. As Maurice Meisner explains:

For Mao, the essential factor in determining the course of history was conscious human activity and the most important ingredients for revolution were how men thought and their willingness to engage in revolutionary action.... [This view] implied a special concern for developing and maintaining a "correct ideological consciousness", the ultimately decisive

factor in determining success or failure. “Correct Thought”, in the Maoist view, is the first and essential prerequisite for effective revolutionary action, and it is this assumption that lies behind the enormous stress on the distinctively Maoist techniques of “thought reform” and “ideological remoulding” developed and refined in the Yan’an era (Teiwes, 1993). (Meisner, 1977, p. 41 - 42)

Mao’s “Mass line”, therefore, serves as an essential precondition for the revolution that could bring about the consciousness and will on the part of the “great masses” to carry out revolutionary changes. From this perspective, Mao believes newspapers should be run by politicians and the media control could play its role in shaping the opinions of the mass. In 1938, Mao emphasizes the power and role that the press could play in the CCP-led revolution to create a new China:

The role and power of the newspapers consist in their ability to bring the Party program, the Party line, the Party’s general and specific policies, its tasks and methods of work before the masses in the quickest and most extensive way.” (Mao, 1965)

Mao attaches great importance to the press’ role in propaganda:

We should go to the masses and learn from them, synthesize their experience into better, articulated principles and methods, then do propaganda among the masses, and call upon them to put these principles and methods into practice so as to solve their problems and help them achieve liberation and happiness. (Mao, 1967)

In brief, what Mao has declared is that the Party should receive, coordinate, systematize and interpret the views of people, and should be responsible for taking the resulting ideas back to them, explaining and widely promoting them until the people comprehend the ideas and put into action. In May 1956, Mao Zedong invited criticism by intellectuals who were serving as cadres and bureaucrats in the Party. This clearly indicates Mao's belief that through his "Thought Work" the intellectual echelon would be spiritually transformed by the Party. Mao's "Mass line" theory is also reflected in his radical campaigns after 1950s¹⁹, in an effort to keep the country on the socialist track and maintain his power at the centre.

In conclusion, the "Mass Line" theory not only serves during the revolution but also afterwards; it does not only emphasize the educating function of the press, but also reveals the propaganda role that the press needs to play to "synthesize the people's feedback and articulate a unified Party voice in an effort to push forward a solution to solving the masses' problems" (Cho, 2007, p.83). Media is essentially another apparatus of the state, or the Party.

2.2.2 Deng Xiaoping's Theory of the Role of the News Media.

¹⁹ These campaigns refer to the anti-rightist campaign in 1957, the Great Leap Forward in 1958 and the Cultural Revolution from 1956 to 1966.

If Mao Zedong's theory is described as the application of Marxism in revolutionary era in China, Deng Xiaoping's Theory is the application of modernization, dependency and Marxism in a GDP-oriented era in China. As a profound reformer, Deng puts forward the concept of "Socialism with Chinese characteristics." Deng's theory is a series of political and economic theories gradually formed, based on the historical conditions, by his experience and ideologies. This theory is a series of ideologies that has been serving to guide the Party and the government for almost three decades. In China, Deng is always regarded as "a great Marxist, a great proletarian revolutionary, statesman, military strategist and diplomat, and a long-tested communist fighter, the chief architect of China's socialist reform, opening-up and modernization drive, and founder of Deng Xiaoping Theory" (Hu, 2004, ¶ 4). In this section, I am going to explore Deng's theory to see how it embodies the application of the theories of Modernization, Dependency, and Marxism to China's development, and how the news media functions in this system.

At the end of the Maoist era, exhausted from the "Great Leap Forward" and the "Cultural Revolution", China began breaking free from its planned economy and witnessed another wave of modernization led by Deng Xiaoping, known as "Socialism with Chinese characteristics". Deng realized the obstacles of China's backwardness after

the industrial revolution were low-level productive forces and a closed-door policy. He immediately shifted the focus to modernization, and unveiled the economic and opening-up reform. Not only did he launch the privatization drive to liberalize productivity and ensure efficiency, but he also encouraged foreign investment to serve as a major supplement in the building of socialism (Deng, 1984). Unlike Hua Guofeng²⁰, Deng insisted that no policy should be rejected outright simply because it was not associated with Mao; and unlike many conservative leaders such as Chen Yun²¹, Deng did not object to policies on the grounds that they were similar to ones that were rooted in capitalist nations. This wave of modernization, different from the previous one under Mao's leadership²², supported a free market in a socialist country. His aspiration for the speedy realization of "Four Modernizations", which refers to the modernization of China's industry, agriculture, national defence and science and technology, has put China on the fast track of prosperity with a strong GDP growth and improved living standards in general. Deng's systematic strategy of developing socialism in a developing country has laid out a "Three-step" timetable for China to achieve socialist modernization²³ (Hu, 2004, ¶ 33).

²⁰ Hua Guofeng, first Chairman of Central Committee of Communist Party of China and Premier of the State Council.

²¹ Chen Yun, a very powerful leader in the CCP.

²² Some argue that Mao's concept had very little to say about the modernization or that what he pursued does not equal to the Western modernization. This, however, is not a point that this paper will include..

²³ In December 1978, under Deng's guidance, the 11th CPC Central Committee held its Third

After the Pro-democracy movement in 1989, China was confronted with internal instability and external pressure. Deng redefined the meaning of socialism during his famous inspection tour of southern China in 1992, which I will discuss in Chapter 4. Deng repeatedly emphasized that planning and the market were only the means of economic development rather than the symbols of socialism and capitalism. He put forward timely principles, namely, “Three Favorables”: Whether it promotes the growth of the productive forces in a socialist society, whether it increases of the overall strength of the socialist state and whether it raises the people’s living standards (Deng, 1993, p. 372). In order to fix the shuddering economy, his talks during the tour concentrated on the urgent task of economic growth. Deng believed that a high level of public support would derive largely from its economic performance, in other words, stability is guaranteed by steady economic development. This tour evoked an explosion of economic activities throughout the country, gave further impetus to China’s modernization and an expansionary process of globalization, resulting in a high degree of political stability in the post-Tiananmen era. Deng was convinced that excessive bureaucratic control stifles change and efficiency. Therefore, he pointed out it is necessary to decentralize power within the state. In the media

Plenary Session. It was at this meeting that the CPC Central Committee re-established the ideological line of emancipating the mind and seeking truth from facts, and made the important decision to shift the focus of the work of the Party and the state to modernization, and carry out reform and opening up.

industry, Esarey (2005) concludes that this tour brought about decentralization of state power over media and ignited enthusiasm to expand and improve content in the interest of higher profits.

Deng carried out a new reform, opening-up reform, to make China powerful, yet he regarded self-reliance and independence as the country's long-run goals - opening-up policy is just a means to increase its ability to stand on its own feet (Deng, 1984). Therefore, firstly, Deng's theory posits that, when opening to the outside world, the government cannot accept all foreign modes or totally reject them, instead, they should selectively adapt the current backward system to modern functions. Secondly, it stresses that the absorption of Western culture by newly emerging industrial countries like China should be self-determined and selective. In short, according to Deng's theory, China should deal more consciously with the relationship between foreign cultures and native culture in the process of modernization and enable China to develop more smoothly (Deng, 1993).

Therefore, Deng built up the "socialist spiritual civilization," which included preserving the fine traditions of Chinese national culture and absorbing the achievements of foreign cultures. Deng encouraged learning the advanced culture from other countries. Deng (1978, ¶ 16) points out, "It is not just today, when we are scientifically and technologically backward, that we need to learn from others. Even when we catch up with

the most advanced countries, we shall still have to learn from them in areas where they are particularly strong.” In 1992, he furthers, “if we want socialism to achieve superiority over capitalism, we should not hesitate to draw on the achievements of all cultures and to learn from other countries, including the developed capitalist countries, all advanced methods of operation and techniques of management that reflect the laws governing modern socialized production” (Deng, 1992, ¶ 11). Deng also emphasized international communication as a modernization drive, believing that the mass media would help transform China.

Deng, however, is a Marxist, and his theory is not economic-deterministic. Instead, it takes economics, politics, culture and others as equally important elements. Gaining from his experience in civilian administration and political control over a long period of time, Deng has established a systematic control over the Party and the country, which comprised: organizational, institutional and ideological control. The control on media is an important part in Deng’s theory, which provides comprehensive guidance for the regulation and development of the media.

In Deng’s theory, media is “ideological work” and media sector is a “State apparatus,” which was “more effective on a broader scale than other means and will play a greater role in the carrying out of the leaders’ intentions” (Deng, 1992 b, p. 146). He repeatedly pointed out that media is “the long-term and seriously political mission with us” (ibid), which

implies a strong state power over it. Deng postulated three regulations that the media must adhere to:

- First of all, it is essential to adhere firmly to the Four Cardinal Principles²⁴, among which the leadership of the Communist Party takes the priority. In other words, newspaper should unconditionally support the Communist Party and keep compliance with the Party spirit (Deng, 1985 a, p. 358).
- Secondly, the newspapers should safeguard the country's unification and social stability, performing the function of propaganda. In early 1980, Deng criticized the participation of party cadres in the printing of illegal publications with content containing mistaken ideology that undermined stability²⁵ (Deng, 1985 b, p. 40).
- Lastly, all cultural and spiritual products should contribute to socialist development. He said, "Ideological, cultural, educational and public health departments should take social benefit as the sole criterion for their activities, and so should the enterprises affiliated with them. People engaged in ideological and cultural work should create more fine intellectual products." (Deng. 1985 c, ¶ 20).

²⁴ The Four Cardinal Principles are: (1) We must keep to the socialist road. (2) We must uphold the dictatorship of the proletariat. (3) We must uphold the leadership of the Communist Party. (4) We must uphold Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought. (People's Daily, 1979)

²⁵ "Dang de baokan yao chengwei guo anding tuanjie de sixiang de zhongxin" - Party Papers must become the ideological center of National Stability and unity ---- transcript of speech on Jan. 16, 1980.

Deng's theory is the combination and application of the theories of modernization, Dependency and Marxism. It is broad, almost covering every sector in the society, and has plentiful and deep contents. In Deng's development scheme, rapid economic development is the centre or the goal of development; therefore, any social apparatus, including the media, should facilitate this process, with necessary learning or borrowing from the developed countries. At the meanwhile, the state's control, or the Party's control, over the society must be maintained to further social stability, whose ultimate value also lies in the promotion of the economic reforms. In brief, Deng's theory focuses on economic construction and social stability. Deng's theory and practices have brought about a striking growth in GDP and extensive cultural development in China. The media industry is no exception. Media development in China has taken on a very unique feature, indicating "Socialism with Chinese Characteristics".

In Deng's theory, modernization is a key component. Such development featuring "Chinese characteristics" brings about not merely a free market with commercialization, competition and fast economic growth in every sector, but less administrative control and more active participation in the world. However, such development stresses political and ideological control should remain in the process of China's development. On the one hand, the modernization and economic liberalization led to pressure for political modernization -

the protests in Tiananmen Square in 1989²⁶ were the reflection of social, political and economic disorder in the society in the late 1980s. Therefore, Deng always emphasized political control, and he believed that anything less than total control by the Party would produce chaos and violence. Hence, he required every state apparatus to shape public opinions to increase the Party's legitimacy²⁷. On the other hand, in the late 1980s, the spread of bourgeois liberalization promoted capitalism and threatened the socialist system. Internationally, the fall of the Berlin Wall, the collapse of communist governments in Eastern Europe and the disintegration of the Soviet Union gave birth to a new international system, which exacerbated the problems China already faced. The fact that China is the only remaining large communist state inevitably aggravated its sense of ideological insecurity. In order to prevent the country from descending into chaos, the CCP repeatedly emphasized the urgent need of influencing people with patriotic ideas and spirit²⁸. Actually, some scholars have found that at the heart of the ideological orthodoxy of Deng's theory

²⁶ The Tiananmen Square protests in 1989 were referred to in China as the June Fourth Incident, while in the west it is called Tiananmen Square Massacre.

²⁷ In 1989, in order to cease the lengthy pro-democracy demonstrations that were a threat to the stability of the country, Deng ordered suppression and kept the media silent on the largest movement since 1949.

²⁸ In the early 1990s, a "Campaign for National Unity" was initiated, which targeted the youth for "patriotic education". In September 1994, the CCP's Propaganda Department issued the "Fundamental Principles on Implementing Patriotic Education" for all the people. The aim of this new campaign, as stated in the "Beijing Review", is to "take concerted effort in various quarters to create a strong atmosphere in which the entire Chinese people will be influenced by the patriotic ideas and spirit".

lies a call for loyalty to the Party, i.e., nationalism, which is important for the Party to maintain unity and political stability (Hughes, 2006)

2.3 Conclusion

I conclude this Chapter by observing that each development theory attaches great importance to media development and each development theory provides explanation for certain circumstances in the Chinese society due to its complex pattern of development, especially after 1978 when the economic reform was unveiled. The media is no exception.

In the process of learning from the experience of industrialised western countries, there is little doubt in the government or in the academia that the transfer of capital goods, technologies, industries and some western cultures has brought about rapid economic productivity and social development in China. With regards to the media, numerous technical and social innovations have expedited the progress of modernization, improved the literacy level, promoted cultural development and generated civilized and active citizens.

Although Chinese leaders and many scholars believe that modernization would force the every sector in the society to become more efficient and dynamic, they are aware of

what has happened to developing countries that are dependent on rich western countries and to Eastern Europe, hence they insist that, in order to maintain social stability, China would have to be ruled by the CCP under all circumstances. The liberalization of market forces and opening up to foreign countries cannot weaken the authoritarian principles. Political leaders Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping develop Marxism-Leninism and the Party accredit their thoughts as “Theories”, which act as the guide for China’s development in the past decades. With regards to the media, they emphasize the Party’s control, which includes the asset structure, top media personnel and the ideological direction of media. Media is not only an agent of social changes, but also a Party organ of propaganda.

However, with rapid commercialization, increased operational autonomy, more access to information and more educated people, the tension, contradiction, compliance and partial resolution remain between the state and market. As there are more voices from home and abroad calling for civil rights, and the media starts to take multiple roles: informing, educating, raising consciousness and moral values, and entertaining, etc.

China is a different case, not only because it is so far the only socialist country that is able to reform its planned system and gain rapid development, but also it has allowed market forces and managed a relatively stable regime. When examining and assessing the “Chinese model”, no matter in economy, politics, media or any other subject, we cannot

look at it as a still picture, either, we could not ignore the transformative possibilities of this country. The western development theories have lots of influence on China's development, but China does not follow a Western pattern but has developed its own development concept.

In the following chapters, I will talk about this unique Chinese development concept, "social stability", and to review the role and performances of news media within the society with reference to this central concept.

Chapter 3: Social Stability

3.1 Media and Development in Media Studies

You will recall from Chapter 2 that the theories of modernization, dependency and Marxism understood media growth to be highly related to general economic, cultural development and social development. And in the theory of civil society, news media can contribute to better governance, political civilization and social solidarity. In the studies of media, numerous publications abound concerning the impacts of the media. There are many recent cases and studies indicating that media development contributes to both individual and national development.

For example, in *Media Effects* (Willis, 2007), Willis elaborates media's impacts on government, political action, national development, by looking into various cases such as the presidency, the war, ideological skewing and bias, public relations, the news consumer and media literacy. The book explores the media-originated influence and shows many different ways that the presidents in the course of American history have treated media. In particular, by looking at the history of different nations, including China, Willis concludes that media has a powerful effect on the way the country grows and develops – as Willis

deduces, “there may be no other single institution that has such a pervasive and long-lasting effect on a country, its government, and its people than the mass media” (ibid, p. 42). From his perspectives, it can be deduced that support media can yield results in governance activities, particularly those related to decentralization, anti-corruption, and citizen participation in the policy process, all of which can lead to national development.

In the book *Media and Open Societies: Cultural, Economic and Policy Foundations for Media Openness in East and West*, a number of experts from different countries in Europe address key issues regarding new regulatory models of media which they believe can contribute to the emergence of an open society (Cuilenburg and Wurff, 2000). An open society, according to them, is a society in which all have access to society's information and communication resources in a non-discriminatory and affordable way (ibid). Media, from their perspectives, should be able bear social responsibilities in a changing society, such as in the process of democratization (Nordenstreng, 2000, pp. 29-47). They also look at the potential of new media in strengthening user's autonomy and empowerment (Bakker, 2000). More assessment can be found in Rampal (p. 99) and Wilkinson's (p. 199) interpretations of the importance of the civic-oriented independent media early in Taiwanese and Mexican political liberalization processes, in McDaniel's (p. 77) discussion of NGO-based media production in Cambodia as a foil to media under control of political

patronage, and in Krady's (p. 185) analysis of how pan-Arab audience interpretations of reality television have created a discursive space for democratic contestation (Blankson and Murphy, 2007).

In the book *The Media and Peace*, Graham Spencer (2005) argues that peace depends on tolerance, which depends on understanding, information, all of which in turn depend on the media. Spencer points out that much attention has been given to media's relationship with conflicts and societal chaos, but not a comparable level of concern about the media's relationship with peace. He draws a few examples, including the coverage of Vietnam, Rwanda, Bosnia, the Middle East, Northern Ireland, the "War on Terror" and Iraq, and highlights the social costs of coverage which is obsessed with conflicts but ignoring peace. For example, in the case of Oslo Peace Process, he demonstrates a problematic relationship between politicians engaged in sensitive and fragile negotiations and the media keeping secrecy with publicity. He believes that media must be used to develop trust and commitment for political advantage (Spencer, 2005).

As a matter of fact, early in 1980, the UNESCO-funded Macbride Report *Many Voices, One World* advocated a communications order to meet the need for "more Just, more equity, more reciprocity in information exchange, less dependence in communication flows, less downward diffusion of messages, more self-reliance and cultural identity, more

benefits for all mankind” (UNESCO, 1980, p. xviii). The emphasis in this report towards peace is clear, as it argues that although disturbing or unpleasant events and facts must be known, media can remind the public that there are peaceful solutions. The report also suggests that those who bear the responsibility in the media (media workers) should remember that “beyond national and political interests, there is the supreme interest of all humanity in peace” (MacBride, et al, 2003, p. 179). Galtung and Vincent (1995) also proposed that the media should seek “to portray more clearly the benefits of peace.”

There are also some studies on media and conflicts in the recent decade, especially in relation to the discussion concerning globalisation. While conflicts today are fundamentally different in nature, as the scholars claim, these changes are directly related to the communications revolution and the media. In *Media and the Path to Peace*, for example, Gadi Wolfsfeld (2004) examines the role the news media play in peace processes, by looking into three cases: the Oslo peace process between Israel and the Palestinians, the peace process between Israel and Jordan, and the process surrounding the Good Friday Agreement in Northern Ireland. He finds that in the case of Oslo the media made a difficult situation worse, while in the case of Northern Ireland the media probably “enhanced the prospects for peace.” The different impacts result from what were covered, how they were reported, and the ethnic diversity of the intended audience.

In *Media and Globalization – Why the State Matters*, several authors explore the roles of different states in communications and cultural policy-making in the increasingly globalized world, because the noteworthy global expansion of media corporations, facilitated by liberalization and privatization of media systems worldwide and the development of technologies, has reduced states' ability to exercise power and maintain information sovereignty (Morris and Waisbor, 2001). While the Dependency Theory includes that the presence of foreign media poses a threat to cultural identity and autonomy in developing countries, the theory of globalization contends that international media flows pose more challenges to national autonomy (Nordenstreng and Schiller, 1979, p. 7). According to Held's elaboration (1989), the premise of sovereignty is that the states have absolute power to make decisions within their territorial space, without interference from the outside. Accordingly, states have communication sovereignty that includes authority over flows of information and ideas. However, in the face of media globalization, it becomes more difficult to exert government control over communication spaces, as people have more access to information.

In short, there is a set of analytical dimensions of the media studies that includes its impacts on social development. In spite of the fact that media systems vary in individual countries, media studies scholars contend that media is closely related to development.

Especially in a global environment favouring economic liberalization, media can offer a broader platform for exchange of information and strengthens the national community.

Reliable, accurate and objective media can help development in the society through the functions of responsibly disseminating information, furthering awareness and knowledge, promoting participatory and transparent governance, and addressing perceived anxiety.

3.2 Social Stability and Development

Social stability is an important development concept in contemporary Chinese society. It has been emphasized by three generations of Chinese political leaders for different purposes. Deng Xiaoping stressed that stability is of “overriding importance” in solving all of China's problems, including poverty alleviation, ethnic issues, foreign relations issues, etc. In the aftermath of the Pro-democracy social movement in 1989, he said, “About the political structural reform, the greatest goal is to achieve a stable environment. I talked with the Americans; the highest interest for China is stability” (Deng, 1993, P. 313). In 1995, Jiang Zeming²⁹ emphasized that “development is the enhancing of national strength

²⁹ In a speech entitled “To Handle Correctly Certain Relationships in the Process of Socialist Modernization Construction”, which was delivered in the 5th Plenum of 14th CCP Conference. The speech was regarded to be one of the most important speeches in Jiang’s tenure as the General Secretary of the CCP (Wong, 2005)

and stability is the pre-condition of development” (cited in Wong, 2005). On the top of his development agenda for the country was the relationship between the reforms, development and stability. Wen Jiabao³⁰ (2004, ¶ 24) has reiterated many times that China has to forge ahead with reforms and development while maintaining social stability, which should be promoted through reforms and development at the same time. Hu Jintao³¹ (2005), at the conference with officials of provincial and ministerial levels, stresses that a socialist harmonious society should feature democracy, the rule of law, social justice, sincerity, amity, vitality, stability and order, man and nature live in harmony.

Indeed, China has been, and still is, in search of another development: equilibrium among reform and social stability. Social stability is not only a top priority for the government, but also an important social value in the society. A Roper Survey in 2003 where stability ranked as a social value indicates that, while its average ranking among other nations’ citizens was twenty-third, Chinese people ranked it second.³²

So what is this “social stability?”

This concept appears rarely in the development literature in the West, but this term is the subject of intensive studies by Chinese scholars and is widely used in Chinese

³⁰ The sixth and current Premier of the State Council of the People's Republic of China

³¹ Current leader of the government of the PRC, as the General Secretary of the Communist Party of China

³² 2003 Roper Survey of Global Attitudes was cited in Joshua Cooper Ramo (2004), “The Beijing Consensus”..

government officials' documents and media articles. However, there is no definition of the concept of social stability in the Constitution of the People's Republic of China. The following paragraphs attempts to capture the complexities of this development concept as it is used by Chinese leaders, analysts and policymakers.

Based on Deng's theory, social stability includes political stability, sustained economic growth, stable national and cultural identities and a sound public order (Wang, 2004).

Social stability is a dynamic state of equilibrium in the process of social development, which is in contrast to social unrest. Social stability includes political stability, economic stability, stable social order and the stability of the peoples' ideology and sentiments.³³ (Gu and Wang, 1995).

The stability of Chinese society is above all political stability. Political stability does not mean, as it does in the West, how the State's laws are implemented, how the courts, the National People's Congress and the government function according to law. Rather, one of its main features is making the *monopolization of political power* the highest, even the ultimate goal, of the political system (Yu, 2009).

Social stability refers to the social system when it is in a healthy and orderly condition. Maintaining social stability in a modern society is a process of coordinating different components of the society. One of the important aspects is to strengthen the construction of socialist democracy and the sense of political participation, so as to increase political participation³⁴ (Liao, 2002).

³³ 社会稳定就是社会发展过程中出现的一种动态平衡状态，是相对于社会动荡而言的一种社会状态，它包括政治稳定、经济稳定、社会生活秩序的稳定和思想观念的稳定及人心的稳定。

³⁴ 社会稳定是指社会系统处于一种有序的良性运作状态。保持现代社会稳定是一个协调社会

Social stability means reasonable social structure and function, the co-ordination of all components of the society, and assuring social order. That is, the country as a whole is in sound operation. Social stability should include political stability, economic stability and stable social order. Political stability mainly refers to strong leadership, superior social system, and stability and unity of the political situation. Stable social order means people can live and work in peace and contentment with a sense of security. Economic stability mainly refers to sustained, healthy and rapid economic development ³⁵ (Li and Zhang, 2005).

The concept “Neo-Social-Stability” embraces the following: people-centred is the core; dynamism is the precondition; social justice is the cornerstone; harmony is the essence; democracy is the key; the Rule of Law provides the foundation; sustainability is the nature. (Hu and Hu, 2009).

From the above definitions of different scholars, the definition of social stability is very comprehensive and broad. It almost includes every aspect in the society: political, economic, cultural, ideological and social development. There is no exactly equivalent term in western literature to this one, as it combines political stability, sustained economic growth, sound social order, stable national and cultural identities, and active civic participation. It is not only a sociological concept but a concept that embodies the focuses

系统诸因素的历史运动过程, 其中一个重要的方面就是加强社会的民主政治建设, 强化国民的政治参与意识扩大政治参与。

³⁵ 社会稳定是社会结构、功能合理, 社会各要素的协作作用及社会运行的有序化, 即社会整体的良性运行。社会稳定应包括政治稳定、经济稳定和社会秩序稳定。政治稳定主要是指坚强的领导核心, 优越的社会制度, 安定团结的政治局面。社会秩序稳定, 主要是指人民群众安居乐业, 思想稳定, 社会治安秩序较好。经济稳定主要是指我国国民经济能持续、快速、健康的发展。

of China's development agenda. On one hand, it borrows different elements in western development paradigm, applied to China under different circumstances. On the other hand, it inherits ancient Chinese values.

3.2.1 From the Western development theories to the theory of Social stability.

Social stability includes the implications of Western development theories of Modernization, Dependency, Marxism and Another Development. Firstly, the process of China's modernization is the pursuit of social stability. Modernization has been the cause for many generations in China. It has been a key theme in academia and politics.

Luo Rongqu, a leading scholar on Modernization in China, summarized four essential schools of thinking on Modernization:

First, Modernization refers to the historical process of economically backward countries undergoing a technological revolution to catch up with economically and technologically advanced countries. Political leaders, Sun Yat-sen, Zhou Enlai and Deng Xiaoping emphasized the urgent need of technological and scientific innovation. Second, Modernization means industrialization, which includes urbanization, mechanization, automation, sustained economic growth, etc. Third, modernization is also a process of human development which occurs in many spheres of life. It is featured with economic, political, technological and social characteristics: such as democratization, rule of law, mass education, information revolution, and so on. Fourth, Modernization is a process of changing values and life styles in the society. (Luo, 1993)

Both Modernization and Social stability center on economic development and attach great importance to sustained economic growth (Li and Zhang, 2005). China's most fundamental task has been to have sustained health, and rapid economic development, because Chinese leaders and scholars believe that an economic solution will make a contribution to peace and it should be the first step in meeting basic human needs as well as other human development needs. If these needs are not satisfied, desperate behaviour may occur, including aggression, as a result, the society will be in chaos ("*luan*")³⁶. Although it is questionable that purely an economic solution is sufficient in building peace, a backward economy will ultimately lead to social instability. For instance, according to the World Bank (2003), in 2003 there were 41 conflict-affected countries³⁷, of which 32 are low-income countries. During the past 15 years some 15 of the 20 poorest countries have had violent conflicts. Therefore, numerous scholars such as Ramo (2004) agree that,

³⁶ Deng has stated that "If our economy continues to grow at a slow rate, it will be hard to raise living standards. Why do the people support us? Because over the last ten years our economy has been developing and developing visibly. If the economy stagnated for five years or developed at only a slow rate -- for example, at four or five per cent, or even two or three per cent a year -- what effects would be produced? This is not only an economic problem but also a political one. When we work to improve the economic environment and rectify the economic order, we should therefore try to quickly attain an appropriate growth rate." (Deng, 1990).

³⁷ Wenger and Möckli posit that the nature of conflict today is civil conflict. Nowadays, more than 90 percent of armed conflict takes place within, rather than between States, and, up to 90 percent of the victims are civilians rather than combatants (Wenger and Möckli, 2003).

without growth, there would be instability and chaos in China. In short, “if China wanted to shake off poverty and modernize, stability was crucial.” (Deng, 1993. P. 336).

Secondly, as in Dependency Theory, that takes economic and political development as equally important (Wong, 2005), Social stability also suggests that economic growth is the precondition, and political stability plays an important role in determining the growth.

Chinese leaders and scholars have widely discussed direct and indirect relationships between economic growth and political stability. On the one hand, structural economic changes sometimes increase political and social stability (such as the case in Central Eurasia³⁸), and that is what has been happening to China. Deng (1988, cited in Zheng, 1999, p. 92) repeatedly emphasized that China’s modernization required two prerequisites: international peace and domestic political stability. Deng (1990) instructs that as long as China can ensure appropriate economic growth, China can maintain political stability no matter how the international situation changes. On the other hand, Younis and Xu (2008) find that political instability often leads to slower economic growth. Jia (1996) argues that in China political stability is the most important prerequisite for economic development - if the Chinese government does not take firm measures to ensure political stability, China will never become modernized. Yu’s definition (2009, see above) emphasizes the

³⁸ Further reading: Irina Y. Morozova (2005). *Towards Social Stability and Democratic Governance in Central Eurasia: Challenges to Regional Security*.

significance of political stability in furthering a stable Chinese society, which is built on China's one party political system.

Social stability highlights the importance of CCP's control and its strong leadership, because in the process of its aggressive modernization, the western ideas of freedom of expression, democracy, and individual citizens' participation in political life and surveillance of the government's behaviour, etc., challenge China's established political system.

There are opposite views on whether China can copy the western modernization. Some suggest that it is necessary to strengthen the construction of socialist democracy and the sense of political participation so the political stability can be ensured (Liao, 2002); scholar Gilley (2004) believes that China's system will be ultimately adjusted or modified as the market exposure increases. Therefore, they require the country, in order to match the market economy, should carry out a political reform that is to democratize the political system and people's life. Such a reform should expand civil rights such as free access to information and political participation. However, some Chinese scholars and the government disagree, with a common standpoint that the Western model cannot be applied to China as it would not serve China's economic reform which is "socialism with Chinese characteristics" (Xu¹, 2003). For judging the soundness of a country's political system,

Deng Xiaoping (1992 c) puts forward three criteria: “First, whether the country is politically stable; second, whether the system and policies help to strengthen unity among the people and to raise their living standards; and third, whether the productive forces keep developing.”² – In short, they hold the point of making the monopolization of political power “the highest, even the ultimate goal, of the political system” (Yu, 2009). Until today, proponents of these two competing views have not stopped arguing.

Thirdly, like many developing countries in Latin America and Asia, changes in social consciousness and values signalled monumental change in China’s contemporary culture. In the reform era, the ideologies of socialism and Marxism gave way to pluralistic trends. For example, as Shou (2007) observes, how to maintain stability and unity while the market reform is expanded and deepened in China has significantly influenced emergence of democratic values and political stability. Therefore, Social stability theory emphasizes that it is essential to build a socialist society that is culturally and ideologically advanced (Deng, 1992 a). Accordingly, Chinese leaders implement a systematic strategy to insert positive social values in the society with a goal to remould the society according to Marxism. From Deng’s “Socialism with Chinese Characteristics”, to Jiang Zeming’s “Three Represents”³⁹, to Hu Jintao’s “Harmonious Society”, CCP has been canalizing their

³⁹ “Three Represents”: 1) Representing the development trend of China’s advanced productive

energies to guard against the westernization and bourgeois-liberal tendencies⁴⁰. Deng and Jiang continuously call people to love the socialist state and the existing form of socialist democracy (Jiang, 1990).

What happened in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe led Chinese leaders to believe that the decline of socialist ideology will cause social chaos. When Deng Xiaoping declared an “open door” policy in late 1970s, he warned that “the penetration of bourgeois ideas is inevitable”, and launched a Chinese political campaign named “Anti-Spiritual Pollution Campaign” in 1983. The Communist Party Propaganda Chief Deng Liqun points out that spiritual pollution includes “obscene, barbarous or reactionary materials, vulgar taste in artistic performances, indulgence in individualism” and statements that “run counter to the country's social system.” However, ideological oppression in China never stops rising since the liberal reform started. The massive pro-democracy movement in June, 1989, for example, was because the communist ideology had been discarded to a great extent (Zheng, 1999)⁴¹. In the recent decade, many Chinese, in particular those who have

forces. 2) Representing the development trend of China's advanced productive forces. 3) Representing the fundamental interests of the overwhelming majority of the Chinese people. <<http://english.cpc.people.com.cn/66739/4521344.html>>

⁴⁰ Early in 1984, at the early stage of opening-up, Deng has affirmed that “Party leadership and socialist system...must be improved but that doesn't mean we can have bourgeois liberalisation or anarchy” (Kleinberg, 1990).

⁴¹ For the regime, western styles of democratic institutions are not necessary for China to achieve rapid economic growth or to guarantee stability and the people a decent livelihood. Thus, the regime regards the movement as undermining the country's stable development instead of patriotic

become disillusioned by the Cultural Revolution and political campaigns, are seeking human rights. In the meantime, the middle and white-collar classes, who are well-educated and influenced by Western ideas, require the government to be committed to enhancing human development. Confronted with such changes of cultural values that cause opposition to CCP's control and China's national interest, Chinese leaders try every means to tighten ideological control so as to keep a stable social order. Thereafter, from education to media, the socialist principles are used widely and nationalism is promoted to be the dominant ideology.

Fourthly, like the Dependency Theory that takes intrinsic factors and the external/international environments into account (cf. Chapter 2), Social stability stresses that in order to understand the internal dynamics, it is indispensable to examine the relationship to the world system especially in the era of globalization. Chinese leaders and scholars consider China's stability as a major contribution to the international community in promoting stability and economic prosperity. Deng points out that as China is the largest developing country in the world, a stable and developing China is a firm force to maintain world peace; however, if China were in turmoil, the regional stability and the international security would be endangered (Deng, 1993). Many others also elaborate that instability in

China would cause all kinds of problems within the country and in the region:

1. Political and economic rivalry inside China might substantially reduce China's influence as an international actor, especially at the regional level
2. Instability could reverse China's remarkable success in attracting international investment
3. Instability could also cause discontent and threaten the party rule
4. With open conflict within and between different regions, the personal well-being and rights of the people are likely to suffer severely.

(Kornberg and Faust, 2005, p. 261)

Lastly, as a process of globalization supersedes geographical borders and deals a powerful blow to every state, Chinese leaders are also aware of dilemmas between the deepening of market reform and the weakening party-state control, and between the empowering the citizens in a freer society with civil rights and maintaining a good social order by suppression of massive social unrest. Therefore, China is also searching for “another development.” The key question is how the government continues to play a leading role as development becomes a more complicated task. “Although the Party still claims legitimacy on the basis of Marxism-Leninism and this claim has important consequences for the political system, they are also aware that performance legitimacy has become far more important than ideology in justifying the government’s continued rule” - According to Joseph Fewsmith’s (2001) careful analysis, the emphasis on economic

growth led to a change in the basis of the regime's legitimacy.

In a recently published book *Report on Contemporary China's Social Stability*, Scholars Hu Angang⁴² and Hu Lianhe conclude the concept "Neo-Social-Stability" embraces the following: "People-centered" is the core; dynamism is the precondition; social justice is the cornerstone; harmony is the essence; democracy is the key; the Rule of Law provides the foundation; sustainability is the nature⁴³ (Hu and Hu, 2009). To elaborate, "People-centered" means China's social development should be designed for and aimed at improving people's health, material and cultural life. It also means to correctly handle the relationships among the State, the society and the individual so as to create a sound social order and political stability. "Dynamism" here means such stability is relatively stable, which is full of opportunities, vitality and openness; while there are partial changes, the overall situation remains relatively unchanged; by means of institutionalized regulation and local changes, the global stability remains a dynamic balance. "Social justice" is of much significance in social stability. Because social justice is people's fundamental needs, which endows people with dignity, opportunities, economic and political values. Social justice can contribute to safeguarding and developing political, economic, and cultural

⁴² Director of Qinghua University's China Studies Research Centre

⁴³ 一、以人为本是新稳定观的核心; 二、动态性是新稳定观的前提; 三、公正是新稳定观的基石; 四、和谐是新稳定观的要旨; 五、民主是新稳定观的关键; 六、法治是新稳定观的保障; 七、可持续性是新稳定观的本质

needs and values. Social justice provides political stability with autonomous power and value basis, which is reflected in society as peoples' mental power. "Harmony is the essence" means social stability requires a stable economic development that has stable social relations with the other sectors in the political system. It also means harmonious relations between the society and the individual, harmonious coexistence between individuals, and between human beings and the environment. "Democracy is the key" to social and political stability, which is a strategy not only to take temporary solution but also to offer a permanent cure to all social problems, so that a long-lasting stable social and political situation can be maintained. "Rule of law", different from rule by people, prioritizes law as the final authority. Its function is to stabilize the country and the society on a long-term basis. "Sustainability is the nature" of social stability means a persistent social order, or, continuous stability in the society. (Hu and Hu, 2006)

In conclusion, from the above discussion we can see that "social stability" is a theoretical concept formed in the process of China's development, applied to China's circumstances, and intended to solve various social problems and to guide the practices of socialist construction. For Chinese leaders, maintaining social stability is not only a goal, but also a means to an end and an ongoing process in China's development. Chinese leaders and scholars draw on the experience of westerner modernization and the lessons of

other developing countries. China is so far the only socialist country that is able to reform its planned system and gain rapid development while the regime stays relatively stable. China does not want to follow some developing countries which were subjected to the exploitation of the industrialized countries. Also, learnt from the collapse of Eastern European communism and the Soviet Union, as well as the lessons of the pro-democracy movement in 1989, the government gradually develops a more assertive development model as the reform continues. The common belief among the Chinese scholars and political leaders is that foreign nations have their own agendas and they always attempt to manipulate China for their own purposes. In order to maintain a stable internal environment, the government exerts greater control over the society, although in recent years they have endeavoured to decrease the costs of doing so. Such control includes the control of the market, natural and human resources, public opinions, and cultural trends.

3.2.2 Integrating social stability and ancient Chinese values: Confucianism.

The problem for Chinese theoreticians and leaders was how to establish the legitimacy of this term and maximize its flexibility so the whole society could adopt and follow the ideas through some already known point of identification. Thus, “social stability” is also

featured with ancient Chinese values, Confucianism, which has been the de facto official philosophy of China for about 2,000 years.

