



Policy and Practice: Chinese Propaganda and Freedom of Information

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1. Introduction

The People's Republic of China (PRC) controls the freedom of information through an extensive network of telecommunication monitoring, data filtering and media censorship, to clamp down on political dissidents and reactionaries, using vague 'state secret' laws as a means of suppression under the guise of protecting national interests. By classifying certain information as 'sensitive material' local and state governmental agencies are able to curb informational flows that run contrary to the Chinese Community Party's (CCP) doctrine. State sponsored propaganda is then used as a mechanism to shape public opinion along party lines; though the PRC remains adamant in its adherence to international laws of which it is a party too, it systematically suppresses these norms through restrictive policies, surveillance of media outlets, blatant propaganda and outright censorship.

This paper seeks to critique Chinese policy by comparing it with events that have unfolded in Tibet with special emphasis on the freedom information and use of state sponsored propaganda. The inherent complexities faced in conducting such research are manifold as both documents that have managed to get through "The Great Firewall" and internal documents are susceptible to state manipulation, consequently making outside research studies susceptible to basing facts on hearsay. Nevertheless, a piecemeal account may be reconstructed using investigative reports from various international monitoring organizations, foreign government studies, Chinese and Tibetan activists and other 'whistleblowers' that enable a certain insight into the tension between Chinese policy and practice.

2. Background

The access to and freedom of impartial information is a fundamental right protected by numerous international treaties and conventions including: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), and the Johannesburg Principles which are widely regarded by human rights lawyers and practitioners as being apart of customary international law. By virtue of its membership with the United Nations (UN), the PRC is legally bound "to fulfill in good faith," the obligations assumed by them in accordance with the UN Charter, including, "promoting

and encouraging respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.”¹ These freedoms, highlighted in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) adopted for the purpose of defining the meaning of the words ‘fundamental freedoms’ and ‘human rights’ in the UN Charter, establishes a norm of conduct upholding certain humanistic values and rights of the individual.² Although not legally binding, the UDHR is a fundamental constitutive document of the UN and is generally seen as being the foundation of human rights law.

The ICCPR, an integral part of the International Bill of Human Rights, explicitly states in Article 19 that: “Everyone shall have the right to hold opinions without interference,”³ from any form of body that seeks to restrict the opinion of others. The right to freedom of opinion, considered to be absolute, differs from that of freedom of expression. Expounding upon this differentiation, the ICCPR states:

“Everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds...through any media, [though may be] subject to certain restrictions, but these shall only be such as are provided by law and are necessary, [such as the] respect of the rights or reputations of others, for the protection of national security or of public order or of public health or morals.”⁴

In other words, the freedom of expression can only be restricted in the most serious cases of a direct political or military threat to the entire nation. Even when censorship is legitimately invoked, any form of restriction must be proportional and restrictive only by means of achieving a desired purpose and the burden of demonstrating the validity of such restrictions rests with each individual government.⁵ Consequently, the interpretation of what is regarded as being a matter of nation security, enshrined under the state secrets laws, allow Chinese authorities to defend their actions, thereby keeping with established norms protected under international law.

The Johannesburg Principles put forward by a group of lawmakers and advocates is also generally accepted as being part of customary international law and underlines certain principles stated in the UDHR and expounded upon in the ICCPR. Principle 19 highlights and draws restrictions on governments trying to bar monitoring agencies from assessing and protecting human rights standards stating:

“Any restriction on the free flow of information may not be of such a nature as to thwart the purposes of human rights and humanitarian law. In particular, governments may not prevent journalists or representatives of intergovernmental or nongovernmental organizations with a mandate to monitor adherence to human rights or humanitarian standards from entering areas where there are reasonable

¹ Charter of the United Nations, articles 1 & 2, 1945. www.un.org/en/documents/charter/chapter1.html.

² “Ibid”

³ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. “International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)”. www2.ohchr.org/English/law/ccpr.htm.

⁴ “Ibid”

⁵ *State Secrets: China’s Legal Labyrinth*. Human Rights in China (HRIC). 2007. www.hrichina.org/public/PDFs/StateSecretsReport/HRIC_StateSecretsReport.pdf.

grounds to believe that violations of human rights or humanitarian law are being, or have been, committed.”⁶

Therefore, the PRC, while able to interpret and apply its own versions of what constitute ‘state secrets’, still must abide by certain parameters that touch upon human rights concerns. Though the PRC is able to twist and contort its own state laws to restrict information that does not conform to CCP ideology, it blatantly infringes upon standard international laws that seek to protect the rights of the individual.

3. Chinese Policy

The political reforms that came during the post-Mao era was to try and separate the activities between the party and the state, though such a separation was never realized.⁷ Since then, the structures have become inexorably linked, the two systems reinforcing the other, entrenching the party’s power through state policies that have virtually eliminated political opposition of the CCP, cementing the role of the party through state policy. This has effectively made the PRC a one party system, one that has monopolized its power through a decentralized framework, firmly institutionalizing CCP ideals within the states structure.

The Chinese constitution states that, “all power in the People’s Republic of China belongs to the people,” as well as the organs that exercise state power including the National People’s Congress and all levels at the provincial, district and local levels.⁸ Despite this, the CCP continues to control appointments to positions of political power, thereby monopolizing its power, giving it the ability to change and form state policy according party lines. Many clauses within state laws and the constitution remain vague, broad and ill-defined and though it includes provisions for freedom of expression and the right to information, the state poses severe restrictions and criminalizes the disclosure of information that goes against its belief which undermine both domestic and international law.⁹ “The vagueness of the Chinese government’s content prohibitions provides Chinese officials with broad discretion to apply prohibitions for purposes impermissible under international human rights standards,”¹⁰ stated in the Congressional Executive Commission on China (CECC) 2010 Annual Report. The PRC makes no attempt to establish standards in which to determine the quality of acts that might harm national security.

There are a plethora of laws aimed specifically at controlling the media. Currently there are some, “sixty such laws, administrative regulations and norms still in effect...and many more laws that relate in some way to media control.”¹¹ Many of the laws merely regulate the administrative and management functions, but the authority remains firmly embedded within the hierarchy of the CCP, the media becoming but a mouthpiece for the party.

⁶ Mendel, Toby. *The Johannesburg Principles: Overview and Implementation*. Article 19. February 2003. [www.article19.org/pdfs/publications/jo-burg-principlesoverview .pdf](http://www.article19.org/pdfs/publications/jo-burg-principlesoverview.pdf).

⁷ Brady, Anne-Marie. “Guiding Hand: The Role of the CCP Central Propaganda Department in the Current Era”. University of Canterbury, 2010.

⁸ US State Department. Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor. “US Department of State: 2010 Human Rights Report: China (includes Tibet, Hong Kong, and Macau)”. 2010 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices. April 8, 2011. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2010/eap/154382.htm>.

⁹ *State Secrets: China’s Legal Labyrinth*. Human Rights in China (HRIC). 2007. www.hrichina.org/public/PDFs/StateSecretsReport/HRIC_StateSecretsReport.pdf.

¹⁰ Congressional Executive Commission on China (CECC). Annual Report 2010. Oct. 2010.

¹¹ *The Fog of Censorship: Media Control in China*. He Quinglin. Human Rights in China (HRIC). 2008.

China implemented its National Human Rights Action Plan in 2010, emphasizing the ‘right to be informed’ stating that the: “Chinese government will make more efforts to keep the public informed of government affairs and improve relevant laws and regulations, so as to guarantee citizens right of information.”¹² Though commendable in its scope, the provisions stated in the Action Plan are still liable to censorship posed under the ‘state secrets’ framework and therefore do little in protecting the individuals right to freedom of information.

