



CONFERENCE REPORT

The growth of media in China

– and its impact on political and economic development in China

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Conference organised by International Media Support, the Danish National Commission for UNESCO and Copenhagen Business School



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1 Introduction



Media in China have a tremendous influence on public opinion and Chinese politics. Several hundred broadcasters, more than 2,000 newspapers and magazines and countless web-media compete fiercely for attention and over a lucrative advertising market. Simultaneously, the state is constantly re-assessing the media policies and the control, on the media in general, as well as on individual media practitioners.

New technology has led to an enormous increase in access to information. Are Chinese media already acting as an independent 'fourth estate'? What does investigative journalism mean to Chinese journalists? What do the Chinese government and leaders of Chinese media institutions think about the media? How do modern Chinese media define their role?

Along these lines IMS and the Danish National Commission for UNESCO organized a Conference in Copenhagen on November 28, 2008. The event brought together more than 100 international journalists and representatives from universities, media organizations, governmental organizations and non governmental organizations.

Secretary General of the Danish National Commission for UNESCO, Mrs. Bodil M. Ullerup opened the conference and welcomed the participants of the conference. She thanked IMS for the cooperation in organizing the conference and gave a special welcome to the international guests including Mr. Sun Yusheng.

This booklet consists of the presentations and recommendations coming out of the conference.

2 Opening remarks

By Jens Linde, IMS Chairperson

It is a real pleasure to welcome our distinguished guests to Copenhagen.

We are proud to have Mr. Sun Yusheng, vice-president of CCTV, among us, probably the highest ranking media executive from China to visit Denmark in recent times - and some of the world's most prominent academic analysts on Chinese media, including Professor Hu Zhengrong, the Vice President of the Communication University of China, and Professor Yuezhi Zhao, the Canada Research Chair, School of Communication of Simon Fraser University in Canada.

I'd also like to welcome Professor Hugo de Burgh and Dr Tong Jingrong from the China Media Centre at Westminster University in London, which we all know is arguably the leading European institution dealing with media in China.

We at IMS are looking forward to cementing our collaboration with you all in the coming months.

We have organized this event together with the Danish National Commission for UNESCO to raise awareness about how the media functions in China today; how the authorities regard the media and how the media regard themselves. There is limited knowledge about this here and so much for us to learn.

Of course we often hear about the individuals who are punished for commentary that would not be an offense here - and although we disagree on these matters, we also understand that there is a tremendously important development underway in the Chinese media community that we must try harder to understand and interact with.

IMS is proud to be part of the organizing team for this event. IMS is also currently working to support not only dialogue between the Chinese and northern European media communities - but also to establish a couple of small programs in support of Chinese journalists; in particular in the field of environmental reporting and climate change reporting.

The first team of Chinese journalists will come to Copenhagen next year in preparation for COP15 - the United Nations Climate Change Conference - and we will continue also in the longer run, using IMS experience from other parts of the world in supporting some of the thousands of ambitious journalists in China to further develop their trade and engage in exchanges with their European colleagues in recognition of the fact that both sides will have lots to learn from each-other.

Let me again welcome our honored guests from China and elsewhere and I hope that we have a day of challenging and productive deliberations.

Thank you.

3 The reform of Chinese Television and the rise of New Media

Presentation by: Mr Sun Yusheng, Vice-President, China Central Television (CCTV) Beijing



Mr. Sun Yusheng

Sun Yusheng began his presentation by mentioning the fact that year 2008 is the year of the Olympic Games and also the 30th anniversary for China's reform and opening-up. He mentioned that China is the second socialist country to host the Olympic Games and that the first one doesn't exist anymore.

When the Chinese Olympic Games were covered it was an unprecedented coverage. In China there were 10 billion viewings in 16 days and 2700 hours of sports coverage. The viewer rate was 59%.

The fact that China could host the Olympic Games is a direct result of China's reforms and opening-up. These reforms opening-up have changed China and the world and the lives of the Chinese people.

Sun Yusheng also mentioned the fact that at present there are four million cars in Beijing. Cars are not something to brag about but the number of cars still gives some indications. Out of these four million cars 80% are private cars. Just 15 years ago even well educated people like Sun Yusheng himself never dreamed of having their own cars. During the preparation for the Olympic Games more than 280 billion RMB was invested in road construction and renovation.

In 2008 the Chinese GDP was close to four trillion USD. This year China will surpass Germany and become the third largest economy in the world. Last year China was the fourth largest economy in the world. It has taken 30 years to develop like this. There have been worries in the West regarding the consequences of this development. To this Sun Yusheng could only say that the Chinese development is a peaceful rise. As an example he mentioned the great wall and the fact that this wall was built for military purposes – but its function was defensive. The Chinese people are not aggressive, Sun Yusheng said. China hopes for tolerant understanding. Along these lines Sun Yusheng further explained that in Chinese the character for trust is composed of the

character for person and the character for word. This means that a person's word can be trusted.

At present there are two main considerations related to social development - efficiency versus equity. At present priority is on efficiency to improve quality of life with due consideration to equity. Sun Yusheng emphasised that democracy needs time and process. So, he continued, if some Westerners think that democracy and rule of law do not develop fast enough in China, he hopes for their understanding and tolerance.

