

Coverage of the Tibet Crisis (March 2008) and the Olympic Games in China (August 2008) in the German-language mass media

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Abstract

The perception by the German media of Tibet, on the one hand, and China, on the other, could not be more contrary: the current image of China is fully in the tradition of the threatening yellow – respectively red – threat and so is strongly opposed to the positive image of Tibet (peaceful, esoteric, in need of protection). Given this double agenda setting and framing, an almost insurmountable communicative and media-political obstacle stood in the way of positive reporting on the Beijing Olympics in summer 2008. The media reports on the social unrest in Tibet in March 2008 and those on the Olympic Games several months later reveal the following. (1) The numerous, highly professional media activities by groups of exiled Tibetans relating to Tibet and the Olympic Games were planned long in advance and were well coordinated. The National Endowment for Democracy (NED) in Washington played a vital role here. (2) Important parts of the anti-Chinese media work were done before and during the Olympics by the British advertising agency Saatchi & Saatchi commissioned by the supposedly independent NGO Reporters without Borders. (3) Essential parts of the pro-Chinese media work were done before and during the Olympic Games by the US-American PR Agency Hill & Knowlton. This supports the conclusion that during the period of time in question German media recipients were provided with authentic news neither about Tibet nor

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about China. Instead, they were victims of competitive rivalry between two western PR and advertising agencies.

Keywords

2008 Olympics, Dalai Lama, Germany, Hill & Knowlton, mass media, National Endowment for Democracy, People's Republic of China, Reporters without Borders, Saatchi & Saatchi, Tibet

The image of Tibet and of China in the German mass media

Mass media images of foreign countries are characterized by the fact that they are subordinate to the journalistic principle of proximity; in other words, the media report very little about countries that are far removed from the recipients. They only report on distant countries when, first, outstanding events are involved, and second, their foreign image undergoes historical change. This also applies to the German image of China.

With the image of the 'yellow threat', which dated from the era of the so-called Boxer Rising (1900), China faded from people's minds in Germany over a number of generations. After the inauguration of the Communist People's Republic of China in 1949, the image of the 'yellow' threat could be seamlessly transformed into the image of the 'red' threat. As a result, for decades the image of China was distorted and frightening (Greene, 1964). Due to a more open-minded political attitude in China and increasing tourism and exports to China in the 1980s, Germany experienced a veritable China Boom, and for a period of some years the media communicated a positive image of that country. From about 2005, however, China again became a threatening, hungry giant. China's economic rise was interpreted as Germany's decline. The image of the 'yellow threat' became strong again, and China was made responsible for various economic problems (migration of German companies, disappearance of jobs, rises in energy, raw materials and food prices, decline in product quality, pirating of German brands, etc.).

By contrast, since the flight of the Dalai Lama from Tibet to India in 1959 the image of Tibet in the German media has been more or less the opposite of this threatening image of China. For almost 50 years now, this powerful image of Tibet can be seen as a counter-image to that of China: Buddhist – i.e. peace-loving and non-violent, contemplative, esoteric – weak and in need of protection. The Tibet/Dalai Lama/Cultural Minority triad became a projection screen for our own miseries and insufficiencies. Currently, Amazon offers 728 German and 908 English books relating to the Dalai Lama, 13,200 videos about him are available on YouTube and almost 8 million entries are to be found on him through Google (Müller and Vougioukas, 2009: 35). Nothing illustrates the 'positive racism' of much Third World exoticism as clearly as the glorified and romanticized image of Tibet (Schell, 1998; Steinberger, 2008).

This romanticized image of Tibet blurs at least three facts. First, it detracts from any criticism of the early feudal theocracy that is Tibet (Goldner, 2008). Second, this image does not address the theme of the striking proximity between the Dalai Lama and exponents of the political right-wing in Europe. This applies in particular to the Austrian mountaineer Heinrich Harrer (member of the NSDAP, SA, SS Oberscharführer and

personal protégé of Heinrich Himmler), who from 1946 to 1951 was one of the young Dalai Lama's private tutors in Tibet (Lehner, 2007). Some of the features that linked the Dalai Lama and the National Socialist German state were racism, the idea of being a chosen people compared to other countries and peoples, notions of fateful providence, a specific form of 'brown' esotericism (Trimondi and Trimondi, 2002) and the evocation of a special 'Arian–Tibetan Alliance'. His friendship with the deceased Austrian right-wing populist politician Jörg Haider (governor of Carinthia) and the conservative German politician Roland Koch (prime minister of the state of Hesse) can be regarded today as a continuation of the relationship between Heinrich Harrer and the Dalai Lama. Third, the romanticized image of Tibet dismisses any criticism of the undemocratic structures of the Dalai Lama's exile government in India. These three dimensions excluded from the portrayal of Tibet are exactly what the critical reader *Jahrbuch 2008* presented as 'what was not reported in the newspaper in 2008' – to cite the subtitle of that publication (Wisnewski, 2009).

