

China Goes Global: A History of Xinhua News Agency's International Expansion from 1978 to
1989

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Abstract

This thesis examines how the Communist Party of China (CCP) aimed to establish global media networks through Xinhua News Agency from 1978 to 1989. As China's central news agency and the highest level of Party-state media, Xinhua was uniquely positioned as the CCP's mouthpiece and intersection between national media, foreign affairs, and global news. This work focuses on Xinhua's shift from expanding into the Global South, specifically in Southeast Asia and Central-West Africa, to exploring partnerships with industrialized nations like South Korea. This shift was due to Xinhua's strategic division of the 'globe' into regions that supported its goals to become a world news agency and fulfill the CCP's political objectives.

Xinhua's globalization came at the heels of the CCP's reinstatement of "reform and opening" in 1978. This not only re-introduced policies of economic modernization and international re-engagement, but also a new conceptualization of the 'news' and news agencies in geopolitical affairs. Namely, Xinhua played a crucial role in this period as the news agency's disaggregation of the Global South actively worked to achieve its ambitions to transform from a state-run national news agency to a world news agency.

This thesis provides a more nuanced understanding into how China saw and defined the region of the "Global South" and contributes to the existing scholarship on South-South connections and China's own globalization. By situating the CCP's transformation of Xinhua within this global frame, it shows how Xinhua's development was not achieved within a historical vacuum. Instead, this research not only demonstrates how the CCP's goals from 1978 to 1989 are still relevant today, but also enables future scholarship to address broader considerations into how media serves different interest groups within world history and contemporary politics.

Lay Summary

This thesis examines the globalization of Xinhua News Agency from 1978 to 1989. The reform policies instituted by the Communist Party of China (CCP) in 1978 shaped a new understanding of media, as Xinhua embarked on a journey to become a world news agency. This thesis focuses on the shift in Xinhua's global expansion from Southeast Asia and Central-West Africa to industrialized nations like South Korea by the end of the decade. To explore the news agency's internationalization, it uses sources from Xinhua and other international news organizations, foreign policy documents from the CCP, and speeches from Xinhua's high-level officials. Ultimately, in the news agency's quest for global media power, where and why Xinhua set its priorities for expansion reflected the CCP's broader understanding of globalization and China's role in the international community.

Preface

This thesis is the original, unpublished, independent work by the author, Elizabeth Wu Ren.

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List of Abbreviations

AFP	Agence-France Press
AP	Associated Press
CCP	The Communist Party of China
NIIO	New International Information Order
NWICO	New World Information and Communication Order
PRC	People's Republic of China
SCIO	State Council Information Office
UNESCO	The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UPI	United Press International

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To my parents

Introduction: “Breaking News from China”

Huawei is the second largest global telecommunications company after Samsung. Over 170 countries and jurisdictions use Huawei’s products and services, including broadband access and broader telecommunications provisions. Since the 2000s, however, there have been repeated allegations and concerns over Huawei’s collusion with the Communist Party of China (CCP), and cybersecurity concerns over their telecommunication infrastructures. These concerns only grew as it began to compete with countries such as the United States in developing 5G networks. In 2019, a report commissioned by the Papua New Guinea (PNG) National Cyber Security Centre stated that the data centre built for the Australian government had exploitable flaws.¹ In June 2020, France’s cybersecurity agency, Agence Nationale de la Sécurité des Systèmes d’Information (ANSSI), encouraged telecom operators not to use Huawei equipment.² In August 2021, the multilingual technology blog *Engadget* reported that Huawei was accused of pressuring US companies to gain access to sensitive citizen and government data “important to Pakistan national security.”³

The anxiety over Huawei implies that China’s global expansion is seen as a ‘new phenomenon,’ that since 2019 has been referred to as the new “potentially grave national security risk” especially as countries like the United States built out their next generation 5G

¹ Nathan Vanderklippe, “Huawei-built data centre a ‘failed investment,’ Papua New Guinea says,” *The Globe and Mail*, August 14, 2020. <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/world/article-huawei-built-data-centre-a-failed-investment-papua-new-guinea-says/>. Last accessed December 23, 2021.

² Florian Dèbes, Fabienne Schmitt, “Il n’y aura pas un bannissement total de Huawei », affirme le patron de l’Anssi,” *Les Echos*, July 6, 2020. <https://www.lesechos.fr/tech-medias/hightech/il-ny-aura-pas-un-bannissement-total-de-huawei-affirme-le-patron-de-lanssi-1221434>. Last accessed, December 23, 2021. See, “France won’t ban Huawei, but encouraging 5G telcos to avoid it: report,” *Reuters*, July 5, 2020. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-france-huawei-5g-idUSKBN2460TT>. Last accessed, December 23, 2021.

³ Dan Strumpf, “Huawei Accused in Suit of Installing Data ‘Back Door’ in Pakistan Project,” *The Wall Street Journal*, August 14, 2021. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/huawei-accused-in-suit-of-installing-data-back-door-in-pakistan-project-11628947988>. Last accessed, December 23, 2021.

networks.⁴ As this project and others have shown, China has been globalizing for at least forty years. The rapid internationalization and globalization of Chinese media has raised old and new concerns over the CCP's presence around the world. Huawei is just one of many examples of the Party using media, in its various forms, to enact its own political interests and foreign policy. One equally important, but understudied aspect of Party-sponsored media is the development of international news, particularly Xinhua News Agency.

While this is not a project on Huawei, it is about the role of media, state power, and foreign diplomacy in an earlier age of new technologies and global competition for media control. My thesis studies the globalization of Xinhua from 1978 to 1989 to understand how its transformation into a world news agency reflected the CCP's broader reactions to shifting geopolitical conditions and the value of global communications in the CCP's foreign policy objectives. This work examines how global communications factored into the Party's understanding of media in this period and why Xinhua became the face of a global media project that is increasingly influential in the world today.

Although Chinese media is a 'hot topic' today, Xinhua is scarcely mentioned. Created in 1931 as a news redistribution mechanism for the Communist Party, Xinhua grew into the most influential state-run news agency in China and is considered the largest news agency by number of correspondents worldwide.⁵ News agencies, also known as a press agency or news organization, are sometimes described as "wholesale news providers" with a wide range of

⁴ Colin Lecher and Russel Brandom, "Is Huawei a Security Threat? Seven Experts Weigh In," *The Verge*, March 17, 2019. <https://www.theverge.com/2019/3/17/18264283/huawei-security-threat-experts-china-spying-5g>. Last accessed February 28, 2022.

⁵ "Top 200 News Agencies," *International Media and Newspapers*, 4IMN, September 6, 2019. <https://www.4imn.com/news-agencies/>.

content from politics to entertainment news.⁶ They gather, write, and distribute news nationally or globally to newspapers, radio and television broadcasters, government agencies, and other users.⁷ While they did not generally publish news before the internet, Dominic Boyer has argued that “news agencies have thus long been important nodes in the production and distribution of facts and messages from afar.”⁸

Over the past forty years, Xinhua has made substantial gains in its efforts to secure international influence. Today, it operates in over 170 countries, publishes in 8 languages, and owns over 20 newspapers and magazines. It has partnered with international organizations such as UNESCO to establish international communication networks and worked with UNICEF on global fundraising campaigns.⁹ Xinhua has steadily risen in the ranks to become a top-tier news agency competing with others like Reuters, Associated Press (AP), and United Press International (UPI) for global news dominance.

But how did it get here?

In 1978, Deng Xiaoping, the paramount leader of China, enacted the policies of “reform and opening” to bring economic modernization and international engagement to the forefront of the CCP’s political agenda. During this period, the Party began transforming its media systems from solely internal propaganda to also serve as forms of external or international propaganda.

⁶ Jelle Boumans, Damian Trilling and Rens Vliegthart, “The Agency Makes the (Online) News World Go Round: The Impact of News Agency Content on Print and Online News,” *International Journal of Communication* 12 (2018): 1769.

⁷ The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, “News Agency.” Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2022. Boumans et al., “The Agency Makes the (Online) News World Go Round,” 1769.

⁸ Dominic Boyer, “News Agency and News Mediation in the Digital Era,” *Social Anthropology* 19 (2011): 9; Boumans et al., “The Agency Makes the (Online) News World Go Round,” 1768-1769.

⁹ UNESCOPRESS. “UNESCO and Chinese Media Giant Xinhua Join Forces | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization,” *UNESCO Media Services*, October 15, 2010. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2010/10/356042-unesco-chinese-media-giant-join-forces-promote-education-culture>; UNICEF. “UNICEF and Xinhua Join Forces to Promote Children’s Rights,” *UNICEF Press Release China*, November 5, 2009. <https://www.unicef.cn/en/press-releases/unicef-and-xinhua-join-forces-promote-childrens-rights>.

The CCP dedicated a significant amount of energy to developing its media reach to expand the Party's foreign policy aims and broadcast "the voice of China."¹⁰

The Party's renewed interest in media policy was not unusual given the conversations around global media and new technologies in the postwar period. The 1970s saw a new era in the globalization of new technologies like personal computers and modern internetworking computer systems.¹¹ Media continued to be a force in political, social, and cultural spaces that regulated information flow and foreign diplomacy. The proposed ideas for international communication organizations, such as the New World Communication and Information Order (NWICO) and the New International Information Order (NIIO), opened new discussions on national and global communication networks and media policy in the 1970s.¹² Simultaneously, Global South nations saw an opportunity in these proposed ideas to shape a new world communication order and overturn the Western-centric dominated ones that monopolized the world's news, film, and advertising.¹³

Xinhua played a particularly prominent role in the developments of new media technologies and global media networks in this period. As the Party's *houshe* or 'official mouthpiece,' Xinhua had a central position within the Party's propaganda system and foreign media infrastructures.¹⁴ This enabled it to become a world news agency and global "voice for

¹⁰ Junhao Hong, "From the World's Largest Propaganda Machine to a Multipurposed Global News Agency: Factors and Implications of Xinhua's Transformation Since 1978." *Political Communication* 28, no. 3 (2011): 380.

¹¹ 18. David Reynolds, "Science, Technology, and the Cold War," in *The Cambridge History of the Cold War: Volume 3: Endings*. Vol. 3, eds. Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010). <https://doi.org/10.1017/CHOL9780521837217>.

¹² Jonas Brendebach, "Towards a New International Communication Order? UNESCO, Development, and "National Communication Policies" in the 1960s and 1970s" in *International Organizations and the Media in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries: Exorbitant Expectations*, 158-159, eds. Jonas Brendebach, Martin Herzer, & Heidi J.S. Tworek (London, Routledge: 2018), 159; Vanessa Freije, "The 'Emancipation of Media': Latin American Advocacy for a New International Information Order in the 1970s," *Journal of Global History* 14, no. 2 (2019): 301, doi: 10.1017/S1740022819000081.

¹³ Brendebach, "Towards a New International Communication Order," 159; Freije, "The 'Emancipation of Media'," 309.

¹⁴ Chinese characters for *houshe* 喉舌. See, Tian Congming 田聰明, "Message from the President of Xinhua News Agency: Speech from Comrade Tian Congming, President of Xinhua News Agency on the 70th Anniversary of Xinhua News Agency 新

China.”¹⁵ Starting in 1978, Xinhua created a specific image and concept behind a “world news agency” that differed from other international news organizations at the time like Reuters or AP.

Mu Qing, the Director-General of Xinhua from 1982 to 1992, contrasted Xinhua with the traditional ‘world news agencies’ in the West that collected news and economic information, and are composed of networks of journalists, global users, and modern communication networks.¹⁶ Mu argued that the fundamental differences between Xinhua and the Western news agency model was their “adherence to the guidance of Marxism,” the news agency’s focus on the “Third World,” and the emphasis of the ‘Chinese voice’ in its news.¹⁷ These differences shaped Xinhua’s goal to “become a powerful rival to the Western News Agency.”¹⁸ This constituted turning Xinhua into a premiere ‘alternative news source’ that targeted the Global South to “strengthen equal cooperation with the press circles of Third World countries, break the monopoly of Western public opinion on international news, and work hard to establish a new international news order.”¹⁹

Mu Qing was not the only Xinhua official who had this vision for the news agency. Ding Yangyan, Xinhua’s Director of Foreign Affairs, echoed similar sentiments and described a world news agency as giving “more coverage to the affairs of Third World countries.”²⁰ Finally,

华社社长致词：新华社社长田聪明同志在新华社建社 70 周年纪念大会上的讲话，” *Commemoration 纪念活动*, 2001, http://www.xinhuanet.com/ztbd/xinhua70/jndh_sz.htm.

¹⁵ Tian Congming, “Message from the President of Xinhua News Agency,” 2001; Zhao Xin and Yu Xiang, “Does China’s Outward Focused Journalism Engage a Constructive Approach? A Qualitative Content Analysis of Xinhua News Agency’s English News.” *Asian Journal of Communication* 29, no. 4 (2019): 348, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01292986.2019.1606263>; Hong, “From the World’s Largest Propaganda Machine,” 380.

¹⁶ Mu Qing 穆清, “Shoulder the Sacred Mission: Speech at the Meeting to Commemorate the 60th Anniversary of Xinhua News Agency 肩负起神圣的历史使命：在纪念新华社诞生 60 周年大会上的讲话,” *China Academic Journal Electronic Publishing House*, (1991): 7.

¹⁷ Mu, “Shoulder the Sacred Mission,” (1991): 7.

¹⁸ Mu, “Shoulder the Sacred Mission,” (1991): 7.

¹⁹ Mu, “Shoulder the Sacred Mission,” (1991): 7.

²⁰ Ron Redmond, “China’s Xinhua attempts to be a World News Agency,” United Press International, December 16, 1984. <https://www.upi.com/Archives/1984/12/16/Chinas-Xinhua-attempts-to-become-a-world-news-agency/8837472021200/>.