Confucianism is the thinking of Confucius⁴⁴ who is the most influential philosopher in Chinese tradition⁴⁵. According to Confucianism, there are five principal relationships in the social structure: between ruler and subject, between parents and children, between elder and younger brothers, between husband and wife, and between friends. Confucianism emphasizes “stability,” or “*wending*” in Chinese. Central to this philosophy is that each individual must fulfill his or her responsibilities within these relationships, and demonstrate virtues that help maintain harmony, order, and stability⁴⁶. Social harmony and stability are important values in the Confucian scheme:

[In Confucianism] there is no fundamental separation between the family, the social and the political spheres. All parts should be ordered in mutually supportive ways to achieve the ethical ideals. The ideal, if achieved, can at once solve problems of individual morality, social harmony and political stability. (Bell, 2007)

[But] some ideas in Confucianism are helpful in maintaining social order and harmony... The CCP certainly wants a revival of such values to help it maintain social stability. (Jian, 2009)

⁴⁴ Kong Fuzi, or, Kung Fu-tzu, 551 B.C.-479 B.C

⁴⁵ The speeches and writings of Confucius are recorded in the “Analects”.

⁴⁶ For more readings on Confucianism and Chinese political culture, see De Bary, Chan, and Watson 1960, Nathan 1973, Pye 1981, Walder 1986, Pye 1989

The stability of society in China, according to Confucian views, is based on unequal relationships between people. This is almost diametrically opposed to British, American and Scandinavian ideas, but it is hardly questioned in China... The Chinese believe that the disorder, crime and lack of societal responsibility in many Western countries are the result of not observing these relationships. (Lewis, 2005)

We can find lots of discussion on the contribution of Confucian values to social stability.⁴⁷ After all, the teaching and acculturation of Confucian thoughts have been promoted and developed in China for thousands of years. This philosophy used today represents the collective experience of China undergone a long process of adaptation and response to challenges of its natural and social environments. For example, Confucianism is no longer characterized as “resistant to, or antagonistic to modernity” (Xiao, 1994)⁴⁸.

Confucianism plays different roles in Chinese society today, politically and culturally. For one thing, Confucianism provides a foundation for a stable society because it emphasizes moral autonomy, peace and harmony in terms of social relations. Tang (2005) finds that Confucianism serves as a guide to Chinese political culture, and in some way, it balances the relationship between the state and the society. For another, with rapid economic growth and globalization, the influence of the official ideology is gradually

⁴⁷ For further readings, see “Confucianism in Action” by David S. Nivison, “Confucian Political Ethics” and “China’s new Confucianism: politics and everyday life in a changing society” by Daniel A. Bell

⁴⁸ Confucianism, because it was connected to traditional feudal and autocratic government, used to play a negative role in resisting modernization reforms.

diminishing. Chinese leaders are worried that the loss of ideology will weaken links between individuals and society that will create daunting challenges for the government in the end. Confucianism has the capacity of creating inclusion and the sense of belonging to the society. Zheng (1999, p. 72) elaborates the impacts of Confucianism on Chinese society in creating a new nationalism, and concludes that “Confucianism was China's traditional mainstream cultural form. Whether China will be able to modernize itself and achieve rapid economic growth while maintaining political legitimacy and stability depends on whether this mainstream culture can be carried forward and enhanced”. In order to maintain socio-political stability, strengthen its political legitimacy and bring people together, the Party need to reconstruct an official nationalism that is built on Confucian values.

Hence, the concept of “social stability” has a cultural and socio-psychological root in the society, and an undoubted impact in China’s political culture. As the most important experience China has learned from its revolutions and modernization reforms, maintaining social stability is the precondition and foundation for development (Lin, 2006). Learnt from the experiences of western modernization and westernization in some developing countries, China has been seeking its own way of development since the reform - As Deng Xiaoping said in 1985, the reform and opening up is a very big experiment that one cannot

learn from books. The course of China's development is mixed with Western influences and Chinese cultures. Hence, its development theory, Social stability theory, is featured with Chinese characteristics.

3.3 Media as a Tool to Maintain Social Stability

The current China is the result of the country's century long chaos and revolutions. As I have discussed, maintaining social stability is the goal and the means to an end. To achieve this goal, media is one of the most effective tools to impose ideological control.

The CCP exercised a systematic ideological control to secure social stability. For example, they launched the Patriotic Education Campaign in 1991, which involved thousands of youths, party members, university professors in the social sciences, and journalists. Leaders believe that the lack of patriotic education in the 1980s resulted in the rise of a romantic political liberalism among intellectuals and students, which caused the social instability at the end of the 1980s. Therefore, in early 1990s, a "Campaign for National Unity" was initiated, urging people to unite under CCP's leadership - otherwise

the country would descend into chaos⁴⁹.

Chinese leaders attribute moral retrogression to the influences of foreign capitalism or even to the foreign capitalists plot for “peace evolution” (Zhang, 1994). As there is growing suspicion of foreign capitalists’ hidden agenda that is to westernize the world, China has politically protected its media industry while pushing hard on market-building and politically and institutionally controlled the ideology.

Media was believed to be a major contributing factor⁵⁰ of the spread of the so-called “bourgeois liberalization” in late 1980s, and journalists were active participants in the 1989 demonstrations. Therefore, in early 1990s, the government reinforced propaganda to retain spiritual control over the society. “The government closely monitors the media - not to mention political organs - to ensure that controversial views are not aired. If the system fails to live up to the ‘ideal’, then ‘stability’ is threatened, and the government take various measures to restore the status quo (Bell, 2007).

The government has learnt that a good public spirit can occur through public media. So after 1989, a wave of “Mao Heat” appeared in all kinds of media programs, generating “a

⁴⁹ In September 1994, the CCP’s Propaganda Department issued the “Fundamental Principles on Implementing Patriotic Education” for all the people. The aim of this new campaign, is to “take concerted effort in various quarters to create a strong atmosphere in which the entire Chinese people will be influenced by the patriotic ideas and spirit” (Beijing Review, 26 September–2 October 1994)

⁵⁰ More information about the news reporting during the movement can be referred to “Mass Media and Tiananmen Square”, by Zhou He (1996), published by Nova Science Publishers.

mass nostalgia for the past spiritual uniformity” (People's Daily, 1991 in Shaw, 1996). In the work units, for example, Victor Shaw (1996) finds that:

Means of propaganda include wired radio system, official documents, study materials, newsletters, wall newspapers, bulletins, blackboard news, shows, entertainments, films, art performances, and closed-circuit television systems. The propaganda task is multi-faceted, including 1) publicizing party policies and state rules; 2) informing the unit population of current political situations; 3) delivering unit news and administrative directives; 4) praising good persons and good events within the unit; 5) establishing models and advancing the unit's task performance; 6) organizing shows, performances, excursions, and entertainments that convey communist values and create a sense of collectivity, and 7) managing important unit events such as anniversary celebrations (p. 52).

Let us now see how media have a fundamental role to play in promoting social stability.

When covering economy-related news, the Chinese media are inclined to choose positive (good) news and other news in accord with the official ideology. One of the most popular practices is in praise of the economic reforms, which mobilizes the national ambition of economic development. As Zhao (1998) observes, in 1990s, the media focused on reporting on rising business stars and the lifestyle of the rich and famous people, while paying little attention to the plight of millions of peasants who were travelling across the country to look for jobs. As economic growth is the priority for both the central government and local governments, negative (or bad) news that might affect the regional

growth, foreign investment and the good image of the government is prohibited. News about severe pollution is often one of these sensitive topics.

Despite of being the fastest-growing economy in the world for the past two decades, China is one of the world's most polluted nations: industrial pollution, municipal waste discharge, soil erosion and various kinds of non-point pollution from chemicals. Severe pollution, major coal mine accidents and food safety are sensitive topics. For example, the newspaper *China Environment*, established in 1984, is an official propaganda paper that aims to raise public consciousness and reflect opinions by reporting on serious pollution accidents and typical cases of environmental deterioration. However, like other media, it does not report "politically sensitive problems such as serious pollution-related disease" (Shigetomi and Makino, 2009). Another example is in 2005, about 100 tons of benzene and other toxic chemicals spilled into the Songhua River after an explosion on November 13 at China National Petroleum Corp, a major petrochemical plant in neighbouring Jilin province, which is owned by a subsidiary of one of the government's largest oil firms. The central propaganda department ordered the media to limit reporting (Pan, 2005). The official news media reported the city had not received any reports of poisoning or other health-related problems from the spill. The media did not inform residents of the pollution threat, but simply repeated the official announcement that "the water system would be shut

down for routine repairs⁵¹” (Yardley, 2005). In 2007, when the World Bank drafted a report “Cost of Pollution in China” that reveals 750,000 people died prematurely every year in China from pollution-related disease, China's State Environment Protection Agency and the Health Ministry asked the World Bank to cut the calculations of premature deaths from the report together with the map, “because Beijing officials feared it would provoke social unrest” (Financial Times, 2007, ¶ 1). Not such news was available on the Chinese language media. To conclude, in order to create a positive business environment and keep a good image of the local government, the media, controlled by the propaganda or self-censored to avoid being punished or a crackdown, are cautious in reporting information on environment and health that would hinder the government’s efforts to achieve economic stability.

In consideration of political stability, the media take “positive propaganda as the core” (Dai, 2009, p. 128), promoting political stability and national unity to gain the public’s support in the existing political structures. Sensitive news such as social conflicts is treated as confidential, especially by official media. The most common practice is Xinhua News Agency send “internal reference” to the highest levels of the authority for review. In order to strengthen the political power of the CCP, “stability should prevail over everything else”

⁵¹ As a result, the local society was full of increasing panic and wild rumours, including growing speculation that the local government had detected some signs of an earthquake (Yardley, 2005).

is made as a political slogan in the Chinese society by the media. The Chinese media have lots of coverage on how social and political stability has been a prerequisite for the economic miracles in other Asian countries. Singapore is frequently used as an example to convince the people that political openness should not be the precondition for economic success (Chen, 1993).

The milk contamination scandal in 2008 was an example of the government using media to prevent social disorder and to keep a positive image at home and abroad. An official ban on reporting of “all food safety issues” during the 2008 Summer Olympic Games kept the Chinese media silent on the news that at least 20 dairy companies had been spiking milk products with the chemical melamine (Human Rights Watch, 2010). Instead, the media echoed the motto of the Chinese Olympics “One World, One Dream” to encourage nationalist sentiments.

Indeed, the Chinese media plays a key role in nationalist sentiments. Pro-socialism, pro-CCP, pro-traditional Chinese values, anti-Japanese, and anti-US are rarely censored while anti-government sentiments are heavily monitored and removed. An example is that during Bill Clinton's visit to China in 1998, China had its first live press conference on CCTV in the history of Chinese television. The one-hour press conference covered a wide variety of sensitive topics, ranging from human rights, the Chinese government's

crackdown on the Tiananmen student demonstration in 1989, the thorny issue of Tibet, Taiwan's independence, to dissidents in China. However, none of these sensitive topics and other controversial issues made the news (Li, 2003). The media talked profusely, however, about China's role in maintaining economic stability in Asia in the midst of the Asian economic crisis starting in 1997.

Anti-Japanese and anti-US sentiments are also mobilized to a great degree by the government through the media. For example, after the bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade on 8 May 1999, US president Bill Clinton instantly proclaimed that the bombing was a “tragic mistake” because of outdated maps and he extended his “regrets and profound condolences” to the Chinese people. However, the official Chinese media did not publicize the US- and NATO-apologies until 11 May, but described the bombing as a “barbaric” and an intentional “criminal act” (Gries, 2005). As People’s Daily wrote on May 12, 1999, cited in Gries (2005):

“The wheel of history will not go backward. This is 1999, not 1899. This is not...the age when people can barge about the world in gunboats... This is not the age when the Western powers plundered the Imperial Palace at will, destroyed the Old Summer Palace, and seized Hong Kong and Macao... China is a China that has stood up; it is a China that defeated the Japanese fascists; it is a China that had a trial of strengthen and won victory over the United States in the Korean battleground. The Chinese people are not to be bullied, and China’s sovereignty and dignity are not to be violated... US-led NATO had better remember this. (p.17)

It appears paradoxical that the media sometimes hides negative (bad) stories to maintain a peaceful, orderly and harmonious society, and sometimes carries out messages of deliberate provocation like in the above example. However, the media's role in taking the government's agenda forward remains consistent. As Gries (2005) finds, the Chinese government's anti-United States attitudes in 1990s were due to a couple of reasons: American abandonment of Mikhail Gorbachev and Russia after the fall of the Soviet bloc, Beijing's lost 1993 bid to host the 2000 Olympics, the Taiwan Strait Crisis, etc. Gries also finds that most media outlets thought Chinese people were manipulated by the propaganda that called the bombing intentional (ibid).

An opposite example is in the spring of 2005, there was a sweeping anti-Japanese protest across China⁵². Considering the important contribution of China-Japan economic and trade cooperation in promoting economic growth and the great number of Japanese investors who were crucial for China to invigorate the economy, the government did not

⁵² The relationship between China and Japan has been complicated for decades. Animosity between China and Japan periodically resurfaces over territorial, historical, and economic disputes. Their relationship chilled markedly after Junichiro Koizumi took office in 2001 and began annual visits to the Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo. In 2005, there were mainly two reasons for triggering the mass protests in China: one is the Japanese government's approval of a Japanese history textbook that include controversial content which many international observers and the Chinese government perceive as a systematic distortion of history; the other reason is the proposal that Japan be granted a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council.

want the protests to continue. Therefore, media seemed to give much less attention to the protest. For example, there were no reports on newspapers, television, or news websites of on the protest on April 9, which was “the largest demonstration in the capital since 1999” (Bezlova, 2005). When the Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi apologized in Asia-Africa Forum on April 22 in Jakarta, almost every media reported it. The Chinese media also made some fence-mending efforts prior to the meeting between President Hu Jintao and Koizumi: CCTV and other key Chinese media run special programs on the “symbiotic nature of Sino-Japan economic ties” (Lam, 2005, ¶ 9). In brief, the national ideology is promulgated through media, and the media serve the government as a tool to shape public opinions and promote nationalist sentiments.

From the discussion above, we can see that the Chinese media have a fundamental role to play in promoting social stability, including economic stability, political stability, a sound social order and the national ideology.

Chapter 4 Background of China's Media

4.1 A brief introduction of China's Propaganda System

The Chinese Communist propaganda system has remained the same since the Maoist era, which the CCP learned from the Soviet Union, although its actual oversight and the degree of censorship have changed considerably since 1980s.

The CCP propaganda system was established in Yan'an before 1949 along with the Yan'an Rectification Movement which consolidated Mao's paramount role within the CCP. The system then became a key mechanism for the Party's ideological control and indoctrination after 1949. The centre of the system is the Central Propaganda Department. However, the system includes a great number of State Council departments and regulatory organs acting as important institutional parts of the system.

4.1.1 The CCP Propaganda / Publicity Department (CCPPD)⁵³.

The CCPPD, frequently called as the "*Zhong Xuan Bu*" in Chinese, is one of five departments directly under the CCP Central Committee⁵⁴, and it is the center of the entire

⁵³ The name has been changed to "the Department of Publicity" in English.

⁵⁴ The other four departments are: the United Front Work Department, the International Liaison Department, the Central Organization Department, and the Central Discipline Inspection

propaganda system⁵⁵ which includes a general office, two management units, eight functional departments and five units under direct administration:

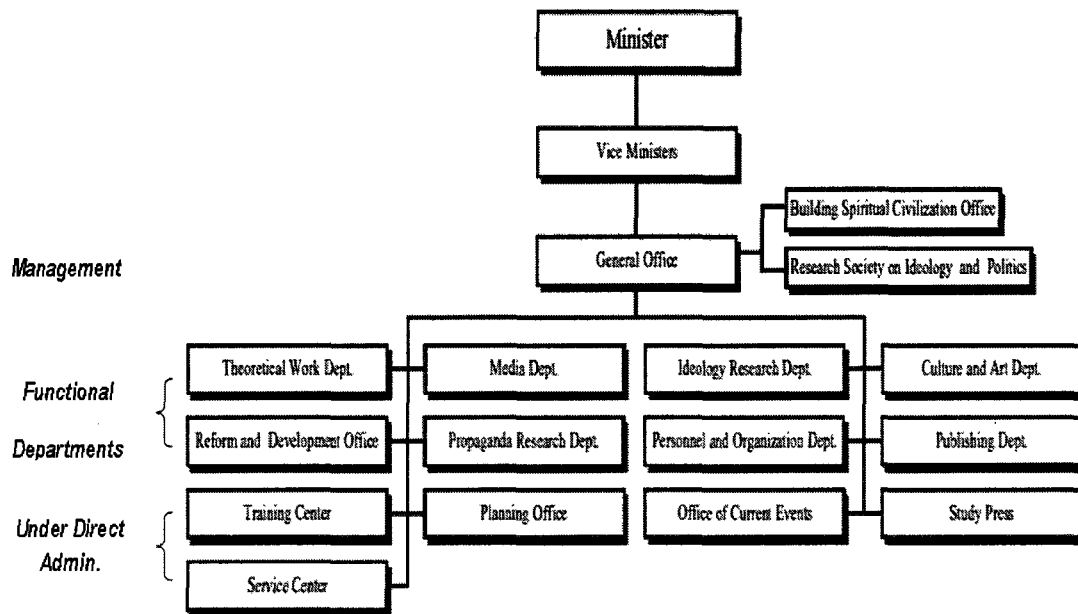


Figure 1: Central Propaganda Department structure – the central level

The mission of CCPPD is to sustain the Party's dominance over ideology, culture and public opinions (CCP Organization Department, 2009). The scope of propaganda includes: newspaper offices, radio stations, television stations, publishing houses, magazines, and

Commission.

⁵⁵ The Propaganda Department started to function in 1922 at the Second Party Congress of the CCP, with an exception during the ten-year Cultural Revolution (1967–77).

other news and media departments; universities, middle schools, primary schools, and other vocational education, specialized education, cadre training, and other educational organs; musical troupes, theatrical troupes, film production studios, film theatres, drama theatres, clubs, and other cultural organs, literature and art troupes, and cultural amusement parks; cultural palaces, libraries, remembrance halls, exhibition halls, museums, and other cultural facilities and commemoration exhibition facilities (Qiao and Zhai, 1991). From this expansive structure, we can find that every medium of information in China is under the CCPPD's control, and that the system is a bureaucratic establishment (Figure 2).

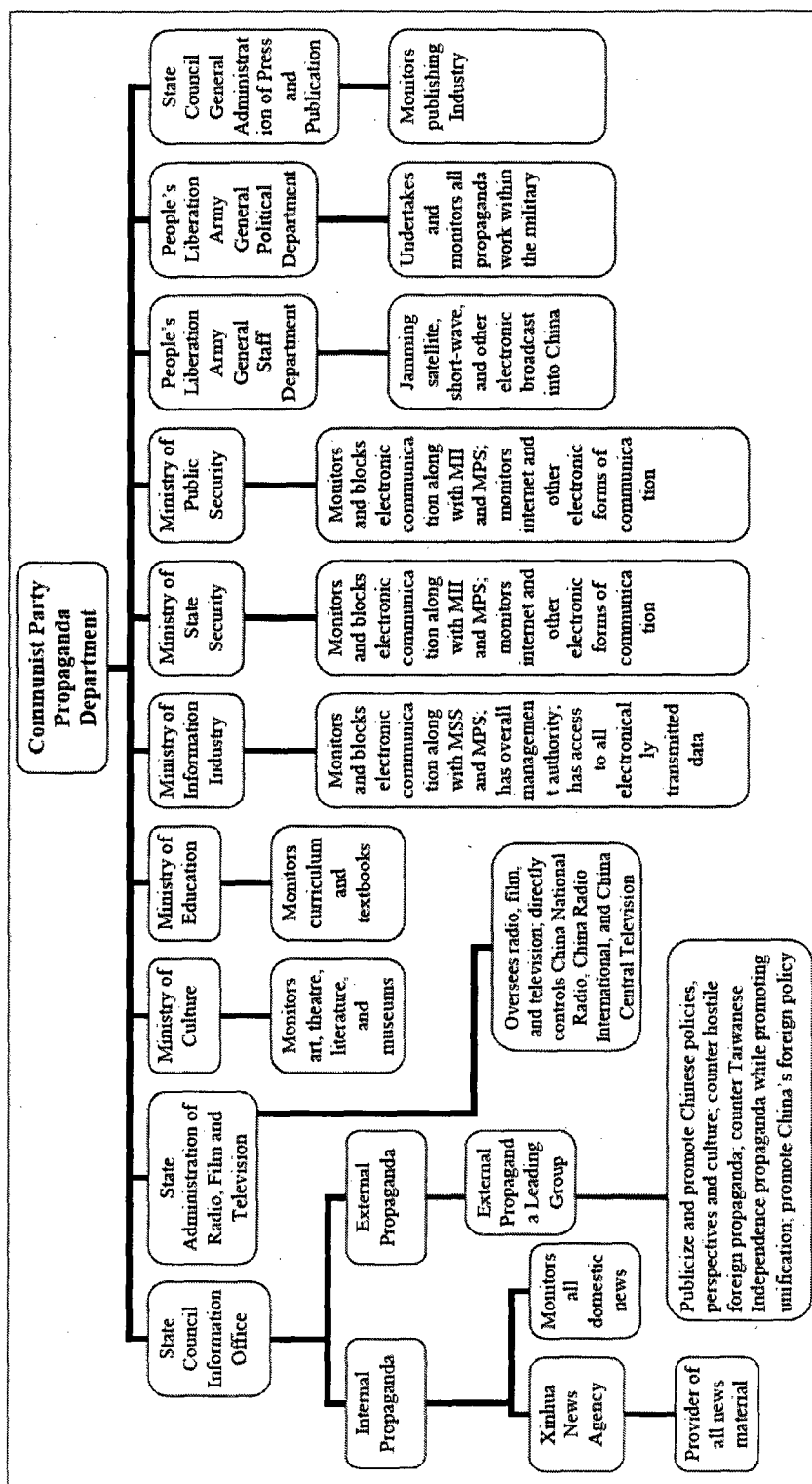


Figure 2: Structure of Communist Party Propaganda Department

Key departments that are enlisted in censorship or regulatory practices in the CCPPD include:

- The State Council Information Office ([*Guowuyuan Xinwenban*], or SCIO) is divided into two categories: directed towards Chinese people (internal) and directed towards foreigners and the outside world (external). SCIO has overall authority of monitoring news content nationwide. Internally, one of its key functions is to oversee the Xinhua News Agency and domestic media - sometimes it collaborates with the GAPP. Externally, SCIO is aimed at promoting Chinese policies, stands, economic development, history and culture to the world so as to build up a positive international image. Especially in 1990s, as the Chinese leaders was gradually aware that managing public crises was useful for domestic politics, they set up “News Coordinator Groups” and SCIO trains the official spoke-persons to deal with crisis.
- The State Administration of Radio, Film and Television (SARFT) controls the content of all radio, television, film and satellite in China. For instance, it has editorial responsibilities over the CCTV. SARFT controls the access to and supervises the operations of satellite and cable networks, and it is the regulator of foreign satellite broadcasts, including its access, news, entertainment programs, etc. For example, foreign satellite news broadcasts are prohibited; only a few foreign channels are allowed to some households in Guangdong Province, luxury hotels and foreign compounds.
- The Ministry for Information Industry (MII) regulates the telecommunications and

software industries. They have the overall authority of the management of telephone lines, fiberoptic cables, cell phones, text messaging, faxes and so on. MII not only manage the registration and issue the license of all “Internet information services”, or Internet content providers, but also has the right to examine all information posted on Internet⁵⁶. MII and Ministry of Public Security (MPS) and Ministry of State Security (MSS) together monitor electronic communications into China. The MPS and MSS are responsible for checking the Internet and other electronic forms of communication on a daily basis.

- The General Administration of Press and Publication (GAPP) has principal responsibility for monitoring the publishing industry. It oversees and controls the quantity, structure, and distribution for the whole country’s publishing, printing, copying, and distribution units; it drafts and enforces regulations and production policies for the news publishing industry; it approves and issues licences to new publishers and publication distributors of newspapers, books, journals, periodicals, and audio-visual products; it monitors news publishing activities such as publishing and trade, investigates illegal activities and publications and, carries out corresponding resolutions; it also examines the information on Internet. In brief, the GAPP has the power over any print, electronic and Internet publications in China – it can sensor and

⁵⁶ “Measures for the Administration of Internet Information Services” (2000.09.25): Providers of Internet information services for news reporting, or for BBS shall record the content, the time it was issued, and the Internet address or city name; providers must record information regarding the amount of time that the customer was on the internet, the customer’s account number, internet address or city name, primary phone number, etc. Providers must maintain these records for sixty days, and provide them to relevant government agencies who intend to examine.

ban the publishing, even to shut down publishers who break its rules. (Figure 3:

Structure of GATT)

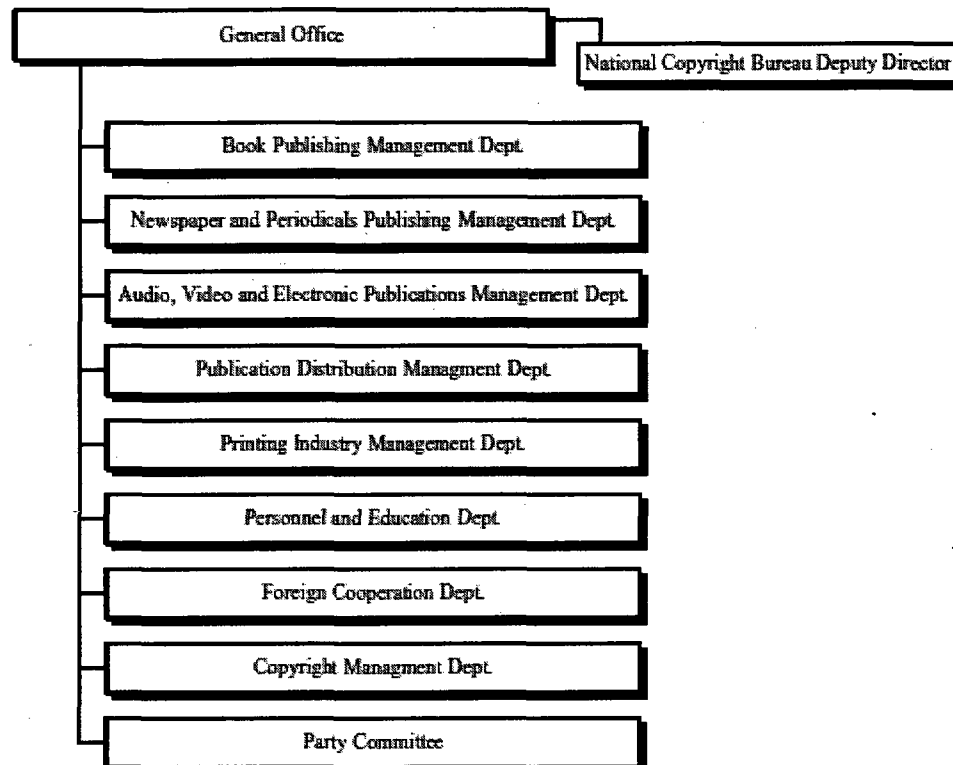


Figure 3: Structure of GATT

Xinhua News Agency is at the top of the media hierarchy with *People's Daily*, *Seeking Truth* [*Qiushi*] magazine and CCTV, all of which are led by ministerial [*zhengbuji*] government officials, who are handpicked by the Central Committee leadership. Xinhua News Agency (hereinafter called Xinhua) was founded in 1931⁵⁷. Xinhua has been a state-run agency since the establishment of PRC, subordinating to the CCP and the

⁵⁷ The forerunner of the agency is the agency Red China founded in Ruijin District in the eastern province of Jiangxi. The name of "Xinhua" was adopted in January 1937.

government. And it has been the main outlet for the CCP's propaganda to China's media. Xinhua "provides all media (at least 306 radio stations, 369 TV stations, 2119 newspapers and 9038 periodicals) with all major items of national and international news" (Reporters Without Borders, 2005). Reporters Without Borders (2005) describes Xinhua as the "World's Biggest Propaganda Agency." The president of Xinhua, Tian Congming, like the presidents of CCTV and *People's Daily*, has the rank of a minister [*Zhengbuj*]. It has branches in 31 provinces, as well as in Hong Kong and Macao, and in around 50 Chinese cities. Almost 80 percent of Xinhua journalists are Party members, according to internal figures (ibid). As mentioned, Xinhua issues "Internal Reference Materials" (IRM) and sends them to the highest levels of state. Anyone who releases this IRM would be accused as "defied the established order". And the result would be: withdrawal of newspapers from the newsstands, a ban on publication for a period of time (such as *Freezing Point Journal* [*Bingdian*]⁵⁸), salary attachment, dismissal and even imprisonment for the offending journalist/editor (ibid).

4.1.2 Types of control of the CCPPD.

As discussed, the CCPPD establishes propaganda disciplines, which is a set of policy statements and instructions that regulate the news media. It includes rules of governing the media, guidelines transmitted from political leaders' speeches and from the heads of PDs.

⁵⁸ *Bingdian* was ordered to withdraw because it published a controversial article about a historical incident on January 11, 2006. For more information and discussion, please refer to: http://www.zonaeuropa.com/20060218_2.htm

Its forms vary as “Red-headed documents” [*Hongtou wenjian*]⁵⁹, “Urgent Announcements,” “Conference Minutes,” “Opinions,” etc. The following are some examples of the propaganda disciplines:

1. Regulation on Guarding Secrets in News Publishing, promulgated on June 13, 1992, includes four chapters and twenty-three articles, and establishes four major principles⁶⁰. I only cite three articles as examples⁶¹:

Article 5: News publishing entities and entities supplying information shall establish a sound system for the censorship of secrets in news publishing in accordance with the state laws and regulations regarding secrecy.

Article 7: In respect of information which they intend to make public, news publishing entities and entities supplying information shall undertake self-censorship in accordance with the relevant secrecy regulations; where it is unclear whether the information in question involves state secrets, they shall submit such information to the relevant departments in charge or to their higher-level authorities or entities for review and approval.

Article 8: Where information involving state secrets needs to be reported or circulated to relevant departments by news publishing entities and their reporters or editors, this shall be undertaken via internal channels, and the information being reported or circulated shall be marked as state secrets in accordance with the relevant regulations.

(TransAsia Lawyers, 2006, Vol. 11)

Therefore, news organizations must be responsible for monitoring their compliance with the regulations. They must submit reports for examination and approval from relevant higher authorities. Based on her experience as a journalist in China for years, He (2006) points out that, journalists must obtain approval before conducting interviews for stories that might involve state secrets. The “state secret” system has been a tool to tighten control

⁵⁹ These documents have red headlines to signify the importance and urgency.

⁶⁰ It is issued by the State Secrecy Bureau Publicity Department of the CPC Central Committee, State Press and Publication Administration, and Ministry of Radio, Film and Television. Effective October 1, 1992.

⁶¹ These translation provided by TransAsia Lawyers, in “China’s Media and Entertainment Law” (Vol. 11, 2006)

over media coverage, and there are intellectuals, editors and journalists who are critical of the state charged as “leaking state secrets” (He, 2006).

2. Interim Provisions on the Functions of the Sponsoring Unit and the Managing Unit for Publishing Units (June 29, 1993)

Article 3: “Publishing Unit” refers to any publisher of newspapers, periodicals, books and audio/visual products, which must obey relevant national regulations, get approved from the GAPP and officially register.

Article 6: The Publishing Unit must be under the leadership of GAPP.⁶²

3. Notice Regarding Resolutely Clamping Down on Illegal Publishing Activities (January 25, 1996)

In accordance with State regulations, no entity or individual may engage in publishing, printing, copying or distributing books, newspapers, periodicals or audio/visual publications without authorization from the General Administration of Press and Publication⁶³.

4. Notice o Further Strengthening the Administration of Periodicals Relating to Current Affairs and Politics, General Lifestyle, Information Tabloids and Scientific Theory (June 28, 2000)

Article 2: In the process of publishing, one must implement the Party's relevant propaganda policies, strictly obey Party propaganda disciplines, national regulations and rules, and any of the following contents must be prohibited:

- i. Opposing to Marxism, Mao Zedong Thought, or Deng Xiaoping Theory;
- ii. Violating the Party line, principles, or policies;
- iii. Violating the Party's propaganda disciplines or the national publishing regulations.

Article 3. Periodicals that carry contents relating to significant political issues, to foreign diplomacy, nationality, or religious policies, or relating to national security, military and national defence construction, must strictly obey the united requirements of the Central Propaganda Department, and relevant national regulations⁶⁴.

⁶²关于出版单位的主办单位和主管单位职责的暂行规定 (1993.06.29): 第三条 出版单位是指依照国家有关规定举办, 经国家新闻出版行政管理部门审核批准并履行登记注册手续的报社、期刊社(编辑部)、图书出版社和音像出版社。第六条 主管单位、主办单位与出版单位之间必须是领导与被领导的关系, 不能是挂靠与被挂靠的关系。

⁶³关于坚决取缔非法出版活动的通知 (1996.01.25): 一、根据国家规定, 未经新闻出版行政管理部门批准, 任何单位和个人不得从事图书、报纸、期刊、音像及电子出版物的出版、印刷、复制和发行活动。

⁶⁴关于进一步加强时事政治类、综合文化生活类、信息文摘类和学术理论类期刊管理的通知 (2000.06.28)

二、时政、综合文化、信息文摘、学术理论类期刊在出版过程中, 应认真执行党的有关宣传工作的方针政策, 严格遵守党的宣传纪律, 严格执行国家对期刊出版管理的有关法规、规章, 严禁在刊物上出现以下内容: (1)否定马列主义、毛泽东思想、邓小平理论指导地位

5. Regulations on the Administration of Publishing (December 25, 2001)

Article 3: Publishing must adhere to the principles of serving the people and serving socialism, adhere to the guidance of Marxism, Leninism, Mao Zedong Thought and Deng Xiaoping Theory...⁶⁵

6. Notice Regarding the Further Strengthening the Administration of Selected Articles for Newspapers and Periodicals (February 25, 2002)

Article 1: When selecting articles, one must keep in mind of the drift of political opinion, strictly obey the rules of GAPP and the Party's propaganda disciplines, so as to adhere to political awareness... when publishing contents regarding important national policies, religions, foreign relations, or the state's secrets, one must strictly adhere to relevant regulations, and consult relevant agencies for advice if necessary.

Article 6. Information taken from the Internet of which has not been verified is not allowed to be published⁶⁶.

What should be noted, however, is in China there is no "Press Law" [*Xinwen Fa*]. All the rules or examples including those shown above are "regulations" [*tiaoli*], which only require approval from the State Council instead of the National People's Congress. In Zhao's analysis, this is because the Chinese government, learning from the "lesson" in 1989, firmly believes that passing legislation about the media would inevitably invoke disputes over the meaning of the constitutional guarantee of press freedom⁶⁷ (Zhao, 1998, p. 34-51).

的；(2)违背党的路线、方针、政策的；(3)其他违反党的宣传纪律和违反国家出版管理规定的。三、时政、综合文化、信息文摘、学术理论类期刊刊发有关涉及党和国家重大政治问题的内容，刊发涉及外交、民族、宗教政策的内容以及刊发涉及国家安全、军队、国防建设等方面的内容，必须严格遵守党委宣传部门的统一要求，严格遵守国家的有关规定。

⁶⁵出版管理条例 (2001.12.25): 第三条 出版事业必须坚持为人民服务、为社会主义服务的方向，坚持以马克思列宁主义、毛泽东思想和邓小平理论为指导...

⁶⁶关于进一步加强报刊摘转稿件管理的通知 (2002.02.25): 一、报刊摘转稿件必须牢牢把握政治舆论导向，严格遵守新闻出版管理法规和党的宣传纪律，对所摘转的内容要把好政治关。不得摘转有悖于党和国家方针政策的稿件。刊载涉及国家重大政策、民族宗教、外交、保密等内容，应严格遵守有关规定，必要时征询有关部门的意见。六、任何报刊不得以任何摘转国际互连网上未经核实的新闻和信息

⁶⁷ In late 1980s, the draft of the Press Law was completed along with heated debates over press freedom. After 1989, the CCP decided to stop the process. Till 2006, the only media-related legislation approved by the NPC is the "Advertising Code of the People's Republic of China".

In addition to rules and regulations, the CCPPD also has the direct authority over the news content. It distributes propaganda documents containing specific instructions for the media to local PDs, which then forward the documents to their local media outlets. There are different types of internal documents, each of which has “different political and social functions” (He, 2008, p. 69). The documents usually instruct the way of handling sensitive or specific news.

For example, in China, there are various kinds of briefings from the Party, government, or military departments, which including reports to higher levels and instructions to lower levels. In media, one type of news resources is from the CCPPD’s Monthly Reprimand (Monthly Review, or [*yueping*]), a circular giving notice to media organizations (He, 2006). *Yueping* has become an effective tool to warn media organizations not to violate CCP’s propaganda disciplines and keep self-disciplined.

As mentioned, in China’s media, there is one kind of document called “Internal Reference Materials” (IRM), which are issued by high-ranking news organizations (mostly the Party and Xinhua News Agency), and are circulated within officialdom for consultation by leaders and related departments. In accordance with propaganda disciplines, some IRM are about matters that would be detrimental to the image of the Party or the government, which would cause social instability; some IRM are inappropriate for open publication, such as high-ranking government officials’ corruption and social conflicts (Zhao, 2008). IRM are classified as national secret, or state secret. Therefore, a very common practice of

handling some IRM is that the Xinhua News Agency releases a “General Copy” [*Tonggao*] on the particular issue to all media outlets, which are not allowed to publish a different version (Zhao, 2008).

