Political Communication
Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:
http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/upcp20

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Available online: 04 Aug 2011

To cite this article: Daniela Stockmann (2011): Race to the Bottom: Media Marketization and Increasing Negativity Toward the United States in China, Political Communication, 28:3, 268-290

To link to this article: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10584609.2011.572447

Political Communication, 28:268–290, 2011

ISSN: 1058-4609 print / 1091-7675 online
DOI: 10.1080/10584609.2011.572447

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Race to the Bottom: Media Marketization and Increasing Negativity Toward the United States in China

DANIELA STOCKMANN

This article examines how Chinese newspapers respond to opposing demands by audiences and Propaganda Department authorities about news regarding the United States when competition poses pressure on marketized media to make a profit. To examine the tone of news reporting about the U.S., I rely on a computer-aided text analysis of news stories published in the People's Daily *and the* Beijing Evening News*, comparing the years 1999 and 2003 before and after the rise of commercialized newspapers in the Beijing newspaper market. Results show that the emergence of news competitors may exert pressure on less marketized papers to change news content, resulting in an increase of negative news about the United States. Evidence is provided to show that the rise of negative news is unlikely to result from an intended strategy by Propaganda authorities, actions undertaken by the American government, or journalists' own attitudes.*

[An appendix to this article is featured as an online supplement at the publisher's Web site.]

Keywords media marketization, China, newspapers, anti-Americanism, press freedom

Negative sentiment toward the United States seems to be on the rise in China. At least this is the image that foreign correspondents in China convey to audiences abroad.[1] Similarly, numerous scholarly works have argued that Chinese views of the U.S. shifted from positive sentiment in the 1980s to increasingly negative perceptions in the 1990s (see, for example,

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For insightful comments, criticisms, and suggestions I would like to thank Mary Gallagher, Iain Johnston, Ken Lieberthal, Don Kinder, Mark Tessler, Shi Tianjian, Ashley Esarey, James Hamilton, Jamie Reilly, Chen Changfeng, Wang Yuhua, Lei Ya-Wen, Zhang Jie, Maaike Warnaar, and the participants of the workshop on media in contemporary Chinese politics at the Fairbank Center for Chinese Studies at Harvard University. For fruitful research collaboration, sharing data, and software programming I am grateful to Iain Johnston, Shen Mingming, CTR Market Research, Deborah Cai, Ku Lunwei, Xiao Qiang, Jonathan Hassid, and Will Lowe. Many thanks as well to Wang Mingde, Cao Manwen, Ai Dan, Cai Jingyi, Zhou Moli, and Andrew Miller for excellent research assistance. I am grateful for research funding provided by the Harvard-Yenching Institute and the Center for Chinese Studies at the University of Michigan.

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Xu, 1997; Fewsmith & Rosen, 2001). Indeed, there is some evidence that negative sentiment toward the U.S. has been increasing and that nationalist protests have become more frequent since the late 1990s (Johnston & Stockmann, 2007; Weiss, 2008). It is widely believed that this rise is mainly a result of propaganda initiated by the state to boost regime stability.

My interviews with media practitioners and examination of journalistic handbooks do not suggest that the government is proactively timing the production of negative images of the United States to prime attitudes among the population for discrete policy initiatives (Stockmann, in press). The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) may have laid the foundations for popular nationalism in the early 1990s when it emphasized more strongly nationalist credentials to substitute for a decline in socialist ideology in Chinese society (S. Zhao, 1998; Hughes, 2006). However, popular nationalism tied to negativity toward Japan and the United States went beyond the boundaries of the official discourse and contained criticism of China's foreign policy stance, thus posing pressures and constraints on Chinese foreign policy (Seckington, 2005; Reilly, 2006). Therefore, the government attempts to pull public perceptions of the United States into a positive direction in order to cool off popular nationalism. Propaganda Department authorities have instructed media practitioners to depict stories on related topics in a more positive (or less negative) light.[2] Thus, the official line of the central government is to constrain negativity toward the United States.[3]

By contrast, media practitioners believe that they attract audiences by tapping into critical stories about the United States (Shirk, 2007; Stockmann, in press). Indeed, a case study demonstrated that Beijingers demanded negative news about Japan during the anti-Japanese demonstrations in 2005. When news reporting switched toward more positive reporting following press restrictions imposed by the Propaganda Department, citizens moved to commercialized papers and the Internet since they expected those media outlets to be more critical (Stockmann, 2010b, 2011). Since sentiment toward the U.S. has recently dropped to about equal levels that Japan "enjoyed" for most of the 1990s (Johnston & Stockmann, 2007), it is reasonable to assume that audiences also demand more critical stories about the United States, just as in the case of Japan.

This article examines how newspapers respond to these opposing demands by the government and audiences over time when competition poses pressure on marketized media to make a profit. Since the late 1970s the Chinese media have undergone marketization, including deregulation, commercialization, and partial privatization. This development has resulted in the emergence of three types of newspapers at different points in time that differ in terms of their degree of marketization. A comparison of the tone of news reporting about the U.S. in two established papers before and after the emergence of new competitors reveals that highly marketized media outlets may exert pressure on less marketized media outlets to change news content, resulting in increasing negativity in news reporting about the U.S. over time. When increased competition made it more difficult for the Propaganda Department to enforce press restrictions, established papers overstepped boundaries for news reporting to attract readers and increase their commercial profit. To lower the likelihood of a clampdown by the Propaganda authorities, newspapers found ways to submit to demands by the state while also responding to the market. While increased competition may have initiated a race to the bottom between media outlets, the specific form this race takes is shaped by the nature of press restrictions imposed by the Propaganda Department. Media marketization can induce an adjustment of the position of the state as publicized in mouthpieces of the government toward audience opinions over time.

To examine the tone of news reporting about the U.S., I rely on a computer-aided text analysis of news stories published in the *People's Daily* and the *Beijing Evening*

News, comparing the years 1999 and 2003 before and after the rise of commercialized papers in the Beijing newspaper market. Results from 46 in-depth interviews with media practitioners in Beijing and Chongqing and a careful examination of journalistic handbooks from 2005 have been published elsewhere, but inform my interpretation of these data (Stockmann, in press). Case selection, content analysis of public statements by the spokesperson of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs as well as Chinese and American human rights reports, and data from a 2010 study of Chinese reporters specializing in international news demonstrate that the rise of negative news is unlikely to result from an intended strategy by Propaganda authorities, actions undertaken by the American government, or jounalists' own attitudes.

Marketization and the Development of Newspapers During the Reform Period

Economic reforms have changed the structure of the Chinese state media. Before the reforms all media were state-owned and financed by the state, but budgetary constraints forced the government to sever media subsidies as early as 1978 (Y. Zhao, 1998). During the reform era the Chinese government deregulated, commercialized, and partially privatized the news media. As such, China marketized the state media.

Deregulation describes the process of diminishing intervention by the state into media organizations. In the early 1980s the State Publication and Press Administration (now General Administration of Press and Publications) started to issue more licenses, a common way of deregulating media outlets. Between 1978 and 2009, the number of officially licensed newspapers increased from 186 to 1,937.[4] In the 1980s the growth in newspapers took place primarily among local papers that funded themselves through the means of advertising (G. Wu, 2000). This shifted the primary goal of media organizations from serving the public (as defined by the state) toward earning profits, a key feature of *commercialization*. By the end of the 1990s, the majority of media outlets had become not only financially self-sufficient but profitable (Y. Zhao, 1998).[5] Yet despite a general increase in marketization of the Chinese media, there still remained differences between newspapers: So-called *semiofficial papers* (or evening papers) financed themselves exclusively with advertising revenues, while so-called *official papers* (including party papers and political machine papers) often lagged behind semiofficial papers and tended to receive indirect or small state subsidies.

