
CHINA'S PROPAGANDA SYSTEM: INSTITUTIONS, PROCESSES AND EFFICACY

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In China today, a daily battle is waged between the state and society over “what is fit to know”. This contest reflects and constitutes a central contradiction in Chinese politics—between the needs of a rapidly modernizing economy and pluralizing society on the one hand, and the desire by the Party-state to maintain absolute political power on the other.

This article explores this contradiction, but primarily from the state side of the equation. Following a brief discussion of the history and roles of political propaganda (in China and elsewhere), this article focuses on the scope, structure and mechanisms of the Chinese propaganda system today. It also considers the politics and personalities involved in the propaganda system, particularly in the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Propaganda Department. Finally, it assesses the overall strength and efficacy of the propaganda system today, considering in particular the impact of market forces on the media. It concludes that, though the efficacy of China's propaganda system has eroded considerably from its Orwellian past and is being buffeted by the information revolution and globalization, the system remains effective in controlling most of the information that reaches the Chinese public and officialdom. In many ways it epitomizes the broader processes of atrophy and adaptation that characterize the Party's rule today.¹

* I am grateful for the comments on earlier drafts of this article by Kjeld Erik Brødsgaard, Ashley Esarey, Donald Keyser and anonymous reviewers for *The China Journal*.

¹ See David Shambaugh, *China's Communist Party: Atrophy and Adaptation* (Berkeley; Washington: University of California Press; Woodrow Wilson Center Press, forthcoming 2007).

Earlier studies of the Chinese Communist propaganda system all described its central role in the broader CCP “control system”.² The Chinese Communists learned much from their study of the Soviet, Nazi and other totalitarian states’ propaganda methods,³ but also drew on the experiences of the imperial and Nationalist Chinese governments. The Chinese Communist propaganda system represented the quintessential Leninist “transmission belt” for indoctrination and mass mobilization (*agitprop* in Soviet terminology).⁴ The CCP system had its origins in Yan’an and the rectification movements carried out there,⁵ and then became a—if not *the*—key mechanism for Mao’s and the Party’s subsequent efforts to transform Chinese society after 1949.

As the works of Solomon, Teiwes, Schurmann, Schoenhals, Whyte, Johnson, Yu, Chang and other scholars have documented well, propaganda and indoctrination were a hallmark of the Maoist state.⁶ Mao was a master propagandist in his own right, and he and his regime used a variety of “thought control” techniques throughout their rule. These included mass mobilization campaigns; the construction of “models” to be emulated; the creation of study groups and ideological monitors throughout society; incarceration for the purpose of “brainwashing”; the promulgation of a steady stream of documents to be

² See, for example, Franz Schurmann’s *Ideology and Organization in Communist China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966).

³ For an excellent study of the Nazi propaganda apparatus, see David Welch, *The Third Reich: Politics and Propaganda* (New York: Routledge, 1993).

⁴ The classic studies are Alex Inkeles, *Public Opinion in Soviet Russia: A Study in Mass Persuasion* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950) and Peter Kenez, *The Birth of the Propaganda State: Soviet Methods of Mass Mobilization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985). Also see Martin Ebon, *The Soviet Propaganda Machine* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1987).

⁵ See, in particular, the discussion in Frederick C. Teiwes, *Politics and Purges in China* (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 1993, second edition), Chapters 1, 2.

⁶ Franz Schurmann, *Ideology and Organization*; Frederick C. Teiwes, *Politics and Purges*, Chapters 1, 2; Richard Solomon, *Mao’s Revolution and the Chinese Political Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971); Frederick Yu, *Mass Persuasion in Communist China* (New York: Praeger, 1964); Michael Schoenhals, *Doing Things with Words in Chinese Politics* (Berkeley: University of California Institute of East Asian Studies, 1992); Alan P. L. Liu, *Communications and National Integration in Communist China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971); Martin King Whyte, *Small Groups and Political Rituals in China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974); Chalmers Johnson (ed.), *Ideology and Politics in Contemporary China* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1973); Franklin Houn, *To Change a Nation: Propaganda and Indoctrination in Communist China* (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1961); Robert J. Lifton, *Thought Reform and the Psychology of Totalism: A Study of “Brainwashing” in China* (New York: Norton, 1961); and Julian Chang, “The Mechanics of State Propaganda: The People’s Republic of China and the Soviet Union in the 1950s”, in Timothy Cheek and Tony Saich (eds), *New Perspectives on State Socialism in China* (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 1997), pp. 76-124.

memorized; control of the subject matter to be taught throughout the educational system; control of the content of newspaper articles and editorials; development of a nationwide system of loudspeakers that reached into every neighborhood and village; domination of the broadcast media; the use of propaganda teams (*xuanchuan dui*) to indoctrinate specific segments of the population; and other methods.

The roles played by official propaganda in China today have declined considerably since the Maoist era, but remain an important part of Chinese political and cultural life. The more recent works of Lynch, Lee, Brady and Esarey have updated earlier studies—particularly by examining the commercialization of the media.⁷ While Lynch and Lee tend to view the propaganda state as in decline as a result of commercialization of the media, Brady and Esarey find that the Party has been very adept at utilizing commercialization to enhance and strengthen the propaganda apparatus.

This article focuses on the institutional actors, mechanisms and processes of the propaganda apparatus in China today, and only secondarily on the issue of commercialization. I agree with Lynch that the overall power and efficacy of China's propaganda state today has declined a great deal, and argue that commercialization has been one of the main factors in this declining capacity, yet I also agree with Brady and Esarey that the CCP propaganda apparatus has been revitalized in recent years and remains fully capable of controlling the content of information that reaches the public *when it decides to do so*. Hence, the issue—like so much else concerning the government in China today—is really one of selective enforcement.

The Scope, Structure and Mechanisms of China's Propaganda System

Scope

China's propaganda system (*xuanchuan xitong*) is a sprawling bureaucratic establishment, extending into virtually every medium concerned with the dissemination of information. According to one CCP publication, the scope of propaganda oversight includes: "newspaper offices, radio stations, television stations, publishing houses, magazines, and other news and media departments; universities, middle schools, primary schools, and other vocational education,

⁷ See Daniel C. Lynch, *Media, Politics, and "Thought Work" in Reformed China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999); Chin-chuan Lee (ed.), *Voices of China: The Interplay of Politics and Journalism* (New York: Guilford, 1990); Chin-chuan Lee (ed.), *Power, Money, and Media: Communications Patterns and Bureaucratic Control in Cultural China* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2000); Anne-Marie Brady, "Guiding Hand: The Role of the Central Propaganda Department in the Current Era", *Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (2006), pp. 58-77; Ashley W. Esarey, *Caught Between State and Society: The Commercial News Media in China* (Columbia University PhD dissertation, Political Science, 2006); Ashley Esarey, "Cornering the Market: State Strategies for Controlling China's Commercial Media", *Asian Perspective*, Vol. 29, No. 4 (2005), pp. 37-83.

specialized education, cadre training, and other educational organs; musical troupes, theatrical troupes, film production studios, film theaters, drama theaters, clubs, and other cultural organs, literature and art troupes, and cultural amusement parks; cultural palaces, libraries, remembrance halls, exhibition halls, museums, and other cultural facilities and commemoration exhibition facilities”.⁸

This expansive definition means that virtually every conceivable medium which transmits and conveys information to the people of China falls under the bureaucratic purview of the CCP Propaganda Department (hereafter CCPPD). In terms of channels of dissemination, the propaganda system encompasses an extensive range of media, publications and other outlets. Official government sources report that, in 2003, these included 2,262 television stations (of which 2,248 were “local”), 2,119 newspapers, 9,074 periodicals and 1,123 publishing houses which published 190,391 books.⁹ In addition, hundreds of internal circulation papers and local gazetteers, approximately 68 million internet accounts with more than 100 million users, and more than 300 million mobile phone users fall under the purview of the CCPPD.¹⁰

The writ of the CCPPD has remained the same since the Maoist era, although its actual oversight and active censorship have changed considerably. Given the pluralization and marketization of media, art and even education in China in recent years, it is simply impossible for the CCPPD and other censorship authorities to police all of these realms effectively. A significant effort has been made to police the internet (*yintewang*) with an estimated 30,000 human monitors and a variety of sophisticated technological filters and devices,¹¹ but even this has had its limitations, given users’ ability to circumvent firewalls. Globalization and the opening of the Chinese television market to satellite and cable broadcasts have also brought various foreign broadcast and print media directly into Chinese homes and work units.

While the effectiveness of the CCPPD’s ability to control the flow of information into and throughout China has eroded over time, it continues to have

⁸ *Zhongguo Gongchandang jianshe dazidian 1921–1991* (An Encyclopedia on the Building of the CCP) (Chengdu: Sichuan Renmin Chubanshe, 1992), p. 676.

⁹ National Bureau of Statistics of China, *China Statistical Yearbook 2004* (Beijing: China Statistics Press, 2004), pp. 844–46, 853. There is some discrepancy in the number of operating television stations. The figure provided in the text is taken from the *China Statistical Yearbook*, but the 2004 *Xinwen nianjian* lists only 358. This probably reflects the elimination of all county-level stations as content producers on 1 July 2002. I am grateful to Ashley Esarey for this distinction.

¹⁰ Estimates provided by Xiao Qiang, Director of China Internet Project, Graduate School of Journalism, University of California, Berkeley, “Prepared Statement” for hearings on “China’s State Control Mechanisms and Methods”, convened by the US–China Economic and Security Review Commission, 14 April 2005, p. 83.

¹¹ See John G. Palfrey, Jr., Executive Director of Berkman Center for Internet and Society, Harvard Law School, “Prepared Statement” and testimony, US–China Economic and Security Review Commission.

the capacity to censor and to crack down when and where it sees fit. Since 2004 in particular, under Hu Jintao's auspices and CCP directives, there has been a concerted crackdown on the media and concomitant strengthening of the propaganda apparatus.¹² Cases of forced closure, investigations, intimidations, persecutions, arrests, prosecutions, imprisonments, even deaths, are well documented in a report by exiled investigative journalist He Qinglian (herself an employee-turned-victim of the propaganda state).¹³

In addition to these active mechanisms, the CCPPD has a passive control capability in the form of *self-censorship*, rather than direct bureaucratic intervention. Perry Link has drawn attention to this phenomenon,¹⁴ and numerous interviews confirm it. Creative intellectuals—whether they are journalists, professors, artists or filmmakers—*know* the limits of the propaganda state, even if they are engaged in a process of constantly probing them. Not only do they have an innate sense of breaching established strictures and taboos, but interviews with scholars and journalists indicate that mechanisms exist which specify the limits (elaborated below).

Censorship, however, is only one side of the coin. The CCPPD is much more regularly engaged in what might be described as *proactive* propaganda—writing and disseminating the information that it believes *should* be transmitted to, and inculcated in, various sectors of the populace. As such, “propaganda” (*xuanchuan*) does *not* carry negative connotations for the CCP, nor, for that matter, for most Chinese citizens. Since its establishment 85 years ago, the CCP has viewed propaganda as education of the masses—a proactive tool to be used in educating and shaping society. It is seen as a legitimate tool for transforming and building the kind of society sought by the Party—a society labeled, since the 1980s, a “socialist spiritual civilization” (*shehuizhuyi de jingshen wenming*) or, more recently, a “harmonious society” (*hexie shehui*).

