

Unmitigated, State-Coordinated Audacity: Democracy and Media Control in the People's Republic of China

ABSTRACT: Outdated Western frameworks of orientalism and anti-communism have led to a similarly skewed view of the Chinese Communist Party's contemporary stance on democracy and the state of its state-controlled media. This article seeks to show that Chinese journalism, while still very much under the Party's capricious control, has taken a markedly different position on democracy than in years past, different also from extant authoritarian states elsewhere. Conflicting totalitarian artifacts and progressive voices from darkness will be highlighted in recent media statements, disillusioning those who believe that any discussion democracy is verboten, or that favorable views cannot be expressed. Descriptive statistics will be used for a quantitative analysis of newspaper coverage of democracy-related issues across different sources, languages, and countries. Through a content analysis of newspaper articles, including official statements and citizens' editorials, an impression of real change, if not necessarily progress toward a free press and democratization, will be formulated.

Much has been written on the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) uncanny persistence in the face of almost constant threats to its control, especially that seen as inevitable in the West, democratization. Yet nearly 20 years after the tragic pro-democracy protests in Tiananmen Square, few tangible results of the Chinese Democracy Movement are apparent, except perhaps for a regime even more determined to preserve itself against future democratic challenges. As usual, many conflicting views explain the stall in what appeared to be a decisive revolution against authoritarian elites in power, with obviously extreme costs of repression, both in terms of Acemoglu and Robinson's process of democratization. Yet as Bueno de Mesquita and Downs write some years later, the CCP has proven itself to be among the highly evolved authoritarian regimes adept at controlling "coordination goods"--especially its state-controlled media--and delivering the economic developmental goods simultaneously. This dual control both prevents any significant challenge from arising and reinforces the system through performance legitimacy¹.

Soon after Tiananmen, Sanford J. Ungar wrote that a free press is a democratic ideal which does

¹ Though there would presumably be serious trouble if economic performance were to falter unexpectedly

not require democracy, often among the first to make inroads into an authoritarian state, and which may in fact have allowed the CCP to prevent violence from erupting in its most prominent gathering space². Yet despite this and other cogent arguments why a free press is ultimately in a state's best interests, while certainly needling both democratic and authoritarian regimes, the Western perception of Chinese media has changed very little from Franklin Houn's 1958 totalitarian assessment: CCP leadership's influence on the media in the PRC must go beyond censorship to be "more positive in nature [and] actively serve [the] regime's interests"³. The press must, in effect, be the royal mouth, with punitive examples made of deviant journalists, and leading to the self-censorship of others, lest they become the next examples.

This paper seeks to clarify with empirical evidence the effects of the PRC's state media control on the discussion of democracy, both in a domestic and global context. Using a quantitative salience test to compare the amount of the PRC's newspaper coverage of democracy to that of other states, an argument will be made that a control mechanism is in place and that its evolved state has remained true to its purpose of serving the interests of the Chinese Communist Party. The space for discussion of democracy in Chinese media is indeed constrained, but by sampling and analyzing several articles qualitatively, it will be shown that a variety of perspectives, even definitions, is nonetheless permitted. In making this multi-staged assessment of the media's portrayal of democracy, insights may be drawn as to the prospects for progress toward or further regress away from democratization of the country.

Summary of relevant literature. The subject of democratization is one of the most vibrant in contemporary comparative politics, and despite consistent failure to proceed past the preliminary stage of it in the past 30 years, the PRC has garnered much attention within the literature. This section will provide a very brief summary of works relevant to the Chinese case⁴, touching upon theory and history.

² Ungar, pg. 134-136

³ Houn, pg. 436

⁴ Best to note as early as possible that given the linguistic and cross-national nature of this study, use of the terms "China" and "Chinese" may

Democratization. Western scholarship on political development sees the democracy as the most advanced point in a general, historical trend, based on claims that go beyond normative preference⁵. The process of becoming a democracy, while far from assured, is thought to be driven in large part by a middle class expanded by a capitalist, market economy⁶ and in a stage of modernization in which self expression, including having a say in government policy, has eclipsed basic survival as a life goal⁷. In order for a democratic state to be established, however, the population of a territory will likely have to demand these modern political goods from an authoritarian regime with little or no interest in ceding power to non-elites or non-traditional elites. By any number of factors, internal and external, structural and agency-based, gradual or instantaneously transformative, authoritarian rule must be weakened and abolished. Acemoglu and Robinson have recently treated this enabling stage of “authoritarian breakdown” as largely a rational negotiation process in which the ruling elite may be convinced to share

become blurred, as opposed to intimately intertwined as they exist in reality. Every effort will be made to use the term “PRC” to refer to the state ruled directly by the CCP, explicitly excluding with their media the territories of Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Macau. Non-linguistic references to the “Chinese case” should also be taken to be referring particularly, though not necessarily exclusively to the PRC. When “special administrative regions” of the PRC such as those three and the Chinese diaspora are to be included in “China”, these terms will be used explicitly and often.

⁵ The otherwise troubling fact that mostly Western scholarship, undertaken by Westerners in Western democracies, has placed democracy atop the pedestal of political development can be downplayed thanks to a wealth of empirical studies showing democracies to be more accountable to their populations, generally providing a greater sense of well-being than non-democracies around the world. Perhaps the only serious challenge to this claim was offered by Marxism’s “socialist dictatorship of the proletariat”, in which the state is theoretically ruled by the masses, directly and thereby circumventing the need for mass elections. While still ideologically proffered as “real” democracy in some isolated states, Cuba and to a lessening extent China among them, it is their very isolation and non-viability in comparison to democracies based on market economies that led Francis Fukuyama to declare this line of historical competition to have “ended” with the disbanding of the USSR.

⁶ Przeworski and Limongi’s empirical work characterizes the seminal work of Lipset on the connections between economic development and democracy as consisting of an “endogenous” explanation (suggesting causation) and an “exogenous” one (in which a level of modernization makes democracy more likely to survive in a society, but is not itself caused by it). Finding the latter more in line with evidence, we should expect only that a Chinese democracy will be more and more viable, should an as-yet unknown movement successfully establish one.

⁷ For the role of the middle class, see Barrington Moore; modernization’s role in creating new goals for the population is treated by Inglehart & Welzel.

power, significantly weakening the authoritarian regime or disbanding it altogether in favor of pursuing Robert Dahl's ideal "polyarchy", by means of a threatened revolution by the masses⁸.

As it is only this preliminary stage which is germane to the research topic, let us consider the role of the media in achieving it.

Mass media and democracy. As intuition would suggest, a free press plays a role both in creating and sustaining a liberal democracy. Not surprisingly, the most explicit link between the two, usually with human rights thrown in for good measure, is made by free press advocacy groups⁹. A better-informed public is far more able to hold its government accountable than one whose sources of information are strictly controlled by the state. Some scholars, however, suggest that a democratic state is a precondition to the existence of independent media¹⁰. While temporal anteriority is a requirement to establish a causal relationship, this paper will not claim conclusively that either a free press or democracy must precede the other. A comparison of Freedom House rankings, which consider press freedom, and the "press freedom index" of Reporters Without Borders shows that while states at the extremes are almost identical in their rankings, their midsections vary considerably¹¹. In any case, and relating particularly to this paper's topic, independent media is of vital importance to a state, regardless of whether it is authoritarian or democratic, and in the former case need not lead to democracy to "advance democratic ideals"¹².

In a decidedly more negative view, Snyder finds that "nascent democratization and its close

⁸ Acemoglu & Robinson show that such revolutions are more likely to demand institutionalized power than often temporary concessions which are often reneged.

⁹ If democracy can be equated with a high degree of freedom the mission statements of Reporters Without Borders, The Committee to Protect Journalists, and the International Press Institute deserve mention in this section.

¹⁰ See, for example, Feinstein

¹¹ This is to say that there is likely considerable interaction between a free press and a free state, but the direction of causation is likely to vary from state to state.

¹² Ungar, pg. 136, 143

cousin, press liberalization, heighten the risk of nationalist and ethnic conflict”¹³ if such confrontational forces gain control of either process. If the nationalism created to sustain an authoritative regime, by providing it legitimacy as the defender of “the nation”, gains a powerful voice in the media from liberal reforms toward or as a result of democratization, the more “democratic” press may amplify ethnic tensions within the country¹⁴ and reconstruct enemies of traditional rivals or neighboring “other” states.