The PRC maintains an effective control of the political apparatuses through a highly complex non-transparent system that maintains its power through a carefully crafted set of processes that censor, propagate and criminalize all acts that are deemed subversive to the state. In a telling statement of the tension in Chinese law, Wen Jiabao, Premier of the PRC, emphasized that: “Unity and stability are of overriding importance,”¹³ for the security of the country. Though the constitution, under Article 35 provides that citizens, “enjoy freedom of speech, of the press, of assembly, of association, of procession and of demonstration,”¹⁴ this freedom is limited and does not include information deemed being apart of ‘state secrets’.

3.1 State Secret Laws

The PRC’s use of ‘state secret’ laws to control the spread of information has been widely criticized as inconsistent with international standards. Though states have the right to restrict information that threatens national security, China’s criminal laws contain ambiguous language that, “gives officials wide latitude to declare almost any information a state secret,”¹⁵ allowing for subjective interpretations that inevitably leads to flagrant abuses of power. Instead of determining whether or not certain types of information is considered to threaten ‘national security,’ the legal system only looks at, “whether a given publication’s content [are] inconsistent with the Communist Party’s current political dogma...and the actual or potential impact on national security or the public’s safety is completely ignored.”¹⁶

The PRC implemented their state secret laws in May of 1989. The following year, the National Administration for the Protection of State Secrets (NAPSS) put forward a set of Implementation Measures that further defined the country’s scope of what is to be classified as ‘state secrets.’¹⁷ The Implementation Measures provided for both a retroactive and preemptive classification: retroactive classification being based on the consequences of disclosure and preemptive classification being based on the potential to cause harm if revealed.¹⁸ Not only does subjective analyzing lead to arbitrary interpretation of criminal laws, but by classifying certain information in terms of its ‘potential to cause harm’ gives governmental departments significant power in the criminalization making process.

All state secret laws are defined as relating to state security or national interest and under

¹² Congressional Executive Commission on China (CECC). Annual Report 2010. Oct. 2010.

¹³ Edward, Cody. China Amends Constitution to Guarantee Human Rights. The Washington Post. March 14, 2010. www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wpdyn? Pagename =article&contentId=A57447-2004.

¹⁴ Congressional Executive Commission on China (CECC). 2009. Annual Report 2009.

¹⁵ *State Secrets: China’s Legal Labyrinth*. Human Rights in China (HRIC). 2007. www.hrichina.org/public/PDFs/StateSecretsReport/HRIC_StateSecretsReport.pdf.

¹⁶ Congressional Executive Commission on China (CECC). Annual Report 2010. Oct. 2010.

¹⁷ *State Secrets: China’s Legal Labyrinth*. Human Rights in China (HRIC).

¹⁸ “Ibid”

Article 8 includes everything from economic and social policy decisions to diplomatic activities and include a catch-all phrase that includes, “other matters that are classified as state secrets by the National Administration for the Protection of State Secrets (NAPSS).”¹⁹ The more than 250 secret-maintenance laws, regulations and statutory documents have firmly embedded secrecy within Chinese institutions.²⁰ Articles 10 through 16 also give other party organs, including the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Public Security and State Security the ability to define and classify information as being ‘state secret’.²¹ This gives ultimate authority to governmental departments who are able to include and amend any information deemed sensitive. Human Rights Watch, in a report published in 2010 added:

“The definition of ‘state secret’ is very broad and leaves the door open to all sorts of abuses. The authorities often use it to justify jailing dissidents and journalists so this amendment seems, on the one hand, to be yet another warning designed to encourage netizens to censor themselves and, on the other, an attempt to present an illusion of legality to the international community.”²²

The spread of ideas are rigidly controlled through self-censorship and laws that consider ‘unofficial’ ideas as being ‘rumors’. The term ‘rumors’ is used to refer to any ideas or views that run contrary to the CCP that is shared and expressed between people.²³ Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR) Propaganda Bureau Chief Cai Yuying made it clear that it was an offence to not only spread, but also listen to rumors when he said: “Without any hesitation, we must prevent rumor-mongering and stop people listening to rumors,”²⁴ initiating the creation of a Public Security Bureau (PSB) task force to address the fabrication and spread of rumors, leading to a more systematic approach to blocking information.²⁵ Article 52 through 54 of China’s constitution states that: “It is the duty of citizens of the PRC to safeguard the security, honor and interests of the motherland [to uphold] the unity of the country,” obliging citizens and organizations to keep secrets that are damaging to the state.²⁶ Instead of upholding and protecting the rights of the individual, the Chinese constitution stifles freedom of expression and opinion through self-censorship. Similarly, under Article 105, spreading ‘rumors’ are cited as subverting the state and have been used to prosecute political opponents in expressing views that run contrary to the Communist Party’s beliefs.²⁷ Such penalties incur hefty sentences ranging from fifteen years to life in prison if convicted.²⁸ Lawyers in China have noted that the legal system can use Article 105 at their discretion because there aren’t any definitions that specify the boundaries between freedom of expression and state security.²⁹ The Dui Hua Foundation, a human rights group, mentioned in a statement that: “There’s little doubt that...the intent of the law against inciting subversion is the silencing of political

¹⁹ *State Secrets: China’s Legal Labyrinth*. Human Rights in China (HRIC).

²⁰ Quinglin, He. *The Fog of Censorship: Media Control in China*. Human Rights in China (HRIC). 2008.

²¹ Yuan Cai, Peter. *The long arm of the Chinese State Secrecy Law*. East Asia Forum. July 27, 2009. www.eastasiaforum.org/2009/07/27/the-long-arm-of-the-chinesestate-secrecy-law.

²² *Amendment Enlists ICT Companies in Protection of State Secrets*. Human Rights Watch. April 29, 2010.

²³ *A Great Mountain Burned by Fire: China’s Crackdown in Tibet*. International Campaign for Tibet. March 9, 2009. www.savetibet.org.

²⁴ *A ‘Raging Storm,’ The crackdown on Tibetan writers and Artists after Tibet’s Spring 2008 Protests*. International Campaign for Tibet. May 2010. www.savetibet.org.

²⁵ “Ibid”

²⁶ Constitution of the People’s Republic of China. People Daily. Dec 4, 1982. <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/constitution/constitution.html>.

²⁷ *Dissenting Voices*. Tibetan Center for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD). September 2010.

²⁸ Congressional Executive Commission on China (CECC). Annual Report 2010. Oct. 2010.

²⁹ “Ibid”

speech.”³⁰ Subverting the freedom of political opinion creates an ideological vacuum, which is exploited and used by the CCP as a means to reinforce and propagate their ideology amongst the population. The state uses various forms of institutionalized propaganda in order to solidify their power base by shaping peoples perceptions in controlling the spread of ideas and information.