Partial privatization further promoted profit orientation among newspapers. From the early 2000s on, shares in print media groups have been publicly traded on the stock market and investment in media groups has been permitted. For example, the Beijing Youth Daily Group became the first newspaper to be listed on the stock market in Hong Kong in December 2004.[6] Although restrictions remain on the share of nonstate investment in media outlets—such a share cannot exceed 49%[7]—investment created additional pressures for newspapers to make a profit. According to my interviews, investment was the key feature that distinguished *commercialized papers* from the other two paper types. Since commercialized and semiofficial papers share many similarities, mainly that they are run with the goal of profit making, media practitioners referred to those as *nonofficial papers*.

Individual newspapers may not always fit neatly into these categories of newspapers. For example, the *Guangzhou Daily* as a municipal party organ was often at the forefront of media marketization. Nevertheless, Chinese media practitioners distinguish between different newspaper types to describe general tendencies within a more complex media system (Stockmann, 2010b). Before I provide more nuanced information on individual

papers included in this study, I first explain how the rise of commercialized papers posed competitive pressure on established papers that led to changes in news reporting.

Why New Papers Change Positions of Established Papers

How does the emergence of a new media outlet influence the old? Economists model the decisions about what product will be offered in a market based on spatial models. In political science, the logic of spatial modeling is most prominent in the study of political parties. Made famous by Downs (1957), spatial theory of party and voter behavior assumes that parties will choose policy positions on a left–right continuum that minimizes the distance between themselves and voters. Parties competing for votes can either move toward or away from each other. By increasing policy distance, they encourage voters to vote for the competing party; by accommodating the competitor, they attract voters (see, for example, Shepsle, 1991; Kitschelt, 1995). Which of those two strategies a party adopts depends on the number of parties and issue areas.[8] For example, the green and radical right-wing parties that have emerged in electoral systems since the 1960s tended to open up environment and immigration as new issues in electoral campaigns. Once an established party accepted competition on the new issue dimension, it tended to adopt a policy position that accommodated the new party (Meguid, 2005).

Spatial models have also been used to explain developments of media markets. In these spatial models the dimension across which media outlets align themselves can be the left–right ideological continuum, similar to the study of political parties (Endersby & Ognianova, 1997), but the dimension can also span between soft and hard news content,[9] as in the following example taken from a study by Hamilton (2004). In the 1960s, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) required local television stations to report on their public affairs coverage, which provided incentives to establish informal norms among television personnel that supported broadcasting of hard news. As cable technology and spectrum allocation increased the number of competitors in the television market, it became harder to maintain informal restrictions on the quality of news, and television stations offered soft news as a programming alternative. This resulted in a race to the bottom situation that led to an increase in soft news over time. A race to the bottom situation is often explained based on the prisoner's dilemma. Here I apply this logic to the situation of Chinese newspapers.

Consider a world with two newspapers, an official and nonofficial paper. If both papers stick to the official line, they each gain an audience worth X. If one paper oversteps boundaries for news reporting while the other continues to stick to restrictions, the paper that "commits the mistake," to use the language of Chinese media practitioners, gains an audience worth B at the expense of the other paper. If only one paper oversteps boundaries, there may be no government backlash. If both papers overstep boundaries, neither paper gains a commercial advantage since readers are not attracted away from the other paper. And on top of that, the government may increase scrutiny because of concern that there is too much reporting that conflicts with the government line. Each paper may face a cost of C from the government reaction. Specific payoffs are displayed in Table OA1 in the online appendix, taken from Hamilton (1998, p. 300) .

In this situation, which strategy should the papers employ when concerned about making a profit?[10] Each paper's strategy depends on the size of the costs C imposed by the government. If the government backlash is greater than commercial losses, each paper will choose to stick to the official line since they must choose between commercial losses (when sticking to the official line) and punishment by the government (when overstepping press

restrictions). Having less competitors in a media market may contribute to such a preference structure. In this case, it remains easier for the government to monitor and impose restrictions, as was the case in China at the beginning of media reform.

Yet this situation can change when new competitors emerge in a media market, as it can affect the likelihood that costs are imposed by the government in case of noncompliance, thus increasing the chance that commercial losses will outweigh the costs of government backlash. In this case, each paper would choose to move away from the official line and earn the commercial profit X, taking into account government backlash C. If the other competitor is offering reports violating press restrictions, then the paper must choose between giving up audience to its competitor and the resulting commercial loss and paying the costs imposed by the government when not complying to the rule. Competitive pressures point toward an outcome where papers choose to overstep boundaries for news reporting in order to attract audiences, despite possible government backlash. This can translate into greater consumer happiness but may also lead to outcomes that carry fewer civic benefits, such as stirring up negativity toward out-groups (i.e., positive externalities). Such a situation has also been termed a race to the bottom, as in the above case of the rise of soft news on American television described by Hamilton.

One possible solution to these dynamics is a coordination of an agreement by a third party, for example, the government (Hardin, 1982). Indeed, the Chinese state has worked on such a solution. As the General Administration of Press and Publications allowed new competitors in the newspaper market, it became harder to maintain restrictions on the type of information offered. Therefore, the Propaganda Department restricted control over news content to the most sensitive issues, allowing media outlets to make a commercial profit on some issues but imposing a cost on others. To facilitate supervision by the Propaganda Department, nonofficial and official papers were supposed to differ in focus, such that official papers covered Chinese government-related or sanctioned topics and nonofficial papers everything else or nonsanctioned topics (Stockmann, in press).

Here I propose that the division of labor between official and nonofficial papers may have worked up until the late 1990s, but was broken by the emergence of commercialized papers that reinforced competitive pressures on established papers. Since commercialized papers were more dependent than official and semiofficial papers on making a commercial profit, they were more likely to tap into nonsanctioned topics that allowed them to attract readers. This imposed commercial pressures on official and semiofficial papers, increasing the likelihood of these established papers to report on nonsanctioned issues as those allowed them to compete with commercialized papers.

As a result, we would expect that established papers, including official and semiofficial papers, will become more likely to publish reports on nonsanctioned issues over time as those topics allow them to express more criticism of the United States. As a result, news reporting on the United States should become more negative over time as established papers use nonsanctioned topics to target readers who demand more critical news coverage of the United States (*negativity increase hypothesis*).

Note that the above scenario assumes that Chinese readers are attracted by news reporting that is closer to their personal beliefs. It also assumes that government restrictions are imposed on issues on which there is some discrepancy between the position of the government and audience demands. These assumptions hold in the case of international news reporting about the United States, as explained in the introduction. In addition, a comparison between the tone of news reporting on sanctioned and nonsanctioned topics will provide further evidence that Propaganda Department authorities attempt to restraint criticism toward the United States in the Chinese press. If Propaganda authorities attempt to

pull news reporting in a positive direction, Chinese newspapers should report more positively about the United States on sanctioned topics while expressing more negativity on nonsanctioned topics (*state and market hypothesis*). Reporting on sanctioned topics allows newspapers to respond to demands by the state while following audience demands when covering nonsanctioned topics.

Case Selection

To learn about the impact of the emergence of commercialized papers on the tone of news reporting about the U.S., I chose to compare articles in the *People's Daily* and the *Beijing Evening News* in 1999 and 2003. Nineteen ninety-nine marks the year before the emergence of commercialized papers in the Beijing newspaper market, and 2003 the year in which this newspaper type had already established itself. In 1999, Sino-U.S. relations had also reached a low due to the NATO bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade by American aircraft in May. By comparison, China criticized the launching of the Iraq war, but criticism did not lead to a crisis situation comparable to 1999, and the year 2003 was characterized by greater stability in Sino-U.S. relations.[11] Therefore, any increase in negativity that we observe is unlikely to result from a negative reaction to actions undertaken by the U.S. government against China among Chinese officials or media practitioners.