The effective influence of the CIA on the image of Tibet in the western mass media can be shown more successfully in the case of Tibet than in scarcely any other case. This manipulation and the cooperation of the CIA with Tibetan exile groups has been well documented scientifically. The CIA had worked illegally in this area until the end of the Cold War (Conboy and Morrison, 2002; Goldstein, 2006; Knaus, 2003). Legally, the same task was taken on by the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) inaugurated in 1983 by President Ronald Regan, a public foundation financed by the US Congress and working to promote democracy the world over (Barker, 2007). With this double agenda setting and framing – China as a threat and Tibet as a place of peace and inner calm – positive coverage of the Olympic Games in China was faced with communications and media-political obstacles that were all but impossible to overcome.

The image of the Tibet Crisis (March 2008) and the Olympic Games in China (August 2008) in the German mass media

It is too early to make a definitive and scientifically grounded judgement on the image of the Tibet Crisis and the Chinese Olympic Games in the German-language mass media, given that so far, too little empirically grounded analysis exists to enable one to make objective and detailed claims. But generalized trends are emerging, and critical journalists and social scientists are drawing very similar conclusions.

What is initially striking about the reports on Tibet is that at the beginning of the social unrest in Lhasa in March 2008 the German media confused cause and effect, perpetrator and victim. When the unrest was starting, with an outbreak of violence by Tibetans against Han and Hui Chinese and an angry Tibetan mob swarming the streets, pillaging and killing many Chinese, the media focused not on these events, but on the deployment of Chinese security forces, later insisting that Tibet was a Chinese colony, illegally occupied and oppressed in every sense. Many western media, including the German ones, illustrated their reports on the unrest in Tibet with photographs and film footage which actually showed the Nepalese police in a truncheon attack on exiled Tibetan demonstrators.

These distorted images were disseminated by the western media: CNN, Fox Television, BBC and *The Times*. In Germany, the images were snapped up by the German television stations RTL and n-tv, the state broadcaster Deutsche Welle, the newspapers *Berliner Morgenpost*, *Bild-Zeitung* and the magazine *Der Stern*. Whereas all the large Chinese newspapers carried reports on this error and the portrayal of the wrong images in the western media, and whereas in China 200,000 people viewed a specially installed Anti-CNN website over a very short space of time, there was no public discussion about it in Germany and the error was not corrected.

Just how drastically the reports on Tibet ousted almost all other foreign policy themes in the western mass media at the time is shown by a study commissioned by the Kofi Annan Foundation and produced by the Zurich Media Tenor Institute in cooperation with experts from the Dalai Lama. This study examined the coverage of Tibet on 11 television stations in four countries (Germany, the US, Great Britain and South Africa) between July 2007 and June 2008. The March unrest in 2008 resulted in (1) 10 percent of all television reports about Asia being solely focussed on Tibet; (2) Tibet and the Dalai Lama being a media topic for a long time after March; and (3) exiled Tibetan groups being generally very much better able to assert their interests than China.¹

Germany, networked with exiled Tibetan groups for some time now through the Heinrich Böll (Green Party) and the Friedrich Naumann Foundation (Free Democratic Party), added a particular emphasis to its coverage of Tibet and/or China not least because two internationally famous Tibet activists (David Demes and Florian Gyana Tshang) live in Germany and accordingly prominent media attention was given to their participation in protest actions in Beijing (the demonstration on the Square of Heavenly Peace at the start of the Olympics and the unfurling of a Tibetan flag).