Sun Yusheng then explained how the 15 years of reform in television journalism has promoted the process of democracy and rule of law. The reforms in television journalism started in 1993. Sun Yusheng has participated in the entire process. Before that time party leaders asked secretaries and journalists to report dinner parties and banquets so that they could see it on television when they came home. The style of reporting and the style of speech have changed. Now focus is on timely quality news. Sun Yusheng then talked about the programme "Focus" (Jiaodian fangtan), which shows a change of focus from investigating social problems only to also investigating public authorities. He gave an example from Chang Jiang (The long River). In 1998 local authorities had built luxury residential areas at a price 15 times higher than ordinary buildings. The residential area was ready for sale when "Focus" discovered that there were no state authority permissions. Zhu Rongji consequently said "even if these buildings were made of gold they would have to be demolished".

The programme "Focus" attracted great attention from both USA and Europe. People were surprised that Chinese media now feature such programmes. The programme has received attention from three prime ministers and as a consequence of this program; the Chinese government has established a "problem solving mechanism". Later the former US Secretary of State Madame Albright enquired about "Focus". In 2007 the government pointed out that "power must be exercised under open sunlight" which meant that issues should be brought out into the open. People's lawful rights should be protected through a system of participation, expression, supervision and information.

The 30 years of reform and opening-up was initiated by economy. So was the television reform. The system changed 30 years ago - the television broadcasting started to change 15 years ago.

Sun Yusheng explained how CCTV is different from many media in the West. CCTV is state owned but gets its funds from the market. CCTV has relative independence regarding program development. At present there are 36 channels. Revenue comes from the market and advertising instead of direct government funding. In 2008 CCTV has earned a total of three billion US dollars

The 50th anniversary of Chinese television - today and the future

This year China's television celebrates its 50th anniversary. The characteristics of Chinese television are that it is state-owned with a single profit model - the funding comes from the market. In China there are now 294 TV stations, 1283 channels, four million TV sets and 1.2 billion viewers. TV is still the most influential media in China. All channels are free and everybody has access to at least 50 free channels of which some are local. The total advertisement income in China is 24.87 billion USD. Television advertisement income constitutes 25% i.e. 6.63 billion USD.

A serious consequence related to the supply of so many channels is that all 1000 channels are rather similar. The specialised channels are NOT specialised which

means that we find competition among rather homogeneous channels. The main content of Chinese television is news, films, TV series and entertainment

CCTV also has a legal channel. This channel needs to broadcast TV series to get high viewer rating. There are no Discovery or National Geographic channels and there are only few science and education channels. The quality of these specialised channels needs to be improved.

At present production and broadcasting constitute one entity. In future production and broadcasting should be separated. Another future development is digital pay TV.

The rise of New Media – what is New Media?

Sun Yusheng then posed the question: What is New Media? Is it the Internet, the mobile phone and other new technology? If so what will the future New Media technology be called? To Sun Yusheng, New Media is an operation fully international and fully commercialised. On September 14, 1987 China sent its first email via dial-up. It took a long time for it to arrive at its destination – Germany. Germany received it on September 20 – 5 days later. At that time Germany had had Internet for two years. Some other European countries had had Internet for 4 years. The Internet changed the whole media environment in China. In 1994 China officially joined the Internet. In 1996 the first Internet Company was established.

Now, Sun Yusheng explained, New Media is extremely important to express public opinion. In 2003 an event took place in Canton. A well-educated and employed man had been found on the streets. He was believed to be a homeless person and was put to a detention centre where he was beaten to death. The Internet and subsequently other media featured this tragic event. The event led to national concern and eventually to a governmental rescue plan for beggars and homeless. The original policy was deportation and imprisonment. The new policy was rescue and aid. It is a clear example of how the Internet can affect government decisions.

In 2007 the New Media had matured. The year saw three spectacular events: The execution of Saddam Hussein filmed by mobile phone, the South China Tiger issue and the sale of the Olympic New Media rights. The execution of Saddam Hussein filmed on mobile phone was a serious challenge as it proved that in future it will be difficult to avoid unintended broadcasting. The South China Tiger event proved to be the making of a peasant who was too tempted to receive a reward for filming the thought-to-be-extinct animal. He had put a paper model of the tiger in the woods and put it on the Internet. The sale of the Olympic broadcasting rights via New Media secured open competition. Had this not been the case the price for the rights might have been much higher.

The ethical problems related to New Media are eroticism, reality and violence. Sun Yusheng mentioned the so-called "human flesh search engine" as an example. This "human flesh search engine" searches for the real identity of people who have witnessed events or crimes on TV. An example was a little girl who's otherwise concealed identity had been put on the Internet. The result was that she was unable to go to school.

A strategic Adjustment – Internationalisation

Sun Yusheng concluded by pointing towards the future. Next year CCTV will have a new office building. Internationalisation will start from here. The building is beautiful classic architecture. Some locals call the building "big pants". A new adjustment to the existing strategy is to integrate New Media. CCTV also has Internet media. At present there are 253 million netizens in China. 231 million netizens watched the Olympic Games online during the

games. All games were broadcast live – 3800 hours in total. 89.9% of all netizens watched the games.

CCTV aims at becoming a world-renowned broadcaster with an international news network. This will allow for a global spread of Chinese culture and hopefully also a better understanding of Chinese culture.

Discussion

The audience and the discussants posed the following questions: The Chinese leadership is concerned about the right of the Chinese people to express themselves freely. How does CCTV promote and protect this right and how does CCTV distinguish what people are allowed and not allowed to say? Will censorship of the Chinese government continue for another 10 years? What is the influence of New Media on CCTV?