The Beijing newspaper market was chosen because it allows me to compare the results from the text analysis with public opinion data about attitudes toward the United States. According to my knowledge, the Beijing Area Studies constitutes the only random survey monitoring Chinese views toward foreign countries over time.[12] These data show that sentiments toward the United States decreased over time across potential audiences of different newspaper types, including the urban middle class as well as public officials.[13] If newspapers follow demands of their readers, news reporting in both papers should move in a negative direction over time.[14]

Individual newspapers were selected as examples of established newspaper types. The *People's Daily* is the mouthpiece of the CCP at the central level. As a party paper, it is registered under the CCP Central Party Committee and supposed to represent the viewpoints of the Chinese national leadership. As a semiofficial paper, I selected the *Beijing Evening News*, which is registered with the *Beijing Daily* and is thus only indirectly linked to the CCP party committee at the Beijing level.

As illustrated in Figure OA1 in the online appendix, both papers have declined in popularity over time, thus experiencing competitive pressure from the *Beijing Times* (*Jinghua Shibao*) and other commercialized papers emerging in the early 2000s. This paper was founded in 2001 as part of the People's Daily Group.[15] The *Beijing Times* immediately started out with 12% of readers in Beijing with a rising tendency, while the *Beijing Evening News* and the *People's Daily*'s readership rates continued to decline to about 50% and less than 5%, respectively. As the most popular paper in Beijing, the *Beijing Evening News* experienced less competitive pressure than the *People's Daily*, which was pushed toward the market. Due to its declining readership rates, the *People's Daily* was supposed to attract a wider audience, including "ordinary people" in addition to cadres as its traditional readership. Of course, the *People's Daily* could still expect to receive some state subsidies, but it no longer could rely on the government to fully cover its losses. In 2003, the most recent year of the text analysis, the *People's Daily* was already preparing itself to be sold at newspaper stands, starting in 2004.[16] Even though the *People's Daily* is generally less marketized than the *Beijing Evening News*, we would expect the official paper to experience

pressure to target audience demands when commercialized papers entered the market—maybe even more so than the semiofficial paper, which still enjoyed a solid readership base in Beijing.

Data and Research Methods

To derive at a representative sample of news reporting, I sampled 10 constructed weeks for each year, deriving a sample of 2,280 articles.[17] Constructed week sampling is a combination of simple random sampling and stratified random sampling. According to this technique, all weeks during a period of time of interest to the researcher are numbered, and subsequently one Monday, Tuesday, and so on is randomly selected until one (or several) weeks are constructed (Stempel, 1952). Constructed week sampling is especially attractive for research that involves multiple years because it relies on a small sample size while at the same time retaining representative results. Ten constructed weeks retain representative results for 1 year of Chinese news reporting about the United States (Stockmann, 2010a).

To analyze the tone of news reporting in these articles, I relied on a computer-aided text analysis using Yoshikoder, according to my knowledge the only content analysis software program that can handle Chinese characters. This technique is often criticized for the lack of in-depth and detailed understanding of meaning that qualitative research can extract; its main advantage lies in encouraging transparency and consistency, thus producing replicable, reliable, and generalizable results (Neuendorf, 2002). Elsewhere I have argued that the extraction of qualitative meaning should always be the standard against which to judge the quality of the measurement when using computer-assisted content analysis (Stockmann, 2010a). Measurement of the dictionaries used in computer-aided text analysis was developed based on extensive qualitative reading of texts and pretested several times. A detailed memo on problems and solutions during data collection is available on the author's Web site at daniestockmann.net.

Concepts and Measurement

Tone of News Reporting About the U.S.

By assessing the tone of news reporting about the U.S., we can assess the degree to which news stories feed into negative out-group perceptions of the United States and Americans among Chinese audiences, thus priming nationalist sentiment. Social identity theory suggests that social comparison between groups leads to positive sentiment toward the in-group and negative bias toward out-groups. Higher devaluation of out-groups can prompt greater sympathy for the in-group, and vice versa (Tajfel, 1982; Turner, 1987). As predicted by social identity theory, negative sentiment toward the United States and Americans is linked to greater perceptions of difference between Chinese and Americans among Beijingers (Johnston & Stockmann, 2007).

In computer-aided text analysis, tone can be assessed based on the negative or positive connotations that words surrounding a specific concept of interest contain. Here I rely on a dictionary of positive and negative words that linguists at National Taiwan University created (Ku, Wu, Lee, & Chen, 2005). These terms can be entered into the Yoshikoder software program as two separate categories and then compared with the terms immediately surrounding all synonyms for the same concept of interest, in this case terms such as "Americans" and "United States." To assess tone, I subtracted the log odds ratio of the number of negative keywords in a semantic space of eight words before and after terms

representing the United States from the log odds ratio of the number of positive keywords in this space.[18] This proves to be a reliable and valid measure for assessing the position of text on a one-dimensional scale (Lowe, Benoit, Mikhaylov, & Laver, 2011). Tone becomes negative when negative words outweigh positive words, and vice versa. The log odds ratio takes into account that the marginal effect of one more word is decreasing in the amount that has already been written on the topic in the report. For example, the effect of adding one more negative word in a report with 50 positive and 20 negative valence words decreases tone (or the ratio of positive to negative words) by about 5%; in a report with 10 positive and four negative words, it decreases tone by 20%. Zero implies that the article is either about neutral or balanced in terms of positive and negative assessments of the United States.

Although a mainland Chinese version of the dictionary of positive and negative words would be desirable, in practice I have found that the results based on the Taiwanese version match my qualitative reading of mainland Chinese texts fairly accurately. A pretest of news reporting on the U.S. in 2001–2002 compared results with a content analysis conducted by the University of Maryland (U.S.-China Security Report Commission, 2002), revealing that measurement of tone based on Yoshikoder roughly matched coding by native speakers.

Sanctioned and Nonsanctioned Topics

Chinese media practitioners frequently claim that news reporting increases in sensitivity as it becomes more political. Yet it turns out that not all issues that Chinese media practitioners describe as "social" or "nonpolitical" are, in fact, politically irrelevant. In the realm of international news reporting, the rule that editors and journalists follow to determine issue sensitivity is its relationship to Chinese foreign policy. When Propaganda authorities get in touch with editors to discuss news content on international affairs, editors usually find the argument convincing that the Chinese news media need to stand behind "the position of China." For example, an editor and reporter specializing in international news reporting explained to me: "The government discourages newspapers to use foreign news as sources of information; that also makes sense, because we want to make sure that our newspapers represent the Chinese point of view" (Interview 25). What the Chinese position is depends on China's foreign policy as defined by national leaders. For example, a textbook on communications recommends that journalists should know Chinese foreign policy, since only then will they know "what to talk about, what not to talk about, what to emphasize, what not to emphasize, what to advocate, what to oppose, etc." (M. Wang & Jing, 2003, p. 74). In the minds of media practitioners, the sensitivity of a particular topic increases as it becomes more relevant to China, particularly the views of Chinese officials.