By comparison, coverage of the Chinese Olympics in Beijing, 8–24 August 2008, had a particularly hard time. Basically, it could not recover from the damage done by the Tibet reports that preceded it. The Tibetan Crisis, caught up structurally and historically in an image of the ‘yellow threat’, functioned as agenda setting and framing for the themes of suppression, human rights violations, censorship and lack of freedom. This was the given framework and all other details were fitted into it: the comparison with the Nazi Olympics of 1936, references to the inhuman training conditions of Chinese athletes (especially children), lack of press freedom, disappointment of promises made by the government (on air pollution, doping, freedom of travel), political tricks at the opening ceremony, etc. In brief: selective perception and self-fulfilling prophecies against the backdrop of a positive image of Tibet and freedom activists, human rights and press freedom on the one hand, and on the other a negative image of China as the ‘yellow threat’, suppression and coercion, resulted in a coverage of the Chinese Olympics that was catastrophic from the viewpoint of the Chinese organizers, the sponsors and of sports people in general.

In summary, one can quote Helmut Digel, professor of sport journalism at Tuebingen University in Germany: ‘Almost all the background reporting by German mass media on the Olympic Games was marked by bias and a tendency to groundless criticism, i.e. a criticism that lacked any empirical foundation. From an international viewpoint, it appears that the German reporting acquired a special status’ (Digel, 2008: 68).

It was almost impossible to break through this homogenized mainstream in the German media coverage of Tibet and the Chinese Olympics. The most important exception was the China Desk of the German state radio broadcaster Deutsche Welle. Under the deputy head of the Chinese Programme at DW Radio, Danhong Zhang, the station adhered to the simple journalist principle of *audiatur et altera pars*. Here you could hear both critical reports on exiled Tibetan groups and positive reports on the Beijing Olympics. As the Deutsche Welle Chinese radio broadcasts can be heard not in Germany but only in China, notice was only taken in Germany when Chinese dissidents living in Germany and associated with Falun Gong adherent Xu Pei began a successful press campaign against the Chinese broadcasts of Deutsche Welle, describing it as a Fifth Column of the Chinese Communist Party. This peaked in a non-public hearing in the Culture and Media Committee of the Bundestag in November 2008. Although the German Journalists Association (DJV) stood behind the China Desk of Deutsche Welle, Danhong Zhang was relieved of her post on the basis of 'red infiltration' (Leyendecker, 2009). In the general round of China-bashing carried out by politicians and the media there were only two positive, remarkably knowledgeable and pragmatically and objectively argued exceptions: a long interview with the former federal chancellor Helmut Schmidt (Social Democratic Party) (2008) on China, and a long essay on the relationship between Tibet and China by the former vice-president of the German Bundestag Antje Vollmer (Green Party) (2008).

In communication science terms, the images of a peaceful Tibet and the 'yellow threat' as the agenda setting and framing in the coverage of the Tibet Crisis and the 2008 Chinese Olympics were in keeping with a so-called priming, that is to say, the frequent repetition of one and the same motif in order to facilitate certain memories. In the case of China, this priming still applies today: in the New Year 2008/9, leading German newspapers carried articles on China under headings such as 'Fear of the Red China Stock Corporation', 'Gone with China's Olympic spirit' or 'Forgotten promises in China'.

Public relations agencies

A fact not very widely known is that for some time now more and more governments, international authorities and organizations have joined private companies as the most important clients of international PR agencies. In many cases, the primary objective of such public relations activities is to influence the media in the interests of the client, i.e. to carry out agenda setting for very specific themes, including negative campaigning against political opponents. The most recent example is the activities of the PR agency 'aspect' consulting (Brussels) for the Georgian government, and of the PR agency GPlusEurope (Brussels) for the Russian government during the five-day Caucasus war in early August 2008.

In 2001, the 10 largest such PR agencies were the following: Weber Shandwick Worldwide (annual turnover: US\$426,572,018), Fleishman-Hillard Inc. (US\$345,098,241), Hill & Knowlton, Inc. (US\$325,119,000), Incepta (Citigate) (US\$266,018,371), Burson-Marsteller (US\$259,112,000), Edelman Public Relations Worldwide (US\$223,708,535), Ketchum, Inc. (US\$185,221,000), Porter Novelli (US\$179,294,000), GCI Group/

APCO Worldwide (US\$151,081,645) and Ogilvy Public Relations Worldwide (US\$145,949,285).

