

The influence of western news freedom on the publicity of Chinese news undertakings

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Abstract: Since the beginning of the new century, the issue of cultural and value diversification triggered by economic globalization has brought about many public-related issues, among which is the public nature of China's journalism industry. The contemporary Western concept of press freedom has a symbiotic relationship with capitalist political, economic, and cultural systems, playing a crucial role in upholding bourgeois political dominance and economic development within its institutional framework. However, indiscriminately promoting this press freedom concept with strong bourgeois characteristics within socialist countries carries more subversive and deconstructive implications. With the widespread and in-depth dissemination of the contemporary Western concept of press freedom, the profit-seeking nature of news media, the disorderliness of the online space, and irrational modes of expression have varying degrees of negative impact on the public nature of China's journalism industry. News practices often unilaterally pursue economic benefits while neglecting social benefits, making it challenging to showcase the public good attributes of news products; commercial capital penetrates every aspect, leading to a trend in news media development driven by competition and profit. At the same time, the lack of rational understanding among the general Chinese population regarding the essence of Western press freedom undoubtedly exacerbates the severity and urgency of this issue.

1. Introduction

With the deepening of the market economy and the further opening of ideological concepts, the contemporary Western concept of press freedom has been widely disseminated in China, exerting a certain degree of negative impact on the public nature of our country's journalism. The Western concept of press freedom in contemporary times can be seen as a trend that has evolved within the context of people's partial understanding of press freedom, Western-centric discourse systems, and the ideological atmosphere of the end of ideology. It demonstrates the systematic nature of discourse systems, the perplexity of value concepts, and the wide audience base, exerting a significant influence in contemporary Chinese society. However, the various chaotic phenomena in the current field of news communication in China and the lack of public nature in journalism have been influenced to varying degrees by the negative effects of the Western concept of press freedom. These influences are deeply rooted in the unique institutional and comprehensive social transformation background of Chinese society, with profound economic foundations, historical

origins, psychological bases, and social conditions, resulting from the combined effects of various domestic and international factors.

2. The dissemination conditions of contemporary Western press freedom view in China

2.1 Economic advantage

With the continuous advancement of economic globalization, competition in cultural products is increasingly becoming a new force in the rivalry of major economies' interests. In the process of globalization, the flow of capital elements affects labor-capital relations and production relations on a global scale. In the field of news communication, as the oligopolistic capitalists in the news sector expand their capital globally, the division of labor that originally belonged to national boundaries has gradually shifted from developed countries to vast developing countries, creating an illusion of the disappearance of the proletariat in developed capitalist countries. The control of the news industry by capital within national boundaries has evolved into a global monopoly issue. The dissemination of news worldwide is increasingly dependent on the monopoly control of a few major newspaper giants. Due to their economic disadvantage, vast developing countries are in a passive position in the flow of news elements, losing their voice in the process of news communication and always remaining in a passive acceptance situation. Therefore, the development of economic globalization provides a solid foundation for the dissemination of Western ideals of press freedom, and the widespread dissemination of Western ideals of press freedom paves the way for further economic expansion.

2.2 Political factor

The rise of neoliberal discourse and the decline of socialist movements have led Western countries to project their values onto developing countries, based on their perceived developmental and cultural superiority. The concept of Western press freedom has been elevated beyond national and ethnic boundaries. In the mid-20th century, the stark contrast between fascist authoritarianism and American democracy resonated with people's desire for peace after the war. The post-World War II press freedom movement became a significant symbol of international opposition to fascism, advocacy for peace, and promotion of democracy. Some Western intellectuals believe that socialism as a political ideology is waning, making way for the universal Western values and logic. They seek to define the development paths of developing countries based on Western civilization's progress, promoting capitalist values and ideologies among marginalized and underdeveloped nations and peoples. Leading Western capitalist countries, particularly the United States, have proposed a series of "peaceful evolution" strategies, making press freedom a strategic tool in the ideological struggle between East and West.