Note that these restrictions by the Propaganda Department allow for nonsanctioned topics to be relevant to politics. For example, editors and journalists described the war on Iraq in 2003 and American domestic politics as not sensitive.[19] This is important because perceived audience demand for negative news about the U.S. relates primarily to politics. The Chinese public holds bifurcated views of the United States. On the one hand, the U.S. is admired for its level of development, its openness, its social individualism, opportunities for economic advancement, and the efficiency of its bureaucracies. Often the U.S. is the unspoken comparison against which China's backwardness is measured. On the other hand, many of the same people see it as hegemonic, aggressive, and arrogant on the foreign policy side (M. Zhao, 2001). Shambaugh (1991) therefore described the U.S. in the eyes of Chinese as a "Beautiful Imperialist." Even less well-educated urban residents distinguish between Americans as people and the U.S. as a state, with the latter (or its leaders) being

the object of stronger criticism than former (Johnston & Stockmann, 2007). If some nonsanctioned topics allow for criticism of the U.S. as a state, a movement into nonsanctioned topics may allow newspapers to tap into audience demands.[20]

Indeed, Chinese show much interest in nonsanctioned news about American politics. Special programs dealing with 9/11, the war on Iraq, and the presidential elections in 2004 were watched by a large television audience. For instance, in Shenyang up to 64.9% of TV viewers watched *Iraq Special Report* (*Yilake Tebie Baodao*) and *Caring About the War on Iraq* (*Guanzhu Yilake Zhan Shi*).[21] The popularity of programming on Iraq was in part due to the fact that it was the first time that international events were broadcasted live in the Chinese media.[22] Reporters also state that criticism of the United States is negative news, which satisfies the demand for dramatic and sensationalist stories among readers (Stockmann, in press).

Restrictions by Propaganda authorities create rules and standards for news reporting among editors and journalists, resulting in associations of nonsanctioned and sanctioned topics with certain norms of behavior. Strictly sanctioned topics cannot be published in the paper, but only internally reported to relevant institutions within the Chinese political system. Sanctioned topics can be reported about, but need to be censored. And nonsanctioned topics can be written in any way the journalist likes. With respect to the United States, it is sufficient to distinguish between sanctioned and nonsanctioned topics only. No topics are so sensitive that the media are not allowed to report about them. For example, handbooks used for training of journalists lay out very specific rules about how to cover Taiwan as the most sensitive issue.[23]

Based on these findings from my qualitative research, I developed measures for nonsanctioned and sanctioned topics for news reporting. When articles mentioned China in addition to the United States, they were coded as sanctioned (1), while stories that only involved the United States were coded as nonsanctioned (0). Similarly, the more frequently a report mentioned a Chinese official involved in foreign policy-making by name, such as Hu Jintao, Li Zhaoxing, and so forth, the more sanctioned it became. Accordingly, this dummy variable, called China and the U.S., and a continuous variable, termed Chinese leaders, form the basis for the journalistic rule to "stand behind China's foreign policy." As we would expect based on my fieldwork, these measures correlate strongly with lists of sensitive keywords frequently censored by Web site administrators.[24] Sensitivity increases as articles become more relevant to China and particularly Chinese officials involved in foreign policy-making. Yet when reports cover political institutions or politicians outside of the Chinese context, sensitivity decreases.

Empirical Results

My first hypothesis predicted that negativity toward the United States would increase in established papers between 1999 and 2003, despite 1999 being a year of tension in Sino-U.S. relations and 2003 being more stable. This change in tone should be primarily driven by an increase in the likelihood of official and semiofficial papers to select nonsanctioned as opposed to sanctioned topics, as those topics allow newspapers to follow market demands.

Let us first take a look at how negativity in the news about the United States changes between 1999 and 2003. Since tone, the dependent variable, is continuous I rely on ordinary least squares (OLS) regression analysis to answer this question. The dependent variable is regressed upon the dummy variables for the *People's Daily*, the year 2003, and interactions between them. To guard against the possibility that any changes observed may be related to the article's relevance to politics (based on the number of times the article

mentioned Chinese, American, or international political institutions or politicians), sanctioned topics (whether it mentioned China), changes in the management of newspapers by the Propaganda Department (sensitivity) over time, or the length of the article (longer articles increase the likelihood that certain keywords are mentioned), I control for these variables in the statistical analysis.[25] To facilitate interpretation, all independent and control variables were recoded to run from 0 to 1.

The functional form of the model is as follows:

$$Tone = \beta_0 + \beta_1 People's\ Daily + \beta_2\, 2003 + \beta_3\, (People's\ Daily^{*}2003) + \beta_{4-5}\, Controls + u$$

The negativity increase hypothesis hinges on the magnitude of coefficients for β_2 and the sum of β_2 and β_3, representing changes between 1999 and 2003 by the *Beijing Evening News* and the *People's Daily*, respectively. If competition exerts pressure on established papers to target audience demands for critical news coverage, we should observe that both newspapers report more negatively about the U.S. in 2003 compared to 1999.

Figure 1 and Table 1 display the results of the statistical analysis.[26] The *x*-axis of Figure 1 represents year and the *y*-axis the marginal effect of year on tone of news reporting about the U.S. As indicated by the downward slope, both newspapers become more negative over time. When comparing 1999 with 2003, the ratio of positive to negative words decreases by about 14%, with both papers moving about parallel to each other. This move in a more negative direction provides evidence that negativity toward the U.S. has indeed been increasing in the two newspapers over time, though we can be less certain about the decline in tone of the *People's Daily*.[27]

Does this increase in negativity primarily result from more frequent coverage of non-sanctioned topics? If competition increases incentives for established papers to overstep boundaries for news reporting, we should observe that both become *less* likely to report on sanctioned topics in 2003. Figure 2 and Table 2 display the results of this second test. Each column represents a separate regression equation, with the left column presenting results from probit maximum likelihood regression and the right one displaying those from

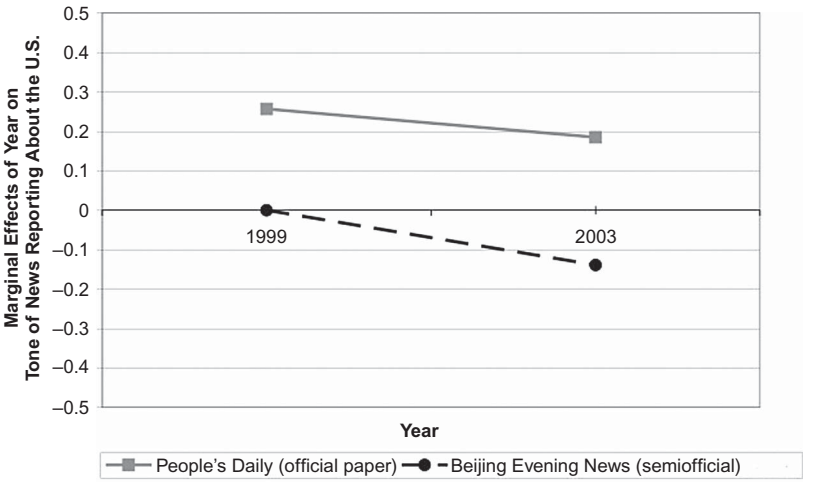

Figure 1. Changes in the tone of news reporting over time. Source: Computer-aided text analysis on news reporting regarding the United States (USCATA).

Table 1
Changes in the tone of news reporting over time

	Dependent variable
	Tone of news reporting about the U.S.
People's Daily	0.257***
	(0.088)
People's Daily × 2003	0.067
	(0.103)
2003	−0.139**
	(0.066)
China and the U.S.	0.451***
	(0.053)
Politics	−1.381***
	(0.189)
Sensitivity over time	−0.896***
	(0.222)
Length	1.070*
	(0.569)
Constant	0.404***
	(0.069)
N	2,272
R^2	.07

Note. Values are coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. Source: Computer-aided text analysis on news reporting regarding the United States (USCATA).
*$p < .10$; **$p < .05$; ***$p < .01$.

OLS regression. I investigated two measures for distinguishing between nonsanctioned and sanctioned topics. At the most simple level, relevance to China was assessed by the dummy variable coded one if the article mentioned China in addition to the United States. I also repeated the analysis with the measure for the number of times the article mentioned a Chinese official involved in foreign policy making by name, as explained above. As before, each dependent variable is regressed upon the dummy variables for the *People's Daily*, the year 2003, and interactions between them. Control variables are consistent with the previous analysis.