Xinhua's Director Zeng Tao, stated that as a government news agency, Xinhua was to "reflect the people's struggle, experience and wishes and works to promote the understanding between the Chinese people and the people of the world."²¹

Ultimately, the conceptualization of a world news agency for Xinhua had three components: 1). A news agency that primarily serviced the Global South, 2). A news agency that spread the correct information of "socialist China to the international community," 3). A news agency that could successfully compete against the "Big Four" news organizations—Reuters, Agence-France Presse, United Press International, and Associated Press—in global news reporting and international reach.²²

The Global South's prominence in Xinhua's globalization also raises a differentiation between the actors' categories and historians' analytical terms for the region that broadly make up Latin America, Africa, Asia, and Oceania. In the Chinese context, this region is still referred to as the "Third World 第三世界." Western scholarship has diverged away from this type of categorization of the region for others such as the Global South or majority world. Nour Dados and Raewyn Connell argued that it was a shift away from "development or cultural difference" towards "geopolitical power relations."²³ This differentiation reiterates how Xinhua became a lens into China's understanding of the world, how it would disaggregate the 'global,' and its implications for China-Global South relations.

²¹ Zeng Tao, "Background Information: Xinhua News Agency 50 Years Old," The Xinhua General Overseas News Service, November 10, 1981.

²² James R. Brennan, "The Cold War battle over global news in East Africa: decolonization, the free flow of information, and the media business, 1960–1980," *Journal of Global History* 10, no. 2 (2015): 346; Donald Read, *The Power of News: The History of Reuters*. 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999). Hong, "From the World's Largest Propaganda Machine," 377-393; Mu, "Shoulder the Sacred Mission," (1991): 7.

²³ Nour Dados and Raewyn Connell, "The Global South," *Contexts* 11, no. 1 (February 2012): 12–13.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1536504212436479>.

This thesis uses the international expansion of Xinhua to explore how the CCP understood the importance of globalization and where it set its priorities. It pays close attention to Xinhua's disaggregation of the 'global' and examines how the news agency's understanding of the world and its role in global communication networks shifted in this period due to its demands and capabilities to achieve global media power. Specifically, Xinhua changed its focus from expansion into the Global South to exploring partnerships with industrialized nations from 1978 to 1989, because of Xinhua's strategic division of the globe into regions that would support its ambitions to become a world news agency and fulfill the CCP's political objectives. This thesis provides a more nuanced understanding of how China saw and defined the "Global South," and contributes to the existing scholarship on South-South connections and China's own globalization.²⁴

The core of this study is how China's media history fits into the broader discourse on the globalization of news. We shall see that up to now the current scholarship has failed to do two things. First, it has yet to incorporate the histories of China and its media systems. As further explained in the following section, recent scholarship on international communication ideas like the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) and the New International Information Order (NIIO) have left out the role of national news agencies, such as Xinhua.²⁵ Especially, in the context of national communication systems for the Global South, China's experiences are largely excluded from the narrative.

²⁴ For more scholarship, see sub-section "The Charm Offensive of Chinese Media." Joshua Kurlantzick, *Charm Offensive: How China's Soft Power is Transforming the World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007); Sarah Nelson, "A Dream Deferred: UNESCO, American Expertise, and the Eclipse of Radical News Development in the Early Satellite Age," *Radical History Review* 14, no. 1 (2021): 30, DOI: 10.1215/01636545-9170696.

²⁵ See, sub-section "The Charm Offensive of Chinese Media" for a further explanation on the relevant scholarship. Brendebach, "Towards a New International Communication Order," 158-159.

Second, the use of China's news organizations as global message machines and tools of foreign diplomacy has been missing from the studies on China's rise. Although Xinhua was poised to be an international news agency since the late 1940s, this vision only became a concrete reality after 1978. Xinhua's global expansion was aided by the CCP's renewed "reform and opening" policies of economic modernization and international re-engagement. Scholars such as Odd Arne Westad, Joshua Kurlantzick, and Mary O'Donnell, et al. have analyzed the historical processes behind China's global expansion and its rise as a contemporary global superpower.²⁶ This scholarship categorizes "reform and opening" in post-socialist China as a 'new era' that ushered in changing geopolitical objectives, mass industrialization across the nation, and newfound diplomatic relationships and foreign policy interests for the CCP. However, the current scholarship on this period of Chinese history and its global expansion have left out the role of news organizations in shaping and facilitating the Party's geopolitical objectives and China's globalization.

My investigation bridges these two narratives by examining how Xinhua became an international mouthpiece for the CCP, why it aligned itself as a news agency for the Global South and became a competitor against other international news organizations, and how it used its news systems to service the Party's goals for widespread political and cultural influence. This research explains the geopolitical mechanisms that contributed to a new world media and technological landscape, shaping Xinhua's own development and objectives to achieve unprecedented global news impact in this ten-year period.

²⁶ Odd Arne Westad, "The Great Transformation: China in the Long 1970s," 65-80, in *The Shock of the Global: The 1970s in Perspective*, eds. Niall Ferguson, Charles S. Maier, Erez Manela, Daniel J. Sargent (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011); Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad, eds, *The Cambridge History of the Cold War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), doi:10.1017/CHOL9780521837217.001; Joshua Kurlantzick, *Charm Offensive: How China's Soft Power is Transforming the World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 5-7; Mary Ann O'Donnell, Winnie Wong, and Jonathan Bach, *Learning from Shenzhen: China's Post-Mao experiment from Special Zone to Model City* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017).

The ‘Charm Offensive’ of Chinese Media

This research on Xinhua’s globalization bridges the broader literature on the control of information flows as a form of state power and the use of media to cultivate a nation’s global image, with the development of Chinese media in the post-reform period. China, in the words of Joshua Kurlantzick, has actively used a “Charm Offensive” strategy since 1978.²⁷ China’s use of ‘soft power’ has become a burgeoning topic of discussion to its expansive international engagement and ‘opening’ to the world in both historical and policy contexts.²⁸ Kurlantzick argues that the Party’s efforts deviated from Joseph Nye’s original definition of soft power to include everything outside of the security and military spheres—from public diplomacy and popular culture to foreign investments and multilateral organizations.²⁹

The CCP’s “proactive” and “far reaching” foreign policy, as categorized by Thomas Kane, reflected the Party’s post-Maoist goals to integrate “China’s aspirations for independence and communist principles of internationalism.”³⁰ Independence was rooted in the CCP’s political agenda to combat Euro-American colonialism and establish ‘Third World solidarity’ or a united front.³¹ Sandra Gillespie and Song Wei contextualize the history on ‘Third Worldism’ and China’s involvement in it. Post-Maoist global policies, especially in the Global South, were shaped by China’s own globalization. As Gillespie puts it, China’s behaviour in the international community can be viewed as “a reflection of its world image and self-image.”³²

²⁷ Kurlantzick, *Charm Offensive*, 5.

²⁸ Joseph S. Nye Jr., *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004), 5, 6.

²⁹ Kurlantzick, *Charm Offensive*, 6.

³⁰ Thomas Kane, “China’s Foundations: Guiding Principles of Chinese Foreign Policy,” 101-115, in *Chinese Foreign Policy in Transition*, eds. Guoli Liu, First Edition, (London: Routledge, 2017), 103-104. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315081281>.

³¹ Arif Dirlik, “Spectres of the Third World: Global Modernity and the End of the Three Worlds,” *Third World Quarterly* 25, no. 1 (2004): 133. Dirlik argues that the ‘means of reorganizing global relationships’ constituted a new paradigm later defined as globalization.

³² Sandra Gillespie, “Diplomacy on a South-South Dimension: The Legacy of Mao’s Three-World’s Theory and The Evolution of Sino-African Relations,” 109-130, in *Intercultural Communication and Diplomacy*, eds. Hannah Slavik (Geneva: Diplo Foundation, 2004), 109; Song Wei, “Seeking New Allies in Africa: China’s Policy towards Africa during the Cold War as

While Xinhua's history is situated within the internationalization of China, it is also part of the ongoing discourse on Party propaganda. As with many institutions and organizations in China, Xinhua cannot be separated from the CCP. Namely, the Party's sprawling "Propaganda-Education System 宣教系统" controlled all forms of communication and mediums that "transmit and convey information."³³ As Zhao Yuezhi explains, China's media systems originated from the Party's revolutionary theories and practices centred around "Mao's sinification of the Leninist press model in Yan'an in the early 1940s."³⁴ The party press served as a "channel of communication not only between the party leadership and local party officials but also between the party and the broad public."³⁵ In Xinhua's case, the news agency fell under the supervision of the State Council Information Office (SCIO) otherwise known as the "front organ for the world," which received its directives from the Central Propaganda Department and adhered to the Party's practices of "External Propaganda 对外宣传."³⁶

David Shambaugh, Zhao Yuezhi, and Anne-Marie Brady draw on the studies of the CCP's "thought-work" and propaganda rhetoric to tell the story of its 'External' or international propaganda tactics. Zhao distinguishes Maoist from Post-Maoist Chinese media through its commercialization and global reintegration to gain a status akin to the "elite press in the West."³⁷

Reflected in the Construction of the Tanzania–Zambia Railway," *Journal of Modern Chinese History* 9, no. 1 (2015): 46–65. For earlier work see, Samuel Kim, *China, the United Nations, and World Order* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979); Samuel Kim, "Mao Zedong and China's Changing World View," in *China in the Global Community*, ed. C. Hsiung and Samuel S. Kim (New York: Praeger, 1980), 16-39.

³³ David Shambaugh, "China's Propaganda System: Institutions, Processes and Efficacy," *The China Journal*, no. 57 (2007): 27-28. See also, Michael Schoenhals, *Doing Things with Words in Chinese Politics* (Berkeley East Asia Centre, 1992), 3, 8, 10. Schoenhals uses "language formularization" to analyze the CCP's propaganda system as an education tool for "appropriate" political discourse and public opinion.

³⁴ Zhao, Yuezhi. "Understanding China's Media System in a World Historical Context," in *Comparing Media Systems Beyond the Western World*, eds. Daniel C. Hallin and Paolo Mancini, 143–74 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 156.

³⁵ Zhao, "Understanding China's Media System in a World Historical Context," 156.

³⁶ Shambaugh, "China's Propaganda System," 49. Anne-Marie Brady, "China's Foreign Propaganda Machine | Wilson Center." Accessed December 19, 2020. <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/chinas-foreign-propaganda-machine>.

³⁷ Zhao, "Understanding China's Media System," 152, 154-156. See also, Zhao Yuezhi, *Communication in China: Political Economy, Power, and Conflict* (United Kingdom: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008).

To do so, it required a balance between the Party's existing objectives for propaganda to be a "moral guidance to the population" and its new interests in implementing commercial structures and social change into the system.³⁸ The Party's external propaganda machine, as examined by Shambaugh and Brady, composed of four principal missions: telling China's story to the world, countering perceived "hostile" foreign propaganda, countering Taiwan independence, and propagating China's foreign policy.³⁹ As with the role of media in the literature on China's internationalization, David Shambaugh states that China's external propaganda "constitutes a very important, but often overlooked, component of China's propaganda system."⁴⁰

The "overlooked" nature of Xinhua's globalization emerges as a pattern even in the scholarship on Chinese media and global media. The literature on Chinese media tends to focus on the internal mechanisms of media systems or news distribution, with an emphasis on the CCP's practices of censorship and suppression.⁴¹ Instead, scholars like Zhao Yuezhi and Xin Xin have tried assessing the globalization of Chinese media through the role of the market.⁴² Their arguments are predicated on putting Chinese media in conversation with the global economy to demonstrate how market forces, especially in the age of China's commercialization, shaped national news distribution, propaganda policies, and information flow.⁴³

The sparse references to Xinhua as a "global media giant" and "behemoth," rarely contain any historical analysis on the CCP's transformation of Xinhua's structures into a global

³⁸ Zhao, "Understanding China's Media System," 152.

³⁹ Shambaugh, "China's Propaganda System," 48; Brady, "China's Foreign Propaganda Machine," 2020.

⁴⁰ Shambaugh, "China's Propaganda System," 50. Brady, "China's Foreign Propaganda Machine," 2020.

⁴¹ He Qinglian, *The Fog of Censorship: Media Control in China*, trans. Paul Frank (New York: Human Rights in China, 2008).

⁴² Zhao Yuezhi, *Communication in China*, 2008; Xin, *How the Market is Changing China's News: The Case of Xinhua News Agency* (United Kingdom: Lexington Books, 2012), 4 & 49; Xin, "Structural Change and Journalism Practice," *Journalism Practice* 2, no. 1 (February 1, 2008): 46–47. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17512780701768501>.

⁴³ Xin, *How the Market is Changing China's News*, 4 & 49.

media network.⁴⁴ The most relevant analyses of global Xinhua comes from Hong Junhao, who explores the impact of multilateral institutions and decolonization narratives on Xinhua's expansion.⁴⁵ As Hong explains, Xinhua's two-staged transformation aimed to "restore itself as a *multifunctional news agency* rather than just a propaganda machine and then to develop itself to become an influential *world news agency* rather than just a domestic news agency."⁴⁶

By contrast, the field of global media studies uses a wider lens to analyze information flow and mass media in an international context. More broadly, these studies help us examine the larger questions on the uses and abuses of global information networks. International Relations scholars such as Henry Farrell and Abraham L. Newman analyze how the economic networks of global interdependence intersect with domestic institutions to create "coercive authority" or "weaponized interdependence."⁴⁷ Farrell and Newman argue that states with "political authority over central nodes in international network structures" can impose costs and leverage their interdependent relations to coerce others.⁴⁸ Specifically, states with the "appropriate domestic institutions" can weaponize their networks, gather information, or choke off economic and information flows to do everything from compel policy change to exploit vulnerabilities.⁴⁹

Global media historians such as Jonas Brendebach, Vanessa Freije, Diana Lemberg, and Sarah Nelson connect the media studies discipline with the evolving nature of globalization, international relations and multilateral organizations, and national ambitions.⁵⁰ Brendebach and

⁴⁴ Judy Polumbaum, *China Ink: The Changing Face of Chinese Journalism* (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2008), 13.