2.3 Psychological basis

Specific social psychology plays an undeniable role in the process of Western journalistic freedom discourse. On one hand, Chinese society is currently undergoing profound and complex changes, facing a myriad of issues and contradictions, leading ordinary people to hold certain societal expectations. They hope for a theory that can provide a different perspective, analysis, and prediction of the enormous changes in Chinese society, in order to offer credible explanations for their closely related lives. However, some young scholars with weak theoretical foundations fail to analyze and address problems using the basic principles, viewpoints, and methods of Marxist journalism theory. They often attempt to diagnose Chinese issues, solve Chinese problems, and

predict China's future direction using Western liberal journalistic perspectives, inadvertently laying a psychological foundation for the dissemination of Western journalistic freedom. On the other hand, contemporary Chinese liberal intellectuals commonly exhibit a "Gestalt psychology" while learning from the West.

This term refers to viewing the cognitive object as an organic whole, with its individual components being inseparable.^[1] In the development of contemporary press freedom, regardless of their acknowledgment, liberal intellectuals generally believe that Western civilization is an interconnected whole, with inherent connections between its parts. To achieve press freedom, it is believed that there must be a systematic transplantation of the entire value system of the Western bourgeoisie, including the ownership forms of news media, the value mission of news media, and even all standards of press freedom based on Western norms. Indeed, no mechanism or system exists in isolation, but these cultural ideas cannot be simply transplanted due to factors such as history, culture, customs, and the fundamental national conditions.

2.4 Technical condition

In the era of self-media, the openness of the internet, the timeliness of information, and the complexity of netizens have provided a favorable environment for the widespread dissemination of Western concepts of press freedom. Western capitalist countries are increasingly manipulating the ordinary people of other countries through self-media platforms to oppose their own governments' ideological strategies. On one hand, Western countries are increasing investment in internet research funding, strengthening internet infrastructure, and enhancing cyber defense. They monitor, listen, and impose cyber sanctions on behaviors that may endanger national security, indicating that using internet means to strengthen national security has long been on the agenda. On the other hand, relying on strong economic power and advanced technology, Western countries have created a one-way flow of international information dissemination from developed countries to underdeveloped countries. Data shows that "although Americans account for only 5% of the world's population, currently 80%-90% of the news circulated in most parts of the world is monopolized by American and other communication agencies."^[2] With the application and popularization of self-media platforms, in just over a decade, the internet has transitioned from a high-end technological field to a more accessible and secular realm. The infiltration of Western values and ideologies is no longer confined to academic or political elites but has gradually become a topic of everyday life for the general public, reaching and influencing a wider audience.^[3]

3. The influence of western news on the publicity of Chinese news undertakings

Contemporary Western views on press freedom, influenced by its private economic foundation, impact people's recognition of our country's public ownership-based news industry. However, in present Chinese society, some fail to accurately understand the essence of Western press freedom, being misled by its superficial aspects. Blindly worshiping Western views on press freedom in journalistic practices has led to erroneous viewpoints and arguments. Guided by these misconceptions, a series of public deficiencies have arisen in China's news media sector, exacerbating the existing phenomenon of deviance, while denying the legitimacy and legality of party and government intervention in the news industry.

3.1 The economic foundation of public ownership is challenged

Contemporary Western journalistic principles are biased towards private ownership due to the tradition of individualism. The concepts of "media independence" and "media ownership" are

specific conclusions of Western press freedom in terms of economic policy orientation, which align with the inherent logic of economic freedom valued by Western liberalism. Our country's journalism is based on a socialist news industry under public ownership, serving the vast majority of the people, which is consistent with our country's actual national conditions and political system. The advocacy of this principle by socialist countries is essentially a direct criticism of private ownership by the capitalist media, pointing towards public ownership of the media in our country, denying the economic foundation of the public nature of our journalism industry, and weakening public support for the public ownership economy of the journalism industry.

The essence of private media is for developed Western countries like the United States to use their financial, technological, and discursive advantages to influence and control the development path of target countries in favor of Western politics and economy. This type of journalism no longer focuses on serving the interests of the general public but rather on protecting the interests of a few capitalists and interest groups, completely losing its public nature. Zhao Yuezhi astutely pointed out that, "Looking at the history of Western journalism, the transition from partisan media to 'free' media under market openness is not simply an economic issue, but a significant political issue and a process of ideological struggle."^[4] Once the news media is privatized, its operation will naturally enter the track of capital operation, and the bourgeois discourse system will be institutionally established. Faced with the bourgeois discourse hegemony, ideological control, and strong economic barriers, the working class and peasant class will completely lose their discourse power, making it difficult to ensure the public nature of the news industry, and even challenging the socialist state power.