The results displayed in Figure 2 and Table 2 show that both papers are indeed less likely to publish sanctioned topics in 2003 than in 1999, particularly the *People's Daily*. In Figure 2, the *x*-axis displays year and the *y*-axis the marginal effect of year on reporting sanctioned topics. Over time, the *People's Daily* and the *Beijing Evening News* become more similar to each other. The *Beijing Evening News* tends to mention names of Chinese leaders rarely in 1999 and in 2003 even one eighth of a name less than before. By contrast, the mouthpiece of the central CCP is about half a name more likely to mention a Chinese leader in 1999 than the *Beijing Evening News*, but in 2003 both papers become about equally unlikely to cover Chinese leaders.[28] This basic pattern of results was strongly replicated when the dependent variable was measured by a dummy variable assessing whether a report mentioned China in addition to the U.S., as shown in the left columns in Table 2.

These results confirm the peculiar pattern for a possible race to the bottom in Chinese newspapers takes. The rise of commercialized papers created competitive pressures

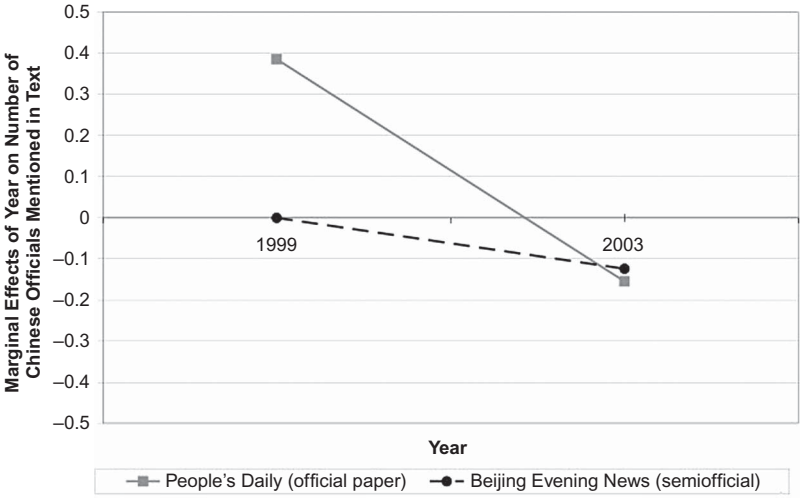

Figure 2. Changes in the selection of reports mentioning Chinese officials in the *People's Daily* and the *Beijing Evening News* over time. Source: Computer-aided text analysis on news reporting regarding the United States (USCATA).

Table 2
Changes in coverage of sensitive topics in the *People's Daily* and the *Beijing Evening News* over time

	Dependent variable	
	China and the U.S. (dummy)	Number of Chinese officials
People's Daily	0.215**	0.386***
	(0.095)	(0.098)
2003	−0.073	−0.124*
	(0.071)	(0.075)
People's Daily × 2003	−0.391***	−0.417***
	(0.111)	(0.117)
Sensitivity over time	0.076	1.162***
	(0.244)	(0.251)
Length	10.688***	2.263***
	(0.830)	(0.562)
Constant	−0.439***	−0.096
	(0.066)	(0.064)
N	2,272	2,272
Pseudo R^2 (probit)	.08	
R^2 (OLS)		.05

Note. Values are coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. Source: Computer-aided text analysis on news reporting regarding the United States (USCATA).
*$p/z < .10$; **$p/z < .05$; ***$p/z < .01$.

that led the official paper to disrespect requests to focus on sanctioned topics. This changed the distribution of labor between the official and semiofficial paper. These results dispute common perceptions that nonofficial papers stay away and official papers retain a monopoly on sensitive topics. Despite efforts to avoid sanctioned topics, even the semiofficial paper still covers sensitive stories: In 1999 about 50% of articles in the *Beijing Evening News* dealt with both, China and the U.S., though only about 2% of those reports mentioned names of Chinese officials. Sensitive news stories are still covered in nonofficial papers.

These results confirm that the two newspapers have become more negative over time and that this rise in negativity is primarily driven by more frequent reporting of nonsanctioned topics, especially in the *People's Daily*, which may have experienced more competitive pressure than the *Beijing Evening News* in 2003.

Causal Mechanism

The state and market hypothesis predicts that Chinese newspapers should report more positively about the United States on sanctioned topics while expressing more negativity on nonsanctioned topics. This pattern of news reporting is rooted in the nature of press restrictions that aim to "massage" Chinese attitudes toward the United States: When covering sanctioned topics reporters satisfy demands by the state, while covering nonsanctioned topics allows them to respond to calls for more criticism in the news by readers.

To test this hypothesis, I repeated the previous statistical analysis relying on the previous model specification, this time allowing year to interact with coverage of sanctioned topics (instead of newspaper). Complete statistical results are shown in Table OA4 in the online appendix.

Figure 3 displays how the tone of news reporting changed between 1999 and 2003 when publishing articles that mentioned China and the U.S. as opposed to reporting solely about the U.S. As before, the *x*-axis indicates year and the *y*-axis the marginal effect of year on tone of news reporting about the U.S. Let us first take a look at the *Beijing Evening News*, displayed in Figure 3a. The nonofficial paper clearly distinguishes between nonsanctioned and sanctioned topics by reporting about stories related to China more positively. The ratio between positive and negative words increases by about 50% when reporting about sanctioned topics. This tendency remains stable over time, as indicated by a parallel downward slope of the straight and dashed lines.[29] By contrast, the *People's Daily* changes its strategy in 2003, as displayed in Figure 3b. In 1999, the paper's ratio of positive to negative words when reporting on sanctioned and nonsanctioned topics was more similar to one another, but in 2003 this difference became more pronounced, increasing from 14% to about 54%. Thus, the paper adopts a similar strategy as the *Beijing Evening News*, whereby news reporting about the U.S. tends to be more positive when topics are restricted by Propaganda authorities, but more negative when topics are unrestricted.[30]

In doing so, both newspapers can simultaneously satisfy demands by Propaganda officials to stand behind China's policy toward the U.S. while also satisfying perceived consumer demands. Especially the *People's Daily* appears to make up for increased negativity when covering nonsanctioned topics by reporting even more positively than before on sanctioned topics. These results are not simply a function of greater affection toward China. First, my measure of tone specifically analyzes words surrounding the United States, and not positive and negative words contained in the whole text. And results remain consistent when employing alternative measures for nonsanctioned and sanctioned news reporting.[31]