Moreover, as Judy Polumbaum (1990) notices, no chief editor can ignore the power of political authorities who can appoint and remove leading personnel at news organizations. The CCPPD is in the position of appointing managers of national media companies, such as CCTV, *People's Daily*, and the *Xinhua News*. Local media executives are appointed by provincial party secretaries and deputy provincial leaders, who are themselves appointed by the Central Organization Department and the CCPPD. A common promotion is top managers of the media companies are promoted to be policy-makers of the regulations of the media. For instance, in the 1990s, the chief editor of the *Guangming Daily*, a national official newspaper targeting intellectuals, was promoted to be the deputy director of the CCPPD and the director of the SARTF; the director of *Guangzhou Daily*, who had been a junior official in the municipal propaganda department, was appointed to be a senior official of Guangzhou's municipal Party Committee after the Daily gained the biggest advertising profit in the country (Li, 2003 a). These authorities have the power to dismiss editorial personnel in particular those in liberal-oriented newspapers such as *Nanfang Weekend*, *China Youth News*, *Youth Daily* and *Nanfang Metropolitan News*.

In addition, the GAPP, Xinhua and the SARFT issue licences, namely, “Press cards” to

journalists, chief editors and broadcast hosts. For these media workers, no matter whether they have journalism degrees or not, in order to attain the press cards, they have to take some training program in official ideology, media regulations, journalism ethics, communication theory, etc.; even they have to pass a national exam. For example, SARFT issued *Provisional Regulations on the Management of Qualifications for Broadcast Editors, Reporters, Announcers, and Hosts* on June 18, 2004, stipulating that media workers working over one year are required to pass an exam administrated by SARFT so as to obtain a two-year-term “operation license”. The qualifications of such licenses include one’s support to the basic theories, principles and policies of the CCP, observance of correct guidance of public opinions, and no records of “personal mistakes causing a major accident in the propaganda” as well as of “violations of professional disciplines and ethnics”⁶⁸.

Also, what is needed to explain here is the difference in management of print media and of broadcast media⁶⁹. Generally speaking, the former is less centralized than the latter; in other words, managing print is the responsibility of the territorial-level party committees. Also, there is no leadership relationship between the central party papers and the provincial party papers; nor is there such a relationship between the provincial party papers and the

⁶⁸ 广播电视编辑记者、播音员主持人资格管理暂行规定. Translated from <<http://www.jincao.com/fa/23/law23.30.htm>>

⁶⁹ Broadcast media and telecommunications in China have been managed by ministries since early 1980s. The Ministry of Radio and Television is much higher in status than an administration in the Chinese bureaucratic system.

municipal and county party papers. For example, *Southern Daily* is the flagship Party newspaper of Guangdong Province. *Guangzhou Daily* is the key municipal party newspaper of Guangzhou, the capital city of Guangdong province. The non-party papers (publications) are controlled by the State Press and Publications Administration (SPPA)⁷⁰, and SPPA's provincial-level bureaus are often dominated by the provincial governments.

The last note is Chinese "Press Law" that would legitimize press freedom does not exist yet in spite of years of appeal⁷¹. While "censorship" is an appropriate description of the effect of the control, it is important to recognize that censorship is achieved not only through direct suppression of news content but also by more fundamental and less visible means, including regulation of media ownership, regulation of entry to the journalistic profession, regulation of printing and distribution, and occasional extra-judicial attacks on media practitioners and bars on access to information.

4.2 Chinese Media Development and Social Development

It is almost impossible to understand the present style of media in China without first delving into the past (Burgh, 2003). Till today, there are four waves of media evolution in modern China: the first period is from 1949, after CCP won the political power of the

⁷⁰ SPPA is an administration to regulate the non-party newspapers, magazines and books.

⁷¹ Jiang Zeming has supported a reform of "Rule by Law" sporadically since 1997. But according to many scholars such as Finkelstein and Kivlehan, Hu "has not shown any sign that he intends to vigorously support". (2003)

country; the second started in 1978, along with the market reform; the third one was marked in 1992, after China re-set its new development agenda and re-focused on economic development; the last was in 2003, when Hu Jintao-Wen Jiabao administration took power and the country needed to have a more balanced development.

To understand China's news media today, it is necessary to review its performance before 1978, because the practices under the leadership of Mao Zedong have profound influence on Chinese society. But I will elaborate societal backgrounds and media development in post-1978 era, when media was greatly encouraged by the market incentives. In this era, media development was divided into two parts: before 1992 and after 1992. There will be more discussion about the media development in the latter, because it formed the social conditions and a different media environment, which could offer some explanation of the media practices and the effects when SARS broke out in 2003.

4.2.1 Media Development after 1949.

Before 1949, China was a semi-colonial and semi-feudal country with continuous wars against foreign invasion and internal conflicts. Since 1949, China has been ruled by the revolutionary vanguard party - the CCP. Built upon the model of Lenin's Bolshevik

Party, the CCP is governed by “democratic centralism”⁷². Most policies and regulations were made from the top in this country, including regulation of the media. This time period witnessed China’s early modernization. However, what makes it different is the political power manipulated the economy activity, monopolized every industry, and controlled the ideology.

As the modernization theorist Pye (1967) has pointed out, political leaders in newly independent developing countries have “a natural tendency” to continue to support and justify all the actions of their leadership. This kind of leadership did have an effective control over the country. Therefore, once they assumed the power, the new ruling party under Mao framed three main functions of the media: firstly, “it is an instrument for agitation and class struggle, a weapon used by the proletarian class to overthrow capitalism and to build up socialism” (Sterling, 2009, p. 288). Secondly, “it serves as a tool for political organization and mobilization” (ibid). And thirdly, “it is an instrument of the Party to propagandize the Party policies and conform to Party goals” (ibid). Therefore, at that time, media was a pure “mouthpiece” of the Party.

As a result, this reform was like a purge in the media market – as Lu Dingyi, who was the Central Propaganda Department during Mao’s reign described his work was nothing but purge⁷³. Before 1949, when CCP was fighting with the Chinese Nationalist Party for

⁷² “Democratic Centralism” means members of the Party have the freedom to discuss and debate over any issue, but once the decision is made by the majority by voting, everyone must accept it and carry out the order.

⁷³ Lu Dingyi recalled in his later years, “During more than ten years that I was head of the Propaganda Department, I did only one thing: purge. When I was done purging one batch of people, I moved on to the next.” Quoted in ShaYexin, “Yulun qipianshu kaishi pochan” (The Art of

political power and cultural hegemony, it developed its own media system and actively collaborated with privately owned commercial media (Zhao, 1998). In 1949, there were still a few non-Party, independent commercial papers. However, all the commercial media were closed down within four years. Not only due to a decrease in advertising revenue and difficulty in sales, but also because the newspapers were required to cover news showing support to the Party in all respects (Zhao, 1998). A well-known Chinese scholar on Chinese media, He Qinglian, furthers, while all newspapers, magazines and radio stations were required to be placed into the “Socialist News Industry System” led by the flagship newspaper *People’s Daily*, which was under Mao’s direct control⁷⁴. Moreover, as no individual was allowed to run newspapers (Zhao, 1998) and all non-governmental news media was eradicated, only *Wenhui Daily*, *Dagong Daily*, and *Guangming Daily* were left, which were nominally published by the democratic parties (He, 2006). However, these newspapers had little freedom to express their own opinions (ibid, p. 6).

The media was tightly controlled by the Party, especially through its propaganda departments at various levels and fitted in the Communist model: for one thing, the media served as the instrument of ideological control of the CCP and functioned as the “mouthpiece” of the Party with one unified voice for “command communication” (Wu, 2000, p.45). For another, the Party held the power of the journalism profession (Lee, 1994). The media was not the source and channel for social information but an ideological

Deceiving Public Opinion Begins to Go Bankrupt), Kaifang, October 2003. In He, Qinglian “Media Control in China”. Taipei: Liming Cultural Enterprises”.

⁷⁴ Hu Qiaomu, who served as Mao’s main secretary from 1941 (some say 1942) to 1966, was the president of “People’s Daily” from 1948 to 1966.

propaganda, which reached absurdity during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). As Hood (1994, cited in Cao, 2005, ¶ 3) finds, “those who dared openly expressed their discontent would found themselves label as enemies of the people”.

A very common practice of reporting was to cover stories in praise of an individual or a group as a model or an exemplar, which is called “model reports [*Dianxing Baodao*],” with a purpose to set the Party’s guidelines or enact the policies. By this means, the propaganda machine functions in a light way (Chen, 1997). Negative news⁷⁵, on the contrary, which would be detrimental to the Party’s control, or weaken their power in other words, were prohibited. Such a tradition cemented during the Cultural Revolution⁷⁶ and its impact remains today.

In brief, the first media reform in China’s early modernization era remoulded the media to be a tool in propagating socialist ideals and in executing the Party’s policies (Chu, 1994), which gradually become the principles of Chinese Party-journalism, “mouthpiece”. It is obvious that this media reform is characterized with Marxism-Leninism-Maoism as its ideology, a “Pravda model”⁷⁷. With this model, in 1950s and 1960s, the CCP’s control over society was further cemented, politically and ideologically.

⁷⁵ Negative news, called “*fumian xinwen*” in Chinese, refers to any stories that focus on criticism, negative incidents, conflicts, debates and even opposite viewpoints of the official ideologies, for example, official corruption, malfeasance, social ills, crime and natural disasters. good news is news, and bad news is not news.

⁷⁶ Cultural Revolution (1966-1976): a mass social movement launched by Mao Zedong which resulted in social, political, and economic upheaval.

⁷⁷ Quoted Zuo Fang, in “Launching Southern Weekend” in “China’s Censors Adopt Agenda Setting”(2008), a collection of fifteen essays from some of China’s top journalists recently published by Hong Kong University

4.2.2 Media Development from 1978 to 1999.

Before the launch of economic reform in 1978, China had a centrally planned economy: farms, factories and financial institutions all belonged to the state or the collective. Almost 80percent of China's total industrial output was supplied by state firms in the late 1970s (Gregor, 1999, p. 272). In 1978 all media in China were completely subsidized by the state. The government had direct control over the media ranging from finance to personnel, and the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications monopolized the distributions. But such tight state control led to a stagnant economy. Also, in the late 1970s, there was a decline in a once dominated ideology: Marxist-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought.

After the Third Plenum of 11th Central Committee in 1978, which endorsed Deng Xiaoping's liberal thoughts and economic reforms, media organizations, like some State-owned Enterprises (SOEs), gradually started to take responsibilities for the revenue and performance. For them, the concept of commercialization, marketization and competition were new, but it did not take long to understand the importance of readership and market. This is a milestone in China's media development, which brings about different phases of development:

4.2.2.1 From 1978 to 1989.

Chinese history embraced the 1980s as a “spring of intellectual freedom” and a “spring of science and technology”, which witnessed the second wave of media reform. From 1978 to 1989, China was in transition from a planned economy to a market economy with remarkable changes in agricultural and industrial sectors. The Third Plenum of the 11th Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party in 1978 not only shifted the focus of the Party's work from “class struggle” and permanent revolution to economic growth, but also marked the prevalence of Deng's socialist modernization. The Plenum announced:

The whole Party, the army and the people of all nationalities to work with heart and one mind, enhance political stability and unity, mobilize themselves....pool their wisdom and efforts and carry out the new Long March to make China a modern, powerful socialist country before the end of this century. (ZZWY, 1987, p.5)

This statement emphasizes the necessity of “political stability and unity” to build a modern China. To achieve this goal, the country undertook an in-depth economic reform, and continued to impose ideological and political control. Media in this period of time also went through substantial changes.

Firstly, this reform characterized as “Socialism with Chinese Characteristics” has an essence of a market mechanism, which was to develop the productive forces, to boost the inactive economy and to provide prosperity for the people. With Deng's famous catchphrase “To Get Rich Is Glorious,” the reform unveiled an economic boom and a dramatic societal transformation across the country. The experiments with market forces, for example, led to the implementation of policies that gave management authority in SOEs so that enterprise leaders could operate independently and take full responsibility for

losses and profits, as there were no longer government subsidies. Workers' productivity and efficiency were improved to a greater degree because their jobs, incomes and benefits were no longer guaranteed (Mackerras, et al., 1998; Cheek, 2007). The establishment of Special Economic Zones in the south-eastern provinces, Fujian and Guangdong provinces in 1984 not only brought about foreign investment and advanced technologies, but also western cultures. As a result, from 1978 to 1989, China's economy maintained an average annual 9.5 percent growth rate (People's Daily, 2002); the GDP per capita more than doubled; the poverty-stricken population had shrunk from 250 million to 100 million (Wang, 2008, p. 4); and, its share of world trade quadrupled during the same period (Harvey, 2007). In the media industry, advertising in news publications was allowed in 1979, which immediately boost the media market.

The central government continued to encourage the media, instead of relying on the state's subsidies, to "walk on their own feet" by advertisements (Lynch, 1999). Both the GAPP and Personnel Department announced more financial independence to media companies (Chen, 1998 in Lai, 2005). With a decrease in subsidies, media companies had to rely on advertising. The nationwide advertising revenue growth ratio jumped to 85.5 percent in 1985 and it crept upwards afterwards; in 1980, there were only 180 newspapers in China; then by 1988, the number of newspaper skyrocketed to 2,322 (China Journalism Chronicle, 2000, in Esarey, 2005)⁷⁸; in 1981, there were 20 newspapers with weekend editions. By 1994, weekend editions increased to more than 400 titles (Yu, 1991). From

⁷⁸ In 1989, there were 1,576 newspapers. The data will be shown in the tables later.

1982 to 1988, the number of television stations in China increased from 47 to 442 (Chu, 2007).

Besides, due to the decentralization of ownership and operational rights over newspaper and television to lower levels of the hierarchy⁷⁹, the news organizations not only gained more autonomy over finance, but also on personnel and editorial decisions (Cho, 2007). For example, in 1980, the State Council issued a document declaring that authority over radio and television should be shifted to the local level; three years later, another conference called for local personnel recruitment instead of personnel assigned by the central government⁸⁰. As the reform went on, in the late 1980s, newspapers had journalistic autonomy in deciding the content, although nominally, they were still attached to official organizations; journalists played a vital role in mobilizing and educating the public, and in promoting the pro-democracy and liberal ideas in the late 1980s (Goldman, 1994). “Journalists criticized the hardliner’s rigid position and sympathized with the reformers but not automatically echoed the reformers’ voice” (Cao, 2005, ¶ 7).

Not only the tremendous liberation of the productive forces was evoked, but also people’s minds were emancipated, which can be drawn from their views and expectation towards the media. In April 1988, the Journalism Research Institute under the Chinese Academy of Social Science (CASS) and the Capital Society of Journalism conducted a survey. About this survey, Sussman (1989) observes:

⁷⁹ Mostly it is at the provincial level and below.

⁸⁰ Dangdai Zhongguo Guangbo Dianshi, vol.2, p.15, p.477, and p.296-299

Most members of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference strongly criticized the Chinese news media. As the *China Daily*, the state-run, English-language newspaper reported, among the 472 respondents⁸¹, 63.2percent were not satisfied with the openness of the news coverage, and only 23.3percent were satisfied with the critical news reports of the news media⁸²; while only 1.3percent said they "fully believe" what the news media report, about 20percent said the media were unbelievable or unbelievable in general. As for the news coverage, 77percent of those surveyed opposed the claim that openness in news coverage would affect social stability; 89percent assented to reporting of "big cases of official corruption", while some of them expressed their anger at the news media which dare not criticize high-ranking officials but just the low-ranking ones. (p. 496)

Economic liberalisation was accompanied by reduced ideological and leadership disputes because Deng supported "inner-Party democracy" within the Party. The dominant ideology was shifted from Maoism to Dengism. Gradually, the previous ideology "Two Whatevers"⁸³ [*liang ge fanshi*] lost its dominance in the Party and the society. Instead, a "utilitarian" point was adopted by the CCP (Wong, 2005), which means economic development is the sole purpose that justifies any action in the reform.

At the same time, in the 1980s, since it was necessary to reconstruct the Party polity so as to enhance political stability and unity (Wong, 2005), the reform brought some changes in the political system, with substantial improvements including in information flows (Lieberthal, 2004). For example, debate and criticism were permitted. Newspapers like *World Herald* (Shanghai) and *Economics Weekly* (Beijing) produced a great number of

⁸¹ Among the 475 respondents, 235 were Communist Party members, 80 from "Democratic" Party members, 118 had no party affiliation and 4 were Communist Youth League members. (Sussman, 1989, in Notes pp.480)

⁸² 18.8% gave no replies.

⁸³ "Two Whatevers" statement was announced by Hua Guofeng, Mao's successor. In 1977, the statement was printed on the Party's newspapers and publications on February 7, 1977: "We will resolutely uphold whatever policy decisions Chairman Mao made, and unswervingly follow whatever instructions Chairman Mao gave." (Renmin Ribao (People's Daily), the journal Hongqi (Red Flag) and Jiefangjun Bao).

articles advocating political reform and media reform, covering issues regarding independent media, media legislation, democracy and freedom of expression, etc. As Goldman (1993, p. 285) finds, “there was open, lively public debate by professionals, intellectuals and officials; on different newspapers and journals, public issues were openly discussed with a high degree of freedom and independence.” Some liberal Chinese scholars call this period of time as “Golden Times” (He, 2006). Also, during this time, Chinese intellectuals established extensive links with scholars in other countries.

However, the above-mentioned changes do not mean that the reforms in the 1980s attempted to change the political structure, nor the dominant position of the Party ideologies.

On the one hand, as Shirk (1993) points out, Deng Xiaoping cautiously introduced economic reform without political reform⁸⁴. Indeed, China’s reform in the 1980s was not a broad, thorough, liberal one. What was actually happening was that as the old economic system declined and liberal ideology arose, people, who had been educated in the socialist ideology of equality, social justice, freedom and democracy, urged deepened reforms and demanded restructuring of the Party and government apparatus. Such voices were not only from students and intellectuals, but also political leaders. Zhao Ziyang, who was considered to be the “chief engineer” of China’s reform, once argued:

In practice, I increasingly feel that the economic reform and political reform should be launched more or less in tandem. If the political reform lags too behind, the economic

⁸⁴ Deng is often regarded as the “Architect” of China’s Reform and Opening-up in the country – but not a builder or an engineer.

reform can hardly go on and that would give rise to many social-political problems. Initially, I thought that if the standard of living for the people is raised, people would be satisfied. Society then would be stable. In their political participatory consciousness would be heightened as well. If the political institutions fail to catch up, society would not be stable. (In Wong, 2005, p. 361)

On the other hand, the control over ideologies in the society, in order to resist western cultural influence, still remained, through “anti-foreignism” and cultural protectionism (Chan, 1994). As Deng admonished the Party:

Don't think that a little spiritual pollution⁸⁵ doesn't matter much, that it is nothing to be alarmed at. Some of its ill effects may not be immediately apparent. But unless we take it seriously and adopt firm measures right now to prevent its spread, many people will fall prey to it and be led astray, with grave consequences. In the long run, this question will determine what kind of people will succeed us to carry on the cause and what the future of the Party and state will be. (Deng Xiaoping, October 12, 1983⁸⁶, , ¶ 23)

Therefore, Deng, further pointed out that one of the ways to prevent it from spreading was to control communication flows by controlling media workers.

Strengthening Party leadership in ideological matters...has become urgent tasks for the entire membership. Not only theorists, writers and artists but also people working in the fields of education, the press, publishing, radio and television and those doing cultural, ideological and political work among the masses are confronted with these tasks. (Ibid, ¶ 29))

⁸⁵ Deng explained that “spiritual pollution” [jingshen wuran] means the spread of all kinds of corrupt and decadent ideas of the bourgeoisies and other exploiting classes and the spread of distrust of socialism, communism, and leadership by the Communist Party. (Deng, 1983, ¶. 15). Deng Liqun was the chief of the CCP's propaganda bureaucracies, who presided over the notorious Anti-Spiritual Pollution.

⁸⁶ This injunction was issued at the Second Plenary Session of the Twelfth Central Committee of the Communist Party of China.

More specifically, in 1985, the leading advocate of reform Premier Hu Yaobang⁸⁷ stated:

What is the way to describe our Party press? When succinctly summed up, above anything else, it is the Party's mouthpiece. Naturally, this means it is also the mouthpiece of the government and the mouthpiece of the people. Of course this one word cannot sum up the total content and function of the press; for example, it is also the bridge and cord that connects the Party to the masses; it is also a tool that transmits information within the Party, outside of the Party, domestically, and internationally, etc. However, since the Party serves the people whole heartedly, and the Party line and policies originates from the masses, and goes back to the masses, then it goes without saying that the Party press is exercising its mouthpiece function when it effectively transmits information from the top down, as well as from the bottom up, ensuring that the Party and people are in close communication by speaking on behalf of the people, and ensuring that the people's need to know is satisfied. Accordingly, the core characteristic of the Party press should be to serve as the Party's mouthpiece. Not must remain firm on this notion and never falter.⁸⁸ (Hu, 1985, ¶ 1)

From Zhao's argument, Deng's statements and Hu's speech, we can understand why media in China in the 1980s was still regarded as the Party's mouthpiece in spite of marketization and a comparatively loosened ideological atmosphere. The Party still had dominant power over the media. In order to have more effective control over the burgeoning news media, the government carried out media re-registration campaigns to reduce the number of media organizations, which caused some media organizations to close down. In order to control the content of news media, in 1984, the Central Propaganda Department asserted that "Emphasizing positive news" must be a guiding principle⁸⁹

⁸⁷ Hu Yaobang was the General Secretary of the CCP at that time.

⁸⁸ Hu's speech "On the Party's journalism work" was given on 8 February 1985.

⁸⁹ "From China Media Project: Emphasizing Positive News" has been a guiding principle of China's Central Propaganda Department (中宣部) since at least 1984.

(China Media Project, 2007). Esarey (2005, p. 39) concludes that the regime policy of media management “shifted to provide media - and journalists - with financial incentives to comply with CCP requirement for censorship and the dissemination of propaganda”.

To see how the media acted as a mouthpiece of the Party, we can look at how People’s Daily, the official organ of the Communist Party, wrote on foreign investment or foreign trade in 1977, 1980 and 1985:

We never permit the use of foreign capital to develop our domestic resources as the Soviet revisionists do, never run undertakings in concerns with other countries and also never accept foreign loans. China has neither domestic nor external debts. (January 2, 1977) (Kleinberg, 1990, ¶ 1)

When private investors outside China enter...their aim is to gain profit. There must be exploitation; this point was clear to us long ago. To realize the four modernizations and develop the socialist economy, we shall tolerate a certain degree of exploitation. (April 2, 1980) (Kleinberg, 1990, ¶ 26)

Marx, after all, had no opportunities to witness foreign trade in any country during his lifetime, and could not write any monograph on this subject. (December 7, 1985) (Kleinberg, 1990, ¶ 26)

What can be concluded here is that in the reforms of a more open era in the 1980s, the Party continued to balance the tensions that arose from the forces of economic reforms in China by controlling the mass media. The media was “a means of monitoring the effectiveness of Communist Party policies (Sun and Michel, 2001, p. 64). In spite of different types of control, the gradual withdrawal of government subsidies, the economic reform and open-door policies brought about a commercialized and more open media

industry. As for the political campaigns, they actually “stimulated rather than suppressed media development” (Thierstein and Kamalipour, 2000, p. 206), because they were “usually coupled with a renewed emphasis on liberalization” (ibid). From the figures (4.21-4.25) at the end of this chapter, we can find media development was accelerated on an escalating scale in the 1980s. This led to a certain degree of advancement in the society, such as technological development that is essential to economic modernization⁹⁰, and positive social changes – in particular, in the last three years when media became more aggressive and direct (Thierstein and Kamalipour, 2000).

The fundamental impacts of media transformation in the 1980s still remain to this day. As in the 1980s, bad news and critical (negative) news reports, which had not been seen since the late 1950s, started to reappear in the media (Polumbaum, 1990). Chinese media started to document, report and reflect social views, which encouraged the ideas of freedom of the press, democracy, and human rights. Editors and journalists in the 1990s were all influenced by these norms and ideologies. And when they become the core force of China’s media, they maintain such a “tradition” and call for civil rights, social justice and free flow of information. In other words, media, since 1980s, has gradually participated in the process of modernization and national development.

4.2.2.2 From 1989 to 1992.

⁹⁰ To meet the increasing media market demand, the media industry introduced foreign technology combined with its own manpower. I will discuss more about the effects of technology in media development in the next section.

The international political climate and China's domestic affairs in the late 1980s and early 1990s⁹¹ had a defining influence on China and reinforced the importance of stability, particularly political stability, throughout this decade. In particular, the year of 1989 was important because it brought to the surface some hidden tensions over China's reform progress and led to the crystallization of a new reform model within a few years. But from 1989 to 1992, the society ceased their liberal reform and intensified state control.

Domestically, since the late 1980s, there have been many social contradictions in Chinese society, which resulted in numerous protests in the country and eventually the influential "Pro-democracy Movement" led by intellectuals and students in 1989⁹². As a result, in the following three years, Chinese society lacked vitality with lifelessness and silence prevailing in almost every industry. From 1988 to 1990, China's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth slumped from about 11.3 percent to 3.8 percent (National Bureau of Statistics, 2009). Foreign investment fell off and international relationships deteriorated, after a decade of advancement. For example, economic sanctions⁹³ were imposed, as some western countries did not accept the Chinese government's actions against the "Pro-democracy Movement"⁹⁴. The period of sanctions led to three years of stagnant

⁹¹ The international situation includes the collapse of the Romanian regime in late 1989, the fall of Berlin Wall in 1990, and the disintegration of Soviet Union in 1991.

⁹² The "Pro-democracy Movement" in 1989 also known as "June Fourth Incident" or "1989 Tiananmen Incident" in China and "Tiananmen Square Massacre" in western literatures. As this is not the topic of this paper, I am not going to going deeper. For more information, please refer to a newly published book "Prisoner of the State: The Secret Journal of Premier Zhao Ziyang" by Simon and Schuster in May 19, 2009. This book is based on 30 hours of secretly taped recordings of China's former premier and party general-secretary, Zhao Ziyang.

⁹³ For example, U.S. sanctions in place against China from 1949 to 1997, see Rennack, Dianne E. China: U.S. Economic Sanctions. CRS Report 96-272 F. October 1, 1997. 51p.

⁹⁴ At this time, the negation for entering WTO ceased.

economy.

The hostile situation in and out of China caused a tightened control during these three years. As Wong found, at this time, the regime's emphasis on political stability was "almost obsessive"—not only the conservative communist leaders such as Jiang Zeming, Li Peng⁹⁵ and Qiao Shi⁹⁶ declared that "maintaining social stability is a task of overriding importance at present and for a fairly long time to come"⁹⁷ (Wong, 2005), but the liberal Politburo Standing Committee member Li Ruihuan posited that "the construction of Chinese democratic politics must be based upon the premise of unity and stability" (People's Daily, May 21, 1993, quoted in Wong, 2005). In the meantime, people who had been holding "Left" views in the ideological and theoretical sphere re-questioned the liberal economic reform which, as they argued, was the product of the capitalist society and it was the root of the destructive social movement⁹⁸. They reiterated the need for tight state control.

Media was one of the targets of severe control and the industry was negatively affected. The main reason was, in 1989, the domestic media and journalists were a key force to "enlarge the democratic movement far beyond a student movement" (Goldman, 1994, p. 31), independently marking "a historical moment in the struggle for autonomous communication" (Zhao, 2008, p. 200). During the student movements, some media

⁹⁵ Li Peng was the Premier from 1988 to 1998.

⁹⁶ Qiaoshi, at that time, was the Secretary of the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection, and the Secretary of CPC Central Political and Legislative Committee.

⁹⁷ This decision was made in the National Conference on the Work of the Public Security and Legal Organs held from February 28 to March 6 in 1990.

⁹⁸ In China, the radical Communist leftists opposed Deng's economic reforms which should not be in a socialist country, such as Li Xiannian (the 3rd president of PRC), and, Chen Yun (the 1st Vice Premier and 1st Secretary of the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection). For example, Chen Yun has said that State-owned Enterprises must remain the mainstay of the Chinese economy if socialism is to be preserved

workers, even those who were working for *People's Daily* and Xinhua News Agency, joined the protest with the students in Beijing. The domestic media also publicly supported the reform in the early days. Newspapers openly discussed the student movement and called for democracy. However, as the situation was getting worse, the media had to stay consistent to the government. The *World Economic Herald* was one of them shut down for this reason. As a consequence, from 1989 to 1991, the number of newspaper in the national unified registration system and in public circulation shrank from 1576⁹⁹ to 1254 (China Journalism Chronicle, 2000, in Esarey, 2005, p. 48). After the Tiananmen Incident, Deng set the new propaganda line "One Focus and Two Basic Points" [*yige zhongxin, liangge jibendian*]. The "Focus" is China's economic development and the "Two Basic Points" refer to the Four Cardinal Principles and China's Marketization reform and Opening-up reform. Li Ruihuan (Li, 1990) demanded that the media must "Publicly declare that that it speaks from the standpoint of the Party and the people; politically, it must remain on the same page as the Party; ... (it must) submit to the Party's leadership and observe propaganda discipline." Such a demand has a far-reaching impact on the media development in China. A typical case is that the *World Economic Herald*¹⁰⁰, a very liberal weekly newspaper, was banned, because it had published articles without obtaining approval from the party's propaganda department (Wright, 1990).

In brief, the crisis of 1989 "gave urgency and legitimacy among the Party to a model of

⁹⁹ In addition, there were about 4000 internal newspapers.

¹⁰⁰ The *World Economic Herald*, which was affiliated to the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences, was banned in 1989 because it had printed "some of the boldest criticisms of the Communist Party ever published in a major Chinese newspaper" (Kristof, 1989).

concentrated power wielded more effectively” (Naughton, 2009, p.15). In other words, the Party’s control over the society took priority over any other issue in development. As Naughton (ibid) compares, “Before 1989, China’s leaders were willing to subordinate other national interests to the quest for a viable economic reform model, and thus a better economy and society. After Tiananmen, while reformers still pursued a vision of a transformed economy, that vision was linked to, and often subordinated to, stabilized and more effective government power.” Media was one of the fields that were seriously affected.

4.2.2.3 From 1992 to the new century.

1992 is a turning point in China’s national economic development and social change, which unveiled another reform era when marketization was combined with a stronger role of the state and a regime more capable of economic development and nation-building. 1992 also marks the start of concerted efforts to “create a modern, systematic, standardized system of control in the propaganda sphere” (Brady, 2007).

Seeing the retreat from reform during the years 1989-1991 and the fact China was squeezed into a narrow space for further development within 3 years of weak economic performance and political repression, Deng Xiaoping¹⁰¹ journeyed to the southern cities of

¹⁰¹ Deng did not hold a formal position at that time but he was actually the decision-maker.

Wuchang, Shenzhen, Zhuhai and Shanghai¹⁰². He publicly strongly reaffirmed the importance of “market” (“marketization”), “opening-up” and economic development, and advocated the legitimacy of “building a socialist market economy with Chinese characteristics.” This journey, which has a specific term in Chinese, “*Nanxun*”, is considered as the kick-off point of China’s renewed reform.

China’s market reforms in the 80s and 90s were quite different. As for the economy, 1980-reforms are characterized as “de-centralizing, dual track, and making extensive use of particularistic bargains and contracting”, while the post-1992 reforms are characterized as re-centralizing, stressed market unification and promoted reforms of ownership and improved regulation” (Naughton, 2009)¹⁰³. At the 14th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party (NCCCCP) held in October 1992, a new vision for the Chinese economic development model, namely, the “Socialist Market Economy”, was announced. From then on, China aggressively adopted the market as a driving force for economic change and development; hence the commercialization prevailed not only in urban areas but also in the countryside. In November 1992, Liang Heng¹⁰⁴ openly talked about “the commodity nature” of the media, and declared that: “the conditions now are ripe for newspapers to be marketization” (cited in Zhao, 1998, p. 50). And this is when the third media reform began.

As the economic reform deepened, the process of restructuring and closing of

¹⁰² This tour from January 18 to February 21 in 1992 was later known as “Nanxun” (Southern Tour)

¹⁰³ Some scholars argue these reforms are just “partial decentralisation”, so they are not liberal reforms (Kleinberg, 153).

¹⁰⁴ An official responsible for newspaper management at the State Press and Publication Administration

state-owned enterprises was accelerated in the 1990s¹⁰⁵, which caused a wave of privatization. Public enterprises were facing tighter budgets and much more open competition. Such competition became more severe as China was keen to seek World Trade Organization membership in the 1990s¹⁰⁶. WTO membership requires not only a much greater openness to the world market, allowing foreign-invested enterprises to sell freely into the Chinese domestic market, but also transparent, independent and participatory human rights, press freedom, and an independent judiciary. Along this process, in spite of the existing propaganda system, Chinese media companies underwent a substantial change towards independence, openness and liberalization. In brief, the media reform in the 1990s, which was a gradual process, was in a fusion of market imperative and political control.

After the Fourteenth Party Congress, Jiang Zeming instructed that propaganda and thought work should become an extremely important department with more powers (Brady, 2007). Thereafter, a new system of propaganda administration was set up, which includes: briefing meetings with editors; establishing news media monitoring groups; regular talks on propaganda and thought work for the various groups working within the propaganda system; a new system of prizes for setting norms in culture and the media; and a new

¹⁰⁵ Statistics shows that the number of SOEs (State-Owned Enterprises) declined from 300,000 in early 1990s to less than 65,000 in 1998, by means of conversion to shareholding enterprises, merger, closure or bankruptcy (Gittings, 2005).

¹⁰⁶ Note: China was a founding member of the GATT in 1948, but withdrew in 1950 after the establishment of the People's Republic. China had been seeking to re-join it since 1986. However, in many respects, including the unrest in 1989, China did not gain support from the West. That unpopularity made China in the early 1990s even keener to join GATT, or at least to become a founding member of the WTO on its eventual formation in January 1995.

approach to funding in the propaganda system (ibid). Brady (ibid) concludes that this reform is to “create a modern, systematic, standardized system of control in the propaganda sphere.” Consequently, for the media companies, the challenge is to meet the needs of market economy and requirements of the propaganda department.

There are opposite views of China’s media development: While Lynch and Lee tend to view the propaganda state as in decline as a result of commercialization of the media, Brady and Esarey find that the Party was still very adept at utilizing commercialization to enhance and strengthen the propaganda apparatus. Factors contributing to the change and development of China’s media during the 1990s also vary. Lynch (1999) argues that the Party’s ability to use the mass media to control the Chinese people is weakening because of administrative fragmentation, property rights reform and technological advancements. Zhao (2008) analyzes domestic and global political economy, social relations, impact of the information age, and institutional and ideological legacies, all of which contribute to the change.

The following paragraphs discuss the media development after 1992 from different angles and analyze it with different factors: market incentives, political decentralization, the development of civil society, continued globalization, and technological advancements.

4.2.2.3.1 Rapid development in media industry.

In the National Newspaper Management Conference in September, 1992, the GAPP announced that newspaper has four “attributes”: the political attribute, the information attribute, the commodity attribute and the cultural attribute. The commodity function of newspaper was emphasized. This is first time the government did not mention “the mouthpiece function” of newspaper. Later, the government further proposed “the newspaper as the commodity, the newspaper companies as business organs, and the press as the industry” as a complete market-oriented system. The media gradually became a strong resource for the national economy (Liang, 2009).

After 1993, the Chinese government cautiously but steadily removed the barriers to marketization and let uncompetitive firms and workers fail. Because the central government had serious and persistent budget deficits, they began to implement plans in 1994 to gradually abolish all newspaper subsidies, with the exception of a few central party organs (Lynch, 1999). As a result, media companies were exposed to much more open competition and they had to finance their own operations through street sales and advertising. As Zhao (2000) finds, in the 1990s financial independence of a few national and regional newspapers encouraged many Chinese newspaper to maximize advertising incomes, to venture other business and increase entertainment content.

Most national media companies had to be responsible for profits and losses. Taking *People's Daily* as an example, in 1995, 70% of its incoming derives from advertising. Some other received a few short-term subsidies for special operations (Lynch, 1999). On the one hand, declining government subsidies caused the media companies to find their own financing, from commercial advertisements, sponsorship and business cooperation. Taking *Shenzhen Special Zone Newspaper* for example, about 90 percent of its revenue in 1995 was from advertising (Lai, 2005). Also, in 1995 editors and journalists in Beijing Radio were given individual incentives and quotas if they sold an ad. On the other hand, declining government subsidies also caused many media companies (including some of those owned by the Communist Party) to publish bold editorials critical of the government. The incentive to attract more readers and avoid bankruptcy overcame the pressure and fear from the government's control. The pursuit of financial survival resulted in increased competition among news media organizations for readers and advertising revenue, which led to gradual decentralization, specialization, diversification of the Chinese media (Lee, 2000). Moreover, many newspapers and television/radio stations take out subscriptions at public expense.

Furthermore, in the early 1990s, media organizations started to actively intensify their economic activities and promotion. This is more obvious in commercial media, which "follow a logic similar to that of the commercial media in the West" (Zhao, 1998). For example, Nanfang Daily Newspaper Group in Guangdong province built a new industrial development zone in the city of Dongguan in 1995. It even borrowed money from the

state-owned banks and lent it at a higher interest rate to assorted enterprises that were associated with the managers of Nanfang Daily Newspaper Group (Lynch, 1999). In the May of 1996, the Guangzhou Daily developed into China's first newspaper group with the approval from the News Publishing Agency. Its success in circulation and advertising revenues exerted profound influence on the Chinese newspaper industry. The financing became available to the Groups through intercompany transfers so it was easier to invest in running more publications such as metropolis dailies, entertainment magazines. The Southern Group's establishment of *Southern Metropolitan News* in Shenzhen city was an example. Some media companies, such as China Television Media, *Oriental Pearl*, Shandong *Sanlian* (journal) and Dianguang Broadcasting, managed to list on domestic markets.

As a result, China witnessed rapid media development in the 1990s (Cf. Figures 6-10). While newspaper sold 70 percent of their copies by subscription in the 1980s, in the later 1990s the balance shifted to newsstand sales, thanks to the demise of compulsory subscription and to independent distribution schemes, both of which have had profound effects on the popularization of editorial content. Statistics show that by the end of 1999, China boasted of 2,038 kinds of newspapers, 7,900 magazines, 298 radio broadcasting stations, and some 368 TV stations and 560 cable television stations (Cf. Figures 6-10), the majority of which were dependent on market returns (Huntington and Berger, 2002).