⁴⁵ Hong, "From the World's Largest Propaganda Machine," 2011.

⁴⁶ Hong, "From the World's Largest Propaganda Machine," 380. Emphasis added.

⁴⁷ Henry Farrell and Abraham L. Newman, "Weaponized Interdependence: How Global Economic Networks Shape State Coercion," *International Security* 44, no. 1 (2019): 43.

⁴⁸ Farrell and Newman, "Weaponized Interdependence," 45.

⁴⁹ Farrell and Newman, "Weaponized Interdependence," 45.

⁵⁰ Brendebach, "Towards a New International Communication Order," 2018; Diana Lemberg, *Barriers Down: How American Power and Free-Flow Policies Shaped Global Media* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019); Freije, "The 'Emancipation of Media'," 301.

Freije focus on the Global South and how multilateral institutions, such as UNESCO and their proposed communication organizations, tried to shape national media systems and global media discourse.⁵¹ While UNESCO's proposals for the creation of national communication systems independent from major news organizations were largely unsuccessful, their rhetoric had lasting implications for actors in the Global South and how they envisioned the global exchange of news and information. As Freije notes, the case of Latin America's experimentation with nationalist-oriented media systems predicated on a "South-South exchange of nationally produced information" with equal participation for an "alternative form of globalization rooted in national sovereignty."⁵²

While Lemberg and Nelson take different approaches to Brendebach and Freije, there are similar conclusions on the growing critique from the Global South on the Western-centric transnational news distribution. Lemberg charts the relationship between American political power and global media.⁵³ She describes a greater sensitivity to "cultural dimensions of material imbalances" and how Western advertising and propaganda shaped the media of the developing-world.⁵⁴ Nelson examines UNESCO, "American expertise," and the Global South in the age of early satellites in the 1960s. As Nelson argues, international news and its technological infrastructures were the "battlegrounds of imperial ambition and anticolonial contestation."⁵⁵ For her, satellites allowed for a decolonization of international communication infrastructures.⁵⁶ There are two standouts from Nelson's argument: 1). Nonaligned activism for media sovereignty

⁵¹ Brendebach, "Towards a New International Communication Order," 158-159; Freije, "The 'Emancipation of Media'," 301.

⁵² Freije, "The 'Emancipation of Media'," 303-305, 309.

⁵³ Lemberg, "Barriers Down," 153-154, 179.

⁵⁴ Lemberg, "Barriers Down," 190.

⁵⁵ Sarah Nelson, "A Dream Deferred: UNESCO, American Expertise, and the Eclipse of Radical News Development in the Early Satellite Age," *Radical History Review* 14, no. 1 (2021): 30, DOI: 10.1215/01636545-9170696.

⁵⁶ Nelson, "A Dream Deferred," 30.

was due to the “frustration over dreams of multilateral telecom and media development repeatedly deferred and denied” and 2). UNESCO played a much more complex role that created and *limited* opportunities for media development.⁵⁷

Overwhelmingly, current global media scholarship fails to incorporate the historical dimensions of Chinese media and its involvement in these broader nationalist media debates in the Global South and international communications policies. There is little attention on the Party’s use of media to change its global reputation and integrate itself with these Global South narratives around nationalist media independence and ‘South-South’ information exchange. While the current literature is foundational to Chinese and global media studies, it has not yet explicitly linked these two areas of study together. Moreover, it has not delved into how global communications factored into the CCP’s objectives for Chinese media or how China factored into the broader historical developments of global media.

My investigation into the intersection between Chinese media and global media uses Xinhua’s international expansion as a lens to argue how the CCP understood the importance of globalization and where it set its priorities. Xinhua’s prioritization of Southeast Asian and Central-West African nations reflected a form of disaggregating the ‘global’ to maximize the news agency’s potential in achieving its objective to become a world news agency and fulfill the CCP’s foreign policy interests. Moreover, Xinhua’s transition from creating news service agreements in the Global South to exploring its potential partnerships with industrialized nations demonstrated how the trajectory of its global expansion changed between 1978 to 1989. It

⁵⁷ Nelson, “A Dream Deferred,” 33.

reveals the deliberate and strategic choices that Xinhua made to suit its needs and ambitions for internationalization.

Some key archives that support this research include the Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS) database, Wilson Centre Digital Archives, and Xinhua News Agency's Digital Archives. From these archives, I draw on a range of political and institutional sources. Political sources consist of Plenum reports, public speeches from Xinhua's officials or other Party members, and Party documents like the *Directory of Chinese Government Agencies*. These give insight into the CCP's internal dynamics and broader global ambitions, how these ambitions fit in with news organizations, and demonstrate the reality of the Party's proposed policies.

Institutional sources are comprised of reports from Xinhua or other international news agencies like United Press International (UPI) and British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). These sources reveal how Xinhua implemented its practices of globalization and how other international news agencies cataloged Xinhua's global transformation. Moreover, in recognizing the political and ideological bias of all Party-sponsored reports and archival sources (approved and censored by the CCP), secondary journal articles and monographs supply further perspective into the Party and Xinhua's expectations versus the reality of their ambitions.

With this historiographical framework and primary sources in mind, the research on Xinhua's internationalization and disaggregation of the 'global' is divided into three parts. Each chapter traces the development of Xinhua's transformation into a world news agency from the Party's internal dynamics to the rationale behind Xinhua's prioritization of certain regions in its process of global expansion. The first chapter examines the CCP's internal mechanisms to understand why they had newfound ambitions to achieve global media power and how the Party's new media strategy revolved around the Global South. In chapter 2, we turn to why and

how Xinhua disaggregated the Global South through its expansion of news services into Southeast Asia and Central-West Africa. Finally, in chapter 3, we review Xinhua's shift away from the Global South towards industrialized nations in 1988 with the case study of North and South Korea, to understand how international and regional failures led to a shift in Xinhua's ambitions and practices of global expansion.

Chapter 1: ‘New to the News’ and the CCP’s Global Vision for Xinhua News Agency

If you walk down West Chang’an Avenue two slogans stand out: "long live the great Communist Party of China" and "long live the invincible Mao Zedong Thought." They sit at the formal entrance, also known as *Xinhuamen* or “New Gate of China,” of Zhongnanhai. Once a part of the imperial gardens, Zhongnanhai is now the headquarters for the Communist Party of China and State Council of China. It is where state leaders and other high-level Party officials handle their daily administrative duties. Just a ten-minute bike ride away is Xinhua News Agency 新华社. Located on the corner intersection of West Xuanwumen Street and Tonglinge Road, tucked away between Chaojia’s Lamb Soup and Yakeyuan Laomen’s Blade Sheared Noodles, sits China’s most influential global news organization.¹

Today China is a key player in global news networks and media systems. Its technological industrialization in the last four decades have turned news organizations such as Xinhua into a national and international phenomenon. The global impact of Chinese media today is rooted in the historical objectives of the Party to restructure its media systems alongside its newfound geopolitical interests. In 1978, Xinhua began the process to reinvent itself into a world news agency. It aimed to transform itself from “the world’s largest propaganda machine into a multi-purposed global news agency.”²

¹ “Contact Us,” *Xinhua News Agency*, 2021. <http://www.news.cn/contactus.htm>. Last Accessed, December 22, 2021; “Beijing Traffic Map 北京交通地图,” *UE Map Online 地图在线*, 2021. <http://www.uemap.com/traffic/beijing/>. Last Accessed, December 22, 2021.

² Hong, “From the World’s Largest Propaganda Machine,” 380; Cheng Manli and Liu Jiang, “Transmitting China’s Voice to the World: An Analysis of the History of Xinhua News Agency’s International News Report,” *The Chinese Journalist*, no. 3 (2011): 88–89. <http://chinesejournalist.xinhuanet.com/html/201103/chenmanli1.htm>. See, bibliography under journal articles for Chinese.

This chapter examines the CCP's internal mechanisms to understand why they had newfound ambitions to achieve global media power and how the Party's new media strategy revolved around the Global South. I show how the Party's interest to transform Xinhua into a world news agency was shaped by the evolving global media discourse and new technologies, the introduction of external or international propaganda into the Party's existing propaganda systems, and the CCP's continued focus on China-Global South relations.

The core characteristics of Xinhua's role as the Party's mouthpiece date back to the birth of the news agency in 1931. Originally, it started as a news redistribution mechanism that sent information to local newspapers run by regional Party administrations.³ After the establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, Xinhua became China's only legal news service and "authorized reporting agent" for the CCP.⁴

Critical to Xinhua's operations was its International News Department (IND), which was officially established on May 28, 1946. It not only ensured the news agency's breadth in covering "important events, progress, and experience in the socialist revolution," but also with staying informed on China's "international activities."⁵ Xinhua sent out its first overseas story in 1948 and opened its first foreign bureau in Prague in 1950.⁶ Xinhua's earlier global ambitions

³ Previous name (in traditional Chinese): "Red China News Agency" (*hongse zhonghua tongxunshe*, 紅色中華通訊社); Damien Ma and Neil Thomas, "In Xi We Trust: How Propaganda Might Be Working in the New Era," *MacroPolo*, September 12, 2018, <https://macropolo.org/analysis/in-xi-we-trust/>; Sun Baochuan, (孙宝传), "Journey to the World: From Yaodong into the World" (*zouxiang shijie de licheng*, 走向世界的历程: *cong yaodong zouxiang shijie*, 从窑洞走向世界), *China Academic Journal Electronic Publishing House*, 1991.

⁴ Tian Congming, "Message from the President of Xinhua News Agency," 2001 (see page 4 and 5, footnote 14 for full note information); Zhao Xin, and Yu Xiang. "Does China's Outward Focused Journalism Engage a Constructive Approach? A Qualitative Content Analysis of Xinhua News Agency's English News." *Asian Journal of Communication* 29, no. 4 (July 4, 2019): 346–362, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01292986.2019.1606263>; Hong Junhao. "From the World's Largest Propaganda Machine," 377-393; Zhao, *Communication in China*, 25.

⁵ Xinhua General Overseas News Service, "Background Information: Xinhua News Agency 50 Years Old," November 10, 1981; Xinhua General Overseas News Service, "Backgrounder International News Department of Xinhua News Agency," November 7, 2001.

⁶ Redmond, "Xinhua Attempts to be a World News Agency," *United Press International*, December 16, 1984. By 2001 the IND was the "largest international news reporting and editing department in China. See, footnote 17 for URL link.

were halted during the Cultural Revolution (1966 – 1976) along with its hopes for international expansion and growth.⁷ Foreign correspondents were called back to China, international news reporting was largely stopped or stayed within national borders, and China’s news agencies paused any goals to build or engage with global media networks.⁸

After 1978, the reversal of the Cultural Revolution’s policies created a new environment and ambition to focus its attentions on achieving global media power. These ambitions stemmed from a renewed understanding of media, especially news organizations, as not just propaganda tools but also global message machines.⁹ This was critical to the CCP’s “going global project,” which involved a global expansion of China’s “outward focused” media institutions and deploying state-run media organizations abroad.¹⁰ Xinhua News Agency became the leading representative in China’s global media transformation.¹¹ It became the face of the CCP’s goal to turn national news agencies into global media networks and establish Chinese media as a worthy competitor amongst existing international news organizations.

When Deng Xiaoping reinstated the policies of “reform and opening 改革开放” in 1978, the goals centred around implementing a socialist market economy and ‘opening China’ to the international community. These policies laid the foundation for a range of institutional,

⁷ Redmond, “Xinhua Attempts to be a World News Agency,” *United Press International*, December 16, 1984.

⁸ Typescript by Xinhua General Overseas News Service, “Backgrounder International News Department of Xinhua News Agency,” November 7, 2001. Foreign Broadcast Information Services (FBIS), Online Database, University of British Columbia Library Database, British Columbia, Canada.

⁹ Samuel Brazys, and Alexander Dukalskis, “China’s Message Machine,” *Journal of Democracy* 31, no. 4 (2020): 61 <https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2020.0055>.

¹⁰ Zhao Xin and Yu Xiang, “Does China’s Outward Focused Journalism Engage a Constructive Approach? A Qualitative Content Analysis of Xinhua News Agency’s English News,” *Asian Journal of Communication* 29, no. 4 (July 4, 2019): 346–362. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01292986.2019.1606263>; Zhuqing Cheng, Guy J. Golan, and Spiro Kioussis, “The Second-Level Agenda-Building Function of the Xinhua News Agency,” *Journalism Practice* 10, no. 6 (July 17, 2015): 744–762. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/10.1080/17512786.2015.1063079>; Maria Repnikova, *Chinese Soft Power*. Elements in Global China. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), 21, doi:10.1017/9781108874700.

¹¹ The full name of the news organization is 新华通讯社 (*Xinhua tongxun she*, Xinhua News Agency). This thesis refers to it as Xinhua News Agency or 新华社.

industrial, and cultural reforms across China, including Xinhua's vision to become a world news agency. This began at the Opening Session of the Central Committee Work Conference on November 10, 1978, when the Party Chairman and Premier at the time, Hua Guofeng introduced the acceleration of economic policies. Referred to as "reform and opening," these policies proposed a "drastic reformulation" for China's future to bring about "open door, international interdependence, division of labour, and specialization."¹²

Most importantly, to achieve this modernization, Hua stated that China must absorb "foreign technology and capital [to] catch up with the world's advancements."¹³ This fell in line with the Five-Year Plans instituted by the CCP between 1981 to 1990.¹⁴ In the Sixth Five Year Plan (1981-1985) and Seventh Five Year Plan (1986-1990) the Central People's Government of the PRC encouraged the continued developments of "news, publishing, broadcasting" and the major achievements in "foreign work" and internationalism.¹⁵ Hua's statement and the CCP's Five Year Plans outlined the Party's approach towards a new type of modernization. Primarily, how the ideas of media and internationalism became intertwined in the Party's own understanding of media and propaganda systems. News agencies such as Xinhua, not only became national propaganda systems but also global message machines that would distribute and promote the Chinese voice around the world.