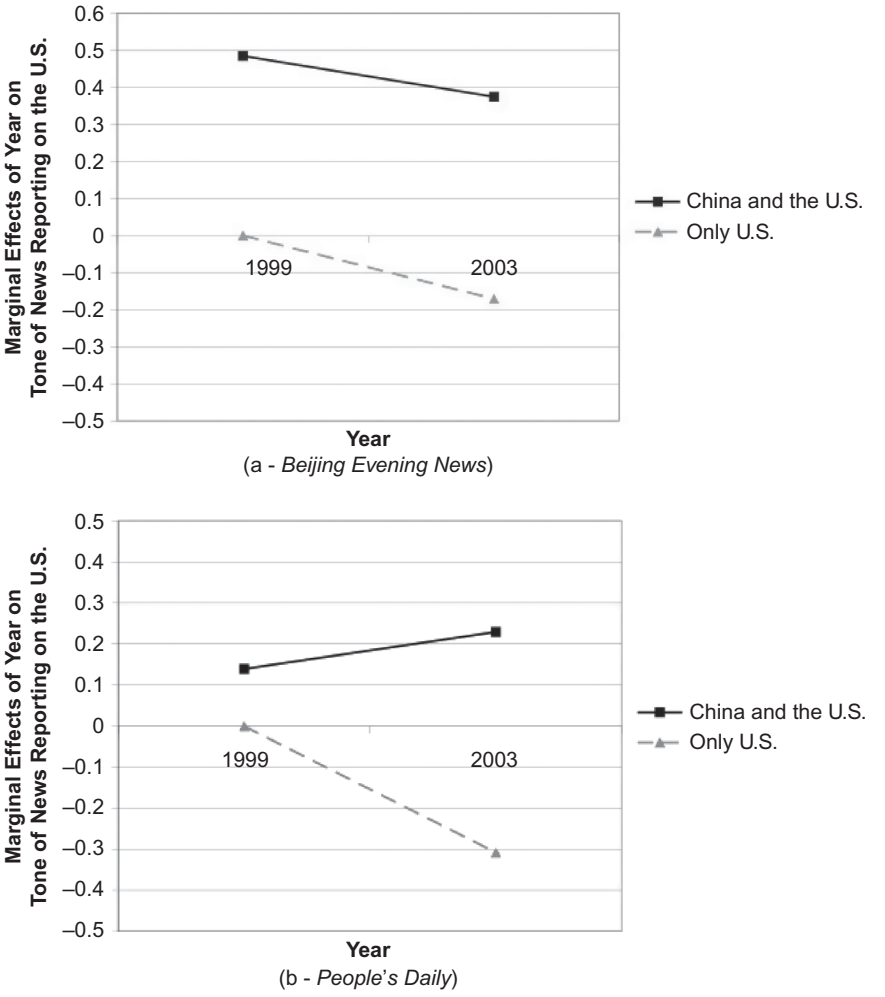

Figure 3. Changes in the tone of news reporting of nonsanctioned and sanctioned topics: (a) *Beijing Evening News* and (b) *People's Daily*. Source: Computer-aided text analysis on news reporting regarding the United States (USCATA).

Therefore, differences in nonsanctioned and sanctioned news reporting provide further evidence that the Propaganda Department restricts negativity in the news about the United States.

These findings provide solid evidence for the causal mechanism that links more frequent news coverage on nonsensitive topics with changes in the tone of news reporting. Different coverage of sanctioned and nonsanctioned topics allows newspapers to serve both the state and the market. When moving into nonsanctioned topics while still sticking to the official line when covering stories that are restricted by Propaganda authorities, newspapers may even be able to protect themselves from potential criticism by the Propaganda authorities as editors can still point toward stories that formerly adhere to press restrictions, even when being published less frequently.

The Nature of Press Restrictions Regarding News Coverage of the U.S.

Results presented in the above empirical analysis confirm findings from my qualitative interviews with media practitioners: The Propaganda Department demands newspapers to report more positively (or less negatively) than they would if unconstrained. As shown in Figure 3, both newspapers report more positively on sanctioned topics than on nonsanctioned topics.

In addition, differences between newspapers strengthen the conclusion that Propaganda authorities attempt to constraint criticism toward the U.S. in the news. As the mouthpiece of the CCP at the central level, the *People's Daily* consistently reports more positively about the U.S. than the *Beijing Evening News*, as illustrated in Figure 1. The ratio between positive and negative words is about 30% higher in the *People's Daily* than in the *Beijing Evening News*. Different reactions to the 1999 bombing of the Chinese embassy illustrate this difference. For example, the *People's Daily* quoted only one netizen's opinion: "I hope Chinese people will understand that many Americans, including myself, feel ashamed of the dishonor, arrogance, and unreasonableness of the American government."[32] By contrast, the *Beijing Evening News* commented on statements by Defense Secretary Cohen that the Chinese protest against the bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade was deliberately instigating anti-Americanism: "The bombing of the Chinese embassy was a serious violation of the sovereignty of China . . . of course the Chinese government and the Chinese people feel extreme indignation towards this issue, is it surprising that we are organizing some protest action?"[33] Cohen's reference to the Chinese media's late publication of President Clinton's apology, which he saw as "calculated exploitation" by the Chinese government rather than righteous indignation, was not mentioned in the article.[34]

One can explain the more assertive reaction by the *Beijing Evening News* in comparison to the *People's Daily* by their differing degree of marketization. The *People's Daily* still depends on indirect state subsidies by work units at all levels of government that receive small funds to subscribe to newspapers (primarily official ones) and is thus more tightly controlled by the state than the *Beijing Evening News*, which is more strongly dependent on its readers to attract advertisers. As a result, the *People's Daily* should remain closer to the official line, while the *Beijing Evening News* should be closer to audience demands.

These differences across topics and newspapers demonstrate that restrictions imposed by the Propaganda authorities are *not* aimed at "demonizing" the United States, as may have been the case in the early 1990s, according to Brady's study of the propaganda system based on data stemming from the early 1990s (Brady, 2008). When issuing instructions for news reporting, the Propaganda authorities tend to either stop reporting about issues that may stir up nationalist sentiment or ask editors to tone down their criticism of the U.S.[35]

This management of media is consistent with public statements made by the spokesperson of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs. A content analysis of all statements containing references to the United States revealed that the Chinese Foreign Ministry has placed the U.S. in a more positive context since 2000, with positive tone peaking in 2005 (see Figure OA4 in the online appendix for details). These statements were aimed at a Chinese audience, including domestic media outlets. Thus, they confirm that the government aims to constrain rather than foster negative sentiment toward the U.S.

This is not to say that the Propaganda Department may not have a bifurcated strategy. That is, Propaganda officials are well aware of the fact that market demands pull media toward more negative news reporting. In crisis situations, as during the 2005 anti-Japanese protests, they may therefore choose to *abstain* from issuing restrictions (Stockmann,

2010b, 2011). The motives of public officials for allowing Chinese media to express their anger are still debated among scholars and include arguments about fear that outraged nationalists may turn against the regime if not allowed to express their anger and strategic use of protests to increase audience costs in international relations (Weiss, 2008; Reilly, in press). However, even if the government makes strategic use of the market during crisis situations, reporters encounter instructions that are aimed at constraining criticism of the U.S. in the news in their work, leading to the peculiar patterns in news reporting described previously.

Other Alternative Explanations

In addition to claims that increased negativity toward the U.S. may be initiated by the Propaganda Department, another possible explanation is that confrontational events between China and the U.S. affect how Chinese media outlets report about the international news. As explained above, I deliberately selected 1999 as a year of tension between the United States and China and 2003 as a year where relations were stable in order to account for this important counterexplanation. As a nonsanctioned topic, newspapers used the war on Iraq to criticize the United States, but the event itself did not lead to the same degree of tension between China and the U.S. as the 1999 embassy bombing. Therefore, the rise of negativity toward the U.S. in the two newspapers is unlikely to result from a direct response to confrontational events between the United States and China.

In order to further strengthen my confidence in these findings, I also compared the tone of news reporting in Chinese and American Annual Human Rights (HR) Reports over time. Since 2000, the Chinese government has published a report on the state of human rights in the United States in the previous year.[36] The Information Office of the State Council usually publishes the report a few days after the U.S. Department of State publicizes its annual country report on human rights practices in China in February or March. An assessment of the tone in these HR reports reveals that American and Chinese HR reports are essentially mirror images of each other: Chinese HR reports become more positive when American HR reports become more negative, and vice versa; only 2008, the year of the Beijing Olympics, breaks this pattern.[37] This development does not show any signs of retaliation, not even when confrontation accumulates over time, thus reinforcing the conclusion that confrontation in Sino-U.S. relations does not drive increasing negativity toward the U.S. in China.

However, the authors of the HR reports in the Information Office are not media practitioners. Could it be that Chinese editors and journalists are becoming more supportive of nationalism and express their increasingly negative sentiment toward the U.S. in the news independently of both instructions by the Propaganda Department and pressures by the market? Research in the American context suggests that misperceptions of the poor being African American may be driven in part by TV and print journalists selecting images of African Americans when reporting about poverty (Gilens, 1999). Yet Chinese journalists consider themselves as being cornered between the state and the market and thus lacking autonomy (Y. Zhao, 1998). More specifically with respect to international news, a study of 123 Chinese journalists with expertise in international news reporting conducted by the People's University of China in the fall of 2010 reveals that only a small minority of media practitioners believe that factors other than the government or demands by media audiences influence their reporting about foreign actors.[38] Though we cannot completely exclude the possibility that reporters' personal opinions do matter in some cases, journalists themselves feel tightly constrained by demands by the government and the market,

leading to changes in news reporting. These studies strengthen the conclusion that increasing negativity toward the United States in the *People's Daily* and *Beijing Evening News* is rooted predominantly in the interaction between state and market forces.