4. The PRC’s Propaganda System

4.1 Functions of the Propaganda System

Propaganda is extensively used in the PRC as a method of controlling information and influencing public opinion by propagating ideas concurrent with the CCP, thereby increasing the party’s legitimacy and authority. Propaganda is pervasively used, though often times implicitly, covering everything from journalism practices to political and cultural affairs. The CCP has historically divided the propaganda system into two different categories, *duinei* (internal) and *duiwai* (external), each being directed and molded by the Central Propaganda Department and the Office of Foreign Propaganda, respectively.³¹ Both departments remain highly secretive and do not divulge the structure, influence, nor implementing guidelines and maintain more of policing role in the public sphere, acting as a ‘guiding arm’ in censoring and propagating information carried out by regional and local offices. The multi-faceted over-riding implementation structure is instituted by various state-run organizations such as the State Bureau of Publishing, the Public Security Bureau, the Ministry of Culture and other state run media intermediaries that work as monitoring agencies.³² The propaganda system relies on a system of control through a system of laws and regulations entrenching a two-track management system that puts party propaganda departments at the head of all news publication bureaus.³³

The Central Propaganda Department uses a variety of tools to combat dissenting internal opinions through various forms of censorship, surveillance, and the propagation of information. The PRC have a number of laws and regulations that restrict media outlets, including compulsory registration, constant monitoring, and regular evaluation of news outlets.³⁴ According to He Qinglian, an author, journalist and vocal whistleblower who worked as an editor in Shenzhen, China said that: “The Party still adheres to Mao’s four principles: (1) propagandize Party policy; (2) force the media to act as the Party’s mouthpiece; (3) unify public opinion; and (4) ban objective journalism.”³⁵ The effect of such rigid control, as stated by the UN Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR) in 2006: “The general public has little knowledge about the outside world since the information inflow and outflow are strictly screened and monitored by the authorities. Most of the journals and media are state-owned and feed people with news laden with official party ideology and propaganda.”³⁶

Propaganda plays a larger role than any law, regulation, or administrative rule in its scope

³⁰ Congressional Executive Commission on China (CECC). Annual Report 2010. Oct. 2010.

³¹ Brady, Anne-Marie. “Guiding Hand: The Role of the CCP Central Propaganda Department in the Current Era”. University of Canterbury, 2010.

³² “Ibid”

³³ Quinglin, He. The Fog of Censorship: Media Control in China. Human Rights in China (HRIC). 2008.

³⁴ “Ibid”

³⁵ “Ibid”

³⁶ *A Great Mountain Burned by Fire: China’s Crackdown in Tibet*. International Campaign for Tibet. March 9, 2009. www.savetibet.org.

in defining information as being acceptable for public circulation.³⁷ Consequently, every publication, piece of news, email and website goes through a sophisticated screening process controlled by the CCP, using both: software that detects certain sensitive words and some 30,000 employees who manually monitor and censor information under the Ministry of Public Security.³⁸ If a government monitor fails to detect a ‘serious political error’ the monitor is dismissed or possibly subjected to political sanctions. Consequently, this makes monitors overly sensitive, adopting an attitude that they would rather, “send a thousand innocents to their death than let one guilty person slip through.”³⁹

The CCP has maintained its authoritarian rule by vastly expanding its propaganda apparatus and by modernizing its methods. One such method employs tens-of-thousands of ‘netizens’ who are paid by the state to post messages in support CCP ideology on websites as a form of passive propaganda that seeks to steer political discourse through ‘state sponsored’ discussion. As the state and the CCP continue to purge China of ‘subversive ideas’ the more prone the public are to being manipulated and accepting state propaganda as truth-a dangerous precedent for the future of domestic discourse. Nicholas Becquelin of Human Rights Watch, reported in a telling statement that:

“In recent years China Central Television (CCTV) and even the People’s Daily look...less political than in the past. But this has not changed the fundamental premise that all information on state-run channels must reflect the government’s views. For the Party, propaganda is not a degraded form of information-it is information.”⁴⁰

Consequently, people living within the PRC’s borders are, “ideologically conditioned to rely on the propaganda machine’s version of reality,”⁴¹ and many lack the knowledge or the ability to make any independent judgments. Years of indoctrination condition people into becoming mouthpieces of the system and without a second thought spew forth-party propaganda.⁴²

4.2 Internal Propaganda in the TAR

The affects of such a totalitarian system of control has been documented in the numerous accounts of overt oppression and coerced methods of propaganda, especially in the TAR, where nuns, monks, academics, and political dissidents have been intimidated, detained and arrested for trying to spread, what were labeled as ‘subversive’ or ‘splitist’ sentiments.⁴³ In a telling statement by TAR Party Secretary, Zhang Qingli:

“The main responsibility of the TAR Propaganda Bureau is to persuade and guide all Tibetans in the right political direction...and to more effectively convince all Tibetans to accept the government’s

³⁷ Quinglin, He. *The Fog of Censorship: Media Control in China*. Human Rights in China (HRIC). 2008.

³⁸ Brady, Anne-Marie. “Guiding Hand: The Role of the CCP Central Propaganda Department in the Current Era”. University of Canterbury, 2010.

³⁹ Quinglin, He. *The Fog of Censorship: Media Control in China*. Human Rights in China (HRIC). 2008.

⁴⁰ “*Ibid*”

⁴¹ “*Ibid*”

⁴² “*Ibid*”

⁴³ *2008 Uprising in Tibet: Chronology and Analysis*. Department of Information and International Relations (DIIR), Central Tibetan Administration (CTA). 2010.

authority unconditionally...through effective and suitable programs, the media can turn all Tibetans against the Dalai Lama.”⁴⁴

Entrenched forms of explicit propaganda are also used through the state schooling system and through forced ‘patriotic re-education’ programs.⁴⁵ The institutionalization of the CCP’s ideology through the school system is used as an effective means of indoctrination by restricting Tibetan language, history and culture, and teaching revised versions through a Chinese perspective.⁴⁶ The physiological toll that children bare in having to contend between two different versions of history and identity, from what is taught in school and what is taught at home, must be particularly onerous. Tashi, a nineteen year-old male from Shigatse Prefecture, explained in an interview with TCHRD: “Only one class was taught in Tibetan language at my school. All other classes were taught in Chinese. The teachers only taught about Chinese subjects [and] Chinese history.”⁴⁷ The effects of such methods of teaching are increasingly becoming apparent as students finish school, some unable to speak their own local language, which contributes to a alienation of Tibetan identity and culture.⁴⁸ Students are taught adulterated renderings of Tibetan history and according to Padma Choling, chairman of the TAR, he would have them believe:

“The democratic reform conducted 52 years ago abolished the cruel and brutal serfdom that existed to exploit the Tibetan people for thousands of years. The reform freed 1 million serfs and allowed the Tibetan people to enjoy legal rights and interest...but the Dalai Lama and his supporters have been attempting to separate Tibet from China and restore the feudal serfdom.”⁴⁹

Similarly, the use of ‘patriotic re-education programs’, once aimed mostly at nuns and monks, are now aimed at primary and secondary schools in an effort to prevent separatist political activities;⁵⁰ though monks and nuns are often forced to attend intensive long-term courses to combat their culture of ‘separatist’ ideology.⁵¹ Despite exiting laws that protect the freedom of religious practice, those who do not attend the programs are expelled from the monastery, detained or imprisoned.⁵² Since the March 2008 protests, the re-education campaigns have expanded to lower levels of the population to, “promote stability within Tibet, with particular emphasis on undermining the influence of His Holiness the Dalai Lama,”⁵³ through propaganda films and mass denunciations. Many are forced to watch films that misrepresent Tibet’s history as a repressive feudal society and that the PRC freed the country through ‘peaceful liberation’.⁵⁴ The pervasive use of such programs show the extent of the PRC’s use of propaganda as means to control, influence and indoctrinate the minds of Tibetans into believing communist ideology.

⁴⁴ *A Great Mountain Burned by Fire: China’s Crackdown in Tibet*. International Campaign for Tibet. March 9, 2009.

⁴⁵ *2008 Uprising in Tibet: Chronology and Analysis*. Department of Information and International Relations (DIIR), Central Tibetan Administration (CTA). 2010.

⁴⁶ *Human Rights Situation in Tibet*. Annual Report 2009. Tibetan Center for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD). 2010.