¹² Examples of newspaper closures include the Guangzhou newspaper *21 shiji huanqiu baodao* (21st Century Global Herald) in 2003, and the Beijing periodical *Zhanlue yu guanli* (Strategy and Management) in 2004. Previous closures included *Shijie jingji daobao* (World Economic Herald) and a number of other publications in 1989; *Qingnian baokan shijie* (Youth Press World) in 1996; *Lingnan wenhua shibao* (Lingnan Cultural Times) in 1998; *Fangfa* (Method) in 1999; *Dongfang* (Eastern) in 1999; *Guangxi shangbao* (Guangxi Business Daily) and *Jingji zaobao* (Morning Economic News) in 2001. More recently, in 2006, *Bing dian* (Freezing Point) was shut down. See Philip Pan, “Leading Publication Shut Down in China: Party’s Move is Part of Wider Crackdown”, *Washington Post*, 25 January 2006; Joseph Kahn, “China Shuts Down Influential Weekly Newspaper in Crackdown on Media”, *New York Times*, 25 January 2006.

¹³ He Qinglian, “Media Control in China”, *China Rights Forum*, No. 4 (2004).

¹⁴ See, for example, Perry Link, “China: The Anaconda in the Chandelier”, *New York Review of Books*, Vol. 49, No. 6 (11 April 2002).

Overall Structure

The bureaucracy of the Chinese propaganda system is enormous. The institutional epicenter of this system is the CCPPD, but a number of other State Council departments and regulatory organs are also important institutional parts of the system. This bureaucratic division of labor is described in a recent CCPPD publication:¹⁵

- The State Council Information Office (*Guowuyuan Xinwenban*, or SCIO) has overall authority for monitoring the content of news nationwide.
- The Ministry of Culture (*Wenhua Bu*, or MOC) has joint responsibility for monitoring the art world, theater, literature and museums.
- The Ministry of Education (*Jiaoyu Bu*, or MOE) has joint responsibility for monitoring curriculum and textbooks at all levels of the educational system.
- The Ministry of Information Industry (*Xinxi Chanye Bu*, or MII), Ministry of Public Security (*Gong'an Bu*, or MPS) and Ministry of State Security (*Guojia Anquan Bu*, or MSS) have joint responsibility for monitoring and blocking electronic communications into China. The MPS and MSS are most actively involved in monitoring the Internet and other electronic forms of communication on a daily basis, although the MII is described as having “overall management authority” and facilitates access to the telephone lines, fiberoptic cables, cell phones, text messaging, faxes and so on. The MII is responsible for monitoring the frequencies, bandwidth and other technical aspects of television and radio broadcasting, while the CCPPD and the State Administration of Radio, Film and Television (*Guojia Guangdian Zongju*, or SARFT) are jointly responsible for monitoring broadcast content.
- The People’s Liberation Army General Staff Department, Third Department for Communications and Fourth Department for Electronic Countermeasures is the primary institution responsible for jamming satellite, short-wave and other electronic broadcasts into China.
- The PLA General Political Department (GPD) undertakes and monitors all propaganda work within the military, but liaises with the CCPPD.
- The State Council General Administration of Press and Publications (*Xinwen Chubanshu*, or GAPP) has principal responsibility for monitoring the publishing industry.
- The CCPPD and the State Council Information Office are responsible for overseeing the Xinhua News Agency and domestic media, sometimes in collaboration with the GAPP.

¹⁵ Central Propaganda Department Cadre Bureau Writing Group, *Xin shiqi xuanchuan sixiang gongzuo* (Propaganda Thought Work in the New Period) (Beijing: Xuexi Chubanshe, 2006), pp. 88-89.

The roles that these organs play in the propaganda system are elaborated below. By their own nomenclature, the system is divided into two separate but interrelated systems (*xitong*): *internal* and *external* propaganda.

Leading Groups

The internal propaganda system is composed of numerous Party and State Council organs. At the pinnacle of the system is the Central Leading Group on Propaganda and Ideological Work (*Zhongyang Xuanchuan Sixiang Gongzuo Lingdao Xiaozu*), hereafter CLGPIW. While the leading group has apparently existed since 1967 (encompassing education until a separate leading group was established for this in 1982),¹⁶ it was formally constituted under its current name by Central Committee Directive (*Zhongwei zhidao*) No. 11 of 1988.¹⁷ From 1967 to 1988 it was known as the Central Propaganda and Education Leading Group (*Zhongyang Xuan-Jiao Lingdao Xiaozu*), exemplifying the close link between educational and propaganda spheres. The 1988 Directive specified the CLGPIW's work: "Routinely analyze and monitor dynamics and trends in the ideological field; research and control propaganda work and direction (*fangzhen*); coordinate work in propaganda, theoretical, cultural, media, publishing, and other departments concerned with work in the ideological field; offer comments and suggestions to propaganda and theoretical units".¹⁸

The CLGPIW is composed of a head (*zuzhang*) and deputy, a head and deputy of the Secretarial Group (*Mishuzu*) and between five and eight members (*chengyuan*). These members are almost always reconstituted following a Party congress (every four years). Since the 14th Party Congress in 1992 it has become conventional that the Leading Group head (presently Li Changchun) is a member of the Party Politburo Standing Committee, while the deputy head (presently Liu Yunshan) is the Minister of the Propaganda/Publicity Department, who is usually also a member of the Politburo. The Head of the Secretarial Group is currently Zhu Hong, and his deputy is Xie Yongjin.¹⁹ The other current members of the Leading Group are not known.

¹⁶ The first mention of a *Xuanchuan Kou* (another term for the Leading Group) is in January 1967. See Wan Fuyi (ed.), *Zhongguo Gongchandang jianshe* (The Building of the Chinese Communist Party) (Jinan: Jinan Renmin Chubanshe, 2001), p. 289.

¹⁷ "Zhonggong zhongyang guanyu zhongyang xuanchuan, sixiang gongzuo lingdao xiaozu de renyuan zucheng ji gongzuo shiwu de zhidao" (Central Committee Notice Concerning the Central Propaganda and Ideological Work Leading Group Personnel, Organization and Scope of Work) in General Office of the Central Propaganda Department (ed.), *Dang de xuanchuan gongzuo wenjian xuanbian (1988–1992)* (Selected Documents on Party Propaganda Work, 1988–1992) (Beijing: Central Party School Press, 1993, *neibu faxing*), p. 1703.

¹⁸ "Zhonggong zhongyang guanyu zhongyang xuanchuan".

¹⁹ *China Directory 2004* (Tokyo: Radiopress, 2004), p. 29.

After the establishment of the new CLGPIW in 1988, Hu Qili was its first head, until he was dismissed in the midst of the May–June 1989 crisis. Hu was succeeded by Politburo Standing Committee member Li Ruihuan, who served until 1992; Ding Guan’gen succeeded him until retiring in 2002.²⁰ During most of this period, Zheng Bijian (author of the “Peaceful Rise” theory) served as deputy head of both the CCPPD and the CLGPIW,²¹ which contained eight members.²² Li Changchun succeeded Ding Guan’gen following the 16th Party Congress in November 2002. Li is a classic technocrat-apparatchik who started his career as a mechanical engineer and subsequently worked from 1980 onwards in a series of Party positions in Liaoning and Henan provinces, before Jiang Zemin promoted him to a series of central-level positions.²³ He apparently had no previous experience in propaganda work.

Of the over thirty standing (statutory) and numerous other temporary Leading Groups,²⁴ the Central Leading Group for Propaganda and Ideological Work is one of the most important. Like other leading groups, it serves as the overall coordinator, or “mouth” (*kou*), of the entire bureaucratic propaganda system. These leading groups are not routinely publicized,²⁵ but they have inordinate influence over policy in their respective policy spheres.²⁶ Bureaucratically, they sit above both CCP Central Committee departments and State Council ministries and commissions, and serve to oversee and guide the work of both. Leading groups are linked to the Central Committee departments through the Central Committee Secretariat, and usually the Director of the CCP Propaganda Department serves on the Secretariat. This “triple-hatting” allows him to personify the institutional linkage from the Leading Group on Propaganda and Ideological Work through the Secretariat to the Propaganda Department

²⁰ “Zhonggong zhongyang guanyu tiaozheng zhongyang xuanchuan, sixiang gongzuo lindao xiaozu chengrenyuan de zhidao” (Notice of the Central Committee Concerning Readjusting the Membership of the Central Propaganda and Thought Work Leading Group), Central Committee Document (1992) No. 196, in *Dang de xuanchuan gongzuo wenjian xuanbian*, p. 2114; Wang Jingsong, *Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo zhengfu yu zhengzhi* (PRC Government and Politics) (Beijing: Zhongyang Dangxiao Chubanshe, 1995), p. 427.

²¹ Zheng has been a leading figure in Party propaganda circles for many years, dating back to the early 1960s. More recently, he has authored and advocated the theory of China’s “peaceful rise”, and has been a close advisor to Hu Jintao on various theoretical and foreign policy issues.

²² “Zhonggong zhongyang guanyu tiaozheng zhongyang xuanchuan”.

²³ Li Changchun biography, at: <http://www.xinhuanet.com> (accessed 14 September 2004).

²⁴ Interview with member of CCP International Department, June 2004.

²⁵ One notable exception to this rule is a *complete list* of all statutory (as distinct from temporary) Leading Groups from 1949–93, their dates of existence, and membership, published in Wang Jingsong, *Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo zhengfu yu zhengzhi*, pp. 378–440.

²⁶ See Kenneth Lieberthal, *Governing China* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2004).

itself. Such has been the case since 1982, with the exception of 1986–89, as is illustrated in Table 1:

Table 1: Propaganda Officials 1982–2004

	1982–87	1987–89	1989–2002	2002–2006
Propaganda and Ideology Leading Group	Hu Qiaomu	Hu Qili	Li Ruihuan (1989–92) Ding Guan'gen (1992–2002)	Li Changchun
Secretariat Member responsible for Propaganda	Deng Liqun	Rui Xingwen	Ding Guan'gen	Liu Yunshan
Propaganda Department Director	Deng Liqun (1982–86); Zhu Houze (1986–89)	Wang Renzhi	Ding Guan'gen	Liu Yunshan

Parallel to, and overlapping with, the Leading Group is another body called the Central Guidance Commission on Building Spiritual Civilization (*Zhongyang Jingshen Wenming Jianshe Zhidao Weiyuanhui*), which was established in May 1997.²⁷ As its name suggests, this Commission (leading group equivalent) is charged with overseeing the educational effort—largely carried out through schools and the media—to build an ethical (*de*) and upstanding culture. Targeted primarily at the nation's youth, the campaign to build a “spiritual civilization” has received both considerable publicity and resources from the Party and State Council. Like the CLGPIW, this Commission is currently headed by Li Changchun; CCPPD Minister Liu Yunshan and Central Committee member Chen Zhili are its deputy heads. It also has a General Office and a Research Office, headed by Hu Zhenmin and Li Xiaoman respectively. The Commission works closely with the Ministry of Education, Xinhua News Agency, the State Press and Publishing Administration, and of course the CCP Propaganda Department.

The Propaganda (Publicity) Department

The CCPPD, known colloquially as the *Zhong Xuan Bu* in Chinese or the Central Publicity Department in English, is the real nerve center of the entire system. With a staff of 250 working in their new office compound at 5 West Chang'an

²⁷ *China Directory 2004*, p. 27.

Avenue in central Beijing, the CCPPD was defined by its Vice-Director Li Congjun in an interview with the author as “a comprehensive functional department for ideology”.²⁸

The *Zhong Xuan Bu* is one of five departments directly under the CCP Central Committee (the others being the United Front Work Department, International [Liaison] Department, Organization Department and the Central Discipline Inspection Commission). It has a long history in the CCP, having been formally established at the Second Party Congress in 1922. With the exception of a ten-year period during the Cultural Revolution (1967–77), the Central Propaganda Department has functioned continuously since then.²⁹ As shown in Table 2, a number of the CCP’s most important leaders have served as head of the CCPPD.