3.2 It is difficult to highlight the publicity of news products

The commercialization, centralization, privatization, and entertainment-oriented tendencies of the news media can lead to insufficient publicness in news communication. The profit-driven nature of the free market indicates that commercial news media must operate for profit, with capital and interests lacking the inherent drive to uphold the public nature of news media. As Tang Haijiang pointed out, "The commercialization, privatization, centralization of the media, and the entertainment-oriented nature of media content, produce a non-politicized audience, eroding the subjectivity of the public, greatly weakening the true essence of democratic politics."^[5] With the advancement of marketization and the influence of Western ideals of press freedom, the commercialization and profit-oriented tendencies that have emerged in the process of news practice in our country seem to have gained legitimacy. Some viewpoints even disregard the current lack of public interest in the field of news media in our country and advocate further opening up of the media market.

Marginalization of public issues is a common phenomenon. In the event of public incidents, the public initially relies on the news media to obtain the latest information, leading to rational discussions and public opinion formation. The credibility and influence of the news media are thus established. However, the individualistic core of contemporary Western liberal views actually acknowledges the legitimacy of personal preferences in influencing news choices. This often results in an excessive focus on personal values and preferences, neglecting public issues that are truly relevant to people's interests. On one hand, this manifests as the privatization of public issues, where news activities are keen on satisfying personal aesthetic and low-level preference demands. On the other hand, it manifests as the publicization of private issues. Public news practices utilize public opinion to intrude unreasonably into private domains, generating voyeuristic attention towards private life and personal privacy, especially concerning celebrity scandals and gossip news.

The excessive commercialization of news products is a direct result of the trend towards

"depoliticizing" news reporting. Firstly, news media driven by capital focus solely on commercial interests, click rates, and repost rates. Secondly, in order to cater to readers' interests and demands, news reports tend to excessively pursue sensationalism, storytelling, entertainment, and sensory stimulation, making the news impractical, hollow, and full of bias. Thirdly, in the pursuit of fresher information and to cater blindly to the public, there is a proliferation of news reports with vulgar and even grotesque content. Fourthly, the boundary between news and entertainment is becoming increasingly blurred, with a vulgar aesthetic and a mocking attitude evolving into a nationwide carnival. As Neil Postman criticized in "Amusing Ourselves to Death": "Here, all public discourse is increasingly appearing in an entertaining manner and becoming a cultural spirit. Our politics, religion, news, sports, education, and business willingly become subordinate to entertainment, without complaint, even silently, resulting in us becoming a species amusing ourselves to death." [6] It can be said that excessively commercialized news products lack both the spirit of commodity exchange and the spirit of public service, with no reflection of the public nature inherent in news products.

3.3 The basic position of public nature is a mere formality

The advocated concepts of press freedom and public sphere theory in Western journalism highlight the undeniable positive significance in expressing citizen will, exercising citizen rights, and expanding public opinion. However, a deeper analysis reveals that the publicness presented in Western journalistic views is merely a formal one, filled with romanticism in theory and failing to ensure the substantive public nature of our country's journalism in practice.

Contemporary Western perspectives on press freedom carry a utopian hue. Western views on the press advocate for a form of press freedom that is both independent of politics and free from economic interference. They argue against preconceived values and moral judgments in all news reporting, emphasizing the objectivity, independence, and fairness of press freedom. They promote the idea of an "ideological free market" and "self-correction theory," believing that fundamental realities such as the class nature of news, ideological factors, capital accumulation, and surplus value do not exist.

Secondly, there is a false sense of publicness that attracts public attention. It should be open to all members of the public, allowing everyone to participate in discussions and analyses of public affairs and interests. However, the opportunities and rights to participate in the public domain are unequal among different social classes and groups. In reality, publicness is partial, subject to losses, and even distortions. In the era of self-media, the proportion of people who can express their opinions and views through the news media has decreased.

In the end, public opinion guided by opinion leaders. The so-called social consensus and public opinion are often just results guided by opinion leaders, manipulated and carefully planned by the media rather than the outcome of public discussion. Contemporary Western views on press freedom are based on the assumption of individual rationality, believing that rational individuals can make the most reasonable choices under market rules, even if some false and erroneous statements can be clarified through open debate and exchange.