According to the Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA 1938 and 1966), the activities of US-American PR agencies for foreign governments are subject to a transparency obligation. Every delegate of a foreign client must submit to the US Department of Justice (DOJ) a file with detailed information on the kind of contract, the income amount involved and own costs for the foreign client. These data are open to the public. As a result, Jörg Becker and Mira Beham were able to find a total of 157 contracts between US-American PR agencies and several Balkan governments for the period between 1991 and 2002, and they could also provide empirical proof that the distorted and internationally homogenized media reporting on the ex-Yugoslavian wars was the deliberate result of the activities of PR agencies (Becker and Beham, 2008).

According to FARA files, between 2003 and 2007 a total of 25 US-American PR agencies were active in China with a business volume of US\$32 million. Differentiated according to years, that means (in rounded figures): 2003, US\$4 million; 2004, US\$6 million; 2005, US\$11 million; 2006, US\$6.5 million; and 2007, US\$5 million. In the years 2006 and 2007, the US-American company Hill & Knowlton was working for the Beijing Organizing Committee for the Olympic Games (BOCOG) in Beijing, doing media and PR work for the Olympic Games. Just how intensively Hill & Knowlton cooperated with the BOCOG is clear, among other things, from the much reported participation of Paul Taaffe, chairman and chief executive officer of Hill & Knowlton, as a torch-bearer on one of the last legs of the Olympic Torch Relay in Beijing. The business with China and the Olympic Games alone earned its parent company, WPP, an increase of 31 percent in earnings. Perhaps this extraordinary increase explains why the affiliate company Hill & Knowlton (illegally) withholds its contract sums with the BOCOG from the FARA files.

Opponents of the Chinese government, however, also availed themselves of the professional help of PR and advertising companies for their international press work. The French NGO Reporters without Borders (RwB), one of the most adamant opponents of the Olympic Games and a proponent of the principles of freedom of expression and of the press in the western sense, was also working very effectively in the media and in the international arena a long time before the Olympic Games. In their statement of accounts of 2007, RwB writes: 'The team from the Saatchi & Saatchi agency develops and implements all communication campaigns for Reporters without Borders' (RsF, 2007).

These companies, Hill & Knowlton and Saatchi & Saatchi, are two of the largest and most important companies in the PR and advertising sector. And in the case of both companies it is important to know something about their dense networking with very influential and established political circles in the different western countries.

The world famous New York advertising agency Saatchi & Saatchi belongs to the advertising empire Publicis SA Group, a multinational enterprise with headquarters in France. As clients this company has, among others, global concerns like Coca Cola, Disney, McDonald's and Toyota, and often clients closely connected with the USA's foreign policy interests, such as for example the Bacardi concern and not least the US Army. Maurice Lévy, chairman of Publicis, is an incredibly influential person, not only in France but also in the USA. He is also someone who works very much in the

background. He is, among other things, a Commander of the Legion of Honour, he was a government advisor in the battle against drug addiction and advisor to the Banque de France. In the USA, he is on the International Advisory Board of the Council of Foreign Relations, i.e. one of the most politically powerful committees involved in foreign policy.

The PR company Hill & Knowlton belongs to the international advertising company WPP in London (as do Ogilvy & Mather, Young & Rubicam, Burson-Marsteller, J Walter Thompson and the Grey agency), a leading company globally in the field of communication services. Hill & Knowlton, located in the US, is one of the most established and well networked think-tanks in conservative government circles in Washington. For example, Tom Hoog, chairman of Hill & Knowlton from 1996 to 2001 and today senior advisor, was political advisor for the Democratic US Senator Gary Hart and headed his campaign for the presidency in 1984; deputy agency head Craig Fuller was formerly chief of staff for US President George Bush Senior; and after her time as general manager of the Washington office of Hill & Knowlton, Victoria Clarke was appointed assistant secretary of defence for public affairs in May 2001. With income of US\$177 million in 2000, Hill & Knowlton earned the third highest amount in the whole branch in the USA that year. That same year the company also earned more than US\$300 million worldwide. Its clients include, alongside the US government, the governments of Botswana, Uganda, Japan, Vietnam and Australia, also the Climate Summit in Copenhagen or huge enterprises like Kellogg's, Boeing, Enron, GlaxoSmithKline, Motorola, Procter & Gamble, Reebok, Unilever and Walmart. Hill & Knowlton has maintained very close contacts with China and the Chinese government since 1989, a period when China's image in the world after the Tiananmen Square massacre was in need of improvement.