Since 2002 the Director of the CCPPD, and hence China’s propaganda czar, has been Liu Yunshan. Liu’s appointment as Director (Minister) of the Propaganda Department in 2002 followed a nine-year stint working at high levels in the department. Liu rose to this position through the provincial Party apparatus (including having periodic responsibility for propaganda work) and apparently has longstanding ties to current CCP General Secretary Hu Jintao. From 1987 to 1991 Liu was the Secretary of the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region Party Committee.³⁰ His counterpart in the Tibetan Autonomous Region at the time was none other than Hu Jintao. The two apparently interacted fairly regularly in provincial Party forums and meetings concerning ethnic minority work, and both had ties to former CCP General Secretary and Youth League chief Hu Yaobang.³¹

²⁸ Interview with CCPPD Vice-Minister Li Congjun, 21 October 2003.

²⁹ Wan Fuyi (ed.), *Zhongguo Gongchandang jianshe* (Building the Chinese Communist Party) (Jinan: Shandong Renmin Chubanshe, 2001), p. 289. This source indicates that, while the Propaganda Department ceased to function, propaganda work continued to be overseen by the Propaganda Leading Group, which was headed by Yao Wenyuan. In addition, this source indicates that Kang Sheng headed another leading group with authority over the propaganda system, the Central Organization and Propaganda Leading Group (*Zhongyang Zuzhi Xuanchuan Zu*). For the pre-1949 history of the CCPPD, see Lin Zhida, *Zhongguo Gongchandang xuanchuan shi* (History of CCP Propaganda) (Chengdu: Sichuan Chubanshe, 1990).

³⁰ Biography of Liu Yunshan at <http://www.xinhuanet.com> (accessed 14 October 2004).

³¹ Gao Xin, *Lingdao Zhongguo de xin renwu: zhonggong shiliuju zhengzhiju weiyuan* (New Personalities Leading China: Members of the 16th CCP Politburo) (Hong Kong: Mingjing Chubanshe, 2003), pp. 492-95.

Table 2: Post-Cultural Revolution Propaganda Department Directors³²

Period	Director
11/1970–12/1975	Kang Sheng
01/1976–10/1976	Yao Wenyuan
10/1976–10/1977	Geng Biao
10/1977–12/1978	Zhang Pinghua
12/1978–02/1980	Hu Yaobang
02/1980–04/1982	Wang Renzhong
04/1982–07/1985	Deng Liqun
07/1985–01/1987	Zhu Houze
01/1987–11/1992	Wang Renzhi
11/1992–10/2002	Ding Guan'gen
10/2002–	Liu Yunshan

Following the 14th Party Congress, in 1993 Liu was promoted from the provinces to the Center in Beijing. He was immediately assigned to work in the Propaganda Department—where he has remained to the present day. Initially he was put in charge of Party affairs (*dangwu gongzuo*) in the CCPPD, but gradually over the next four years was exposed to different aspects of the department's work. This was a kind of apprenticeship period for Liu, as he was being carefully monitored and mentored by the CCPPD Minister Ding Guan'gen (who himself had been brought in to lead the department in 1992).

In the run-up to the 15th Party Congress, as Jiang Zemin was doing his best to stack the Politburo with officials loyal to him, Jiang wanted to move Ding out of the job. Ding's principal patron, Deng Xiaoping, had passed away. Ding gave up day-to-day control of the Propaganda Department, and Liu Yunshan became his *de facto* successor (although Ding maintained the title and portfolio). Part of Ding's deal was to remain on the Politburo *and* remain in charge of the Central Leading Group for Propaganda and Ideological Work—thus maintaining his overall control over the propaganda apparatus.

This was the arrangement that prevailed for the next four years until the 16th Party Congress in 2002. As the jockeying began to retire Ding and replace him as both head of the Leading Group on Propaganda and Ideological Work and nominal Director of the CCPPD, Liu was promoted to lead the department. This meant that Jiang Zemin's favored candidate for the position, Bai Keming, failed (Bai was instead sent to work as Party Secretary of Hainan Province).³³ Bai, who had been head of the State Bureau of Radio and Television, an important job in

³² Zhang Heng and Jian Fei (eds.), *Zhonggong zhongyang zuzhi renshi jianming tupu* (Brief Atlas of Central Committee Organizational Personnel) (Beijing: Zhongguo Guangbo Dianshi Chubanshe, 2005).

³³ Gao Xin, *Lingdao Zhongguo de xin renwu*, p. 497.

the propaganda system, had been viewed as a rising star in the Party apparatus.³⁴ However, Liu Yunshan got the job. At the same time, Li Changchun was promoted to the Politburo Standing Committee and put in charge of the Leading Group on Propaganda and Ideological Work. This probably reflects a trade-off between the Jiang and Hu camps, with each having one protégé promoted.

The situation left Liu in a difficult position, as he had not been Jiang's choice for the job. Liu's first big test came when Jiang unveiled his theory of the "Three Represents" (*Sange Daibiao*) in a widely publicized speech at the Central Party School on 1 July 2001.³⁵ From the outset of the campaign until the spring of 2004, the clear and primary emphasis was on the first "represent", namely the drive to recruit "advanced productive forces" (entrepreneurs and business people) into the Party.³⁶ This was Jiang Zemin's emphasis as well. Liu Yunshan's Propaganda Department dutifully emphasized this element. However, beginning in the spring of 2003, after Hu Jintao had succeeded Jiang Zemin as General Secretary and Liu had been confirmed as CCPPD Director, the department began to shift the emphasis of the Three Represents campaign from the first to the third element. This dovetailed with Hu Jintao's (and Premier Wen Jiabao's) emphasis on the broad masses in society, the interior of the country, social stratification, and those left behind by economic reforms which had benefited the coastal and urban areas, the new entrepreneurial elite, and science and technology. Since shifting the emphasis in 2005, Liu has led Hu Jintao's propaganda campaign to build a "harmonious society" (*hexie shehui*).³⁷

Structure of the CCPPD

The actual table of organization of the CCPPD is not entirely clear. It is a very secretive body. A careful review of a wide range of published Party sources does not reveal its precise institutional organization, although it does reveal the internal structure of other Central Committee departments. Many of these sources list functions of the department, but not the actual table of organization. However, one illuminating source, written and published by the CCP Organization Department, lists the specific institutions that the CCPPD has authority over: the Ministry of Culture; General Administration of Press and

³⁴ Gao Xin, *Lingdao Zhongguo de xin renwu*, pp. 496-97.

³⁵ The "Three Represents" concept emanated from Zeng Qinghong's Organization Department and Wang Huning's Policy Research Office of the Central Committee (which Jiang had built up as a kind of personal think tank for Party affairs). Interviews with CCP personnel, October 2003 and June 2004.

³⁶ For further analysis of this drive, see Bruce Dickson, *Red Capitalists* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

³⁷ Liu Yunshan, "Strengthening, Expanding, and Innovating in Propaganda and Ideological Work in Accordance with the Requirement of Constructing a Harmonious Socialist Society", *Qiushi* (Seeking Truth), No. 19 (2005), in Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS), 1 October 2005.

Publications; Chinese Academy of Social Sciences; *People's Daily*; Bureau of Broadcast, Film and Television; New China News Agency and its affiliates; and all Party propaganda cadres at the provincial and sub-provincial levels.³⁸

In a 2003 interview with me, the Propaganda Department's Deputy Director, Li Congjun, said that the CCPPD was composed of a General Office, five units under "direct administration" (*zhixu guanli*), two "managed" (*daiguan*) organizations and eight functional departments.³⁹ Li listed the five units as:

1. Training Center (*Peixun Zhongxin*)
2. Planning Office (*Guihua Bangongshi*)
3. Study Press (*Xuexi Chubanshe*) and "Party Building" magazine (*Dangjian*)
4. Office of Current Events (*Shishi Bangongshi*)
5. Service Center (*Fuwu Zhongxin*).

He listed the managed organizations as:

1. Office of Building Spiritual Civilization (*Jingshen Wenming Jianshe Bangongshi*)
2. National Research Society on Ideology and Politics (*Quanguo Sixiang Zhengzhi Yanjiuhui*).

He listed the eight functional departments as:

1. Theoretical Work Department (*Lilun Ju*)
2. Media Department (*Xinwen Ju*)
3. Culture and Arts Department (*Wenyi Ju*)
4. Ideology Research Department (*Sixiang Yanjiushi*)
5. Reform and Development Office (*Gaige yu Fazhan Bangongshi*)
6. Propaganda Research Department (*Xuanchuan Yanjiushi*)
7. Personnel and Organization Department (*Renshi yu Zuzhi Bu*)
8. Publishing Department (*Chuban Ju*).⁴⁰

These can be graphically depicted as in Figure 1.

While this description must be considered fairly authoritative, given its source, it does not completely accord with other authoritative publications—both foreign and Chinese. It could be that Deputy Director Li was not completely clear or accurate in his description—whether by default or by design—and this is a possibility, given that he had only worked in the Central Propaganda Department for about a year at the time of the interview, spoke from no notes, and he himself was more concerned with theoretical work and Party history than with

³⁸ Central Committee Organization Department (ed.), *Zhongguo Gongchandang zuzhi gongzuo zidian* (Dictionary of the CCP's Organizational Work) (Beijing: Dangjian Duwu Chubanshe, 2001), p. 64.

³⁹ Interview at CCPPD, 21 October 2003.

⁴⁰ This department also oversees the Propaganda Department's own publishing house, Study Press (*Xuexi Chubanshe*), which is located in the same compound.

administration.⁴¹ The most authoritative, if not only, foreign assessment of the Propaganda Department's table of organization is the reliable annual *China Directory* published in Japan. The 2004 edition lists two offices and six bureaus:

1. General Office (*Bangongting*)
2. Policy and Law Research Office (*Zhengce Fazhi Yanjiushi*)
3. Theoretical Bureau (*Lilun Ju*)
4. Propaganda and Education Bureau (*Xuanchuan Jiaoyu Ju*)
5. Media and Publishing Bureau (*Xinwen Chubanshu*)
6. Literary and Art Bureau (*Wenhua Yishu Ju*)
7. Training Bureau (*Peixun Ju*)
8. Cadre Administration (*Ganbu Guanli Ju*).⁴²

Another CCP source provides the table of organization for all provincial level PDs, albeit for 1991,⁴³ and it is reasonable to assume that provincial and sub-provincial level Party organs parallel the central-level organ rather precisely. While there is some dispute between sources, they also indicate considerable consensus about the internal composition of the Propaganda Department today.

It is also useful to consider the roles played by three State Council organs in the propaganda process in China—the Ministry of Information Industry, the State Press and Publishing Administration and Xinhua News Agency, as well as the propaganda system in the People's Liberation Army.

