



Re-defining Media Convergence and Re-thinking the Role of Internet in Transforming the Media System in China

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Basic statistics

(penetration rate)

- Newspaper: 1005 (2015)
- Radio: 98.77% (2016); more than 1900 channels
- Television: 98.9% (2016); more than 3000 channels
- Internet: 53.2% (700 million, 3.1% above global average, 7.6% above Asian average), of which 95.1% via mobile (2016)
- Smartphone: 58% (2016)

Two entry points for understanding the transformation of media landscape in China

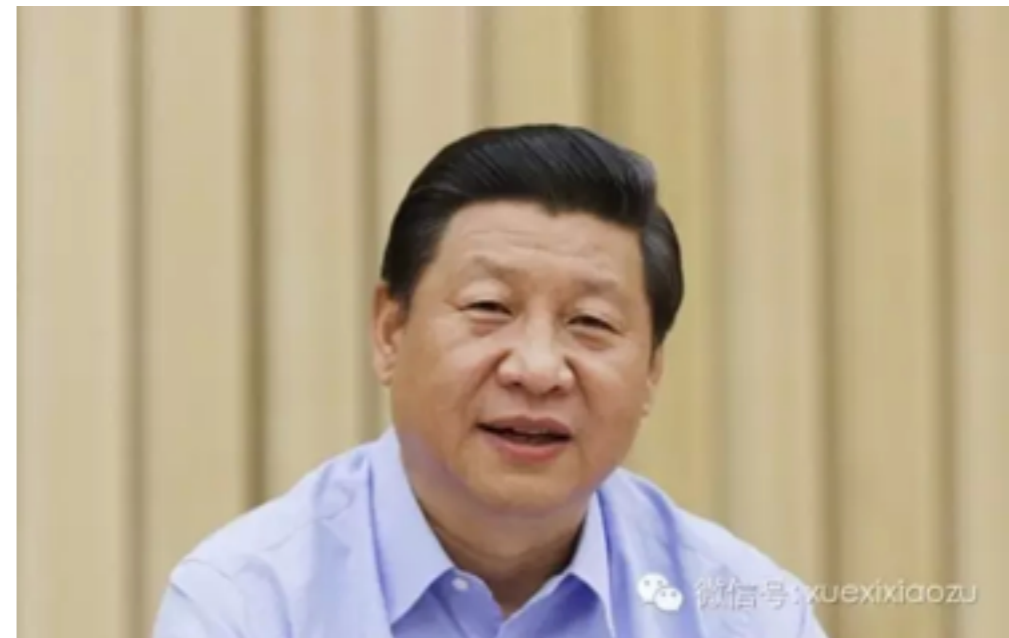
- **Theory:** not a single media system model can grasp the dynamics of media development in contemporary China (democratic vs. non-democratic; totalitarian or authoritarian vs. libertarian; Leninist theory - “the press should be not only a collective propagandist and a collective agitator, but also a collective organizer of the masses; Marxist journalism theory (formulated by Mao Zedong) - the Party’s principles; Internet-driven theories (network society, information society, citizen activism, etc.); between the Party line and the Bottom line (Zhao, 1998)...

- **Experience:** certainties and uncertainties: ownership of traditional media organizations, the Party's leadership over news reporting and other content production including entertainment; tensions and heterogeneity inside the bureaucratic propaganda system and different localities; internet-based public engagement; media market and media profession in rapid restructuring; technological revolution (e.g. "WeChatization"); China's media going out and its consequences; media convergence with Chinese characteristics...

Re-defining media convergence by the
CCP's leadership and theorization of media
convergence with Chinese Characteristics

Media convergence from the top: traditional/mainstream media should take the lead (August 18, 2014)

- Speaking at a meeting of the central leading group to deepen overall reform, President Xi Jinping urged media to strengthen what he called the “**Internet way of thinking**” and speed up the “**convergence**” between **traditional media and the Internet and mobile Internet.** (China Daily, 2014-08-20)



CCTV NEWS

CNTV

EDWIN MAHER

NEWS
DESK

Liu Shiyu replaces Xiao Gang as China's securities r

- The leading position of **Marxist journalism theory** in guiding journalistic practices
- How to build an army of **politically-loyal journalists with competent communication capacities** in a media-saturated society
- The critical role of the **propaganda officials**
- **Nine innovations** to catch the development of ICTs and to fit in the changing communication environment (agenda-setting, timing, formats, etc.)

Three principles for media convergence

- Sustaining the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party over the media system, particularly the Party/State-owned media
- Innovating communication strategies (e.g. pick perfect timing to release news about corrupted officials)
- Changing ways of ruling the media system (more public relations management than directives, more data-based analysis and response, etc.)

	Legacy Media	New Media
1980s	agenda-dominator (disseminator)	not yet appeared
1990s	agenda-setter	communication facilitator, advocator of IT-driven development
2000s	agenda-coordinator	social connector, platform provider for public engagement and negotiation



“Chinese history is not linear but bifurcated.”

