

Global Expansion of China's Media for Soft Power Promotion

Abstract

China initiated the media “Going out” Project in 2009, attempting to promote its “soft power” globally. This article re-examines how soft power theory, having been adapted to Chinese context, shaped this strategy. This paper then studies the global reception of Chinese media's outreach with statistical analysis and concludes that much of China's effort fails. Causes for failure are discussed. Finally, further obstacles confronting China's soft power promotion via media's global expansion are explored.

Keywords

China, Media “Going out” Policy, Soft power, Soft power promotion, Global expansion of China's media,

Just before the dawn of 2017, on December 31, 2016, China Central Television [CCTV], China's state-run television network, rebranded its CCTV News to China Global Television Network [CGTN]. This network now includes five foreign language channels; one documentary channel; two overseas broadcast centers; three smartphone apps; accounts on ten social networking sites; and a global news content distribution platform called CCTV Plus.

President Xi's congratulatory letter to the opening of CGTN urged the newly launched network to "tell China's stories well, spread China's voices well, let the world know a three-dimensional, colorful China, as well as showcase the country as a builder of world peace, a contributor to global development and a vindicator of international order" (Xinhua, 2017; Madrid-Morales, 2017; Associated Press, 2017).

The launch of CGTN is just one of the steps—the most recent one—China takes to implement its media "going-out" strategy. Initiated in 2009, the policy aims to "counteract negative prejudices by amplifying China's voices overseas" (Hu, & Ji, 2012). A large number of discussions have framed this policy within the discourse of "soft power". In fact, this concept—soft power—has been adapted to domestic contexts by Chinese scholars and leadership (Lee, 2016). Therefore, how this strategy relates to "soft power" theory needs to be re-examined. Also important is to look at the outcome of this policy by empirically studying how global audiences have been reacting to Chinese media that "went out". So far, relevant works have been only focusing on the global reception of a specific media, like CCTV News' performance in Africa. Thus, an overall evaluation of Chinese media's international expansion is need, which will be explored in the second section

of this article. This essay then explores the reasons for these media achievements (or lack of achievements in this case) so far. As a conclusion, I discussed the barriers China needs to break through if it attempts to project its soft power worldwide via media's expansion.

Soft power and media's "Going out"

Soft power is "the ability to produce outcomes through persuasion and attraction rather than coercion or payment" (Nye 2012a). Coined in 1990, the term was originally intended "for an elite American audience" (Flew, 2016). Ten years later, the audience of this conceptualization was no longer confined to the US (Glaser, & Murphy, 2009; Edney, 2012) nor to the elites (Flew, 2016). Most notably, Chinese seemed to have become the most enthusiastic and devoted student of Nye (Xie, 2015). Eager to increase the country's soft power, China set up Confucius Institutes worldwide (Paradise, 2009; Yang, 2010; Hartig, 2012a; Zaharna, Hubbert, & Hartig, 2014); facilitated students' mobility in higher education (Metzgar, 2015); hosted Olympic Games in Beijing and World EXPO in Shanghai; and encouraged its mainstream media to "go global". This essay will focus on the media's role in China's soft power promotion. Paragraphs that follow in

this part would examine how this concept—soft power, relates to and shapes China's media “going-out” policy.

While according to Nye (2008), soft power relies upon three main pillars: culture, political values and foreign policies, the Chinese discourse puts much emphasis on the cultural dimension.

The term “cultural soft power” appeared so frequently in official documents that it almost became a synonym for Nye's “soft power” (Edney, 2012). A large number of scholars complain that even though China enjoys a long history and rich cultural heritage, it is “losing its competitiveness in the international trade of cultural products” (Li, 2008) including movies, pop music, fashion and fast food (Ni, 2008). In 2007, former President Hu Jintao (2007) addressed the 17th Congress of the Communist Party of China that the country needed to increase the international impact of its cultural soft power by tapping its rich cultural heritage and facilitating cultural exchanges. Noting that the influence of a country's cultural soft power depends not only on the attractiveness of the contents but also “whether it has advanced communication methods and powerful communication capacity”, the state-run Xinhua News Agency urged China to enhance this communication capacity (Xinhua, 2007).

That political values and foreign policies are often times missing from the discussion of cultural soft power does not mean that Chinese analysts did not realize their significance. In fact, these two elements were incorporated in the discussion of “discourse power”. Although there is not an exact definition of discourse power, most scholars reached a consensus that discourse power is closely related to soft power (Wang, 2010; Guo, 2012; Jiang, 2013; Wang, & Wang, 2013; Wang, & Cui, 2015; Mao, 2017). Zhao (2016) viewed discourse power as a principle hold by CPC since its establishment in 1921 to “create a new political model rather than be a mere follower of the established political order”. Wang and Cui (2015) believed that to promote a country's international discourse power, it is important to influence the international agenda-setting by proposing diplomatic ideas and concepts that would be embraced by other countries, like “peace and development” and “harmonious world”. But diplomatic concepts and ideas, however desirable, are not able to get across to overseas audiences without “an effective platform for international communication”. Therefore, they regard communication capacity as one of the three components of discourse power in their definition. The leadership, too, used this term—communication capacity, quite frequently along with the promotion of China's international

discourse power. For example, at the Conference on the Party's Propaganda and Public Opinion Work, Xi Jinping (2016) urged China's state-run media targeting at overseas audiences to "increase international communication capacity, (so as to) promote international discourse power and tell China's stories well"¹.