Ministry of Information Industry

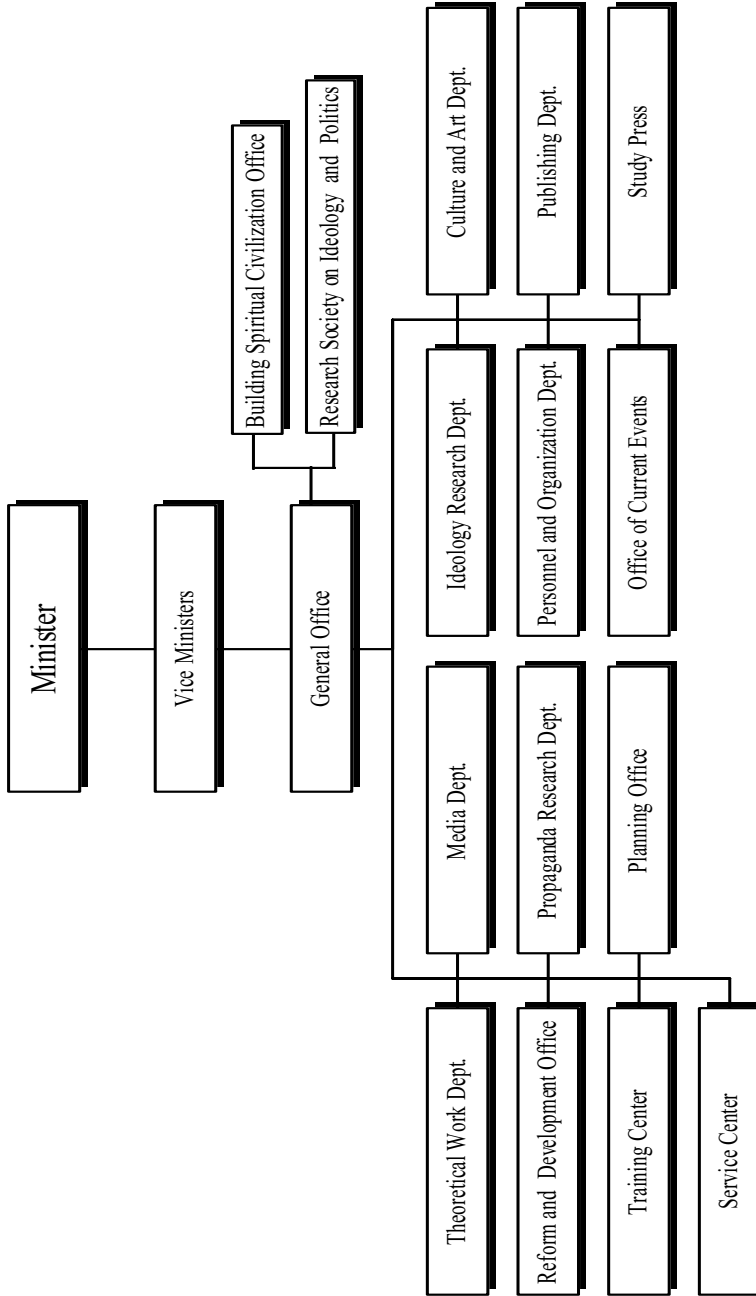
The MII (*Xinxi Chanye Bu*) was formally created as part of the State Council Organizational Reform Plan of 1998, as approved by the National People's Congress in March of that year. The new MII was constituted by combining together several existing ministries and commissions, as well as delegating some functions to other newly created organs. The MII absorbed the National Radio Management Commission; the State Council's (former) Leading Group on Information Work (*Guojia Xinxihua Gongzuo Lingdao Xiaozu*); administration and management of telecommunication standards of the Ministry of Radio, Film and Television (including cable television); responsibilities for technical systems for radio and satellite networks and the coordinating functions for deciding satellite orbits from the former Space Industry Corporation and Commission on Science and Technology for National Defense (COSTIND); and the State Planning Commission's management of public telecommunications.

⁴¹ See his edited series *Zhongguo Gongchandang lishi tuzhi* (The CCP's Historical Evolution), 3 vols. (Shanghai: Shanghai Renmin Chubanshe, 2001).

⁴² *China Directory 2004*.

⁴³ *Zhongguo Gongchandang jianshe da zidian*, p. 655.

Figure 1: The CCP Propaganda/Publicity Department (Central Level)



The MII did not absorb the functions of the postal service or the construction of telecommunication networks. The industrial, material and construction management functions under the former Ministry of Post and Telecommunications and Ministry of Electronics Industry were also delegated to the private sector.⁴⁴

The central task of the MII is to manage the *technical* aspects of electronic communications throughout China. It is not deeply involved in monitoring *content* of such communications (this is mainly the responsibility of the Ministry of Public Security). But insofar as it grants licenses and governs strategy for constructing the government and national telecommunications network, it plays *the* key role in the “hardware” side of the propaganda system in China. Its work also involves the military sector, as well as constructing secret communications systems for Party, government and military organs.⁴⁵

The MII is located next door to the Central Propaganda Department at 13 West Chang’an Avenue in central Beijing (testimony to the close links between the two bodies), has one minister, four vice-ministers, 45 department directors and deputy directors, and a total of 320 professional staff.⁴⁶ The MII is organized into the fourteen departments shown in Figure 2.⁴⁷

General Administration of Press and Publications

The GAPP, formerly known as the State Press and Publishing Administration (*Guojia Xinwen Chubanshu* or *Guojia Chuban Ju*),⁴⁸ is something of a counterpart to the MII with respect to the publishing industry. While a State Council organ, the GAPP is linked closely to the CCP Propaganda Department. As CCPPD Deputy Director Li Congjun put it, “We guide the GAPP on issues of ideology”.⁴⁹

The GAPP has existed for a number of years, but was also reorganized as part of the 1998 State Council reorganization, and again in 2001. Under the 1998 reorganization, the Ministry of Culture absorbed from the GAPP responsibility for overseeing imports of audiovisual products, while the State Administration of Radio,

⁴⁴ This description draws on Liaowang Editorial Department (eds), *Guowuyuan jigou gaige gaikuang* (Survey of the State Council Organizational Reform) (Beijing: Xinhua Chubanshe, 1998, *neibu faxing*), pp. 126-27; Zhang Zhijian and Liu Junlin (eds), *Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo zhengfu jigou wushinian* (Fifty Years of PRC Government Organization) (Beijing: Dangjian Duwu Chubanshe and Guojia Xingzheng Xueyuan Chubanshe, 2000, *neibu faxing*), pp. 119-20.

⁴⁵ *Guowuyuan jigou gaige gaikuang*, pp. 126-27.

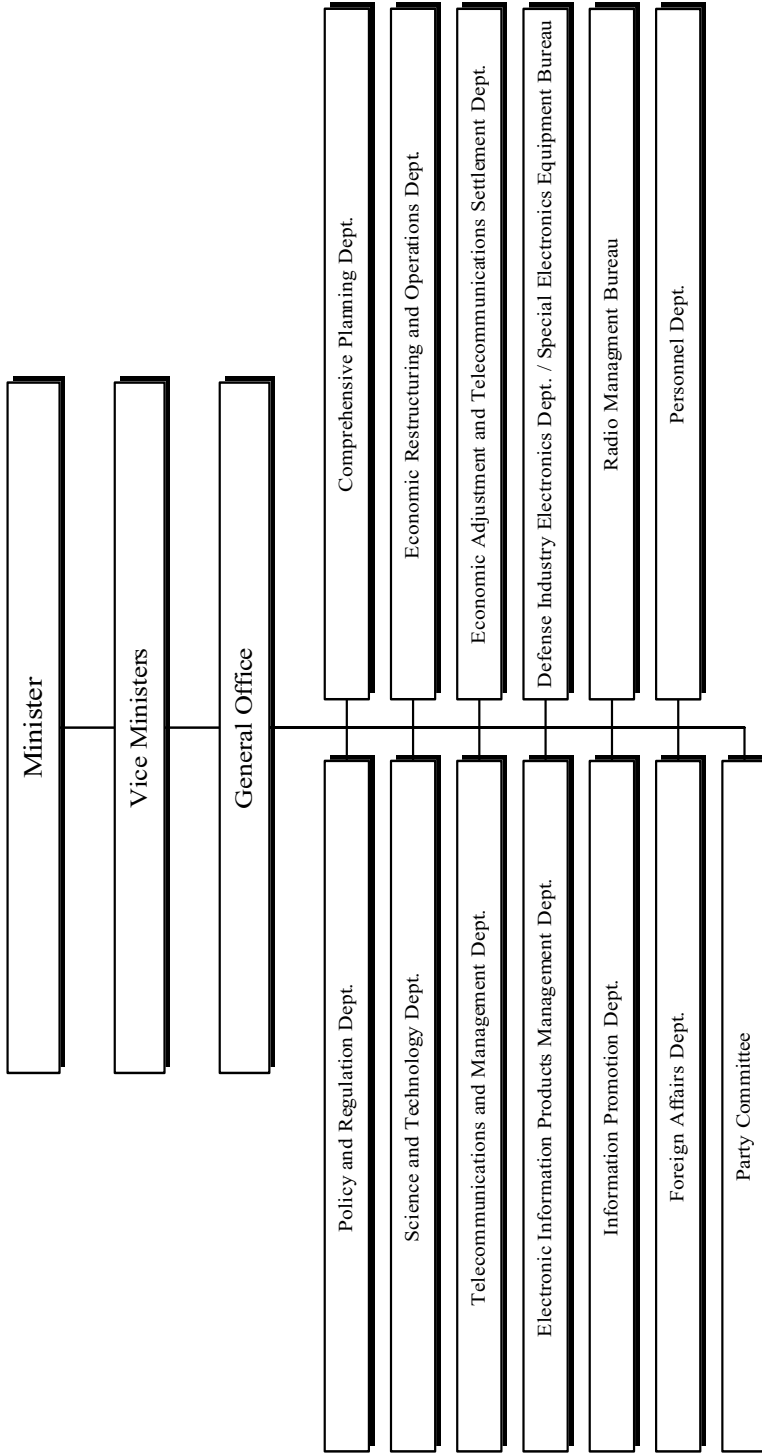
⁴⁶ *Guowuyuan jigou gaige gaikuang*, p. 132.

⁴⁷ *Guowuyuan jigou gaige gaikuang*, pp. 228-31.

⁴⁸ In 2001 the SPPA was elevated to a ministerial-level organization and renamed the GAPP.

⁴⁹ Interview with Li Congjun, see note 38.

Figure 2: Ministry of Information Industry



Film and Television became responsible for imports of radio and TV programs from abroad. The 1998 reorganization also saw the devolution of many GAPP responsibilities to provincial-level press and publishing supervisory organs. This included examining and approving contents of newspapers, periodicals and magazines; approving and managing “internal” (*neibu*) publications; monitoring companies that produce electronic publications; approving contracts with foreign publishers; and managing wholesaling and distribution.⁵⁰

At the national level, the GAPP absorbed the State Copyright Bureau, and issuing, protecting and enforcing copyright infringement law has now become one of its major functions. The GAPP’s other principal function is to oversee all standards in the publishing industry—everything from issuing ISBNs to monitoring pirating. Even though it transferred some degree of responsibility and oversight for audiovisual products to the Ministry of Culture, the GAPP clearly retains considerable responsibility in this domain as well.

The GAPP has one Administrator (*Juzhang*), four deputies, one full-time Deputy Director of the National Copyrights Bureau, 31 department directors and deputy directors, and a total professional staff of 145.⁵¹ It is divided into ten departments and offices as shown in Figure 3.

When a newspaper, magazine or publishing house is to be closed down because of something they have published, it is the GAPP’s responsibility to revoke the license and enforce the order—although it is often the determination of the CCPD to close it down. According to the “Provisional Rules for the Administration of Periodicals”, a periodical may not include, and can be closed because of, the following types of content:⁵²

1. inciting subversion of the regime of people’s democratic dictatorship and the socialist system, national division, rebellion or rioting
2. inciting opposition to the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party
3. inciting defiance or disruption of the implementation of the Constitution or laws
4. divulging state secrets, jeopardizing national security or harming national interests
5. inciting ethnic or racial discrimination or hatred, or disrupting national unity
6. propagating murder, obscenity or pornography or instigating criminal activities
7. insulting or slandering other people
8. hindering the impartial hearing of cases by judicial departments

⁵⁰ *Guowuyuan jigou gaige gaikuang*, p. 226.