Sun Yusheng pointed out that Chinese politics have made great improvements. To secure continued improvements, the media should guide society. The media have the obligation to let the people know what they have the right to know. Sun Yusheng explained that if CCTV is not sure about the truthfulness of information, CCTV is careful to report it. This is a difference between the West and China, he said. CCTV does not report hearsay. CCTV has a reputation for being truthful. In recent years CCTV has reported incidents that have affected government officials. Such programmes are necessary. Sun Yusheng highlighted an incident where government officials visited the countryside with an entourage of many cars. The entourage passed a narrow bridge. A small girl on a bicycle was pushed into the river by one of the cars. 20 people witnessed, but no one came to her rescue although she waved for help. Sun Yusheng was to decide whether or not to broadcast this incident. He decided to broadcast it and the responsible officials were fired. In recent years CCTV has increasingly acted as watchdogs, Sun Yusheng explained.

To a question related to censorship as the contrast of freedom of speech, Sun Yusheng commented that, yes, China has censorship but not a governmental censorship. CCTV has people hired to handle censorship in order to be responsible for society. He further explained how China searches for objectivity and principles to search for fairness and objectivity. Many Westerners, Sun said, feel that the Chinese press is limited in its right to report and that there is a great gap between reporting and reality. The Olympic Torch report was Sun Yusheng's responsibility. He saw the reporting in western media but it was not fair and objective. He could not believe that the Tibet-related protesters could be so extreme. A German citizen Zhang Xi defended China but was laid off. Isn't this also censorship? Sun Yusheng asked. He then explained how he sees himself as a gatekeeper. Everybody needs to be responsible and the media need to make sure that reporting does not cause turmoil and unnecessary panic.

At the end of the discussion Sun Yusheng underlined that the technology used by CCTV does not lag behind Western technology. He explained how he went to Radio Denmark during his stay in Denmark and he saw that the CCTV equipment is as avant-garde as that of Radio Denmark. CCTV has production through the Internet. CCTV invests in modern equipment. The Olympic Games were reported with the newest technology. China is one out of seven countries that use the newest technology and Sun Yusheng mentioned that this made him proud. CCTV works on constantly improving the quality of its products and its competitive situation.

4 How does commercialisation and globalisation of media in China affect China's political structure?

Presentation by: Ms Yuezhi Zhao, Ph.D., Professor and Canada Research Chair, School of Communication, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, B.C. Canada

As for her first main topic, commercialisation, Ms Zhao pointed out three main topics:

1. Media commercialisation
2. Implications of commercialisation on media perspectives
3. Implications of commercialisation on social power structure:
Empowering certain groups, not others

1. Regarding commercialisation, Ms Zhao noted that as part of "socialism with Chinese characteristics," media commercialization in China also has its distinctive characteristics:

These Chinese characteristics are that the media are commercialised BUT without independence. The media are BOTH advertising-supported and state-controlled. This is "commercialization without privatization." The media have thus changed their business model but not their ownership structure. There is no private ownership of broadcasting channels and newspapers. The private capital is limited to the peripheries of the system. It is capital investments, advertising and distribution, and the provision of business, entertainment and lifestyle content

On one hand, the media commercialisation sees an expansion of market-oriented general interest urban media outlets, and an increase of business and finance related media. On the other hand the media commercialisation sees a growing irrelevance and declining market share of traditional "organ" papers such as People's Daily and Workers' Daily.

The process is highly uneven across media sectors, but the mantra of Chinese media has become that "news creates values", with "values" referring to social and, more importantly, monetary values. There are many manifestations of crass commercialism.

2. Implications of commercialization on media perspectives.

Ms. Zhao highlighted two main issues:

1. The dominance of a neoliberal market rationality in media content and the rise of "the dictatorship of (neoliberal) economists".
2. The rise of not just happy talk as "indoctrination", but also a consumerist angle in news reporting, to the neglect of the perspectives of workers and farmers:

Ms Zhao provided examples of social Darwinism / neo-liberal ideology in street tabloids:

On unemployment an example of social Darwinism was: "The process of reform... needs to lay off some people, who will pose a threat to those remaining on the job and motivate them to work harder. It also requires

some to get rich first, to let the poor have a goal in mind. Competition knows no passion. It is bloody. Either you die or I die."

On neo-liberal ideology Marx is still quoted, but this is what he was quoted for in the "layoff special page" of a street tabloid: "Life is an ocean. Only those who have a strong will can reach the other side."

Regarding the second point, the rise of not just happy talk as "indoctrination" (best illustrated by CCTV's Spring Festival Gala and Hunan Satellite TV), Ms Zhao focused on the rise of a consumerist angle in news reporting that has led to the neglect of the perspectives of workers and farmers:

During the coverage of China's WTO entry in 500 news stories, neither a single Chinese worker nor a single Chinese farmer was interviewed. The supposed masters of the country thus do not even fill in the popular voice in the news.

The Beijing Youth News depicts the arrival of the consumer paradise after China's WTO entry for "ordinary folks":

"With the lowering of tariffs and the entry of foreign goods, prices will drop dramatically. Ordinary Chinese can deposit Renminbi in foreign banks freely and buy foreign currencies freely. They can freely buy insurances in foreign-owned firms and receive insurance payments in foreign currencies. They can also receive medical services from foreign-invested hospitals and get better medical treatments. Foreign agricultural products such as wheat, beef and oranges will enter the ordinary family at lower prices. The prices of high-end consumer services such as telecommunications and cars will be greatly reduced (on November 18, 2001, page 4).

An economist was cited as saying: "China's ordinary folks will truly enjoy the rights of consumers as 'the God' in domestic and international competition..."

The Chinese case of a Communist Party-led media system with little place for the voices of workers and farmers appears counterintuitive. However, it is consistent with a world historical pattern. British press historian James Curran: Commercialization of the British press was pivotal in marginalizing a radical British labour press. Another example is the Canadian Report of the Royal Commission on Newspapers: "It was left-wing viewpoints that tended to be under-represented as commercialism increased its hold" (1980: 15).