Although Nye (2008) does mention media as part of public diplomacy which could broadcast the contents of a culture's culture, values, and policies with a view to producing soft power, he "does not generally refer to private-sector news organizations like CNN or BBC as a source of soft power" (Edney, 2012). But, as is evident in the above analysis, Chinese analysts attach so much importance to communication capacity that they refer to mass media per se as a vital component of soft power (Li, 2008; Edney, 2012).

The global expansion of China's media was not merely motivated by the intention to boost cultural soft power and its discourse power. It also intended to build national image and shape international public opinion. People in China got surprised and mad at most of Western media's reports on 2008 Tibetan Unrest and the Olympic torch relay (Glaser, & Murphy, 2009; Sun, 2010). China realized despite of its rising economy, its voices still could not get across to people

worldwide since the narratives and public opinion have long been dominated by Western media which are largely biased against China. (Cam, 2009; Jiang, 2010; Hu, & Ji, 2012; Jiang, 2013). Chinese called it “hegemony of Western media” (Tiexue Net, 2008).

Conscious of Western media dominance, Li Changchun, the head of China's propaganda department and a senior member of the Politburo Standing Committee, made an important speech calling for boosting Chinese media's communication capacity (Sun, 2010). Believing “Developing communication capacity is ... critical to the promotion of China's cultural soft power and to how Chinese media's can influence the international public opinion”, he urged the media to “go global”, to expand worldwide reach by “establishing foreign language channels and collaborating with major overseas TV stations” (Li, Changchun, 2008a). The aim, in Li's mind, is to “build a communication capacity that is commensurate with China's socioeconomic development and its international status” (Li, Changchun, 2008b). A scholar at Communication University of China also commented that “preventing giant foreign media agencies from monopolizing the right of voice, enabling foreign people to hear the voice of China ... is of vital importance in enhancing China's soft power.” (People's Daily Online, 2010)

Who are listening and where are they?

Wu and Chen (2009) reported that Chinese government invested over US\$6.8 billion in the media “going-out” project. State-run news media including Xinhua News Agency, CCTV, China Radio International [CRI], *People's Daily* and *China Daily* received most of the budget. Spurred by the generous funding, Xinhua added 86 overseas bureaus (Brady, 2015) and created its 24-hour international TV network called “CNC” (Hu, & Ji, 2012); *China Daily* launched its editions specifically made for the US, Asian, African and European markets; CRI “continues to expand its reach on stations from Texas to Thailand” (Farrar, 2010); *Global Times*, a tabloid affiliated to *People's Daily*, in 2009 launched its English version (Brady, 2015); CCTV International changed its name from CCTV-9 to CCTV News in 2010, and launched its two overseas headquarters in Nairobi and Washington in early 2012, with an European center on the way.

However, physical expansion does not guarantee loyal viewers automatically. To evaluate the outcome of this strategy, it is of much significance to look at who are really listening to what China has to say and where they are.

Traditional media

In 2009, it was reported that CCTV could reach 838 million overseas subscribers in 137 nations (Nelson, 2013). However, global reach does not translate into actual viewership. In fact, it is very hard to specify the actual ratings of CGTN. Although CGTN has been focusing on expanding audiences outside China, “few resources have been devoted to measuring international audiences” (Nelson, 2013). Also, audience surveys mapping the reception were generally not publicly accessible (Gagliardone, 2013). Nonetheless, the author of this paper attempts to draw the “map of Chinese media’s global audience” by referring to various sources.

The most recent relevant data is from a survey done in 2016 by Global Poll Center, an organization affiliated to *Global Times*. Over 19,200 people from 19 countries outside China participated. When asked “through which channel did you obtain information about China”, 40% respondents answered “domestic TV channels” followed by “domestic websites” (34.6%), “internationally-renowned traditional media such as CNN and BBC” (28.0%) and “internationally-renowned new media (websites and social media)” (26.8). In comparison, only 13.1% opted for “China’s traditional media (TV, broadcasting, newspaper and news agency) in my country”; 10.1%

chose “China’s new media in my country” and 11.2% did not try to gain any information about China at all. (See Figure 1)

It is noticeable that this ranking and the exact percentages remain almost the same when respondents were asked through which channel they look for facts “when major international affairs arise” or “when major international affairs pertaining to China arise”. The results demonstrate that in terms of becoming a major source of information about China, let alone the world, CCTV, along with *China Daily*, China Radio International and Xinhua News Agency lag far behind local TV channels and Western media including BBC and CNN. “China’s stories” and “China’s voices”, unfortunately, had been, and still are, for the most part delivered by media other than China’s.