⁴⁷ “Ibid”

⁴⁸ Quinglin, He. *The Fog of Censorship: Media Control in China*. Human Rights in China (HRIC). 2008.

⁴⁹ *Tibet’s achievements celebrated*. Peoples Daily. March 28, 2011. <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90001/90776/90882/7332537.html>.

⁵⁰ *Dissenting Voices*. Tibetan Center for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD). September 2010.

⁵¹ *2008 Uprising in Tibet: Chronology and Analysis*. Department of Information and International Relations (DIIR), Central Tibetan Administration (CTA). 2010.

⁵² “Ibid”

⁵³ Quinglin, He. *The Fog of Censorship: Media Control in China*. Human Rights in China (HRIC). 2008.

⁵⁴ “Ibid”

The PRC, in its attempt to sway public opinion and draw sympathy from local Chinese and Tibetan communities, ardently defame those forces, both Western and Tibetan, who support Tibetan historical heritage and political autonomy or H. H. the Dalai Lama. By stigmatizing individuals and nations as being apart of ‘reactionary forces’, the PRC entrenches divisions that create an us *versus* them mentality. Similarly, the PRC tries to strengthen its position by voicing the opinions of those sympathetic to its cause by propagating ideas in articles and headlines, vehemently condemning those who do not toe the party-attacking journalists, activists and all political dissidents. Lhapa, the chief of the Democratic Management Committee of Jokhang Temple, in an article posted on *Xinhua News* website in 2011, was quoted to have said that monks honored Vice president Xi Jinping in a visit as if he were, “reuniting with a family member whom they have long time not seen.”⁵⁵ Such overtly romanticized sentiments are quoted to display Tibetan-Chinese kinship, but to a more critical observer it would appear that Lhapa was merely trying to save face by praising his superior to appropriately commemorate the occasion. Eye-catching headlines serve to reinforce party opinion, as some studies have suggested that for every ten people who read the news only two will actually read the article, whereas the other eight will manage just to read the headlines. The CCP take advantage of this and use titles such as, “Dalai's democracy practices are laughing stock” and “1st anniversary of Serfs' Emancipation Day-Tibetans' new life” which do little to promote a shared sense of identity, compromise or willingness to enter into dialogue, and only serves to further alienate and divide people against each other.

4.3 External Propaganda on Tibet

In an attempt to shape international perceptions of Tibet, the PRC uses external propaganda in its attempts to make such views stick in the outside world.⁵⁶ In projecting its image abroad, the CCP use the Internet and other media outlets to control and project a vision of ‘soft power’.⁵⁷ An internal speech by the CCP’s top Internet official posted by accident on an official site before being promptly removed, outlines a vast array of institutions and methods to control opinion and, “create an international public opinion environment that is objective, beneficial and friendly to us.”⁵⁸ The PRC’s has drawn much international attention and outrage over its policies regarding Tibet, though such allegations are dismissed as rumors, apart of a plot hatched by pro-American conspirators who envy China’s growing power in the world. In a conference statement made by State Council Information Minister Zhao Qizheng on June, 12th 2000:

“External publicity on Tibet is an important element of our country's external propaganda. It is also a very important element of our struggle against the Dalai clique and hostile western forces. These efforts are related not only to national and nationalities unity, but also to the open-door reform, progress and stability of our country. Chinese state run Tibetology institutes...should propagate our government's policy in Tibet and progress of Tibet...They should work hard and attain success in changing foreign public opinion on Tibet issue...In short, we should make every effort to convert the Tibetology institutes and specialists

⁵⁵ *China's vice president urges Tibetan monks to "stay clear from" separatist forces*, July 20, 2011. Xinhua News Agency. http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/china/2011-07/20/c_13998087.htm.

⁵⁶ *Freedom of Information*. Free Tibet Campaign. 2008-2009. www.freetibet.org/about/freedom-information.

⁵⁷ Garnaut, John. *China's Plan to Use Internet for Propaganda*. The Sydney Morning Herald. July 14, 2010.

<http://www.smh.com.au/technology/technology-news/chinas-plan-to-use-internet-for-propaganda-20100713-109hc.html>.

⁵⁸ “*Ibid*”

into an effective army of our external propaganda for public opinion on Tibet.”⁵⁹

Under the directive of the External Propaganda Department, the PRC have published over 500 reports, 100 films and television programs, 2 million copies of more than 60 types of Tibet related information material to expose the Dalai-clique’s ‘separatist’ policies.⁶⁰ In trying to stress how much Tibet has benefited from Chinese ‘liberation’, the PRC emphasize its modernization and development programs; highlighting statistics that claim the government has invested over 60 billion Yuan in Tibet or that 95.6% of Tibetan children are in school and are happy, content, and grateful to their Chinese ‘liberators’.⁶¹ Such statistics are but inflated numbers that aim to legitimize themselves in the eyes of the international community, as such facts have never be reproduced by independent researchers because the PRC bars foreigners from conducting private research.⁶² In a statement given by Wang Chen, chief of the Cabinet's Information Office back in 2010: “We will strengthen the blocking of harmful information from outside China to prevent harmful information from being disseminated in China.”⁶³ In a disturbing example, depicting the extents to which the PRC has carried out this approach, back in November 2008, an official newspaper reported that seven Tibetans received sentences, ranging from eight years to life in connection with the March 2008 uprising charging them with disseminating nationalist material and providing information, “concerning national security and interests to organizations outside China.”⁶⁴ This case represents the alarming readiness of the state to harshly penalize even the mildest forms of dissent. Though, the PRC has taken great lengths to purport an image of reform and openness to the outside world, it is but an empty ideal propagated by the state that lacks any measure of validity.

In a rare look into the inner-workings of the propaganda system, a series of ‘classified’ documents were ‘leaked’ to the Danish daily, *Information*, supposedly originating from the party’s Central Committee and contains information that would have been approved by the politburo’s standing committee whose members include President Hu Jintao and Premier Wen Jiabao.⁶⁵ Although the documents doesn’t particularly contain anything that was not already assumed about the CCP, it directly contradicts public statements given by some of China’s top leaders who officially deny that the PRC censors information. According to the documents, people should be prevented from getting in touch with, “politically sensitive information and that such information must be, “blocked, destroyed or cleansed,” from the internet, media and books.⁶⁶ Details of the document summarized by *Information* describe how the PRC should, “seal off China’s borders from foreign influence and intensify the propaganda efforts abroad for changing the international community’s views on China.”⁶⁷ Besides detailing increased control of domestic media and the Internet, something international observers have long suspected, the document also supports the development of a corps of informants who would be posted in schools, workplaces, and villages, responsible for identifying ‘dissident’ citizens on behalf of the

⁵⁹ *Freedom of Information*. Free Tibet Campaign. 2008-2009. www.freetibet.org/about/freedom-information.

⁶⁰ Quinglin, He. *The Fog of Censorship: Media Control in China*. Human Rights in China (HRIC). 2008.

⁶¹ *Human Rights Situation in Tibet*. Annual Report 2009. Tibetan Center for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD). 2010.

⁶² “*Ibid*”

⁶³ A ‘Raging Storm,’ The crackdown on Tibetan writers and Artists after Tibet’s Spring 2008 Protests. International Campaign for Tibet. May 2010.

⁶⁴ “*Ibid*”

⁶⁵ Gottske, Martin. *Major leak exposes Chinese Duplicity*. *Information*. June 27, 2011. <http://www.information.dk/272093>.

⁶⁶ Gottenke, Martin. *A Party that smiles to the world, but tightens its grip at home*. *Information*. June 27, 2011..

<http://www.information.dk/272094>.