Returning to authoritarian breakdown and the thrust behind this paper, a free media is seen by many, including BBM & Downs, as vital to the formation of a viable opposition to the standing regime: “A diverse and largely unregulated press (and other media)...enables the dissemination of information that can bring diverse groups together around common interests [such as reforming or overthrowing an authoritarian regime].”¹⁵ In the absence of such an institution, dissidents may unaware of or unable to communicate with others harboring similar sentiments, fragmented into small groups at most which must do their organizing, recruiting, and even spread their fundamental message of opposition “underground”. Such a description conjures images of resistance movements and conspiracies of bygone days, a remnant of a time before the Cold War ended and technology made communication freer and faster than ever, yet if the mechanism for controlling all of these “coordination goods” evolves with the times, the principles of suppression and depoliticization of citizens’ lives remain intact as ever. More is made of these statements in the Chinese context in the following sections.

China and democracy. Given Western perspectives and interests, it is not an exaggeration to say that the vast majority of attention on China in the past thirty years has addressed or focused exclusively on its prospects for democratization. Some scholars, such as Lynch, have concluded that the primary obstacle to such a laudable goal is the CCP, which fears “de-centering” itself in terms of world

¹³ Snyder, pg. 31

¹⁴ Especially true in multinational states; see Snyder’s discussion of Hutu radio’s role in the Rwanda genocide,

¹⁵ Bueno de Mesquita and Downs, pg. 83, [added text]

civilizations¹⁶. In the view of the CCP, he claims, to democratize is to Westernize, or even, to submit to arrogant American hegemony¹⁷. Other scholars, including the most recent article here cited¹⁸, emphasize that the CCP sincerely attempted to reform itself through “intra-party democracy” both in the years preceding the watershed moment in the movement¹⁹, the Tiananmen Square Massacre, and in the present day.

The *New York Times* in recent years seems particularly taken with the concept of a growing middle class in China whose demands and defiance toward the government are becoming increasingly vociferous, suggesting prospects for gradual democratic reform, if not a revolution²⁰. The subject of the PRC middle class is itself a topic of debate²¹, largely, one might presume, as an indication that China is “ready” for democracy or will be soon. Questioning the PRC’s “readiness” for democracy takes on much greater weight when considered in the context of Snyder’s work, in which new democracies are prone to both internal violence and wars with their neighbors, driven by nationalist one-upmanship of competing political candidates²².

In recent years, there has been little optimism that any significant liberal reforms are in store in the PRC’s near future. Previously touted village elections seem destined to stay there²³, and “China-

¹⁶ Lynch, pg. 92. China’s pride as the oldest continuous civilization, has been for 5,000 years as the “Center Kingdom”, and perhaps especially stubbornly so in times of weakness relative to others.

¹⁷ Lynch, pg. 96-97

¹⁸ See Leonard, midway through 2008 article.

¹⁹ Pei, pg. 50 explains how in the mid-1980’s party liberals drafted an outline of political reform which was approved by the NPC but never enacted, due largely to opposition from party conservatives and Deng Xiaoping himself, who had earlier advocated democratic reforms (pg. 47).

²⁰ See Larmer, Rosenthal, French (2008)

²¹ See Xin for a claim by Chinese media that the West has grossly exaggerated the Chinese middle class.

²² See Snyder in general, pg. 49-53 in particular. While the size and influence of the PRC middle class may be debated, there is no doubt about nationalism, on which the CCP in tandem with performance legitimacy is based as “protector of the Chinese nation”.

²³ Pei, pg. 80

watchers” such as James Mann make a strong case for an adapted authoritarian CCP to prevail over the previously assumed and largely preferred “upheaval scenario”²⁴. The current trend in scholarly literature is to plan for an enduring CCP and “The Chinese Way” as an alternative model²⁵ for developing countries to follow, both politically and economically.

Further evidence for the evolved authoritarianism of the CCP is its ability to co-opt challenging ideologies while morphing its own to fit its interests²⁶. While the role of ideology in the PRC is said to be declining, the revolutionary book of tricks can always be retrieved from the archives and dusted off to create cognitive dissonance in its policy toward democracy²⁷. When the democratic vision of CCP leaders is sent abroad by its overseas propaganda departments, it may be variously be of developing the “people’s democracy” which “already exists” in the PRC, sowing hopes that democracy will sprout and blossom like a multi-colored flower within the CCP as “inner-party democracy”, or in cases where Western democracy is not demonized as foreign and incompatible, a distant goal which cannot possibly be realized until some distant and indeterminate point in the future. Official documents such as the 2005 White Paper on Political Democracy²⁸, CCP Chairman Hu Jintao’s speeches to the National People’s Congress (NPC), and media dilutions of any of these are notorious for clouding the picture of the party’s plans, policies, and popular perceptions of the current Chinese state. While skepticism should be

²⁴ Mann, pg. 8 The strategy behind President Clinton’s engagement strategy was that increased integration into the world’s political and economic orthodoxy would give the communist party virtually no choice but to democratize or dissolve.

²⁵ Lynch, pg. 92

²⁶ Modern Chinese history in the PRC, while supposedly maintaining a basis in Marxism, has undergone extreme ideological changes in both its politics (from Maoism to nationalism today) and economics (from a pure planned economy to Deng Xiaoping’s “socialism with Chinese characteristics”, increasingly appearing to be a euphemism for Chinese-style capitalism).

²⁷ Advantage is clearly taken of the fact that most Westerners, having shelved their Marx and Engels, are not aware of the concept and equation of “socialist democracy” with the “socialist dictatorship of the proletariat”. It may be intentionally unclear whether leaders talking about democratic goals for the future of the PRC are referring to this or the kind we Westerners know and love.

²⁸ That democracy should need to be qualified as “political” should be a cautionary example. See State Council and Information Office.

automatic when encountering a document describing Chinese democracy as, in a magnanimous show of modesty, “not yet perfect”, it is additionally crucial when scrutinizing statements on democracy, emanating from any level within or outside the government, to ascertain *which kind* of democracy they are addressing. The qualitative section of this paper will attempt to illuminate Chinese media’s portrayal of each, in small samples.

Chinese media. In a pan-Asia conference, seeming to exclude Western influence, Xu Xiaoge makes an extremely broad and important claim that the central purpose of Asian media is to promote political stability for economic development. The press can be skeptical, even critical, but not “cynical”. Press freedom is wholly subordinate to a stable state, and the normative critique is offered that the Western press is “too free”.²⁹ From these stark assertions, it seems very difficult to progress with our topic, but we will try.

In purely quantitative respects, printed media in the PRC has grown and evolved drastically since 1949³⁰. Zhongdang Pan suggests that the PRC’s media over its history, like the country itself, has undergone several swings of being open and closed³¹, though from a Western perspective, “open” periods must be seen as frustratingly brief and relative only to previous standards of isolation. The 1950’s and 1960’s media resembled nothing more than one would expect in a totalitarian ideal type³², as total unity was required to carry out experiments in the new Chinese socialist state³³. By the 1970’s, according to Liu’s study, a split between elite and public outlets emerged³⁴, and readers interested in the

²⁹ Xu, pg. 42

³⁰ French (2007) reports that the number of newspapers and magazines sold in the PRC has skyrocketed from only a few dozen to more than 2,000 and 9,000 respectively, and to the further exclusion of foreign media.

³¹ Pan, pg. 99

³² See Houn’s article on state control of the media.

³³ Lent, pg. 34, characterizes the largely unmet goal of the 1960’s PRC press as promoting unity with diversity.

³⁴ Liu, pg. 942

real scoop became adept at “reading between the lines”³⁵. Reforms in the media accompanied those in the country in the 1980, as part of Deng Xiaoping’s sweeping process of “De-Maoification”³⁶, peaking before Tiananmen and then violently contracting. Fan and Ostini’s study of the 1990’s found only minimal signs that the PRC press might be recovering from the drastic reassertion of control.

The PRC offers a unique challenge to prevailing theories of the media’s role in shaping nationalism in “monopolistic”³⁷ press structures. While the Chinese government faces no political competition and maintains a near “perfect” monopoly of the press, it nonetheless approaches what Snyder calls “the worst of both worlds” as in a newly democratizing state. The work of Susan Shirk portrays a CCP very much fearful of its legitimacy among a diverse and ethnically fragmented population across a vast territory, in need of a pliant press to stoke and sooth popular nationalism³⁸ as it sees fit. Again, this potent popular nationalism would very likely carry into a new, democratic Chinese state, and quickly fill the vacuum in the press created by an absence of state control.

A very thorough, though now somewhat dated study of Chinese media, especially broadcast and print media’s conflict between being politically correct and commercially viable, can be found in Yuezhi Zhao’s book: *Media, Market, and Democracy in China*. This volume excels in providing a cultural insider’s perspective on journalistic media, especially the consequences of having to maintain subscribers while under strict content control³⁹. For the newspaper market, becoming more of one in the

³⁵ Liu, pg. 949

³⁶ Lent, pg. 20

³⁷ Snyder, treated fully on pg. 59-65

³⁸ Post Tiananmen, there is evidence that the press was used to “shore up” the Party’s nationalist credentials, as previous “relaxation” of control was reversed in the 1990’s. In the case of the 2005 anti-Japanese protests, in which nationalism played the key role and threatened to get out of control, state media was instrumental in urging calm and restraint.