In this process, media tended to stretch the boundaries of publication content and style

(Yang, 2003). They broke new ground for the readers and viewers. Topics that had been regarded “sensitive” abounded on newspapers: crimes, police brutality, economic disputes, unethical business practices, corruption cases or scandals, consumer complaints, legal issues, etc. The variety of publications was increasing, such as *Trends*, *Shopping Guide* and *Caijing*. As a result, preliminary evidence indicates, in the 1990s and into the first few years of the twenty-first century, that media satisfaction further increase, “thanks to expansion of the scope of news coverage” (Tang, 2005). According to two surveys, “Urban Social Survey” in 1992 and “Six-city Survey” in 1999, interest in domestic news increased while interest in international news decreased: 29 percent of the respondents in 1992 and 43 percent of the respondents in 1999 preferred domestic news. In China, people used to be more interested in international news because it was believed to be more objective than domestic news. The change of public interest in domestic news in late 1990s reflects that more attention was drawn to growing social issues, such as the market reforms, corruption, unemployment and social unrests, etc. (ibid).

4.2.2.3.2 *Relative decentralization and media independence.*

Increased competition among news companies for readers and advertising revenue, led to gradual decentralization and diversification of the Chinese media. In general in the

1990s, especially after the 14th Party Congress, the political atmosphere in China was greatly relaxed, and media became relatively more decentralized and autonomous. The media produced social contradictions envisioned in the reforms, documenting, reporting and reflecting the views of the public, which as a means of monitoring the effectiveness of policies, their implementation and the practices the government officials. This function, known as “*yulun jiandu*” literally translated as “supervision by public opinion,” is one of the key features of the media development in this era.

At the government level, the Party Congress Report in 1992 incorporated this unique institution in the Chinese news media system, *Yulun Jiandu*, a mechanism by which the government uses the media as an effective vehicle for promoting government policies, laws, reform initiatives, and as a venting valve for social dissatisfaction in the society. Nearly all the national leaders in China invoked this principle as a motive for economic and social reform (Yang, 2003). In Section 6 of the Report, it says, “Strengthening legal supervision and administrative supervision (in the system), paying attention to the media’s function of forming public opinions, and gradually improving the monitoring mechanism to ensure that state organs and their staff at all levels, subject to effective supervision” (Fourteenth National Congress of the Communist Party of China, 1992). Cho (2007, p. 95) points out that this report “drew a direct association between ‘*Yulun Jiandu*’ with other supervisory provisions of the Party such as administrative supervision and legal

supervision ... ‘*Yulun Jiandu*’ was to become an integral part of the party’s internal monitoring mechanism at every government level”¹⁰⁷. Local officials often tolerate this reporting, “as long as it brings in revenue for the provincial government, and it doesn’t touch too closely on their own leadership” (Beach, 2004, ¶ 12). It is therefore permitted to publish politically sensitive news, edge-ball news¹⁰⁸, critical news, crime, low-level corruption, police brutality, celebrity gossip, and natural and man-made disasters, etc, in newspapers, magazines and journals.

Hence, throughout the mid-1990s, as the Chinese central government launched numerous anti-campaigns to curb local government corruption and unruly and dysfunctional bureaucracies, the media became an effective and comparatively inexpensive tool for the government in these campaigns (ibid).

At the society level, after the social movement in the late 1980s, there was a deeper understanding of the social reality as the citizens were more aware and active. A reader survey results in 1993 and 1994 showed that the rising middle class Chinese consumers wanted news and information, rather than culture and entertainment (Cho, 2007). Deng’s “*Nanxun*” has settled the debate over the nature of socialism to a great extent.

¹⁰⁷ Original Chinese version: “强化法律监督机关和行政监察机关的职能，重视传播媒介的舆论监督，逐步完善监督机制，使各级国家机关及其工作人员置于有效的监督之下。”

¹⁰⁸ “Edge ball” is a term in “Ping Pong”(table tennis), referring to a hit on the very edge of the opponent’s side which is still a legitimate ball (within bounds) but nearly impossible to defend by opponents since it goes in unpredictable directions. In the mid-1980s, China’s heyday of political reform, Qin Benli, chief editor of the avant-garde Shanghai newspaper World Economic Herald (shut down in March 1990), used this metaphor to describe the art of Chinese journalists gaming with the censors. (In *Southern Metropolis*’ Headline and ‘Edge Ball’”).

<<http://chinadigitaltimes.net/2007/11/southern-metropolis-headline-and-edge-ball/>>

At the media administration level, media organizations were fully aware that the media must supply the content satisfying the audience. Although there was still some restriction over the media content, Chinese media had “greater diversity of content and higher degrees of predictability and professionalism” (Price, 2004). The exiled journalist Zhang Weiguo observed in 1993 that “mainland journalists are now initiating a new process of a conscious, courageous, energetic, and ingenious fight for a larger margin of journalistic freedom” (Shih, 1994, quoted in Lynch, 1999, p. 96). Price (2004) finds that entertainment and soft news appeared in majority media so as to appeal to audience/readers taste. New media genres, programs and publications also flourished.

This media reform, born after Deng’s *Nanxun*, led to unprecedented rapid media development in the industry and a dramatic change in news reporting. Cho’s study found that in 1992, only 8.1 percent of stories published by the commercial newspapers were critical reports, and in 2001, the number jumped to 27.7 percent; while the commercial newspapers targeted 8.2 percent of its critical reports on Party-state officials in 1992, the number increased to 15.2 percent in 2001. The study also found that in 1992, only 2.1 percent of critical reports targeted malfeasance that occurred in other provinces, by 2001, the number jumped to 28.5 percent (Cho, 2007).

4.2.2.3.3 *Media as civil society: editors and journalists as the force.*

As China became more integrated with the world economy, there were some social conditions in the 1990s that contributed to the birth and maturity of civil society emerging in China. As Tai (2006) argues, “most of the changes in the social conditions that are thought to be favorable breeding grounds for a nascent civil society have to do with a dramatically improved economic environment in the reform era that helps elevate the quality of life for average citizens on one hand, and a drastically new information environment (both at the national and international levels) as a result of more access to a variety of information sources and increased contact with the outside world on the other.” In particular, as a result of the 1989 social movement, the discussion about China’s civil society became more sophisticated, more diversified and more rational in perspectives and approaches (He, 1997; Ma, 1994). Media is regarded as part of the civil society evolution in China. Media workers are the major force in this evolution.

Since the late 1980s, there have been many publications concerning the discourse on civil society. Li (1998) notes four significant transformations in China’s march into a civil society: expanding autonomy and freedom of the individuals, increasing separation of the state and the society, self-management of society, and mounting interaction between the state and society. In spite that not every citizen understands or exercises their rights, many scholars contend that China is already on a path towards a mature civil society (Zhang, 2003). Surveys on “Media content preference” done in 1992 and 1999 showed that public

interest in domestic news was higher in 1999 than in 1992 (in Tang, 2005). The growing attention to domestic news indicates increasing awareness as a responsible citizen in the society, and media's corresponding reaction to public's interest.

In the 1990s, there were many informal or semi-formal economic and social groups¹⁰⁹, such as salons of intellectuals that are less explicitly political but with common interest. Profession or place of origin did not limit participation in these groups. Many millions of mostly young farmers, who account for the greatest proportion in China's population, became migrant workers and new city residents and became active. Meanwhile, some new industries (such as high-tech, IT, and banking) and many new professions appeared. The number of private entrepreneurs and middle class increased rapidly. Some civil servants and professionals form professional groups such as specialized academic societies and journalist associations. All of these groups formed various kinds of mass associations¹¹⁰, for instance, environment and animal protection groups, children/women protection groups and civil religious groups. These "new-born" individuals and groups brought new features and changes to the relation between the society and the state. In such an atmosphere, the media's performance as watchdog in the public's interest gradually stood

¹⁰⁹ They are either not officially recognized.

¹¹⁰ According to an authoritarian source, for example, in 1999 there were 180,000 local and provincial mass societies and professional associations. Among them, there are about 102,000 in the level of counties, 56000 in the level of regions, 21400 in the level of provinces and four chief central cities(Beijing, Shanghai, Tianjin and Chongqin), 1800 or so in the national level. (The Almanac of China's civil work, 1998, p274.)

out, and editors and journalists took the initiative to inject more real journalism into the news reporting.

There were increasing examples in mainland China of loosely organized civil groups pressuring the government for action on various issues. Media plays an important role in this process. The birth of *Southern Metropolis Daily* is an example. The *Southern Metropolis Daily* hit the newsstand in 1997, with Cheng Yizhong as the deputy editor, who was determined to make the newspaper better than any newspapers in the country by printing stories that people actually wanted to read and that had never appeared in other newspapers. *The Southern Metropolis Daily* had lots of coverage of international news such as Princess Diana's death and President Bill Clinton's affair with Monica Lewinsky, as Chinese readers need to know the outside world; the Daily published sensitive news such as news of corruption, crimes, and government officials' faults. Other examples are *Southern Weekend*¹¹¹, *Caijing Magazine*¹¹², *Focus News Programme CCTV*¹¹³, *News Probe CCTV*¹¹⁴ [*Xinwen Diaocha*]. The common feature of these newspapers, magazines,

¹¹¹ The Southern Weekend was started in 1984 and till mid-1990s; it was one of China's most influential watchdog press institutions. "Many in China and in the West insist that Southern Weekend's watchdog journalism is among the boldest, most outspoken and forthright in China" (Cho, 2007). It changed its English name to Southern Weekly in Spring 2006.

¹¹² Caijing Magazine was started in 1998, with a mission "independent standpoint, exclusive coverage and unique perspective".

¹¹³ "Focus News Programme" or translated as "Focus Report", "Topics in Focus", started in 1994, is a 13-minute-long program in China Central Television (CCTV) with an in-depth coverage on hot current topics in the society.

¹¹⁴ News Probe is a documentary television programme in CCTV that aired in 1996, with a purpose to investigate various news, issues and scandals, so as to reveal the social problems.

and TV programs is their investigative reports that reveal social problems and social dissatisfaction. For example, a community group was organized to raise awareness of environmental threats in their region. Their actions drew the attention of various media across the country and gained extensive coverage in the news calling for action from the local or even central government.

The media acted as a watchdog to monitor official powers, and as civil society to mitigate the relationship between the government and the society. They gained national-wide popularity, for example, as Burgh (2003) finds, the ratings for network news was around 40 percent of maximum audience (over 900 millions), while investigative and critical features on *Focus News Programme* they could be as high as 70 percent; *Focus* received 80 percent of CCTV's mails, 3000 to 4000 letters per week, along with many thousands of phone calls. The government also valued the importance of this function. In 1998, when Premier Zhu Rongji met reporters from the *Focus*, he said, "through media supervision, the press can help us correct our mistakes and listen to the public opinions" (in Yang, 2003, p. 237). He even called Chinese journalists to be the "throat and tongue of the masses, mirror of the government, and pioneer of the reform." (ibid).

In regards to media workers, from 1979 to 1989, Chinese journalists were obliged to conform to a narrow definition of their role although sometimes they broke free from the limitation (Burgh, 2003). However, during the 1990s, many media workers broke new

ground in Chinese journalism by seeking for increased independence, exerting much influence in shaping social and psychological life, the organization of economic and political activity, and the construction of public culture. Media workers, most of whom were educated or influenced in the opening era of the 1980s by the concepts of “freedom”, “democracy” and “human rights”, were keen on finding societal problems in the country. For example, Hu Jiwei, the editor in chief of the People’s Daily writes in the “There Will Be No Genuine Stability without Press Freedom”, “Freedom of the press for citizens is the right to be informed as masters of the country, their right of political consultation, their right of involvement in government and their right of supervision over the party and government.” (Hu, 1989). Hu’s perspectives were very common among the media professionals.

As Yu Haiqing (2009, p. 131) concludes, “Situated in multiple relationships that can be problematized, modified, and readjusted, Chinese journalists are perfecting their craft as mediators between the state, society and the market”. Southern Metropolis editor Cheng Yizhong¹¹⁵ is one of thousands of Chinese media workers, who show enthusiasm for media independence.

4.2.2.3.4 Being globalized.

¹¹⁵ Cheng was named as the laureate of the 2005 UNESCO/Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize by UNESCO Director-General Koïchiro Matsuura.

In the 1990s China actively participated in both economic integration and cultural globalization. The best example is its unremitting efforts to enter the World Trade Organization.

In this decade, China's has experienced spectacular GDP growth rates, averaging at 10 percent; the country speedily became one of the largest traders in the world as well as the main recipient of foreign investment among developing countries; also, internationalization in China was growing rapidly in the forms of education, research, technology, management and governance. In media, after Deng's *Nanxun*, a new model of media development materialized. One example is the establishment of two independent media companies: a 24-hour radio station, *Oriental Radio Station*, and of *Oriental Television Station*¹¹⁶. The establishment indicates the end of China's monopolistic media rule of "one radio station and one television station in one market" which had existed since 1949. The establishment also indicates that this media reform is widening.

These changes in the economy in turn contributed towards a reconstructing of the social fabric, greater social competition and increased individual liberalization. Therefore, a new domestic bourgeoisie was in the making, composed of an expanding group of private entrepreneurs, employees at supervisory level in foreign companies, lawyers, university professors, and journalists. This emergence was tied to a desire for post-socialist humanity, rights and freedoms (Rofel, 2007).

Market opening culminated as China obtained World Trade Organization (WTO)

¹¹⁶ They were established on October 28, 1992, and January 18, 1993, respectively.

membership in 2001. In the process of speedy globalization during 1990s, China was more aggressive to join the WTO - it took China 15 years of arduous and protracted negotiations to get the accession to WTO on December 11, 2001. So the government not only had to restructure its domestic economy¹¹⁷, but also prepared for the upcoming competition from international media upon China's accession into the WTO. The Chinese media accordingly adjusts its regulations and became internationalized. In 2000, the government announced that, in order to prepare China for admission into the WTO and to become more competitive internationally, a few provincial and national “brand-name” newspapers and journals will be established (Ogden, 2002).

Also, after the entry into WTO, China stopped using normative internal documents, namely, *hongtou wenjian*, to govern the society so as to be transparent to the world. Provincial and municipal administrations followed the government's instruction and did a thorough vetting of *hongtou wenjian*, so as to invalidate most of them and to replace them with proper legislation. An example is in the later period of the SARS, a number of government-issued administrative regulations regarding publicity of information, public

¹¹⁷ Chinese Commitments under the WTO:

- Reduction of tariffs on all imported goods, including high-technology and agricultural products
- Removal or reduction of non-tariff barriers
- Elimination of export subsidies, if any
- Transparency of economic procedures, laws, rules and regulations
- Opening of the government procurement process
- Opening of service sectors to foreign investment and participation—international trade, distribution sectors, financial sectors (banking, insurance and securities), telecommunication and transportation sectors
- Enforcement of intellectual property rights, including patents, copyrights, brand names and trade secrets
- National treatment for all foreign direct investors

health, transportation, and protection of the environment and wildlife. (Zou, 2006).¹¹⁸

As part of the conditions for admission to the WTO, China was required to open its media market to overseas operators, and open up its potentially vast telecommunication industries and the Internet market to foreign ownership. In order to compete against international media, Chinese media has undertaken some measures. For instance, the Media Groups were founded so the domestic media share collective resources to compete against the foreign media; facilities, equipment and other hardware in the media companies were upgraded; the government issues a directive in 1996 ordering that all Internet communication from overseas be routed to the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications¹¹⁹.

The progress of human rights is also an important aspect of the conditions for admission to the WTO. China is required to further cooperation with the international community to promote equity, justice and democracy. In October 1997, the Chinese government signed the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and; in October 1998, they signed the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights¹²⁰, the "Article 19" of which includes:

1. Everyone shall have the right to hold opinions without interference.

¹¹⁸ More discussion can be found, Willy Wo-Lap Lam "WTO winds will blow away the old China", July 3, 2001, <<http://archives.cnn.com/2001/WORLD/asiapcf/east/07/03/china.willy.column/index.html>>

¹¹⁹ Now it is named the Ministry of Information Industries.

¹²⁰ The former was ratified in 2001 but the latter has not been ratified. - "Premier: China will ratify the UN Covenant on Civil and Political Rights at an early date" http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2008-03/18/content_7813405.htm

2. Everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of his choice.

3. The exercise of the rights provided for in paragraph 2 of this article carries with it special duties and responsibilities. It may therefore be subject to certain restrictions, but these shall only be such as are provided by law and are necessary:

(a) For respect of the rights or reputations of others;

(b) For the protection of national security or of public order or of public health or morals.

(United Nations, 1997)

Price (2004) points out that “Globalization means that the potential of the media to buttress the identity of the state and its inhabitants is altered... it may mean the development of an international regime and international norms (e.g., human rights) to prevent a sovereign from excluding information even when it is technically capable of doing so.” Therefore, in the 1990s, the government faced international pressure to open the media market and remove interference, and the Chinese domestic media began to be confronted with global competition. The regulations governing media was relatively relaxed in many areas. J.M. Chan (1994) finds that internationalization of the Chinese media eroded the Party's ideological control over the Chinese media. “The realm of political content remains sacrosanct, but what counts as 'political' has been gradually reduced” (Latham, 2007, p. 40). For example, economic news reporting, whose publication had been prohibited, became the mainstream, and such reporting attaches great importance to the benefits and rights of the public. The *People's Daily* starts to introduce a four-page financial section, featuring regular candlestick charts for Shanghai and Shenzhen composite stock indices; the Xinhua News Agency also has financial data business (Snyder and DeLisle, 2001). Another example is the monthly *Caijing* (finance and economics)

Magazine¹²¹, which has “sharp exposure of all kinds of corruption” and looks for “a Chinese model of modernization and democracy” (Scotton and Hachten, 2010, p. 71); *Caijing* also “focus on major problems of a Chinese city in transition, from constitutional debates, public affairs, and civil rights to the rights of reporters themselves” (ibid). In addition, as of 2000, there were 14 English newspapers in China, which are perceived as reporting on China's problems with less propaganda.

4.2.2.3.5 *Technological advancements.*

Since the opening of China's markets, development of technologies and even greater demand for technologies has played a significant role in the media market. In the 1990s, technology rapidly developed which played a significant role in media development.

As cable television became a significant presence in all provinces¹²², major cities and counties, as both of cable television and satellite TV services swiftly grew (from Figure 6-10) and became more commercially astute. As the inflow of official imported foreign media culture such as movies, soap operas, foreign news and evening talk shows gradually poured in people's homes, the development of Television production became more sophisticated. As Kevin Latham (2007, p. 81) writes, in the 1990s, “technological

¹²¹ Caijing Magazine was started in 1998, with a mission “independent standpoint, exclusive coverage and unique perspective” (Caijing, ¶ 2)

¹²² Till 2000, about 60 percent of families in urban areas were connected to cable networks.

developments transformed the way people watched television; audiences started to become more fragmented and individualized”. Technology also made live coverage of news possible, which implied that “Chinese broadcasts are as authoritative as Western ones” and made censorship more difficult (Tang, 2005, p. 83-84).

Mobile phones and Internet have been leading the latest growth in China’s telecommunications market (Tai, 2006). By the end of 2001, China surpassed the United States to become the world’s largest mobile telecom market, with a number of 130 million mobile phone users – the figure in 1997 was only 10 million.

It is worth noting that controlling information and public opinion becomes ever more difficult in the Internet age, in any country. In China, the widespread application of Internet technology also presents a serious challenge to the monopoly of information. Unlike North Korea that continues to be an information black hole, China, in order to accelerate its economic expansion and increase its competitiveness, determined to foster a national information network infrastructure. Jiang Zeming, the former president announced a vigorous promotion of IT technology, which would transform the country. In his speech in August 2000, he said,

We should deeply recognize the tremendous power of information technology and vigorously promote its development. The speed and scope of its transmission have created a borderless information space around the world. ..the melding of the traditional economy and

information technology will provide the engine for the development of the economy and society in the 21st society. (Jiang, August 22, 2000)

In 1995, the first year China was connected to the Internet, there were about 50,000 Chinese having access to the Internet; by the beginning of 2000, the figure had increased to about 8 million (Kramarae and Spender, 2000). By 2003, the total of netizens in China had increased to 79.5 million (China Internet Network Information Center, 2009, p. 13). The increasing popularity of the Internet showed Chinese people its potentials through this media. Although the government has implemented a variety of technological and policy mechanisms to impose control over the Internet surveillance and censorship¹²³, Chinese people have been actively making use of this new way of global information exchanges. The rapid growth can be seen from the following graph.

¹²³ For example, “The Regulations of Safety Protection for Computer Information Systems in the People’s Republic of China” (1994) forbids unauthorized distribution of computerized information that may threaten China’s national security”. “Interim Regulations on International Interconnection of Computer Networks in the People’s Republic of China”(1996) forbids the use of the Internet to harm national security, disclose state secrets, damage national interests, endanger social stability, or produce, distribute, or consume pornographic information.

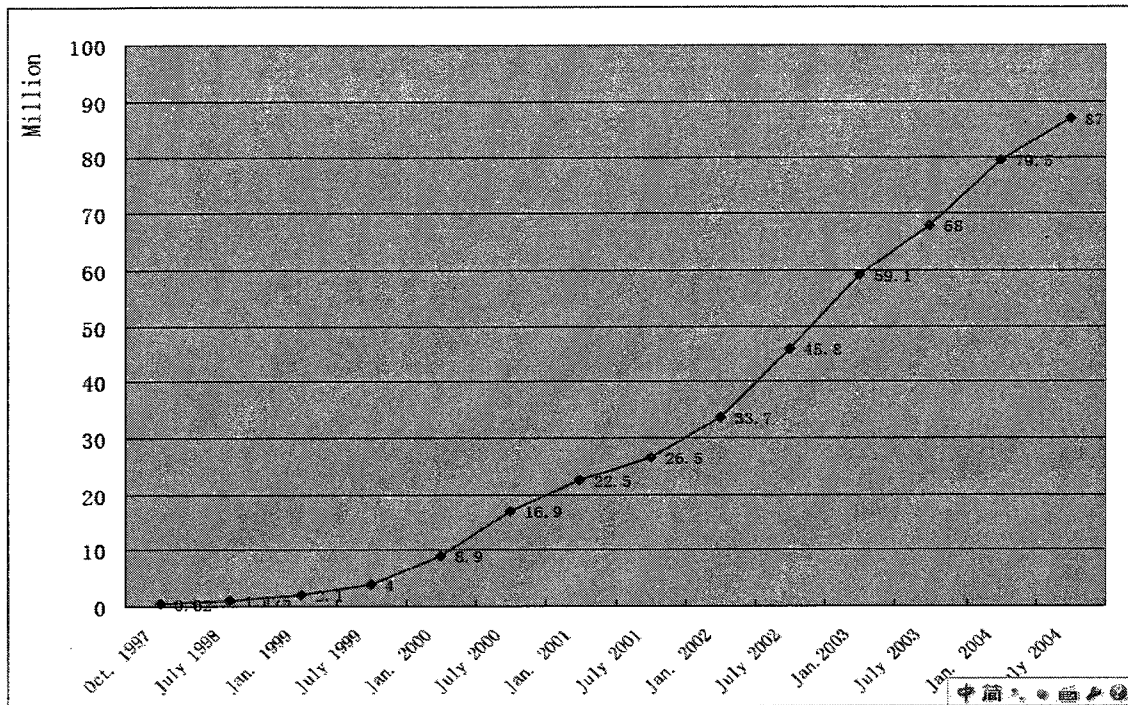


Figure 4: Development of Internet in China: 1997 – 2004

Note: Reproduced from the China Internet Network Information Center. Retrieved on May 20, 2010, from <<http://www.cnnic.net.cn/en/index/00/index.htm>>.

As Reeves (1998) notes, new technologies create instantaneous global reporting, which left the government unable to control the flow of information to the nation. When the SARS breakout happened to China, mobile phones and the Internet were the key tools for the public to share information and opinions before the media broke silence.

4.2.2.3.6 Conclusion.

A faster and more efficient development needs free flow of information in the society. China was on a fast track of economic development and globalization in 1990s. Since 1992, its more liberal and complete reform has brought numerous unprecedented changes to the country's industries including the media, in terms of financial operations (Zhao, 1998), number of outlets, variety of offerings (see the figures 4.21-4.25), rise of weekend editions and metropolitan newspapers that emphasize news to the interest of the public, and relative autonomy in the market-oriented newspaper (Zhao, 1998). The marketization efforts, associated with considerable independence, within the media industry and the changing relationship between readers or audience and the media, enforced media's relatively independent position between the state and the public with the functions of informing, surveillance (or watchdog), entertaining, and holding the society together.

It cannot be deduced that Chinese media enjoyed autonomy with the introduction of commercialization and decentralization. Because the Party's fundamental concept of the propagandist role of media remains largely unchanged (Zhao, 1998; Lee, 2003; Esarey, 2006). Also, they were still concerned that the risk of public panic and potential damage to the image of the Chinese leadership would cause social instability. This explains why the Chinese government often hesitated to publicize news about disasters, even natural disasters (Huang and Hao, 2008). Hence, in the eyes of people in the West, Chinese media did not enjoy a good image domestically and internationally.

Nevertheless, after the Tiananmen Incident in 1989, many media scholars considered media development in China would stop. It did cease for a period of time, but after 1992, from the above discussion and the figures below, media development in this decade actually grew faster. For one thing, “the government actually was losing the levers to control the media” because the media had to meet consumers’ needs and tastes (Liu Xiaobo, in Shrik, 2007). For another, the media reform in this decade did contribute to the country’s economic development and served the Party’s political system (for example, a tool of anti-corruption). As Liebman (2005) concludes that in spite of the continued overlay of informal and formal regulation, China’s media have significantly greater discretion over content than at virtually any time since 1949. In particular, Liebman (ibid) points out that increased competition – in order to make the media financially self-sufficient - has led editors to push the limits of what they are allowed to report. As Tang (2005) observes, lots of previously sensitive topics were covered by the media, such as policy brutality, human rights, the rule of law (formally rule of the Party), and collective bargaining by trade unions. Tang (2005) also argues that, the available evidence of media consumption - which refers to the increasing subscription of newspaper, Television and the Internet – supports the positive influence of market reform, and proves that the government’s censorship did not stop public media access to information, especially in urban China.

Media hence also acted as a forum for public discussion and brought about recognition

of individual responsibility, freedom and equality. The Party and the state, who directly confront the public, have met more challenging difficulties that they could not deal with. For example, while stranded by an inability to deal with corruption and institutional protectionism that undermines the legitimacy and effectiveness of the government and the Party, media is one of the actors and institutions in the campaign – along with the courts, people's congresses, Party disciplinary organs, and the lawyers. Because of media's expansion of the scope of news coverage and the improved quality, the satisfaction of the media during 1990s also increased (Tang, 2005).

There is a dominant view among Western government and scholars that public opinions in China are shaped by the government's control. However, it seems to be a different case during 1990s. A survey in 1993-1994 showed that, unlike previous studies, political control of the media in this period of time in China led to alienation and distrust of the government (Chen and Shi, 2001). Chen and Shi thus concluded that the propaganda state was failing its task of generating public support by its control of information in early 1990s. Since then, state monopoly of media, or at least the monopoly of media content, has largely decreased since the early 1990s.

In order to show what impacts that media produce on preserving social stability, I am going to use the data in the 1999 Six-city Survey in Tang's studies of Chinese media. Tang's analysis is focused on two issues: media production and media consumption (2005).

He finds that on the production side, media growth and marketization has greatly softened media control and censorship, which led to media development. Then he elaborates how media in the 1990s contributed to regime support, official ideology, nationalism, pro-Western tendencies, political activism, political efficacy, and support for civic values, by using the data in the 1999 Six-city Survey.

Tang focuses on the “media consumption” side and looks into public opinions shaped by media. On the one hand, to assess the consequences of “political mobilization”, he examines three factors: the first factor is “regime support”, a factor shows one’s support to the single-Party system; the second is “official ideology,” a factor shows one’s evaluation of Marxism-Leninism and Maoism; the third is nationalism, a factor shows one’s assessment of the West as the best model for China’s future economic and political development (*ibid*). Through these factors, we can see the effect media have on regime support, official ideology and nationalism as an effort to gain public support.

On the other hand, to assess “political alienation,” Tang examines four factors: the first factor is “Pro-Western tendencies,” a factor that shows one’s assessment of the West as the best model for China’s future economic and political development; the second factor is “Political activism,” which is one’s response to political actions¹²⁴ and making suggestions at work; the third one is “Political efficacy”, a factor shows the level of agreement which

¹²⁴ Actions include report to the government, report to the media, protest/ petition, other means, complain, and do nothing.

includes two statements: ① people like us can affect social development as long as we often voice our opinions, and, ② ordinary people can affect government decision-making; and the fourth factor is “Support for civic values,” which is a factor shows one’s agreement with the following five statements: ① one should participate in public affairs; ② government should not decide whether an opinion can be circulated; ③ government should not decide everything for the country; ④ “social diversity will not lead to chaos; ⑤ patriotism should not require supporting the current government. All of these four factors, “Pro-Western tendencies”, “Political activism”, “Political efficacy” and “Support for civic values” can show whether media plays an increased role or reduced role in promoting both political activism and efficacy (ibid).

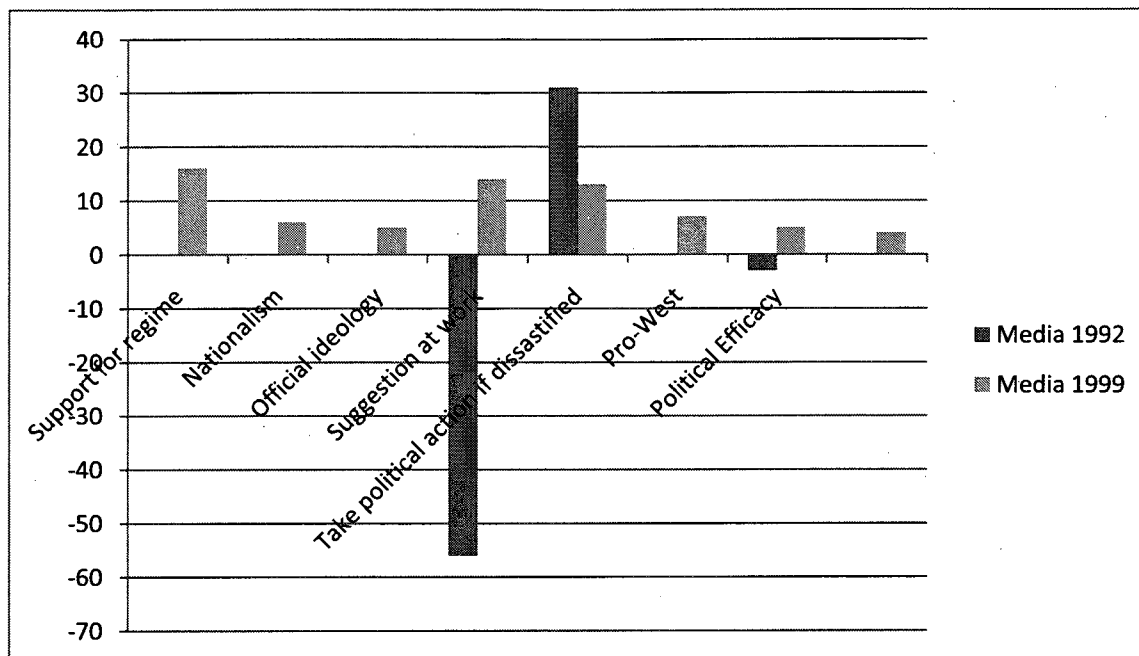


Figure 5: Effect of media on mobilization and liberalization, 1992 and 1999

Source: 1999 Six-city Survey and 1992 Urban Social Survey in Tang (2005)

Based on the survey, Tang finds the media mobilized support for the State: “the most frequent media consumer in China was about 16 percent more supportive of the single-Party system, about 6 percent more nationalistic, and about 5 percent more supportive of the official ideology, Marxism-Leninism and Maoism.” Wang (2005) also finds in 1990s there was a high level of public support for the state in China. Some would argue that this was because of the propaganda work by the Party. However, from my findings and discussions earlier in this chapter, media in 1990s were not under tight control and severe censorship. In China, the recent economic development, industrialization, and post-industrialization led to the rise of Self-Expression Values (Wang, 2004). Generally

speaking, it enjoyed a higher degree of media independence in financial capability and editorial and journalistic authority on the media content. While comparing with the data in the 1992 survey by Chen and Shi, Tang concludes that media in the late 1990s were more effective at promoting support for the regime.

Tang also finds that media “worked the other way and promoted liberalization.” As the most frequent media consumer was more likely to make suggestions at work (14 percent more), to take action if dissatisfied (13 percent more), to have more efficacy (5 percent more), and to express support for civic values (4 percent more). The findings also included more support to Western tendencies. Comparing with the findings of Chen and Shi (2001), Tang concludes that media in late 1990s played an increased role in promoting political stability by “discouraging open challenge to the regime and encouraging intra-system participation”¹²⁵.

In addition, many survey studies show that Chinese people’s support for the regime in a “remarkable high degree” (Shou, 2007, p.17). For example, the fourth wave of World Value Survey (WVS)¹²⁶ finds confidence in government from 1990 to 2000 in China has been steadily high. In this research, two key variables are taken into consideration:

¹²⁵ Tang finds, media impact on taking political action dropped from 31% in 1992 to 13% in 1999, while the impact on making suggestion at work increased from minus56 in 1992 to 14% in 1999.

¹²⁶ The World Values Survey is an ongoing academic project by social scientists to assess the state of socio-cultural, moral, religious, and political values of different cultures around the world. < <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/>>

nationalist sentiment and political exposure. Both variables were proved to work together through the media to influence individuals' support in the government, as media is "the main mechanism" to promote nationalism (Shou, 2007, p. 19) and "the primary mediator" to sustain the interaction between political leaders and the public (ibid, p.21).

The fieldwork of WVS in China was done in 2001, interviewing a sample of 1,500 adults across the country. The results indicate that political trust in China in 2001 was indeed very high than in 1990. 97 percent of the respondents say they have "a great deal of confidence" or "Quite a lot of confidence" in the national government, while 95 percent say this concerning the National People's Congress, and 92 percent say this concerning the political parties (basically the Communist Party). 66 percent say they have quite a lot or a great deal of confidence in the civil service, and 73 percent in the police. In Wang's study, few countries around the world have higher level of political trust than this (Wang, 2005). In response to the question, "How much confidence do you have in the national government?" the Chinese public shows one of the highest levels of confidence among the 27 countries examined in the survey. The confidence level in other major political institutions is similarly high, with trust in the National People's Congress (parliament) ranking fourth highest among the countries surveyed and trust in political parties ranking second highest among these countries.

Therefore, in 1990s, the media played a relatively positive role in reinforcing official

ideology and political power, and in conveying public consciousness and critical opinions.

Especially in a global environment favouring economic liberalization, the public demands more accurate and objective media, as it can offer broader platform for exchange of information and strengthens the national community. By responsibly disseminating information, furthering awareness and knowledge, promoting participatory and transparent governance, and addressing perceived anxiety, media further the country's development. For Chinese government, as it becomes more active in the globalization process launched and dominated by Western developed countries, they had to adjust China's regulations and rules, and make promises on improving human rights. Thus it might be reasonable to understand in 1990s China's media tended to be westernized or Americanized.

In brief, in 1990s, media was changing from leading the masses to serving the consumers; media organizations were targeting the perceived interests of the general public instead of the Party. Its essential role not only met the demand of their market incentive, but also acted as a stabilizer of the society: media industry became an important industry and it contributed to economic stability; it promoted the official ideologies and continued to be a tool of the political power to maintain political stability; it instilled information from the West and influenced the society with Western cultures; it provided a platform for the State and the society, and for citizens' participation in governance. Although government's control was oscillating – sometimes loose, sometimes tight, **“control and liberalization**

do not seem to be a zero-sum game” (Tang, 2005, p. 98) – in other words, the existence of one does not require the elimination of the other. Tang goes on to observe in the same work that China’s political system is by nature different from the West, which is a deterrent factor that the media control “is more extreme”. Nevertheless, as China entered the Twenty-first century, there will be continued media growth and information explosion. As the public become more informed and educated, as the media itself becomes more responsible and more committed to the public’s interests, the control of the flow of information would have greater challenges.