China’s voices seemed to have become a major alternative choice for people in Latin America. The survey showed that 36.1% of Argentines, 31.4% of Mexicans and 18.5% Brazilians would turn to China’s traditional media for information about China-related global issues. These figure were still lower than those for internationally-renowned traditional media (44.7% for Argentina and 34.3% for Brazil), they nonetheless revealed that China’s traditional media attracted almost as

many views as “domestic TV” did (44.6% of Argentine, 37.5% of Mexicans and 17.7% of Brazilians). Countries in Europe, on the other hand, generally do not rely on China's media for information.

Similar results were reached by other surveys. The editorial board of international news department of Xinhua News Agency conducted in-depth interviews with 62 media professionals and sinologists from 30 countries scattered among 7 regions—Asia-Pacific, Africa, Europe, North America, Middle East and Latin America. Based on these interviews, Liu (2013) draws the “Influence Index of China's media on the world”. It showed that the impact of China's news media was felt most strongly in Africa. Lowest influence was felt in Europe and North America. (See Figure 2)

This weak influence of China's news outlets in Europe and North America is confirmed by an unpublished survey done for CCTV by Nielson in 2015. Conducted among 2,426 TV viewers in New York, the survey looks into the audience ratings of four TV channels—CCTV News, Al Jazeera America², BBC World and KBS World. A glance at the results demonstrated that in February, 2015, ratings for Al Jazeera America were about 1.00% on average, peaking at 1.94%.

Average rating for BBC World was about 0.3%, reaching the highest point at 1.39%. In comparison, the figures for CCTV News and KBSW were close to zero. The largest volume of viewer traffic CCTV News ever experienced was only 0.16%.

Maybe it is because people in the United States do not know where to find CCTV News' cable TV. Nelson (2013) observed "CCTV has devoted little effort to informing potential U.S. viewers that its service exists, or where to find it" (p.23). In fact, even though media professionals in Africa regard CCTV News as very influential (Liu, 2013), not so many ordinary local people are watching it, which can be confirmed by the words of Howard French: "I spent most of the summer in East Africa, and people I spoke with in several countries said that not only did they not watch Chinese TV, but that they generally didn't know other people who did, either." (Feng, 2015, para. 15, as quoted in Jirik, 2016)

New media

This low reach rate of CCTV and other traditional media might be because people cannot get access to their services. However, as an increasing number of people worldwide obtain news

through the Internet, things are bound to change. A survey entitled *The modern news consumer*, issued by Pew Research Center (Mitchell, Gottfried, Barthel, & Shearer, 2016) reveals that “about four-in-ten Americans often get news online”, either through news websites and apps (28%) or on social media (18%). Although TV (57%) remains the single most important source of news, “TV news use is dramatically lower among younger adults, suggesting future shake-ups to come”. Specifically, among those 18-29 and 30-49, half turn to online platforms for news while only 27% and 47% respectively obtain news via watching TV. Generally, print newspapers (20%) are the least preferable platform, followed by radio (25%). The *Digital News Report 2016*, issued by Reuters Institute at Oxford University, reach similar results. Based on a survey of over 50,000 online news consumers from across 26 countries, including the US and the UK, the report shows that 51% of the respondents each week use social media as a source of news and “Facebook is by far the most important network for finding, reading/watching, and sharing news.” (p.7) Thus, to gain a deeper understanding of the popularity and the impact of Chinese media's global outreach, it is necessary and important to also look at the performance of their accounts on social media platforms and their websites.

Social media platform. I chose Facebook and YouTube (both are blocked by Chinese government) for the analysis on the social media accounts. Five China's media are included in the analysis: CGTN, *China Daily*, Xinhua News Agency, *People's Daily* and *Global Times*. For a point of reference, ten major English news media including TV channels, newspapers and news agencies are also studied. The data was collected on March 26, 2017.

I ranked these news media's accounts on Facebook based on two indicators—the number of Likes and the number of Followers. To my surprise, Chinese media performed much better than what the above mentioned surveys indicate. Specifically, CGTN has by far the largest number of Likes (47,208,406) and Followers (47,048,180), followed by BBC News (40,230,153/39,619,992), *People's Daily* (34,380,435/34,220,698) and CNN (27,090,512 /26,505,084). Between CNN and *Global Times* (9,750,097/9,737,259) are China Xinhua News (17,234,444/17,237,567), *China Daily* (11,309,736/11,274,523) and the *New York Times* (13,714,364/13,159,132). Al Jazeera English and RT are ranked 9th and 12th among all the 15 media. The number of Likes and Followers CGTN has is over 5 times that of Al Jazeera English and over 11 times that of RT. (See Table 1)

Something rather strange is that CGTN adds its fans so quickly—much quicker than its global competitors. I checked the numbers on March 30 again, and found that in just 4 days, CGTN added 217,602 likes and People's Daily added 169,027; in stark contrast, the figures for CNN, Al Jazeera and RT are just 32,152, 22,370 and 5,728 respectively. So, has China become a master of journalism? Probably not. An article published on *Foreign Policy*, after conducting statistical analysis on Socialbakers.com, speculated that the huge number of fans *People's Daily* gained in such a short time is simply the product of click farms since half of The Daily's fans came from India, Pakistan, Indonesia and Nepal (Olesen, 2015).