Although the market imperative may pose a challenge against party control, the logic of the media market is "one dollar, one vote"; not "one person, one vote"

3. Implications on social power structure are how the commercialisation empowers certain groups and not others.

A media elite as "the dominant among the dominant" has emerged together with the formation of a power, money and knowledge "iron-triangle" ruling bloc. Examples of this are the real estate industry-urban newspaper complex and the interlocking interests of government officials /state enterprise managers/ private businessmen/neoliberal economists /business journalists in the reporting of SOE privatization.

The above mentioned implications on social power structure do not presume a "golden age" past in which China's lower social classes had their own voices, nor do they deny the role of the commercialized media. It is also important not to underestimate the integrity, courage, and ingenuity of some Chinese



Ms. Yuezhi Zhao

media professionals in stirring up public debates about important economic and social issues, in pursuing investigative journalism that exposes official corruption and crusading for social justice and in demonstrating "compassion" toward lower social classes. However, there are clear limits:

Market-oriented media, following the lead of the Internet, are important for "stirring up" a debate about property right reform such as when celebrity economist Lang Xianping led the charge by threatening a law suit against a capitalist. But the debate was not only too little and too late, but also totally disconnected from ongoing working class resistance against privatization.

Thus, a Beijing Morning Post headline proclaimed: "Lang Xianping: My Only Regret Is to Fight [against Unfair Privatization of SEO] Alone" on the same day as workers in a Sichuan factory were engaging in a militant struggle against the privatization of their factory!

In the calculations of the elites, the road to a liberal capitalist utopia is to cover up debates. A well-known Beijing Youth News commentator: Although it is increasingly difficult to cover up the long-standing contradictions of Chinese social development, "to cover up or not to cover up" remains a difficult choice. Mainstream economists are the hard-core supporters of the "to cover up" school... they insist on their original views even in the context of today's social reality.... They believe that although this has a price... as long as this path is surmounted, at the end is a wonderful order: Clearly delineated property rights, fair exchange, legal justice, and a harmonious society. The premise of "surmounting," however, is that those who are doomed to be sacrificed as the "price" during the process better be "spent" without knowing it. In the calculation of mainstream economists, this is the lowest cost option for China in the march toward its glorious future...

As for her second main topic, globalisation, Ms Zhao mentioned how the party sets the terms of foreign media entry. Foreign media are restricted to the areas of entertainment, business and lifestyle only.

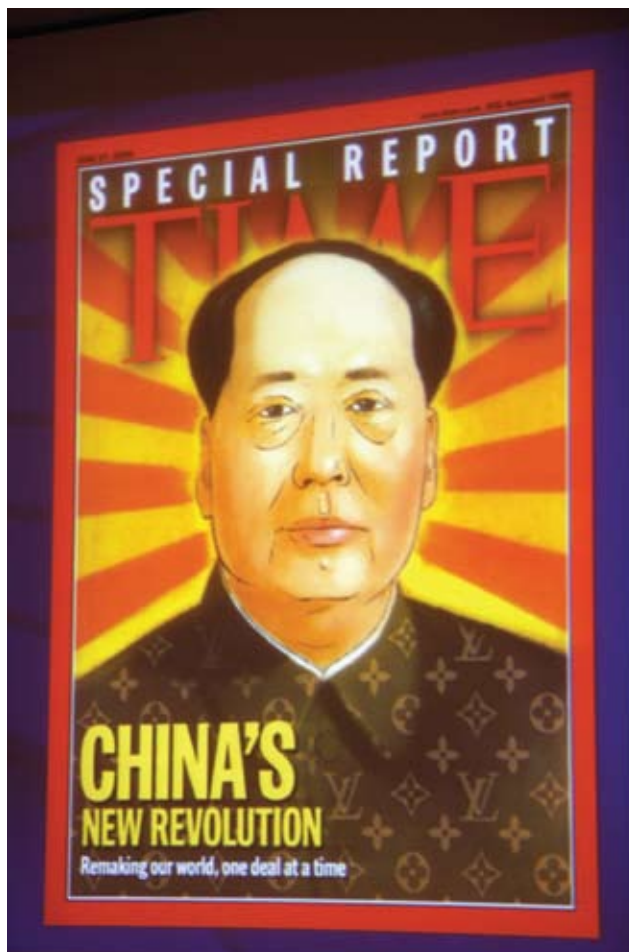
Globalization also intensifies the consumerist and profit orientation of domestic media through an indirect demonstration effect.

Foreign-invested media put direct competitive pressure on domestic media to pursue affluent urban consumers and neglect the needs of lower social classes. Examples are Phoenix TV versus CCTV and foreign joint venture magazines versus domestic ones.

As such, the domestic media's outward globalization/going abroad strategy has led to the further marginalization of domestic lower social classes in the media market.

Conclusion

Media commercialization and globalization are part and parcel of the processes of class polarization and social stratification that have created explosive social tensions. The winners are political, business and media elites as well as affluent urban consumers who have helped the media industry create profits and enjoyed the media's services tailored to their needs and tastes. The losers are poor rural and urban working-class populations who have little appeal to the media industry and advertisers. These populations thus see their interests and needs marginalized in the media.



The commercialized and globalized media system's structural bias against the low social classes goes hand in hand with a political and ideological fear of the "masses" on the part of the ruling elites. There are many signs of emerging fears of "public opinion" among the media and business elites: China News Weekly editorial: "Be Vigilant against Public Opinion Bias."