¹² 17. Samuel S Kim, "China's Path to Great Power Status in the Globalization Era," 353-385. In *Chinese Foreign Policy in Transition*, eds. Guoli Liu. 1st Edition (London: Routledge, 2017), 364. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315081281>.

¹³ Hua Guofeng, "Hua Guofeng's Speech at the Opening Session of the CCP Central Work Conference," November 10, 1978, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Hubei Provincial Archives SZ1-4-791. Wuhan, Hubei, China. Translated by Caixia Lu. <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/121688>

¹⁴ The Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China. Five Year Plans, 6th Five Year Plan (第六个五年计划). National People's Congress Website, December 10, 1982. http://www.npc.gov.cn/wxzl/gongbao/2000-12/26/content_5001347.htm; The Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China. Five Year Plans, 7th Five Year Plan (第七个五年计划). National People's Congress Website, March 25, 1986. http://www.npc.gov.cn/wxzl/wxzl/2000-12/06/content_1763.htm.

¹⁵ The Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China. 6th Five Year Plan, December 10, 1982.; The Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China. 7th Five Year Plan, March 25, 1986.

As described by Zhao Yuezhi, this ‘new media era’ was ushered in by the “reform and opening” policies that intended to use media systems as forms of foreign relations and soft power diplomacy.¹⁶ By building Xinhua into an “outward-facing” news agency, the Party wanted to elevate Xinhua onto the global stage of press agencies and proudly spread the message of Chinese political and cultural values.¹⁷ These newfound ambitions to combine media developments with studies in internationalism were a reflection and culmination of the Party’s policies to achieve global media power through its national news organization.

The other significant change to the CCP’s internal dynamics was the rebuilding of the ‘External Propaganda’ department. In addition to the new integration between media and internationalism, Xinhua’s globalization was also shaped by the Party’s clearer distinctions between internal and external propaganda. While a well-known part of the Party’s propaganda system repertoire today, at the time this restructuring aimed to strengthen China’s image and global distribution of information abroad.¹⁸ The CCP aimed to establish new apparatuses to promote the ideas of external propaganda. As China’s involvement with world affairs grew, so did its “sensitivity to its image abroad.”¹⁹ This made external propaganda work the utmost importance to leadership and became a key tool of the Party’s foreign policy.

¹⁶ Zhao, “Understanding China’s Media System in a World Historical Context,” 149 (cited by Zhao, 1998); see also, Majid Tehrani, “Global Communications and International Relations: Changing Paradigms and Policies.” *International Journal of Peace Studies* 2, no. 1 (1997): 39-64. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/45037972>.

¹⁷ “Great Big Secret: The Past of Xinhua News Agency, Part Two, Episode Three 大揭秘: 新华社 往事: 下集, 第三集.” Directed by Xia Zhoubo 夏舟波. *YouTube, Hubei Media Group* 湖北卫视. 湖北广播电视台, 21:33 minutes, July 4, 2019. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n1IF00tVPII>.

¹⁸ Brady, “China’s Foreign Propaganda Machine,” 2020.

¹⁹ Shambaugh, “China’s Propaganda Systems,” 47.

On April 8, 1980, the External Propaganda Leading Group (EPLG) was created as a joint sponsorship between the CCP Central Committee and the State Council Information Office.²⁰

The EPLG, or External Propaganda department, had four principal missions:

(1) to tell China’s story to the world, publicize Chinese government policies and perspectives, and promote Chinese culture abroad; (2) to counter what is perceived to be hostile foreign propaganda (such as the so-called “China threat theory”); (3) countering Taiwan independence proclivities and promoting unification and **(4) propagating China’s foreign policy.**²¹

The EPLG’s aim was to ensure its widespread control of media, from radio to provincial newspapers. In the case of Xinhua, since its operations fell under the purview of the EPLG and SCIO, the news agency paid particular attention to the first and fourth principal mission: telling China’s story to the world and propagating China’s foreign policy. Further supporting the Party’s newfound ambitions for global media power, the internal dynamics of the propaganda systems in the 1980s underwent a restructuring so that Xinhua’s operations worked in tandem with the SCIO’s function as the “front organ to the world.”²² Essentially, Xinhua was projected to become the chief administrator in disseminating and popularizing all aspects of Chinese culture, language, and politics to “promote China’s cultural image and ‘soft power’” abroad.²³

The second part to the CCP’s quest for global media power was its diplomatic strategy towards the Global South. As previously mentioned, the proposed international communications

²⁰ Shambaugh, “China’s Propaganda Systems,” 48; Brady, “China’s Foreign Propaganda Machine,” 2020. EPLG in Mandarin: 对外宣传领导小组. SCIO in Mandarin: 中华人民共和国国务院新闻办公室.

²¹ Emphasis added. Central Propaganda Department Cadre Bureau Writing Group (新时期宣传思想工作, *xin shiqi xuanchuan sixiang gongzuo*). Beijing: China Film Publishing, 1980 (*zhongguo dianying chubanshe*, 中国电影出版社), 188-189, also found in Shambaugh, “China’s Propaganda Systems,” 48-49.

²² Brady, “China’s Foreign Propaganda Machine,” 2020. Directory of Chinese Government Agencies (*Zhōngguó zhèngfǔ jīgòu mínglù*, 中国政府机构名录), 267; Shambaugh, “China’s Propaganda Systems,” 50; Zhuqing Cheng, Guy J. Golan, and Spiro Kioussis. “The Second-Level Agenda-Building Function of the Xinhua News Agency,” *Journalism Practice* 10, no. 6 (July 17, 2015): 744–762. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/10.1080/17512786.2015.1063079>.

²³ Brady, “China’s Foreign Propaganda Machine,” 2020; Directory of Chinese Government Agencies (*Zhōngguó zhèngfǔ jīgòu mínglù*, 中国政府机构名录), 267; Shambaugh, 50; Cheng et al. “The Second-Level Agenda-Building Function of the Xinhua News Agency,” 745.

ideas of the 1960s and 1970s such as the New World Communication and Information Order (NWICO) and the New International Information Order (NIIO) facilitated new discussion forums around communication networks and media policy. The Global South was prominently featured in these discussions, with their objective to shape a new world communication order and overturn the Western-centric dominated narratives that monopolized the world's news, film, and advertising.²⁴ As Arif Dirlik stated, the prominence of Global South voices emerged from the efforts by radical advocates to reorganize global relationships and combat “Euro-American colonialism and hegemony.”²⁵

The “NWICO debates” originated from national and intellectual critiques on the economic and technological imbalances in global markets and media, and aimed to formulate international policy norms for national communication systems.²⁶ Similarly, the NIIO envisioned a platform for Global South solidarity through the end of Soviet-American imperialist agendas in global mass media.²⁷ It aimed to reorganize existing communication channels that were “the legacy of the colonial past” and create new global media infrastructures to support a South-South exchange of “nationally production information.”²⁸ This ‘South-South exchange of information’ formed the basis of the Global South’s media initiatives and news networks to combat communication imperialism and create a platform for Third World solidarity.

²⁴ Brendebach, “Towards a New International Communication Order,” 159; Freije, “The ‘Emancipation of Media’,” 309.

²⁵ Dirlik, “Spectres of the Third World,” 133; Giuliano Garavini, *After Empires: European Integration, Decolonization, and the Challenge from the Global South 1957-1986* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 231-232.; Aijaz Ahmad, *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures* (London: Verso, 1992), 3, 7.

²⁶ Brendebach, *International Organizations and the Media*, 162. Wilbur Schramm considered one of the ‘founding fathers’ on media studies in the postwar era, argued that media played a direct role in nation-building (162).

²⁷ Freije, “The ‘emancipation of media,’” 301.

²⁸ James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies NAM Disarmament Database (henceforth CNS), Documents of the Fourth Conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries, Algiers, 5–9 September 1973, p. 88, <http://cns.miis.edu/nam/#&panel1-1> (consulted August 2021).; Freije, 301 & 309.

To understand how the Global South's communication initiatives fit into the CCP's own global media strategy, we must turn to the history of China's relationship with the Global South. This relationship can be traced back to the 1940s and 1950s when Mao Zedong aimed to establish a coalition with countries in the 'Third World.' Mao drew inspiration from the Soviet Union's (USSR) "Two-Camp Theory," initially proposed in 1947 by Andrei Zhdanov, the former secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Zhdanov's theory divided the postwar international situation into two major camps: "the imperialist and anti-democratic camp" and "the anti-imperialist and democratic camp."²⁹

Mao adopted the Soviet's earlier 'two camps' framework while ideologically and politically distancing China from the USSR, emphasizing a united front of "intermediate zones."³⁰ These zones served as the foundation to the Party's diplomatic approach towards the Global South and composed of a "vast zone that separated the two rivals [US and USSR]: a zone that included many capitalist, colonial, and semi-colonial countries across Europe, Asia, and Africa."³¹ When Mao introduced his "'Three Worlds' theory 三个世界的理论" on February 22, 1974 in a meeting with the president of Zambia, Kenneth David Kaunda, his theory proposed that Africa, Latin America, and all Asian countries (except Japan) belonged to the Third World.³²

²⁹ Andrei Zhdanov, "New Aspects of World Conflict: The International Situation," September 22, 1947, September 22, 1947. <http://soviethistory.msu.edu/1947-2/cold-war/cold-war-texts/zhdanov-on-the-international-situation/>

³⁰ Sandra Gillespie, *South-South Transfer*, 111.

³¹ Gillespie, "Diplomacy on a South-South Dimension," 111; Gillespie, *South-South Transfer*, 111.

³² "Mao Zedong, 'On the Question of the Differentiation of the Three Worlds'," February 22, 1974, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Translation from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China and the Party Literature Research Center under the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, eds., *Mao Zedong on Diplomacy* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1998), 454. <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/119307>; "President Kaunda of Zambia Visits China: Report and Joint Communique," *Peking Review* (北京周报) 27, June 30, 1967. For the purposes of this paper, the term "Global South" and "Third World" may be used interchangeably due to preferences of the historians and preferences of the author (see introduction).

His theory represented a new geopolitical strategy based on overturning imperialism instead of ideological symmetry.³³

After Mao's death, the CCP maintained its focus on the Global South. The Seventh Five Year Plan (1986-1990) emphasized China's relationship with the rest of the 'Third World' in maintaining world peace, confronting the superpowers, and establishing a joint effort of the peoples to promote development.³⁴ These were the circumstances that constituted transforming Xinhua into a premiere 'alternative news source' for the Global South. As Mu Qing, Xinhua's Director-General, stated this new idea of news for the Global South revolved around their speciality of using a Marxist, scientific outlook and methodology to give their news "authority, authenticity, credibility, and power," as well as correctly reflect the image of socialist China to the international community.³⁵ Xinhua's primary goal was to "strengthen equal cooperation with the press circles of Third World countries, break the monopoly of Western public opinion on international news, and work hard to establish a new international news order."³⁶

This categorization did not just construct Xinhua as this 'alternative news source' for the Global South. It would also establish Xinhua as a competitor against other international news organizations, like Reuters, that were also intent on expanding their influence across the Global South in this period.³⁷ As international news became another battleground for imperial ambitions

³³ During his 1954 interview with the Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, Mao emphasized that "[i]n spite of differences in our ideologies and social systems, we have an overriding common point, that is, all of us have to cope with imperialism." See, "Minutes of Chairman Mao Zedong's First Meeting with Nehru," October 19, 1954, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, PRC FMA 204-00007-01, 1-10. Obtained by Chen Jian and translated by Chen Zhihong. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/117825>.

³⁴ The Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China. 7th Five Year Plan, March 25, 1986.

³⁵ Mu, "Shoulder the Sacred Mission," (1991): 7.

³⁶ Mu, "Shoulder the Sacred Mission," (1991): 7.

³⁷ Mu, "Shoulder the Sacred Mission," (1991): 7.; Nelson, "A Dream Deferred," 30.

and industrialized nations, Xinhua tried to set itself apart by promoting itself as a ‘Third World news agency made for the Third World.’³⁸

Xinhua’s new distinction as a ‘Third World’ news agency was not just influenced by the CCP’s own foreign policy interests towards the region. It was also shaped by the proposed national communication systems and movements like the NWICO and NIIO. In both cases, UNESCO was at the forefront for much of the research, interest, and technical support for these proposed ideas in the 1970s. At the same time, UNESCO also became the first UN specialized agency to restore China’s legitimate seat to the organization on October 29, 1971.³⁹ By 1979, the Chinese National Commission for UNESCO was established.⁴⁰

China’s entrance into UNESCO was significant in two ways. First, the acceptance of China into organizations like UNESCO also exposed it to ongoing debates from the Global South on national communication systems and global media. The CCP had shared many similar sentiments raised by Global South nations related to the hegemony of Western media and the value of developing communication systems independent to Western news agencies.⁴¹ Even if China was not a member of the Group of 77, the major body that initiated the NWICO, it was a strong supporter of its ideas and consistently participated in its related activities.⁴² As Junhao Hong stated, UNESCO and its push for ideas like the NWICO had influenced the development of Xinhua’s global operations and intent on becoming a ‘Third World’ news agency.⁴³

³⁸ Mu, “Shoulder the Sacred Mission,” (1991): 7; Hong, “From the World’s Largest Propaganda Machine,” 380.