For the accounts on YouTube, I primarily looked at two indicators— total views and subscribers; I also looked at the number of uploaded videos and the registration date. Results show that in terms of total views, CGTN is ranked 8th and the other four Chinese media are placed at the very bottom. RT is ranked first, with about 2 billion views—10.5 times that of CGTN. The *New York Times* is ranked 5th, with a viewership 745 times that of *China Daily* and 5,136 times that of *Global Times*. But considering the fact that all the Chinese media's accounts were created six or seven year after the registration of its overseas competitors, China did make huge achievements:

CGTN has a viewership that is 1/4 of Al Jazeera's and about half of BBC's. (See Table 2)

In sum, China's media seemed to be much more popular on the social media platforms. However, it remains doubtful whether all their fans were real or "bought". Also, it should be noted that there are over 50 million overseas Chinese who are most likely to Like Chinese media. In addition, even though Facebook is blocked by Chinese government, people interested still can manage to get through the "Great Firewall". Unfortunately, I cannot get access to the needed data to analyze where did their followers or subscribers come from, which is necessary to see how the media's impact was distributed. Analyzing data on visitors to their websites, hopefully, might offer us this missing data.

News websites. I chose 'Alexa'³ for statistical analysis on news websites, as Alvaro (2015) did.

Alexa provides global traffic ranks by calculating a site's estimated average daily unique visitors (UV) and its estimated pageviews (PV) within the current 3-month period. An amazing tool Alexa provides is that you can get the percentages of the website's average daily visitors and viewers by country. All the data was accessed on March 27, 2017⁴.

As for global ranking, both by UV and PV, CNN (94/101), BBC (103/109), *China Daily* (107/157), *The New York Times* (112/129), *The Guardian* (146/158) and Xinhua News Agency (169/ 153) are among the TOP 200 most visited websites worldwide. Between RT (309/323) and Al Jazeera (1,848/2,241) are *The Wall Street Journal* (458/526), Reuters (476/528) and *Financial Times* (1,614/1,816). The remaining China's media—*Global Times* (3,028/2,591), *People's Daily* (31,513/35,929) and CGTN (44,288/44,755), are at the very bottom of the list. Associated Press (1,444/3,040) is positioned between Al Jazeera and *Global Times*. (See Table 3)

But do not jump to the conclusion that *China Daily* attracts more worldwide attention than *New York Times* does, because global ranking does not tell the whole story. At the Visitor by Country column, it clearly shows 95.88% of the visitors to *China Daily* are from China itself. The second largest percentage of visitors come from the U.S. at 1.08%, followed by Hong Kong (0.5%), Japan (0.35%) and Australia (0.19%). The same pattern goes for Xinhua and *Global Times*, about 95% of whose visitors come from China. Domestic visitors contributed to 59% of the daily traffic for *People's Daily* Online and 45.8% for CGTN⁵.

Simple math reveals that if domestic visitors are excluded in the calculations, all the five

Chinese media would be positioned at the very bottom of the list. The lowest-ranked non-Chinese media, AP would have more daily UV than the highest-ranked Chinese media, *China Daily* does. The daily traffic of CNN and BBC would then be 720 and 648 times respectively that of CGTN. Maybe it is not very fair to compare a media company (which broadcasts its programs in foreign languages, though) with superstars in the world's TV realm. But CGTN is at least comparable to RT and Al Jazeera, both of which, just as CGTN, are run by countries where English is not the official language, and most importantly, are fully-funded by the government. Again, simple math shows that RT and Al Jazeera have a daily traffic that is 189 times and 42 times that of CGTN respectively. This disparity is just huge considering the fact that the traffic of CNN is just 3.8 times that of RT and 17.1 times that of Al Jazeera⁶.

Aside from the volume of visitors, how these visitors are distributed is also a very important dimension to measure and compare these media's performance. Here I just examine three media websites: RT, Al Jazeera and CGTN. For any site, Alexa lists all the countries contributing to no less than 0.5% of the daily traffic. I put all these countries into seven columns, i.e., US, UK, Asia-Pacific, EU, Africa, Middle East, and Central and South America. The reason why the US and the

UK stand out and become parallel to regions in the world is simply because news media and agencies in the two countries have huge impact on the world. Even though countries contributing to less than 0.5% of the traffic are not listed by Alexa and thus cannot be calculated in the study, at least we could know where did the major traffic come from.