Beijing University Economics Prof. Zhang Weiying: "The public opinion environment has reached the worst point since 1992" for private entrepreneurs... and "The Internet era is one in which information can be easily biased... it is an era when many people can speak without having to take responsibility. Therefore, we must pay particular attention to this. We should not underestimate the detrimental impact of public opinion... even more serious, in our country, public opinion in society can easily become political pressure force, and the political environment itself..."

Social divisions and conflicts set the context for understanding the political role of China's state controlled and commercialized media: Although the rising urban "middle class" – including China's urban-based media and its primary audiences – may challenge the

party's authoritarianism - and there are many instances of such a challenge, they are more likely act as the party's "silent partner" in marginalizing oppositional voices and containing social unrests from below.

These oppositional voices are not necessarily the voices of liberal intellectuals who advocate liberal human rights and Western-style democracy, but voices that call upon the party-state to fulfil its socialist promises of equality and justice for all.

Discussion

Discussion was about how commercialisation has been a constraint to freedom of speech. Questions were also asked as to why the written media cannot reach the country customers. The benefit of economic reform has obviously not been split equally to different social groups.

5 The Chinese media: Western perceptions, Chinese reality

Presentation by: Mr. Hugo de Burgh, Professor of Journalism and director of The China Media Centre (CMC) at University of Westminster

Hugo de Burgh initially introduced CMC to the audience. CMC has three responsibilities: to study the Chinese media, to undertake projects with Chinese media organisations and to help increase understanding of China in the UK. CMC has in any one year around 60 Chinese media personnel in the organisation. Most of these are young media workers undertaking their MAs. There are also Ph.D. students at CMC. Two of these who graduated this year were also present at the seminar. Dr. Tong Jingrong as a speaker and Dr. Zeng Rong who is managing media projects for CMC in China. Some are visiting Fellows from Chinese universities and Media institutions. One of the keynote speakers at the seminar, Vice President Hu Zhengrong, was CMC's first ever Visiting Professor. CMC handles briefings on western media and training projects for several Chinese organisations including Beijing TV, Shanghai Media Group, Hunan Broadcasting, and Shenzhen TV and also works extensively with the State Council Information Office. Similarly CMC works on expanding understanding of China in the UK. CMC also holds public seminars on Western journalists' cover of China and on China's media management system. CMC also has a full programme of academic seminars.

At the conference Mr. Hugo de Burgh spoke on Western perceptions of Chinese media and the Chinese reality. Hugo de Burgh is often invited to speak on China at various institutions in Europe. In the course of these occasions he has become aware that Western assumptions about China, and in particular about its media, are wide of the mark. By this he meant that they can betray a wilful ignorance of that which they are criticising; and that they criticise unjustly. It is true that the Chinese media are characterised by a measure of state control, which is more substantial than in Europe, and topics that may not be discussed are decided by officials rather than by cultural tradition as in Britain.

However China's media are extraordinarily varied, with a great deal of discussion and investigation of social issues and, increasingly, policy and commercial interests. There are many chat shows on television; every issue under the sun is discussed on radio and newspapers and magazines reflect the extraordinary variety and vitality of the country. The Chinese media system is quite simply the world's most extensive. Publishing is enormous. Any European or American visiting Chinese bookshops, is overwhelmed by their size and by the range of their contents. To this comes the web. There are more users in China than in the USA. There are 17 million blogs. Blogging and other uses of the web are having a tremendous impact on society and polity. China is a very communicative society. To focus on the prohibitions is to miss the main story.

Over the centuries Western attitudes to China have often seemed more to reflect contemporary prejudices at home, rather than any real knowledge of China and any clear idea of what is the China 'brand'. The Western attitudes to China have changed markedly over the centuries.

In the 14th and 15th centuries we had the magic Tartary of a splendour and technical superiority that Europe looked at in awe. This gave way to Voltaire's China, in which philosophers avoided superstition, ruled according to reason and had meritocratic institutions. This was useful at a time when Europeans of the Enlightenment were confused at the decline of the old certainties.

In the 18th century came the China of silk and ceramics and superiority in arts and crafts so popular in the early stages of Britain's industrial revolution.

In the 19th century this image of China ceded place to that of the grotesque and contemptible tyranny that could not withstand the West's modernity during the imperialist period.

By the 1930s China was a heroic country. During the Second World War, China was admired as a brave ally against Japan. In the Cold War that followed 1949, China was heavily criticised as a Communist tyranny. In the 1960s the European left fell in love with China, hailing the Peoples' Communes as a 'new civilisation'. By the 1980s China was once again loved for its quaintness and for the business opportunities it offered ('the last great market'). After the Tiananmen massacre China was condemned as the world's moloch – rival, giant and villain. Recently attitudes have become more complicated.

Opinion polls tell us that China has become popular as an antidote to the USA as ordinary people do not see the rise of China as a threat. However, the opinion forming classes tend to be quite hostile. Whatever the reason, as the British journalist Ben McIntyre has pointed out, China is treated more critically by the European media than any other foreign country. Whereas there are human rights issues, ethnic issues, freedom of information issues in many countries, these matters are much more likely to be the core of media coverage of China than of any other country.

As to the mass media, the assumption is made that because China's polity is organised differently, the media are somehow uniform; that they merely parrot Party statements and that they do not provide opportunities for social conversation and the airing of views as in the West. Hugo de Burgh informed that when he has told people that he and his colleagues study the Chinese media, he has been greeted with incredulity, as if there were nothing to study but propaganda. He has been told that the concept 'Chinese journalist' must be an oxymoron (translator: a term containing mutually contradictory words); it is assumed that the media reflect nothing worth knowing.