In the clash between media censorship reproaches worldwide (Reporters without Borders) and the most beautiful Olympic Games ever (Beijing Organizing Committee for the Olympic Games), between WPP on the one hand (Hill & Knowlton) and Publicis (Saatchi & Saatchi) on the other, the two main competitors for the global PR and advertising market met head on. Or to put it another way: two contrary and competing US-American foreign policy strategies towards China became abundantly clear. Or to put it in more pointed terms: the image of the Tibet Crisis and of the Olympic Games in China presented by the global media was the product of two competing western PR companies.

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs)

That a successful impact in the media cannot be achieved using the principle of the 'Nuremberg Funnel' may be regarded as a communication science generalization. There is no such thing as a cleverly conceived advertising and manipulation strategy whereby certain messages are simply transmitted unfiltered 'from above' to 'down below' and achieve a successful impact. A media impact strategy for agenda setting 'from above' can only be successful on condition that there is a kind of social counter-group 'below' that (consciously or unconsciously) supports the communication impulses 'from above' positively, reactively, prosocially and reflectively. In the case of government

propaganda ‘from above’, this is very often the role assigned to NGOs ‘below’. It is they that bridge the credibility gap towards the general public between ‘above’ and ‘below’. These NGOs mainly engage in media work that draws attention to ‘the good cause’.

This also means that – contrary to a general assumption – many NGOs are only apparently non-governmental. On the contrary, due to their state funding, staff and political interconnections, many NGOs are nothing more than state front-end institutions acting in the interests of states. This has become quite clear in recent years through the involvement of many NGOs in the so-called colourful revolutions in Eastern Europe, which on closer scrutiny all turn out to be groups financed by the US government and acting in no way autonomously (Becker, 2006; Huber, 2005). It is in this very context that the Canadian ethnologist Mariella Pandolfi (2000) speaks quite deliberately not of NGOs but of an internationalist operating ‘human rights industry’.

Many of the actions and media activities of two very different NGO groups in connection with the Tibet Crisis and the Chinese Olympics must be seen against this politico-theoretical backdrop. First, there is the strong French momentum rooted in the Reporters without Borders NGO, with its founder and long-term president Robert Ménard; and then there is another much stronger US-American momentum rooted in the US-American financing of the Dalai Lama and countless exile-Tibetan NGOs.

Since 2005 various ‘International Tibet Support Groups Conferences’ have taken place around the world (including Brussels, New Delhi, Dharamsala). Financed by state and semi-state funds from the USA and Germany, these conferences dealt with the following topics: coordination and cooperation between all the different Tibet NGOs, strategic shift from the promotion of autonomy to independence for Tibet and preparation of actions and media campaigns against the Olympics in Beijing. Of particular importance at these meetings was the setting up of two anti-Chinese umbrella organizations, namely, the Support Team Tibet/National Olympic Commission (NOC) Tibet and the Tibetan People’s Uprising Movement.

If the political and financial promoters of these exile-Tibetan NGOs are examined more closely, there is a definite move away from some small grassroots movements and in the direction of the big players in US-American foreign policy towards China. The names that then emerge are those of the multi-millionaire and entrepreneur George Soros, Carl Gershman, chairman of the National Endowment for Democracy or the deputy US foreign minister (and leading member of the Project for the New American Century) Paula Dobrianski, who met with leading Tibetan activists in Dharamsala in 2007.

Table 1 shows the official state funds invested by the US in supporting the many Tibet NGOs.

Two points should be emphasized here: first, the financial support began in financial year 2003, in good time for the 2008 Olympics; second, the overall annual sum for promoting exile-Tibetan NGOs is about US\$4 million per annum.

Of all the actions and highly professional media campaigns by exile Tibetan NGOs in the run-up to the Olympics brief mention should be made here of the activities of Lobsang Yeshe (former president of the Tibetan Youth Congress), who lives in Vienna, Austria. Together with the umbrella organization Support Team Tibet, he staged a perfect media coup in 2007: several exile-Tibetan organizations formed a quasi-fictive