3.4 The value orientation of public welfare has deviated

Western journalism philosophy believes that there is fundamentally no such thing as the so-called social public interest; instead, it has become a subsidiary of serving private interests, where meeting private interests is seen as a prerequisite for achieving public interests. The Western journalistic discourse of "individualism" exaggerates individual subjective desires, alienates the public nature of press freedom, and replaces collective will with deconstructive, fragmented

individual wills and demands; the profit-oriented nature of private media inherently contradicts the public character of journalism, as a news philosophy based on media ownership cannot guarantee the realization of public interests.

Currently, some news media in our country have failed to uphold the value of public interest. This is largely due to being influenced by Western concepts of press freedom, excessively focusing on their own interests in news coverage, gradually losing faith in fairness and justice in public life. These news reports often neglect public interests, chase personal gains, deviate from societal functions, overlook social responsibilities, and lack professional ethics. This may lead to a trend where societal values and standards become more utilitarian, secular, and diverse. While bringing vitality to society, it may also trigger doubts about the "reasonableness" and "necessity" of core values and public ethics, leading to a certain degree of consensus, order, and meaning loss, resulting in negative phenomena such as materialism, hedonism, selfishness, apathy, and nihilism. [7]

In the era of self-media, mainstream media holds a certain level of power and social influence by virtue of its highly concentrated public attention. It is not uncommon to see news professionals and advertisers engaging in behind-the-scenes manipulation of news coverage, where the will of the people is not reflected at all. This paid news, driven by economic interests, not only violates the professional ethics of journalism but also lacks the public nature of the news industry.

3.5 Delegitimize party and government intervention

Facing the issue of insufficient public nature in our country's news media, there are still voices advocating Western views on press freedom, opposing the party's leadership in our country's journalism, and undermining the government's legitimate intervention in the field of news media. While it is a consensus to call for active government participation in traditional economic markets where market failures exist, when it comes to the "failure" issue in the news media market, the stance has not been abandoned, and a high level of vigilance towards the party and government is maintained. Many American media reformers have put forward a modified theory of "social responsibility" and suggested government intervention as a last resort. Even in early 2014, "renowned American media reformer McChesney suggested in an article that news should become a public good." [4]

The misleading arguments with ulterior motives have exacerbated the disorder and prevailing irrational expression in the field of news media in our country. For our news industry, negating the Party's leadership means negating the industry's grasp of the correct political direction; denying government intervention increases the phenomenon of news media going astray. Firstly, without the Party's leadership, the development of socialist news industry may lose its political orientation. Upholding the public nature of the news industry requires managing the relationship between the news industry and the Party correctly, accepting the Party's leadership and supervision. Secondly, without government management, it is difficult to effectively address the problem of news media going astray. Whether viewed from the perspective of China's news practice or the evolution of Western concepts of press freedom, issues like the lack of public nature in the news media field are hard to resolve within its own scope. Relying solely on the professional ethics of media practitioners is not enough to create a media ecosystem of integrity; sound government management is the essential way to ensure the public nature of the news industry.

4. Conclusion

The news industry is an important part of socialist cultural undertakings, and its management is an essential aspect of government public cultural management. Influenced by Western concepts of press freedom, there are some erroneous arguments and viewpoints in China's news and media field,

leading to a significant number of misconducts in news practices and impacting the public nature of the news industry. Meanwhile, Western ideas of press freedom negate party leadership, government intervention, and mainstream values, exacerbating misconduct issues in the news and media sector. Faced with the lack of public nature in China's news industry caused by Western press freedom concepts, the Chinese government must respond rationally. On one hand, it is necessary to combine theory with reality, deeply analyzing the essence of contemporary Western press freedom theories at the theoretical level while recognizing the true face of Western press freedom. It is necessary to deeply analyze the theoretical essence of contemporary western press freedom at the theoretical level and recognize the true face of Western press freedom. We should also base on the reality of the lack of publicity in our country's news undertakings, call for the effective intervention of the government, and put forward countermeasures. On the other hand, "passive defense" and "positive construction" should be combined. To resist the western news freedom view and the construction of Marxist news view is an integral and two-sided process. We should not only rationally criticize the unreasonable elements of contemporary western news freedom, but also actively construct Marxist news view, lead the development of news cause with correct news view, and fundamentally guarantee the healthy development of our news cause. All in all, the healthy development of China's press needs to set up a comprehensive governance system of party committee leadership, government management, industry self-discipline and law-based governance on the basis of rational criticism of Western press freedom.

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