⁶⁷ Gottske, Martin. *Major leak exposes Chinese Duplicity*. *Information*. June 27, 2011.. <http://www.information.dk/272093>.

state.⁶⁸ Rhetoric such as this is a chilling reminder of China's authoritarian legacy and the means it is willing to use to retain power. The perceived threat that 'hostile forces' aligned with the West are, "trying by all means to contain our development, to defame our image and to infiltrate our ideology and our culture; they are trying to pressurize us to accept Western values and a Western political system,"⁶⁹ borders on paranoia. In order to resist such measures, the documents states that control over foreign journalists and NGO's needs to be heightened and, "greater control over the access of Western cultural products to the Chinese market," combined with a strengthening of the propaganda system so that Chinese citizens may have, "a better understanding of the Communist Party's strength," aiding them to resist dangerous information from the outside.⁷⁰

4.4 Lack of Transparency

The government maintains such a tight control over media outlets through censorship and propaganda that those living outside China can only ever have a vague conception of the realities that exist within the country and subsequently come to know only what the authorities reveal.⁷¹ He Qinglian, a former editor back in China, succinctly stated in his book detailing the intricacies of the PRC's censorship policies: "The China that foreign academics see is the China the Chinese government wants the world to see, and the news they hear is what the Chinese government wants the world to hear."⁷²

Preserving its autocratic rule remains the utmost importance and in keeping such forms in place the state deploys a massive amount of resources to protect itself from foreign influence. Even though such restrictions cannot filter through all potentially sensitive information, the lack of transparency, accountability and openness makes any critical analysis or investigative reporting potentially fraught with factual errors. This was most evidently displayed at a conference hosted by Columbia University's East Asian Institute in 2002, where professor Shi Tianjian, from Duke University, presented statistics demonstrating that a majority of Chinese people were 'satisfied or very satisfied' with the government and the status quo.⁷³ In responding to comments made during the conference, professor Shi Tianjian said:

"Chinese government officials told me that the level of popular satisfaction with the reforms found in my survey was several percentage points higher than in their own surveys. I assured these officials that my investigations were based on scientific methods and that there was nothing unreliable about my findings."⁷⁴

However, the credibility of such statistics are questionable, since 2000 the government has enforced a ban restricting foreign institutions from conducting independent research without authorization from the Ministry of State Security, and since all research data must be submitted to the Ministry, the reliability of such statistics are uncertain.⁷⁵

⁶⁸ *China's vice president urges Tibetan monks to "stay clear from" separatist forces*, July 20, 2011. Xinhua News Agency. http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/china/2011-07/20/c_13998087.htm.

⁶⁹ Gottenke, Martin. *The West restrains, defames and infiltrates us*. Information. June 27, 2011. <http://www.information.dk/272189>.

⁷⁰ Gottenke, Martin. *A Party that smiles to the world, but tightens its grip at home*. Information. June 27, 2011. <http://www.information.dk/272094>.

⁷¹ Quinglin, He. *The Fog of Censorship: Media Control in China*. Human Rights in China (HRIC). 2008.

⁷² "Ibid"

⁷³ *Human Rights Situation in Tibet*. Annual Report 2009. Tibetan Center for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD). 2010.

⁷⁴ Quinglin, He. *The Fog of Censorship: Media Control in China*. Human Rights in China (HRIC). 2008.

⁷⁵ "Ibid"

Similarly, foreign academics who base research papers on figures by the State Statistical Bureau use statistics that are meticulously filtered and approved for dissemination by the Ministry of State Security.⁷⁶ He Qinglian, in his book, *The Fog of Censorship*, went so far as to state: “When conducting research on China, foreign scholars blithely base their conclusions on information from sources that, essentially, constitute a rumor mill.”⁷⁷ Though He Qinglian makes a valid point in trying to show how difficult it may be in discerning truth in a country prone to secrecy, however such a sweeping statement does not give credence to the various channels of information, journalists or organizations who dedicate themselves to uncovering the truth. It is safe to say that foreign researchers are prone to making conceptualized arguments from what little information is made available. This may certainly be true for certain biographic, historical or ethnographical based field research, as such studies are likely to be influenced by the extended hand of the state, who intimidate interviewees, alter statements, monitor expeditions and stifle liberal discussion.

The gap between the China manufactured by state propaganda and the China experienced by a majority of its citizens living in the countryside is vast and can not be measured nor ascertained through surveys, reports and statistics put forth by the CCP. The China presented to the world is but a shadow of the truth, a showcase that displays its strengths while harboring its weaknesses.

5. Freedom of Information

The PRC has had a long history of restrictive policies relating to the freedom of information. After its rise to power, the CCP based its policies off of the Soviet Union’s model, making all media outlets subservient to the party in a rigid hierarchical structure controlled by government directives.⁷⁸ Control of information was considered paramount in keeping political control and in so doing the CCP embodied Mao’s idea that one should, “report only the good news, not the bad [for] if we do ten things and nine are bad, and they are all published in the press, then we will certainly perish.”⁷⁹

Though the law provides for freedom of speech and the press, the government generally does not respect these rights.⁸⁰ All information is thoroughly screened by state agencies, the factual basis of any report considered to be wholly irrelevant.⁸¹ A set of Media Reporting Guidelines was issued by the CCP in the 1990’s, restricting everything including social and political content, praising western values, any report using statistics or that criticized the party.⁸² Furthermore, all media organizations must register, be approved and supervised by the General Administration of Press and Publication (GAPP) or another local provincial body, effectively incorporating all outlets into the government’s bureaucracy.⁸³ Consequently, nearly all print and broadcast media, including publishing houses are affiliated with the CCP, though there are several privately owned print publications, there are no privately operated television or radio

⁷⁶ Quinglin, He. *The Fog of Censorship: Media Control in China*. Human Rights in China (HRIC). 2008.

⁷⁷ “Ibid”

⁷⁸ Quinglin, He. *The Fog of Censorship: Media Control in China*. Human Rights in China (HRIC). 2008.

⁷⁹ “Ibid”

⁸⁰ *US Department of State: 2010 Human Rights Report: China (includes Tibet, Hong Kong, and Macau)*. Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor. 2010 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices. April 8, 2011.

⁸¹ Quinglin, He. *The Fog of Censorship: Media Control in China*. Human Rights in China (HRIC). 2008.

⁸² “Ibid”

⁸³ “Ibid”

stations.⁸⁴ Despite this, the PRC maintains its position, according to Liu Binjie, Deputy Director of GAPP:

“No country in the world has more freedom of speech or freedom of publication than China. Much of what is said abroad about freedom of the press, speech, and publication in China has no basis in fact. The government helps media organizations fulfill their social function in accordance with the law and clearly stipulates that no organization or individual may unreasonably interfere with the media’s management, newsgathering, and broadcasting operations.”⁸⁵

Nevertheless, state authorities continue to monitor telephone conversations, fax transmissions, e-mail, text messaging, and Internet communications and also have been criticized for blocking and restricting domestic and international mail, especially within the TAR regions.⁸⁶ The constitution, though it is suppose to protect the freedom and privacy of correspondence, however, in practice authorities often did not respect such rights. Reporters without Borders, according to its Press Freedom Index, ranked China 171 out of 178 countries included in the study, joining the ranks of Burma and North Korea, ranked 174 and 177 respectively and other notoriously depraved countries at the bottom of the list of countries that do not uphold human rights or press freedoms.⁸⁷

A variety of restrictive methods have been used by government agencies to restrict the freedom of information including criminal prosecution, civil lawsuits and other more intimidating tactics such as harassment, detention, and violence to intimidate authors, journalists and laypeople from disseminating ‘sensitive’ material.⁸⁸ Furthermore, there have been known cases where Tibetans have been sentenced to long prison terms for simply speaking about the Tibetan situation through email or telephone conversations.⁸⁹ These penalties indicate that the PRC has a zero tolerance policy for even low-level information sharing.