Table 1. Structure of pro-Tibet and anti-Chinese media activities

Sponsors/donors	
National Endowment for Democracy (NED); Centre for Human Rights and Democracy; Project for the New American Century (PNAC); Kofi Annan Foundation; Open Society Institute (George Soros); Trace Foundation (Andrea Soros)	
Pro-Tibet NGOs, activities and campaigns paid by NED (2007)	Anti-Chinese NGOs, activities and campaigns paid by NED (2007)
Gu-Chu-Sum Movement of Tibet; International Campaign for Tibet (ICT); International Tibet Support Network (ITSN); Khawa Karpo Tibet Cultural Centre Charitable Trust; Social and Resource Development Fund (SARD); Social, Economic and Cultural Development Fund; Tibetan Literacy Society; Tibet Museum; Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD); Tibetan Parliamentary and Policy Research Centre (TPPRC); <i>Tibetan Review</i> ; Tibetan Women's Association (TWA); Tibetan Writers Abroad PEN Centre; and Voice of Tibet.	American Center for International Labor Solidarity; American Federation of Teachers Educational Foundation (AFTEF); BBC World Service Trust; <i>Beijing Spring</i> Magazine; Beijing Zhiaixing Information Counselling Centre; Centre for International Private Enterprise (CIPE); Centre for Modern China; China Aid Association; China Free Press; China Information Centre; Democratic China; Education Rights Working Group (ERW); Foundation for China in the 21st Century; Human Rights in China (HRIC); Independent Chinese PEN Centre; International Republican Institute; Laogai Research Foundation; Open Magazine Publishing; Reporters without Borders; Southern Mongolia Human Rights Information Centre (SMHRIC); Yirenping Information and Counselling Centre; Civic Exchange; Hong Kong Human Rights Monitor.

'Tibetan Olympic Committee' with the aim of achieving the participation of Tibet in the Games in China – which was completely utopian given that only recognized states are allowed to participate, but which made very effective media news. In addition to Lobsang Yeshi, the Tibetan Wangpo Tethong, a collaborator of the Green Bundestag deputy Petra Kelly in the early 1990s, was also responsible for this media project. Wangpo Tethong is meantime an employee of the Swiss company Kampagnenforum in Zurich, Switzerland, which organizes and implements professional campaigns for NGOs (e.g. Greenpeace). Just how professional that media work for the different exile-Tibetan NGOs is can be seen, among other things, from the use of actors to dramatically restage the police violence in Tibet in press photographs so as to impress it on people's memories.

Alongside the group of NGOs financed by the USA, the other NGO working against China and the Olympic Games was the French group Reporters without Borders. This NGO also works much more closely with governments than one might assume and than it itself has reported. Among its sources of funds are, among others, the multi-millionaire George Soros, the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), the French government and the EU Commission. The money placed at the disposal of RwB by the NED in 2007 was explicitly for media activities against China. In the course of 2007, RwB devoted its

attentions mainly to the theme of internet censorship in China, calling the People's Republic of China the world's largest 'jail for cyber-dissidents' and initiating a large international campaign against China, particularly in the light of the Olympic Games there, in which it called upon the Chinese government, on nine points, to end every form of internet censorship. Politically, Robert Ménard, founder and (until recently) president of RwB, is a highly influential person. During a meeting with the French foreign minister Bernard Kouchner in August 2007, the latter assured him of his support in the activities against China. In April 2008 this French foreign minister visited the German Bundestag on the very day when the German parliament was to have a plenary discussion about internet censorship worldwide; during that discussion, several deputies made reference to analyses carried out by RwB.

Even if in future a considerable amount of research work will be required on how PR companies are increasingly influencing and possibly even shaping international politics and international media relations (cf. Cowan and Cull, 2008), a significant difference must be acknowledged, however, when this is compared with the highly controversial debates about the New International Information Order in UNESCO during the 1970s and 1980s. Whereas then this referred mainly to the global market dominance of only five globally active news agencies, their position has meantime been taken by just a few globally operating PR companies. In just 30 years, the international media-imperialist dynamism has become decidedly more commercialized. What is more, hand in hand with this commercialization goes a process of privatization which is making the international public domain utterly non-transparent.

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Note

1. The media coverage in Chinese newspapers of the unrest in Tibet was very much more differentiated than the general anti-Communist prejudice would like to believe. As the Sinologist Christian Oberlander shows in detail in his BA thesis on the depiction of the unrest in Lhasa in the Chinese newspapers *Renmin Ribao*, *Nanfang Dushi Ba* and *Wen Wei Po*, these latter carried very different reports on the unrest in Tibet. He writes in summary that 'right after the events a relatively high degree of editorial freedom predominated' (2008: 27) and 'that the view of the west of the Chinese media must be revised' (2008: 28): 'Pluralism and control, free scope and censorship exist side by side' (2008: 28).

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