Several conclusions can be drawn. First, compared to Al Jazeera (35.5%) and RT (14.1%), much lower percentage of visitors from the US and the UK combined browsed the website of CGTN (9%). Second, major visitors to RT and Al Jazeera are better distributed than those to CGTN. A total number of 34 and 37 countries in the world contributed to no less than 5% of daily unique visitors to the website of RT and Al Jazeera respectively, while the figure for CGTN is just 19. Not a single country from the Middle East or Central and South America contributed to no less than 5% of the daily traffic for CGTN. Lastly, the influence of CGTN in Europe is much too weaker. Only 1.9% of CGTN's major visitors come from the EU. In contrast, the figures for RT and Al Jazeera are 27% and 13.4% respectively. (See Table 4)

Why So Few People?

With so much money pouring in and also with people increasingly obtaining news from the Internet, these media's communication capacity and their chances to be "heard" or "heard of" by international audiences are greater than ever before. Yet, as is demonstrated by all the above data, Chinese media, which are making progress though, does not seem to have won many foreign hearts. Bandurski (2009) observed that China's lack of overseas audiences "has little to do with its communication capacity ... and everything to do with its failure to recognize the basic nature of soft power: the articulation of values that the rest of the world can aspire and emulate" (as quoted in Sun, 2010). Low credibility and the media's direct link to the Chinese government have been identified as the main causes by many scholars (Sun, 2010; Nye, 2012b, 2013; Brady, 2015; Creemers, 2015; Lee, 2016). Zhang (2011) explained that "It will be difficult for China to win the hearts and minds of foreign viewers unless it deals effectively with issues of credibility and government control" (p.68, as quoted in Hartig, 2012b). But as President Xi tightened his control over ideology, demanded that all the media stick to party line and discouraged "negative reporting" (Phoenix News, 2016), things are not going to change anytime soon.

Problems with the strategy of some media might have contributed to this failure, too. Take CCTV. CCTV News was “targeting an elite rather than mass audience” (Jirik, 2016) and the newly launched CGTN continues to adopt the same strategy⁷. Jirik (2016) believes that this lack of a mass audience is not a problem because the goal of soft power can be “achieved as easily by targeting elites in a country rather than relying on broader appeal”. To some extent this is true. Political leaders, scholars, think tanks do have the power to influence a policy. However, as Nye (2008) noticed, “even when foreign leaders are friendly, their leeway may be limited” if their publics and parliaments have different opinions. In such circumstances, “diplomacy aimed at public opinion can become as important as the traditional classified diplomatic communications among leaders”. This is exactly the case nowadays because “information is power, and today a much larger part of the world’s population has access to that power”.

Looking Forward as A Conclusion

This article has reviewed how China’s “soft power” drive shaped its media “going out” policy. The paper also studied the global reception of Chinese media and has found that in terms of

audiences, China's media still lag far behind their international competitors. But apart from the lack of audiences due to low credibility and government control, China is facing other obstacles at a deeper level while promoting its soft power through the media's outreach.

First of all, even Chinese people do not have a clear idea of what consists of its cultural soft power. According to President Xi (2014a), "traditional Chinese culture is the most valuable source of our cultural soft power". Many scholars hold the same view as they believe China boasts "an uninterrupted long history", during which its culture "influenced East Asia for millennia" (Li, 2008). Aside from emphasizing on traditional elements, Xi (2014b) believed "to promote China's culture soft power, it is vital to disseminate contemporary Chinese values, i.e., socialist values with Chinese characteristics". This explained Why Xi put forward the new "core socialist values", which, Xi (2014b) believes, "embody essential requirements of socialism, carry on the good parts of traditional culture and at the same time absorb desirable portions of cultures in the world"

However, this was not the first time Chinese leaders had repackaged the elements of Chinese culture: Hu Jintao's "Eight Honors and Eight Shames" and Jiang Zemin's "Three Stresses" are similar attempts. But these concepts just come and go since different leaders emphasized on

different aspects. Not a shared definition of Chinese culture exists among leaders. In fact, this definition does not exist among the general public either. An obvious difference between Nye's conceptualization of soft power and that of China lies in the fact that China's soft power promotion is targeted at both international and domestic audiences (Li, 2008; Glaser, & Murphy, 2009; Edney, 2012). Xi (2014c) stressed that "(It's important to) let core socialist values become people's inner pursuits and let people live these values spontaneously" and "let the values be just like the air, influencing people anywhere and anytime". The fact that each leader put so much emphasis on promoting these values domestically demonstrates again that what comprises Chinese culture, which is what China is attempting to communicate to its overseas audiences through media "going-out", is still in the making.

Also, there exist two contradictions when China promotes its cultural soft power. First, on one hand, China's efforts were based on the premise that Chinese culture should be exported and could be understood, appreciated and even employed by overseas audiences. But on the other hand, China seems to have a sense of superiority and privilege in terms of deciphering Chinese culture, believing that it is quite hard and even impossible for a foreigner to understand a culture with a

history of over 5,000 years (Creemers, 2015).