Mr. Hugo de Burgh
& Ms. Zeng Rong

There is an irony in these attitudes, which is not lost on media specialists. It is this: For those who consider that the media are important channels of communication, education and information in society and who consider that the study of them in given societies helps us to understand those societies; it is very noticeable that, whereas over the last 20 years the situation of the Chinese media has improved to a very remarkable degree, the reverse is widely regarded to be the case in the Anglophone world. The Anglophone media are now described both by elite thinkers and by many ordinary citizens as making the truth muddled, undermining social norms, creating cynicism about democracy and generally having a detrimental effect on society. By contrast with our pessimism, there is a sense in the Chinese media, as there is in so many other areas of Chinese society, that things are always getting better.

Hugo de Burgh illustrated his point with two developments:

1. Over the last 20 years investigative journalism has returned to China – there was healthy investigative journalism in the 1920s and 1930s but it more or less disappeared during 1949-1990s. The best known print vehicles of this are Nanfang weekend, Beijing Youth and Finance and Economics

There are also local equivalents and well-known examples of local television programmes, which are investigative. The standard is set by a national programme, (news investigation) on whose successful development the seminar's keynote speaker Mr Sun Yusheng has had a great influence.

2. The second example of change comes from the world of light entertainment, that part of television, which draws much greater audiences than even the best investigative journalism.

The China Media Centre works with several Chinese television companies and in particular with Hunan TV, to help its producers develop their creative skills. While working with CMC, Hunan has either bought or adapted a number of English originated television formats and turned them into successful indigenous television shows. Other Chinese companies are following suit. Hugo de Burgh showed the audience some examples among them "Who wants to be a millionaire?" Now simply adapting international formats is not necessarily original, but it does show how Chinese television is developing its repertoire without needing to import foreign cultural products. The most interesting result from this adoption of formats is that Hunan now intends to develop its own formats, which after establishing in China, it will seek to sell abroad. That is why it sends its producers to the UK to improve their creativity. There are two principal motivations for this:

1. Business. Hunan wants to extend beyond its domestic market and
2. Patriotic. Hunan wants to export Chinese culture rather than see its country always as a recipient.

The head of Hunan TV, Mr Ouyang Changlin, and his colleagues are conscious that Chinese culture is not understood and that China could create a better climate for itself in the world if people could see China through its civilisation rather than merely through its politics.

Perceptions of China in the West

Looking at the studies done of attitudes to China, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that China does not, in the marketing idiom, 'project a satisfactory brand'. There are at least two levels at which the image of China – or any other country – is constructed.



Firstly there is the brand or emotional level. The brand is the perception of a country overall - in terms of all facets of popular and high culture, ranging from films, TV, sport and music to history, art and literature. The brand image of a country usually rises above short-term political preconceptions and engages audiences at an emotional level. This takes time to build but enables a country to go over the heads of its critics and reach out directly to overseas populations.

The second is reputation, which is more rational and is about what a country does, says and what others say about the country. This involves how a country promotes, explains and justifies its political and economic actions.

Now, journalists have some influence over China's reputation, which is why it is important for China to handle foreign journalists well. Over the last two years the China Media Centre, working with the 国务院新闻 (State Council News) has held briefings for nearly 400 Chinese media handlers. These briefings are to help them to understand both the expectations of Western journalists and the techniques deployed by media handlers in Europe in dealing with the media.

The successful Olympic Games were of enormous benefit to China's reputation. But the brand is still an issue requiring resolution. Brand is much less easy to manage than reputation. However, there are some interesting case studies upon which to draw. In the 1950s and 1960s Italy, Germany and Japan had appalling brands. Italy was a country known only for corruption and failure and gangsterism (the mafia). Germany was evil and dangerous and Japan was a greedy economic rival.

Over 20 years or so Japan and Germany became admired for their achievements.

Japan's traditional culture was seen to have been admirably preserved and Germany to be politically a most civilised society. Perhaps the biggest transformation came in the Italian brand. Among the opinion forming classes Italy now comes out as the country they most want to live in. Italy is admired for having held onto its traditions of food, family and civilised living. It has not destroyed its architectural heritage or its art or its landscape.

Although on the reputational level many observers consider that Italian politics and criminal life are shocking, we have a clear brand image in our minds that over-rides that. We accept the Italian self-estimation of their country as 'the land of poets, painters and philosophers' and we know that the Italians do not just eat well; they have a culture of food. Italian cinema has produced reflections of Italian life that represent Italians as humane. Italy is recognised the main source of Western Europe's civilisation.

In the wider world China ought to be seen as another Italy, but 200 times bigger. China is the source of much of Asia's culture and the world's science. It is the home of great philosophers and arguably of the most surpassing culture of food.

What should come to mind when people in the rest of the world think of China is its food, medicine, sports, religions, scholarship, plastic arts and, above all, the warmth and humanness of its people, struggling with the same issues (work, schools, health and the environment) as people everywhere.

Hugo de Burgh concluded by saying that this seems to be the international challenge for Hunan Broadcasting and other media decision makers in China today: Once they have cracked how to get foreigners to watch Chinese films and television programmes, once they have discovered the vehicles for exporting Chinese culture, then they have to make sure that the culture they are exporting is the China they want and we admire.

That we can even discuss these questions is because the Chinese media are not – as many Anglophone commentators write – backward and utterly politicised. Far from it. Western perceptions do not take account of Chinese reality. China's is not only the biggest media system in the world, it is probably the media system changing fastest and responding most imaginatively to the world around it.