5.1 Freedom of the Press

The CCP maintains a chokehold on press freedom inside the PRC through a multitude of laws and regulations that seek to restrict information flows. By restricting licenses, the GAPP implicitly restricts information, as every book, newspaper and magazine requires a unique serial number that is available only through the state. Similarly, books can only be published through approved publishing houses by the State Press and Publications Administration (PPA) who are also responsible for monitoring newspapers, periodicals, books, audio and video recordings.⁹⁰ Those who attempt to publish without the consent of the government often times face hefty fines or criminal proceedings. The only types of publications which are allowed to operate with the PRC, besides the three government

⁸⁴ US State Department. Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor. “US Department of State: 2010 Human Rights Report: China (includes Tibet, Hong Kong, and Macau)”. 2010 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices. April 8, 2011.

⁸⁵ Quinglin, He. *The Fog of Censorship: Media Control in China*. Human Rights in China (HRIC). 2008.

⁸⁶ US State Department. Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor. “US Department of State: 2009 Human Rights Report: China (includes Tibet, Hong Kong, and Macau)”. 2010 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices. March 11, 2010.

⁸⁷ *Internet Enemies: China*. Reporters Without Borders. 2011. <http://en.rsf.org/internet-enemie-china,39741.html>.

⁸⁸ *US Department of State: 2010 Human Rights Report: China (includes Tibet, Hong Kong, and Macau)*. Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor. 2010 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices. April 8, 2011.

⁸⁹ A ‘Raging Storm,’ The crackdown on Tibetan writers and Artists after Tibet’s Spring 2008 Protests. International Campaign for Tibet. May 2010.

⁹⁰ US State Department. Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor. “US Department of State: 2009 Human Rights Report: China (includes Tibet, Hong Kong, and Macau)”. 2010 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices. March 11, 2010.

newspapers and magazines, *The People's Daily*, *Guangming Daily*, *Jingji Ribao* (Economic Daily), and *Qiushi* (Seeking Truth), are those provincial publications or offshoots thereof, publications that have a 'correct political orientation' or those publications that are able to exist through private subscribers.⁹¹ Since many state newspapers are sponsored or are subsidiaries of the party, smaller private publications have a hard time competing. In 2002 the PRC had 2,137 newspapers and 9,029 magazines, virtually all of them getting their news from *Xinhua* News Agency.⁹² As a result, newspapers are forced to use boilerplate language containing empty words and hollow stories, whose publications do not rely on demand as many are subsidized through mandatory subscriptions by government offices.

According to state policy, under the Regulations on the Administration of Publishing: "All levels of the People's Government shall ensure that citizens are able to legally exercise their right to freedom of publication."⁹³ However, any publication that questions or criticizes party policies are deemed to be a threat for that reason alone, "and their actual or potential impact on national security or the public's safety is completely ignored."⁹⁴ Many state secret crimes stem from unauthorized publications that expressed opinions deemed inconsistent with CCP ideology. The cases of more than 50 Tibetans, including 13 writers, involved in the arts and public sphere are either in prison, have 'disappeared' or have faced torture or harassment due to expressing their views.⁹⁵ Civil servant, editor and essayist Shogdung, arrested in April 2010, was held for 6 months and is now on bail pending trial for his book entitled, "The Line between Sky and Earth," which analyzed the 2008 protests as a re-awakening of Tibetan national consciousness calling for the right to use civil disobedience to resist China's policies.⁹⁶ It was not immediately known why he was arrested, as no reason was given, but it could be directly related to his books content or his failure to have it published through proper authorized channels.

Authorities continue to ban newspapers from covering anything that relates to labor, health, environmental crisis's, or industrial accidents. Of the 65 million items confiscated as being 'unauthorized publications' in 2009, it is unclear how many were categorized as being 'politically sensitive' as they were included in the same category as pornography and pirated materials.⁹⁷ The extensive used of censorship and restrictive publishing practices has irrevocably shaped the context that Chinese citizens receive their information, which has further eroded the idea that the PRC operates in a free, open and transparent manner.

5.1.1 Local Journalist Reporting in the TAR

Journalists reporting in the TAR experience flagrant forms of oppression by state and local authorities in trying to cover incidents deemed sensitive to the state, including everything from political protests and corruption scandals to natural and industrial

⁹¹ Quinglin, He. *The Fog of Censorship: Media Control in China*. Human Rights in China (HRIC). 2008.

⁹² "Ibid"

⁹³ Regulations on the Administration of Publishing. Freedom of Expression Laws and Regulations. Congressional Executive Commission on China (CECC).2001. www.cecc.gov/pages/virtualAcad/exp/explaws.php?PHPSESSID=f1898bb6598e1c46f08d09472288aaa3#publishinglaw.

⁹⁴ *Silencing Critics*, Congressional Executive Commission on China (CECC), 2006.

⁹⁵ US State Department. Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor. "US Department of State: 2010 Human Rights Report: China (includes Tibet, Hong Kong, and Macau)". 2010 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices. April 8, 2011.

⁹⁶ "Ibid"

⁹⁷ US State Department. Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor. "US Department of State: 2009 Human Rights Report: China (includes Tibet, Hong Kong, and Macau)". 2010 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices. March 11, 2010.

accidents. Authorities conceal such incidents from journalists in an attempt to maintain a level of placidity amongst the local population, often times constructing roadblocks, using news blackouts, cutting mobile and telecommunications in an effort to contain the spread of ‘reactionary news’. The PRC also use other forms of intimidation to force journalists to self-censor their reports, as well as preventing ordinary people from providing information to domestic media rouses.⁹⁸ Consequently, any exposé that does manage to appear in the press represents a hard-won battle by journalists, who often run the risk of endangering their own lives in order to publish certain investigative reports.⁹⁹ He Qinglian appropriately captured what journalists go through in trying to cover such incidents: “It is difficult for non-journalists to appreciate the difficulties involved, not only in getting to the bottom of a story, but in battling various levels of the Chinese bureaucracy.”¹⁰⁰ The state often times eases restrictions, giving the illusion of freedom of the press, only to later come down hard on all those journalists who liberalized their writings. There have been many reports detailing the disappearance and jailing of known journalists who vocalized their discontent with the CCP, including Rangjung from Kardze TAP, and Chen Daojun who each received a three years prison sentence for ‘inciting subversion’ in their writings.¹⁰¹

Official guidelines for journalists, enacted by the Central Propaganda Department, are ill-defined and subject to change at the discretion of officials who subjectively interpret such laws according to their judgment.¹⁰² Such protocols were often retroactively enforced by authorities who fire editors, journalists or close publication houses if reports are interpreted as encroaching on ‘state security’ issues.¹⁰³ In a speech given in June 2008, Party General Hu Jintao stated that journalists should: “Promote the development and causes of the Party and the state [and their] first priority [is to] correctly guide public opinion.”¹⁰⁴ Consequently, such measures often require journalists to blatantly censor, misreport and falsify information in order to walk the party line.