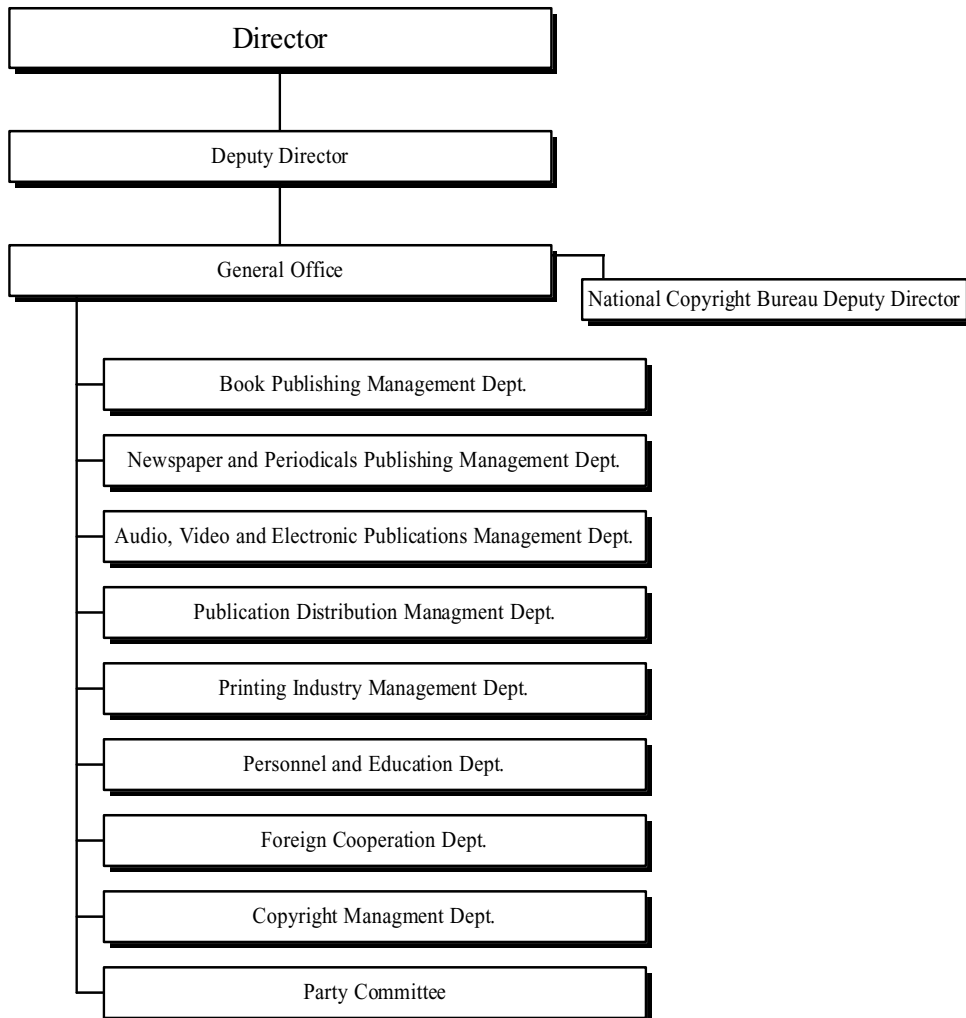
⁵¹ *Guowuyuan jigou gaige gaikuang*, p. 231.

⁵² “Provisional Rules for the Administration of Periodicals” (1988), in Jesse T. H. Chang, Isabelle I. H. Wan and Philip Qu (eds), *China’s Media and Entertainment Law (Vol. I)* (Beijing: TransAsia Publishing Ltd., 2003), pp. 380-89.

9. other content prohibited by law.

Thus the GAPP is provided a broad writ for investigating and closing publications.

Figure 3: General Administration of Press and Publications (GAPP)



The Xinhua (New China) News Agency

Xinhua News Agency (China's official state news service) is a large and sprawling organization, reaching throughout the country and around the world. Bureaucratically, with the brief exception of 1980–82 when it was placed under the direct administrative control of the Central Committee and CCPPD,⁵³ Xinhua has always officially been an organ of the State Council.

From its inception, Xinhua has always had a dual role: to report news and to disseminate Party and state propaganda. This has been true both domestically and internationally. The division between these two functions has not always been distinct, although straightforward news reporting has increased and improved during the reform period.

In addition to the publications that it sponsors and supervises, Xinhua's internal organization is comprised of no fewer than 17 internal units, all of which are located in Xinhua's compound at 57 West Xuanwumen Street in central Beijing. These are shown in Figure 4.⁵⁴

All of the editorial departments have cadres from the CCPPD assigned to them, who perform liaison functions with the CCPPD and oversee implementation of CCPPD directives and news guidance.⁵⁵ These individuals are, in effect, censors. However, the editors in each department also perform this role on a daily, hourly and minute-by-minute basis. For example, the Editorial Committee (*Bianji Weiyuanhui*) in Xinhua's International Department—which is comprised of editors from all the sub-sections of the International Department—meets at the beginning of the morning and evening shifts. At each session, the editors receive instructions from the CCPPD on topics to pay attention to or avoid, and specific terminology to use. After the meetings, the editors return to their sections and enter these instructions into a “red book” (*hong benzi*) for all journalists and section personnel to read and check in the course of their work. The “press guidance” in the “red book” is updated twice daily. Through these mechanisms, the CCPPD exerts its practical control over Xinhua news dispatches. After a while, journalists gain a “feel” for what the guidelines are, what is and is not acceptable, and thereby exert “self-censorship” in their work.

Xinhua also runs a network of numerous internal-circulation (*neibu*) publications in which information appears that is deemed too sensitive to publish openly. Most of these are distributed in very limited numbers and are classified secret (*jimi*), “carefully protect” (*zhuyi baocun*) or “internal usage” (*neibu*)

⁵³ Zhang Zhijian and Liu Junlin (eds), *Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo zhengfu jigou wushinian*, p. 165.

⁵⁴ As described in Xinhua News Agency (ed.), *Zhongguo zhengfu jigou minglu* (Directory of China's Government Structure) (Beijing: Zhongyang Wenzhai Chubanshe, 2002), pp. 270–85.

⁵⁵ Interview with former Xinhua correspondent, 19 April 2004. This paragraph derives from this source.

kanwu). The Reference News Department of Xinhua publishes at least eight such internal publications.⁵⁶

Thus Xinhua really runs two very different news operations: one for the general public (influenced by propaganda and censorship) and one for officials (unvarnished and uncensored). This means that China's officialdom are actually quite well informed about the range of problems occurring in China and around the world, while they simultaneously control what the public should know.

The Military Propaganda System

Another key element of the domestic propaganda system is the People's Liberation Army's propaganda system. While closely linked to the CCPPD and the Party committee system inside the military, the PLA has its own propaganda system. It is administered at two levels: (1) by the General Political Department (GPD); and (2) through the Party committee (*dangwei*), Party branch (*dang zhibu*) and Party small group (*dang xiaozu*) systems. The distinction between the two, and the division of responsibility, really has to do with Party membership. The latter deals only with propaganda for Party members in the military, while the GPD is more broadly responsible for propaganda work for all members of the PLA. As the PLA remains, to a considerable extent, a "Party-army", the institutional penetration of the military by the Party is a (if not *the*) key mechanism for ensuring the PLA's loyalty to the CCP.

Historically, the GPD's principal function has been to indoctrinate the rank and file in the PLA and to be the military's institutional liaison to the Party, but today the GPD's portfolio is much broader (including personnel management, overseeing Party committees, managing the welfare of cadres, officers and veterans, military justice and some intelligence functions).⁵⁷ The GPD's Propaganda Department is one of the four principal departments in the GPD. It oversees and includes sub-departments for education, film and television, literature and arts, and a series of publications. At each level from military region commands down to regiments, a PLA commissar is designated to be in charge of propaganda work.⁵⁸ To this end, the GPD publishes numerous handbooks for their use; some are very detailed, not only about the *content* of propaganda work, but also the *process* of how to undertake it.⁵⁹

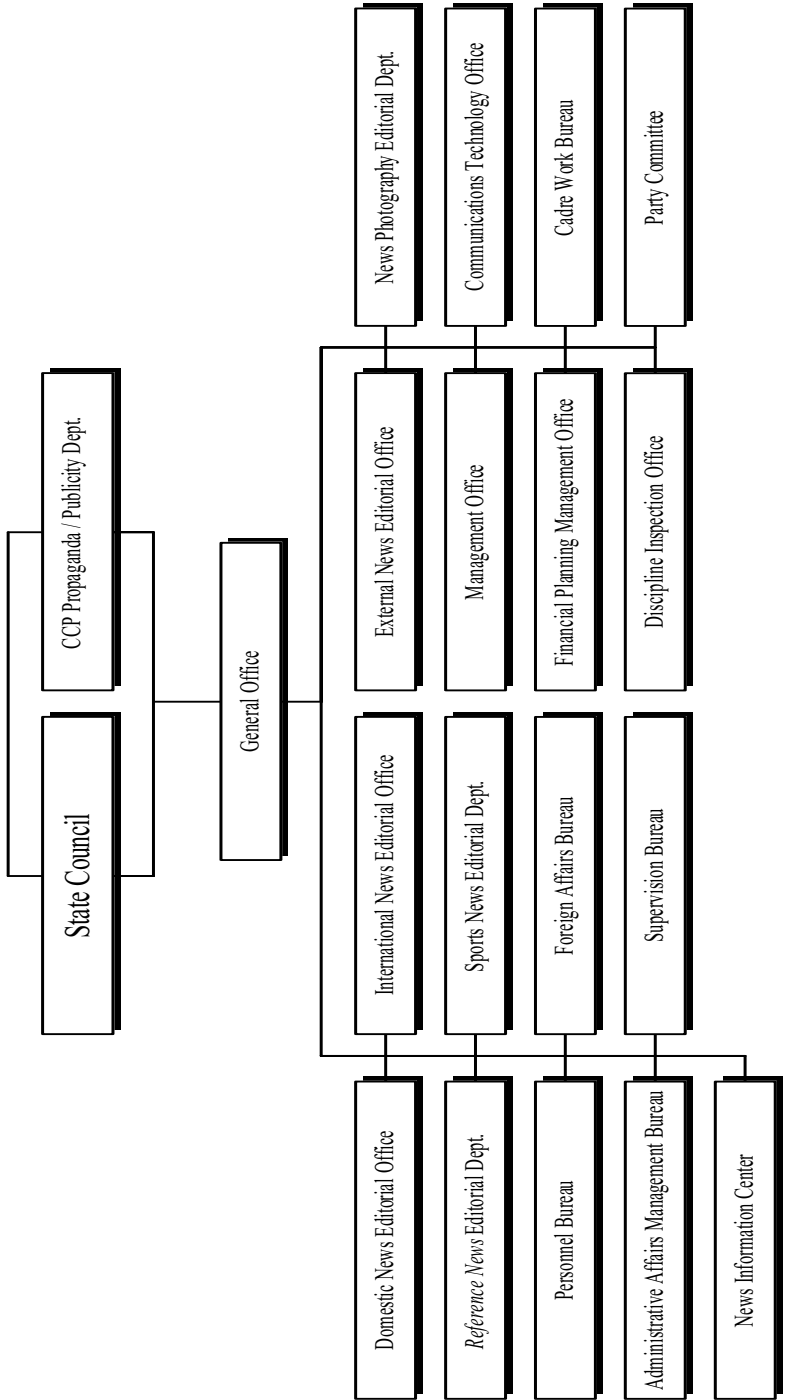
⁵⁶ Xinhua News Agency, *Zhongguo zhengfu jigou minglu*, p. 274-75.