³⁹ His account of Chinese journalistic corruption (Ch. 4) suggests that the most recent celebration of “Journalist Day” in the PRC, commemorated by the GAPP with an open letter to journalists (exhorting them to be “upright”), is not just a party working to keep them from publishing sensitive articles but also to address very real problems of extortion and bribery. Pang also addresses this issue.

financial sense as government funding gradually decreases, the “structure” is said to be more “pluralistic” than broadcast media⁴⁰, with new and specialized publications finding new ways to be profitably provocative without getting shut down by the authorities. His account goes into anecdotal detail about individual sources such as the *People’s Daily* and *Beijing Youth News*, but is fairly light on systematic content analysis and only mentions the press in a democratization context as a potential tool, if made more free, to democratize the CCP⁴¹.

An important effect of PRC politics on the media, for comparative purposes even across its own “special administrative regions” under the policy jurisdiction of “one country, two systems”, can be found in two 2005 articles on the Hong Kong press. Lee, Chan and So argue that after the 1997 transition back to Chinese rule, HK media has become both “depoliticized” and “less critical”⁴², a very troubling fact for both free press advocates and, encouragingly, most citizens. Generally, it struggles to maintain editorial independence in the absence of liberal democracy in the former colony, and there is evidence that the freer news sources not owned by PRC agencies are more trusted and respected by both citizens and journalists, maintaining the expectation that a free press in an advanced society has a duty to be critical of the government⁴³. Chan and So even go so far as to suggest that the media is providing a “surrogate” democracy to compensate for the lack of it in Hong Kong’s legislature⁴⁴. It is unclear, as a whole, whether media trends on the Mainland are converging with the fierce competition and private ownership of HK media, or if the more salient threat is a journalistic backsliding in HK toward a propagandistic condition of PRC party-line parroting and state ownership. It is hoped that my empirical results will provide a window through which to view how the “one country, two systems” policy affects media content across sections of

⁴⁰ Yuezhi Zhao, pg. 127.

⁴¹ Yuezhi Zhao, pg. 164

⁴² Lee, pg. 87, Chan and So, pg. 70

⁴³ Chan and So’s primary evidence is a series of opinion surveys, showing a generally high interest in media issues in Hong Kong, which has a very high number of daily newspapers, 14, for a population of less than ten million, as Chan and So note on pg. 70.

⁴⁴ Chan and So, pg. 80

the Chinese diaspora.

Despite reforms and claims that the growing number of journalists is giving state censors “enormous headaches”⁴⁵, it is difficult to be optimistic about the current state of Chinese media affairs. PRC media and its state regulatory agency, the GAPP, face challenges from all directions by free-press advocacy groups⁴⁶, domestic corruption in its journalistic ranks, and an ongoing relationship with the CCP which Zhongdang Pan describes as “co-conspiratorial”⁴⁷. With the level of self-censorship⁴⁸ arising among journalists afraid of being purged in old communist fashion, it would be a wonder if any substantive and nuanced discussion of Western democracy is allowed and observed.

Chinese media’s portrayal of democracy. Press excerpts on this topic have been highlighted recently by Daniel Lynch and are often centered on cultural opposition to Western democracy. He begins with a 1996 article in the *People’s Daily* claiming that the PRC already has its own form of democracy⁴⁹, and the West’s promotion of its preferred form is nothing short of a plot for world domination⁵⁰. Lynch finds at least two strong advocates of Chinese democracy in He Jiadong and Wang Sirui⁵¹, writing around the turn of this century, yet for each of them tens of opposing examples could be cited. The recurring

⁴⁵ He Qinglian, pg. 34

⁴⁶ See Committee to Protect Journalists, Free Press Institute, and Reporters Without Borders, all with fresh reports of anti-free press atrocities despite promises to liberalize for the Olympics. He Qinglian’s article also

⁴⁷ Pan, pg. 106

⁴⁸ See Pan, pg. 102-103 for interesting anecdotes on the current psychological state of PRC journalists.

⁴⁹ This would be the “socialist democracy” outlined by Suisheng Zhao, pg. 44-45

⁵⁰ Lynch, pg. 100

⁵¹ Lynch, pg. 120-123. The first was published in the defunct (as in revoked by the government in 2004 for criticizing Kim Jong-Il, Lynch, pg. 238) PRC IR journal *Strategy and Management* in rebuttal to influential and polemic popular nationalist Wang Xiaodong’s virulent anti-American writings. The source of the second is not given. One may thus, with good reason, be doubtful that either view (that history is on democratization’s side and that democracy is the key to ending corruption in the PRC) could find its way into the popular press, though see the qualitative analysis section for at least one encouraging article.

style of “promising” articles from this liberal canon, according to Lynch, is to “start off sounding like they will differ from the mainstream discourse in a significant way but then soon degenerate into something closer to the Party-sanctioned orthodoxy”.⁵² A final article Lynch provides from the *People’s Daily* is by PRC theorist Xie Hong, who conclusively states that Western democracy perpetuates Greek slavery, is inferior to the heights of socialist democracy, and ends with a majoritarian justification of guardianship by a “vanguard party”.⁵³ Efforts should be made to determine whether anything positive about Western democracy can be said in the popular media, and whether any more scholarly publication has emerged as a forum for more open and nuanced discussion of this sensitive subject.

Under more optimistic circumstances, Pei’s book notes that Party control of the media was “relaxed” in 1988, shortly after the agenda for political reform was approved by the NPC, resulting in “lively debate about Chinese culture”.⁵⁴ Press liberalization was a central demand of the Tiananmen demonstrators, which included many journalists, however the post-massacre period was a dark time for both the democracy movement and the Chinese press⁵⁵ as Party conservatives seized control of the NPC and have yet to relinquish it.

Yuezhi Zhao’s 1998 book serves as a strong foundation for studying the Chinese media, and ten years seems an appropriate interval for an update. Similarly, Lynch’s examples need to be corroborated and compared across different media outlets to ascertain whether any deviation from this “party line” is allowed in the public sphere and if it holds when reporting on international democratization events. The concept of authoritarian, state-controlled media as a “coordination good”⁵⁶, restricting the discourse on controversial topics and preventing its utilization for organizing revolutionary (or even reformist) groups is

⁵² Lynch, pg. 123

⁵³ Lynch, pg. 132

⁵⁴ Pei, pg. 56

⁵⁵ For a detailed account of behind-the-scenes journalism at the *China Daily* office throughout the Tiananmen period, see Porter, pg. 30-61.

⁵⁶ Again, see Bueno de Mesquita and Downs

crucial to the topic of democratization, though it has received little in the way of comparative, empirical attention. This study will provide a more systematic and empirical assessment of PRC newspapers' portrayal of democracy than any previously encountered.

Research questions. This study could be considered a test of the prevalent opinion of the PRC, CCP, and its mass media, held widely in the developed democracies of the West and especially in the USA, with its longstanding policy of promoting democracy and the prosperity of the “free world”. A state government interested in controlling the media is presented with many options, especially with the wide variety of media types and technologies available today. It may choose to ban any mention of certain topics (or people) or denial of access to certain sources by means of strict censorship⁵⁷. Such totalitarian measures are increasingly seen as brutish remnants of the Cold War, not becoming of modern, adaptive authoritarian regimes more sensitive to international and domestic criticism, thereby more interested in preventing, to a practical extent, the public from being aware of the existence of any control mechanism or other limitations on supposedly protected “free speech”. More likely are the options of co-optation of would-be threatening terms and topics and the maintenance of an active propaganda campaign which blends seamlessly with journalistic coverage of current events, an embedded ideology which plays to the interests of those in power.

To determine whether the first option has been enacted, a quantitative, word-count test would be sufficient to show whether a topic considered dangerous and actively threatening, as “democracy” might rationally be seen, is being excluded from media coverage. If test results show an extreme of *zero* results, or more likely a number greatly reduced in comparison across different countries' media, for article searches on democracy, one would be able to conclude that a straightforward ban or limit is in place.

To assess more sophisticated “co-optation”, a similar test could first be undertaken, and if the

⁵⁷ Such is still common in the usage of new mediums such as blogs (BBM & Downs, pg. 81, note the Chinese demand that Microsoft block the terms “freedom” and “democracy” in their blogging software) and the internet in general. For precise examples, see Wikipedia's entry for banned internet search terms in the PRC.

results show little or no difference in coverage of democracy-related theories and events, it might be assumed that the term is being used to further state interests, as delineated by the CCP. As one would expect this mechanism to be the more likely and sustainable in the long term, the acceptable context for discourse may be presumed as restricted in a less perceptible manner. Only if supported by qualitative content analysis of printed articles could such a condition be ascertained.