The second contradiction is between the government and private sectors, or between “the commercial” and “the official”. As Creemers (2015) points out, “China’s conception of soft power focuses on top-down, State-centered image management”, thus “the power to define China’s identity has been monopolized by the propaganda administration”. So far, most budgets went to, and most efforts to promote China’s soft power came from, state-run news media (Hu, & Ji, 2012). This brought two issues. To start off, in order to get people’s attention, the programs must be interesting. However, it is very hard for a “news media” to produce news that is both interesting and culture-laden. The top-3 most viewed video clips on CGTN’s YouTube account has nothing to do with image-building: a tiger attacking a visitor in a Chinese zoo, a breeder feeding a panda and a two-year-old boy from Iran performing gymnastics. Also, lack of, or little presence of, private corporations causes China to miss the most creative forces. Yes, private companies are allowed and sometimes encouraged to sell their products like movies overseas, but this does not mean they are allowed to “define China’s identity”. Xi (2014c) views socialist values as the “soul” of China’s cultural soft power; thus the authorities would definitely reserve the right to interpret

and broadcast this soft power, which can easily be achieved by the censorship system. This guarding against private sectors just demonstrates again that there is not a consensus on what makes up Chinese culture; otherwise, everyone would be free to interpret it.

Lastly, China has to face the fierce conflict between what it has to offer and the existing Western political system, values and ideology. Former President Hu Jintao (2011) warned that “We must clearly see that international hostile forces are intensifying the strategic plot of westernizing and dividing China, and ideological and cultural fields are the focal areas of their long-term infiltration” (Translation by Wong, 2012). Since the collapse of Soviet Union, Chinese government has been guarding against similar “peaceful evolution” to Western-style democracy. Facing criticism from the West that “China lacks democratic freedoms and respect for human rights” (Lee, 2016), Chinese analysts found China does not have the power to define and interpret “popular” core concepts in the world: freedom, democracy and human rights (Li, 2009; Jiang, 2013). When the government realized it is hard, even impossible, at least for now, to let other nations adopt its definition of these concepts, China began to project its economic power. Even if China's economic appeal is welcomed, direct conflict with Western ideology is still inevitable in

the future. In this case, China has to realize that if “Beijing Consensus” wants to challenge the “Washington Consensus”, media’s global expansion is helpful, but not decisive.

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Notes

1. It should be noted, however, that source of discourse power is not confined to “political values” and “foreign policies”, as discourse power is also related to hard power such as economy and military (Wang, & Wang, 2013; Zhao, 2016), public opinion (Mao, 2017) and decision-making power in international organizations (Wang, & Cui, 2015).

2. ALJA shuttered its cable TV and digital operations at the end of April, 2016 the decision of which, according to the AJAM board, was drive by the fact that its “business model is simply not

sustainable in light of the economic challenges in the U.S. media marketplace". But it would continue to provide digital services to audiences in the US, the official website said.

3. The Internet engine I used is <http://www.alexa.cn>, rather than <http://www.alexa.com>, which charges fees for data. The relationship between the two engines is not clear. It shows that the domain of the former website was registered by eName Technology Co., Ltd, an Internet company based in Xiamen, Fujian Province, China.

4. The overall global ranking is based on statistics in the past three months, but the percentages of visitor metrics by country vary from day to day.

5. In fact, back in 2001, Guo (2002) did an online survey on CCTV-9's audience rates among CCTV-9's WEBSITE visitors. Over 4,000 viewers responded, and it turns out more than 90% of them came from China. Half of the respondents watched the channel every day, but 81% of them said it was primarily to learn the language. In 2001, only 2.64% of 1.28 billion Chinese could get

access to the Internet, but in 2016, 53.2% of 1.38 billion Chinese could go online.

6. Here, for the sake of fairness, visitors from Russia are excluded from the calculation of RT's daily traffic since it is possible these Russian visitors, as many Chinese visitors do when they browse the website of CGTN, come just to learn English rather than gain information. But Al Jazeera is different because according to Snoj (2014), Qatar nationals make up 12% of the total population. Thus visitors from Qatar, when browsing the website of Al Jazeera, are most probably in search of information rather than language knowledge and so they are not excluded from the calculation for Al Jazeera.