³⁹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, “Permanent Mission of the People’s Republic of China to the United Nations Office at Geneva and Other International Organizations in Switzerland,” *Ministry of Foreign Affairs Archived Website*, 2004. <https://www.mfa.gov.cn/ce/cegv/eng/tsjg/jgjbtc/t85565.htm>. Last accessed, February 28, 2022.

⁴⁰ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, “Permanent Mission of the People’s Republic of China to the United Nations Office at Geneva and Other International Organizations in Switzerland,” *Ministry of Foreign Affairs Archived Website*, 2004. <https://www.mfa.gov.cn/ce/cegv/eng/tsjg/jgjbtc/t85565.htm>. Last accessed, February 28, 2022.

⁴¹ Hong, “From the World’s Largest Propaganda Machine,” 387.

⁴² Hong, “From the World’s Largest Propaganda Machine,” 387.

⁴³ Hong, “From the World’s Largest Propaganda Machine,” 387.

Second, we see the broader implications of China's integration into international organizations in the 1970s. As Odd Arne Westad states, the 1970s was a critical point in China's own internationalization as it transitioned away from being an "estranged divorcee of the International System."⁴⁴ After China was supported by the United States for the annual bid of the UN Security Council in 1971, it also allowed for the CCP's re-integration of China into the international system and multilateral organizations.⁴⁵ Primarily, this consisted of a renewed engagement with Global South nations, sending ambassadors back to countries (Thailand, Philippines), and providing large sums of aid to others (Tanzania, Zambia, Pakistan).⁴⁶ China's rapid re-integration into the international system also played a significant role in furthering the CCP's foreign policy interests in the Global South, as well as determining Xinhua's attention to global expansion in the region in the 1980s.

The history of China's relationship with the Global South had a significant role in shaping where and why Xinhua chose specific nations and regions to expand its news services. During the reform era, the Party recognized the value of media as a tool amongst others to strengthen its renewed interests in international engagement. The Global South quickly became the forefront of Xinhua's own expansion for two reasons. First, the CCP's continued commitment and engagement with the 'Third World' across all Party institutions. Second, the creation of a news organization that would support the Global South's pleas to combat Western-centric media narratives with new forms of nationalist communications systems.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Westad, "The Great Transformation," 78-79.

⁴⁵ China expanded its memberships from one intergovernmental organization (IGOs) and fifty-eight international nongovernmental organizations (INGOs) to forty-six IGOs and 1,568 INGOs by 2003. See, Ann Kent, *Beyond Compliance: China: International Organizations, and Global Security* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007). Edward Friedman. *China's Rise, Taiwan's Dilemmas and International Peace* (London: Routledge, 2005), 89-90, 175.

⁴⁶ Jeremy Friedman, *Shadow War* (North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 183 & 195; Thomas J. Bellows, "Taiwan's Foreign Policy in the 1970s: A Case Study of Adaptation and Viability," *Asian Survey* 16, no. 7 (1976): 593.

⁴⁷ Cheng et al., "The Second-Level Agenda-Building Function of the Xinhua News Agency," 744.

By the early 1980s, Xinhua was gradually increasing its presence in the Global South through its expansion of overseas bureaus, partnerships, and news services agreements. In the following chapter, we take a closer look at Xinhua's strategy in the Global South by examining where it prioritized its expansion and why. Specifically, it will explore the news agency's growing partnerships with Southeast Asian and Central-West African news organizations. Ultimately, Xinhua's division of the Global South in this period was fuelled by a more precise definition and practice of expansion within the region. It presents a new perspective into Xinhua's internationalization that shows how its growth was not one of immediate widespread influence. Rather, the news agency formulated a practical strategy to seek out nations that it saw as viable in supporting its own ambitions for global media power.

Chapter 2: Xinhua's 'How To' in Dividing the Global South

On June 21, 1967, the CCP displayed one of its public efforts to support 'Third World' solidarity. On the heels of the Party's investment and support of the Tanzania-Zambia railway, the president of Zambia Kenneth David Kaunda was invited by Chinese officials for a state visit in Beijing. He was greeted by the throngs of people cheering and the "throb of drums and crash of gongs."⁴⁸ The squad of young Red Guards rushed to their honoured guests with copies of *Quotations from Chairman Mao Zedong*, reciting in unison a quotation from Chairman Mao: "the Chinese people regard the victory in the anti-imperialist struggle of the people of Asia, Africa and Latin America as their own victory and warmly sympathize with and support all their anti-imperialist and anti-colonialist struggles."⁴⁹

As Kaunda greeted the welcoming crowd, he saw them eagerly waving their copies of *Quotations from Chairman Mao Zedong* and feverishly yelling:

"Long live the friendship between the Chinese and Zambian peoples! Resolutely support the national-liberation struggle of the Asian, African, and Latin American peoples! Long live the unity of the Asian and African peoples!"⁵⁰

The role the Global South played in the internationalization of news posed an invaluable opportunity for the CCP to globalize its own national news agency. At a time when the NWICO and NIIO were dedicated to developing forms of inclusive national media systems, the CCP saw the value of information as a form of political soft power and foreign diplomacy. In their efforts to achieve global expansion, Xinhua wanted to take the Global South's growing demands for

⁴⁸ President Kaunda has been long referenced in the media as a dedicated supporter the CCP and China. In fact, Xinhua has published multiple reports related to Kaunda, his relations with China, and his support of the Chinese government. "President Kaunda of Zambia Visits China: Report and Joint Communique," *Peking Review* (*Beijing zhoubao*, 北京周报) no. 27, June 30, 1967.

⁴⁹ "President Kaunda of Zambia Visits China," *Peking Review*, June 30, 1967.

⁵⁰ "President Kaunda of Zambia Visits China," *Peking Review*, June 30, 1967. Abridged.

new media infrastructures and make the news agency one that would “make the Third World the focus of [their] work.”⁵¹ It promoted themselves as *the* alternative news source for the Global South and a ‘Third World News Agency.’

This chapter moves beyond the “Global South” as a monolith and shows *where* Xinhua focused its expansion and why. It examines why and how Xinhua disaggregated the Global South by focusing its expansion into Southeast Asia and Central-West Africa (Zaire, Liberia). These priorities occurred for two reasons: first, Xinhua saw these two regions as ‘news niches’ where it could successfully expand without competing with existing international news agencies. Second, it fulfilled the Party’s greater ambitions for Xinhua to become an ‘alternative news source’ for the Global South that aimed to provide the ‘correct’ news through a Chinese lens. Xinhua’s efforts to become a world news agency reflected a broader change in its conceptualization of the Global South, as it made deliberate choices during its expansion in the 1980s to strategically support its globalization.

In part, Xinhua’s exchanges across Southeast Asia and Central-West Africa reflected how its definition of the Global South had diverged from the Party’s original outward-facing definition. While the ‘Third World’ encompassed multiple regions from Asia to Latin America, Xinhua’s quest to achieve global media power did not progress the same way. Unlike news organizations such as Reuters, which used its previous colonial connections to further its own expansion, Xinhua went into many of these news markets without the experience or reputation of other international news organizations. It created its own conceptualization of the Global South

⁵¹ Qi Mingquan and Hu Xun, “Approaching Mu Qing 走进穆青,” *XinhuaNet*, 2000, http://www.ha.xinhua.org/add/syzx/2003-10/16/content_1066147.htm. Last accessed July 11, 2021. See bibliography for alternative source link.

by dividing the regions into geopolitically favourable and accessible ones that suited the news agency's own capabilities and successes for global expansion and internationalization.

Thus, Xinhua's engagement with the "Third World" is foundational to the Party's understanding of foreign diplomacy and media policy, and shows how Xinhua's expansion reflected their conceptualization of the world.⁵² There is an emphasis on the 'Third World' in the current scholarship on the decolonization era, geopolitical relations in the 1960s and 1970s, and China's own globalization in the early reform era. This region became the 'competition grounds' for the United States, Soviet Union, and China in their efforts to establish political control in the newly independent nations.⁵³ Jeremy Friedman, Song Wei, and others argue that the CCP's foreign policy tactics in this period, from hard to soft power, reflected a newfound understanding of how they viewed China's position within the new international order.⁵⁴

Seeking to further its own globalization and diplomatic influence, the CCP used Xinhua to distribute Chinese news in the Global South to fulfill its own political interests and efforts to consolidate geopolitical power. Existing policies and ideologies such as Mao's "Three Worlds Theory" led the CCP to publicly define the 'Third World' as encompassing Latin America, Africa, and Asia. However, the reality of Xinhua's globalization was a much more calculated and targeted expansion into Southeast Asia and Central-West Africa.

In part, Xinhua's expansion sought to fulfill its main purpose as a world news agency to not "enter the world news arena as small partners of the Western news agencies, but to become

⁵² As previously mentioned in the introduction, the terminology of "Third World" and "Global South" may be used interchangeably due to the use of "Third World" in the Chinese literature, and the contemporary nomenclature of Global South in the scholarship.

⁵³ Sandra Gillespie, *South-South Transfer: A Study of Sino-African Exchanges* (London: Routledge, 2014); Jeremy Friedman, *Shadow Cold War: The Sino-Soviet Competition for the Third World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015); Gregg Brazinsky, *Winning the Third World: Sino-American Rivalry during the Cold War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017). For more information on the definition of 'Global South' please refer to the introduction.

⁵⁴ Friedman, *Shadow Cold War*, 1-3, 36, 85; Song, "Seeking New Allies in Africa," 46.

[their] powerful rival.”⁵⁵ Due to Xinhua’s own capabilities at the time, these two regions were ‘news niches’ in which it could effectively expand its operations without competing with international news agencies like Reuters.⁵⁶ Xinhua’s choices to collaborate with national news organizations in Southeast Asia and Central-West Africa reflected its strategies to achieve news globalization in an increasingly competitive and saturated market, while also reinventing the definition of ‘Global South’ to suit its own ambitions in becoming a world news agency.

In 1978, along with the calls for technological modernization and international re-opening, Xinhua resumed staffing foreign journalists and accelerated its development of overseas bureaus. Xinhua set its sights on the Global South for three reasons: to become the principle alternative news source for the Global South, to combat dominant Western news narratives, and to complement the Party’s evolving foreign policy interests within the region.

As shown in Chapter 1, China’s relationship with the Global South relied on promoting ‘Third World solidarity’ to cultivate potential relationships with regional allies. Part of this history begins at the Bandung Conference in 1955, where many nations were wary or feared re-integrating a communist, aggressive China back into the international order. Zhou Enlai, the first premier for the PRC, ameliorated these tensions by publicly committing the CCP to safeguarding world peace, defending national independence, and promoting “friendly cooperation” amongst Asian and African nations.⁵⁷ Once media, by way of the NWICO and NIIO debates, became a

⁵⁵ Mu Qing 穆清, “Shoulder the Sacred Mission,” (1991): 7. Abridged.

⁵⁶ Between 1963 and 1981 to nineteen different addresses across Asia and its former colonies in East Africa. By 1981 Reuters had the highest income amongst the Big Four news agencies and was internationally the most popular news organization with over 80 percent of its income coming from foreign subscribers. See, Brennan, “The Cold War battle over global news in East Africa,” 346-347.

⁵⁷ Naoko Shimazu coined the Bandung Conference as an example of “diplomacy as theatre,” which showcased the Party’s ‘charm offensive’ to try to appease to other nations. Naoko Shimazu, “Diplomacy as Theatre: Staging the Bandung Conference of 1955,” *Modern Asian Studies* 48, no. 1 (2014): 227, doi:10.1017/S0026749X13000371; Zhou Enlai, “Main Speech by Premier Zhou Enlai, Head of the Delegation of the People’s Republic of China, Distributed at the Plenary Session of the Asian-African Conference,” April 19, 1955, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Translation from China and the Asian-African

prevalent part of the ‘Third World’ solidarity experience, the CCP saw another avenue in which it could gain valuable political influence. As an extension of the Party’s ‘charm offensive,’ Xinhua’s internationalization allowed the CCP to engage with the Global South by spreading its political and socio-cultural values via the news.

By the early 1980s Xinhua became more active and public in its work towards expanding news services and communication networks with national news infrastructures in Southeast Asia and Central-West Africa. Xinhua’s capabilities were largely limited by its own restructuring that only just started up again in 1978. It partnered with local news agencies and intra-regional news organization based on Xinhua’s abilities for expansion at the time and aims to find sustainable news partnerships. Most importantly, *free political news*, or news meant to inform or for propaganda purposes, was central to establishing any type of influence between Xinhua and other national news organizations in Southeast Asia and Central-West Africa.⁵⁸ Political news was most beneficial to news agencies when it was free and easily accessible.⁵⁹ Xinhua maintained these practices, at no cost to the national news agencies, because to strengthen their reputation and purpose as the ‘alternative news source’ for the Global South it aimed for high visibility and accessibility to their news.

The story of Xinhua’s expansion into the Global South began in 1982, when the news agency joined the newly created Asia-Pacific News Network (ANN). Prior to the creation of ANN, earlier manifestations of nationalist-oriented communications systems in Southeast Asia included the cooperation between Indonesia and Malaysia’s national news agencies, Antara and

Conference (Documents) (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1955), 9-20.

<http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/121623>.

⁵⁸ Heidi J.S. Tworek, “Political and Economic News in the Age of Multinationals,” *Business History Review* 89, no. 3 (2015): 448.

⁵⁹ Tworek, “Political and Economic News in the Age of Multinationals,” 449.