Given an official statement on the PRC's democracy goals in the 2005 "White Paper on Political Democracy"⁵⁸, in which commonly recognized paths to democracy involving external structure and agency are explicitly rejected, "democracy" is whatever the Party says it is (not unlike its treatment of socialism), and no timetable is necessary (the proverb "crossing the river by grasping at the stones with one's feet" is often evoked as preferable), any divergence in the media from these tenets would be a highly significant and surprising finding.

Methodology. Justification of Newspapers. PRC mass media, as in any country, employs a wide variety of mediums, and as technology widens and alters the influence of each, the choice to focus on newspapers deserves explanation, especially as they have ceded considerable influence to broadcast and internet forms in recent decades⁵⁹. The points of justification are interrelated. Firstly, newspapers have also evolved with technology, with most major companies now offering full archival content on their own internet websites. This makes for sheer practicality for content analysis, as an easily accessible record exists for all data to be analyzed. This is especially true in the absence of a comprehensive international archive of journalism—research databases such as *World News Connection* are very helpful, yet the resources which would be required to translate every article for even a single source in another country would likely exceed the benefits. Furthermore, the printed medium, transferred intact to the internet, allows for far more depth than broadcast media in complex topics, especially those with intimate ties to comparative and IR political science theories less easily compactable into 30-second

⁵⁸ See State Council Information Office

⁵⁹ Further discussion of this and other methodological assumptions can be found in APPENDIX B.

excerpts. Newspapers, in sum, offer the most thorough and convenient examination of this research topic, and differing approaches here will allow for both quantitative and qualitative tests of their content.

Quantitative Salience Test. One exposed only to fairly sensationalist reports⁶⁰ on the Chinese media, which is to say most of the Western world, may understandably get the impression that life as a Chinese journalist is wrought with fear that one could be the next target of an endless string of atrocities ranging from harassment to imprisonment and bludgeoning to death. From the proportion of Western media coverage it receives, Westerners may also assume that democracy is foremost on the minds of the Chinese, yet presume that there is absolutely no allowance for opinions to be expressed on a subject which exceeds taboo and is a real threat to the very existence of the state. This test will establish the extent of media controls for inserting the word “democracy” into newspaper articles across a wide variety of countries and cultures.

The primary unit of analysis in determining the salience of democracy as a topic of interest in various news sources will be the “democracy frequency ratio” or DFR. One may think of it as the percentage of the total “hit” articles for the 13 search terms which contain the word “democracy”. This is calculated for each source⁶¹ along with the average within similar and across different groups. The aggregate, average DFR’s for the higher-n and randomized samples (namely, for the PRC and USA) may be taken most authoritatively as the salience of democracy, compared to the other terms in the search.

A total of 177 sources were searched, generally in China and greater Asia, the Americas, Western Europe, and some stragglers wherever data could be obtained. It must be emphasized that the sample sizes taken, and indeed the entire pool, for some countries is too small to be fully representative. The purpose in ranking sources by their country of origin is thus to situate media within the Chinese

⁶⁰ See the 2008 article on Chinese media by Reporters Without Borders, The Committee to Protect Journalists’ 2007 and 2008 reports to U.S. Congress, and 2006 International Press Institute report on China.

⁶¹ A single source being the web site for a daily, “quality” newspaper, as opposed to weekly, magazine, or tabloid paper’s site. A few of these latter have crept their way in for comparison, but by their status as “all other printed news media” a representative sample is not able to be obtained. For more discussion of sampling, see APPENDIX A.

diaspora in an international field which as a whole provides comparative contrast. No guarantee can be made that linguistic differences will not significantly affect the results, though care was taken in selecting the search terms to be equivalent across languages and regions.

Another important weakness of the test method of ranking frequencies among a basket of search terms is that an extremely high or low count of one or a few terms will have a strong and opposite effect on the other terms. This can, however, be seen to work to the advantage of negating artificially high results for “democracy” in Chinese, as discussed in APPENDICES A and B. Generally, those vitally concerned with the methods of this test should go straight to those sections before moving on to the results, as many practical concessions had to be made to attain them.

Not surprisingly, the word “democracy” itself is far from forbidden in the Chinese press, and as the test results will show, actually appearing in a ratio to other subjects not significantly dissimilar to an assortment of non-PRC sources around the world⁶². Full results are listed in the next section under “FREQUENCY OF DEMOCRACY”. If the proportion of coverage is not greatly divergent, one can move on to the next and more reasonable assertion, that articles portraying democracy in the PRC are one-sidedly negative, and with an unquestionable consensus that China “isn’t ready”.

Qualitative Content Analysis. Given that the vast majority of articles in which the word “democracy” appears are actually about quite different subjects, true for both Western and Chinese media, it is necessary to select cases (articles) based on their relevance to the research topic and hypotheses⁶³. Not only due to translation difficulty but also space constraints, lest this paper should spiral into an anecdotal tome, only a very limited number of articles can be analyzed here. Every effort will be made to diversify the source publications and positions advocated, however to systematize the qualitative

⁶² See appendices A and B for exhaustive explanations of this test. A lack of formal quantitative training and less than 100% reliable sources necessitate the use of these non-standard methods⁶³

⁶³ One could raise objections to selecting cases on the dependent variable here, but as the intent is to seek diversity in media perceived to be monolithic, any sign of divergence from the “party line” is significant and deserving of attention, though with caution not to proclaim crucial “leaks in the dam”.

sampling exceeds the abilities of the researcher and, arguably, the benefits of doing so. As the prevailing notion of discussion parameters for democracy in the PRC's media is extremely narrow, special efforts will be made to find newspaper accounts which advocate practical steps the PRC may (or should) take to become a liberal democracy in the Western sense. Qualitative findings are given at the end of the next section, after the charts and listed under "DISCUSSION OF DEMOCRACY".

Results. As mentioned in the previous section, quantitative data show that the ratio of the word "democracy"⁶⁴ to other topics is no lower than in news sources outside the PRC. In fact, PRC sources had an average DFR of 14.2, nearly two percentage points higher than the mean for all sources, of 12.8. Strength can be added to this particular finding by noting where specific terms are found in the highest ratios. As one would expect, geographic, cultural, and political (not linguistic⁶⁵) factors seem to be behind the extremes in variation across the search terms. Especially notable high/low ratios for states' media with at least three sources sampled can be found in APPENDIX E. Generally, topic and word frequencies conformed to the expectation that geographic and cultural areas in which the terms originate will have more "hits".

⁶⁴ Actually, less exactly, 民主 *min zhu*, which is subject to the linguistic fact of Chinese words being interchangeable between parts of speech. There is thus a considerable amount of noise in the data, as the search term can signify either "democracy" or "democratic" (meaning that any mention of the U.S. Democratic Party, for example, will count as a "hit" even if democracy as a concept is not mentioned at all in the article). Attempts to isolate the concept with the "-ism" suffix "主义 *zhu yi*" (as in democracy-ism "民主主义 *minzhu zhuyi*", communism "共产主义 *gongchan zhuyi*", etc.) yield many fewer results but are instead overrun with articles on Mao Zedong's "New Democratic Revolution 新民主主义革命 *xin minzhu zhuyi ge ming*" and the DPRK 朝鲜民主主义共和国 *chaoxian minzhu zhuyi gonghe guo* (North Korea). One can speculate that search engines are manipulated to frontload these results in search engines, but that would suggest a very high level of censor sophistication for little effect; articles on democracy exist and are readily available if one sorts through such detritus.

⁶⁵ An international media test such as this is extremely vulnerable to a linguistic critique (in which all significant differences in word frequency are based on the usage of a particular search term in the vocabulary), which for reasons described in the previous footnote is quite valid. Emphasizing that geographic and cultural factors are responsible for higher and lower ratios in other subjects allows one to make an argument that lower ratios for "democracy", "human rights", etc. may be caused by political factors (I.e. state censorship or more subtle self-censorship by journalists and media companies).