6 How do authorities understand the role of the media? How is state control of media exercised today?

Presentation by: Mr. Hu Zhengrong, Dr., Professor in Communication and Vice President for the Communication University of China, Beijing

Mr. Hu Zhengrong split his presentation into two main points:

1. The evolving role of the media and its ideological background and
2. the media regulatory structure in China.

As to the evolution of the nature and role of the media in China Mr. Hu Zhengrong explained how before 1978, the Chinese media was state-owned without commercial contents. After 1978 commercial contents entered the scene and in 2003 public service. The media has been state-owned all the way. Before 1978 the role of the media was propaganda. After 1978 business became part of the role of media and since 2003 the media has also been a service provider.



Mr. Hu Zhengrong

Hu Zhengrong then explained the shift of ideology that happened during the years. The country went through a de-ideologisation from rigid orthodox communism, fundamental Marxism, planned economy and cold war to de-politisation, entertainment driven media and news – tabloid media. After the period of de-ideologisation came re-ideologisation:

Before 1945: Marxism and Leninism.

After 1945: Marxism, Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought.

From 1987-2002: Marx-Leninism, Mao Zedong Thought and Deng Xiaoping theory.

1. The White Cat Black Cat Theory (it does not matter whether the cat is black or white as long as it catches mice)
2. The "Get over the River by Grasping for Stones" theory (take one step at a time and see how it works)
3. Pragmatism

From 2002: Marx-Leninism, Mao Zedong Thought, Deng Xiaoping theory and the Three Represents (Jiang Zemin):

1. Economic production
2. Cultural development
3. Political consensus

From 2004: Marx-Leninism, Mao Zedong Thought, Deng Xiaoping theory, the Three Represents and Scientific Development Approach and Harmonious Society (Hu Jintao):

The Scientific Development Approach

1. Balance between development and environment among various groups and interests
2. Stability
3. Legitimacy

Harmonious Society (Hexie Shehui):

1. Democracy and Rule of Law (Minzhu Fazhi)
2. Fairness and Justice (Gongping Zhengyi)
3. Honesty and Friendliness (Chengxin You'ai)
4. Embedded with vigour (Chongman Huoli)
5. Stable and orderly (Anding, Youxu)
6. Harmony between Man and Nature (Ren yu Ziran Hexie Xiangchu)

2007 saw the 17th Party Congress of the Chinese Communist Party. This Party Congress embraced the theory of:

1. One Flag Socialism with Chinese Characteristics
2. One Path Socialism with Chinese Characteristics
3. One Theory Socialism with Chinese Characteristics

Hu Zhengrong then mentioned the media regulatory structure in China and explained how the media are not network-structured but correspond with the Party and Government structures.

There is the vertical structure (tiao-lines) that coordinates from Centre to locality. This takes place through the Party system with propaganda departments at all levels (state, province, city, council). Similarly China has a four-tier media structure with the State media for the central party and government, the Provincial media for the provincial party and government, the City media for the municipal party and government and finally the County media for the county party and government. The media outlets are not affiliated but independent from each other.

Then there is the horizontal structure (quai-pieces) that coordinates between different sectors. Different government authorities regulate different media sectors.

- The State Administration of Radio Film and Television regulates radio, TV, film and animation.

- The State Administration of Press and Publication regulates newspapers, press and publications.
- The Ministry of Culture regulates art and entertainment
- The Ministry of Industry and Information regulates telecom, wire-less services and broadband
- The State Council's information office regulates the online media and the Internet.
- The Bureau of Radio, Film and Television, the Bureau of Press and Publication, the Bureau of Culture and the Bureau of Sports are all gathered in the Commission of Culture.

Hu Zhengrong conclusively explained how there are two forces at play: De-regulation and re-regulation. De-regulation opens up towards economy and media business, peripheral areas such as production and distribution and topics such as accidents, disasters and public issues. Re-regulation control areas such as ownership, ideology (Party-line), personnel appointments and policy towards ownership, content and competition.

7 Investigative journalism and the authority in China

Presentation by: Ms Tong Jingrong, Dr., Lecturer in Journalism and Media , School of Media, Film & Communications, Deanery of Arts & Humanities, Liverpool Hope University

Tong Jingrong's presentation was about the development of investigative journalism in China and the paradox that the Chinese authorities demand investigative journalism. Tong Jingrong suggests that Investigative Journalism in China faces a difficult future but also that it is very far from being entirely defunct. Her research is based on empirical research from 2004-2008 including 6 months fieldwork and 73 interviews. Her fieldwork was mainly conducted in Henan and Guangdong provinces

China saw the rise of investigative journalism in the 1990s and it had the support from the Chinese top leaders. Investigative journalism gave rise to a new generation of journalists. Two media featured investigative journalism - TV and newspapers. For the television media CCTV has been the leading media. Here investigative journalism materialised as the programme "Focus" (1994) and News Probe (1996).



Ms. Tong Jingrong

Investigative journalism also emerged in other media such as The Southern Weekend, the Southern Metropolitan Daily, the Dahe Daily and the Beijing News etc. Investigative journalism brought reputation - and profits to these media.

The Dahe Daily was founded in 1995. It had a strong reputation with its public opinion monitoring reports and its critical reports. It showed concern for the powerless and those living at the bottom of society. One example was the Zhang Jinzhu event in 1997 - a case of the police trying to avoid responsibility in connection with a traffic accident. In 1997 the circulation of Dahe Daily increased from 75000 copies a day at the beginning of the year to 226.000 copies a day at the end of the year. In 2003 Dahe Daily sold 800.000 copies a day!

The new century, however, brought changes to this development. The newspapers reported less about local issues and less about officials and governments. There were more limitations such as the 17 provinces and cities' joint appeal calling for the banning of cross-regional critical reporting. The Central Government approved this appeal. The media now had a hard time deciding whether or not to continue critical reporting. The result was a severe decline in investigative journalism.