Bernama, and the formation of the ASEAN News Exchange system (ANEX).⁶⁰ The latter, ANEX, was crucial in connecting ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) news agencies to a grid of satellite communications that were operational around the clock.⁶¹

The vision and creation of ANN came from Ahmad Mustapha Hassan, who in addition to being the General Manager of Bernama, Malaysia's national news agency, was also the president of the Organization of Asia-Pacific News Agencies (OANA).⁶² For Hassan, the creation of ANN was the next logical step in this restructuring of the information order. At ANN's unveiling in 1981, Hassan stated that the aim of this news network was "to redress an imbalanced news flow from developed to developing countries and to promote good will and cooperation among the Asian-Pacific nations."⁶³ Most importantly, the creation of ANN expanded the list of OANA membership countries and their news agencies from 14 to 25. This not only fulfilled the "continent-wide dimensions" of ANN's news reporting and information sharing, but also opened membership opportunity to China and by extension Xinhua.⁶⁴

As with Bandung, Southeast Asian nations were wary about partnering with news agencies from Communist China. However, Xinhua built on the earlier relationships the CCP cultivated with ASEAN leaders from, and since, Bandung to foster an acceptance into ANN that would aid their own expansionist efforts. Not only was its membership highly publicized by Xinhua and other news agencies, but it also gave Xinhua access to communications systems and potential news services partnerships with twenty-four other ASEAN news agencies.⁶⁵ By

⁶⁰ Ahmad Mustapha Hassan, "New World Information Order: role of the news agencies of ASEAN," *Media Asia* 10, no. 1 (1983): 12.

⁶¹ Hassan, "New World Information Order," 12.

⁶² Hassan, "New World Information Order," 11-14.

⁶³ "Asian-Pacific News Network Begins Operation," Xinhua General Overseas News Service, January 1, 1982.

⁶⁴ Hassan, "New World Information Order," 12.

⁶⁵ "Asian-Pacific News Network Begins Operation," Xinhua General Overseas News Service, January 1, 1982.

becoming an active partner in ANN, it used its international membership to share information, exchange technology or journalists, and disseminate its own version of the news to a wide range of countries to promote the Party's own political values and interests.

At the time, ANN was considered an unprecedented move that established a news network specifically for Southeast Asia. Containing a nineteen-nation news network that supported information exchange and communication through six clearing centres, it proposed a new way of transmitting and distributing news amongst ASEAN.⁶⁶ Ultimately, the creation of ANN reflected Hassan's own mentality around nationalist communication systems. As a strong supporter of UNESCO's proposed ideas in the NWICO and NIIO, he hoped to set a new standard for a more balanced, just, and effective world information order.⁶⁷ Most importantly, he believed that ASEAN could take these more abstract UNESCO initiatives and transform them into legitimate practices, like through ANN, of actual 'South-South' information exchange.

Beyond its fulfillment of intra-ASEAN news agency cooperation, it also had two broader objectives. First to complement, rather than compete, with international wire services.⁶⁸ Second, to promote self-reliance and self-financing across all member agencies for equity of information exchange, promote joint efforts, and improve all aspects of cooperation.⁶⁹ While Xinhua was more intent on competing and overtaking international wire services, ANN's second objective to instill cooperation amongst the news agencies in Southeast Asia was a direct match to Xinhua's own visions for globalization.

⁶⁶ "Asian-Pacific News Network Begins Operation," Xinhua General Overseas News Service, January 1, 1982.

⁶⁷ Hassan, "New World Information Order," 13.

⁶⁸ Hassan, "New World Information Order," 13.

⁶⁹ Hassan, "New World Information Order," 13.

When Hassan presented a paper at the first ASEAN Editors Conference in January 1983, he outlined the importance of ANN for developing intra-state communication systems to combat the “one-sided” flow of contents that only favoured one part of the globe.⁷⁰ Hassan’s paper communicated the shared interest amongst Global South nations to strengthen their national news agencies and overturn the monopoly of Western news agencies. Not unlike Mu Qing’s own sentiments about Xinhua being a ‘Third World’ news agency that combated Western news narratives, Hassan also argued that Western news agencies were hyper-focused on exploiting the pain and violence narratives when reporting on Southeast Asia:

We in Malaysia or in this region would know more of London, Amsterdam or Washington than say Manila, Jakarta, or Kuala Lumpur. But if we ever come across any story concerning these latter places, it invariably would centre on some disasters or suffering.⁷¹

Once again, Hassan’s own sentiments about what ANN could do for ASEAN paralleled what China believed Xinhua could do for the Global South. As Mu Qing stated at Xinhua’s 60th Anniversary in 1991, the news agency’s primary objective was to “strengthen equal cooperation with the press circles of third world countries, break the monopoly of Western public opinion on international news, and work hard to establish a new international news order.”⁷²

Xinhua’s membership to ANN was a big step in its path to becoming a world news agency. Around the time of Xinhua’s membership, more concrete definitions of ‘world news agency’ were also coming from top-level Xinhua officials like Zeng Tao, Ding Yangyan, and Mu Qing.⁷³ These definitions revolved around Xinhua becoming a premiere news agency that

⁷⁰ Hassan, “New World Information Order,” 11.

⁷¹ Hassan, “New World Information Order,” 11.

⁷² Mu, “Shoulder the Sacred Mission,” (1991): 7.

⁷³ See, Introduction page 7.

serviced the Global South and made “the Third World the focus of [their] work.”⁷⁴ Xinhua’s entrance into ANN crystallized its own understanding of what it meant to become a world news agency, as it actively worked with Southeast Asian nations to combat Western news narratives. Xinhua’s prioritization of Southeast Asia reaffirmed the idea of ‘news niches’ and where it chose to expand its news services in the Global South. It reiterates that Xinhua’s path to becoming a world news agency was not uninhibited global expansion, but rather targeted developments into nations that were accepting or easier for Xinhua to access.

Xinhua’s expansion was not limited to Southeast Asia, as the news agency also made significant gains in news service partnerships across Central-West Africa. Specifically, Xinhua targeted Zaire, known today as the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and coastal states like Liberia. Xinhua’s ambition to develop media influence in Africa was part of a larger competition for news hegemony in the region that emerged in the decolonization era.

The history of this competition for news hegemony started with the ‘Big Four’ news agencies of Reuters, Agence-France Press (AFP), Associated Press (AP), and United Press International (UPI) battling to establish news monopolies in East Africa. Reuters had the largest success and secured lucrative contracts in Uganda, Tanzania, and Tanganyika.⁷⁵ Their strategy combined appealing to the political vanities of state leaders, integrating national news agencies into Reuters’ international services, and promoting Reuters’ “global reputation for accuracy through effective local reporting.”⁷⁶ Reuters’ expansion was driven less by political

⁷⁴ Mu, “Shoulder the Sacred Mission,” (1991): 7.

⁷⁵ Brennan, “The Cold War battle over global news in East Africa,” 346.

⁷⁶ Brennan, “The Cold War battle over global news in East Africa,” 346-347.

considerations and more about “creating profits and prestige within the news business,” as it feared its influence was beginning to slip behind its better funded American rivals like AP.⁷⁷

At the time, Xinhua was still developing its news broadcasting and international operations after the halt from the Cultural Revolution. Xinhua took a different approach to establish influence by concentrating its efforts into nations where the Big Four had not expanded or had little influence, primarily across Central and Western Africa. While Reuters was interested in “profits and prestige,” Xinhua focused on coordinating with the CCP’s geopolitical interests in Africa as a way of bolstering the news agency’s international reputation.⁷⁸ Whereas news agencies like Reuters and AFP expanded their news services by exploiting previous colonial holdings, Xinhua was more cautious of where it chose to establish its influence as a newcomer into the news market and without prior connections in Africa.⁷⁹ Xinhua’s provision of free news services and direction on expanding into Central-West Africa lessened its competition and worked to entice as many willing African nations to partner with them.

In most cases, Xinhua’s global expansion relied on its practice of political news to gain access to other national news agencies.⁸⁰ In the case of Africa, Xinhua’s approach followed the earlier statements made by Zhou Enlai in 1967 for China to foster international relations by “seeking common ground while reserving differences.”⁸¹ It revolved around support for the African struggles for national independence, the fight “against imperialism and colonialism,” and

⁷⁷ Brennan, “The Cold War battle over global news in East Africa,” 337.

⁷⁸ Brennan, “The Cold War battle over global news in East Africa,” 337.

⁷⁹ Nelson, “A Dream Deferred,” 30; Brennan, “The Cold War battle over global news in East Africa,” 335-336.

⁸⁰ Tworek, “Political and Economic News in the Age of Multinationals,” 448.

⁸¹ Zhou Enlai, 1955, Main Speech by Premier Zhou Enlai, “Head of the Delegation of the People’s Republic of China, Distributed at the Plenary Session of the Asian-African Conference.” Recorded at Bandung, Indonesia, 1955.

<http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/121623>

to help African countries develop their national economies.⁸² The news agency's rationale to become a dependable 'Third World news agency' was driven by the Party's support of anti-colonialism and national independence movements across the Global South.

Part of Xinhua's strategy was advertising its news service agreements to African nations to help them gain independence from their overreliance on Western news agencies.⁸³ The first reported partnership for Xinhua in Africa was in 1985, when it collaborated with the Zairean press agency to supply French-language news through the Beijing-Paris-Kinshasa international satellite circuit.⁸⁴ A year later, Xinhua and the Liberian News Agency (LINA) signed a cooperative agreement for LINA to receive Xinhua news items to retransmit amongst local press stations as well as provided free news service to Xinhua's Monrovia branch.⁸⁵

The political motivations of Xinhua's expansion in Zaire and Liberia were part of a larger history of the CCP's political interests across the African continent. This history had begun twenty years earlier when the CCP became the chief financial supporter of the construction of the Tanzania-Zambia railway (Tan-Zam railway).⁸⁶ After the failure to obtain international support from the World Bank, the CCP's involvement in the Tan-Zam railway established a treaty of friendship and a "package agreement" for future bilateral cooperation in economics, trade, and technology between the three countries.⁸⁷ In addition to financial support, the CCP

⁸² Song, "Seeking New Allies in Africa," 56; "Minutes of Zhou Enlai's Second Meeting with President Kaunda of Zambia (Zhou Enlai tong Zanbiya gongheguo zongtong Kawengda di'erci huitan jilu 周恩来同赞比亚共和国总统卡翁达第二次会谈记录)," June 23, 1967, *Dang de wenxian* 党的文献 [Literature of the Chinese Communist Party], no. 3 (2012): 8–9.

⁸³ "Increased News Service Cooperation between Xinhua News Agency and Zairean Press Agency," *The Xinhua General Overseas News Service*, July 25, 1985; "Other Reports on Chinese and Liberian News Agencies Sign Agreement," *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, March 1, 1986.

⁸⁴ "Increased News Service Cooperation between Xinhua News Agency and Zairean Press Agency," *The Xinhua General Overseas News Service*, July 25, 1985.

⁸⁵ "Other Reports on Chinese and Liberian News Agencies Sign Agreement," *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, March 1, 1986.

⁸⁶ Song, "Seeking New Allies in Africa," 50; See also, Jamie Monson, *Africa's Freedom Railway: How a Chinese Development Project Changed Lives and Livelihoods in Tanzania* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2009).

⁸⁷ Song, "Seeking New Allies in Africa," 52.

also provided short-wave radio stations free of charge in 1964 and 1965.⁸⁸ As with the provision of free news services to Monrovia in 1986, ‘free’ communication technology allowed the Party to build long-term partnerships or appeal to nations resistant to the CCP’s influence.

Just as the construction of the Tan-Zam railway modified China’s strategic position in Africa, the targeted expansion of Xinhua supported a different but equally effective form of influence in the region.⁸⁹ While the railway failed to gain sufficient and sustainable financial return, it served its earlier purpose of building relationships with East African nations weary of a Communist China.⁹⁰ Xinhua’s global expansion opened a new type of reciprocal cooperation between the CCP and Central-West African nations. Whereas for the Tan-Zam railway, China was the primary nation supplying the financial, technological and manpower support (of their own volition), this time Xinhua would not only give African nations free news services, but also receive benefits such as unfiltered access to local news operations and the state-run media infrastructures.

Xinhua’s hopes for advantageous reciprocity were most evident when it extended its partnerships beyond national news agencies and joined an agreement with the Pan-African News Agency (PANA). In May 1988, Xinhua signed an agreement with PANA to establish an information exchange between the news organizations.⁹¹ PANA emerged from UNESCO efforts to counteract Anglo-American global news hegemony. Alongside the Non-Aligned Press Agencies Pool (NANAP), UNESCO also subsidized PANA, an alternative news source that was

⁸⁸ Monson, *Africa’s Freedom Railway*, 3, 4; Song, “Seeking New Allies in Africa,” 50.

⁸⁹ Song, “Seeking New Allies in Africa,” 59.

⁹⁰ Song Wei stated that the railway highlights another problem with China’s foreign aid, which is its failure to be sustainable after completion or transfer of ownership. See, Song, “Seeking New Allies in Africa,” 61. See also, Monson’s discussion of “unprecedented cultural exchange” between Chinese and Africans during the construction of the railway in *Africa’s Freedom Railway*, 57, 148.

⁹¹ “PANA signs agreement with Chinese news agency,” *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, May 31, 1988.

created by non-aligned nations wanting to provide news free of ‘imperialist’ content.⁹² Shahe ‘Gubby’ Guebenlian, an Armenian Cypriot reporter for Reuters, stated that even more so than NANAP, the establishment of PANA was the “Africans’ principal desire.”⁹³ Eventually, the news organization was created at a meeting of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 1979 and became operational in 1983.⁹⁴

Xinhua’s agreement with PANA was extensive. Up until this point, Xinhua’s news services agreements were largely discussions between national news agencies about future cooperation, small deals of news exchanges, or being invited to join existing news networks (e.g., ANN).⁹⁵ Xinhua’s partnership with PANA was seen as one of the largest for the news agency at the time and the first one where Xinhua took the initiative to draw up the agreement. The agreement consisted of three components: a free exchange of services and equipment between the news agencies, new transmission lines for Xinhua news through PANA, and an exchange of professional opinions and technical experiences.⁹⁶

Xinhua’s approach to PANA was reminiscent of its first major collaboration with ANN. First, they were both UNESCO backed initiatives that hoped to turn the international organization’s proposed national communication systems into working realities. This fit within Xinhua’s own vision of working with Global South nations to create national and independent news services, challenge the existing Western dominated news narratives, and support Xinhua’s

⁹² Brennan, “The Cold War battle over global news in East Africa,” 353.