FREQUENCY OF DEMOCRACY. A notable exception to this expectation is our primary focus, democracy. FIG. 1 shows the rankings of DFRs in newspaper coverage across the countries, regions, language, and other groupings. The rank of countries' DFR's is as follows: 1. Pakistan, 2. Taiwan, 3. Hong Kong, 4. Portugal, 5. Mexico, 6. Venezuela, 7. PRC, 8. India, 9. Macau, 10. Argentina, 11. Brazil, 12. Australia, 13. Cuba, 14. Canada, 15. United Kingdom, 16. USA, 17. Spain, 18. Ireland. Given such clearly divergent results, one is strongly tempted to draw political conclusions about the groupings in question⁶⁶. If one were to guess at a pattern in these admittedly incomplete results, it would appear that the word "democracy" appears in newspaper articles most often where democracy in the country is a serious and heavily debated topic, perhaps accompanied by frequent protests, generally highly publicized debates and electoral matters. More consolidated democracies in developed countries apparently do not find the topic as newsworthy, or perhaps there is simply more coverage of the other search terms in their generally freer presses. (FIGURE 1: Rank of Different Groups' DFRs, FIGURE 2: 24 highest DFR sources)

Country/Territory (total sample size= 177)	Mean	Rank of sources w/	DFR
People's Republic of China (38)	14.2	El Mercurio (Chile)	34.69
United States of America (37)	7.8	The International	33.5
Brazil (5)	10.8	El Universal	32.45
Taiwan (5)	25.7	China News Digest	30.37
Cuba (5)	10.1	Liberty Times	29.78
Hong Kong (4)	23.3	La Prensa (Bolivia)	28.04
Spain (4)	6.9	Tibet Daily	27.51
UK (4)	8.7	Global Times	26.66
Argentina (3)	11.9	A Semana (Praia,	26.64
Mexico (3)	20.3	The Himalayan	26.31
Venezuela (3)	16.2	Apple Daily (HK	25.99
Macau (3)	13.3	Xinjiang Daily	25.38
Portugal (3)	2.1	Diário do Minho	24.66
Canada (3)	9.8	Yemen Times	24.49
India (4) (oops)	14.2	El Comercio	23.88

⁶⁶ While the sample was taken in English, and thus is much less representative of the Pakistani press, it is not difficult to surmise why democracy would be a highly salient issue, by comparison. It remains troubling that, other than Pakistan and India, sources in English are generally near the bottom of the list, including the hyper democracy-promoting USA and UK. This likely shows a weakness in the selection terms, which may simply be more likely to appear in these countries. There does not appear to be an English language effect, as several other English sources in other regions (I.e. Latin America, Middle East) have ratios even higher than Pakistan's three sources.

Pakistan (3)	25.9	United Daily News	23.85
Ireland (3)	3.2	El Universal (Mexico)	23.56
Australia (3)	10.1	Hohhot Evening	22.96
PRC English Sources (3)	9.4	Pakistan Times	22.9
All English Sources (96)	10.5	Yunnan Daily	22.58
All Spanish Sources (27)	13.5	Público (Lisbon,	21.78
All Portuguese Sources (11)	15.6	The Daily Star	21.11
All Chinese Sources (incl. Taiwan/HK) (40)	16	El Diario (Xalapa,	20.79
All Traditional Chinese Sources (Taiwan/HK) (5)	23.1		
All Non-Chinese Sources in Macau, Taiwan, HK (7)	15.5		
All Latin American sources (32)	14		
All Asia & PRC SAR sources (PRC excluded) (36)	16.5		
All European sources (15)	9.7		
All African & Middle East Sources (15)	13.3		
All PRC SAR sources (13)	21.5		
MEAN of all sources	12.8		

A strong PRC effect can be gleaned by comparing the DFR of its sources with the average DFR of Chinese language sources in Hong Kong and Taiwan⁶⁷. Among Chinese-language sources, there is likely a built-in linguistic boost due to factors described in APPENDIX B, perhaps allowing both HK and Taiwan sources' DFR's to rank second and third overall. The PRC, manages only midway status, largely thanks to amplified DFR's in sources discussed in the following paragraph. One might expect the PRC to use its English language media as a tool to project a favorable image to the Western, English-speaking world, namely to suggest that China is working hard to move, at its own pace and under its own internal guidance, toward democracy. Indeed, the qualitative section below confirms this agenda, however the average DFR for the three publications, *China Daily*, *Shanghai Daily*, and the English version of *People's Daily*, is a full percentage point below the average for English sources. The seven "SAR" non-Chinese sources, by contrast, exceed the mean by a full five points. In terms of quantity, Taiwan and Hong Kong media appear to be winning the war for ownership of democratic discourse in all tongues.

It may also be interesting to note, for speculative readers, which sources in the PRC had the highest DFR's. Below is another chart, listing only PRC newspapers (including Taiwan, HK, and Macau), alphabetized by the name of the publication.

⁶⁷ Obviously, a much better comparison could be made with more data from Chinese language sources in other territories (i.e. Singapore, Macau, Australia, USA, etc.). While

Chinese language newspapers exist outside of "China" (web sites for them were found in each of those countries), we were unable to obtain data for them, due to an unfortunate lack of search engines on their sites. Many Chinese language sources other than those listed for Taiwan and HK also exist and could not be tallied for the same, disappointing reason.

(FIGURE 2: DFR's of CHINESE SOURCES)

Source	DFR
Anhui Evening News (www.hf365.com)	12.87262873
Apple Daily (HK newspaper) (www.atnext.com)	25.98752599
Beijing Evening News (www.ben.com)	11.49263064
Beijing News (PRC newspaper said to be "reformist") (www.thebeijingnews.com)	15.54745346
Beijing Youth Daily (www.ynet.com)	9.613566917
China Daily (English Language Chinese newspaper)	7.30398555
China News Digest (www.cnd.org) (PRC newspaper???)	30.69947062
China News Service (News source for non-PRC newspapers) (www.chinanews.cn)	15.7772271
China Post (English language newspaper in Taiwan)	15.31329923
China Youth Daily (Youth newspaper in PRC) (www.cyol.com)	9.217986698
Chongqing Daily (www.cqnews.net)	14.22920993
Dalian Daily News (www.daliandaily.com.cn)	15.6976137
Farmers Daily (www.farmer.com.cn)	8.255659121
Gansu Daily (www.gansudaily.com.cn)	9.10631289
Global Times (www.huanqiu.com)	26.58120932
Guangxi Daily (www.gxnews.com.cn)	10.93828303
Guangzhou Daily (www.gzdaily.dayoo.com)	7.733513213
Harbin Daily	16.14954478
Heilongjiang Daily (www.hljnews.cn)	17.38309225
Hohhot Evening News (www.nmgnews.com.cn)	22.8638956
Jiefang Daily (Shanghai) (www.jfdaily.com)	13.3326743
Jornal Tribuna de Macau (Portuguese Language Newspaper in Macau) (www.jtm.com.mo)	18.63905325
Liberty Times (Taiwanese newspaper)	29.77903912
Life of Guangzhou (PRC English but not a newspaper?)	3.191489362
Macau Daily Times (English Language Newspaper in Macau)	11.79245283
Mandarin Daily News (Taiwanese children's newspaper)	17.69179894
Nanfang Daily (PRC newspaper in Guangdong)	14.58797327
NDDaily (PRC newspaper in Guangdong said to be "questioning")	3.107088989
Ningbo Daily (www.cnnb.com.cn)	12.78883398
Ningxia Daily (www.nxnet.net)	11.3840784
People's Daily (English version)	10.34341694
People's Daily (Official PRC newspaper)	17.62718228
PLA Daily (PRC newspaper of the People's Liberation Army)	15.9715811
Qilu Evening News (Shandong) (www.qlwb.com.cn)	11.99839486
Revista Macau	9.333333333
Shanghai Daily (English language newspaper in PRC)	7.862169376
Sichuan Daily	18.39054459
South China Morning Post (HK English Language Paper) (www.scmp.com) @	17.09601874

Taipei Times (English language newspaper in Taiwan)	17.77777778
Takungpao (HK newspaper)	18.38029483
The Standard (HK English newspaper)	18.3540724
Tianjin Daily	10.109268
Tibet Daily (www.tibetinfo.com)	27.48015873
United Daily News (Taiwanese newspaper) (www.udn.com)	23.85428907
Wenhui News (Shanghai newspaper which had been shut down in past for political views) (www.wenhui.news365.com.cn)	15.56003528
Workers Daily (PRC) (www.grrb.com.cn)	19.2676885
Xiamen Daily (www.xmnn.com)	11.01462346
Xinjiang Daily (www.xjdaily.com)	25.33652625
Xinmin Evening News (Shanghai) (www.xmwb.news365.com.cn)	7.944643772
Yunnan Daily (www.yndaily.com)	22.54901961
Zhejiang Daily (www.zjdaily.com)	15.05221079
Zhongshan News (Guangdong) (www.zsnews.com)	9.819393302
AVERAGE	15.19579297

A clear pattern emerges in the five PRC newspapers with the highest DFR's: (1. Tibet Daily 2. Global Times 3. Xinjiang Daily 4. Hohhot Evening News 5. Yunnan Daily) They are almost all in areas with high "minority" populations, universally considered to be the PRC's periphery and under surveillance and "patriotic education" campaigns for ethnic tensions and to counteract any hints of separatism⁶⁸. Clearly, if the CCP considered the discussion of democracy to be a threat to its power, it would not allow these sources to print any articles on it, let alone actively skewing coverage to these areas. Instead, this appears to be an example of co-opting the term for party purposes, of using the media to forward the CCP agenda in the same manner as Houn described nearly 50 years ago. If the power of propaganda to win "hearts and minds" is to be believed, it would be most needed in these areas, where an assertorily existing "socialist" or "people's" democracy⁶⁹ projecting CCP leaders as benevolent guardians of all

⁶⁸ Given the limitations of the search methods, one may argue that the DFR's are artificially inflated by less coverage of the other search terms, which are predominantly both political and international. That the Global Times (a vanguard international publication owned by the People's Daily) is ranked #2 should be enough to discredit such claims. That the danger of ethnic turmoil or separatist threats is more important than a minority presence itself can be seen in that DFR's of papers in two other minority-heavy areas, Ningxia and Guangxi, are actually *below* average.