7. Personal communication with an insider

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Figures and Tables

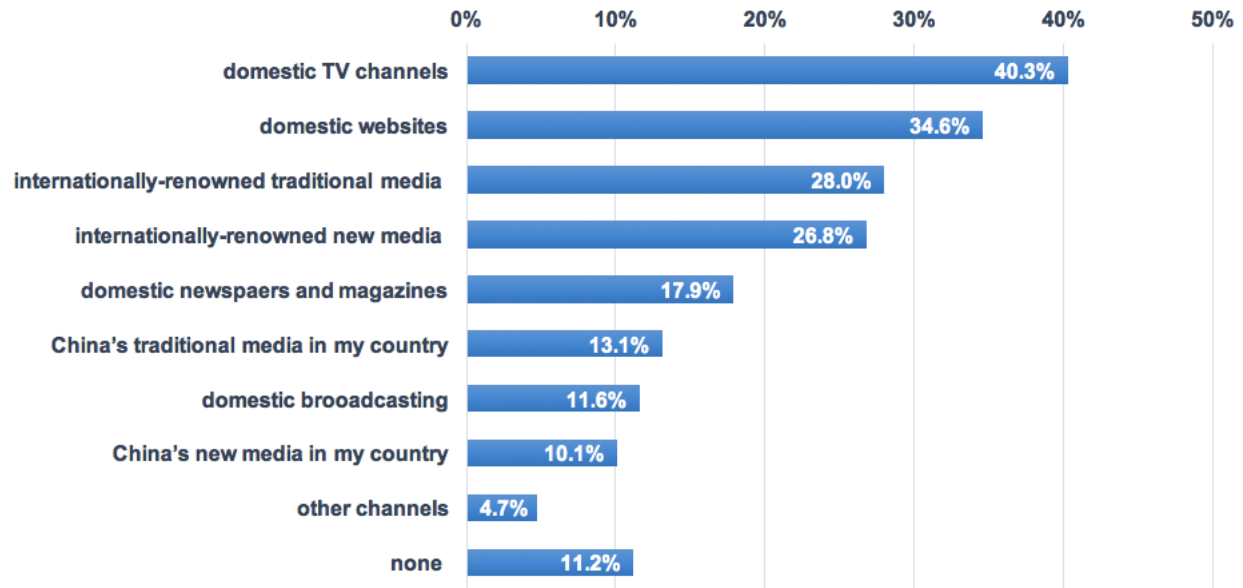


Figure 1. Through which media did you acquire information on China?

Source: [Global Poll Center, 2016](#)

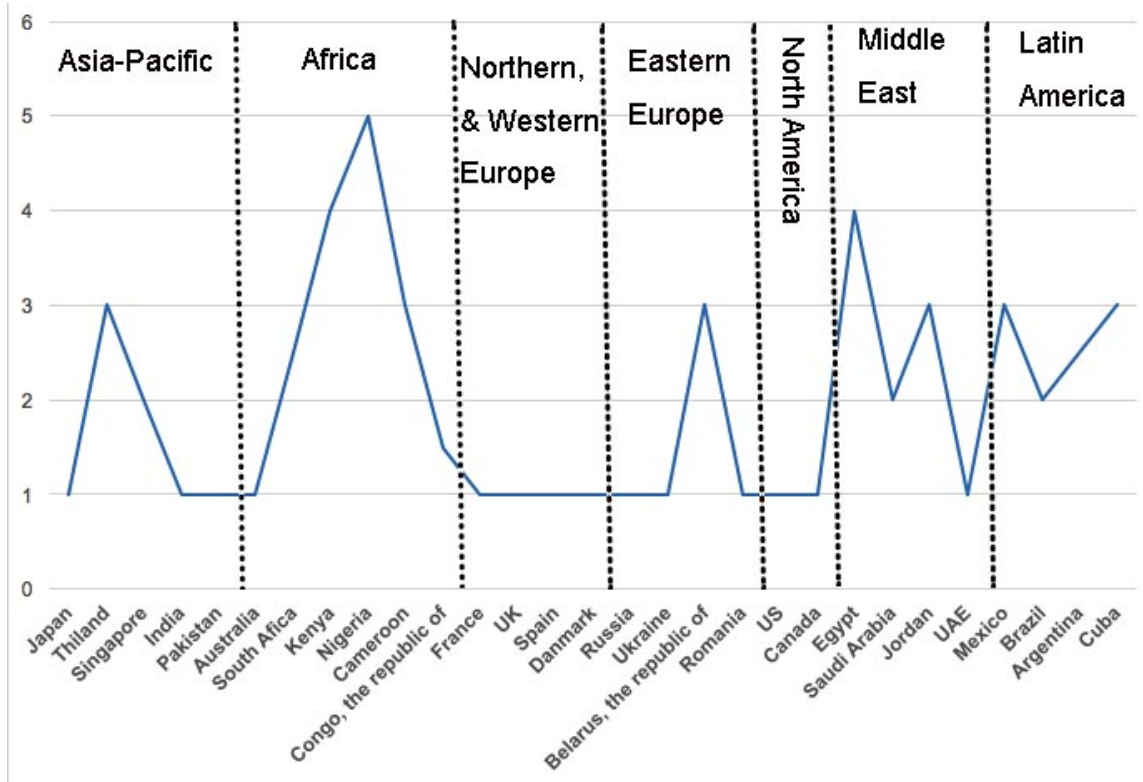


Figure 2. Influence index of China's media in countries around the world

Source: Liu, Ying (2013)

Table 1. All fifteen media's performance on Facebook

	Likes	Followers
CGTN	47,208,406	47,048,180
BBC News	40,230,153	39,619,992
<i>People's Daily</i>	34,380,435	34,220,698
CNN	27,090,512	26,505,084
China Xinhua News	17,234,444	17,237,567
<i>China Daily</i>	11,309,736	11,274,523
<i>The New York Times</i>	13,714,364	13,159,132
<i>Global Times</i>	9,750,097	9,737,259
Al Jazeera English	9,269,439	9,099,711
<i>The Guardian</i>	7,261,435	6,968,412
<i>Wall Street Journal</i>	5,597,033	5,445,877
RT	4,288,402	4,176,717
Reuters	3,672,147	3,613,300
<i>Financial Times</i>	3,458,388	3,390,304
Associated Press	533,042	528,107