⁹³ Brennan, “The Cold War battle over global news in East Africa,” 353.

⁹⁴ Brennan, “The Cold War battle over global news in East Africa,” 353.

⁹⁵ See examples, “The Xinhua General Overseas News Service: Xinhua Delegation to Poland,” *The Xinhua General Overseas News Service*, April 12, 1985.; “The Xinhua General Overseas News Service: Xinhua Delegation to Hungary,” *The Xinhua General Overseas News Service*, April 6, 1985.; “The Xinhua General Overseas News Service: Xinhua News Agency and Allgemeiner Deutschmark Nachrichtendienst News Service Agreement,” *The Xinhua General Overseas News Service*, May 24, 1985.; “The Xinhua General Overseas News Service: Xinhua Delegation to Hungary,” *The Xinhua General Overseas News Service*, April 6, 1985.

⁹⁶ “PANA signs agreement with Chinese news agency,” *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, May 31, 1988.

ambitions of becoming a worthy competitor against other international news organizations by distributing what the CCP viewed as the ‘correct’ news.

Second, they were both collaborations with intra-regional news organizations. Since Xinhua saw the regions of Southeast Asia and Central-West Africa as ‘news niches’ that it could effectively expand into, intra-regional news organizations presented a new approach for Xinhua to disseminate its media influence. Working with ANN and PANA not only gave Xinhua unprecedented access and prospective partnerships with multiple states and their respective national news agencies, but it also established itself as a public partner to much larger, UNESCO backed and supported news organizations.

Xinhua’s division of the Global South into ‘news niches’ reflected two key developments for the news agency. First, its quest to establish itself as the premiere ‘alternative news source’ and promote their vision of news across the ‘Third World.’ Second, its ability to establish itself as not only a viable competitor for news hegemony across the Global South, but also challenge the dominant Western news narratives and presence in international communication networks.

After May 1988 and Xinhua’s partnership with PANA, there was a noticeable shift in their global approach. The ideas from the NWICO had waned and lost traction amongst the international community, and the realities of ANN and PANA failed to live up to expectations. Xinhua’s failures in establishing influence in the Global South motivated a search for expansion elsewhere. After this point, we will see a stronger attention to establishing news hegemony amongst industrialized nations. While Xinhua maintained an outward-facing commitment to the Global South, it began to test partnerships and explore opportunities with more industrialized nations. One of which being, South Korea. This opened a new phase in Xinhua’s globalization and efforts to support its ambitions in becoming a world news agency.

Chapter 3: Talking to a New South, Xinhua and the ‘News Turn’ towards South Korea

On September 12, 1988, the World Health Organization’s (WHO) regional committee for the Western-Pacific met in Manila for the first WHO Conference Hall meeting. It was classified as a successful year in achieving its goal of “health for all.”¹ They boasted developments in technical trade between Papua New Guinea and China, the WHO’s support with AIDS prevention in the Republic of Korea, and the general support in training health personnel and rehabilitation programs across the Western-Pacific region.² Professor Chen Minzhang, China’s representative, even described a “deepened understanding [from] China of the Organization’s work” after it took its legitimate seat in the organization.³

While some considered it just another international conference, the Manila Conference was also the first international news report that Xinhua circulated in the Republic of Korea (hereafter known as South Korea).⁴ A crucial first step and regarded as Xinhua’s ‘entrance’ into the South Korean news market, the news agency’s article on the Manila Conference played a significant role in shaping the future of Xinhua’s partnerships with South Korean news organizations in the late 1980s.

The year of 1988 can be seen as a ‘news turn’ or shift in Xinhua’s approach to globalization as it moved from the Global South towards industrialized nations. As the climate

¹ World Health Organization, Summary record of the first meeting, WHO Conference Hall, Manila, Monday, 12 September 1988 at 9:00 a.m., September 12-16, 1988, 58. <https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/142002>.

² World Health Organization, Summary record of the first meeting, WHO Conference Hall, Manila, Monday, 12 September 1988 at 9:00 a.m., September 12-16, 1988, 56-57. <https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/142002>.

³ World Health Organization, Summary record of the first meeting, WHO Conference Hall, Manila, Monday, 12 September 1988 at 9:00 a.m., September 12-16, 1988, 56-57. <https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/142002>.

⁴ “Asian News – South Korea, China, Soviet Union; Yonhap distributes new from Tass, Xinhua, Tanjug,” Japan Economic Newswire, September 16, 1988.

for proposed nationalist communication systems began to change, so did Xinhua's understanding of its interactions with the world around them. The differentiation in Xinhua's approach between North and South Korea presented the best example in this shift in understanding about becoming a world news agency. While still publicly proclaiming the message of 'Third World solidarity' and 'nationalist independence,' the concept of internationalization took on a new meaning for Xinhua by the late 1980s. It was shaped by Xinhua's failed news services agreements across Southeast Asia and Central-West Africa, its growing technological and reporting capabilities to take on regions outside of its initial 'news niches,' and its interests in creating stronger relationships through news with potential regional allies.

This chapter explains Xinhua's shift away from the Global South towards industrialized nations in 1988 by analyzing the case of North and South Korea. This shift occurred for three reasons: first, the failure of communications ideas like the NWICO and NIIO. Second, the failure of Xinhua's own partnerships with news organizations in Southeast Asia and Africa like the Asia-Pacific News Network (ANN) and Pan-African News Agency (PANA). Third, the CCP's new foreign policy initiatives for North and South Korea in the 1980s. These were the circumstances in which and by which Xinhua saw a new market and potential in fostering a stronger relationship with South Korean news agencies by the end of the decade.

The failures of international and regional efforts significantly shaped the trajectory of its globalization and led to Xinhua's more national approach by the late 1980s. First, the significant decline of the NWICO debates by the 1980s, and with it the prominence of Global South nations in global media and press agency discourse. Despite the valid considerations raised around instituting more inclusive international media and communications structures, the realities

remained an “unruly subject” for UNESCO.⁵ The fervor around prospective institutions such as the NWICO and NIIO only lasted until the 1970s with a legacy that “produced much uproar and few results.”⁶ The norms for the national communication policies that UNESCO presented were ultimately too ambitious and too ambiguous to fit into the diverse socio-cultural and economic contexts across the Global South.⁷ Scholars like Junhao Hong argue that the decline in Xinhua’s attention to expanding its reach within the Global South was at least partially attributed to the decline in movements like the NWICO in world affairs.⁸

Second, the failures of Xinhua’s partnerships with ANN and PANA. Much like the end of the NWICO and NIIO, the realities for these intra-regional news organizations proved to be better on paper than in practice. ANN struggled to successfully put into action its ASEAN run news network, with its fervor falling out of news circulation by the mid-1980s.⁹ At the same time, PANA struggled to put its resolutions into action and eventually ceased operations until its reopening in 1993.¹⁰ The news organization remained bogged down by the divisions between Sub-Saharan Africa and North Africa, weak inter-African communications, and a general lack of funds.¹¹ The underwhelming results in Xinhua’s partnerships in the Global South coupled with the decline in ideas like the NWICO led Xinhua to turn to other nations and regions to fulfill its ambitions to become a world news agency.

This leads to the final factor in Xinhua’s shift in 1988, which was the CCP’s foreign policy initiatives towards the two Koreas. China’s evolving position in global affairs in the 1980s

⁵ Brendebach, *International Organizations and the Media*, 176.

⁶ Brendebach, *International Organizations and the Media*, 175.

⁷ Brendebach, *International Organizations and the Media*, 171, 176.

⁸ Hong, “From the World’s Largest Propaganda Machine to a Multipurposed Global News Agency,” 387.

⁹ There is sparse mention of ANN in archival documents or secondary scholarship after 1983, the closest thing to ANN is most likely *Asia-Pacific News Net*, which was created in 1999 and is headquartered in Dubai. <https://www.asiapacificnews.net/about>.

¹⁰ Brennan, “The Cold War battle over global news in East Africa,” 353.

¹¹ Brennan, “The Cold War battle over global news in East Africa,” 353.

impacted the CCP's own foreign policy objectives. As it normalized relations with the United States, China also saw increasing openness and relations with other industrialized nations or traditional US allies.¹² Most importantly, Sino-US relations were predicated on East Asia as a top priority, with the hopes of maintaining peace across the region. The Party focused on creating stronger ties with regional allies like South Korea, especially after it had labelled itself the "mediator" on Korean Affairs.¹³ As the CCP's diplomatic priorities shifted, so did Xinhua's own perspective on where it targeted its partnerships, reflecting a new reality for the news agency. Xinhua's failed expansions in the Global South shifted its attention away from the region towards exploring more lucrative partnerships with industrialized nations.

In part, this elucidates how Xinhua defined a "world news agency" by the late 1980s. Xinhua's global news objectives began as primarily a 'Third World' driven ambition to turn its national news organization into a "world news agency," that catered to the needs of the Global South and combated the Western dominated news narratives. However, by 1988, Xinhua's understanding of the world evolved as it became motivated by its evolving capabilities as a news agency and the failures of its previous partnerships.¹⁴ In doing so, Xinhua's turn to industrialized nations revealed its own hopes of expanding its media influence beyond the Global South.

This chapter analyzes the change over time in Xinhua's approach to internationalization by looking at the cases of North and South Korea. Not only did the period from 1978 to 1989 demonstrate the Party's newfound ambitions to turn Xinhua into this world news agency, but

¹² The expansion of Xinhua operations into nations that were US-allies continued well into the late 1980s. In 1989 Xinhua made a visit to Israel to set up a potential new Middle East bureau.; Gillespie, "Diplomacy on a South-South Dimension," 122.; Long Yang, "Self-reliance," 231-236, in *Afterlives of Chinese Communism: Political Concepts from Mao to Xi*, eds. Sorace Christian, Franceschini Ivan, and Loubere Nicholas (Australia: ANU Press, 2019), 23-234, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctvk3gng9.40>.

¹³ Jae Ho Chung & Myung-hae Choi, "Uncertain allies or uncomfortable neighbors? Making sense of China-North Korea Relations, 1949-2010," *The Pacific Review* 26, no. 3 (2013): 253.

¹⁴ Hong, "From the World's Largest Propaganda Machine to a Multipurposed Global News Agency," 387.

there were also substantial changes to Xinhua's own path to globalization. News organizations like Xinhua were part of an ongoing process of globalization and internationalization that led to its shift away from the Global South towards industrialized nations. This shaped a new understanding and set of interactions with the world.

Xinhua's relationship with news agencies from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (hereafter North Korea) materialized in the early 1980s, around the same time Xinhua was making gains in the Global South. Sino-North Korean relations have largely been categorized by scholars as ones of "uncertain allies" that sustained limited cooperation in times of ideological or geopolitical strife.¹⁵ In the early 1960s and 1970s, the CCP sought to maintain good relations with Kim Il Sung, the president of North Korea, to offset the growing tensions with the USSR after the Sino-Soviet split. During this period, Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai had prioritized rebuilding previous channels of communications and information-gathering with North Korea to maintain China's geostrategic influence.¹⁶

The "reform and opening" era had presented two new challenges for the CCP in its dealings with North Korea. First, the post-Mao leadership of Deng Xiaoping put itself at odds with Kim's confrontational strategy once he assured that "maintaining peace and stability" in East Asia would be the top priority and common interest between China and the US.¹⁷ Second, in the 1980s China had labelled itself the "mediator" on Korean Affairs.¹⁸ Staying true to its maintenance of "peace and stability," Deng focused on mitigating tensions within the Peninsula and acting as the middle-man between North-South Korean relations to also further its own

¹⁵ Chung and Choi, "Uncertain allies or uncomfortable neighbors," 244.

¹⁶ Chung and Choi, "Uncertain allies or uncomfortable neighbors," 244.

¹⁷ Chung and Choi, "Uncertain allies or uncomfortable neighbors," 251.

¹⁸ Chung and Choi, "Uncertain allies or uncomfortable neighbors," 253.

cooperation with the US.¹⁹ Even with Deng's new approach, North Korea was still a valuable strategic ally for China. The CCP maintained its relations with North Korea in other ways, one of which was the cooperation between Xinhua and national North Korean news agencies.

One of the earliest examples of a Xinhua-sponsored state visit was the banquet Mu Qing held in 1983 for the Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) and its General Director Chu Hyon Ok.²⁰ At the forefront of this visit was the assured cooperation between the two agencies and nations. Mu even invited North Korean journalists to Beijing as "Xinhua's official guests."²¹ Not only did Xinhua continue its practices of 'free information exchange' by extending an invitation to North Korean journalists and assurances of cooperation between the two news agencies, but Xinhua was also proactive in extending these invitations. As with its later partnership with PANA, Xinhua paid close attention to providing as many services as possible to the KCNA to demonstrate its capabilities as a world news agency and cultivate a relationship reliant on Xinhua's global media skills.

At a time where Xinhua was being invited to join partnerships with networks like ANN, Xinhua was more active in establishing a partnership with North Korean news agencies. This reflected the news agency's earlier and more motivated expansion into the nation. The impact of Xinhua's partnership with KCNA was two-fold. First, it signified the news agency's dedication to its larger purpose of creating a network of nationalist communication systems across the Global South. Second, it reaffirmed how Xinhua's operations were an extension of the Party's own political interests, specifically, maintaining its diplomatic relations with North Korea.