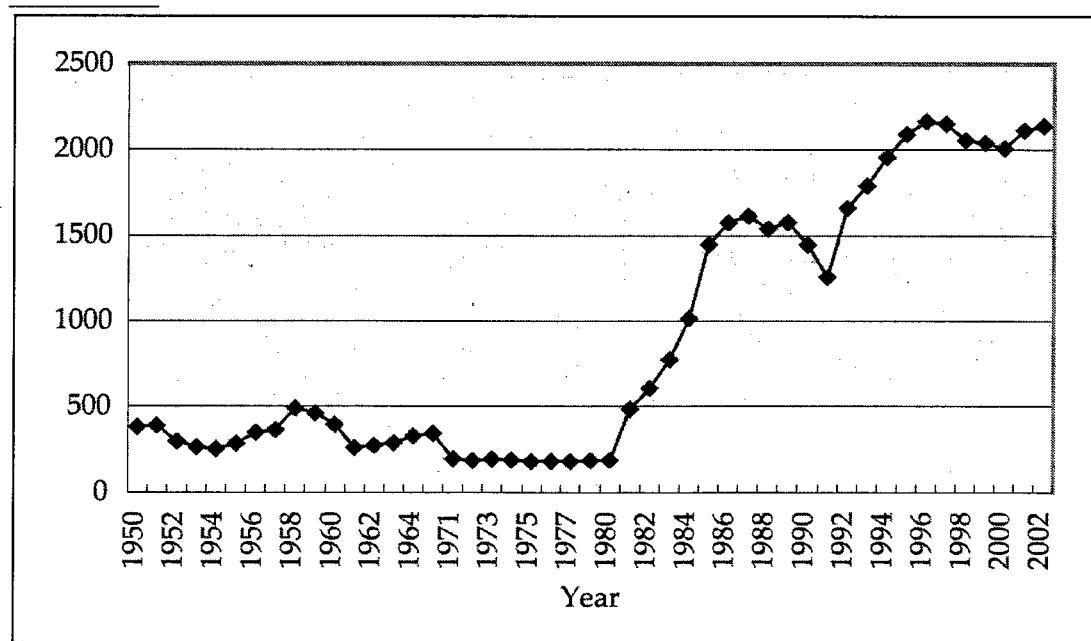


Figure 6: Newspaper in China (1950-2002)

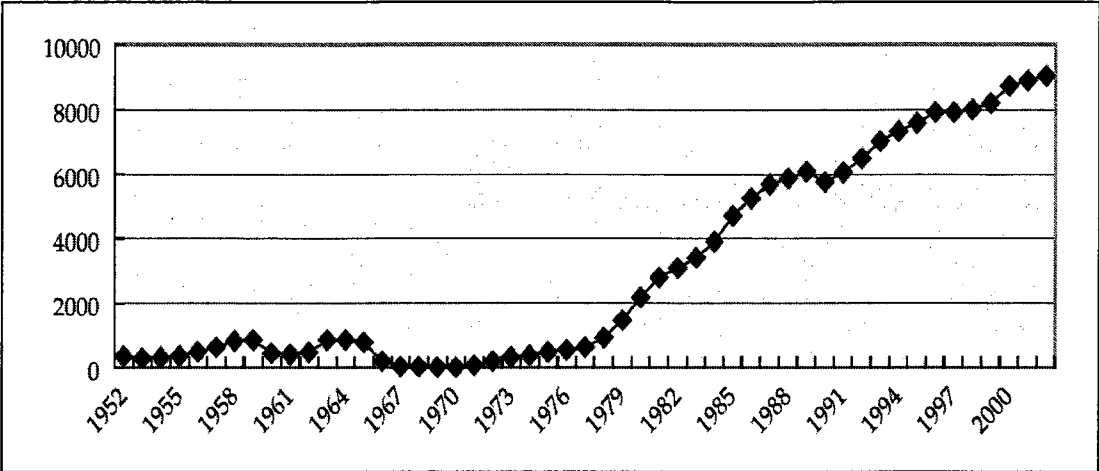


Figure 7: Magazines in China (1952-2000)

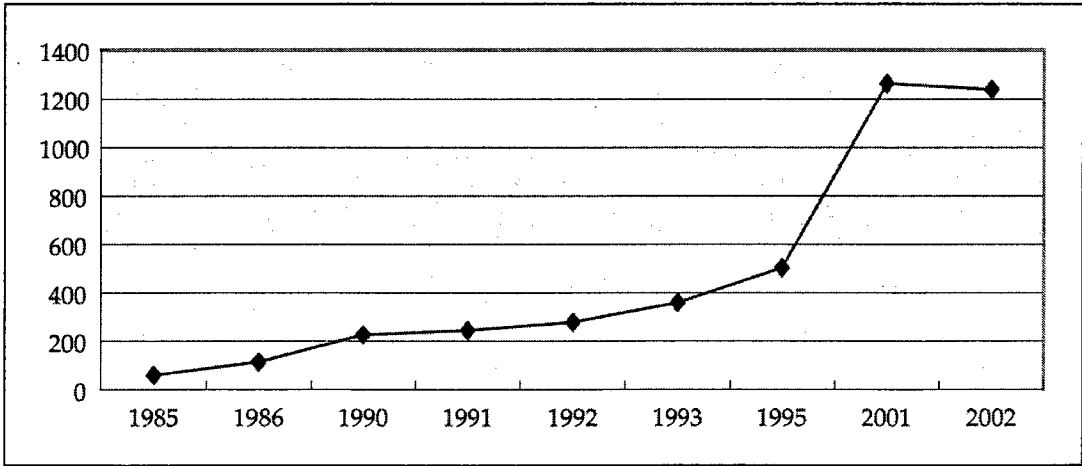


Figure 8: County Television Stations in China (1985-2002)

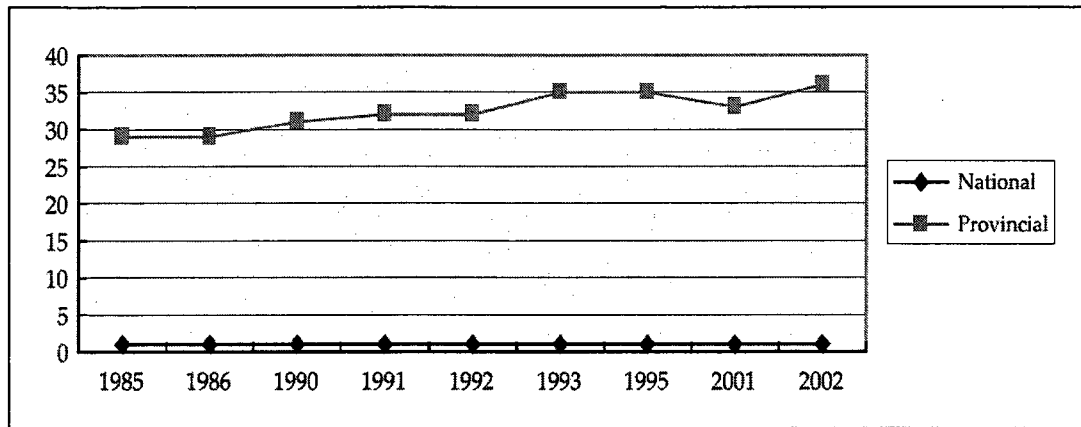


Figure 9: National and Provincial Television Stations in China (1985-2002)

Note: In 1983, China decided to build a nationwide television system by the end of twentieth century. In 1985, the expenditure on television was triple the amount in 1980

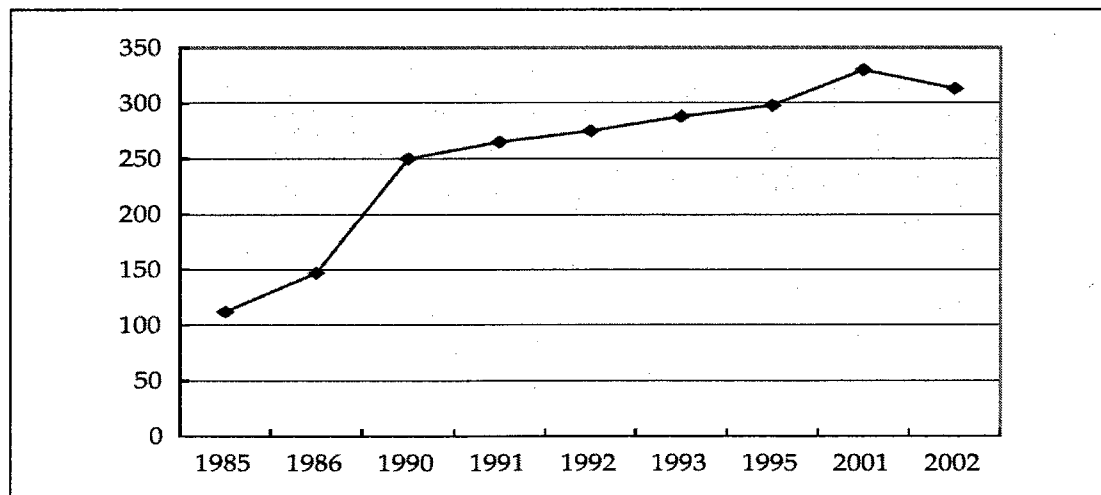


Figure 10: City Television Stations in China (1985-2002)

Table 1. Nationwide Advertising Revenue Growth Ratio

Year	Advertising Revenue	Growth ratio
1983	0.73	0
1984	1.19	+61.9 %
1985	2.20	+85.5 %
1986	2.56	+16.3 %
1987	3.35	+38.9 %
1988	5.01	+41.0 %
1989	6.29	+25.6 %
1990	6.77	+ 7.6 %
1991	9.62	+42.1 %
1992	16.18	+68.2 %
1993	37.71	+133.0 %
1994	50.50	+33.3 %
1995	64.68	+28.1 %
1996	77.69	+20.1 %
1997	96.00	+23.6 %
1998	118.00	+22.9 %
1999	170.00	+44.1 %
2000	222.00	+29.4 %

Table 1: Nationwide Advertising Revenue Growth Ratio

Note: Reproduced from China Advertising Association as cited in Yenjun Sun, Newspaper in China [*Baoye Zhongguo*] (Shanxi: Zhongguo Shanxi Press, 2002) (Cho, 2006). This table shows that the advertising was becoming the most important source of the media company during the reform era.

4.2.3 Social changes in Chinese society and media practices in early 2000s.

After two decades of reform (1978 - 2002), in China there were economically, politically and ideologically and culturally diverse in social development. In order to advance its economic interest, the new Hu Jintao-Wen Jiabao administration repeatedly

emphasized the importance of social stability in various occasions as it is of “overriding importance¹²⁷”.

One of the characteristics in early 2000s is that China, with continued economic growth, was getting more involved in regional and international issues, a way to show the national power. The year of 2001 was a milestone: not only did China finally join the World Trade Organization (WTO) after 14 years of negotiations, but also China won the bid to host the 2008 Summer Olympic Games. Unavoidably, forces from outside placed China under an obligation to liberalize its markets including the telecommunications industry, which included allowing foreign firms to invest directly in the domestic firms. Also, China made other considerations concerning such things as making the regulatory system more transparent and just for foreign firms and countries. Among the government’s promises, there were media freedom and improvement in human rights.

Another characteristic is the Chinese government was confronted with various social contradictions as a result of its unbalanced development¹²⁸ that was becoming more acute, which will be discussed in the next chapter. Chinese government was seeking equilibrium among reform and social stability. In order to maintain ideological and political unity, and

¹²⁷ “Stability is of overriding importance. Without a stable environment we can accomplish nothing, and may even lose what we have gained. This is a major principle for running the country, which overrules many minor principles.” (Hu, in a speech on March 6, 1997)

¹²⁸ For example, the restructuring of SOEs (State-owned Enterprises) led to increasing unemployment; the speedy urbanization not only took farmers off the lands, but also caused environmental problems.

sound social order, the new-established Hu Jintao-Wen Jiabao Administration strengthened its power through a combination of ideological and social policy initiatives. The new administration put forward the concept of building “a harmonious society”, so as to build China into a “dynamic, stable and orderly society”. “Maintaining social stability is the precondition and foundation for the building of a harmonious society” (People's Daily, 2005). The agenda of political reform was included in the new administration.

To many scholars in social science and media workers in China, the expectation of a thorough political reform along with a “Press Law” legitimating the press freedom was unprecedentedly high. However, according to the observation of a few scholars (Bergsten, Gill, Lardy and Mitchell, 2007), the new leadership initially welcomed media reporting on subjects such as official corruption and social unrest, but later the media was gagged.

Therefore, after two decades of reform, CCP's control of the media is greatly challenged by domestic pressures, journalistic professionalization, globalization of information flows, and popularity of technologies. However, the “Press Law” and various regulatory measures to allow a gradual opening of the media were stalled in 2002-2003. Under such circumstances, in this very short period of time, China's media were experiencing a comparatively tighter censorship over news content (Yang, in Finkelstein and Kivlehan, 2003, p. 223-226)

4.2.3.1 Media environment in early 2000s.

In the early 2000s, unprecedented changes as a result of globalization especially being a WTO member transformed and integrated the political, economic, and social structures around the world. The Chinese society was also undergoing such transformation and integration. For scholars and media professionals home and broad, the entry of WTO was a sign marking an accelerated process of press freedom, and of opening domestic media market to international competition, and of making Chinese media as a tool of “pro-people” leadership.

From the late 1990s – especially in 2002-2003 – the government agenda included a political reform to promote “socialist democracy with Chinese characteristics”, so to “help consolidate today’s democratic, united, dynamic, stable and harmonious political atmosphere” (Jiang Zemin, May 31, 2002)¹²⁹. The Chinese media was used as a tool to make the country’s procedures more transparent since the Sixteenth Party Congress in November 2002 (Bergsten, Gill, Lardy and Mitchell, 2007). The Chinese media could report on the Politburo meetings and openly discussed the responsibilities of each member. Even more out of people’s anticipation, the transfer of power / leadership to Hu Jintao and Wen Jiabao as well as the “Fourth Generation” of China’s leadership in 2002-2003 was the “smoothest and least controversial in over 80 years of Chinese Communist History” (ibid).

¹²⁹ Jiang also pointed out that what China needs is socialist democratic politics with Chinese characteristics and China will never copy the Western political systems (ibid).

Secondly, the Hu-Wen new administration initiated a slogan “constructing a socialist harmonious society, which features democracy, the rule of law, equity, justice, sincerity, amity and vitality”. The Central Committee of the CPC proposed amendments to the current Constitution by adding the provision that “the state respects and safeguards human rights”. Besides, the propaganda system incorporated Western-style media techniques, such as public opinion polls, proactive news reporting, public relations and image-making (to home and abroad), which were to bring about a “pro-people” leadership (Zhao, 2008).

Lastly, the Chinese government allowed foreign investment in the film industry, increased the import quota of foreign movies, and granted cable carriage rights to News Corporation’s Star TV and Time Warner’s partially owned CETV in South China. Moreover, China lifted its ban on foreign investment in media production to permit international media companies to jointly create television programs and films with local partners (People’s Daily, August 22, 2004). Foreign companies such as *Yahoo*, *Google* and *Microsoft* have entered the Chinese market. For example, the official CCTV connects to the global media through a wide range of trans-national programming, which includes American, Japanese and South Korean television drama and Hong Kong action movies. As increasing foreign investment into the Chinese media industry was pouring into China rapidly, state control was further eroded (Shambaugh, 2008).

As a result, along with the greater number and diversity of media companies, the local media enjoyed expanded managerial discretion over the operation and greater attention to increase circulation, readership or viewership, and advertisement revenue. Media development has served to expand the social roles of the media in China.

The printing media, only a very few, such as *People's Daily* and *Guangming Daily*, were still under direct supervision of the central party and partly subsidized by the government. Media gradually became one of the country's most profitable industries (Scotton and Hachten, 2010)¹³⁰. More than 95 percent of the revenue came from advertising (James and Hachten, 2010). The ad revenues even show spectacular growth far in excess of the country's overall GDP (Baum, in Li, 2007; and see Figure 4.26). Even *People's Daily* "has been constrained to improve its bottom line, expanding both sales and ad revenues by diversifying and enlivening its content and pinning off new, eye-catching commercial media ventures" (Baum, in Li, 2007, p. 163). Even by doing so since 1990, *People's Daily* circulation has dropped by 40 percent in 2005 (ibid). Instead, even more metropolis newspapers which were more market-oriented and readers-oriented became popular with lots of information about leisure, entertainment, romances, sports, as well as violence, crimes, intrigue which were once regarded as "unhealthy" and "harmful" (Ogden, 2002); they were "actively moving to assume the role of opinion supervision and

¹³⁰ Media in 2006 became the country's fourth most profitable industry (Scotton and Hachten, 2010)

monitoring¹³¹“ (Li¹³², in Apple Daily, 2006, ¶ 5). There was a popular saying that “The mainstream media are marginalized, while the marginal media are mainstream.” (ibid).

Commercialization also encouraged journalists, broadcasters, publishers and filmmakers to produce products appealing to the majority. In news media, increased investigative reports with a more incisive style, extensive coverage of corruption, officials' wrongdoings, business scandals of listed companies, and vulnerable groups or disadvantaged groups¹³³ gained more popularity.

Journalistic professionalization has become more mature as well. Judy Polumbaum's 2008 book *China Ink* highlights twenty interviews of different Chinese journalists who carry out their work with professionalism and morality and try to make a difference – some of whom were working for the official media such as CCTV and Xinhua News Agency. The interviews show that the development of freedom of information and expression is the tendency among Chinese journalists and intellectuals (Polumbaum and Lei, 2008). Taking the conclusion of Zhou Yijun for example, who had been a journalist for the Xinhua News Agency then was at the Phoenix TV based in Hong Kong, “journalism progresses along with the larger environment. As our country grows more and more self-confident,

¹³¹ For example, many newspapers such as Southern Metropolis Daily started a section of commentaries and opinions and in 2004 this became quite popular (Qian, in Chen and Qian, 2008).

¹³² Li Datong was formerly the editor of the Freezing Point Magazine under China Youth Daily Group.

¹³³ For example, migrant workers, peasants, street children, etc.

journalism is bound to become more and more open...It is important to find equilibrium among truthfulness, professionalism, and readability” (ibid, p.33).

Journalists became a strong forward momentum of the movement of China’s civil society, who were eager to participate in politics and call for human rights. Beach (2004) notes, “Chinese journalists have transformed themselves from state propaganda workers and government mouthpieces into professional reporters who cover aspects of society, economics, and international affairs that would have been prohibited two decades ago”. Tang (2005) cites many examples that show media openly questioned or criticized the government and hence challenged the Party’s control. He finds that although under the government’s censorship, bold media workers keep emerging – even the “officially controlled CCTV is openly discussing its ‘supervisory’ role in government decision-making” (ibid, p. 84).

In the name of modernization and globalization, highly advanced technologies have become available, in particular in the areas of technologies in the editorial office, internet and mobile phones. The efficiency and effectiveness of these communication technologies enhances access to communication messages, and challenge the censorship. In particular, Internet and mobile phones text messaging played an even more significant role in the media development.

From 2001 to 2003, Internet users in China grew dramatically from 26.5 million to 68

million (Zheng, 2008)¹³⁴. By the end of 2003, more than 66 percent of users had access to the Internet from their homes (ibid). China overtook Japan and became the world's second most active web audience, accounting for 6.63 percent of all global Internet traffic, second to the United States (Dudek, Bunnell and Yu, 2002). Tai (2006) demonstrates that despite government control and surveillance, the Internet has proved to be an alternative form of information and communication; it transformed the arena of public opinions, which the government or the media could not ignore. A survey by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (2005) finds 62.8 percent of users thought the Internet could help raise political awareness and 60.4 percent thought it could guide government officials on public opinion. What should be noted as well is Internet users in China are “younger, better educated, middle-class, and more urban than non-users” (Baum, 2007, p. 167). According to a consumer survey, the most popular use of the Chinese Internet is news, i.e. 67.9 percent of all users; the following popular uses are search engines (65.7 percent), email (64.7 percent), instant messaging (41.9 percent), bulletin boards and community forum (41.6 percent) (ibid). Therefore, Internet is providing an important tool to media - more and more major media companies started to launch their own websites which include a variety of news and special forum sections for the users to express their comments, opinions, grievances, resentment, and, criticism of the government¹³⁵ - even the official Party medias such as Xinhuanet.com, People.com.cn and China.com.cn. The news sites post breaking news

¹³⁴ Another figure is: the Internet users increased more than hundredfold times from 620,000 in October 1997 to 87 million in June 2004 (China Internet Network Information Centre 2004), surpassing Japan (66 million) and ranking 2nd in the world after the U.S (201 million). (Tang, 2005)

¹³⁵ Most of the comments and opinions in the online forums are negative. (Tai, 2006)

from the international media “almost instantaneously”, much faster than the print media and television. They cover local news as well as international news in a wider scale. The consequence is often government’s prompt responses to the related issue (Tai, 2006). Even, the on-line media forces the print and television media to react sometimes (Shirk, 2007).

In the meantime, SMS had significant growth in the mobile phone telecommunications segment, acting as an important source of information in the society, which caused more difficulties in controlling the flow of information for the government (Baum, 2007). Although the information was not accurate, it still acted often as a “messenger” between the media and the public. The mobile phone market in China reached 250 million subscribers at the end of September 2003. The number of SMS messages sent in China in 2003 was 137 billion. At the beginning of the outbreak of SARS, SMS played a key role in exchanging information in the society, which will be discussed in Chapter 5.

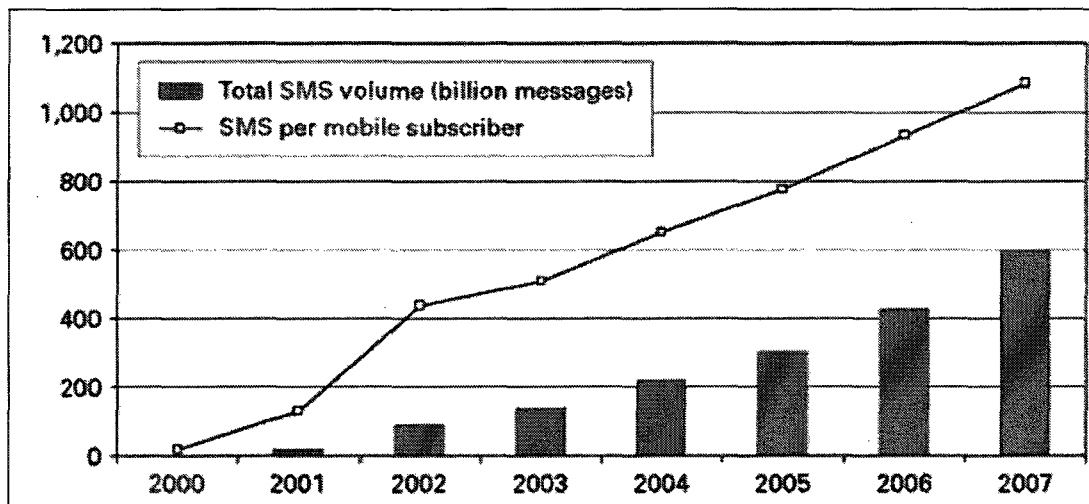


Figure 11: Growth of SMS traffic volume in China (2000-2007)

Note: Reproduced from Qiu, Jack Linchuan (2009). *Working-Class Network Society: Communication Technology and the Information Have-Less in Urban China*. p. 68. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press

Advanced technologies accelerated the spread of news around the society, which challenged the government's ability to stop it at the beginning. Especially, people were fully aware of the significance of both Chinese and foreign media, they quickly turn to journalists when they need to express their dissatisfaction and demands.

The above discussion shows the media development environment in the early 2000s. Inside the news reporting, a unique type of reporting, namely, "Cross-regional reporting [*yidi jiandu*]" became popular, which was "instrumental in breaking the silence on important national disaster stories as well as regional ones" (China Media Project, 2006). Various translations of this term include: "extra-regional media supervision," "inter-regional supervision," "extra-territorial reporting," "cross-region media supervision,"

and “inter-district media monitoring.” What it means is that, to some degree, the media in other provinces or regions are freed from the local government’s control. For example, it had been prohibited reporting by local governments as well as neighbouring provinces the exposure of China’s HIV-Aids crisis, which had devastated whole regions of the countryside in Northern provinces like Henan since early 1990s. The first complete news report on the crisis – written by a Henan reporter Zhang Jicheng in December 1999 - was eventually published by a commercial newspaper in Sichuan province in South-west China. “Cross-regional reporting” became so common that such critical reports of other provinces could account for more than half of the news (Ke, Wang and Chen, 2005). Such reporting has produced a kind of “breakthrough within the existing media management system” and to some degree it has reduced the constraints of political resources upon news media (Su, 2005, p. 792). Liu and Ma (2004, p. 59) argue that “Cross-regional reporting” is an expression of journalists’ innovation within the existing media management system, and it introduces a horizontal supervision system that encounters less control from the local government, which to some degree “challenged the traditional vertical supervision system”.

In conclusion, from 2001 to 2003, with continued commercialization, advanced technologies and increasing civic awareness, media were breaking the limits and challenging the traditional control. Journalism was practiced in a more liberalized culture and developed towards Western style - investigative or critical reports were leading the trend. China’s media, including newspaper, TV and broadcasting, bears commercial

feature and watchdog function, both of which brought about much influence in the industry and the society.

4.2.3.2 Reasserting control over media.

As discussed before, control over media has never been removed, because of China's political system. In the past two decades, the fast-developing media market to some degree pushed the central government to release some of their control, to formulate the rules and regulate the market. But it does not mean the propaganda system ceases its function. In order to keep a good environment for the Sixteenth Party Congress in fall 2002, a few attempts in early 2000s to establish a more modern and transparency policy on media were blocked, reference to foreign investment in media was removed, and tighter control was imposed (Yang, in Finkelstein and Kivlehan, 2003, p. 235).

One of the most efficient and effective forms of control, which is still used often by the Chinese government, is to enact rules and regulations:

1) In Notice Regarding Strengthening the Administration Work of Provincial Level Television Satellite Program Channels (January, 30, 2000): Satellite television channels must strictly observe propaganda requirements, and firmly observe correct guidance of public opinion. With respect to reports on important events, breaking stories and other sensitive issues, they must obey the integrated dispositions of the local party committee Propaganda Departments, and strictly abide by Party discipline. (SARFT, 2000)

2) In Notice Regarding Further Strengthening the Administration of Periodicals Relating to Current Affairs and Politics, Lifestyle, Information Tabloids and Scientific Theory (June 28, 2000):

- Publication of periodicals relating to current affairs and politics, comprehensive lifestyle, information tabloids, and scientific theory must uphold the correct political direction, uphold the correct guidance of public opinion, strengthen political consciousness, general situation consciousness, responsibility consciousness, uphold service of the people, and uphold service to society through the publishing principle of socially beneficial effects taking precedence.
- In the process of publishing periodicals relating to current affairs and politics, comprehensive lifestyle, information tabloids, and scientific theory, those involved shall earnestly implement the guiding policies of the Party's propaganda work, strictly obey Party propaganda discipline, and strictly implement relevant national regulations and rules on periodical publishing administration, and, strictly prohibit any of the following contents from appearing in periodicals:
 - ① Denying the guiding status of Marxism, Mao Zedong Thought, or Deng Xiaoping Theory;
 - ② Violating the Party line, guiding principles, or policies;
 - ③ Anything else that violates Party propaganda discipline or violates national publishing administration regulations.¹³⁶

3) In Notice Regarding Prohibiting the Transmission of Harmful Information and Further Regulating Publishing Order (October 25, 2001): No one can establish an entity with the purpose of transmitting news information and engage in other news publishing activities without permission from the press and publication administration agency.

Moreover, the government must retain editorial control if a media organization wants to accept investment from non-government organizations (Finkelstein and Kivlehan, 2003).

The above rules indicate that while the "Press Law" was still not introduced into the system after two decades of reform, the Chinese authority was still imposing control as the policy director and regulator of the media sector. Despite of the direct control over the media

¹³⁶ 关于进一步加强时事政治类、综合文化生活类、信息文摘类和学术理论类期刊管理的通知(2000.06.28): 1、时政、综合文化、信息文摘、学术理论类期刊的出版,必须坚持正确的政治方向,坚持正确的舆论导向,增强政治意识、大局意识、责任意识,坚持为人民服务、为社会主义服务的出版方针,坚持社会效益第一的原则。2、时政、综合文化、信息文摘、学术理论类期刊在出版过程中,应认真执行党的有关宣传工作的方针政策,严格遵守党的宣传纪律,严格执行国家对期刊出版管理的有关法规、规章,严禁在刊物上出现以下内容:(1)否定马列主义、毛泽东思想、邓小平理论指导地位的;(2)违背党的路线、方针、政策的;(7)其他违反党的宣传纪律和违反国家出版管理规定的。

companies becoming more difficult, the influence of the government indeed helped them maintain control and successfully execute its policies in many situations (Qian, in Chen and Qian, 2008)

The graph below shows frequencies of the use for the terms “Guidance of public opinion”, “Supervision by public opinion” and “Media reform” between 1994 and 2004 in *Chinese Journalist*¹³⁷ and *News Line*¹³⁸. They suggest that control, via “guidance”, has been the top priority, while media “supervision” (of official corruption, etc.) has been an important, but secondary, priority (Qian, 2005)

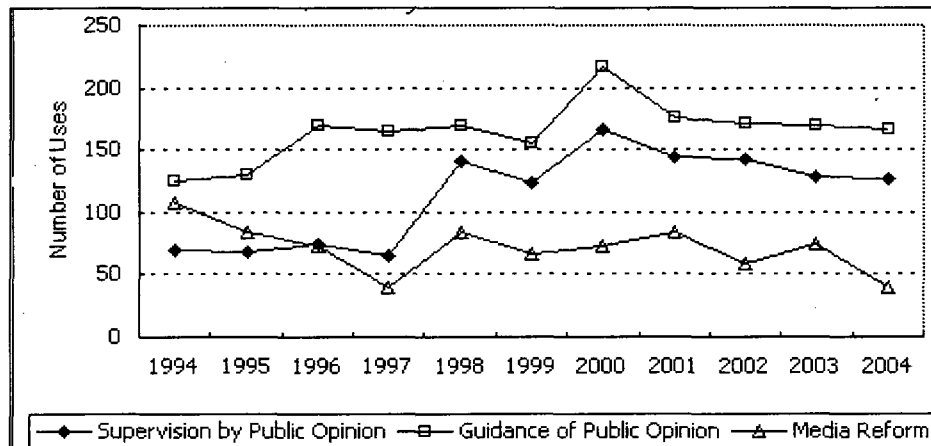


Figure 12: Occurrence of “Guidance”, “Supervision”, “Media Reform” in Chinese Journalist and News Line

Note: Reproduced from Qian Gang (July 13, 2005). Guidance • Supervision • Reform • Freedom: Plotting the direction of Chinese Media through an Analysis of the All-important Buzzword.

<http://cmp.hku.hk/2005/07/13/33/>. Source from: China Knowledge Network Service Platform (CNKI), China Journalism Network (CJN). Search through complete archives of China Journalist and News Line for 1994-2004.

¹³⁷ A monthly magazine published by Xinhua News Agency

¹³⁸ Published by *People's Daily*

In addition to the control over media content, another type of control was direct control over media companies and individual media workers. Suspension of newspapers, magazines or journals was not rare. Investigative journalism was sometimes repressed, depending on the topics. “Journalism remains a political profession in China and the price to be paid for violating the CCP’s propaganda dictates can be harsh” (Shambaugh, 2008, p. 110). A new practice was to exercise its political control over the new media - cyberspace, such as Blogs and BBS, in order to ensure they didn’t become an avenue for overflow of negative information that would undermine the government

A few examples are:

- Between 2003 and 2005 the government cancelled the registration of 202 news bureaus and shut down an additional 73 “illegal” bureaus (Congressional-Executive Commission on China, 2006)
- In 2004 the newspapers were prohibited from reporting stories about changes of leadership or political reform unless the source was from Xinhua News Agency (ibid). This seems contradictory to the previous discussion on the smoothest and least controversial coverage of the transfer of leadership to Hu Jintao and Wen Jiabao in 2002-2003. Nevertheless, this was the situation of the development of Chinese media, which could be described as the swing of a pendulum, oscillating between left and right, following “the oscillating cycle of state control (Li, 2003 b, p. 17)
- Reporters without Borders report (2005) finds that at least 32 journalists are

currently imprisoned in China, 12 of whom worked for official media; in 2004, 65 media outlets were censored and three repressive media laws were passed.

In the face of foreign competition, China eagerly wanted to build a technologically sophisticated media sector (Tang, 2005). The advanced technologies are not only for improving the country's communication but also for strengthening its censorship. As some scholars have observed, developing countries are largely able to control the information technologies and services, including the Internet (Kavanaugh, 1998; He, 2006). For the Chinese government, as they had learned the power of technology during the 1989 Tiananmen Incident when fax machines gave citizens access to images that they would have never seen otherwise, the government would not allow the Internet to serve as a new "threat" to its power. Therefore, on the one hand, the MII imposes obligations on Internet providers to regularly monitor the content appearing on their websites¹³⁹. Websites have to be held liable for disseminating information that is prohibited under the IIS Measures. As early as in 1995, China's telecommunications minister stated that "As a sovereign state, China will exercise control on the information" (Information Week, October 2, 1995, in Hao, Zhang and Yu, 1996, ¶ 14); in 1996, when the Internet was still unfamiliar to the majority even in urban areas, the existing computer networks were required to "liquidate" and "re-register", and there was only limited international channels provided by certain ministries of the government. By early 2000s, the government has managed to control the

¹³⁹ According to the Article 20 of the Internet Information Services Procedures Measures, an Internet service provider would have its website shut down and suffer possible criminal charges if it "produces, reproduces, disseminates or broadcasts" certain categories of information.

flow of information on Internet with extensive measures. For example, numerous “Chinese police” actively patrol cyberspace and keep track of Internet users in the country on a daily basis; a number of sites and areas on the Internet are blocked, including *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *the Cable News Network (CNN)*, *Playboy*, and any politically-sensitive site supporting Tibetan independence and human rights issue.

The government has invested enormous sums into setting up such a censorship system, which is known as “Golden Shield” - “a massive, ubiquitous architecture of surveillance”¹⁴⁰ - with an ultimate aim to “integrate a gigantic online database with an all encompassing surveillance network” (Walton, 2001, p. 5). In his report *China’s Golden Shield: Corporations and the Development of Surveillance Technology in the PRC*, Greg Walton (2001) finds that many companies, including Nortel Networks, Canada’s largest firm¹⁴¹, are playing key roles in meeting the security needs of the Chinese government. Based on an arsenal of facts, Walton posits that these international firms are actually helping China to set up the firewall that monitors China’s network communications¹⁴² (ibid).

Also, although China became a member of WTO and won the bid for hosting the 2008

¹⁴⁰ Often it is referred to as the “Great Firewall of China”. It is operated by the Ministry of Public Security (MPS).

¹⁴¹ Nortel Networks was Canada’s largest firm when Walton’s report was released. It filed for bankruptcy in 2009.

¹⁴² It includes: Access Control, Anti-Hacker Intrusion, Communication Security, Computer Accessories and Software, Decryption and Encryption, E-commerce Security, Extranet and Intranet Security, Firewalls, Networking Communications, Network Security and Management, Operation Safety, Smartcard Security, System Security, Virus Detection, IT-related Services and Others. (Walton, 2001)

Olympics, foreign media were still under control in terms of restricted ownership¹⁴³ and limited scope of programs. The Article 6 of Measures on the Administration of Foreign Satellite Television Channel Reception (August 1, 2004) stipulates that: “Regarding a foreign satellite television agency, in principle, no foreign satellite television news channels shall be approved to be distributed domestically”¹⁴⁴. Broadcasters, such as CNN and BBC World, can only broadcast into high-end hotels and residential compounds where foreigners live or they have joint ventures with Chinese state-run television stations. In a meeting with the Chairmen of Viacom, Inc., producer of MTV, Jiang Zeming said that: “International media could play an active role in helping deepen understanding between China and the rest of the world” (People’s Daily, in Yang, 2003, p. 236). It should be noted that in 1997 China signed the United Nations International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), and it was ratified in 2001; in 1998, it signed the United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). However, the later, ICCPR, has not ratified till today. In other words, China has not fully adopted international human rights standards.

4.2.3.3 Conclusion.

In the face of an opening Chinese market and a diverse social development, upon entry

¹⁴³ Despite the concessions to the WTO, foreign nations can only invest up to 49% share in the firms to ensure the state will remain the major stakeholder

¹⁴⁴ 《境外卫星电视频道落地管理办法》(2004)

into the WTO, China has made supreme, concrete, and positive changes. The commercial development of the news media in China has been imperative, and the role of the media is rapidly changing and increasingly complex. As Burgh (2003) notes, “the media have adjusted and now contrast very markedly with the media of the first decades of CCP dictatorship” (p. 14). There is more investigative, insistent and prolific reporting, for a greater variety of topics than ever before. Media is far more diverse than before; especially the electronic media has more freedom than the printed press (Gittings, 2005). “One of the noticeable changes in newspaper in China, particularly in the past decade, is that newspapers are no longer just the epitome of Chinese politics as in the past. Rather, they have started to epitomize the contemporary Chinese society as a whole, which, though still dominated by government, has become more diverse in its power structure. The economic and societal sectors are gaining more influence and gradually shifting the boundary of the dominant government power.” (Scotton and Hachten, 2010, p. 45). The Chinese media have “made much more progress than the Western news media” (Chin-Chuan, 1990, in Ross, 2009, p. 6-7). The impacts of such progress include economic growth, development of civil society and greater demand for much greater public information.

However, under China’s hybrid system of economic freedom and political repression, even as the media changes to bring about development and accommodate this demand, information control is still critical for the CCP’s maintenance of political control, or for its political stability. Most of scholars agree that censorship by the Party’s propaganda apparatus remains to be unaccountable and unpredictable across the media (Gittings, 2005;

Burgh, 2003). The invisible “bottom-line” still remains, and the government has an invisible hand whenever a sensitive, or potentially controversial, issue appears. As Zhang (1993, p. 195-196) stresses, “Press controls in China are not based upon codified censorship but are issue specific. In order to ensure that the media interpret the news in a way favorable to the regime, the state decided what the press can and cannot report, who deals with particular issues and how these news items are to be presented”. Journalism as a profession, while benefiting from the changing information environment, also suffers from persistence. Hence, some argued that professionalization can hardly be guaranteed unless a more democratic and freer political climate emerges in China.

The result of this collision of priorities in the early 2003s, in Qian’s¹⁴⁵ view, has been a “chaos” dynamic in which professional journalists could find some space to pursue the controversial truth and impose pressure for change, despite continued censorship and control of the media. According to Qian, conflicts between the Chinese Communist Party’s need to control the mainland news media, and the demand for greater information created by the country’s modernization, has caused chaos that gives mainland journalists some flexibility in getting around media censorship (Qian, 2008, p.149-153).

Chinese media in the early 2000s have moved away from Siebert et al’s authoritarian model, in which media is directly under government’s control. From the above discussion, media controls in China are in a constant oscillating stage, sometimes tight and sometimes

¹⁴⁵ Qian Gang, Co-Director of China Media Project. He is regarded as one of China's foremost investigative journalists

loose. It can be described as “a telling example of 21st-century authoritarianism in practice” (Freedom House, 2009, p. 21). In keeping with the country’s development agenda, the government has developed a market-based censorship model. Under this model, both traditional and online media are operated as commercial enterprises that rely on advertising revenue, street sales, media contents in the public’s interest, improved production quality and entertainment value to a certain degree. In the meantime and of equal importance, either type of media must carry out political directives from the authorities. In the news media sector, such directives include elimination or limitation of coverage of some topics, stressing or enhancing the reporting of certain issues, and fixing the time of releasing the news reports in compliance with the government’s favor. To the government, such a model is necessary for the continuation of the economic and social developments. As Esarey (2005) concludes, China’s media can satisfy popular demand for more modern media content and party priorities for transmitting.