Race to the Bottom?

Changes in news reporting about the United States in the *People's Daily* and *Beijing Evening News* demonstrate that increased competition within a marketized media environment can, over time, change the dominant message transmitted by a tightly controlled state media. When competitive pressures induce established papers to move into nonsanctioned topics, these changes can pull news reporting closer to the opinion of media audiences. The *People's Daily* and *Beijing Evening News* both used nonsanctioned topics considered unrelated to the U.S.–China relationship, such as the war on Iraq, as opportunities to raise criticism and cater to audience demands. By increasing reporting on nonsanctioned topics, even the mouthpiece of the CCP central leadership adjusted its position over time to accommodate audiences and increase negative news.

These findings, though neither representative of the Chinese media as a whole nor news reporting more generally, help to place common explanations of the rising negativity toward the U.S. as a product of propaganda induced by the state into perspective. As a main source of information, media provide the lens through which domestic audiences interpret international events. In a marketized media environment, concerns about what kind of news stories this audience finds attractive can have a significant influence on how journalists decide to cover these stories. While this point seems obvious in the context of most liberal democracies, media audiences are often considered unimportant for authoritarian media, as they tend to be subject to tight press restrictions. There is a strong correlation between freedom of press and political liberalization (Norris & Inglehart, 2009). Yet even when an authoritarian regime tightly controls news content, the combination of press restrictions and competitive market forces can induce reporters to engage into a race to the bottom as media outlets have to weigh the possible government reaction against the benefits of gaining an audience to make a profit. This situation may result in an overall move toward audience demands.

How one evaluates these effects depends on which highest standards one employs for evaluation. On the one hand, this development may result in more satisfied consumers as readers see their own opinions more strongly reflected in the news. Indeed, there is evidence that Chinese readers seek out nonofficial papers as those are regarded to be more credible (Stockmann, 2010b, in press). On the other hand, readers are also affected by what they read in the news: Negative news reporting about the U.S. in nonofficial papers increases negative sentiment towards the United States (Stockmann, in press). When journalists write critical stories about the U.S. they may be responsive to growing assertiveness among the Chinese public while simultaneously feeding into popular nationalism and antiforeign sentiment, which may have important implications for U.S.–China relations.

These dynamics do not seem to be part of a carefully planned strategy of Propaganda authorities. While Chinese officials often blame the marketized media and the Internet for stirring up nationalist sentiment (X. Wu, 2007), they do not seem to be aware of a long-term downward trend of the official line as publicized in official mouthpieces. From the perspective of public officials, media may experience increasing pressure from audiences, and the job of Propaganda authorities remains to keep those pressures under control when they arise. One reason for this focus on short-term developments may be that the

Chinese Propaganda Department imposes press restrictions situationally (Brady, 2008), often without empirical knowledge about long-term trends. Another may be that marketized media are creative about disguising their strategies to circumvent press restrictions, as shown in the case of the *People's Daily*. If Propaganda authorities only place emphasis on sanctioned topics, simply publishing fewer topics but those according to the rules may already satisfy demands by the state, while increased coverage of nonsanctioned topics may allow media outlets to respond more strongly to the market. As a result, the official government position as publicized in mouthpieces may adjust to audience demands over time, while public officials get positive feedback that press restrictions are implemented effectively.

While a race to the bottom situation may occur in any media system, the particular pattern in which media outlets attempt to circumvent punishment by the state may be specific to China, or possibly other kinds of authoritarian states. Authoritarian regimes impose tighter controls over media reporting and are more likely to rely on severe punishments to enforce policies (Norris & Inglehart, 2009; Mulligan, Gil, & Sala-i-Martin, 2004). In China, repeatedly undermining boundaries for news reporting can result in reeducation sessions, loss of employment, and even imprisonment. These coercive measures by the government and the absence of a media law and legal system capable of protecting freedom of the press provide strong incentives for media practitioners to disguise attempts to disregard press restrictions. As a result, the particular way in which newspapers try to adhere to audience demands while simultaneously satisfying the state is shaped by the broader political environment into which they are integrated. Antiforeign sentiment and ethnocentrism may be attractive means to keep audiences attentive and engaged (Kinder & Kam, 2009, p. 40), yet the particular form they take in Chinese newspapers is a distinct function of the Chinese political system.

Notes

1. See, for example, *The National Interest* (Winter 2000/2001), CNN (April 3, 2001), and *Newsweek* (April 16, 2001).

2. My findings differ from Brady (2008) since her data stem from the early 1990s while mine refer to the situation in the early 2000s.

3. This approach by the central government can change during crisis. During nationalist outbursts, the central government walks a fine line between allowing expressions of negativity while at the same time constraining popular anger. Since this study examines general trends over time, my explanations of the position of the central government relate to regular circumstances. For more detailed explanations of the dynamics between the central government and citizens in times of crisis, see Johnston and Stockmann (2007) and Stockmann (2010b).

4. See http://gapp.gov.cn.

5. Some newspapers had already lost all subsidies in the early 1980s, for example the *Jilin Daily* (Y. Zhao, 1998, p. 52, footnote 6).

6. See http://www.3009.cn/Article/200591413311-1.htm. While the *Beijing Youth Daily* had been the first among newspapers, the Hunan Broadcasting Bureau listed parts of its business on the Shenzhen stock market as early as 1999 (Y. Zhao, 1998). The *Guangzhou Daily* also applied to go on the stock market but did not receive permission (Shentu, 2004).

7. *Guanyu Guifan Xinwen Chubanye Rongzi Huodong De Shishi Yijian* (*Opinion on the Implementation of Regulations on Financial Activities of the Publication and Press Industry*), General Administration of Press and Publications, July 25, 2003. Foreign investment remains restricted to magazines and the Hong Kong-based Phoenix TV (Interviews 4, 7, 10, 15, 21, 25, 27, 35, and 42). Phoenix TV is a satellite television joint venture between Rupert Murdoch's Star TV; Liu Changle, an overseas Chinese entrepreneur; and the Bank of China.

8. Spatial models are more complicated once more than two parties and more than one issue dimension are taken into account (see, for example, Meguid, 2005).

9. There is no commonly accepted definition of hard news and soft news. Features of soft news common in definitions include a more personal and colloquial language as opposed to a more institutional and distant one as well as a set of story characteristics, including sensationalism and the absence of a public policy component (Baum, 2002).

10. In principle, nonofficial papers are more concerned than official papers about making a profit since official papers can still rely on small state subsidies. However, profit orientation also depends on competitive pressure: If readership drops dramatically, an official paper may experience greater competive pressure than a nonofficial paper (see the section on case selection for details).

11. Yan and Qi coded events in Sino-U.S. relations on a monthly basis along a negative (−9) to positive (+9) interval scale. In May 1999 the scale drops from being fairly friendly (about +3) to somewhat confrontational (about −0.5) and remains at about similar levels until the end of the year; in 2003 the scale is continuously positive (about +0.5) without dramatic shifts in the relationship (Yan & Qi, 2009). Figure OA4 in the online appendix confirms that the position of the Chinese government regarding the U.S. improved between 2000 and 2003. The role of the war on Iraq is discussed in detail in the online appendix.