⁶⁹ 社会（主义）民主 *shehui zhuyi minzhu* or 人民民主 *renmin minzhu* in the parlance of the PRC and commonly retrieved results in searches

Chinese races might serve as a well-integrated tool to promote national unity.

An interesting corollary finding on the effects of Chinese press control can be found by comparing which regions and countries had the highest and lowest ratios of articles on particular subjects. As mentioned in the methods section, this may also be used to assess the validity of the salience test in general. Full results may be found in APPENDIX E, but for the purposes of noting what the Chinese press considers most important, Chinese sources (compared to other countries' media) had the highest coverage ratios for these terms: panda, intellectual property, success, bribery. Coverage ratios were among the lowest for these terms: human rights, global warming, terrorist. These highs and lows did not match up neatly with Taiwan, Hong Kong, or Macau, corroborating reports that a strong, state-control mechanism is in place to guide potentially wayward journalists away from undesirable subjects and toward those in vogue with party leadership and their agendas. This can be said with greater confidence thanks to the combination of the largest sample size, totaling 38 sources, and the fact that as a whole PRC media still managed to lead the field in coverage of four topics by wide margins while not cracking the top three in any others. Paired with topics an authoritarian regime might reasonably want to neglect in a non-investigative media (except in the case of bribery, traditionally used as a media tool to discredit and purge officials who have fallen out of favor), the PRC media's extremes match well with certain aspects of highly controlled mass media in Cuba, Venezuela, and Pakistan. Each is extreme in a larger number of search terms than the Western democracies, and each can claim first or last ranking in at least two terms. This can be contrasted especially with the USA sample, which led in zero terms, cracking the top or bottom three countries in only three terms.

DISCUSSION OF DEMOCRACY IN PRC NEWSPAPERS. As mentioned previously, treatment of democracy in the PRC press does not differ greatly in proportion to the other media sources examined,

however there is evidence that the subject is treated substantively only with officially-sanctioned kid gloves. A sampling of articles which genuinely examine the concept of democracy shows markedly different definitions, strong skepticism, and only vague outlines for how it might be applied in the PRC--- and only at some indeterminate date in the rather distant future.

To establish a standard for qualitative contrast, it is helpful to consider first how newspapers in the West and in English treat the prospects of democracy in China. As mentioned previously, the NYTimes is representative of a generally favorable portrayal in Western media which often borders on advocacy, publishing articles which emphasize the need for democracy there and suggesting that its population is indeed “ready” for it. In recent years, CCP chairman Hu Jintao and premier Wen Jiabao⁷⁰ have had their every public statement scrutinized for mention of democracy, both by Western and Chinese media in English⁷¹. While both sides are catering to their audiences, news headlines of statements made by these two leaders have not surprisingly been portrayed as the very forces impeding and causing democracy by non-PRC media⁷² and official PRC sources.

Two articles in the *People’s Daily*⁷³ from the mid-2000’s are illuminating for possible shifts in the

⁷⁰ Wen and the CCP would appreciate if the update to a 2003 *CNN.com* article (and Chinese now know just how anti-China and untrustworthy they are) quoting him in the headline “Too soon for China democracy”, with the 2006 official *Xinhua News Agency* article in which “Wen urges pursuit of democracy” is taken as a sign of real progress. Wen also waxes positively about the democratic system in a 2007 article by Zhang Ming in *Chinanews.com*

⁷¹ In a style which might serve as cautionary against extrapolating too much from my own methods, the headline of a recent official *Xinhua News Agency* article trumpeted the 2007 key note speech by Hu to the NPC for mentioning democracy “more than 60 times” (!!).

⁷² Taiwanese sources are especially illuminating. The *Taipei Times*, for example, saw fit to make a headline of Wen Jiabao’s 2007 statement that the PRC will not have democracy for 100 years. In an anti-White Paper editorial for the Taiwanese *China Post*, Frank Ching also launches into polemic attack of the CCP’s proud promotion in the document of the PRC’s almost completely powerless “democratic parties”. Other examples abound.

⁷³ which by merit (?) of being the official mouthpiece of the CCP should adhere most closely to the “party line” and be generally most restricted in terms of content

party line in the “domestic” context⁷⁴. Yu Qiao’s 2004 article responds to a purportedly large contingency of democratic dilettantes, who have made democracy a “fashionable” term of late, with patriotic fire and brimstone. Critics calling Taiwan’s democracy “false” are wrong, he says. Taiwan is a real Western democracy, and it has naturally produced “the last wave of fascism” in Lee Tenghui and Chen Shuibian, evil-minded separatists who fit the universal connection between democracy and turbulent fragmentation⁷⁵.

It is unclear whether Yu Keping, in his 2006 article “Democracy is a good thing”, is being patronizing, cautious, or both. The fact that this article needs to be written suggests that there may be audiences on either side in the population who need to be convinced of the title, for the hardline communists, and those blind idealists on the other side who see democracy as an instant panacea. His structure repeats the title in each topic sentence, a quasi-acknowledgment which nonetheless resembles someone repeating a mantra against one’s deepest principles, then uses the remainder of the paragraph to disillusion the audience about a pernicious democratic myth, such as everything about it being good, it being achievable without painful costs, and that results can be good without a “designer” schooled in the “fine art” of politics. He accuses some democracy advocates of being malevolent opportunists “who say ‘democracy’ but mean ‘dictatorship’”, and generally the poor Chinese sheep must beware of these rogues. As simplistic as this article is, it appears to have received a lot of attention, significantly by establishing a new context in which the topic may be discussed in other sources.

Both Yu’s close their articles with the requisite assertions that China and the CCP are inseparable, that any democracy implemented in China must be 100% Chinese. Both, it should also be noted, also conclude with the affirmation that a “socialist democracy” is being pursued in the PRC, and

⁷⁴ Yu Qiao’s article on Taiwanese democracy, while actually going into detail about democratic matters which *would* be considered international by those in the PRC, is primarily concerned with demonstrating the dangerous and terrible effects analogous to Chen Shuibian’s election in the PRC, if it were to democratize.

⁷⁵ He lists Eastern Europe as hopelessly split into tiny countries after the USSR’s dissolution, with Northern Ireland and Quebec thrown in for good measure, results of democracy. Western democracy, by Yu’s account, also “killed” the common man.

that everything is going swimmingly in this pursuit.

Earlier this year, the *Global Times*, a subsidiary of the *People's Daily* reporting on international news, seized upon electoral violence in Kenya (and the great potential for it in Zimbabwe and elsewhere) to publish an anonymous piece entitled, tautologically, “Only Good Democracy Is a Good Thing”. Addressing various topics as Western imposition on the developing world, a straw man of “messy” democracy, and the irrationality of one person choosing to vote⁷⁶ in a big country, it is a rejection of “democracy for its own sake” and a shaming of the West for tearing developing countries apart, without apologies. Notably, while the rejection of anything non-Chinese is consistent, there is no mention of “socialist democracy” but rather talk closing remarks of China following its own route of “liberalization and reform”. This is probably nothing to get excited about, as the enthusiasm with which China is exporting its version of democracy to Africa is generally thought to be less than its manufactured goods.

Having established a context, it would be very disheartening and totalitarian if nothing critical of these broad, propagandistic pieces could be found. Scouring most sources produces very little in the way of a rebuttal, but a couple of articles which were more positive did turn up in the search results for a newspaper in Guangdong called the *NDDaily*, said by Wikipedia to be “questioning” of the party line. Notable beyond the content, to return to the quantitative analysis, is the fact that this source has the single *lowest* DFR of all Chinese sources. Discounting the possibility that such critical and pro-West comments can be kept a secret in a mainstream daily newspaper, it must at least be suggested that the *NDDaily* is not doing much to advertise itself as a heavyweight coverer of the treacherous topic—preferring apparently self-preservation to self-promotion.