Chapter 5 Case Study and Analysis

5.1 Introduction

The case this thesis will examine is the news coverage of SARS during the outbreak in 2003 and its impacts. This chapter will firstly consider the news coverage in a time sequence, because at the beginning of the SARS outbreak (before April 20, 2003), little news coverage was allowed in China. Later news reports about SARS were much more accurate, objective, fair and comprehensive. Comparing Chinese news articles about SARS to the situation as reported by WHO and international media will reveal contradictions and discrepancies in coverage. In other words, the factors of timeliness and accuracy of the news reports will be examined, and the negative social impacts as a result of this lack of information will be studied. Afterwards, it will analyze the content and tone with which the reporting was offered, in official media and in non-official media. By drawing comparison of the content and the way of reporting by the official media and non-official media, we can find the differences in contents, diversity of coverage, reporting styles, and human interests. Finally, this chapter will focus on the impacts of the news coverage on social stability.

SARS is used as a case study not only because SARS is a health issue that is of the utmost importance in human life, but because it clearly shows that if news media is under

the direct control of the government and cannot report the truth, it will put social stability at risk.

In order to understand the societal context before the outbreak of SARS, it is necessary to discuss the social tensions and its dynamics after China entered the Millennium. The government, as maintaining social stability became more challenging, increased its control over media.

5.2 Social Tensions and Dynamics in the Early 21st Century

As discussed earlier, the operational concept in China of social stability has enabled the Chinese state to resolve a number of pressing social problems in the past decade. However, it is common that in any society, rapid economic growth causes enormous social grievances. The rapid development of the market economy in the 1990s produced new socio-economic groups whose rights were not fairly protected. The central authority had to cope with new constraints on its control created by commercialization and pressure from the outside.

In China, as Deng proposed, some regions and some people indeed got rich first. By the end of the 1990s, China was already experiencing greater income differentials than ever before in history. China's Gini Coefficient has been rising from among the world's lowest

(about 0.24) to among the highest: in 2001, it reached 0.447 nation-wide (World Bank, 2004). According to the official statistics, although more or less biased, indicate a rising urban–rural income gap from 1997 to 2003 - the ratio of urban to rural household income per capita rose from 2.5:1 to 3.2:1 (NBS 2004). There were only a selected group of individuals who were able to benefit from the reform. A 2002 survey which studied “social groups that benefit the most and the least since the reform and opening-up” generated the following data:

Table 1. Social Groups that Benefited the Most and Least since the Reform and Opening Up Policy

Social groups that benefit the most		Social groups that benefit the least	
Types of groups	Choice as a percent	Types of groups	Choice as a percent
Party and government cadres	59.2	Workers	88.2
Private enterprises owners	55.4	Farmers	76.3
Acting personnel	43.0	Teachers	15.3
Urban and rural self-employed	33.0	Professionals	14.2
State-owned enterprise managers	29.3	State-owned enterprise managers	8.8
Professionals	24.3	Urban and rural sole proprietorships	7.7
Teachers	14.9	Party and government cadres	5.1
Farmers	3.4	Private enterprises owners	4.7
Workers	1.5	Acting personnel	2.5
Others	0.5	Others	2.7

Table 2: Social Groups that Benefited the Most and Least since the Reform and Opening up

Policy.

Note: Zhou Jiang (2003). Investigation of the “hot” issues in Chinese cities in 2002 [2002 nian Zhongguo chengshi redian wenti diaocha], in Ru Xin, Lu Xueyi, and Li Peilin (eds.) (2003), *Blue Book of the Chinese Society in 2003: an Analysis and Forecast of Chinese Social Situation* [Shehui lanpishu 2003 nian: Zhongguo shehui xingshi fenxi yu yuce]. pp. 159-60. Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe.

The result of this survey indicates that party and government cadres, private enterprises owners, acting personnel, urban and rural self-employed and state-owned enterprise managers are the groups that have benefited most from the reform and opening up. The increasing wealth gap was only one of the causes of social tensions, others include unfair working conditions, peasants forced off land to make way for urbanization, workers out of employment in the deepened reform of state-owned enterprises, the loss of property rights, officials' corruption, ethnic tension and environmental degradation etc. As a consequence, the less privileged groups, especially farmers and workers, started to raise their voice and fight for their rights.

The term “mass incidents” (social unrest, [*quntixing shijian*]) was publicly introduced by Minister of Public Security Zhou Yongkang at a news conference, and was originally published in *Dagong Bao* (or *Ta Kung Pao*) on June 5, 2005 (EastSouthWestNorth, N.D.). But there has been a striking increase in the number of “mass incidents” in China - up from about 8,700 in 1993 to 40,000 in 2002, 58,000 in 2003, 74,000 in 2004 and 97,000 in 2005 - which includes strikes, demonstrations, sit-ins, traffic-blocking and building seizures. The protests are growing in average size from 10 or fewer people in the mid-1990s to about

52 people per incident in 2004, which caused economic loss and worsening social security (Statistics from the Ministry of Public Security quoted in Bergsten et al, 2007, p. 41, 166). In 2005, within the first half of the year, there were 341 large-scale, organized mass incidents, 17 of which involved over 10,000 protestors, resulting in an economic loss in a range of \$ 4.2 to \$ 5 billion; and, within 10 months in the same year, 1,826 policemen were injured and 23 were killed while handling the mass incidents (ibid, p. 41). Increasingly frequent and widespread mass incidents became an outstanding problem affecting social stability (Zhou, in Yi, 2005, ¶ 1); maintaining social control and order became pivotal in consolidating the Party's leadership and reassuring the people home and abroad of the government's ability to govern the country.

However, as China has to adopt policies required by WTO accession that would further exacerbate strikes, protests, and unrest, the new leaders have to continue to use a control strategy that is more sophisticated, albeit riskier, than those of Jiang Zeming and Deng Xiaoping; moreover, they will be more willing to tolerate social unrest and protests as a "safety valve," or attempt to turn such unrests to the CCP's own benefit (Lawrence, 2001, p. 16-21). According to Finkelstein and Kivlehan's observation, the new leader Hu Jintao shows a willingness to consider more sophisticated approaches towards social stability and control (Finkelstein, Michael and Kivlehan, 2003). Media therefore is used as a tool more often.

Media by nature tends to be an ally of protestors. Nevertheless, Chinese propaganda authorities imposed a tighter grip on media reporting of mass incidents so as to prevent a

local protest from emboldening discontent in another area – because they believed any signs of public conflicts were likely to produce social confusion and eventually chaos. In 2002, the Propaganda Minister Ding Guangen said in a meeting of propaganda officials that “the work of next year’s press, broadcasting and film reform is to elevate the level and create a new spirit of unity and beneficial atmosphere for the Sixteenth Party Congress” (Ding, 2002, ¶ 3). The Press Law and press freedom were not mentioned. The function of the media as shaping public opinions was emphasized instead. Ji Bingxuan, deputy head of the CCPPD, clearly defined the difference of reporting positive and negative news in 2004,

The relationship between positive and negative news must be well-managed. We must always support the guiding principle, which is to encourage unity and stability by emphasizing positive news. This principle must be followed with news reports. China is so vast and diverse, its development so unequal. While some areas are advanced, others lag far behind. Our country’s social development is fraught with contradiction, and problems appear often in many places. Suppose problems arise in each of our more than 2,800 counties. How those problems are viewed, and how they are reported – these questions must be treated correctly. The influence of propaganda is extensive. Failing to carefully analyze [content], or allowing negative reports to become too numerous or careless, results not only an incomplete picture of events but misleads the public, who begin to imagine problems are piling up. Such a slide in social morale negatively impacts social stability, the consequences of which may be incalculable. (Ji, 2004, p. 4)

However, the access to credible information is essential to ensure accountable governance, and to make it possible for people to understand and to react correspondingly and correctly to the actual situation. As Matlock (1995) points out, closed societies rely on rumour. Often, when normal or regular sources of information become unreliable, people

would turn to personal connections, such as friends, family, coworkers, and even casual contacts. People tend to believe what others say rather than what politicians speak about in front of the media. As we can see from the case of SARS breakout in 2003, while the public had to turn to rumour as they found media was actually the “mouthpiece” of the state, the society was in chaos and the country was losing social stability.

5.3 The SARS Outbreak News Reporting

5.3.1 Traditional news coverage & influences.

The SARS epidemic in mainland China can be seen in a geographical, socio-economic, political and organisation context. In fact, it is also a battle between the media, the people and the government. Many scholars have argued that the SARS epidemic would not have become a world-wide threat if China had not imposed tight control over the media (Ng, in Ali and Keil, 2008; Pan, 2008). However, the authority, instead of passing on a public health warning, forbade the doctors to publicize that SARS had arrived in Beijing – “in order to ensure stability” (Dr. Jiang, cited in Rosenthal, 2003, ¶ 9). Therefore, a blackout of information at the local level misled the central government, the public and the international community¹⁴⁶.

¹⁴⁶ China’s decentralization reform allows the local governments to have administrative and urban

It is generally accepted that the outbreak of SARS began in southern China's city of Foshan in mid-November 2002. The disease radiated so quickly outward throughout December and January that the governments were not at all prepared to react. Instead of seeking advice and help from the central authorities or international organizations such as WHO, the provincial authorities tried to keep any pertinent information confidential by all means. The media could not release any information, and they were unable to assist the public when timely and accurate information was most needed. The following summaries show the chronology of key events surrounding the outbreak of the SARS virus and the responses from the media. From the chronology, we can examine the timeliness of the news reports and the accuracy of the reporting by comparing with WHO reports or international news reporting. Meanwhile, we will be able to identify the news resources of information in China's media, whose opinions dominate the news, and whose actions determine the reporting.

16 November 2002--The first cases of SARS emerged in mid-November 2002 in Foshan City in Guangdong Province, China. The affected were sent to Heyuan People Hospital. Seven medical workers in the Heyuan hospital got affected. From December 15

management functions, including the health services. As a result, the central or even the provincial governments are sometimes left in the dark when something bad happens at the local level (Ng, in Ali and Keil, 2008, p. 70)

on, health care workers in Guangdong Province started to notice people coming in with a form of atypical pneumonia (Saich, in Kleinman and Watson, 2005, p. 71). According to a chronology prepared by Chiu and Galbraith (2004), only one week later a SARS patient arrived in Guangzhou and infected 56 people in two hospitals, which was in addition to 19 members of his own family he had infected previously. From November 2002 to March 2003, the Chinese government imposed a virtual news blackout (Huang and Hao, 2008).

January 2003--On January 3, to calm the local population, Heyuan Health Bureau sent its message to the media, with the title claiming “the Appearance of an Unknown Virus in Heyuan is a Rumour.” Newspapers in early January devoted most of their coverage to articles quoting government’s claim that “there is no epidemic.” But by early January 2003, the society was already in panic and people were terrified and buying drugs because of rumours of a “mystery epidemic.” (U.S. Congressional-Executive Commission on China, May 7, 2003). On January 23, a more serious out-break was reported in Zhongshan City in a secret bulletin to the Ministry of Health in Beijing. These medical experts warn in this report that this illness is “highly infectious” and they recommend medical workers isolate patients and take precautions to protect themselves (Pan, 2008). Around the same time, the Guangzhou Department of Health received a confidential report about the outbreak in the southern Guangdong region. All evidence showed that relevant

officials clearly understood that they had a developing epidemic on their hands that they could not control (Powers and Xiao, 2006). However, there was no news about the disease in the media, so the citizens began sending each other SMS messages to share whatever information they had (Abraham, 2004). The report was not sent to WHO, and the warning was not given to other provinces.

Early February, Chinese Spring Festival starting from February 1st--In spite of the increasing number of infected patients and the fact that people in Guangdong had been wearing facemasks and fumigating their homes with boiling vinegar for weeks, newspapers, radios and television kept a complete silence until the provincial authorities notified the central authorities on February 8. Journalists in Guangzhou were aware of the serious situation. They frequently received inquiries and questions from other provinces and cities, but their efforts to report it were refused by the editors (Abraham, 2005). On February 8, two of Guangzhou's major newspapers, *Nanfang Daily* and *Yangcheng Evening News* had short reports about a "mysterious illness." The propaganda department of the province immediately moved to prevent further coverage. They sent the first of a series of notices to media organizations asking them not to report the disease to avoid "public fear and instability"¹⁴⁷.

¹⁴⁷ Information from a confidential document, from Abraham (2005).

Not until the disease began killing people in Hong Kong, where government has much less control on the free flow of information, did the PRC's central government acknowledge the disease's existence. Even so, Hong Kong authorities did not receive the information of the outbreak of SARS from the Guangdong authorities until Feb 21, 2003 (Powers and Xiao, 2006). On February 10, the WHO became involved in this mysterious contagious disease in China¹⁴⁸. On the same day, the Guangdong government assured the world that the disease "atypical pneumonia" was under control. All provincial newspapers were ordered to publish the assurance (Pan, 2008). The government-controlled media continued to insist that everything was under control.

11 February 2003--The first official report from the Chinese Ministry of Health about an outbreak of an "acute respiratory syndrome" in the province was received by WHO on 11 February, saying there were 305 cases, including 105 health care workers and 5 deaths as of February 9. Chiu and Galbraith (2004) suggest that the report minimized its seriousness. Abraham (2005) points out that although the figures were accurate at that time, the government's assurance that the epidemic was under control was "wildly off the mark" -- because there were between 40 and 50 new cases being reported every day, and according

¹⁴⁸ The WHO received a telephone call from an embassy in Beijing and an email rumour about reports of this strange contagious disease in Guangdong (Murray, in Kleinman and Watson, 2005, p 17-31)

to later figures, 688 cases in total were reported in February. On the same day, the Guangdong and Guangzhou governments held press conferences, claiming that “local governments at various levels have taken emergency measures to control the prices of isatis root [*banlangen*], vinegar and other related anti-virus medicines, which saw soaring prices due to their effectiveness in curing this disease” (People’s Daily, February 13, 2003). The provincial health authority had informed doctors in Guangzhou that something was not right and that they should isolate patients and wear masks. But this information was not made public (Forney, 2003). On February 13, *People’s Daily* published “Guangdong Brings Atypical Pneumonia under Control” (also in English language) (People’s Daily, February 13, 2003).

Late February--On February 19, Guangzhou municipal authorities held an internal meeting, which revealed the anxieties of the government (Zhang, 2003). The virus had hit at least five provinces in mainland China and Hong Kong, an international financial and travelling hub with six hundred international flights every day. By the end of this month, the virus also attacked Vietnam, Singapore and Canada. (Pan, 2008)

15 March--The WHO issued its first global health alert on March 12 and the second one on March 15. The WHO confirmed that Severe Acute Respiratory syndrome (SARS)

is a “worldwide health threat” (Dr. Gro Harlem Brundtland, Director General of the World Health Organization) and that possible cases have been identified in Canada, China, Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of China, Indonesia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. The WHO issues emergency guidance for travellers and airlines guidelines, particularly warning travellers to South East Asia about the dangers of SARS (WHO, April 23, 2003). But there was no information from China. Only two sentences addressed the glaring omission: “An epidemic of atypical pneumonia had previously been reported by the Chinese government starting in November 2002 in Guangdong Province. This epidemic is reported to be under control.” (WHO, March 16, 2003). By this time, SARS had spread to seven countries (Murray, in Kleinman and Watson, 2006, p. 17-31)

19 March--SARS spreads to the US and Europe. In Belgium, a man was hospitalised after getting sick suddenly on a flight back from his business trip to Hong Kong, Singapore and China; in Romania, a woman is put into a Bucharest hospital after returning from China a week before (BBC, March 19, 2003). A WHO team was finally invited to visit China to review information on the disease, starting its work on March 24. They still did not have the permission to go to Guangdong Province (GAO, 2004, p. 19).

26 March--Both the local government in Guangdong and the highest health

department in Beijing denied that SARS was a serious threat to public health. The first SARS case occurred in Beijing on March 1st, but no media reported the case. While all non-official media still kept silent, the official news on March 26 titled “Beijing Effectively Controls Imported Atypical Pneumonia”, it said eight patients from Shanxi Province and Hong Kong had been transferred to hospitals in Beijing, three of whom had passed away while the others had “basically completely recovered”¹⁴⁹ (Chen, March 19, 2003, in Liu, 2005, p. 9). This was the first official news about SARS. On March 27, when WHO put Beijing on its list of SARS-affected areas, the official newspaper *People’s Daily* reported that Beijing was under control (Song, March 27, 2003). *Beijing Youth News* reported only two suspected cases and eight confirmed cases in the city (Huang and Hao, 2008). On March 31, *Beijing Youth News* published an article titled “Gauze Masks out of Stock for Several Days” on its ninth page, which indirectly indicated the serious situation of SARS¹⁵⁰. *Beijing Youth News* is regarded as the first non-official media to address the spread of SARS (Zhang, 2005). On the same day, there were only 43 SARS-related stories on news sites in China - including archive stories, but there was neither breaking news nor any special coverage of SARS (Lee, in Powers and Xiao, 2008). “Compared with 1,082

¹⁴⁹ Chen, Yun (March 19, 2003), Weishengbuzhang wu shiwei dai biao: Yue feidianxing feiyan yi kongzhi [The Minister of Health Meets WHO Representative: Atypical Pneumonia in Guangdong is Under Control], People’s Net, at <http://www.people.com.cn/GB/shehui/47/20030319/947458.html> (last visited Sept. 6, 2004);

¹⁵⁰ At that time, *Beijing Youth News* had a circulation of 600,000 daily. (Zhang, 2005)

stories in Hong Kong, China's coverage was minimal." (ibid, p. 82). According to Lee's finding, 72.1 percent of these stories were from official news agencies, and only a quarter of the coverage was about the SARS situation in mainland China.

2 April--The permission was granted for a WHO five-person team to visit Guangdong province, to confer with officials and investigate the SARS outbreak there. According to Dr David Heymann's ¹⁵¹ conclusion later, "These are very positive steps taken today by China. ...As a result we'll be able to gather even more evidence about the nature of the SARS outbreak in China."¹⁵² The WHO imposed a travel advisory for Hong Kong and Guangdong on April 2, for the first time in history.

3 April--After the WHO's travel advisory, Chinese media, including *People's Daily*, all broke the silence by reporting the meeting on April 2 of the State Council on the SARS issues and, an interview with Health Minister Zhang Wenkang, who claimed that "Through the hard work of the central and local health departments, the number of people infected has fallen sharply", that "it is safe to live, work and travel in Mainland China" (Beech, 2003, ¶ 6), and that almost all 1,190 SARS cases reported were in Guangdong Province (12

¹⁵¹ Executive Director of Communicable Diseases at WHO

¹⁵² "SARS outbreak WHO investigation team moves to Guangdong China - New travel advice announced" <<http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/releases/2003/pr29/en/index.html>>

cases in Beijing only), 80 percent of these patients had recovered (Pan, 2008). To support this claim, both official and non-official media carried stories on how safe it was to be in China (Huang and Hao, 2008).

4 April--An unprecedented apology was made by Li Liming, director of the Chinese Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). He told domestic media in Beijing, “Today we apologise here to all of you that our health departments did not have enough close cooperation with the media.” (Grady, 2003, ¶ 13) His apology for its slow response to the SARS outbreak and allegations that officials have covered up the true extent of the spread of the disease were reported inside and outside China.

5 April--Deputy Prime Minister Wu Yi called for “the immediate establishment of a national medical emergency mechanism, with emphasis placed on public health information and an early warning reporting mechanism” (BBC, April 5, 2003).

8 April--*Times Magazine* published a statement written by Jiang Yanyong, a 71-year-old semi-retired military surgeon at the No.301 Hospital. According to Jiang, at one Beijing hospital alone (Beijing's No. 309 PLA Hospital), 60 SARS patients had been admitted, of whom seven had died. Jiang also revealed that medical staff in Beijing's

military hospitals was briefed about the dangers of SARS in early March, but they were told “not to publicize what they'd learned lest it interfere with the annual meeting¹⁵³ of China's rubber-stamp legislative body” (Jakes, 2003, ¶ 1). The WHO on the next day criticized China for providing incomplete information. On April 10, the WHO country representative for China, Henk Bekedam, said that data from Beijing and other places seemed far less complete, and they were very concerned about rumours they were hearing (Rosenthal, 2003). Under international pressure, Vice Premier Wu Yi promised to look into the rumours of unreported cases in Beijing. However, media did not laud other whistleblowers; and they eschewed covering violent mass incidents in some urban areas which planned to erect SARS hospitals, or the flights of thousands migrant workers departing from Beijing, or the resort to quasi-feudal measures by localities to stop travelers from entering their jurisdictions (Eckholm, 2003 a; Dolven and Murphy, 2003).

13 April--The Chief of Beijing Health Bureau declared on April 13 that “An individual who has been spreading rumours that ‘an unknown epidemic is spreading in Beijing’ is arrested.” The news was not reported until 10 days later on the Beijing Youth Daily and on the *People's Daily* Website (People's Daily online, April 23). A WHO team, after visiting several hospitals in Beijing, presented a report on April 16 saying that there

¹⁵³ Here refers to the First Plenary Session of the 10th National People's Congress (NPC) that is from March 5 to March 18, 2003.

was a risk of an explosive outbreak in Beijing similar to those had occurred in Guangdong and Hong Kong.

20 April—April 20, 2003 was the turning point in the battle against SARS in China. President Hu Jintao commanded an about-face on the day, launching a “people’s war against SARS.” Prior to this date, the SARS epidemic was taboo in the Chinese news media. The words “epidemic” and “outbreak” rarely appeared in the media (Zhang, 2005). On April 20, Minister of Health Zhang Wenkang and Beijing Mayor Meng Xuenong were ousted for their mismanagement of the crisis. According to a press conference hosted by the Vice Minister Gao Qiang, there were 1,807 SARS cases nationwide, 339 of which were in Beijing. Gao also announced that a daily SARS reporting system was established (Zhang, 2005). As a result, the national media was full of SARS reports, and a national campaign against SARS was officially and openly launched. In short, the SARS outbreak was no longer a “secret.” Also, it was estimated that by the end of May, nearly 1000 government officials had been disciplined for their “slack” response to the SARS epidemic (Lianhe Zaobao, June 25, 2003).

22 April—While on April 3 there were “only 12 cases” and in mid-April Beijing admitted 37 SARS cases in the city, officials announced that there were closer to 700

confirmed or suspected cases in the capital, and 102 deaths and 2,317 infected people in the whole country. In order to “protect the lives and health” of pupils - according to an official statement - all schools in Beijing were shut for two weeks to halt the spread of the disease. Some regarded the closure as a sign of “just how worried China's leaders are” (BBC, April 23, 2003 a).

27 April--The Xinhua news agency put a notice that all entertainment businesses involving mass public gatherings must remain closed until the outbreak of SARS was brought under control. The closure of all entertainment venues in the Chinese capital - including theatres, cinemas and karaoke bars – indicated the severity of the situation: according to the Health Ministry, nine new deaths in China took the death toll to 131, with an additional 161 new cases (Health Ministry, April 27, 2003).

30 April--CCTV reported a press conference hosted by the Acting Beijing Mayor Wang Qishan who said that despite progress made in the battle against SARS, the situation in Beijing remains severe (CCTV, April 30, 2003).

After April 20--To halt the spread of the virus, the Chinese authorities mobilized the full power of the state to contain the epidemic and launched an information campaign. Two

characteristics will be discussed below. One is the intensive and extensive news coverage of SARS in all forms of media. The other is that the traditional propaganda system soon found its position to portray the new leadership and the nation's spirit and morality, in the form of "Model Reports" that pay homage to the doctors and nurses who worked tirelessly to combat against SARS.

The following are some examples to show the extensiveness of the news reporting after April 20: On April 21, *Beijing Daily* (government-owned) had an entire page devoted to methods for disinfecting the home, the importance of wearing a surgical mask, and suggested prescriptions for preventing SARS. On April 23, *Beijing Evening News*, a popular tabloid-size newspaper in China's capital with a circulation of nearly 2 million, devoted six of the sixteen pages in its first section to the war against SARS. One of the stories featured the experience of a nurse from a local hospital who had just recovered from the disease (Xu and Xiong, 2003). The same day's *Wenhui Bao*, a Shanghai-based newspaper popular among intellectuals, gave five of its 12 pages over to coverage of SARS (ibid).

After April 20, CCTV News started to run an on-line edition of the "Battle against SARS"¹⁵⁴ on its website CCTV.COM. It includes the daily reports with the national outbreak updates, government control measures, preventive measures from medical

¹⁵⁴< http://www.cctv.com/special/1018/more_10.html>

experts, warnings and advice from inside and outside China, the worldwide progresses in medical research on finding the right vaccine, inquiry hotlines, and the “Model Report” of doctors, nurses and journalists who died from SARS. Beijing Public Radio launched a four-hour special daily program on the “People’s War against SARS”. Beijing TV Channel 3 started to air a nightly, 150-minute program allowing viewers to call the hotline to ask medical experts about the SARS. On April 23, under the headline “Facing SARS: Let Me See You Smile,” Beijing’s government-owned Xinhua News Agency commented, “Government officials seem to have forgotten how to smile when faced with SARS.... Smiling does not mean you’re ignoring the problem, nor does it mean that you’re attempting to disguise the facts. It is a signal we should extend to the public: In the struggle against SARS, we are confident.” (Xu and Xiong, 2003)

The front page of the April 23 edition of *People’s Daily* featured the headline. “It is good to have SARS figures released daily” (Xu and Lei, 2003). In the accompanying article, Liu Chengyin comments that “to the broad masses of people, accurate and timely information is also a good way to mobilize them to be more conscious of the disease. Panic stops when the public is fully informed.” (ibid, ¶ 13)

From April 21 to May 21, more than 80 percent of economic news in *Chinese Business Journal* [*Zhongguo Jingying Bao*] was SARS-related. The table clearly shows the diverse coverage of SARS news.

Table 3. Diverse coverage of SARS news

Newspaper		Government actions	Meeting	Updated statistics	Social news	Econ. News	Edu. news	Scientific news	Cultural News	Sports news	Law news
Beijing Evening News	News Items	105	12	31	395	32	48	42	24	34	45
	%	13.6%	1.5%	4%	51.4%	4.2%	6.3%	5.5%	3.1%	4.4%	5.9%
Beijing Daily	News Items	193	40	31	41%	63	23	37	28	9	23
	%	22.5%	4.7%	3.6%	47.8%	7.4%	2.7%	4.3%	3.3%	1.1%	2.7%
21 st Century Business Review	News Items	43			26%	35%		11			6
	%	35.5%			21.5%	28.9%		9.1%			5%
Chinese Business Journal	News Items	3			13	70%					
	%	3.5%			15.1%	81.4%					

Note: Adapted from Xu, Xiangdong, SARS News Reports: on the Integration of Information Resources. From Cai, Wen (2003), From SARS Report: Editorial Policies in News. International Press (Guoji Xinwenjie), Issue 5, 10-13. In Cai (2003, p. 12.). International Press [Guoji Xinwenjie], Issue 5, 10-13.

As the panic had not yet stopped, the Chinese media, in addition to keeping the public informed of the spread of the disease, also tried to convey a message that, though fatal, the disease is not insurmountable. For example, a detailed news article in the April 24 edition of the *Beijing Entertainment Newspaper* (non-official) and a commentary in the April 25 edition of the *Beijing Youth Daily* (government-owned) urged people not to engage in “scare shopping” (or “Panic buying”, [*Qianggou*]) because the supply of daily necessities in Beijing is adequate (Beijing Youth Daily, 2003; Beijing Entertainment Newspaper, 2003). The article further advised people to behave rationally and have greater confidence in the government (ibid).

After the mayor of Beijing was fired, many publications criticized the government's initial response to SARS. For example, the *China Youth Daily* railed that the government had "acted foolishly." The Chinese government "not only untruthfully informed the international community on the state of the disaster, but also refused international assistance.... This way of dealing with problems and the public may look smart, but actually shows a lack of political confidence and even a weak mentality." (BBC, 23 April, 2003 b).

As for the reporting of Dr. Jiang Yanyong, in spite that Chinese authorities made it clear to him and foreign reporters that they would no longer be speaking to one another, Chinese media started in late May to acknowledge Jiang's role in prompting a change in the government's line. Till June 2003, Dr. Jiang was on the cover of several official newspapers and magazines (Pan, 2008).

From the above summary of the development of SARS and the news coverage in China, we can find that the Chinese government exerted explicit control over the media from late 2002 when the disease started to kill people including medical workers. The report (or, the secret bulletin) sent to the Ministry in Beijing in late January could have stopped SARS before it became a global epidemic, if it was made public home and abroad (Pan, 2008). After February 10, when the rumours of a mysterious disease in Guangdong spread across the country speedily, media in Guangdong remained silent in front of

countless inquiries from people in and out of Guangdong (Chen and Jiang, 2003). Until early April, the epidemic was still hardly mentioned in the Chinese media. When the media broke silence on SARS, there was only one voice that was from the official line: the disease was already under effective control, and Beijing remained safe as ever.

The media's light-heartedness and irresponsibility were more apparent when Dr. Jiang Yanyong sent emails with a hope to unveil the truth to the official media (China Central Television, CCTV) and non-official media, Hong Kong-based broadcaster Phoenix Satellite Television. Phoenix Satellite Television always claims to be the only "non-government" channel television. It was established in 1996. Phoenix had been virtually the only "non-government station" in China. Known among audiences worldwide as the "government-friendly station", it conforms to the policy directives of the Chinese government, observing restrictions on coverage of sensitive issues such as Tiananmen Incident of 1989 and abortion (Borton, 2004). It focuses on news and information, adopting a Western "CNN" style, reporting news from sources such as *Reuters*, *Bridge*, *Fox*, *Sky* and *AP* news, and covering some sensitive news such as mining accidents, homosexuality and about Taiwan. It also has entertainment programs such as talk shows, drama and movies. However, Phoenix kept silent on the SARS outbreak, so did CCTV - there was not any coverage or following-up with Dr. Jiang. Instead, a pamphlet titled "Atypical Pneumonia is nothing to be afraid of" was published (Pan, 2008). While WHO

was warning to avoid unnecessary travel to southern China, the *People's Daily* cited a government official Sun Gang¹⁵⁵, “A well-organized holiday¹⁵⁶, with millions of people travelling around this vast country, will show the world that tourism in China is safe and healthy” (cited in Schafer and Guterl, 2003). Even after Wen Jiabao, China's new Prime Minister, told the nation that the situation regarding SARS outbreak “is grave” on April 9, the media was still “playing safe”. For example, no media informed the public that WHO added Beijing as a SARS-affected area on April 11¹⁵⁷. In the following week, almost all media reported the toll of SARS infections and deaths released by the Ministry of Health and the Beijing municipal government, which were widely believed to be untrue and low.

The real turning point in Chinese media coverage came on April 20, when SARS had spread to over 20 cities in China. Health Minister Zhang Wenkang and Beijing Mayor Meng Xuenong were stripped of their posts allegedly for failing to handle the issues regarding the fatal disease properly. A new official from the Ministry of Health, Vice Minister Gao Qiang, gave a press conference. The media then reported that Beijing had 346 confirmed SARS cases with 18 deaths - instead of 37 cases with and 4 deaths, as previously reported (Xu and Lei, 2003). From that day on, both print and electronic media reported the SARS statistics daily to the public.

¹⁵⁵ Deputy director of the National Tourism Administration

¹⁵⁶ It refers to the week-long May Day Holiday. In China, it was called “Golden Week”, which is a government's strategy to promote tourism and internal consumption.

¹⁵⁷ < http://www.who.int/csr/sarsarchive/2003_04_12/en/ >

In addition to the grim daily statistics, the coverage was so extensive that it ranged from news coverage on governmental and grassroots efforts to control the spread of SARS in different parts of China, to reports on the medical researches into the nature of SARS and the search for an effective vaccine. Heroic deeds of medical workers saving lives became a popular topic in the media, especially in the official media. Newspaper features and talk shows frequently discussed the measures of preventing the disease, with resources from WHO or from the Health Ministry. The impressive coverage was, however, partly out of self-consciousness and responsibility, and partly “an effort to follow the government’s instruction to inform the public about the disease” (Lee, in Powers and Xiao, 2008).

5.3.2 Content and tone of the reporting and effects.

In addition to timeliness and accuracy, the way of reporting plays a key role as well. How to construct the reporting often determines how a society reacts to the catastrophe (Singer and Endreny, 1993).

Before April 20 when the official policy changed, all news coverage was almost the same because there was only one news resource: from the government. In spite of the limitation, non-official media still tried to demonstrate their difference from the Party’s mouthpiece media. For example, on April 15, while the article on *People’s Daily* was

entitled “WHO Experts Extremely Impressed by Beijing’s Innovative Measures to Control SARS,” *Beijing Youth News* had an article titled “International Cooperation Is Needed to Control SARS”. *Caijing*, one of the earliest media outlets covering SARS¹⁵⁸, also cautiously published a short news article about WHO’s visit to Guangdong province. Then they had a cover story headlined “From Whence Comes the Danger” with a picture of a mother wearing a mask, holding her daughter tightly and looking at the camera with a frightened expression (Polumbaum and Xiong, 2008). Gradually, as the SARS outbreak was no longer a secret, even the official media were criticizing the government’s cover-up, like what they had done on issues of corruption, crime, and pollution. For example: On June 6, *China Daily* reported:

Modern forms of government are characterized by transparency and openness. Unfortunately a long-held but outdated conviction among many top public servants dictated that information could also cause possible social panic and disorder. Hence, information was controlled, which was just what happened at the onset of the SARS outbreak. This outdated information control gave rise to a swarm of rumours, resulting in the very social panic those government officials and public health authorities concerned had sought to avoid by withholding such information.... The current impediment to the public's views being heard by the government is that they do not have full access to a variety of information that concerns their livelihood, information that the government could make public via the mass media. (Xue, in *China Daily*, July 13, 2003)

¹⁵⁸ “When the SARS crisis was raging in early 2003, *Caijing*'s lengthy exploration of how the disease spread and how the government covered it up was one of the few critical accounts to appear in the Chinese news media.” (New York Times, April 18, 2005)
 <<http://www.nytimes.com/2005/04/18/business/worldbusiness/18shanghai.html>>

In June 8, this article was also published on *People's Daily* (People's Daily, June 8, 2003). The coverage of economic impacts of SARS gained substantial ground including on official news organizations. Many of these reporting were about the negative impacts on the country's development, which had been impossible a decade ago. For example, *People's Daily* on May 6 reported a survey by the China Economic Monitoring Centre under the National Bureau of Statistics, titled "SARS Virus Infects China's Economy." *China Daily* on May 29 had "*Badly Hit Sectors to Get Support*," and on June 30 it published "*SARS slows Computer Market*". The above examples perfectly demonstrate that the professionalism of Chinese journalism slowly expands the space in which they are able to operate.

However, the media, including the on-line news media, "still did not have a free hand in reporting the crisis" - as Lee (in Powers and Xiao, 2008, p. 82) finds, the media had to follow the government's instructions, acting as its "agent of containment", even after April 20. For example, *People's Daily* affirmed that, "under the staunch leadership of the Party Central Committee and Comrade Hu Jintao, the whole nation, united as one-man...has struck up a heroic song featuring the Chinese people's strong will." (People's Daily, April 30, 2003). On May 2, 2003, it reported, "the strong and correct Party leadership was the key to success. President Hu called for a 'people's war against SARS'" (People's Daily, May 2, 2003). "Heroic song" and "war against" are very classic Mao-era phrases. Other

media was required to raise hopes that the government is able to fight against SARS. On April 28, *the PLA Daily* cited the Premier Wen's words, "China is confident in winning over the disease and putting SARS under control, because China had the strong leadership of the Central Committee of the Communist Party and the support of the general public." (The PLA Daily, April 28, 2003, in Lu, 2008, p. 116). On April 29, Xinhua News Agency published "Chinese New Government Acts Responsibly in Combat against SARS" (Xinhua News Agency, April 29, 2003). More notably, in order to promote the national sentiment and cultural pride, "the long-muzzled media were ordered to give extensive coverage to SARS risks and to emphasize the heroism of doctors and nurses, invariably referred to as 'white angels'." (Eckholm c, in Kleinman and Watson, 2006, p. 126).

It was in attempting a balance between economic loss and public health and confidence that the new installed President Hu and Premier Wen took "visible and politically risky public roles" in supporting the openness in the media (DeLisle, 2003, p. 11). Meanwhile, the propaganda made use of different means to recall national unity and patriotic sentiments so as to restore cohesion in the society. As a result, public discourse was filled with anti-SARS slogans, heroic deeds of medical workers, government's achievements, and visits of Hu Jintao and Wen Jiabao to SARS-affected areas including schools and countryside. A great number of newspaper articles, journals, books, videos and performances were produced to promote national spirit in overcoming SARS. Model

reports from Mao's era were encouraged; doctors and nurses were considered as having exemplified the "Chinese spirit" and "national character" (Lu, in Powers and Xiao, 2008, p.117).

Under this official directive, even non-official Chinese media self-consciously promoted a renewed sense of nationalism characterized by patriotism, and helped reinvigorate some traditional Chinese moral values such as loyalty, collectivism, sacrifice and unselfishness. Newspapers, Radio and Televisions were full of news coverage of Chinese leaders' passion towards the people. For instance, it reports the new President Hu inspected the SARS-affected cities of Tianjin, Guangzhou, and Shenzhen. It also reported the Premier Wen Jiabao had tears while visiting daycare centres in Beijing, dined with students at SARS-affected universities, visited hospitals, construction sites, shopping malls, and residential neighbourhoods. Both staked their reputations on their success in beating SARS (Lu, in Powers and Xiao, 2008). As Tian (in Powers and Xiao, 2008, p. 127) concludes, "These SARS case reports constitute a particular type of 'anti-SARS ideology' that favours the government's approach to fighting against the SARS epidemic".

In conclusion, the SARS news reporting, even in later stages of the SARS outbreak, clearly demonstrates Chinese media's struggle under control, its efforts and performances with journalists' professionalism. In the initial stage, the media's silence was as a result of the propaganda's severe control: the News Office determined when and how to publish the

SARS discourse. In later stage, media enjoyed a comparatively openness, characterized by diverse SARS-related topics and in-depth discussions. However, its preference for some content and tone still embodies the influence from the propaganda.