12. The survey was conducted based on face-to-face interviews by the Research Center on Contemporary China at Peking University, relying on probability proportional to size random sampling. Lists of registered Beijing residents (with Hukou) are issued every year, but exclude migrant workers. See the online appendix for more details.

13. See Table OA3 in the online appendix. For a detailed examination of our knowledge base on Chinese attitudes toward the U.S., see Johnston and Stockmann (2007).

14. It is unclear why public sentiment toward the U.S. declined over time; possible explanations include rising in-group identity and nationalism (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), dissatisfaction with the situation at home (Hollander, 1992), socialization in school and peer groups (Greenstein, 1965), personal contact (Brewer & Miller, 1988), and increasing negativity in the news driven by media marketization (see conclusion).

15. On the role of conglomeration in tightening control over nonofficial papers and subsidizing official papers, see Y. Zhao (2005) and Li, He, and Yu (2006). On conglomerates' internal organization, see Song (2004).

16. Interviews 8 and 34.

17. The *Beijing Evening News* was sampled from CD-ROMs published by the Beijing Daily Group. The *People's Daily* was sampled using the Renmin Ribao Archive. In order to exclude tangential articles, I did not collect those that only mentioned the United States once in the text.

18. Semantic space was chosen based on pretesting. Eight words were large enough to pick up variation in tone but narrow enough to ensure that valence words (negative and positive terms) tended to be related to the concept of interest (the United States).

19. Interviews 14, 16, 21, and 25. C. Wang (2010) argues that Chinese netizens voiced support for the American invasion of Iraq but that official papers could not report these positive opinions in order not to undermine the official line of the government. None of my interviewees mentioned a demand by the public for positive news, only for negative news, also in relation to the war on Iraq.

20. Nonsanctioned topics give journalists autonomy to satisfy market demands, but the resulting news reporting can be close to the "official line," even if Propaganda authorities do not issue instructions. For a detailed examination of these dynamics, see Stockmann (in press).

21. The author is grateful to AC Nielsen for sharing these data. In the case of special programs, TV ratings of each individual program on the war on Iraq were added together. Since some people may have watched several programs, the actual audience size may be smaller.

22. About 30 news organizations sent over 100 journalists abroad. Interviews 16 and 25.

23. First, the Office of Taiwan Affairs gives instructions for coverage of Taiwanese people of importance, leadership meetings, and cross-strait relations. Second, journalists can only report about Taiwanese economic issues if they received agreement from the Office of Taiwan Affairs beforehand. Finally, in case of a crisis, reporters need to rely on announcements by the Office of Taiwan Affairs

and the International Communication Office of the CCP Central Committee. There are also detailed guidelines concerning word usage in the context of Taiwan. For example, instead of "mainland" journalists should use "my country."

24. Results are included in Table OA5 in the online appendix available at the author's Web site at daniestockmann.net. Many thanks to Xiao Qiang, the head of Berkeley's China Digital Times Project, and Jonathan Hassid for sharing this list.

25. Since the number of matching synonyms for the main concept of interest affects the number of negative and positive words found in the text, I control for the length of the article, measured in words and recoded to run from 0 to 1; sensitivity over time was assessed by the proportion of Xinhua news articles published on the same day as the article by the newspaper. For details, see Stockmann (2010a).

26. Variations of the model are included in Table OA4 in the online appendix.

27. The difference in tone (marginal effect of year on tone as newspaper type changes) between 1999 and 2003 in the *Beijing Evening News* is -0.14^{**} ($SE = 0.08$); in the *People's Daily* it is -0.07 ($SE = 0.07$). Differences between newspapers in 1999 and 2000 remain statistically significant: Differences between newspapers in tone (marginal effect of newspaper type as year changes) in 1999 is 0.26^{**} ($SE = 0.09$); in 2003 it is 0.32^{**} ($SE = 0.08$). Statistical tests on the role of Xinhua news reports and news reporting on Iraq are discussed in detail in the online appendix.

28. The difference in mentioning leaders in the text (marginal effect of year on sanction topic as newspaper type changes) between 1999 and 2003 in the *People's Daily* is -0.54^{**} ($SE = 0.09$); in the *Beijing Evening News* it is -0.12 ($SE = 0.08$). Differences between newspapers in 1999 and 2000 (marginal effect of newspaper type as year changes) in 1999 is 0.39^{**} ($SE = 0.10$); in 2003 it is -0.03 ($SE = 0.09$). Statistical tests on the role of Xinhua news reports and news reporting on Iraq are discussed in detail in the online appendix.

29. In the *Beijing Evening News* the difference in tone (marginal effect of year on tone as sanctioned topic changes) between 1999 and 2003 when reporting on China and the U.S. is -0.11 ($SE = 0.10$); when reporting only about China, it is -0.17^{*} ($SE = 0.10$). Differences between sanctioned and nonsanctioned topics in 1999 and 2000 remain statistically significant: Differences in tone when comparing between topics (marginal effect of reporting on China and the U.S. as year changes) in 1999 is 0.48^{**} ($SE= 0.10$); in 2003 it is 0.55^{**} ($SE = 0.10$). Statistical tests on the role of Xinhua news reports and news reporting on Iraq are discussed in detail in the online appendix.

30. In the *People's Daily* the difference in tone (marginal effect of year on tone as sanctioned topic changes) between 1999 and 2003 when reporting on China and the U.S. is 0.09 ($SE = 0.10$); when reporting only about China, it is -0.31^{**} ($SE = 0.12$). Differences between sanctioned and nonsanctioned topics in 1999 and 2000 become more significant over time: Differences in tone when comparing between topics (marginal effect of reporting on China and the U.S. as year changes) in 1999 is 0.14 ($SE = 0.12$); in 2003 it is 0.54^{**} ($SE = 0.10$). Statistical tests on the role of Xinhua news reports and news reporting on Iraq are discussed in detail in the online appendix.

31. Results are available from the author.

32. "Uphold Justice" ("Shenzhang Zhengyi"), *People's Daily,* May 13, 1999.

33. "US Secretary of Defense Cohen Talked a Lot of Nonsense Yesterday" ("Meiguo Fang Buzhang Keyin Zuotian Da Fang Jue Ci"), *Beijing Evening News,* May 13, 1999.

34. "Big Raids Resume as NATO Reasserts Demands on Serbs," *New York Times,* May 12, 1999.

35. The negative coefficient of sensitivity over time in Table 1 indicates that news reporting becomes more negative when tension in Sino-U.S. relations increases. However, even in crisis situations the Propaganda Department often constrained news reporting after protests took place. For a more detailed explanation of this argument, see Stockmann (2010b).

36. The first Chinese HR report was published in February 2000, referring to the situation in 1999. It was coded as 1999 in Figure OA3 in the online appendix.

37. See the online appendix for details on research methods and findings regarding the comparison of American and Chinese HR reports.

38. These data are part of a research project on Chinese views of the European Union funded by the 7th Framework Program of the European Commission run by the University of Nottingham

in collaboration with the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, the People's University of China, Leiden University, Jakobs University Bremen, and Chatham House. A total of 29.5% of editors and journalists named as influential the nature of the relationship between China and the foreign actor, and another 13.11% named the Chinese government and senior-level media staff; since the Propaganda Department demands that the Chinese media report about foreign affairs from the perspective of the Chinese government, together the perceived influence of the state on media reporting adds up to about 43% (the perceived influence of the government is much higher among the second [11%] and third important factors [29.5%] in influencing reporting). Another 27% named readers and media audiences as influential. Only 16.4% selected attitudes of other media and only 4% the newsworthiness of the story as being influential in how they report about foreign politics. The precise question wording referred to reporting about the European Union, not the general term international news. However, since news reporting about the U.S. is more tightly restricted than about the European Union and Chinese media audiences care more strongly about news on the United States than about the EU, we would expect reporters to be even more likely to select the state and media audiences as important factors when asked about the United States.

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