(Prasenjit Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation*, 1995)

Three lines intertwined:
the Party line
the bottom line
and
and technology line.

The Party Line

- Sustaining the commanding height
- The complex formation of ideological leadership
- The intended containment of the market expansion and social differentiation
- Reclaiming the moral high ground of international communication (Global South and a new world information and communication order)

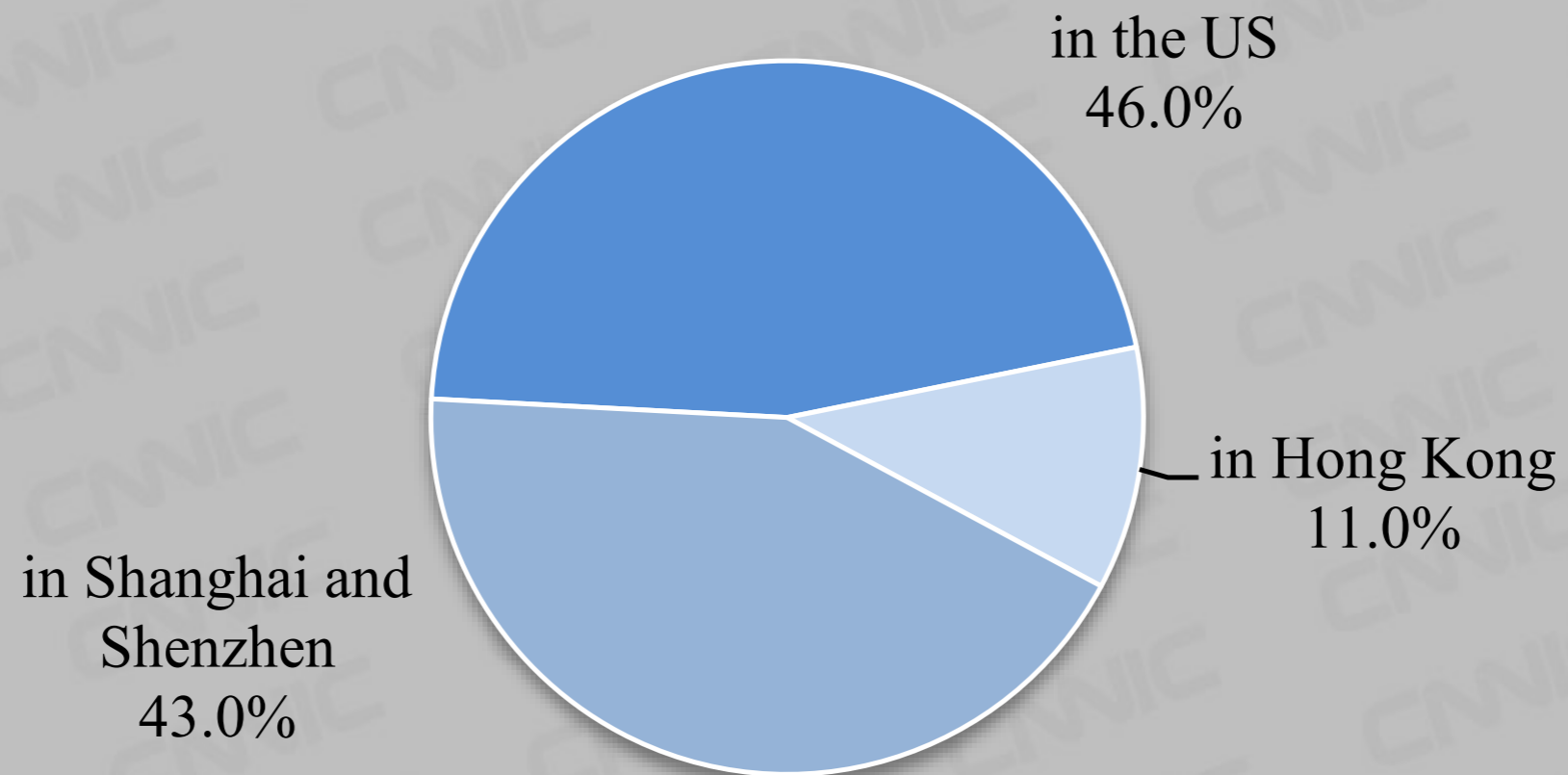
The Bottom Line

- The results of 30-year marketization: from advertising to a diverse structure of profit making, and capitalization
- Media as ICTs and creative industries
- A controlled commodification (Ian Weber, 2005)

The Technology Line

- Fast-changing ICTs industries
- Maturation of ICTs infrastructure and the prosperity of application industries
- Internet companies lead the technological innovation (e.g. BAT)
- Cyber security

Number Distribution of Listed Internet Companies, by Listing Location



Thanks!

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