5.1.2 Foreign Journalists in the TAR

The PRC tightly controls the movement of foreign journalists and reporters who face severe restrictions when operating within the TAR. Many are allowed access only through structured tours or government organized press visits where they can be appropriately monitored.¹⁰⁵ Foreign journalists are routinely prevented from conducting interviews in sensitive provinces and are prohibited from reporting on issues relating to human rights, family planning, ethnic minorities, religion, or democratic ideas.¹⁰⁶

The Foreign Correspondents Club of China (FCCC) called on the PRC to open the TAR to foreign journalists and respect proper journalistic practices after 50 incidents of harassment, ten death threats and six cases of detention when they tried to visit some of

⁹⁸ Quinglin, He. *The Fog of Censorship: Media Control in China*. Human Rights in China (HRIC). 2008.

⁹⁹ “Ibid”

¹⁰⁰ Quinglin, He. *The Fog of Censorship: Media Control in China*. Human Rights in China (HRIC). 2008.

¹⁰¹ Garnaut, John. China’s Plan to Use Internet for Propaganda. *The Sydney Morning Herald*. July 14, 2010.

<http://www.smh.com.au/technology/technolog-news/chinas-plan-to-use-internet-for-propaganda-20100713-109hc.html>.

¹⁰² “Ibid”

¹⁰³ Quinglin, He. *The Fog of Censorship: Media Control in China*. Human Rights in China (HRIC). 2008.

¹⁰⁴ Congressional Executive Commission on China (CECC). 2009. Annual Report 2009.

¹⁰⁵ US State Department. Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor. “US Department of State: 2010 Human Rights Report:

China (includes Tibet, Hong Kong, and Macau)”. 2010 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices. April 8, 2011

¹⁰⁶ Quinglin, He. *The Fog of Censorship: Media Control in China*. Human Rights in China (HRIC). 2008.

the more remote provinces in the TAR.¹⁰⁷ Similarly, a study found that 86% of respondents stated that it was not possible to report accurate information in Tibet due to the level of control and monitoring by state authorities.¹⁰⁸ Respondents had submitted some 35 applications to travel within the TAR and had only four approved; those that were approved received regular guidance from the Central Propaganda Department listing which topics could be covered and had mandatory security officials present at all times during interviews.¹⁰⁹

Tibetans who were accused of speaking to foreign reporters or who attempted to relay any information to foreigners or organizations outside the country were subject to detention and criminal prosecution; failure to comply with such measures were punished depending upon the, “degree of harm to the nation.”¹¹⁰ Several known instances involved the case of Drakpa, a monk from Gyuto Monastery, who was arrested back in 2008 by the local Public Security Bureau for informing foreign correspondents about human rights abuses and Jigme Gyatso, from Labrang Monastery who was also arrested for giving a telephone interview to a foreign journalist.¹¹¹ Furthermore, during 2009, 59 Tibetans were convicted of ‘creating and spreading rumors’ during the March 2008 protests.¹¹² Aforementioned incidents were especially frequent in 2008, as authorities began cracking down on ‘subversive behavior’ using a wide berth of indictments to punish protestors that threatened stability.

In trying to keep dissenting or critical opinion from circulating abroad, authorities placed tight restrictions on citizens who were employed by foreign media organizations. Back in 2009 the state issued a code of conduct threatening dismissal for employees who engaged in any ‘independent reporting’ instructing them to provide, “information that projects a good image of the country”.¹¹³ The PRC purports an image of domestic solidarity and internal cohesion by painting a glossy picture to the international media, while continuing to use repressive measures to control movement, speech and expression all the while maintaining the illusion of control.

5.2 Internet Freedoms

The explosion of telecommunication, the Internet and the spawn of hand-held mobile devices has revolutionized the way in which the world sends and receives information. For the CCP this has proved to be the biggest stumbling block in maintaining its autocratic rule. Though it has yet to pose a direct challenge to China’s leadership, it has given the people a mode of communicating ideas around the directorate, allowing activist to voice their opinions and critiques of the state. Battling against those forces, the CCP employs an un-exhaustible amount of resources to try and halt the spread of harmful information. Through the guidance of state regulators, Internet users are ‘guided’ toward

¹⁰⁷ *2008 Uprising in Tibet: Chronology and Analysis*. Department of Information and International Relations (DIIR), Central Tibetan Administration (CTA). 2010.

¹⁰⁸ US State Department. Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor. “US Department of State: 2010 Human Rights Report: China (includes Tibet, Hong Kong, and Macau)”. 2010 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices. April 8, 2011.

¹⁰⁹ US State Department. Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor. “US Department of State: 2009 Human Rights Report: China (includes Tibet, Hong Kong, and Macau)”. 2010 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices. March 11, 2010

¹¹⁰ Quinglin, He. *The Fog of Censorship: Media Control in China*. Human Rights in China (HRIC). 2008.

¹¹¹ *2008 Uprising in Tibet: Chronology and Analysis*. Department of Information and International Relations (DIIR), Central Tibetan Administration (CTA). 2010.

¹¹² US State Department. Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor. “US Department of State: 2009 Human Rights Report: China (includes Tibet, Hong Kong, and Macau)”. 2010 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices. March 11, 2010

¹¹³ “*Ibid*”

government ‘friendly’ information and away from ‘subversive’ material.¹¹⁴ The official CCP mandate has been that they do not engage in censorship, however, according to a recently ‘leaked’ document from among the party’s most inner circle, information must be, “guided in order to ensure the stability of the party’s leadership [while] control of politically damaging information on the Internet is to be increased.”¹¹⁵ The document repeatedly stated: “All illegal and harmful information on Chinese and foreign web sites should be completely blocked,” and anyone caught should be, “indicted and prosecuted quickly before a judge and be quickly convicted.”¹¹⁶ According to a White Paper released last June by the Information Office of the State Council, the government maintains that they protect certain freedoms of speech on the Internet as long as it does not endanger, “state security, subvert state power, damage state honor and interests, jeopardize state religious policy, propagate heretical or superstitious ideas, spread rumors or other content forbidden by laws and administrative regulations among other caveats.”¹¹⁷ The aforementioned loosely stated definitions are left open to interpretation by state security regulators giving the state a wide latitude to censor.

Authorities consistently blocked access to web sites deemed controversial, especially those discussing Tibetan independence, underground religious organizations, or democratic ideas, and at various time selectively blocking sites operated by foreign governments and news outlets, health organizations as well as social networking sites and search engines that allow for instant communication.¹¹⁸ The Internet News Coordination Bureau was formed to combat on-line subversion under the State Council Information Office who work in conjunction with the Ministry of Public Security and fourteen other government subsidiaries who employ thousands of monitors in their censorship efforts to control content and restrict information.¹¹⁹ A 2005 regulation, drafted by the State Council deemed blogs, online bulletin boards and cell-phone text messages as part of the news media and are therefore subject to state regulation. Supervision of social networking sites, online chat rooms, micro-blogging, and video-sharing sites are seen to pose a direct threat to social and political stability and are specifically targeted by government agencies, though many times they are not wholly successful.¹²⁰

The rapidly interconnected network of telecommunication systems makes effective monitoring and censorship particularly problematic. Electronic gadgets and other digital technology have played a vital role in relaying information and transmitting news throughout China and abroad. According to Robert Barnett, Director of Modern Tibetan Studies at Columbia University, said during the March 2008 protests: “The widespread use of cell phone and internet technology in Tibet allowed information to travel rapidly to those Tibetans who had arrived in exile, or directly to observers like myself.”¹²¹ With such tight restrictions over many other forms of communication these remain the primary methods used to send updates of the Tibetan situation abroad. Nevertheless,

¹¹⁴ Garnaut, John. *China’s Plan to Use Internet for Propaganda*. The Sydney Morning Herald. July 14, 2010. <http://www.smh.com.au/technology/technolog-news/chinas-plan-to-use-internet-for-propaganda-20100713-109hc.html>.