5.3.3 On-line news coverage of SARS.

Proliferation of Internet in China has made dissemination of information harder to control and this is evident in the inability of the government to keep the SARS epidemic in dark. On-line news is an immediate medium that delivers the most updated information to the public. Internet news has flourished in China in the new millennium. At the end of June 2003, there were about 68 million Internet users in China. The country had the largest number of netizens after the United States (AFP, April 7, 2003). During the SARS epidemic, news sites could provide useful materials around the clock, which would help people be aware of the risks and take correct precautionary measures. Moreover, the interactive function of the news sites allows people to exchange information and advice, as well as provide the relevant authorities with people's concerns and needs.

According to Tai's findings, during the early stage of the SARS outbreak, mobile phone message (SMS) played a key role in widely spreading the news in the public, because there was no information available in the media. The first mobile phone message

on SARS appeared on February 8, 2003, saying “there is a fatal flu in Guangzhou!” (Zhang, 2005). Although it did not have the same influence or accountability as news media, SMS gave the local people as well as media workers first-hand information, and “it was an effective tool that was out of the government’s control at the beginning” (ibid, ¶ 35). According to Guangdong Mobile, the message “there is a fatal flu in Guangzhou” was sent 40 million times on February 8, 41 million times the next day, and 45 million times on February 10 (Chen and Jiang, 2003). The public concerns expressed through SMS forced the Guangdong government to make some kind of public acknowledgement on February 11 in a press conference (Saich, in Kleinman and Watson, 2006, P. 76).

But later when the SARS epidemic rapidly spread to others areas including Hong Kong, it was the Internet that played a more active and crucial role. This is also how the media in Guangzhou got inquiries about the epidemic at the beginning (Tai, 2006). During the SARS epidemic people stayed indoors to avoid being infected and websites had more hits (Jen-siu, 2003, in Lee, in Powers and Xiao, 2008, p. 83). In March, when more and more information, including the global alert on March 12, the announcement of “a global health threat” and the travel advisory on March 15, and the confirmation that Guangdong was the originator of the disease, became available from WHO website (which is accessible in China), people were aware that something was going wrong in China and they began to turn to the Internet to seek information. Because of the regulations controlling the

postings on Chinese websites, there was little news on Chinese news websites. As a result, the most frequent visit websites were from Hong Kong, Singapore and Taiwan, some of which were not banned in China. Many surfers then posted fragments of information that they found from the WHO website and foreign news media websites on the BBS of major portal sites in China. Also, the Internet has created a venue of public communication that was not available in the past (Tai, 2006, p. 161-208). Internet was an empowerment tool for Chinese civil society (ibid). Netizens shared their anger of mainstream media, criticism of the government's slow reaction and China's institutional flaws in the political system, and so forth. For instance, a young surfer posted, "(in early April), I felt the media were lying and they were intentionally suppressing news about SARS... Because we work with the Internet, we have long felt that news in mainstream media is routinely manipulated. They just tell you what they want you to think" (Tai, 2006, p. 238).

After *Time Magazine* published Dr. Jiang Yanyong's statement on its website, the international media attention was seized. In China, news of Jiang's statement spread rapidly across China on Internet Bulletin Boards and in cell phone messages (Pan, 2008). The Party's struggle to maintain the cover-up was in vein. From that time on, neither the WHO team nor the Chinese media believed the government's figures (ibid). The turning point of on-line news coverage was also on April 20. From then on, the on-line news website was used to give health education to the public, including medical professionals

who did not know about the preventive measures against SARS (Ma, 2003). The role of the Internet was even acknowledged by the top leaders. President Hu made a public statement on the Internet, “I have seen good advice on the Internet (to combat SARS)” (NEWSGD, 2006, ¶ 12). Premier Wen also commented, “As the people’s government, we should be subject to the democratic will of the people, and listen to the numerous viewpoints on the Internet.” (ibid, ¶ 13)

However, technologies themselves are neutral, which means that the question of whether they can be used properly depends on the country’s social-political and structural characteristics. In mainland China, news website managers were ordered to remove “negative” postings about SARS, and they were warned that violators could face fines or punishment (Saiget, 2003). Internet was unable to alert and inform people to a greater extent as the government used it as an “online foot soldiers” in the fight against SARS (Dong, 2003). Obviously, in the later stages of the epidemic the government was fully “aware of the utility of online news sites” and “made full use of them as propaganda tools to help contain the disease and maintain social stability” (Lee, in Powers and Xiao, 2008, p. 87). An evidence is that the press freedom of 2004 country report on China, which points out that “the government promotes use of the Internet, which it believes to be critical to China’s economic development but regulates access, monitors use, and restricts and regulates content” (Karlekar, 2004, p. 79). Further evidence can be drawn from Tian’s

comparative study on on-line news coverage in Hong Kong and in mainland China. Tian's quantitative and qualitative researches prove that on-line news coverage, a unique interactive medium tool, did not function as well in mainland as it in Hong Kong in achieving its majors social roles, which include "information dissemination", "public education", "crisis interpretation and government monitoring", and "community building" (in Powers and Xiao, 2008, p. 77-87).

5.4 Discussion

5.4.1 Reasons for controlling information of the SARS outbreak.

The principle of the news media is "assumed audience interest" (Singer and Endreny, 1993). In the situation of disasters, the media should play an essential role in keeping people alert of the health hazards and life threats. When it comes to emergency, media should be the channel of official notice and unofficial but accurate news. SARS is mysterious because it caused a high number of fatalities within a short period of time; it is shocking and the epidemic is dramatic because it was totally unexpected and unexplainable. In addition, it is not only a health issue but also a social matter, because it affected varies industries and people's ordinary life. In a word, the SARS epidemic met the media's

“Ebola Standard”, “the standard against which all other epidemic diseases are now measured” (Moeller, 1999, p. 94), the standard of prominence, novelty, controversy, emotional appeal (terror), significance and proximity” (Lee, in Powers and Xiao, 2008, p. 70).

Why did it take so long - from November to April 20 - for the Chinese media to report the situation of SARS? One policy measure called the “Three NOs” issued by the Communist Party's Publicity Department during the SARS outbreak clearly stipulates, “no talking to the media about the nature of SARS; no talking to the public about doctors' personal experiences treating the disease, and no communicating with the WHO about anything to do with SARS” (Beech, 2003, ¶ 4). Therefore, the point is not to question either the abilities or motivations of Chinese news reporters but the media under government control. The government-controlled media system inhibits the free flow of information that the government may deem sensitive, although Chinese media had been a commercialized media after two decades of reform. There are three factors, systemic or specific, which contributed to the government's decision to control information about the SARS outbreak.

The first factor, or the main motivation, of stopping reporting was the concern that such news coverage would threaten the economic stability. “No country wants to bear the stigma or the economic costs associated with disease” (Abraham, 2005, p. 24). Guangdong,

as the wealthiest and most advanced province in China, has been exported-oriented and attractive to foreign investors and tourists since the marketization and opening-up reform. The per-capita GDP of Guangdong was 13,730 RMB in 2001, while the nation was only 8,622 RMB (National Bureau of Statistics, 2002). For one thing, the local government were worried the strange disease would scare foreign business persons or tourists away; for another, the government wanted to make sure the spending during the Chinese New Year - the most important festival in China – would not reduce (Pomfret, 2003) - Feng Shaomin, director of foreign affairs for the Guangdong Health Department, said in an interview, “You can imagine how people would have reacted if we had told them about the disease (before the weeklong Chinese Spring Festival starting on February 1st). They would not eat out. Nor would they go shopping or get together with family members and friends. If we had done it earlier, it would definitely have caused chaos” (Pan, 2008, p. 202-203). Consequently, all media followed Heyuan Health Bureau’s claim that “there is no epidemic” and informed the public that the story of unidentified virus was rumour.

The second factor is the intention to maintain a good social order by eliminating the causes of social unrest or protests. The social tensions in early 2000s, as discussed earlier, had been a major issue for both the local and central governments, as it would lead to mass protests. According to White (2003, p. 31), “Rulers in China for millennia held an odd belief: that natural disasters, such as earthquake or new disasters, reflect on their legitimacy.

Guangdong cadres repressed news of early cases of SARS out of fear that knowledge of this mysterious illness would disturb the populace and sow ‘disorder’ [*luan*]. In order to cut off the sources of social disorder, or chaos, the government imposed control with great precaution. That was why in the past, national emergencies such as earthquakes, floods, and mining accidents were often handled quietly by the (local) government. This handling method has been known as “Black Box” [*heixiang*] approach, which impeded the public from knowing the emergencies in time (Liu, 2004).

The third key factor results from the context of the SARS outbreak that was when the first political transition in this century took place, which might generate uncertainty of leadership succession and political instability. As Saich (in Kleinman and Watson, 2006, p. 73) points out, China was undergoing a major leadership transition that started formally in November 2002 at the Sixteenth Party and ended in March 2003 with the Tenth National People’s Congress, which meant political jockeying inside the Party and less responsibility for negative issues. In Guangdong province, the new Party Secretary Zhang Dejiang, a keen supporter of Jiang Zeming (the former General Secretary) and of Jiang’s position that “Social stability and economic growth are of paramount importance,” stepped in to stop any negative news coverage of SARS (ibid, p. 74). In brief, in the earlier stage of the breakout, the SARS cover-up indicates that Chinese officials put economic development and one’s own reputation before the lives of the population (Lee, in Powers and Xiao, 2008,

p. 84).

In the later stage, from the intensive, extensive, somewhat critical, news coverage of SARS in traditional media and on-line media, we can find the media has broken away from the traditional notions of propaganda. The marketization incentives in the past two decades not only turned the media to be market-oriented, but also professional and responsible. The media carried messages of truthfulness, practical relevance and in a way acceptable to the public. The media workers probed the limits of control and the permissible, criticizing the mishandling of the local government. The content and tone of the news reporting is more western-styled. In this regard, it can be said that the Chinese journalists have the same professional values and views as their international colleagues.

However, as Joseph Chan (1993, p. 25-28) points out, media commercialization alone does not, or will not, necessarily lead to a free press. We find in the Maoist-style “Model Reports” that the traditional propaganda system soon found its position to portray the new leadership, the doctors and nurses to promote the national spirits and morals. In short, the media became the voice of the marketplace and continued to be the voice of the government.

5.4.2 Impacts of controlled news coverage of SARS in 2003.

The SARS case was no doubt one of the most important crises faced by the CCP since the Cultural Revolution (Huang and Hao, 2008). The fear of its economic and political negative impact caused the Chinese government to attempt to control the media on the reporting of SARS. From the above discussion on traditional news media and on-line news media, we can find that, from information blockade to information overflow, from misleading to educating the public, from neglecting to uniting the people, and from censorship to containment, the changing face of Chinese media, subject to systemic and content controls by the authorities, had strong impact on the society as a whole and people as an individual.

But the importance of the media in collecting and reporting timely and accurate information on SARS and in informing the public is essential. As Reynolds (2005) summarizes, in a public crisis, news organizations would serve these four important, and sometimes competing, functions:

- To channel local public health information by connecting public health officials to citizens, and, to a lesser extent, to serve as a channel for public health information between groups of professional stakeholders (e.g., medical officials, politicians, and businesses);
- To provide a national and international conduit for news reports and analysis;
- To offer a venue for public and political debate over the handling of the crisis;
- To document the economic and other impacts of the crisis on businesses, frontline health workers, and the community as a whole.

(Reynolds, 2005, p. 111-112)

The failure of Chinese media to achieve these functions during the initial outbreak, however, allowed a severe disease to “become silently established in ways that made further international spread almost inevitable” (UNESCO, 2003, p. 17). The world could have handled this outbreak better with some effective preventive measures if people had known it earlier. The lesson in Guangdong could have been how to protect medical workers from getting infected. However, there was hardly any report on the epidemic appearing in media. Here is a map showing the severity of the outbreak in early May:

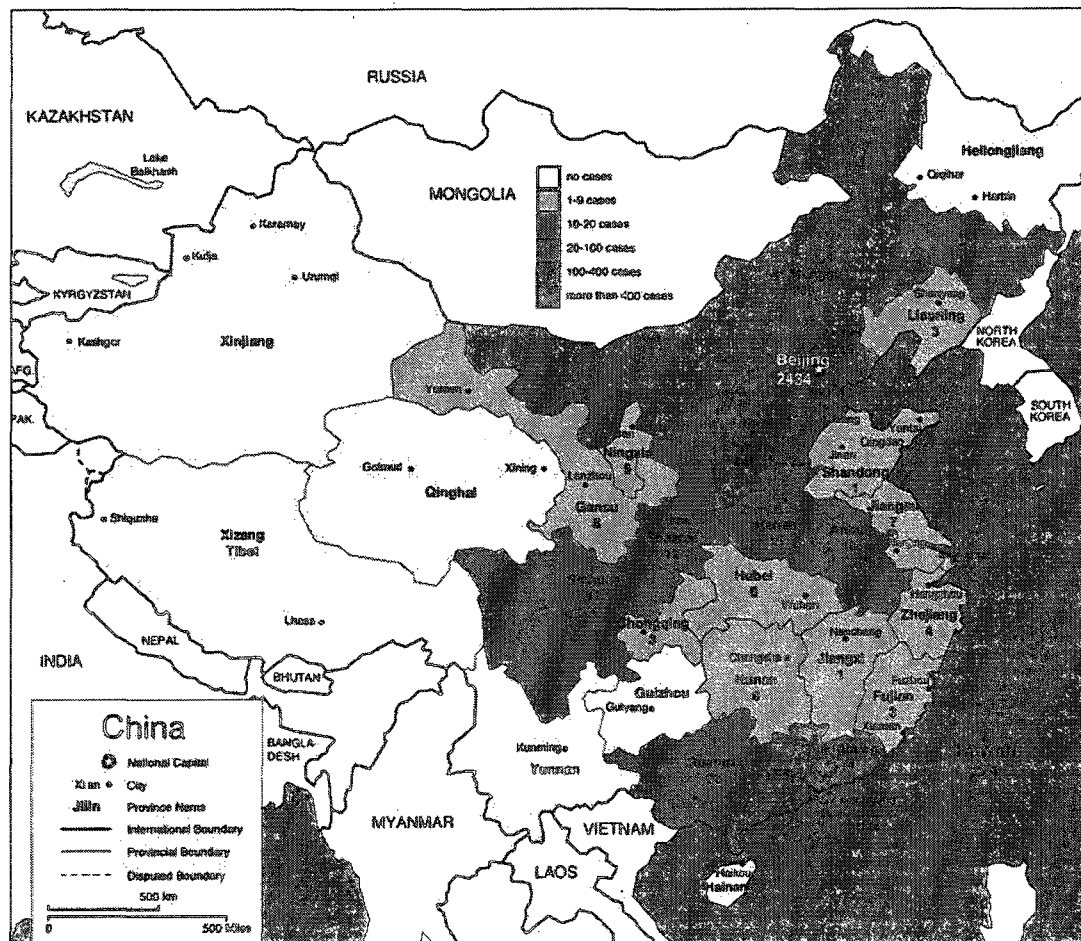


Figure 13: China SARS Map

Note: Reproduced from China Internet Information Center.

Released by China Ministry of Health, 10:00 am of May 18, 2003, Beijing Time

Retrieved on July 19, 2010, from

<http://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/china_sars_map.htm>

The inadequacy of information not only contributed to serious economic consequences, but also fears, panic, serious political and social consequences, which undermine the social stability. As Zhou (2006, ¶ 33) concludes, “SARS, an unprecedented

public health disaster, posed a serious threat to human security and social stability, especially in China. ... Socio-politically, the epidemic exposed a tremendous amount of troubling developments in China, and most importantly, highlighted certain drawbacks of the country's robust economic growth and social insecurities over the past two decades". Here I will give an analysis of the pernicious economic, political and social consequences of China's tenacious media control.

First of all, the information blackout brought about negative impacts on China's economic development. There is no official discourse on the total loss, but unquestionably it did cause a large-scale economic downturn for Chinese economy. According to the Asian Development Bank, SARS cost the Asian economies a total of US\$18 billion, in which China lost US\$6.1 billion, about 5 percent of its GDP (Leu, 2005). Tourism, aviation, surface transport, service sectors and their associated manufacturing were the hardest hit. According to the Chinese National Tourist office, the revenue from tourism had dropped by 276.8 billion Yuan in 2003 due to the SARS pandemic (Zhou, 2006). With household incomes falling especially in rural areas, retail disruptions in the cities, airlines virtually grounded and tourism-related business affected, the impact on China's economy brought about by SARS could be greater than that of the Asian Financial Crisis of 1997 (People's Daily, May 6, 2003). There are also long-term implications in terms of investors' perceptions. Investors could be influenced to place more stress on government

responsiveness, governance and transparency instead of just direct production costs in their investment plans. The initial mismanagement in SARS case has caused some market concerns, although the government later moved towards greater transparency, which may have helped mitigate these concerns.

After May, Chinese economists and market analysts tried to calculate the costs. There were numerous research reports, surveys, and interviews with economic experts in China and with international economic agencies. For example, *People's Daily* on May 6 (ibid) reported a survey of 20 four and five star hotels in Beijing by the China Economic Monitoring Centre under the National Bureau of Statistics,

Their occupancy has fallen by 30 per cent since April compared to the same period last year. The occupancy of six five star hotels surveyed has decreased by 50 per cent. Hence it is not difficult to imagine the losses to airlines, restaurants and tourist sites. Telephone interviews with 48 trans-national corporations conducted by the centre revealed that they have banned their employees from travelling in China and their businesses in the country have been affected to varying degrees. A survey of 50 enterprises in Beijing shows that 36 of them have cancelled or reduced domestic business travel. Another interview with 160 Beijing residents shows that 72 per cent of them have cancelled journeys and cut back on shopping trips and socializing through fear of catching the disease. Catering business fell 50percent in Beijing, and one-third in Shanghai (China Economic Monitoring Centre, 2003).

Moreover, the damage was not limited to the regions with largest concentration of disease victims in China (Rawski, in Kleinman and Watson, 2006), on both demand side and the consumption side. The Chinese Entrepreneur Survey System's semi-annual poll of

2,000 companies across the country found that “the volume of orders, production, exports and purchases all slipped during the second quarter of 2003; 67 percent of respondents said their orders dropped during the period, 67 percent ... said SARS increased their business costs and 65 percent believe their profits have slumped” (Dai, 2003, p. 109). Private consumption dropped in the first half of 2003 (Rawski, in Kleinman and Watson, 2006).

Not only public facilities and retail establishments closed their doors, but also some international trade fairs were cancelled. For example, an international bicycle trade fair scheduled for April 10-12, was cancelled after majority of participants refused to come due to SARS scare. Another international trade fair for bicycle parts and bicycles to be held in Shanghai in the first week of May was also postponed. The Canton Trade Fair, the world’s biggest trade fair, was cut short on April 19 with \$3.31 billion in signed contracts, less than 20 percent of the previous year’s total. Signed contracts at the Fair fell to \$730 million, just 4 percent of the 2002 total. Orders were being routed to Southeast Asian countries. Part of the reason was the increased business costs after February 2003, due to the reduced working hours from SARS-related illness or absences, and due to the introduction of precautionary measures to prevent the spread of SARS.

Figures from China are suspicious to some people. Hence, Thomas Rawski (in Kleinman and Watson, 2006) looks into the market for petroleum products, which “reflects activity throughout the economy” (p. 111). He finds the output of thermal electricity, a key

measure of manufacturing operations, dropped by 4.4 percent in April and fell a further 2 percent in May (ibid). As for China's demand for oil product went down, and China's crude oil imports were the lowest in May and the situation would not disappear in a short time; meanwhile, China's second-largest refiner was also reducing its exports because they had problem in meeting the domestic demand (p. 112). Though this data contains no statistical value, it is a good indicator of SARS's impact on the entire economy.

In addition to the decline in the tertiary sector and in export growth, SARS also worsened China's employment situation, which had already been struggling, as Zhang of the National Development and Reform Commission points out (Rawski, p. 119). As a lot of small and medium-size enterprises suspended their operations or simply closed down, the already acute employment contradiction aggravated. According to the Ministry of Labour and Social Security, jobless rate rose to 4.2 percent by the end of June in 2003, with 7.95 million registered unemployed in the country's cities (ibid).

The globalized China had been highly interlinked with the rest of the world in terms of travel, production and trade. The economy setback of China was transmitted to other countries in Asian and the world. The SARS impacts on the world's economy have highlighted how a similar type of economic shock in one country hit others.

Secondly, the provision of timely, accurate and transparent information on the nature and extent of any further SARS outbreak was important in assisting to contain and reduce

public fears and uncertainty. However, during SARS, public panic was widespread, especially at the beginning when the information was hidden. Social stability has been jeopardized: rumours and panic buying that caused unreasonable prices and an unstable market, conflicts and unrests in cities and countryside.

Rumours often fill a vacuum created by a dearth of reliable and believable information. Rumours of the “killer pneumonia” were flying since winter 2002, and they did not cease spreading even after the government’s confirmation on the outbreak. The earliest Chinese reporting on “scare shopping” (or “Panic buying”) was on January 3 by a local Guangdong newspaper¹⁵⁹. According to Abraham’s finding (2005), by February 10, there was panic buying of medicine and essential supplies in Guangdong province, and fear was beginning to spread to neighbouring provinces. Media in Guangdong also reported that the “scare shopping” was getting more serious, because there was a rumour that the central government would delimit Guangdong Province as “the epidemic area” (Southern Metropolis Daily, February 14, 2003). The prices of “Banlan root”¹⁶⁰, vinegar, rice, salt, and the medicine Tamiflu that was actually not helpful for anti-SARS, soared unbelievably. For example, a bottle of vinegar that normally sold for a couple of Yuan was sold for 100 Yuan or even 1000 Yuan when it was running out (Abraham, 2005). Local people were so

¹⁵⁹ “Incident Resulting from Rumours of an Unknown Virus, Heyuan City Citizens Fight to Buy Antibiotics”, by Huang Liqi, on Yangcheng Evening News, on January 3, 2003.

¹⁶⁰ A Chinese herbal medicine used to treat colds and fevers

terrified that they asked friends or relatives in other provinces to mail them Banlan root (Liao, 2003).

In order to stop the rumours that had caused disorder in the society, on February 11, the media, under some guidelines, reported the Public Health authority's announcement that the situation had been effectively controlled. This kind of report did serve the immediate purpose to calm the society down (Abraham, 2005). However, the media continued to construct around a number of themes, repeating that "the virus is contagious but not horrible and incurable", denying that "the virus is unbeatable", and stressing that "early discovery, early diagnosis, early reporting, early quarantine and early treatment will lead to early recovery" (Lee, 2008, p. 85). Such catchphrases misled the nation and the international community. The fact that the disease remained out of control and was kept hidden at a local level quickly turned the disease into a global health threat (Pan, 2008). What is also misleading is that in China, the disease was neutrally named as "atypical pneumonia", while in Hong Kong it was described as "deadly illness", "killer disease" as an "epidemic", and in American and British news media it was called "mysterious disease". Different versions of information were widely circulated inside the society, which caused more uncertainties, fears and chaos. Instead of controlling the rumours and reducing panic, the media stimulated the dissemination of rumours through text messaging, and generated a countrywide panic (Du 2003; Xu and Yan, 2003)

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, in early 2000s, there was already increasing social tension in the Chinese society, between the wealth and the poor, between the city and the countryside, and between the East and the West. The poor handling of information flows had a heavier blow to the unprivileged groups who had been increasingly burdened by the ongoing economic reforms, because they had less access to true information and less health social protection but more vulnerability in getting infected. According to Saich (in Kleinman and Watson, 2006, p. 212), “the poor handling of information flows led to panic buying as well as rioting and destruction of quarantine centres”. Here are some examples, which, unsurprisingly, were not mentioned by Chinese media¹⁶¹:

- In April, as BBC reported, “Despite the precautions now in place, a sea of people in white masks have thronged Beijing railway stations in recent days, trying to leave the capital”¹⁶².
- In mid-April, Beijing residents blocked the gates of Heping Hospital after hearing the facility would be used for SARS patients. The hospital was then closed for renovation, but people in surrounding villages still believe the building has been quarantined with SARS patients inside.

¹⁶¹ There is no official figure of the number of riots.

¹⁶² In order to prevent the spread of the disease to the less economic-developed central and western provinces, migrant workers have been told not to return home from Beijing.

- On April 27, 2,000 farmers on the outskirts of Tianjin destroyed a junior high school because of a rumour that it was being turned into a quarantine center for SARS patients. On the same day, in Linzhou city in Henan Province, several hundred farmers destroyed a local clinic and attacked a Chinese-medicine hospital. Thirteen people were arrested.
- On April 28, thousands of residents of Chagugang (a rural town in Tianjin city) searched through a local school that they suspected had become a ward for SARS patients. Amid signs of rural and urban tension, residents were furious with the lack of government consultation.
- On May 3 and 4, villagers in Xiande (in Zhejiang province) broke into a government building where suspected SARS patients were quarantined. They destroyed windows and furniture. Three officials got injured and many were arrested.
- On May 8, officials in Chengde City, Hebei province admitted that their city had experienced an unrest resulting from quarantine problems. According to reports by the BBC, more than 100 people participated in the disturbance, among whom 64 were arrested.

- On May 9, about 60 people protested in Beijing against the government's plan to set up a fever station at a neighbourhood hospital, the first known SARS demonstration in the capital.
- On May 11, there was once again a massive incident in Tianjin. Over 300 people blocked the road leading to the planned site of a "SARS hospital".
- In rural areas of Chongqing city, villagers fearful of SARS have repeatedly ransacked quarantine sites.

It is worth noting that, unlike in other countries, the development of the SARS epidemic became the root of social unrest in China. According to WHO figures, till May 8, except China, all the other countries are successful in containing the disease¹⁶³. Also, we can see that even after April 20 when media had less control to report SARS case, rumours and riots did not cease. The news blackout in the initial stage resulted in suspicion and anger in the government, which contributed to public panic and unrests. As Irvine and Millar (1998) posit, making a situation clear and transparent can reduce anxiety. Media can play a crucial role in calming public fears by providing timely and accurate information. (Kleinman and Watson, 2005)

Thirdly, the control of information results in decreasing trust in the government's accountability in the country. Providing timely, reliable and accurate information

¹⁶³ "Cumulative Number of Reported Probable Cases of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome" published on May 8, 2003 <http://www.who.int/csr/sarscountry/2003_05_08/en/>

contributes to social stability and strengthened confidence in the government (Xu, 2003 b).

In the previous chapter, there are discussions about the changing face of China's media in reporting. With regards to reporting of disasters and public health incidents, while it is "necessary to stimulate public awareness and aid donations" in the West (Smith and Petley, 2009, p. 22), it was not allowed in China without authorisation of releasing such "politically sensitive" information, because it is regarded as a source of disturbance, or instability.

However, information control is almost impossible in this electronic age. Chinese people chose to rely on getting SARS information through their SMS channels - even though they knew the information was not completely correct. This, to some degree, reflects the government had been losing trust from its people. As the civil society was getting more mature, even the government's most consistent supporters showed their dissatisfaction of the government's apparent dishonesty. These supporters not only included the urban middle class but also university students,

In 2003, the rising middle class comprised 15 percent of the population. When they realized they had been betrayed after trusting the government's initial assurances, many of them voiced out, some even condemned the government for acting only because of international pressure but not out of concern for public health government (Beck, 2003). Like Dr. Jiang Yanyong, who had been a doctor in the country's military hospital, become

the first vocal critic of the deliberate deceptiveness. And when the public learned about Jiang on the Internet, they immediately recognized his courage and openly discussed him. University students also spoke loud for their rights. They began to question party leaders, acting “more assertively than their predecessors did over the last decade”: asking for the cancellation of classes, demanding school administrators to take more precautions measures to protect them, and voicing their frustration with the government-ordered quarantine (ibid, p. 4).

Another example is media workers, who are also the main force of Chinese civil society. As we discussed earlier, in the past decades, Chinese media has built their readership through increasingly bold reporting and commentary, gained greater autonomy and gone further and further in pushing the boundaries on press freedom. These media workers have been open-minded and educated, taking more social responsibilities and looking for the truth and justice. They were frustrated with the government’s news blackout on the SARS epidemic, but they knew they had to play smart. Hence, in spite of the government’s continued notices after February 8, newspapers continued to send reporters to hospitals to interview doctors and hospital administrators to keep track of what was actually going on. It was like a seesaw battle between the provincial propaganda department and the media. In Abraham’s words, the media was “playing a cat and mouse game” with the government (Abraham, 2005, p. 22). For example, on March 31, *Beijing*

Youth News published an article titled “*Gauze Masks out of Stock for Several Days*” on its ninth page, which indirectly indicated the serious situation of SARS. The earliest Chinese media to resume comprehensive SARS reporting, *Caijing Magazine*, had a critical report “Beijing Case” for publication on April 20, which featured 18 pages of articles and a commentary on the SARS epidemic in what proved to be a journalistic tour de force. This edition of *Caijing* reveals the spread of SARS internationally and assesses the negative economic effects of the epidemic. This edition was mentioned in numerous Chinese studies on communications during the SARS.

What also reflected decreased confidence in the government was the increasing number of SARS jokes. Zhang (in Kleinman and Watson, 2006) categorizes SARS jokes into six groups on the basis of the content, which includes political satire and jokes playing on the government’s efforts to control SARS. Here are two examples:

Example One: “What the Party Has Failed to Do, SARS Has Succeeded in Doing”

The party failed to control dining extravagantly. SARS did.

The party failed to control touring with public money. SARS did.

The party failed to control having a sea of meetings. SARS did.

The party failed to control deceiving one’s superiors and deluding one’s subordinates. SARS did.

The party failed to control prostitution and whoring. SARS did.

(Page 152)

Example Two:

The government's declaration: war on SARS
The media's front page: [news] about SARS
Experts' suggestions: prevention of SARS
Drugstores sell medicine: in the name of SARS
Friends meet: trading information on SARS
A co-worker coughs: a frightful cry – SARS.

(Page 157)

As Zhang (*ibid*) explains, the first example uses sarcastic irony and implies that as destructive as SARS is, “it can remedy the failures of the party to correct social ills, many of which are the party’s own creations” (p. 153). The second example is imitating “Maoist-style” political campaign slogan, to “show off both one’s ingenuity and one’s defiance of the authority” (p. 158).

The government turned an important corner on April 20, which led to a dramatic change in the later media reporting and people’s attitudes towards the government. For example, all media highlighted the new Health Minister Gao Qiang’s admission on April 20 that “the Ministry of Health was not adequately prepared to deal with a sudden new health hazard” (Eckholm, 2003 b, ¶ 8). Electronic reporting of new cases and deaths, by province, now occurred daily. There were numerous reports about the removal of the former Health Minister, former Beijing mayor, and another 120 officials who were sacked or penalised for their “slack” response to the SARS epidemic. According to a survey on government’s ability in handling SARS in late May, 76.5 percent people had more confidence in the government after they opened information channels and established the

daily report system of the SARS epidemic (Chen, 2003). With more confidence in government, political stability is preserved.

Fourthly, the mishandling of the SARS was damaging to China's international reputation. International affairs scholar, Pang Zhongying, points out that "the greatest damage to China caused by the SARS crisis is the loss of China's reputation" (in Saich, 2006, p. 91). Repairing the mutual trust between China and the international community was extremely urgent in the later stage of the SARS outbreak.

China has tried hard to place itself to be a "responsible state" in the world since 1990s. However, during the epidemic, China was described as "a country that does not take care of its people"¹⁶⁴ by the *Financial Times* (on April 8). While Beijing claimed SARS was under control in their city, *Washington Post* revealed there were actually a great number of SARS patients in Beijing, which were far more than the official number (Tian and Li, 2003).

WHO has criticized China's handling of the crisis, "the news blackout during the four months after the SARS breakout in Guangdong Province led to a fast spread of the epidemic inside and outside China, resulting in a total of 8,098 cases and 774 deaths worldwide by the end of July 2003" (WHO, 2003, in Huang and Hao, 2008, p. 94).

Scholars like Lee (in Powers and Xiao, 2008, p. 82) also blame China's 4-month media cover-up. It resulted in that "China lost the chance to stop the disease from spreading to

¹⁶⁴ "A country that does not take care of its people," *The Financial Times* April 8, 2003.

other provinces and the rest of the world". Zhou (2006, ¶ 1) finds the information control "significantly damaged China's international reputations as a responsible world power, and accordingly called the Party's credibility into question" – "People widely expressed their doubts on the credibility of the Party for their suppression of information. The opaque communication only increased the amount of rumours concerning the epidemic, which had spread not merely over the country, but to the rest of the world." (ibid, ¶ 13). Kaufman (in Kleinman and Watson, 2006, p. 66) concludes that the SARS epidemic was "a painful lesson for China" because China's integration with the global economy, which had fuelled China's unparalleled economic growth for two decades, also requires better global citizenship. From these arguments, one thing in common is the criticism of the government's inaction to the epidemic that not only caused the situation to aggravate, but also destroyed the country's image as a responsible world power. "To be a responsible" state is not only China's wish but also the world's expectation. China must fulfill its responsibility of surveillance and honest, timely admission and reporting of emerging infectious disease.

The outbreak of SARS in 2003 brought China to the focus of world attention. SARS case is not only a new health issue for many countries, but also a social affair. It is in the interest of people of every country to share available information so that they can learn from the experience from each other and effectively handle the arising problems. The

report of the first WHO expert team to investigate the SARS situation in Guangdong Province reached the following conclusion:

If SARS is not brought under control in China there will be no chance of controlling the global threat of SARS. Control of a new and rapidly disseminated disease like SARS is challenging, especially in a country as large and diverse as China. Effective disease surveillance and reporting are key strategies in any attempt to control the spread of a serious new communicable disease such as SARS. (WTO, May 20, 2003, p. 11)

In a review report by WHO on May 20, the effective reporting is again stressed:

This is the most important lesson for all nations: in a globalized, electronically connected world, attempts to conceal cases of an infectious disease, for fear of social and economic consequences, must be recognized as a short-term stop-gap measure that carries a very high price – loss of credibility in the eyes of the international community, escalating negative domestic economic impact, damage to the health and economies of neighbouring countries, and a very real risk that outbreaks within the country's own territory can spiral out of control. (ibid)

China was not the only one fighting the sudden attack of SARS. Hong Kong, Vietnam, Singapore and Canada, were also severely affected by the outbreak. These countries had information disclosure systems from the early stage. After WHO issued emergency travel recommendations on March 15, “all countries with imported cases were able to either prevent further transmission or keep the number of additional cases very low – except for China” (WHO, 20 May 2003)¹⁶⁵. Let's look at Hong Kong and Vietnam as examples:

¹⁶⁵ Of the cumulative global total of 7761 probable cases and 623 deaths reported on 17 May, 5209

From March to July 2003, Hong Kong was listed by the WHO as an affected area under direct severe threat from SARS. What is different from mainland China, the fight against SARS in Hong Kong was not led by the government but social groups including the media that is not under political constraints or censorship. Hong Kong government was openly criticized to be inefficient in handling the situation. By contrast, the media, including the online news sites, actively collaborated with other social organizations to fight against SARS. Many SARS reports have pointed out that the existence of a free press was a distinct advantage for Hong Kong during the SARS crisis (Chiu, Galbraith and Loh, 2004). The local media was praised as they kept the public informed, monitored social actions and played a vital role in helping to contain the virus. The media not only gathered and disseminated the information that the society needed to prepare and protect themselves from the disease, but also provided the latest statistics, details of new cases, treatment and preventive methods, warnings and advice from the health department and professionals, as well as the government's control measures. There were not only positive images as in China but also negative ones, for example, recovering SARS victims and their reunion with families and friends, and "dark" quarantine camps and the affected medical workers. The Hong Kong media also extensively reported and openly discussed the socio-economic impacts of SARS and the social reactions to the public (Lee, in Powers and Xiao, 2008).

cases and 282 deaths had been occurred in mainland China (not including Taiwan) (WHO, 20 May 2003).

The SARS experience in Vietnam has also shown that immediate and accurate information is crucial. Vietnam was initially seen as one of the countries that were worst affected by the virus, with five people dead out of a total of 68 reported infections (BBC, April 28, 2003). However, with the Vietnamese Government's strong commitment at the highest level of information from the beginning of the outbreak (WTO, May 20, 2003, p. 10), Vietnam was the first country that successfully contained its outbreak of SARS. Vietnam's case demonstrated to the world how a developing country, hit by an especially severe outbreak, could triumph over a disease "when reporting is prompt and open, when WHO assistance is quickly requested and fully supported, and when rapid case detection, immediate isolation and infection control, and vigorous contact tracing are put in place" (WHO, May 20, 2003, p. 10)

5.5 Conclusion

Media is heralded as prime mechanism for societal development, including in conflict management and in emergency management. Under the circumstances of conflicts or emergencies, the need for a more timely, accurate and comprehensive understanding of the truth is of utmost importance. Unfortunately, although relevant experiences and research continue to increase and accumulate in the world, some governments view this topic as embryonic.

The media plays an essential role in today's development, no matter what social system it is under. Information transparency in the media is essential to the successful execution of a government especially in a crisis. For example, to alert the people, to ease social anxiety, to mobilize community resources, and to boost the morale of the rescuers and victims (Zhong, 2003)

In a human crisis like SARS, people need to obtain information from the media, both in terms of official alerts or warnings and unofficial related news. SARS as a fatal disease was a serious global public health threat. It teaches the world a lesson that an epidemic should be curbed at the local level (Ng, in Ali and Keil, 2008, P. 85). It also teaches China that in today's globalized information society, it is impossible to keep people in the dark.

The tightly controlled Chinese media, in spite of two decades of reform, created uncertainty and ambiguity among the public at the initial stage: information was sanctioned; editors, journalists, website managers were under pressure from the propaganda department and had to follow the official directives to release news. As a result, individuals became information producers and disseminators with the use of technologies. Rumours spread in the society, which produced panic and chaos largely negatively affecting people's ordinary life. The country's economy suffered from the blackout of information. The government's reputation with its peoples and in the international community was ruined. Accordingly, the trust was lost. In later stage of the situation, when

the government realized its flaws and the control was relieved, media immediately regained its functions as an “information-carrier”, as “watch-dog actor,” and a “civil society performer,” as well as an agent of the government’s mouth-piece that promoted the Party’s ideologies. The government realized that the better way to maintain social stability and international dignity was not to suppress truth-seeking reporting but to inform the public with timely and accurate information.