⁵⁷ For a fuller description of the GPD's work, see David Shambaugh, *Modernizing China's Military: Progress, Problems and Prospects* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), pp. 131-36; and "The Soldier and the State: The Political Work System in the People's Liberation Army", *The China Quarterly*, No. 127 (September 1991), pp. 527-68.

⁵⁸ These and other responsibilities and activities are discussed in Gao Peng, Bo Guanghua and Zhang Weiguo (eds), *Jundui dang zhibu gongzuo shouce* (Handbook for Party Committee Work in the Military) (Beijing: Guofang Daxue Chubanshe, 2004), especially pp. 91-93.

⁵⁹ Zeng Zhouyi and Li Jianjun (eds), *Zhengzhi zhidaoyuan gongzuo taolu* (Political Instructors Work Manual) (Beijing: Haichao Chubanshe, 2002, *junnei faxing*).

Figure 4: Xinhua News Agency



The GPD is also responsible for publishing the *Liberation Army Daily* (*Jiefangjun bao*), the principal mouthpiece of the PLA (both hard copy and the electronic edition at <http://pladaily.com.cn> and <http://english.pladaily.com.cn>), seven military region newspapers and over 100 periodicals published by various PLA units, as well as overseeing the PLA's sprawling book-publishing empire. Like other things concerning the PLA, the military's own publishing and information system is a "system within a system".

External Propaganda

Beginning in the early 1980s, the CCP began to distinguish between internal and external propaganda (*duiwai xuanchuan*), and began to set up a separate bureaucratic apparatus to promote the latter. As China's involvement in world affairs grew, and its sensitivity to its image abroad increased, "external propaganda work" became more important to the leadership and as a tool of foreign policy.

The external propaganda apparatus is overseen by the External Propaganda Leading Group (*Duiwai Xuanchuan Lingdao Xiaozu*) or EPLG. It was established on 8 April 1980 under the joint sponsorship of the CCP Central Committee and State Council.⁶⁰ Before this time, external propaganda was the joint responsibility of the Foreign Affairs Leading Group (*Waishi Lingdao Xiaozu*), which was established in 1958, and the Propaganda and Education Leading Group. The latter was temporarily abolished in February 1988 (when its duties, functions and staff of 33 were absorbed by the CCPPD), but it was restored two years later in March 1990.⁶¹ The EPLG's composition has varied over time, but in 1990 it had eleven members.⁶² It is not clear who the members are today.

On 25 January 1991 the Central Committee and State Council decided jointly to merge the State Council's Information Office (*Xinwen Banggongshi*) with the EPLG.⁶³ These two organizations are, in fact, one and the same—what is called in Chinese "one organ, two signs" (*yige jigou, liangge paizi*). The current Director is Cai Wu, who holds a PhD in political science from Beijing University and served previously as Deputy Director of the CCP International Department.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ Wang Jingsong, *Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo zhengfu yu zhengzhi*, p. 400.

⁶¹ The documents abolishing and restoring the EPLG are available in General Office of the Central Propaganda Department (ed.), *Dangde xuanchuan gongzuo wenjian xuanbian*, pp. 1704, 1904, 1936.

⁶² Central Committee Document No. 265 [1990], *Zhonggong zhongyang guanyu zhongyang duiwai xuanchuan xiaozu zucheng ren yuan zhuzhi de tongzhi* (Notice Regarding the Membership of the Central External Propaganda Leading Group) in General Office of the Propaganda Department, *Dang de xuanchuan gongzuo wenjian xuanbian*, p. 1919.

⁶³ Wang Jingsong, *Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo zhengfu yu zhengzhi*, p. 401.

⁶⁴ "China Appoints New Head of State Council Information Office", Xinhua News Agency, 25 August 2005; and interview with Cai Wu, July 2004.

The Information Office is the “front” organ for the world—and particularly the foreign press corps in Beijing—but it is in fact one operational side of the EPLG and external propaganda work. Among other responsibilities, the Information Office is responsible for coordinating the compilation and publication of all government White Papers. External Propaganda towards Taiwan is a special aspect of external propaganda.⁶⁵ Propaganda aimed at foreigners resident in China and short-term visitors such as tourists and businessmen is also a priority.⁶⁶ Some analysts believe that the Information Department is involved in Internet censoring.⁶⁷

External Propaganda covers a variety of media. It includes international broadcasting of Radio Beijing, Central People’s Broadcasting System Taiwan and Hong Kong services, CCTV broadcasting to Taiwan of Cross-Strait Voice (*Haixia zhisheng*), publications such as *People’s Daily* foreign edition (*haiwai ban*), *China Today*, *Beijing Review*, *People’s China*, *China Pictorial*, *China Daily*, *Voice of China*, *Liaowang* weekly edition and various publications of the Foreign Languages Press.⁶⁸ Xinhua News Agency’s International Department also falls within the administrative purview of the EPLG and engages in external propaganda work.⁶⁹

External propaganda work also involves a range of “united front” exchange organizations, such as the Chinese People’s Institute of Foreign Affairs (Foreign Ministry), China Association for International Understanding (CCP International Department), China Association for International Friendly Contact (PLA General Political Department), China Institute of International Strategic Studies (PLA General Staff Department Second Department), Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences and others. To a certain extent, external propaganda work also extends to the work of international affairs think tanks such as the China Institute of Contemporary International Relations (Ministry of State Security), China Institute of International Studies (Foreign Ministry) and others.⁷⁰

External propaganda work is thus oriented towards four principal missions: (1) to tell China’s story to the world, publicize Chinese government policies and

⁶⁵ These are drawn from Zhang Jingyuan, *Dangwu gongzuo zhishi shouce* (Handbook of Information on Party Work) (Beijing: Zhongguo Renshi Chubanshe, 1997), p. 130.

⁶⁶ Zhang Jingyuan, *Dangwu gongzuo shiyong shouce*, p. 244.

⁶⁷ Ann-Marie Brady, “Guiding Hand”.

⁶⁸ *Dangwu gongzuo shiyong shouce*, pp. 247-48.

⁶⁹ Wang Chongnong, “Shiying xingwu he fazhan: jiaqing nei-wai xuanchuan jiehe” (Adapt to the Situation and Developments: Improve the Unity of Internal and External Propaganda), in Research Office of the Central External Propaganda Office (eds), *Duiwai xuanchuan gongzuo lunwenji* (Collected Articles on External Propaganda Work) (Beijing: Wuzhou Zhuanbo Chubanshe, 1998), pp. 63-72. This volume is extremely valuable for understanding China’s external propaganda work.

⁷⁰ See David Shambaugh, “China’s International Relations Think Tanks: Evolving Structure and Process”, *The China Quarterly*, No. 171 (September 2002), pp. 575-96.

perspectives, and promote Chinese culture abroad; (2) to counter what is perceived to be hostile foreign propaganda (such as the so-called “China threat theory”); (3) countering Taiwan independence proclivities and promoting unification; and (4) propagating China’s foreign policy.⁷¹

External propaganda efforts have, for example, targeted the United States in recent years. Various exhibitions have been sponsored by the State Council Information Office, including the week-long “Festival of China” at the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC, in September 2005 (for which the Information Office contributed \$5 million). Other activities include taking out advertising in major US newspapers, providing film footage and “feeds” to US television networks, giving US reporters in China special briefings and taking them on special trips not granted to other foreign reporters, holding press briefings at the Chinese embassy in Washington, writing “letters to the editor” and placing editorials in US newspapers, using Chinese international affairs experts on the (Chinese) media, using Chinese émigré scholars to publicize China’s viewpoints, targeting the Chinese-American community with a variety of activities, and (allegedly) paying expenses for specific Americans to visit China and cultivating foreign specialists and ex-officials to convey China’s views.⁷²

Another example of external propaganda work is the annual World Forum on China Studies, begun in 2005 and ostensibly sponsored by the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences (SASS). However, it is very clear that it is the Shanghai Municipality Propaganda Department’s External Propaganda Bureau that underwrites the conference. Several dozen international China specialists are invited, with all expenses paid (compliments of the Propaganda Department and SASS). They are subjected to two days of not-so-subtle propaganda about China’s “peaceful development” and intentions, China’s desire to build a “harmonious society” at home and abroad, how China will never be a threat, and so on.

Another prominent example of external propaganda work is the substantial effort to establish a range of “Confucius Institutes” around the world. These organizations are sometimes free-standing entities while at other times they are embedded within universities or other cultural affairs organizations. Such foreign universities are typically approached by the Education Counselor of the local Chinese embassy offering “no strings attached” funds to establish a Confucius Institute. The recipient is told that the funding comes from the Ministry of

⁷¹ See description of external propaganda priorities in Central Propaganda Department Cadre Bureau Writing Group, *Xin shiqi xuanchuan sixiang gongzuo*, pp. 188-89.

⁷² These activities are described in Xia Anling, “Meiguo dui hua jielun de tedian he women de duice” (Characteristics of America’s Debate on China and Our Responses); Li Haibo, “Qiantan Meiguo chuanmei guanyu Zhongguo de baozhi ji wozhi duice” (An Exploratory Discussion on American Propaganda Concerning China and Our Countermeasures); and Zhang Chongxian, “Dui Meizhi Zhongguo zhuianti baodao de pouxi he women de duice de jianyi” (American Newspapers Analysis of China Topics and Proposals for Our Countermeasures), in *Duiwai xuanchuan gongzuo*, pp. 159-67, 168-82 and 183-91 respectively.

Education, but it is in fact laundered through the MOE from the CCPPD's External Propaganda Department. The purpose is to promote and popularize Chinese language and culture by offering Chinese language and culture classes, mounting exhibitions, staging theater and concerts and so on—all intended to promote China's cultural image and "soft power".

Another recent effort is the attempt by the external propaganda authorities to get major foreign media conglomerates—like Bertlesman or Pearson—to publish Chinese books abroad. Translation costs and publication subsidies are underwritten by the CCPPD (although often laundered through other front organs).

In sum, external propaganda work constitutes a very important, but commonly overlooked, component of China's propaganda system—one on which increasing priority has been placed in recent years. Progress has been made by Chinese propagandists and diplomats, but they still have a lot to learn about public relations and public diplomacy.

Process and Priorities of Propaganda Work

There are two principal types of domestic propaganda—intra-Party propaganda and mass propaganda. Each has its own distribution mechanisms and channels.

Intra-Party propaganda is, of course, targeted exclusively at Party members. It involves five principal mechanisms:

1. Party publications
2. Party schools
3. Cadre training courses
4. Study sessions and other propaganda activities organized by local party committees
5. National propaganda campaigns.

