The Taming Of The Shrew: Global Media In A Chinese Perspective

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Engaging China in Global Media

No global media outlet can be considered truly ‘global’, if it fails to reach a quarter of the world’s population. Put another way, the world system of global communication would remain a far-fetched myth without China’s involvement and commitment.

• Global media tycoons such as Rupert Murdoch and Sumner Redstone have recently tried every means to court the topmost leadership of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) for a permit into the local media sphere.

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• The direct, legalized access to global media like CNN or MTV is restricted either to some peripheral ‘experimental zones’ (Guangdong province) or to privileged locations (such as five-star hotels);

• thousands of government-employed ‘internet watchdogs’ commit to blocking or filtering ‘inappropriate’ information – ranging from the banned cult (such as Falungong) to pornography – from the surfing of some 87 million ‘netizens’ in China.
Transnational Media Corporations’ (TMC’s) Penetration

- TMCs’ latent penetration into Chinese media spheres in various forms.

- Global media have successfully developed a ‘brand loyalty’ amidst the ‘E-generation’, those who were born in the 1970s and 1980s.
  - To them, online newswire from cnn.com or yahoo.com appears more reliable and efficient than official mouthpieces like the People’s Daily, China Central Television (CCTV) or xinhuanet.com (the official Xinhua News Agency’s website).

- What global media aim to achieve in China is not an overnight coercion, as they did in the former Soviet Union, but rather a long-term ‘consensus making’ via cultivation of potential consumers and, ultimately, a gradual encroachment of the local media marketplace.
  - With the advent of economic liberalization and market systems, the structural and behavioral transformation of Chinese press/media reform have been soaring in the past few years.
  - Consequently, the newly-established CCTV-NEWS channel claims to be ‘China’s CNN’, and that the New Beijing Daily avows to ‘be responsible for covering everything’, ostensibly parroting the New York Times’ renowned motto ‘all the news that’s fit to print’.

- Despite the aforementioned restriction and regulation, global media have become more palpable to a Chinese readership and audience through direct or indirect investment, joint venture, chain distribution, or, worse still, through smuggling and piracy.
  - Global media virtually serve as major content providers for the ever-expanding media marketplace in present-day China. It is worth mentioning that approximately 60 percent of international news coverage on Chinese media is either translated or adapted from source materials produced in the US.
  - Obviously, such an over-reliance in terms of content provision will nurture an American-centered perspective of international affairs among Chinese audiences, as has happened elsewhere in the world.
The Process Of 'Taming Of The Shrew' Is Never Unidirectional:

- Chinese authorities have tried every means to regulate global media's increasing penetration into local marketplaces in the name of nationalism or cultural/ideological exceptionalism;
- Global media, under the patronage of China's accession to capitalist globalization, have also made every effort to integrate the 'renegade' Chinese counterparts into a US-led world system.

Chinese Media Already Globalized?

- Chinese media appear more 'global' by way of alluding to such news sources as the Qatar-based TV network al-Jazeera;
- Importing soap operas from Brazil and Venezuela;
- Selling pop music stars from Japan and South Korea;
- Local institutions also endeavor to make Chinese media products more 'globalized', as evinced by CCTV-9 (English Channel)'s integration into Viacom's distribution system in Euro-America, and by the global success of Zhang Yimou's recent Kungfu-cum-epic, Hero.

Conclusion

- In a Chinese perspective, what the coming of global media evokes in contemporary China is not simply another rehearsal of Hollywoodization or Disneyfication, but rather a plethora of ideological, institutional and discursive conflicts, contests and negotiations at various levels.