

On the Incremental Reform of China's Media since 1990s

Binggang Guo¹, Zhaoyang Zhang²

¹Communication University of China, Beijing, P.R. China

²Changchun TV Station, Changchun, P.R. China

Abstract - This paper is a study on the change of China's media, the mass medias in China started its incremental reform since 1990 because of marketing. The media increments oriented by this reform lay foundation of the China modern communication politics, also push the old media system into the crisis of adaptation and in the critical point of the reform. As a political study of this phenomenon, this article illustrates the characteristics of China's media system, the reform pressure to the system from these media increments, the development of communication politics and the political dilemma of the media regulation. And then explore the future direction of the China media incremental transformation.

Index Terms - incremental reform, China's media system, the media regulation

1. How the Reform under the Media System Carried Out

China's media system has two basic functions before 1990, one is that all the mass medias are asked to have positive dissemination that give the political system more legitimacies and powers of social arouse, the other is a function to forbid, that is all the news that have potential damage the basic function of the national politics mustn't disseminate. Both functions of China's media system have a same purpose, which is to ensure that the media can be controlled and be the important tool to demonstration of the national political will.

Therefore the nation manipulated all the media resources by the media institution design, which all the media involved in the political power structure, and most important of all, the media system retained the characteristic of wartime system and has the mandatory that cannot be questioned and resistant through the final adjudication as administration out of law.

The unresisting mandatory made the China media system become the restrictive factor of the China media Incremental transformation and any reform should be forbidden in this area, and at the same time the Deng's marketing reform provided the possibility and opportunity of media reform in the name of taking part in market economic.

In the strong restrictive condition of the media system, the development of China media industry is more difficult than the other industries, which in the precondition of not challenging the system and vested interests but through the exploration within the system that can have continuing revise of the old system. Therefore the Incremental Transformation in China media since 1990 that the start point is not threatening the old system will accumulate the enough reform pressure that results in the old system changes.

Marketing made China media not only as the party's throat but also have the motivation to develop itself under the capital will. The release of productivity of China media cause release of more functions which including communication, entertainment and even political function in public sphere. In

addition the most important significance of the reform since 1990 is the three incremental factors: the capital invading into media, the public news prevailing and the Internet gaining ground.

The three factors force the media system adjusts itself continuously, for instance the capital invading into media lead to the duality of China media industry policy that is the balance between the new system and the old; the public news prevailing deconstruct the hegemony of propaganda languages of the old medias; and the Internet gaining ground end the monopoly of communication channel and lead to the crisis of the news regulation.

On the other side China media system show its stability and flexibility. The purpose of adjusting itself is to governing again.

2. The Clash between Media System and Incremental Reform

In the whole scale the incremental transformation since 1990 make the function of the China media system switch its strongpoint from the positive political propaganda to negative news regulation. The expectations of Chinese party and government to the function of China media have also changed from the positive expression to the Ideology and political mobilization to maintenance the social stability.

Since 1990, the urgency of instability of the society becomes the cause and foundation of news regulation strengthening. The more threatens of instability the more rigorously the government control mass media.

By severe news control China government avoid the explosion of the civil political participation, which happened under the low level of political institution. In this sense the news regulation is the positive cause of social stability since 1990.

However the news regulation has two edges, which make mass media lost its functions to warn public crisis, monitor public power and release social discontent, and reduce the capability of integrating society and governing with news. The news regulation will accumulate the conflict that will lead to revolution because of suppression of expression of public opinion and cause the spread of corruption in political system because of suppression of political participation. Therefore the social stability caused by news regulation is in a poor balance with the vicious circle between low-level participation and low-level institutionalization.

At the same time the news regulation becomes a power, which cannot be questioned, defended but abused because of its characteristics out of law and then has possibility of rent seeking.

So there is vicious circle between the news regulation and the social instability, which form the poor balance and high risk between low-level participation and low-level social stability in China politics.