Source: <http://www.facebook.com>

Table 2. All 15 media's performance on YouTube

	Total views	Subscribers	Uploaded videos	Registration Date
RT	1,953,324,610	2,056,165	33,408	28-03-2007
Associated Press	1,780,564,000	663,572	100,006	18-09-2006
CNN	1,757,425,966	1,899,532	100,014	02-10-2005
Al Jazeera English	792,085,192	1,269,603	69,029	23-11-2006
<i>The New York Times</i>	355,307,280	843,983	8,237	13-10-2006
BBC News	343,349,452	1,188,286	5,949	07-04-2006
<i>Wall Street Journal</i>	313,060,831	496,190	24,629	18-06-2007
CGTN	186,427,035	124,500	35,360	24-01-2013
Reuters	178,907,343	209,684	40,230	01-03-2007
<i>The Guardian</i>	148,198,155	306,767	6,279	14-02-2006
Xinhua China TV	70,123,259	86,333	20,076	16-05-2012
<i>People's Daily</i>	37,364,030	11,063	1,517	02-10-2012
<i>Financial Times</i>	20,496,078	96,012	7,396	26-03-2009
<i>China Daily</i>	476,531	2,620	591	27-02-2014
<i>Global Times</i>	69,177	307	51	16-01-2012

Source: <https://www.youtube.com>

Table 3. Global ranking of all 15 media by Alexa. cn	Global ranking (by UV)	Global ranking (by PV)	Daily UV	Percentage of visitors (by UV) by country or region	
CNN http://www.cnn.com	94	101	26,438,400	68.9%	US
				3.9%	Canada
				2.1%	China
BBC http://www.bbc.com	103	109	23,811,200	25.4%	US
				7.4%	China
				6.2%	Japan
<i>China Daily</i> http://www.chinadaily.com.cn	107	157	23,577,600	95.89%	China
				1.08%	US
				0.5%	HK
<i>The New York Times</i> http://www.nyt.com	112	129	22,092,800	66.7%	US
				4.2%	China
				3.7%	Japan
<i>The Guardian</i> https://www.theguardian.com	146	158	16,633,600	28.0%	US
				23.2%	UK
				5.0%	Japan
Xinhua News Agency http://www.xinhuanet.com	169	153	13,984,000	94.7%	China
				1.6%	US
				1.5%	Japan
RT http://www.rt.com	309	323	8,137,600	14.7%	Russia
				10.5%	US
				10.4%	Germany
<i>The Wall Street Journal</i> http://www.wsj.com	458	526	5,676,800	60%	US
				7.5%	Japan
				7.3%	China
Reuters http://www.reuters.com	476	528	5,523,200	42.2%	US
				15.1%	Japan
				5.7%	UK

Table 3 (continued)	Global ranking (by UV)	Global ranking (by PV)	Daily UV	Percentage of visitors (by UV) by country or region	
<i>Financial Times</i> https://www.ft.com	1,614	1,816	1,734,400	25.1%	UK
				20.7%	US
				5.8%	Japan
Al Jazeera http://www.aljazeera.com	1,848	2,241	1,545,600	28.0%	US
				7.5%	UK
				5.3%	Canada
AP https://www.ap.org	2,444	3,040	1,193,600	76.1%	US
				3.1%	UK
				2.6%	Canada
<i>Global Times</i> http://www.globaltimes.cn	3,028	2,591	979,200	95.0%	China
				1.0%	US
				0.7%	Japan
<i>People's Daily Online</i> http://www.people.com.cn	31,513	35,929	96,000	59.0%	China
				8.6%	US
				3.4%	Canada
CGTN https://www.cgtn.com	44,288	44,755	67,200	45.8%	China
				7.7%	US
				6.1%	Japan

Source: <http://www.alexa.cn>

Table 4. Distribution of visitors (who contributed to no less than 5% of the daily traffic) to the website of RT, Al Jazeera and CGTN, by regions in the world

	US	UK	Asia-Pacific	EU	Africa	Middle East	Latin America	total percentage	number of countries
RT	10.5%	3.6%	5.1	27%	4.2%	2.8%	9.5%	62.7%	34
Al Jazeera	28.0%	7.5%	26.7%	13.4%	6.3%	4.9%	—	86.8%	37
CGTN	7.7%	1.3%	22.9%	1.9%	6.3%	—	—	40.1%	19

Note: — denotes zero.

Asia-Pacific here includes Canada but excludes countries in South America.

Egypt here is regarded part of Africa, not Middle East.

Visitors from China (45.8%) are not calculated for CGTN; visitors from Russia (12.2%) are not calculated for RT.

“number of countries” means “Total number of countries contributing to no less than 5% of the daily traffic”.

Source: <http://www.alexa.cn>