The first article from this source is decidedly brief and wrapped in several protective layers: it is anonymous, mentions in its introduction the very same *People's Daily* article proclaiming democracy as “good”, couches its initial criticisms in the form of a book review, and its title expresses only mild skepticism that democracy in the PRC must take some sixty years to “ripen”. The later content, despite

⁷⁶ Perhaps channeling Anthony Downs' classic work?

these precautions, might be taken as scandalous: advocating rights for migrant workers, portraying poor workers as well able to grasp democratic concepts, and ultimately denying outright that any “socialist democracy” exists under the ruling party. The writing is very much in the style of one who fears the consequences of one’s words, needing to adopt the language and co-opt the message of previous propaganda and patriotism, but the message is unequivocal: the people aren’t going to swallow the bait in one gulp.

A second article from March 2008 transcribes a speech by Cai Dingjian, objectively showing evidence that democracies *can* be stable, sustain economic development, and reduce corruption, with a disclaimer at the end that these radical views are solely those of the individual author. There is even some analytical complexity, as the discussion takes minute care to address ways in which a “tyranny of the majority” may be avoided, specific cases of how Latin American democratic reforms helped their economic growth. This is as close to an advocacy piece as this researcher has encountered, and it is notable that the call for democracy in the PRC is only strongly implied.

With due caution against oversimplification, PRC newspapers in Chinese which treat democracy are walking a fine line, and in fact several lines whether portraying it positively or negatively⁷⁷. The cited articles have set out primarily to define the term, to place it in a domestic and international context, as it relates to current events, and to offer official and challenging viewpoints on whether something resembling “polyarchy with Chinese characteristics” can or should have a future in the PRC. Little has been uncovered which might be considered earth-shaking or even particularly encouraging. The minimal level of nuance and variation to the sampled articles, while disappointing, should not be terribly surprising, given the difficulties Lynch faced even in more scholarly sources.

Some consolation can be found in the facts that the concept of democracy outside of “people’s democracy” or “socialist democracy”, in other words resembling more closely the Western kind, can be

⁷⁷ Objective or “fair” articles in the Western sense, as the two described above, are positive by comparison, all the more so for the fact that an openly suggestive article in the mainstream media on Western-style democracy in the PRC might earn both the writer and the publishing staff a demotion, robust flogging, years of self-criticism reports in prison, or worse.

raised if not discussed and advocated openly. It is also comforting that the PRC appears to have moved largely beyond the non-productive debate on which version is the “real” government of, by, and for the people. That no articles were found to vilify the Western form outright, as is still common in Cuban media, should not be taken as indication that such firebrand, ideological pieces are not still being written and published in the PRC. The sanctioned consideration of whether Western-style democracy is “good or bad” --even possibly desirable for China--is a modest improvement, in that an interested reader might actually be able to find a less venomous depiction than in years past. Such should by no means be overstated, however, as the situation for public speech outside of newspapers (as in the “big character posters” which were the hallmark of the Tiananmen era or more modern online discussion boards) appears no more lenient or accessible, unless one is technically savvy enough to surmount the “Great Firewall”.

A final and strong effect combining quantitative and qualitative analysis can also be seen by comparing the search result headlines between Chinese language (intended for domestic consumption) and English sources (directed at prying and concerned international audiences). As mentioned in a previous footnote (#64), a Chinese search for either phrasing of “democracy-ism”, with or without the suffix, tends to be dominated by results on “Mao Zedong’s New Democratic Revolution”⁷⁸. English Searches on this concept yield very few results, as indeed very few Westerners are probably interested in what the long-dead Chairman theorized on the topic⁷⁹. Rather, catering to the audience, every time a CCP leader utters the word, it makes China Daily’s headlines as an account of how progressive the party really is, clearly a kindly worded request to the West to give the PRC some space and leave it to the experts. Given this and the qualitative conclusion that most articles in Chinese on what most in the West

⁷⁸ The source with the highest DFR, Tibet Daily (the reader is left to draw conclusions as to why printing many stories about “democracy” might be of use there), approaches 100% of its articles with this frame of reference. Again, articles which treat the subject substantively in a manner resembling the Western concept are exceptional, and every attempt has been made to summarize them here.

⁷⁹ Few Chinese may be either, for that matter, but the implication is that if Chinese people want to know something about democracy from their newspapers, this is the proper and most important context.

consider to be democracy are highly skeptical at best, the effect of PRC media control remains strong indeed.

Conclusions. The most likely interpretation of the PRC media's mixed portrayal of democracy is that the CCP wishes to portray itself as in accordance with international opinion of regime legitimacy and political development, with democracy as the highest ideal of all aspects. Another possibility is raised in a recent article by Mark Leonard on the "new Chinese intelligentsia", in which both the "new left" and "new right" propose mechanisms for real political change in the PRC: democracy may begin within the CCP along precisely these ideological lines. Indeed, the term "inner-party democracy" has long been in use, and this recent article suggests that ideological lines for its actualization are becoming progressively clearer. This path, if not just another platitude to diffuse Western pressure, seem more likely than a revolution, as long as coordination goods continue to be doled out by a state-owned near-monopoly.

Methods for the salience test, while crude, have yielded many clear patterns from their results. If the rigor of this test is found to be lacking, this analysis can at least serve as a foundation for more conventional tests with standardized, descriptive statistics. The combination of these quantitative results and the qualitative content analysis of articles in Chinese newspapers corroborate the more anecdotal and sensationalist assessments of the Chinese media as under highly restrictive government control. Writing about democracy in other countries may provide a channel for its discussion outside the usual framework of the "inner-party" version, however, until this itself may be discussed critically and publicly, with open discussion of alternatives, the PRC democracy movement will continue to be consigned to its uncoordinated "underground" and explicitly rejected, scarcely influential advocacy from ex-pats and foreigners beyond its borders. Outside observers and the CCP alike should be well aware that significant media reform in the PRC would likely be a "triggering event" which would do much to reignite the flickering flame of hope for a Chinese democracy. Many Westerners, however, could clearly use some patronizing, PRC propaganda, lest they be allowed to think that such a flame might not burn out of control and become a belligerent bonfire of nationalism.

The PRC's media portrayal and allowances for discussing democracy are vital to the country's prospects for democratization. Were the CCP and its GAPP to loosen restrictions on the mass media,

social forces of all kinds would be unleashed to consolidate and coordinate their latent sociopolitical capital. Many of these forces would prefer a more revolutionary route to change over the current, often soothing message of gradualism emanating from the evolved yet highly-instrumental and regulated propaganda machine. Should the next “opening” of the media be sustained, a democracy of some form seems likely to follow, its increasingly affluent Chinese characteristics allowing it to endure.

APPENDIX A: DETAILS OF QUANTITATIVE SALIENCE TEST METHODS, (THE UNSOPHISTICATED AND OCCASIONALLY UNSAVORY)

This section explains what was done to obtain the data for the quantitative salience test section. For practical and theoretical considerations behind these methods, see APPENDIX B (ASSUMPTIONS) on the following pages.

DATE UNDERTAKEN: March, 2008.

MEDIUM OF SEARCHES: internet newspaper sites with built-in search engines or links through major search engines to search their sites.

LANGUAGES OF NEWSPAPER SITES: English, Chinese (Simplified 简体中文), Chinese (Traditional 繁體中文), Spanish, Portuguese. Note that newspaper sites in a language other than the official language of the country where the newspaper is published (I.e. Buenos Aires Herald, Hoy Chicago, Yemen Times, China Daily, etc.) should not be taken to be representative of the mass media in those countries.

SELECTION OF SITES: In countries where English is the (*de facto*) official language (I.e. USA, Canada, UK, India, etc.), at least one site based in the national capital and one in another city was taken. This was attempted for all countries, though in developing countries whatever newspaper site had a functional search engine was sampled. USA newspaper sites were randomized by selecting from every other state (from an alphabetical list) and alternating between a state capital paper and a non-capital city. For newspapers in the PRC, an attempt was made to sample official CCP, national, semi-private, provincial, and city papers, though again subject to limitations of websites and search engines. A slight bias is to be expected in favor of newspapers with higher circulations (more influential as news sources and also more likely to have good search engines/full archives online).

TERMS SEARCHED FOR EACH SITE: English- democracy, human rights, terrorist, global warming, United Nations, bribery, protester, intellectual property, success, Milwaukee, panda, paella, wicket.

Chinese (Simplified 简体中文) - 民主, 人权, 恐怖分子, 全球变暖, 联合国, 受贿, 抗议者, 知识产权, 成功, 密尔沃基, 熊猫, 锦饭, 三柱门。

Chinese (Traditional 繁體中文) - 民主, 人權, 恐怖分子, 全球變暖, 聯合國, 受賄, 抗議者, 知識產權, 成功, 密爾沃基, 熊貓, 錦飯, 三柱門。

Spanish - democracia, derechos humanos, terrorista, calentamiento global, naciones unidas, soborno, en protesta por, propiedad intelectual, éxito, Milwaukee, panda, paella, críquet.