The SARS case also proves that a fairer, more open, more transparent media can contribute to a steady economic growth, more mature and objective governance, sound social order and positive international reputation. Media, as the most powerful traditional tool in communication, can cause social instability when it was kept silent and politically monitored.

As Scotton and Hachten (2010) posit, the SARS epidemic’s case brought reforms in national policies. The Chinese government’s information management system has been so thoroughly discredited during the SARS crisis, and the stake is so high for people that a powerful impetus for more independent news reporting has emerged. After SARS, China established and promoted the “news briefing and spokesperson system.” One of its functions is to address the concerns of the public at home and abroad, honour the public’s right to information and provide convenience for journalists to report China more objectively and accurately. In 2004, the first group of about 80 spokespersons in 70

departments under the State Council and 20 provincial governments started to host press conferences for the Protection of State Secrets (NAPSS) and Ministry of Civil Affairs (MCA) (Jiang and Chao, 2005). Since August 8, 2005, the death toll in natural disasters and relevant materials are not treated as state secrets (People's Daily, October 01, 2005, ¶ 2). The new system allowed the media to openly report the epidemic situations after SARS.

SARS is just one of the cases in China that media actively engaged in information-seeking from non-official resources and tried to supply accurate information to the public, and by doing so, the social stability was preserved. These cases gradually paved the way for media in China to escape government controls in their efforts to seek the truth (Scotton and Hachten, 2010). By doing so, media acts as a catalyst for economic development and human development, which serves the government's goal of achieving social stability.

Chapter 6 Discussion

6.1 In Theory

Media development is unique in each social culture and system and plays a great role in development.

As the modernization theorists posit, economics is the key to the process of modernization and development for developing countries, and media is a neutral force in the process of social, political, economic and cultural conditions in development. This is based on a belief that the media would help transform traditional societies with the global diffusion of numerous technical and social innovations. Three basic functions: the watchman function, policy function and the teaching function, enable media to be “an inspector” or “a mirror”, or “an agent of social changes” that facilitates the building of other institutions so as to further economic development. We can see that the impacts of media on modernization have contributed to China’s economic growth and social changes.

While the modernization theorists stress economic growth and transformation, Dependency and Structuralist theorists attach much importance to the other social factors, such as social traditions in developing countries which include values, beliefs and customs that bound people in a society together for centuries and which face overwhelming western cultural and economic imperialism or dominance. These theories lay more emphasis on the state’s control. Chinese leaders have obviously been aware that social instability is inevitable when a country is in transition from a low level of economy. Media is therefore

used to smooth the transition, so as not to raise the social temperature. Seeing cultural imperialism, media imperialism, and news communication imperialism happening in some development countries, the Chinese government never ceases exercising influence on its media market. From this perspective, Chinese media is perceived as serving the instrumental purposes of the government, characterized by economic dynamics, political dictates and ideological traditions.

Like Marx, Chinese leaders see economic stability as the base of the society and media as one of the “superstructures” that is built on the base and solidified by it. They consider the meaning of peace to be the absence of opposition to socialism. Hence, while encouraging the media market to open, they attach great importance to ideology and solidarity. Like Antonio Gramsci, who proposes “hegemony” and regards media as “the most dynamic part of the ideological structure” in keeping social order, Chinese leaders use media as a tool to strengthen political stability and sound social order. In Marxist analysis, media is an “ideological” state apparatus and media control can contribute to maintaining good social order, social integration and conformity, so that economic activity and progress can be guaranteed.

As a result of internal commercialization and international pressure, Chinese media has become an information provider and an actor of civil society. More than just reporting news, it has become an important channel for people to express their opinions on the current situation, creating, reporting, explaining, and reflecting public opinions. News media, including on-line media, has come into being as the “Public Sphere” (Zhan, 1998)

or “Third Sphere” (Huang, 1993). According to civil society theory, media can have an impact on economic activity, political stability, and community and social development. However, with numerous institutional or non-institutional difficulties hindering the participation of immature civil society in developing countries - such as central-planning mode and authoritarian traditions, promoting the concepts of political freedoms, democracy and people’s participation would not be a quick fix.

Mao Zedong’s theory is the application of Marxism in revolutionary era in China to preserve a peaceful environment and strengthen CCP’s leadership. Deng Xiaoping’s theory and its development in Jiang Zeming’s and Hu Jintao’s eras are the application of theories of Modernization, Dependency, Marxism and Civil Society, integrated with Maoism and Confucianism, all of which contribute to the formation of “social stability” theory. This development theory has various “Chinese characteristics”.

In order to resume social stability, the reformer leaders shifted China from “socialist planned commodity economy” to a “socialist market economy” in 1992 so as to stimulate the stagnant economy. Deng (1990) said,

What I mean is that the political stability we have already achieved is not enough to rely on. Although we have to strengthen ideological and political work and stress the need for hard struggle, we cannot depend on those measures alone. The crucial factor is economic growth, which will be reflected in a gradual rise in living standards. Only when people have felt the tangible benefits that come with stability and with the current systems and policies will there be true stability. No matter how the international situation changes, so long as we can ensure appropriate economic growth, we shall stand firm as Mount Tai”. (Deng, March 3, 1990)

The 1990 reform of economic development limits the central government’s control

over economic decision-making, constraints superfluous administration, promotes creative competition among local governments and provides an array of commercial incentives to induce creative enterprises. With the free flow of capital, labour and technology, the free flow of information is required. With the opening of media market and industry as well as independence in management, media enjoys an unprecedented growth in the past three decades.

In order to maintain political stability, the state exerts control to make the leadership of political power the highest priority of the political system. The famous report “Fault Lines in China’s Economic Terrain” produced in 2003 identifies eight fault lines, which would seriously affect China’s ability to sustain rapid economic growth and predicts how much they affect China’s growth. The eight lines, or weakness, include: unemployment, poverty, social unrest, corruption, HIV-AIDS and epidemic disease, water resources and pollution, energy consumption and prices, fragile finance system and state-owned enterprises, possible shrinkage of foreign direct investment, and Taiwan and other international conflicts. Such problems have sent alarms to the government. In order to maintain political stability, on the one hand, the economic growth is put as the priority under all circumstances. On the other hand, the one-party rule is reinforced, and no political alternative is allowed – in other words, the Communist Party is the only national level of political party in effect. In order to ensure CCP’s leadership and to prevent its political system from danger, Chinese government impose mandatory regulations to control the society and develop a consensus-building mechanism among the top political leaders and

inside the public. The government realizes successful unfolding of autonomy requires a central government strong enough to integrate national and local goals together, to discipline local government officials whose corrupt practices threaten the progress of reform, and to provide rewards to those who advance it. The Party promotes socialist democracy and the sense of political participation at local level. Hence the cross-regional reporting (i.e. reporting negative news that occurs in different areas), or “*Yidi Jiandu*”, is encouraged in recent years. Media is used to advance both goals: as a tool of ideological control and a watch-dog.

In order to preserve the stability of the peoples’ ideology and sentiments, education and media are the most effective channels. The CCP educates and informs the public under a tight censorship, in which the SCIO, the GAPP, the Xinhua News Agency, the SARFT, the MII, the MPS and the MSS, etc, function differently and collaborate closely. In China, the media is a product of market and Party logic. While national policy has shifted from class struggle to economic growth, ideological control persists. Despite that market dynamics have crept into China’s subordination of journalistic media since 1979, media’s liberalization has been blocked whenever the authority perceived it as a threat. For example, newspaper editors follow the party line on the front pages but exercise more autonomy on subsequent pages, publishing sensitive information some of which is to test ideological boundaries. As a chief-editor indicates, there are “face” and “body” issues on the newspaper, where the “face” is the space devoted to Party’s content and the “body” is

for the market (Zhou, 2003) - an example is Beijing Youth News March 31 edition revealing the out-of-stock of facemasks. "Model reports" in the later stage of SARS outbreak also embody such orientation.

With inequality between the urban and rural areas, the coastal and interior provinces, the highly educated elites and poorly educated masses, and between the Han majority and the ethnic minorities, a growing social unrest has threatened the economic stability and political stability. Mass petitions to government authorities called "*xinfang*" by a certain group of people seeking the redress of their grievances have increased. Maintaining a sound social order has become an urgent task for both the central and local government, as social disorder would cause economic disability. In order to prevent a local conflict from breeding social confusion and eventually chaos, the media was not allowed to report such negative incidents. This was the reason for the SARS news blackout in Guangdong province.

The social stability concept has the following implications with regards to the functions of the media: firstly, media should ensure "stability" instead of making trouble, causing disorder or inciting rebellions against the government. China will not adopt Western-style democracy. Neither will they allow a western-style open media. To them, the western-style media are irresponsible and reckless in many ways: for example, the western-style media sometimes cause "moral panic" and they have been viewed as agents of moral indignation, generating concerns, anxiety and panic in the society (Cohen, 1973); they are unfair or over-reacting sometimes; they occasionally generate the erosion of

public confidence in government (Heise, 1985). The profit-driven media lose their credibility because of reduced accuracy, bias, or excessive sensationalism. Secondly, the news media have a responsibility to inform the public, to document, report and reflect the views of the public, and to act as a watchdog over government (sometimes in the government's internal monitoring mechanism, such as Xinhua's "internal reference", or IRM). Thirdly, however, the news media should not give rise to social instability at any cost. Hence, the news reporting should not convey information that, in the short- or long-term, hurt the communist system or reduce the confidence in the government. For instance, if the news media consistently undermine people's confidence in the system or the government, it will be more difficult for the government to run the country.

In conclusion, theoretically, media development can foster economic stability by promoting growth in the industry and improving information infrastructure. It contributes to the process of China's better governance, political civilization, and civil society development. The Chinese media under reform has proved to contribute to such development. It also promotes China's national spirits and the Party's ideologies, which foster social solidarity and social cohesion to a certain degree. Social stability is the foundation of all progress in the Chinese society. In order to achieve this development goal, the Chinese media, including the news media, plays an important role.

6.2 In Reality

After the collapse of the USSR and its Eastern European satellites, Chinese leaders recognized that their models were neither lasting nor universal, and then China started to build a new variety of socialism: single Communist party rule with a market economy. The government seemed to acknowledge that the socialist model of a centrally planned economy would never work. The conventional socialist model was proved to improve the distribution of wealth and makes the society more egalitarian, but it resulted in a society where everyone becomes equally poor. China turned into market-oriented economies in 1979. What China has been doing shows that economic needs have to be met first, even though it is contrary to the theory of orthodox Marxist or Maoist socialism. China's model has dramatically developed their economies, while politically China has maintained a single party system.

There are two main strands in the discussion of China's development. One strand is on the rise of China as a great power, highlighting its rapid economic growth, expanding share of the global market, strong and sound financial capability, ever-increasing technological advancements, and the rejuvenation of Chinese cultures home and abroad. The other strand is on the deconstruction of the central power and the disintegration of the economic and social governance, emphasizing the rise of local governance, the emergence of a systematic control comprised organizational, institutional and ideological control, the problems of corruption, environment, human rights and social instability. From the discussion in the

previous chapters, neither is the government's power or control disappearing in China, nor is it yet an authoritarian state with great power, but rather China is in the midst of unique transformation. In some cases, the development's goal is to limit the government's control, such as in its marketization reform; while in some other cases, the development's goal is to maintain its control, such as its ideological control on the cultural sector. The media is an industry enjoying great financial freedom and representing commercial interests of the authority and people, and a sector remaining in the government's regulatory framework and requiring continued negotiations with the power.

The media development in China has mirrored China's unique transformation:

China has tried hard to catch up with the world's advanced level of development, and take the path of modernization as a key strategy to development. The Chinese government views a growing economy as vital to maintaining social stability. The goal of modernization has been an unalterable target since PRC was newly established, and such a goal has been widely and effectively driven the people to pursuit a modernized China especially after 1978, when Deng Xiaoping announced the official launch of the "Four Modernizations" with a "Three-step" development strategy at the Third Plenum of the Eleventh Central Committee. In Dengism, traditional socialism was replaced with "Socialism with Chinese Characteristics". Such a development strategy has led to the opening up of economic revival and a rising GDP, which can be shown from the chart in the

below:

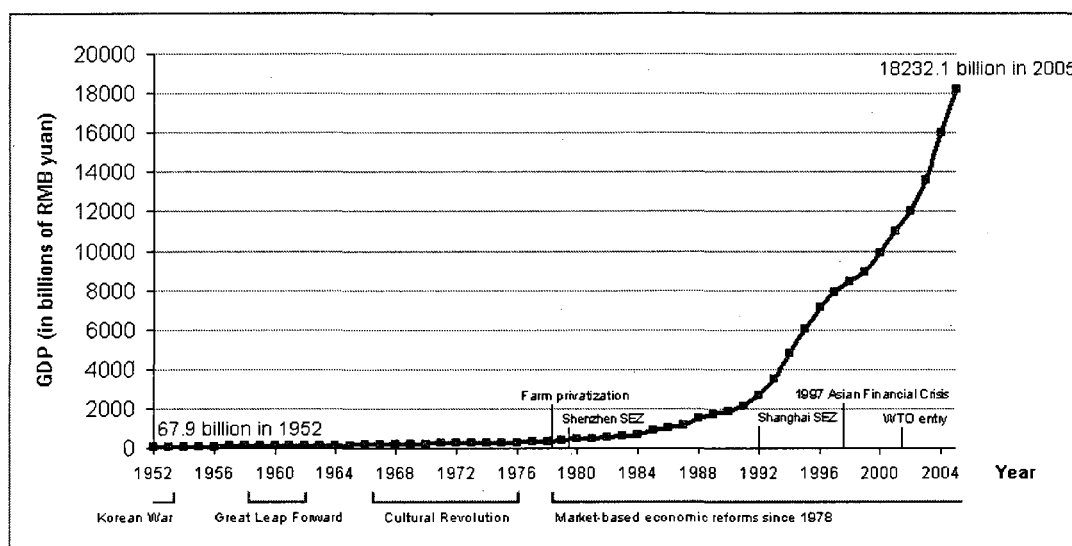


Figure 14: PRC's Nominal Gross Domestic Product (GDP) between 1952 to 2005.

Note: Reproduced from *Wikipedia*. Retrieved May, 28, 2010, from

<<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Prc1952-2005gdp.gif>>

In the period of 1978-2005, Chinese GDP per capita rose from 2.7 percent to 15.7 percent of US GDP per capita¹⁶⁶; per capita incomes grew at 6.6 percent a year (Heston and Sicular, 2008); real wages increased six-fold (Cai, 2008). Trade and foreign investment flows have been major factors in China's booming economy. From 1950 to 2002, China's first economic modernization index had increased from 7 to 22 (Chinese Academy of Sciences, 2005).

¹⁶⁶ In 2005, Chinese GDP per capita reached about US\$ 1,700.

Bearing commercialization incentives, privatization, administrative fragmentation, technological advancements and evolving trend of globalization, 1990s media reform turned the media to meet the requirements of the propaganda department and the market economy. From the charts of the numbers of newspapers, magazines and televisions in Chapter 4, we can see that the Chinese media has been going through a revolution in modernization: enormous increase in growth in the media market resulting from revenue from soaring readership or viewership and advertising, financial operations (Zhao, 1998), number of outlets, variety of offerings (Polumbaum, 1994), rise of weekend editions and metropolitan newspapers that emphasize news of the interest of the public, and relative autonomy in the market-oriented newspaper (Zhao, 1998). As media industry becomes one of China's key economic drives, the continued marketization efforts, associated with considerable independence, and the changing relationship between readers or audience and the media, enforced media's relatively independent position between the state and the public with the functions of informing, surveillance (or watchdog), entertaining, and holding the society together. Competition inside the media market has created a closer relationship between the media companies and public. A more informed public has proved more difficult to be kept in the dark. The increasing number of users of technologies especially Internet creates more access to information and further promotes media growth. In this context, the propaganda department's ability to use the mass media to control the Chinese people is weakening. From this perspective, with reduced government control, with increasing growth and expansion, media contributes to China's economic stability and

helps further social stability. According to Tang's comparison (2005), China's media growth during 1979 to 2002 almost matched that of societies that had undergone democratization and multiparty elections.

China's development is not only highly related to general economic development, but also political development and social development. Chinese media is endowed with the commodity attribute, the political attribute, the information attribute, and the cultural attribute (cf. chapter 4). On the one hand, Chinese media have furthered political development and social development through preserving political stability and promoting social solidarity, which can bring about sound social order. As Tang's studies finds, media is effective in promoting political mobilization when it enjoys a higher degree of media independence in financial capability, and editorial and journalistic authority on the media content. The reform decades in the 90s not only made media more capable in gaining regime support, in reinforcing official ideology and in strengthening nationalist sentiment, but also encouraged intra-system participation, political efficacy and civic values through the channel of media (cf. Chapter 4). As discussed in Chapter 2 (cf. section 2.1.4), participation is an essential condition of solidarity in today's society. Chinese news media have been acting as a form of civil society, contributing to social solidarity (cf. Chapter 4). Tang's findings and the World Value Survey (WVS) both show a high level of confidence in the government in Chinese society for the period of 1990-2000, which is brought about through Chinese media (cf. Chapter 4).

On the other hand, Chinese media have accelerated the speed of the

informationization and globalization, which led to the country's cultural and social development. In this regard, Chinese media has "two hands": For one thing, media has been one of the most dynamic tools to grasp global information and development, leading China to the road of globalization; also through media, there has been an obvious unprecedented tide of large scale of western concepts (such as individualism and liberalism), liberal values (such as autonomy and freedom of the individuals, the rule of law, and self-management of society,) and cultures (such as public interests, civic cultures and pop cultures). For another, as these pro-western tendencies are hard to resist in the process of globalization, Chinese media actively propagates Chinese ethics, values and cultures, and enhances the Party's ideology. Such a conscious effort is to ensure the process of modernization can develop more smoothly - with less chaos, to strengthen the propaganda apparatus, and to legitimize the leadership.

From the discussion of media effects, we find that Chinese media, like media in other countries, is able to bear social responsibilities in the societal transition and has a powerful long-lasting effect on the country, the government, and the people (Wills, 2007). Without engaged media to serve as a source of information for government agencies and for the public, the country would be in conflict. In the SARS case, for example, very limited, or untrue, information impeded the country handling the outbreak, resulting in economic stagnant, political instability, social disorder and a damaged international reputation. However, later the less censored open media brought the country back to peace, order and prosperity by reducing the social tension; it helped the government regain trust and

confidence, and it made the government engage in self-examination and finally establish the “news briefing and spokesperson system”; it ensured the smooth flow of information and informed people of the prevention and global battle against this mysterious disease, as well as shaped people’s attitudes of the media, of their government, of the use of technology and of the society. Especially in today’s globalization, these roles are indispensable.

Moreover, media can establish cross-sectoral alliances and build social solidarity. For example, in the SARS case, the media's daily updated news coverage of the outbreak allied with the government, medical experts, media workers and other groups of people together - as it also reported the SARS development in other countries - people gradually calmed down as they realized that they were not alone and that the world and their government were fighting against this disease with no efforts spared. Its critical news coverage of the government’s mishandling of the case promoted civic awareness, and regained trust from the people because they became informed of the “mysterious” epidemic.

The media’s role in China’s transformation is also reflected in the relationships between the government and the society, between the propaganda and the media workers, and between China and the international community. The expanding and mounting interaction between the government and the society, the voices for media freedom from the more informed public, and the pressures from the international community to open the media market and remove interference, have compelled the government to develop a systematic and standardized system of control in the propaganda sphere. Chinese media, in

addition to meeting the public's demands, have to please the propaganda department. Often, whether to cover the information, what to report and when to release the information are critical factors to take into consideration¹⁶⁷. As a consequence, editors and journalists expressing professionalism cultivate a flexible "cat-and-mouse strategy" on sensitive or controversial issues, for instance, HIV/AIDS spread in China, natural disasters, pollution issues, social unrests, etc. The SARS case clearly illustrates the media's weakness and strength in such interaction. In the initial stage of SARS breakout, under the propaganda's instruction, almost all media kept silent on the epidemic despite the public's augmented anxiety, which exacerbated the social tensions that had been percolating throughout the society. Some non-official media, such as *Beijing Youth News*, without any headline, on the non-front page, briefly described the panic purchasing and out-of-stock masks. Such reporting did imply the serious situation of SARS but the impact was limited. This reflected the media's fear to provoke the propaganda guardians so as to avoid punishment. In spite of the directive not to report on SARS, some experienced media editors such as Hu Shuli of *Caijing Magazine* sent journalists to secretly interview medical workers and published the stories right after the government released the control, as she was confident that such censorship could not last long. After April 20, there was a SARS information explosion in all kinds of media, with numerous critical reports and commentaries on economic loss, irresponsible government officials and the public's grievance, as well as

¹⁶⁷ An example is Xiamen's PX chemical plant project. "Official Media on popular opinion in the Xiamen PX Affair".

<http://www.danwei.org/state_media/xiamen_px_sms_china_newsweek.php>. Chinese version on <<http://www.greenlaw.org.cn/files/reports/WangYongchen.pdf>>

“model reports” on government officials and media workers. Social tension was thereafter greatly reduced. The daily updated reporting also helped relieve the tension between WTO and the Chinese government (cf. Chapter 5).

The current Chinese media is two-faced. He (2006), Brady (2007) and Esarey (2006) are right that the Party became more skilful in enhancing and strengthening the propaganda apparatus. Tang's research and analysis reveal that the media has played a relatively positive role in reinforcing official ideology and political power, and in conveying public consciousness and critical opinions. These studies find that Chinese media has furthered economic development, promoted the global diffusion of technical innovations and social improvement, generated civilized, socialized and active citizens. Its multiple roles benefit the whole society with a certain degree of transparency and objective criticism, as it has become “an inspector” or “a mirror” that takes on the responsibility of “watchdog function” (cf. Section 4.2.3.3). Compared to what China was and what the media was before 1978, this development is a winding but progressing process that would not exist without China's economic growth. Such development does not guarantee press freedom which means the media is and will be still under control. Although in Chapter II of the Chinese Constitution, Article 35 writes, “Citizens of the People's Republic of China enjoy freedom of speech, of the press, of assembly, of association, of procession and of demonstration” (Constitution of the People's Republic of China, 1993), and although China expressed their willingness to work with UN human rights rapporteur and the United Nations in the future¹⁶⁸, the Media

¹⁶⁸ “PRC FM Spokesman says China willing to cooperate with UN Rights Reporter”, AFP, December 5, 2005

Law legitimating the press freedom does not exist, after years of appeal. The government's control is sometimes tight, and sometimes loose, depending on specific topics and timing. The over-reacting control hinders the nation's efforts to further development through social stability. Instead of imposing tight control, the government should allow the media more freedom and openness without sacrificing social stability.

6.3 What Remains in Question

In the introduction, it mentions that this paper will examine the media's integration in China's development process in the reform era. A few related points have been extracted for other media research.

First, there was a conjecture that the market would push the Chinese media towards a liberal free model. This conjecture has fallen through as the government developed a more complicated censorship regime. This research has shown that media's integration in China's development is related closely with the government's control. Since 1978, although Chinese media have been making a slow transition from a Party mouthpiece to a market-oriented model, the Chinese Communist Party have never loosen its strong control of the media through regulatory, administrative and other informal means. China thus has its own media system that combines elements of control and capitalist marketization and

competition. Market forces alone cannot guarantee a free liberal media.

Another point is that media growth does not represent media development. In China, media development faces obstacles mainly due to its fragmented legal frameworks and a constraining political system. The media is not able to break free from its political constraints. Under these circumstances, there are questions about how and whether the media will benefit the public interest. Specifically, can and should media support a growth at the cost of the public's interest, for example, by restricting some types of information when directed to do so?

Another question is whether globalization could eventually push the Chinese government to remove interference from the media. In the era of globalization, many countries make relentless efforts to maintain control over the media by keeping out unwanted signals and information - explicitly in the name of "national identity" (Price , 2004, p. 13). Democratic countries, like Canada, and democratic developing countries, like India, limit the freedom of foreign media in their own borders. China is not alone. India - a country that is often contrasted with China – made it clear that the rise of foreign media had imposed adverse impacts on the nation's own values and cultures¹⁶⁹. Since independence, India has strived to maintain the state's monopoly on its Broadcast Bill of 1997, "any licensee, terrestrial or satellite would be obliged to ensure that programming would not

¹⁶⁹ In 1997, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting of India released an official report decrying the adverse impact of large number of foreign satellite TV channels on Indian values and culture.

“offend against good taste or decency” (Price, 2004, p. 35). As religious issues are sensitive in India, the draft statute also put emphasis whereby programs should avoid “improper exploitation of religious susceptibilities” or offending the “religious views and beliefs of those belonging to a particular religion or religious denomination” (ibid). Statutory standards include that “due emphasis is given in the programs to promote values of national integration, religious harmony, scientific temper and Indian culture” (Mazlish and Iriye, 2004, p. 64). CNN’s negotiations with India fell, as India would not allow CNN in unless CNN agreed that Indian Broadcasting would be the core provider of domestic news (ibid). Examples like this abound. Hence, globalization does not mean government’s control is lost. It might lead to “justified” and assertive government action and control. Time and more thorough research should be done in this regard.

Another issue is on China’s censorship and mistreatment of journalists, which have raised suspicions around the world. A few months after the SARS information explosion, three managers of the well-known liberal newspaper, Southern Metropolis Daily, were arrested for having revealed a new SARS case in the south of China “without the agreement of the authorities” (Reporters Without Borders, 2005). In 2006, the National People’s Congress was considering legislation that would fine domestic and foreign media for unauthorized reporting of “sudden incidents”, including citizen protests and riots (Kahn, 2006). In 2009, China was found to have jailed the most journalists for the 11th year in a

row. Of the 136 jailed journalists worldwide, there were 24 in China (Committee to Protect Journalists, 2009). This problem has long been recognized and discussed world-wide. On World Press Freedom Day in 2003, Mr. Koïchiro Matsuura, Director-General of UNESCO, said, “whenever one journalist is exposed to violence, intimidation or arbitrary detention because of his or her commitment to conveying the truth, all citizens are deprived of the right to express themselves and act according to their conscience” (UNESCO, 2003, ¶ 5). What have been done to protect the journalists’ rights? At the end of 2006, the UN Security Council unanimously passed Resolution 1738 on the protection of journalists “in conflict”. The resolution calls for every country to end impunity and to prosecute those responsible for serious violations of journalists (UN, 27 December, 2006). The Resolution only addresses the safety of journalists “in conflict” and it encourages support for the society to protect the journalists. The Resolution seems to be unpractical considering China’s political environment. The international community could play a crucial role by strengthening international instruments to ensure the safety and respect of journalists. More specific solutions to increase the safety of Chinese journalists should be looked at.

What questions with regards to “Social stability” remain unanswered?

As discussed, “Social stability” is a Chinese development concept, which the country clings to in the process of development. China seems to be moving in multiple directions at the same time, with no clearly discernible pattern. In other words, China is still looking for

a development model, based on the concept of “social stability”. The difficulty in reaching a balanced judgment on China, as well as Chinese media, is exacerbated because of the complexities and unpredictability of China’s situation. On the “complexities”, unlike the former Soviet Union, China has been able to pursue economic growth and development and maintain control in the nation. As most scholars agree, contemporary China is a regime with one ruling party and a free market, embracing some western principles and trampling on others. For instance, Saich (1992) finds that the conceptualization of the socialist market economy has been amended to include political control and stability; and, as Dirlik (2005) posits, China has become a paradigm of development that was the product of capitalism, thus turning socialism into a cover for policies of development inspired by capitalism. As for “unpredictability”, the frequency of constitutional change is an indicator: China has promulgated the four state constitutions after the establishment (in 1954, 1975, 1978 and 1982). After 1982, the constitution has been amended four times: in 1988, 1993, 1999 and 2004. The frequency of constitutional change reflects the scope and pace of change in China and suggests the transitional nature of the state (Benewick and Wingrove, 1999).

There seems to be an international consensus that China should be built into a country with prosperity, transparency, democracy and rule of law and a country that embraces human rights, so that the country comes to fit more smoothly into the world order. Can or should the Western “human rights” thinking - including a free and open media and the

Western notion of development in China be applied to Chinese reality? There is no doubt that western countries have given full play to the humankind's ability to conquer the nature, and have enhanced individual freedoms to an unprecedented level. But western countries are faced with many problems where they appear helpless. For example, inside western societies, modern social defects and evils are hard to cure by Western culture: the immeasurable gap between the rich and the poor, cultural and moral degeneration, the loss of family values and individual identity, alienation, and environmental damage. The western media is also criticized by the local society and people in the rest of the world (not only Asia, but also Eastern Europe, Africa and the Middle East), because the western media is pro-western on various political, cultural and economic issues. If there are flaws in the western models, why should these models be applied to China?

This paper has also tried to examine whether civil society is "another development" model in China. No doubt, China's development, based on "Social stability", includes the elements of civil society and human development, such as "people-centered", "social justice", "democracy", etc., which are embodied in social stability theory (cf. Chapter 3). But "people-centered" first of all is to make sure the right to live – without poverty and meeting basic needs, which is based on economy development. In other words, the development of civil society cannot be separated from economic development. China's rapid economic growth has sharply improved Chinese living standards and helped raise

hundreds of millions of people out of extreme poverty: From 1978 to 2001, the absolute poverty declined from 41 percent of the population to just 5 percent (Brandt et al, 2008).

What is stressed in the social stability theory is that if there is no stable economic growth, social instability would occur. As a consequence, not only would millions of people be seriously affected, but the rest of the world would not have access to the Chinese market which would cause more poverty. It is easy to criticize China's lack of freedom of speech, a protected human rights, while ignoring its vast achievements in advancing other human rights, such as reduction of poverty, access to education and health. From the perspectives of poverty elimination, China has contributed to the world's number one human rights development. Chinese people have increased access to a healthier life style and education. This paper cannot prove that civil society alone could remove the hurdles in a developing country.

From the earlier discussion, we can see that the western notions of development cannot be applied to China, and the Chinese government would not allow it. They have been learning from the west and gradually establishing its own model. According to the concept of "socialism with Chinese characteristics", socialism can only be built on a highly developed economy. Currently, the system is highly dependent on the performance of the Chinese economy; in order to sustain economic growth and development, the government must introduce other reforms that would change the structure of the market and the society.

Time should be devoted to studying what development model it will be in the end.

Based on the discussion above, to achieve China's development goal, what will be the "socially proper" use of the media? The news media can be a powerful force for change in both developed and developing countries. In China, it can have an important role in supporting economic growth by stimulating marketization incentives. The access to information raises the level of the resources available to individuals and social groups, to increase their capabilities, to engage them in the economy. Such an access enables new means of production, interaction, participation and collaboration, which can lead to new forms of growth. Besides, where it is able to effectively fulfill the role of watchdog, it can improve governance by raising citizen awareness of social issues, enabling citizens to hold their governments accountable, curbing corruption, and creating a civic forum for debate. Indeed, the access to information is so important for the individual and the nation that society would turn into chaos without it. The right to credible information and freedom of expression are essential to ensure transparent and accountable governance and to make it possible for all parts of a population to have access to, and participate in, the national development of a country. These elements are also important in order to decrease perceptions of threat (such as in the case of SARS), to encourage active participation and to create more stable and sustainable societal structures. News media can also amplify the voices of the public so that their interests can be included in the government's development

agenda, which in a way helps to preserve the leadership and a sound social order. Giving all these functions and uses of news media, the government should review as a matter of priority all legislation and regulations relating to the media, including foreign media and the Internet, and where necessary revoke or amend them to ensure compliance with the public's interests. There should be an independent organ of the public service monitoring and protecting the media's independence in news reporting. There should be a union of media workers representing their rights and powers. There should be a direct channel between the public and the media which is beyond the government's control. Social stability can be furthered when the media workers use media professionally and when the media is properly monitored by the government, with a priority of the public's interest.

Last but not least, the question "what will be an appropriate model in China's development" has been among the most frequently asked questions. As a developing country, China still has a relative low level of economic development and social development, faced with many difficulties and challenges in the realization of civil rights and political rights. It is obvious that the government is taking various measures to resolve them. They are trying to build China into a dynamic, stable and orderly society based on social stability. It is very encouraging that China has caught-up and established strong industrial economies in its three-decade development, while at the same time making breakthroughs in exploring its own development paradigm. The findings of this paper

confirm that China's media have significant roles in maintaining social stability. Progress in media development, including media consumption and diversification, has helped resolve a series of social problems and contributed to some social improvement. To a great degree, control has to give way to privatization and decentralization, and the need to release information for market profit and for the desire to present China as a modern state. Participation becomes active and diversified because media has been seeking to become a driving force of social change and the public becomes more informed and independent-minded. Globalization is advocated by the media, and is partly enabled by the technological advancement associated with the media development. When there is a news blackout, social instability occurs.

This thesis does not try to extrapolate future implications, nor does it try to generalize the findings. This thesis only serves to explain the roles news media can play in furthering social stability. The answer is that media can act as a catalyst for economic development and human development, which serves China's development goal of social stability. Even so, the scope of the paper presented is limited and more research must be done to study the effects of news media and the implications of China's development, maintaining social stability.

Chapter 7 Conclusion

In order to assess the roles of Chinese media on China's development, this dissertation set out to achieve the following three objectives: firstly, to explore the application of western development theories in China and to define China's development goal of social stability; secondly, to examine the background, origins, dynamics, policies, processes and consequences of China's media development and to understand the complexity of China's media under a system that combines elements of control and marketization; thirdly, to examine the roles of news media in furthering China's development through social stability in China's reform era, through a case study of news reporting of the SARS outbreak. From these objectives, the study seeks the impacts of media on maintaining social stability. This chapter returns to these objectives and re-examines the research.

China's development is "socialism with Chinese characteristics" which has led to massive social and economic transformations. This research justifies that, along with these transformations, social stability has become China's development goal, the concept of which assimilates western development theories - Modernization, Dependency, Structuralism, Marxism and Civil Society theory -- and draws strategically from the endogenous Chinese development ideologies and traditional Chinese culture. "Social stability" is born out of Mao Zedong Thoughts and Deng Xiaoping Theory, both of which were developed from Marxism. Comprehensive, broad and somewhat abstract term as the

term is, the paper defines it from different angles: political, economic, cultural, ideological and social development. Basically, it combines sustained economic growth, political stability, sound social order, stable national and cultural identities, and active civic participation. It is a theoretical concept intended to solve various social problems and to guide the practices of socialist construction. For the nation, maintaining social stability is not only a goal, but also a means to an end, as well as an ongoing process in the development.

This paper discusses multi-level impacts of media in fostering development, from the perspectives of “development studies” and of “media studies”. There is little ambiguity about the nature and functions of the media before the marketization reform as “mouthpiece” of the Party. But in the past three reform decades, the functions of the media have been varied. The study, and many others, has shown that media development has been closely related with the country’s economic, political and social development. Stevenson (1994, p. 105-112) finds that after the reform, the media falls more coherently into the Development Concept. Evidences in the discussion of China’s media suggest that Chinese media during the reform era, while enjoying much more independence, freedom and openness, has contributed to economic growth, political stability, a sound social order and stable national and cultural identities. In other words, media is an effective tool to maintain social stability in the process of the country’s development.

The study also reveals that the government still exercises various control over the

media system. The government and the party encourage China's commercialized media because they want to develop the media as an industry. But as they are concerned that a western-style free news media would cause social instability, they persistently control the media. Sometimes they over-react and impose excess control over the reporting. However, as many cases including the case studies of the reporting of the SARS outbreak have shown, such tight control is unnecessary. Social stability can be preserved with more flow of information.

This study integrates media studies and development studies on three fronts. First, conventional development covers areas such as poverty, health and education. Generally, this broad concept is reflected in the definition of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) adopted by the International Community during the UN Summit in 2000. Yet, this study looks at the role of media in the development world, as media is a strategic element in human and social developments. For example, the media is the main tool to inform and educate people when diseases such as SARS and H1N1 spread across countries. Being excluded in the MDGs does not mean that the subject is unimportant. The discussion in Chapter 2 demonstrates various impacts of media in different development paradigms.

Second, on a theoretical level, this thesis dispels a traditional way of discussing a development concept that comes out of western literature. By including the Chinese development concept of "social stability", this paper proves that development is such a broad concept that we need to refine it to specific points, as well as to apply it to the local

society. The study has looked at the intra-relationships between “development”, “social stability” and the media. By doing so, we find that there are overlapping extensions between the concept of “development” in different paradigms and “social stability”, and that media play various roles.

Third, this research contributes quantifiable data that suggest a collaboration of government and media in pursuit of the common goal of preserving social stability: for instance, to strive for economic development, to advocate modernization (marketization, western knowledge, skills and technologies, to propagate the party’s ideologies and national sentiments, to promote greater watchdog journalism to ensure other social organs to function properly (such as covering anti-corruption topics), etc. Similar findings have been made as follows:

A notion to which most Westerners would object, the control itself does not necessarily mean the stagnation of the media system. In fact, reasonable control can encourage the development of the media system. (Thierstein and Kamalipour, 2000, p. 206)

The state can play no role in promoting good journalism and genuine watchdog journalism can only exist within an adversarial state-press framework. In fact, three decades of controlled commercialization of the press has greatly increased journalistic autonomy but has not pushed the Chinese press into an adversarial relationship with the Party. (Cho, 2007, p. 274)

Fourth, the study poses a few questions with regards to development and media studies, as articulated in the previous chapter. It is necessary to have a wide-ranging

re-examination of what type of media should be looked for to help achieve our development goals. The development studies have given us a reasonable large number of examples and discussion that development cannot be free of government control. While the western free media have been criticized for their negative social effects, the Chinese media are condemned to be under government's control. Since no control is wrong, is there any parameter, or standard, to measure what kind of control is appropriate? Since the total absence of control is unacceptable in China, it must search for more appropriate methods to serve both its central concept of social stability and the new demands for an open, freer media that will serve the new policies of economic growth.

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