There are three principal types of party publications: books, journals and newspapers. The CCPPD oversees a number of Party publishing houses, including one of its own (Study Press or *Xuexi Chubanshe*), in Beijing and throughout the country. It also oversees the publication of nearly 200 Party journals and newspapers, including at least two of its own (*Party Building/Dang Jian* and *Internal Report/Neibu Tongxun*).⁷³ These party journals include both "open" (*gongkai*) and internal (*neibu*) circulation publications.⁷⁴ The CCP Propaganda Department also has direct responsibility for overseeing all provincial and municipal dailies, as well as *People's Daily*, *Liberation Army Daily*, *Guangming Daily*, *Economic Daily*, *Workers' Daily*, *Farmers' Daily* and

⁷³ These are all listed in *Zhongguo Gongchandang jianshe da zidian*, pp. 682-97.

⁷⁴ For a listing and history of Party periodicals see Fang Ke (ed.), *Zhonggong zhongyang dangzhi shigao* (Historical Compendium of Central Committee Party Journals) (Beijing: Hongqi Chubanshe, 2001).

China Youth Daily.⁷⁵

The second mechanism for propagandizing Party members is the extensive system of Party schools (*dang xiao*) throughout China. In 1996 China had over 2,600 Party schools, averaging more than 80 per province!⁷⁶ The number may well be larger today. In addition to attending one of these institutions, Party members can also take distance learning correspondence courses (*hanshou jiaoyu*) from the Central Party School (CPS) in Beijing.⁷⁷ This institution, located near the Summer Palace on the outskirts of Beijing, is the national-level center of the system.⁷⁸ It runs courses for Party cadres at a variety of levels: for Central Committee members, for cadres at the ministerial and vice-ministerial level, for institute directors, for mayors, for cadres at the provincial and county level.⁷⁹ Specially tailored courses are also offered for cadres in certain types of work, such as ethnic minority work, state-owned enterprises, united front work and so on. The CPS has about 600 personnel engaged in teaching, as well as a number of researchers and administrative personnel. While the Party School system is bureaucratically in its own *xitong* (system) under the Central Committee, it is a key institutional mechanism for propaganda work of leading Party cadres at the central, provincial and even county level (usually Party secretaries).

The third mechanism, targeted at lower-level Party cadres, is specialized training courses run for cadres working throughout China. At the end of 2001, there were a total of 40,510,000 cadres nationwide, of which 6,932,000 were full-time Party cadres.⁸⁰ The Propaganda Department runs a variety of cadres' training courses for these personnel throughout the year. These are usually administered by provincial and sub-provincial Party schools, although sometimes they are put on in townships and villages themselves. There are annual and four-year guidelines set by the central authorities for the content of these courses.⁸¹ During

⁷⁵ Fang Ke (ed.), *Zhonggong zhongyang dangzhi shigao*, pp. 678-79.

⁷⁶ For a complete listing, see Editorial Committee, *Quanguo dangxiao gailan* (National Survey of Party Schools) (Beijing: Hongqi Chubanshe, 1996).

⁷⁷ For the curriculum, see Central Party School (ed.), *Zhonggong zhongyang dangxiao hanshou jiaoyu nianjian* (Annual Edition of the Central Party School Distance Learning Education) (Beijing: Zhonggong Zhongyang Dangxiao Chubanshe, annual).

⁷⁸ See Ignatius Wibowo and Lye Liang Fook, "China's Central Party School: A Unique Institution Adapting to Changes", in Kjeld Erik Brødsgaard and Zheng Yongnian (eds), *The Chinese Communist Party in Reform* (London: Routledge, 2006).

⁷⁹ Information in this paragraph derives from an interview with Wang Weiguang, Vice-President of the Central Party School, 21 October 2003.

⁸⁰ General Office of the Organization Department of the Central Committee (ed.), *Shisanju sizhong quanhuai yilai dang de zuzhi gongzuo chengjiu gaishu* (Survey of the Achievements of Party Organizational Work Since the Fourth Plenum of the 13th Party Congress) (Beijing: Dangjian Duwu Chubanshe, 2002), p. 99.

⁸¹ See, for example, "1996-2000 quanguo ganbu jiaoyu peixun guihua" (Guidelines for National Cadre Education Training), in National Ideological Political Work Scientific

2002, 3,078,000 cadres participated in such training courses.⁸²

The fourth mechanism is daily propaganda work undertaken by Party secretaries at the local (*jiceng*) level throughout all work units and across the nation. As of June 2002, there were 3,445,000 Party organs at the local level throughout China, of which only 168,000 were formal Party Committees, the vast majority being Party groups or cells (*dangzu*).⁸³ Propaganda work is *supposed* to occupy a significant amount of the time of such local level Party Committees, as indicated in the numerous handbooks published for use by local Party secretaries.⁸⁴ In this way, all Party members at the local level (below the county level), comprising about 80 per cent of the 66,355,000 members in mid-2002, are exposed to the CCP propaganda system.⁸⁵

The fifth mechanism is nationwide propaganda campaigns which are launched by the CCPPD in Beijing and administered by Party Propaganda Departments all the way down through the system. There have been countless numbers of these over the years. They range in character from campaigns to study certain speeches, documents or Party pronouncements, to campaigns to emulate certain models, to campaigns to criticize domestic officials or foreign governments, to campaigns for the mobilization of mass labor, to campaigns encouraging moral conduct and “spiritual civilization”, to specific ideological campaigns. The latter is exemplified by the ongoing “Three Represents” and “Progressivism” (*xianjinxing*) campaigns. Each year the CCPPD issues two or three dozen directives in these areas.⁸⁶

Publication Review Process

Another key element of the propaganda function is the review process for publications. It must first be acknowledged that in today’s China a considerable and increasing amount of newspaper, magazine, journal and book publications

Specialization Committee (ed.), *Zhongguo sixiang zhengzhi gongzuo nianjian (2001)* (Beijing: Zhonggong Zhongyang Dangxiao Chubanshe, 2002), pp. 50-54.

⁸² *Shisanjie sizhong quanhui yilai*, p. 104.

⁸³ *Shisanjie sizhong quanhui yilai*, p. 98.

⁸⁴ See, for example, Wu Xinyuan *et al.* (eds), *Dang de jiceng zuzhi xuanchuan gongzuo* (Party Basic Level Organizations Propaganda Work) (Beijing: Renmin Ribao Chubanshe, 2003); Pu Xianfu *et al.* (eds), *Duwenban dang de xuanchuan gongzuo peixun jiaocheng* (Study Manual of Training Materials for Party Propaganda Work) (Beijing: Hongqi Chubanshe, 2004); Yu Yabo *et al.* (eds), *Dang de jiceng xuanchuan gongzuo shouce* (Handbook for the Party’s Basic Level Propaganda Work) (Beijing: Hongqi Chubanshe, 2003).

⁸⁵ *Shisanjie sizhong quanhui yilai*, p. 94.

⁸⁶ Many of these for 1986–92 are contained in Wang Balin (ed.), *Xuanchuan sixiang gongzuo de shixian yu tansuo* (Propaganda Ideology Work: Practice and Exploration) (Nanjing: Nanjing Daxue Chubanshe, 2004, 2 vols.). These documents are not to be confused with decisions (*zhidao*) of the CCP Propaganda Department or directives issued by the Central Committee (*zhongfa*) on propaganda issues. These are contained in *Dang de xuanchuan gongzuo wenjian xuanbian*.

are *not* routinely subject to review by the Propaganda Department or other censorial organs. The market and consumers are increasingly driving what is “fit to print”. As a result, a bevy of racy magazines, DVDs, VCDs and CDs have popped up for sale on the street stalls around the country. They range in subject-matter from military-related magazines that tout ways and means of attacking Taiwan to pop singers, underground films and pornographic materials.

Where the Propaganda Department and GAPP do ostensibly exercise their authority over publications is particularly with television and radio broadcast media, the newspaper media, popular magazines, scholarly journals and book publishing. Even here, however, the review process relies more on the discretion and self-censorship of individual authors and publishing houses.

There is, however, a formal review process that is supposed to take place to vet these publications. Newspaper editorials are the most closely vetted. All editorials in the main Beijing newspapers (*People's Daily*, *Guangming Daily*, *China Youth Daily*, *Workers Daily* and so on) must have their editorials cleared by the CCPPD prior to publication. In some cases, particularly in the *People's Daily*, the CCPPD drafts the editorial (*pinglun*) in the first place. The same holds true for main news stories in these papers and the Xinhua News Service. The CCPPD very clearly establishes the substance and even the language to be used in such articles. This is known as *tifa*, which literally means “formulation” or “wording”.⁸⁷ In Xinhua News Agency this is sometimes called the “*koujing*” (unified path). The CCPPD sets and enforces the *exact wording* to be used by journalists, scholars and broadcasters in reporting on a given event. Deviation or variation from this *tifa* is a very serious transgression, and is punishable. In this way, the Propaganda Department keeps the nation's media and scholarly community “on message”.

For scholars in China, another method of censorship and control involves vetting by relevant ministries or Party departments.⁸⁸ Depending on the subject matter of a book manuscript, scholars are supposed to submit their draft manuscript (*cao'an shu*) for pre-publication review by the government ministry or Party department responsible for that subject area. For example, manuscripts dealing with China's foreign relations since 1949 are supposed to be submitted to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for vetting and approval. Any study that draws on the Central Archives (*Zhongyang Dang'an Guan*) must also be submitted to the Central [State] Secrecy Bureau (*Zhongyang Baomi Ju*). Manuscripts regarding Taiwan, Hong Kong or overseas Chinese must be submitted to the CCP United Front Department. Studies in CCP history must be submitted to the Propaganda Department itself and/or one of three other organs: the Party History Research Office (*Zhongyang Dangshi Yanjiushi*), the Central Party Documents Research Office (*Zhongyang Wenxian Yanjiushi*) or the Central Translation Bureau

⁸⁷ See the discussion of this phenomenon in Michael Schoenhals, *Doing Things with Words in Chinese Politics*.

⁸⁸ Interview with diplomatic historian, 6 June 2004.

(*Zhongyang Bianyi Ju*). This mechanism does not necessarily involve the CCPPD directly, but it provides reinforcement to ensure that the prevailing *tifa* is being used, that Central Party or government decisions are accurately portrayed as intended, and that state secrets are not leaked.

The Propaganda Meeting System

The other key element of the propaganda process that merits mention is the meeting system. The centerpiece of the propaganda meeting system is the annual conference of heads of propaganda departments from around the country (*Xuanchuan Buzhang Huiyi*). There is no fixed time for them to convene, although they usually meet in the first quarter of every year.⁸⁹ They also sometimes convene following an important Central Committee plenum.⁹⁰ This is by far the most important session in the annual calendar of the propaganda system (*xitong*). It is always addressed by the CCPPD Director and usually by the CCP General Secretary, who set out the themes and priorities for propaganda work for the coming year. These speeches are then published in the annual volumes *Xuanchuan dongtai* (Propaganda Trends) and *Quanguo xuanchuan sixiang gongzuo huiyi wenjian huibian* (Collected Documents of the National Propaganda Thought Work Meeting), which are transmitted to all CCPPD departments nationwide as the guidelines (*tiaoling*) for annual propaganda work. These volumes often contain highly sensitive internal speeches by senior Chinese leaders.

There is also a second tier of meetings that take place throughout the year, organized according to different functional aspects of propaganda work.⁹¹ Propaganda Departments at different levels also convene their own meetings and issue their own “guidance” documents throughout the year.

⁸⁹ General Office of the CCP Propaganda Department (ed.), *Dang de xuanchuan gongzuo huiyi gaikuang he wenzhai* (The Situation and Documents of the Party’s Propaganda Meetings) (Beijing: Zhonggong Zhongyang Dangxiao Chubanshe, 1994, *neibu faxing*).