¹¹⁵ Gottske, Martin. *China’s leadership will turn the Internet to its own advantage*. Information. June 30, 2011. <http://www.information.dk/272304>.

¹¹⁶ Gottenke, Martin. *A Party that smiles to the world, but tightens its grip at home*. Information. June 27, 2011. <http://www.information.dk/272094>.

¹¹⁷ US State Department. Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor. “US Department of State: 2009 Human Rights Report: China (includes Tibet, Hong Kong, and Macau)”. 2010 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices. March 11, 2010

¹¹⁸ “*Ibid*”

¹¹⁹ “*Ibid*”.

¹²⁰ “*Ibid*”

¹²¹ *2008 Uprising in Tibet: Chronology and Analysis*. Department of Information and International Relations (DIIR), Central Tibetan Administration (CTA). 2010.

communication along these platforms pose significant risks to activists and bloggers as their identity's can often times be tracked to specific IP addresses or phone numbers, as was the case with Tibetan writers Kunchok Tsephel and Kunga Tseyang who were sentenced to fifteen years and five years, respectively, back in November 2009 for leaking 'state secrets' charges and for writing and posting 'reactionary' articles online.¹²²

With an estimated five million bloggers in China and Tibet, blogging remains a popular platform for citizens to voice their opinions. The potential to be used to spread politically divergent ideas threatens to undermine the states control of information and poses a powerful medium for political mobilization. Since the 2008 protests there has been a growing crackdown against political bloggers, such as the case of Norzin Wangmo and Kunga Tsayang who were imprisoned in 2009 for posting politically sensitive material online.¹²³ Furthermore, the blog of a well-known Tibetan poet and journalist, Tsering Woesser, who has been a vocal against Chinese policies in Tibet has been inaccessible for long periods.¹²⁴ Censorship of Tibetan-language internet sites has greatly hampered the development of Tibetan's presence online, despite government funded projects, as security agencies often lacked the language skills necessary to monitor content and as a result such website are often indiscriminately shutdown.¹²⁵

Given the limitations of manually censoring online content, the government forces Internet companies to self-censor online content. In April 2010, the PRC added an amendment to the State Secrets Law requiring Internet and telecom companies to cooperate with the authorities on state security issues.¹²⁶ Companies are forced to block the transmission 'state secrets' over their networks, keep logs and monitor content.¹²⁷ Similarly, regulations were implemented requiring Internet cafes to verify the users identity, with some provinces installing software that allowed authorities to monitor Internet usage remotely in real time.¹²⁸ Also, major news portholes imposed mandatory registration and identity authentication measures in order to post comments on news articles. In a study conducted by Reporters Without Borders and Chinese Human Rights Defenders, they identified 400-500 words that were banned by the CCP and tracked through e-mails, search engines, and online chats based platforms.¹²⁹ While such measures generally kept people away from accessing sensitive content on public Internet terminals there are many forms of technology that allow users to bypass government censors that remain widely available, allowing activists and dissidents the ability to post online anonymously on issues such as political reforms, ethnic discrimination, and corruption.¹³⁰ Nonetheless many websites of prominent activists, scholars, artists and professors have been periodically blocked throughout the year, especially during major religious, cultural or political Tibetan holidays or during major events such as the 2008 protests or the announcement of Liu Xiaobo's Nobel Peace Prize.¹³¹ Similarly, the

¹²² US State Department. Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor. "US Department of State: 2009 Human Rights Report: China (includes Tibet, Hong Kong, and Macau)". 2010 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices. March 11, 2010

¹²³ *Internet Enemies: China*. Reporters Without Borders. 2011. <http://en.rsf.org/internet-enemie-china,39741.html>.

¹²⁴ US State Department. Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor. "US Department of State: 2009 Human Rights Report: China (includes Tibet, Hong Kong, and Macau)". 2010 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices. March 11, 2010. <http://en.rsf.org/internet-enemie-china,39741.html>.

¹²⁵ "Ibid"

¹²⁶ "Ibid"

¹²⁷ *Internet Enemies: China*. Reporters Without Borders. 2011. <http://en.rsf.org/internet-enemie-china,39741.html>.

¹²⁸ US State Department. Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor. "US Department of State: 2009 Human Rights Report: China (includes Tibet, Hong Kong, and Macau)". 2010 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices. March 11, 2010. <http://en.rsf.org/internet-enemie-china,39741.html>.

¹²⁹ *Journey to the Heart of Internet Censorship*. Reporters Without Borders and China Human Rights Defenders. October 2007. http://en.rsf.org/IMG/pdf/Voyage_au_coeur_de_la_censure_GB.pdf.

¹³⁰ US State Department. Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor. "US Department of State: 2009 Human Rights Report: China (includes Tibet, Hong Kong, and Macau)". 2010 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices. March 11, 2010. <http://en.rsf.org/internet-enemie-china,39741.html>.

¹³¹ "Ibid"

Tunisian and Egyptian revolutions have been particularly troubling to Chinese authorities for fear that such ideas might spread, prompting an increasingly vigilant campaign against online discussions.¹³² Just days after the Egyptian uprising, the PRC began censoring ‘Egypt’ or anything related from Internet searches and social networking sites.¹³³

In April 2010, a speech was given by Wang Chen, head of the Information Office of the State Council to the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, which he outlined the PRC's goal of creating an exclusive Chinese intranet. The story was picked up by Human Rights in China (HRIC) in a report entitled, “China's Internet: Staking Digital Ground.”¹³⁴ Professor Anne-Marie Brady, an expert on China's propaganda system at the University of Canterbury, commented on the report saying: “China has this goal of establishing a Chinese intranet, removing China from the global Internet.”¹³⁵ In its efforts to control and manipulate the flow of information, this recent move by the PRC is particularly troubling as the proposal will ultimately create an information blackout, one that would be devastating to the people living in Tibet as the whole territory would remain shrouded in a veil of secrecy.

6. Conclusion

China's laws remain ambiguous, ill defined, broad and easily exploited by the state to prosecute political dissidents, non-conformist and all those who resist the autocratic authority of the state. Though the PRC's constitution does protect freedom of speech and other civil liberties, they are protected only in writing as such laws are subordinate to CCP decree under the guise of safeguarding ‘state secrets’. Censorship is used overtly as a tool to restrict the influence and spread of information projected by media outlets and telecommunication systems that does not conform to party dogma. Together with its entrenched propaganda network, the CCP seeks to exert its influence within the public sphere by controlling and manipulating the ideas held in public discourse.

The PRC operates in a shroud of secrecy regarding its internal affairs, adamantly refusing to allow international monitoring organizations into the country. The lack of transparency and accountability allow authorities to act with impunity, disregarding both the Chinese constitution and international treaties. Though China has signed the UN Charter and the UDHR, it acts irrespective of its tenants and continues to impose its stranglehold on human rights and press freedoms. China's increasing dominance in the international economy has stifled criticisms from other world leaders regarding its abusive human rights record. As China's relative power continues to gain, the international community's ability to influence its policies wanes. Consequently, change will only come from a mobilization of the people and nothing short of a revolution is needed to dislodge China's entrenched system of authority; yet it is within reach, as the recent upheavals in the Middle East have shown-it is the people who have the power and it is only through them that the system can change.

¹³² *Internet Enemies: China*. Reporters Without Borders. 2011. <http://en.rsf.org/internet-enemie-china,39741.html>.

¹³³ “*Ibid*”

¹³⁴ Garnaut, John. *China's Plan to Use Internet for Propaganda*. The Sydney Morning Herald. July 14, 2010.

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¹³⁵ “*Ibid*”

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