3. The Change in Public Sphere by the Media Reform

The game theory relationship between the China media Incremental and the China incremental system since 1990 also demonstrate changing development of the Chinese political communication.

In the original promotional and regulatory media system, media is in the dependant position in the political structure that is controlled unconditioned by the party and government power. The exclusive emphases of propaganda cause the absence of media in public sphere between nation and citizen, political and private domains, and severe damage of public function of media. Public function of the media is the interaction and activity on politics of media as the access of political negotiation and interesting expression. Essentially the public function is a platform for citizen participation provided by mass media.

China media experience the changes of the power's media to the media's power in the process of the incremental transformation since 1990, and even transcend the restraint of the tool of propaganda into a public institution that have the intervention function of social life and interactivity function of the politics.

The ongoing communication politics have some specific forms including marketing medias which starts from protecting client's privilege to supervise with public opinions in the social economic area to improve the public service efficacy and intervene the government public policy, and even to supervise government.

However China communication politics still have limit of uncertainty and vulnerability, which happens at the precondition of inefficiency of regulation. There is no balance between government and media, which are the two most important roles on the opening stage of China communication politics. The government is in the superiority position. The news regulation that is tightened usually by government makes China media politics face the challenge of disappears again at any moment.

4. The Direction of the Media System Reform

All in all, the power of China media incremental transformation and the system control is almost at the extremely point, the vicious circle between low participation and stability, the tension between the ongoing communication politics and authority political system make the news control become the focus of the conflicts, and also become the changing point and yield factor of reform. The high

expectation of harmonious society and executive capability of Chinese communist party has provided political legality and possibility of the reform agenda.

The "deep water region" reform of China media system is the natural extend of China incremental transformation since 1990, which must follow the principal of positive and stability and have the following transformation of way:

FROM POLITICS TO ADMINISTRATION

With the use of the ideology suspend policy, we should decompose the political objectives into manipulable steps and return ideological demand to original condition of experiential science.

FROM STATIC BALANCE TO DYNAMIC BALANCE

With the use of the concept of modern stability, we should encourage mass media supervise government with public opinion which make the government improve itself continuously.

FROM RULE TO GOVERN

With the use of socialization governance and media self-governance, we should help to bring about a free and responsible press with scientific media management and utilization and without illegal control.

FROM RULE BY MAN TO RULE BY LAW

With the use of lawmaking to protect media supervision, we should standard the usage of power in media management and news regulation, and collapse special region of ruling-by-man and blind spot of ruling-by-law.

References

- [1] Yukeping, *The incremental reform and Good governance*, Beijing: Social Sciences Press, 2005.
- [2] Gaohua, *How the Red Sun rises*, Hongkong: Chinese Uni. Press, 2000.
- [3] Zhanjiang, *Wartime communication*, Beijing: Economic Publishing House, 1999.
- [4] Zhanjiang, *Supervision by public opinion*, Guangzhou: Nanfang daily Press, 2004.
- [5] Harold D. Lasswell, *Propaganda Technique in World War I*, The MIT Press, 1971.
- [6] Michael G. Roskin, *Political Sciences: An Introduction* (9th Edition), Longman, 2009.
- [7] Wilbur Schramm, etc, *Four Theories of the Press*. pp. 140-142. Illinois: University of Chicago Press. 1963.
- [8] Samuel Huntington, *Political Order In Changing Societies*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969.
- [9] Commission on Freedom of the Press, Robert D. Leigh, *A Free and Responsible Press*, University of Chicago Press, 1988.
- [10] John D. Zelezny, *Communications law: liberties, restraints, and the modern media*, Beijing, Tsinghua University Press, 2004.
- [11] A.D. Lindsay, *The Essentials Democracy*, p.43, London, Oxford University Press, 1929.
- [12] Lixiguang, *ICT and the Demise of Propaganda*, Tsinghua University Publishing House, 2010.