⁹⁰ “At National Forum of Propaganda Department Directors, Liu Yunshan Stresses Need to Conscientiously Study, Propagate, and Implement the Spirit of the Fourth Plenum of the CPC Central Committee”, Xinhua News Agency, 23 September 2004, in FBIS.

⁹¹ There are the National Propaganda Thought Work Meeting (*Quanguo Xuanchuan Sixiang Gongzuo Huiyi*) which focuses specifically on Party ideological work; the National Cultural Unit Heads Work Meeting (*Quanguo Wenhua Tingjuzhang Huiyi*); the National External Propaganda Work Meeting (*Quanguo Duiwai Xuanchuan Gongzuo Huiyi*); the National Broadcast and Visual Film Propaganda Meeting (*Quanguo Guangbo Xingshi Xuanchuan Huiyi*); the National Heads of News and Publication Units Meeting (*Quanguo Xinwen Chuban Juzhang Huiyi*); the *People’s Daily* Domestic Reporter Bureaus Meeting (*Renmin Ribaoshe Guonei Jizhe Zhan Hui*); and the Xinhua News Agency Domestic Analysis Section Heads Meeting (*Xinhuashe Guonei Fenshe Shezhang Huiyi*). See CCP Propaganda Department, *Quanguo xuanchuan sixiang gongzuo huiyi wenjian huibian* (Collected Documents on the National Propaganda Thought Work Meeting) (Beijing: Xuexi Chubanshe, 1994).

Taken together, these are the mechanisms and processes by which the CCPPD enforces (or, more accurately, attempts to enforce) the “Party line” (*Dang de luxian*) and attempts to control the media and other publications in China. While this system is still quite effectual, it also faces a number of challenges.

Challenges to China's Propaganda System

While its control and censorship abilities remain substantial, the propaganda authorities have lost some of their control in the face of technological modernization, social pluralization, economic marketization and globalization. They are also losing influence due to public cynicism and skepticism. Given the range of information now available to Chinese citizens (particularly urbanites) and the growing awareness of the general population, people are much less willing to believe what they are told by the state media organs. The debacle of the attempted government cover-up of SARS in 2003 only fueled this public cynicism.⁹²

This was also made evident by an extraordinary diatribe against the Propaganda Department authored by a Peking University professor and published on the internet in 2004.⁹³ Jiao Guobiao's article was an unprecedented attack on the CCPPD, calling for its abolition. Jiao's broadside resulted in his dismissal and temporary exile abroad. The declining power and prestige of the CCPPD was similarly underscored in February 2006, when a group of Party elders who had retired from the propaganda apparatus brazenly warned the CCP of the dangers of excessive media control. The Party elders included Mao's former secretary Li Rui, former Propaganda Department chief Zhu Houze, former editor of *People's Daily* Hu Jiwei, and former deputy director of Xinhua News Agency, Li Pu. They warned in a (leaked) letter to the government: “At the turning point in our history from a totalitarian to a constitutional system, depriving the public of freedom of speech will bring disaster for our social and political transition and give rise to group confrontation and unrest. Experience has proved that allowing a free flow of ideas can improve stability and alleviate social problems”.⁹⁴

The Party Line and the Bottom Line

Commercialization of the media also matters as the commercial “bottom line” is increasingly undermining the “Party line”. The overall impact of the market

⁹² For an excellent assessment of the propaganda campaign associated with the SARS epidemic and cover-up, see Ashley Esarey, *Caught Between State and Society* and “Cornering the Market”.

⁹³ Jiao Guobiao, “Dui wo zhong xuan bu” (Concerning Our Propaganda Department), 28 March 2004. Available in Chinese at: www.chinesenewsnet.com, and in English at www.chinadigitalnews.org.

⁹⁴ See Joseph Kahn, “Beijing Censors Taken to Task in Party Circles”, *New York Times*, 15 February 2006.

means that China's citizen consumers have much more diversified and pluralistic media content. The government has little choice but to watch as these twin trends drive the industry.⁹⁵ Yet, as Ashley Esarey's research demonstrates, the government has also attempted to use its licensing authority to enforce its political will.⁹⁶

The publishing industry in China today runs on business principles of profit and loss, sales and revenue.⁹⁷ Competition for readership and advertising revenue is fierce, and consumer preferences are now the driving force in many editorial decisions. For many publications, state subsidies have declined considerably if not disappeared altogether—particularly for state and Party publications, which are having a hard time surviving without subsidies and guaranteed institutional subscribers. Hard-copy printing and distribution of such staples as the *People's Daily* have plummeted—from a circulation of 5 million copies per edition in the 1980s to an official figure of 1.8 million in 2004, although non-official estimates run as low as 200,000.⁹⁸ Foreign investment into the Chinese media industry is also increasing rapidly, further eroding state control.

The shift from propaganda to profit means that journalists, broadcasters, publishers and filmmakers must shift their thinking from being agents of the Party-state to being commercially viable, which in turn means that their product must be appealing enough for people to pay for it. They must also become more professional in their training and the daily practice of their profession. These new realities are occasionally reflected among the Party-state's propaganda czars. Liu Binjie, deputy director of GAPP, told the *Financial Times*: "We cannot make all newspapers and periodicals the mouthpiece of the Party and country. On this, we have already changed our frame of reference. In the past (media) work units relied on the government and not the market. Now we have to liberate them and push them towards the market".⁹⁹

Marketization also means the breakup of large media conglomerates (previously owned by Party and state organs) into smaller, privately-owned and more competitive units. For example, the *Beijing Youth Daily* (*Beijing qingnian bao*), a paper affiliated with the CCP Communist Youth League and part of China's second largest newspaper group, is preparing to list its non-editorial operations on the Hong Kong stock exchange with an initial public offering (IPO)

⁹⁵ See Kathy Chen, "China Eases Its Grip on the Media", *Wall Street Journal*, 8 August 2004; Mure Dickie, "A Free Press for China: Will Beijing's Cautious Opening of the Media Herald a Triumph of Profit Over Propaganda?" *Financial Times*, 4 March 2004.

⁹⁶ Ashley Esarey, *Caught Between State and Society*.

⁹⁷ See Chin-chuan Lee (ed.), *Power, Money, and the Media*; He Qinglian, "Media Control in China"; Ashley Esarey, *Caught Between State and Society*; and Daniel Lynch, *After the Propaganda State*.

⁹⁸ See Ashley Esarey, *Caught Between State and Society*, p. 129.

⁹⁹ Mure Dickie, "Market the New Master", *Financial Times*, 7 December 2004.

expected to raise approximately \$300 million.¹⁰⁰ Various provincial media units, particularly in television broadcasting and cable operations, are beginning to be listed on domestic exchanges. Even China Central Television (CCTV) is considering an IPO for one of its sub-units.¹⁰¹

These market-driven trends continue to gather force and propel China's media and publishing industry in new, and more open, directions. They will only continue to exacerbate the existing frictions between the Party/government propaganda authorities and journalists and intellectuals. Publishers and editors are caught in the middle.

The tug-of-war between the propaganda authorities and the print media (to say nothing of the battle over cyberspace) occurs on an almost daily basis, with journalists and publications regularly probing the limits of control and the permissible.¹⁰² This is colloquially referred to as "playing line balls" (*chabianqiu*).¹⁰³ Occasionally, in the classic Chinese deterrent method of "killing the chicken to scare the monkey", the propaganda authorities crack down and send a tough signal to the media or publishing industry about the boundaries of the permissible—such as when editors are fired, journalists arrested or publications shut down. Nonetheless, on a daily basis, intellectuals and print journalists (television and radio broadcasters are far more circumscribed) probe the limits of the permissible. While investigative journalism has caught on in China, journalism remains a political profession in China and the price to be paid for violating CCP propaganda dictates can be harsh.¹⁰⁴ The international monitoring group The Committee to Protect Journalists, reports that, at the end of 2004, 42 journalists were imprisoned in China—more than any other nation in the world.¹⁰⁵

It is particularly evident that propaganda and public security authorities are intent on controlling Internet access and blog discourse.¹⁰⁶ The international monitoring group Reporters Without Borders noted in its report *The Internet Under Surveillance* that 32 journalists and 61 cyber-dissidents remain imprisoned

¹⁰⁰ Mure Dickie, "Market the New Master".

¹⁰¹ Mure Dickie, "Market the New Master".

¹⁰² See Philip Pan, "In China, an Editor Triumphs, and Fails", *Washington Post*, 1 August 2004.

¹⁰³ Ann-Marie Brady, "Guiding Hand", p. 66.

¹⁰⁴ Ashley Esarey, *Speak No Evil: Mass Media Control in Contemporary China* (Washington: Freedom House, 2006).

¹⁰⁵ "Statement of Frank Smyth, Washington Representative of the Committee to Protect Journalists", in proceedings of hearings on "China's State Control Mechanisms and Methods", US-China Economic and Security Review Commission, p. 93.

¹⁰⁶ See report of hearings, US China Economic and Security Review Commission. Other useful surveys are Christopher R. Hughes and Gudrun Wacker (eds), *China and the Internet: Politics of the Digital Leap Forward* (London: Routledge, 2003); and Michelle W. Lau, *Internet Development and Information Control in the People's Republic of China* (Washington: Congressional Research Service, 2005).

in China “for posting messages or articles on the internet that were considered subversive”.¹⁰⁷ Bulletin boards (BBS) are monitored particularly closely.¹⁰⁸ As foreign companies—such as Yahoo, Google and Microsoft—have entered the domestic Chinese market, they too have complied with government censorship regulations.¹⁰⁹

It should be evident that the daily shadow boxing among propaganda authorities, media producers, public consumers and commercial interests is intense in China today. This interplay is likely to only increase over time as the forces of commerce, technology, politics and consumer preferences interact.

Conclusion

This article has examined how China’s propaganda system is institutionally structured, how it functions, and the challenges it is facing. While much can be learned about these subjects from Chinese sources, in many ways it remains a bureaucratic “black box”. More case studies on different sectors of the Chinese media are needed to illuminate these processes and trends.¹¹⁰

The overall image one derives at present is of a bureaucratic system that has atrophied compared with its Maoist past, yet remains capable of controlling the content of most information available to the Chinese public. It remains an important instrument in the Party-state’s toolbox of control. Yet it is also clear that the system is being buffeted by the forces of commerce, technology, globalization, public sophistication and cynicism. These forces inexorably erode the Party-state’s control over the dissemination and content of available information, and cumulatively and progressively undermine the system and the regime’s ability to control the minds and beliefs of its citizenry.

The ultimate question remains whether the Party-state can continue to maintain its ideational influence effectively in society when its guiding ideology is a mish-mash of slogans that few understand or believe, and when the institutional mechanisms for controlling and disseminating information are growing weaker over time. When the message becomes unbelievable, it is only a matter of time before the messenger is questioned. To be sure, the Party-state has many other means of control and influence but, if it is unable substantially to shape how people think and what they believe, it will have lost a key mechanism of its control and source of its legitimacy. If the Party-state loses the battle for minds, losing the battle of hearts will not be far behind.

¹⁰⁷ As cited in Tom Zeller, Jr., “Beijing Loves the Web Until the Web Talks Back”, *New York Times*, 6 December 2004; Richard Cohen, “Business, and Repression, as Usual”, *Washington Post*, 19 January 2006.

¹⁰⁸ Howard French, “Chinese Censors and Web Users Match Wits”, *New York Times*, 4 March 2005.

¹⁰⁹ Frida Ghitis, “Google, We Hardly Knew You”, *International Herald Tribune*, 27 January 2006.

¹¹⁰ Ashley Esarey’s work is a fine example of possible research.

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