CCTV's "Focus" declined from a proportion of critical reports from 47% in 1998 to 17% in 2002. Jilin TV's "Documentaries" ceased in December 2006. Instead the newspaper "Southern Weekend" featured an article: Serving middle class and providing constructive suggestions. "Southern Weekend" had a golden age in the period 1995-2000 regarding investigative journalism. At the turn of the new century its purpose changed to the above-mentioned focus towards the middle class.

At present investigative journalism faces a major challenge and a difficult future. It would be tempting to ask if this was then the end of the road for investigative journalism. The answer seems to be no, as the last few years have seen a number of influential cases. These cases are too important to say that investigative journalism has died. Those cases are (some of them are explained):

- The case of Niu Niu in 2004 about a girl who got the main role in a movie in Shenzhen. All students were requested to see the movie and study from it. Later it was discovered that this girl was the daughter of a high official.
- The case of the Peng Shui Poem in 2006. In the township of Peng Shui a teacher acquired knowledge of high-level local corruption. This teacher sent out the information to friends and colleagues. The police investigated all persons involved and realised that there was indeed corruption.
- The Case of Gao Yingying in 2006.
- The Scandal of Live Human Organ Transplant Experiments in 2006.
- The Chongqing "Nailhouse," in 2007 (Dingzi hu) about a man who resisted to be moved from his house. The local government was building new commercial houses and forced people to move. The man's house still stands there as a nailhouse – the surrounding area all excavated. The case has not yet been solved.
- The case of Lan Changchang in 2007.
- The Xiamen XP Project Scandal in 2007. A chemical factory was supposed to be built in the city centre. The citizens were against this and demonstrated. The two parties fought against each other. In the end the factory was built outside the city.
- The Shanxi Brickfield Scandal in 2007. The owners of a brick factory kidnapped or bought 10 year old kids to work in the factory. They treated them badly and didn't pay them salaries. The local authorities knew about it but did not react as they were bribed by the factory owners. An investigative journalist discovered the case and got it out in the open. The children were freed and the responsible people punished.
- The Milk Scandal in 2008.

Another reason why investigative journalism will survive is the Chinese government's double sided attitude, which results in both positive and negative factors towards investigative journalism.

The positive factors (for the survival of investigative journalism) are that the authorities demand investigative journalism in order to: Exercise control through propaganda, change social order in some lower level parts of parts of China, promote certain politics and finally use investigative journalism as an outlet for political faction struggles. Another positive factor for the survival of investigative journalism is the government's need to maintain its image (of allowing investigative journalism) and manage the journalists. Hereto comes the professionalization and institutionalisation of investigative journalism as a positive factor.

The negative factors (against the survival of investigative journalism) are the rise of local power including the need for a good local image. Hereto comes the collaboration between political power and economic capital and the intimate relation between local media and local interest groups. An example is a real estate case in Guangzhou that was not mentioned in the media due to the good relations between the real estate owners and the local power holders. Guangzhou (Canton) is otherwise one of the most liberal parts of China.

The choice that news organisations face at present is whether to leave or to stay. If they decide to stay they will have to understand the psychology of the authorities and positively practice investigative journalism.



From left: Mr. Jens Linde, Mr. Thomas Hughes (IMS) and the President of the Danish Union of Journalists, Mr. Mogens Blicher Bjerregaard.

8 Discussion after presentations by Mr. Hu Zhengrong, Mr Hugo de Burgh and Ms Tong Jingrong

The discussion focused on investigative journalism and the present situation it faces. Hugo de Burgh commented: "I was told that investigative journalism was dead! But I have just published a new book full of stuff. Investigative journalism is not dead – it is just going through a difficult phase."

The interviewers asked what kind of investigative journalism is allowed. It is difficult to say what can and cannot be allowed. This is all very subjective. It is with investigative journalism in China as with cold and warm winds in Chinese politics. In phases where the Chinese government is confident, investigative journalism will be published to a great extent. In periods with social unrest and social dissidence, the Party will be more careful.

Mr. Sun Yusheng commented: "I always give the advice not to make any judgment whether something is right or wrong. The journalists should report facts. Sometimes journalists act as judges in the court. This is not our principle. The truth will emerge from the reporting. If there is any wrong doing it will be solved by the legal system. We try to protect the rights of our journalists. I have not heard of any journalists who have been punished. We not only protect our journalists but also our sources. I have aired a program about a local government that carries out pharmaceutical tests that allow people who pass these exams to do business within pharmaceuticals. Many people want to have these licences. Some people did not have the qualifications but passed the tests. They had hired people to take the test on forged ID papers. The local police department controls these permits so they had to be involved. A source who knew about this took the test on forged ID papers. Our team followed the process. The source was not afraid of witnessing. But I knew that if we showed his identity he would be threatened. I explained the consequences to him. We aired the programme but excluded the part where he witnessed. I will do everything to protect my source. That is my principle and the role of the media."

A question from the audience was when CCTV will start featuring 24-hour programs. Mr. Sun Yusheng explained that CCTV has already begun such service including English channels.

The interviewers commented that in the West there are also channels that do not generate revenue and that it is an obligation to have public service programs. Mr Sun Yusheng answered that exactly because of this he was surprised that so many foreign journalists left the Para Olympics. "I thought the Western media would broadcast this. These are the values they advocate."

A final comment from the panel was that the West expects capitalism and democracy to go hand in hand. We need to be more broad-minded and to understand each other better. That is exactly why a seminar like this is so important.

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