Portuguese - democracia, direitos humanos, terrorista, aquecimento global, Nações Unidas, suborno, manifestante, propriedade intelectual, suceso, Milwaukee, panda, paella, críquet.

APPENDIX B: ASSUMPTIONS ON THE NEWSPAPER SEARCH DATA

QUANTITATIVE SALIENCE TEST:

That the data and analysis of PRC newspapers' coverage of democracy are both relevant and accurate rests on the following ASSUMPTIONS (with comments): 1. Newspapers still matter. (While readership of newspapers is in a decreasing trend, especially among the young, they remain one of the most significant sources of news. Where the internet--and in some cases television-- is less pervasive, I.e. China and developing countries, the influence of newspapers may be assumed to be greater.) 2. Online and paper newspaper content for each company do not differ significantly. (Major differences would create different ratios depending on the newsprint or electronic version.) 3. State-controlled media generally represent the view of the state, to the extent of state control. Articles which criticize the state or diverge from the "party line" on an issue represent what the state will tolerate. (Judgments of the state's position on democracy in China and elsewhere are based primarily on this.) 4. Searching different ranges of time in different newspaper sites will not have a significant effect, unless the range is very small. (This is both a major and shaky assumption regarding my results. Almost none of the sites in China allowed for a specific date range of articles to be searched, even in the "advanced search" option. The maximum portion of sites archives for which results were illustrative was searched in each case. Where results were capped, an attempt was made to narrow the range of dates until the most numerous search term was below the cap. Where searches by individual year were the widest range available, 2007 was used. In some cases, the range of dates searched was very narrow, and thus assumption 4 becomes very shaky indeed. Thus results in general, with only a moderate sample size, are acknowledged to be crude but still useful.) 5. Measuring "democracy" against the other search terms provides an accurate ratio of total coverage within the source, which in turn approximates the salience of the issue for a particular media source. (A better measure would be to divide the number of articles containing the word "democracy" by the total number of articles, however the standards of newspaper site search engines varied widely. Most did not show the total number of articles in the archive, and none gave the total available when searching only a specific date range.) 6. Search engine function/inclusiveness did not influence results significantly. (A major issue for search terms of more than a single word is whether results are for "any" or "all" of the terms. The vast majority of sites did not allow for this to be adjusted; those that did were toggled to "all" of the words for terms such as "United Nations" and "intellectual property".) 7. Linguistic differences in the search terms did not significantly

influence results. (It is hoped that with several terms searched, linguistically-influenced results would “even out”, with those used more frequently or with more parts of speech in a language [i.e. 民主 *min zhu* = democracy/democratic, 成功 *cheng gong* = success/successful/successfully/succeed] offsetting those used for less [i.e. A search engine in English, Spanish, or Portuguese would not return articles containing “democratic” if “democracy” was the entered search term]. Geographic, cultural, and political differences, conversely, are precisely those in which this study is interested, and which are expected to be represented in the results for the specific search terms chosen.) 8. Differences in the day of the search will not affect results significantly. (Searches made earlier in the month would have fewer results for “protester” than those done later, as Tibetan protest coverage grew, for example. This would mostly affect sources for which the total number of articles retrieved, due to a limited time range, was smaller.)

In retrospect, other search terms may have been more appropriate to address some of the concerns listed above. To test further the results that PRC news is more positive in general, terms such as “war”, “recession”, “applause”, “surplus”, etc. may have been substituted or added, pending time constraints.

Methodological consultation, with previous studies and experienced researchers, on the soundness of these methods was undertaken post-hoc, unfortunately. If found to be wholly unsound, let this stand as an example of the dangers of reckless research!

QUALITATIVE CONTENT ANALYSIS:

The qualitative portion, analyzing individual newspaper articles, is subject to assumptions 1-3. Additionally, it is assumed that the sampled articles from varying sources and dates, in that their content does not vary significantly, is representative of the PRC media’s treatment of democracy. More explicitly, we assume: 8. TV and internet media in the PRC will not be more pro- or anti-democracy than its newspapers (again noting that newsprint and newspapers’ websites are considered identical).

APPENDIX C: WAS REMOVED (HOPE THERE AREN’T STILL ANY REFERENCES TO IT IN THE TEXT)

APPENDIX D: ABBREVIATIONS AND TRANSLATIONS OF CHINESE TERMS

CCP - Chinese Communist Party
 DFR - “Democracy Frequency Ratio”, the primary unity of analysis in this study for determining the salience of democracy in a particular source.
 GAPP – General Administration of Press and Publication of the People’s Republic of China (Official Chinese press monitoring agency, www.gapp.gov.cn)
 GT - Global Times (环球时报 *huanqiu shibao* PRC newspaper)
 HK - Hong Kong (SAR/Special Administrative Region of the PRC)
 NPC - National People’s Congress
 NYTimes- New York Times
 PD - People’s Daily (人民日报 *renmin ribao* Official newspaper of the CCP, paper of record in the PRC?)
 PRC - People’s Republic of China
 ROC - Republic of China (Taiwan)
 RWB - Reporters Without Borders
 SAR - Special Administrative Region (of the PRC)
 UN - United Nations

APPENDIX E: SALIENCE TEST PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT

Based on the terms searched (see APPENDIX A), the media of certain countries are expected to contain more articles with geographic and cultural ties to particular terms. If search results conform to these expectations, confidence in the methods of this salience test may be improved. Conversely, if results do not conform to expectations (i.e. if there are more articles about pandas in Canadian sources than anywhere else, we would have little reason to expect that higher or lower ratios for “neutral” terms such as IP are caused by country-level factors but rather by chance), the validity of these unorthodox methods may be further compromised.

“LEADERS” BY SEARCH TOP 3 or so (descending) bottom 3 or so (ascending)	Democracy Pak, Tai, HK Ire, Spa, USA	H. Rights Can, Aus, Arg. PRC, Cuba, Mac	Terrorist Cuba, Pak, Mex, PRC, Ire	G. Warming UK, Can, Aus Ven, Mex,	UN Ven, UK/HK, Can, Aus, Arg,	Bribery PRC, HK, Ire/Ven,	Protester Ven, Spa, Pak, Ind,
Int. Proper. PRC, Arg, HK/Spa Can, Mex/Pak	Success PRC, Bra, Tai, Cuba, Pak, Ven	Milwaukee USA, Can, Tai/HK Port. Cuba, Ven, Pak	Panda PRC, HK, Tai, Ven/Pak,	Paella Spa, Mex, Aus Pak, Cuba, Ind	Wicket Ind, Pak, Aus Ven, Mex, Bra		
Rank of Democracy Article Name/Name denotes a near Remember: for PRC and							

Geographic and culturally sensitive terms appear to align as expected, while more interesting research term results are fairly easy to explain. A notable exception is Venezuela's world-leading coverage of protesters, which BBM & Downs claim (pg. 82) was not allowed to be reported on after a 2004 edict by Hugo Chavez.

"LEADERS" BY COUNTRY

Country/Territory (In descending order of sample)	Top 3 in Search Terms	Bottom 3 in Search Terms
People's Republic of China (40)	Bri!, IPI, Suc!, Pan!	HR, GW, Ter
United States of America (37)	Milw	Dem, UN
Brazil (5)	Suc	Wick
Taiwan (5)	DEM, Suc, Milw, Pan	()
Cuba (5)	Ter!, UN	HR, Pae, Suc!
Hong Kong (4)	DEM, Bri, Milw, UN, IP, Pan	Pro
Spain (4)	Ter, Pro, IP, Pae!	DEM, GW, Bri
UK (4)	GW!, UN	DEM, Pan
Argentina (3)	HR, IPR	UN, Pan
Mexico (3)	DEM, Pae	Ter!, GW, IP, Wick
Venezuela (3)	UN!, Pro!	GW!, Bri, Suc, Pan!, Wick!
Macau (3)	Bri, Pan	HR
Portugal (3)	DEM	Bri, Milw!
Canada (3)	HR!, GW, Milw	DEM, IPI, UN!
India (4) (oops)	Wick!, Pan, Ter	Pro, Pae
Pakistan (3)	DEM!, Ter, Wick	Pro!, Suc, Pan!, IP, Milw
Ireland (3)	UN, Pro, Suc	DEM!, Ter
Australia (3)	HR, GW, Wick	UN
! Denotes #1 or lowest of all		
Search term abbreviations:		
Bri= Bribery, Pro= Protester,		
Taiwan was not among the		

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