¹⁹ Chung and Choi, "Uncertain allies or uncomfortable neighbors," 253.

²⁰ "Mu Qing fetes Korean Central News Agency Delegation," *The Xinhua General Overseas News Service*, May 17, 1983. For reference, the official Korean title of the news agency: 조선중앙통신 (choseonjung-angtongshin).

²¹ "Mu Qing fetes Korean Central News Agency Delegation," *The Xinhua General Overseas News Service*, May 17, 1983.

More broadly, the expressions of collaboration and exchange between the two states was a direct reflection of the ‘balancing act’ that Deng aimed to maintain during the 1980s. If the Party faced diverging military and political interests with North Korea, then it would use media to extend diplomatic relations. This tactic was equally effective in serving the purpose of facilitating channels for communication and information-gathering, which had been the Party’s top priority since the 1960s. Ultimately, Xinhua’s proactive approach was part of the CCP’s aim to maintain diplomatic relations with North Korea through state-run news agencies.

However, Xinhua’s public news services with North Korea were brief. Despite their importance to fostering stronger China-North Korean relations, a series of developments emerged by the late 1980s that signified a new strategic shift for the news agency. First, the previously mentioned failures of international and regional communications efforts. Second, the development of North Korea’s own foreign policy interests amongst the Global South nations. Kim Il Sung was not only intent on playing the Soviet Union and China against each other to ensure funding and technology, but also became interested in establishing its own relations with new states in the Global South.²² Finally, there was Deng Xiaoping’s “tightening grip” on China’s own foreign policy.²³

Crucial to the story of Xinhua’s ‘news turn’ in 1988 was the changes to the CCP’s own foreign policy. Despite the continued public declarations to support Global South initiatives, China’s evolving relationships with industrialized nations placed a significant amount of pressure on where Xinhua directed its future partnerships. After Sino-US rapprochement in 1972

²² Odd Arne Westad, *Empire and Righteous Nation: 600 Years of China-Korea relations* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2021), 130, <https://doi.org/10.4159/9780674249653>.

²³ Westad, *Empire and Righteous Nation*, 130; Yong Deng, *China’s Struggle for Status: The Realignment of International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 31.

and the normalization of relations in 1979, both nations committed to establishing normal state relations based on a series of five principles of mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity; mutual nonaggression; non-interference in each other's internal affairs equality and mutual benefits, and peaceful coexistence.²⁴

The publicized normalization of Sino-US relations created geopolitical opportunities for China to collaborate with US-allied states.²⁵ Scholars such as Odd Arne Westad and Sergey Radchenko have examined the role of Sino-US relations in China's internationalization. Westad argues that by the 1970s, China transitioned from being an "estranged divorcee of the International System" to becoming "transformed."²⁶ Sino-US normalization opened foreign trade and investments that spawned "the breakthrough for capitalism in China."²⁷ Similarly, Radchenko argues that Deng approached China's future "in terms of modernization," by developing stronger relations with countries in the West and Japan.²⁸ For Radchenko, Deng's policies of "reform and opening" meant "leaning to one side—the American side."²⁹

An understudied part of this history is how the changes to China's internationalization and economic modernization contributed to shaping the national outlook towards renewing relations with South Korea. Despite the lack of official recognition, since the start of China's

²⁴ The New York Times Archives, *Transcript of the Toasts by Premier Chou and President Nixon*, February 22, 1972. Online. <https://www.nytimes.com/1972/02/22/archives/transcript-of-the-toasts-by-premier-chou-and-president-nixon.html>. Emphasis added.; U.S. Department of State & Office of the Historian, *Shanghai Communiqué*, Washington D.C., 2016. Online. <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v17/d203>.

²⁵ The expansion of Xinhua operations into nations that were US-allies continued well into the late 1980s. In 1989 Xinhua made a visit to Israel to set up a potential new Middle East bureau.; Gillespie, "Diplomacy on a South-South Dimension," 122.; Long Yang, "Self-reliance," 231-236, in *Afterlives of Chinese Communism: Political Concepts from Mao to Xi*, eds. Sorace Christian, Franceschini Ivan, and Loubere Nicholas (Australia: ANU Press, 2019), 23-234, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctvk3gng9.40>.

²⁶ Westad, "The Great Transformation," 65-80.

²⁷ Westad, "The Great Transformation," 78-79.; Seung-Youn Oh, "China's Reform and Opening: 40 Years and Counting How Far is the Chinese Government willing to go in getting go of Economic Control?" *The Diplomat*, June 1, 2018. <https://thediplomat.com/2018/06/chinas-reform-and-opening-40-years-and-counting/>.

²⁸ 2. Sergey Radchenko, "Sino-Soviet Relations in the 1970s and IR Theory," 47-65, in *Misunderstanding Asia: International Relations Theory and Asian Studies over Half a Century*, ed. Gilbert Rozman (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

²⁹ Radchenko, "Sino-Soviet Relations in the 1970s and IR Theory," 47-65.

economic reform efforts, South Korean companies played a critical role in fostering trade and investment between the two countries.³⁰ For China, South Korea became a vital source of technology imports and mutual trade which had quickly grown to over \$1 billion by 1985.³¹ Along with these new policies of economic normalization between China and South Korea, Xinhua's expansion into South Korea in 1988 presented a new opportunity for the Party to foster diplomatic relations with industrialized nations through its state-run news agency.

As in other cases, Xinhua's partnership with South Korean news agencies acted as a precursor for the eventual normalization of relations between Beijing and Seoul in 1992.³² China's role as 'mediator' for North-South Korean relations had renewed its interest in reinstituting relations with South Korea. Simultaneously, the South Korean president Roh Tae-woo had been employing *nordpolitik*, which informed South Korean foreign policy in the 1980s and 1990s.³³ The goal was to reach out and eventually normalize relations with North Korea's traditional allies of China and the Soviet Union.³⁴ Normalization was the end goal, but due to the limited movement and trade barriers in the late 1980s, media presented a better opportunity to facilitate relations between the two countries.³⁵

³⁰ Westad, *Empire and Righteous Nation*, 130.

³¹ Westad, *Empire and Righteous Nation*, 130.

³² Nicholas D. Kristof, "Chinese and South Koreans Formally Establish Relations," *The New York Times*, August 24, 1992; Xiaoxiong Yi, "Ten Years of China-South Korea relations and Beijing's view on reunification," *The Journal of East Asian Affairs* 16, no. 2 (2002): 315-351.

³³ Kim Woosang, "South Korea's Diplomatic Normalization with China and its impact on old ties between South Korea and Taiwan," *The Journal on East Asian Affairs* 7, no. 2 (1993): 372.

³⁴ Woosang, "South Korea's Diplomatic Normalization with China," 372; 3; Scott A. Snyder, "Roh Tae-woo and Kim Young-Sam: Nordpolitik and Democratization," in *South Korea at the Crossroads: Autonomy and Alliance in an Era of Rival Powers* (Columbia University Press, 2018).

³⁵ Woosang, "South Korea's Diplomatic Normalization with China," 372. In the late 1980s, academics and journalists saw some freedoms in mobility between the two nations, especially those with separated families on either side of the border. This was most evident in the Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture (延边, 연변) which was designated as a prefecture due to the large percentage of ethnic Koreans living in the region.

In 1988 Xinhua was given access to two different media outlets in South Korea. First, the news distribution agreement with Yonhap News Agency. Recently created from a merger of three different news agencies, Yonhap was considered “the gatekeeper of international news” in South Korea.³⁶ Yonhap was the only independent commercial news agency that received international news and photos from all ‘Big Four’ news agencies (AP, UPI, Reuters, and AFP).³⁷ It was in charge of collecting and selecting foreign news, translating them into Korean, and distributing them to mass media across the country.³⁸ Since it was considered the exclusive gatherer and redistributor of international news in South Korea, any foreign news agencies interested in entering the South Korean market would need to go through Yonhap.³⁹

Xinhua gained access to the South Korean news market through Yonhap on September 16, 1988. For the first time, Yonhap distributed news articles from socialist state-run news organizations including Xinhua, Tass (USSR), and Tanjug (Yugoslavia) press agencies.⁴⁰ The contents of Xinhua’s article were related to the WHO’s Manila Conference.⁴¹ This news distribution was significant for two reasons. First, the inclusion of Xinhua in Yonhap’s distribution of news from socialist press agencies. This proved to be an important step to Xinhua’s role as a foreign media service in South Korea. Not only was Xinhua’s story picked up

³⁶ Chang Won Ho and Jung Ho Han, “Yonhap News Agency: Gatekeeper of International News in Korea,” *Korean Studies* 9 (1985): 15.

³⁷ Ho and Han, “Yonhap News Agency,” 15.

³⁸ Ho and Han, “Yonhap News Agency,” 15; On Yonhap’s ‘About Us’ page, they label themselves as “South Korea’s representative newswire service.” See, “About Yonhap News,” *Yonhap*, last accessed December 13, 2021, <https://en.yna.co.kr/aboutus/yonhapnews>.

³⁹ On Yonhap’s ‘About Us’ page, they describe that the news agency still falls behind in comparison to Xinhua in terms of international correspondents worldwide (500 staff in 107 countries). Yonhap states they aim to overcome this gap to become a better global news agency, aiming to be in the world’s top ten global news agencies. See, “About Yonhap News,” *Yonhap*, last accessed December 13, 2021, <https://en.yna.co.kr/aboutus/yonhapnews>.

⁴⁰ “Asian News – South Korea, China, Soviet Union; Yonhap distributes new from Tass, Xinhua, Tanjug,” *Japan Economic Newswire*, September 16, 1988.

⁴¹ “Asian News – South Korea, China, Soviet Union; Yonhap distributes new from Tass, Xinhua, Tanjug,” *Japan Economic Newswire*, September 16, 1988.

by other local South Korean news agencies, but it would also facilitate the opportunity for future collaboration with South Korean media outlets.

Second, the contents of Xinhua's story. The shift towards partnerships with industrialized nations also meant a change in the meaning of 'news' for Xinhua. In the news agency's dealings with the Global South, news was redefined from being solely a medium to propagate propaganda to a medium that distributed the 'correct information' from the Chinese perspective—essentially Xinhua's proclamations of becoming an 'alternative news source' for the Global South. However, the circulation of Xinhua's report on the Manila Conference marked another shift in the conceptualization of the 'news.' News took on the role of 'international media news,' or news that was focused on China's reporting of world events.

This newfound understanding of the 'news' would not be fully explained until Mu Qing's speech at Xinhua's 60th anniversary in 1991. At the anniversary, he stressed the importance of being concerned with the global situations at home and abroad, consider problems at an international level, and habitually including international reactions into Xinhua's reporting of the news.⁴² The case with Yonhap demonstrated how Xinhua began to pay more attention to distributing forms of 'international news' and its part in the news agency's understanding of how and what entailed becoming a world news agency.

By December, Xinhua had started to expand its partnerships outside of just South Korean news agencies and looked to partner with other media outlets like newspapers. On December 19, 1988, South Korea's *Joong-Ang Ilbo* newspaper announced a finalized news exchange

⁴² Mu, "Shoulder the Sacred Mission," (1991): 7.

agreement with Xinhua.⁴³ Founded by the owner of Samsung Group, Lee Byung-chul, *Joong-Ang Ilbo* is still considered one of the three largest daily newspapers in South Korea.⁴⁴

The importance of this partnership starts with the history of Samsung itself. In its earlier stages of development, Samsung served as a crucial turning point for South Korea's development of a domestic electronics industry.⁴⁵ Since its introduction of monochrome television sets in 1971, it had grown an average of 38% per year, rapidly broadening its range from household appliances to “sophisticated information and communications equipment.”⁴⁶ Samsung officially entered the communications market in 1977 with the establishment of Samsung GTE Communication alongside General Telephone and Electronics Corporation (GTE Corporation).⁴⁷ Their objective was to produce electronic exchanges and transmissions devices.⁴⁸ While Samsung Group would not reach global notoriety until the 1990s, their entrance into the communications market facilitated new opportunities for partnerships with foreign news agencies such as Xinhua.

Xinhua's entrance into the South Korean media market produced the first of its kind partnership between Xinhua and *Joong-Ang Ilbo*. The agreement consisted of a photo and news material sharing system from *Joong-Ang Ilbo* to Xinhua in exchange for teletypes news articles

⁴³ “Asian News -South Korea, China: Southern Korean paper, China to exchange news; Joong-Ang Ilbo,” *Japan Economic Newswire*, December 19, 1988. For reference of the full Korean name for the newspaper: 중앙일보 (*Joong-Ang Ilbo*). *Joong-Ang Ilbo* was transferred to its own holding company in 1999. They also publish their own English version of the daily newspaper that is in collaboration with the New York Times. See also: Chunhyo Kim, *Samsung, Media Empire and Family: A Power Web* (London: Routledge, 2016), 43, 50. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315669045>.

⁴⁴ *Communication, Digital Media, and Popular Culture in Korea: Contemporary Research and Future Prospects*, eds. Dal Yong Jin and Nojin Kwak (Lexington Books, 2018), 126; Kim, 43, 50.

⁴⁵ Seongjae Yu, “The Growth Pattern of Samsung Electronics: A Strategy Perspective,” *International Studies of Management and Organization* 28, no. 4 (1998): 57; Se-jin Chang, *Sony vs. Samsung: the inside story of the electronics giants' battle for global supremacy* (Singapore: John Wiley and Sons, 2008).

⁴⁶ Yu, “The Growth Pattern of Samsung Electronics,” 58. In the mid-2000s, Samsung overtakes Sony (Japan's multinational technology corporation) and today is considered one of the leading technology brands in the world. In 2021 it ranked no. 2 “Best Global Brands by YouGov.

⁴⁷ Chang, *Sony vs. Samsung*, 39.

⁴⁸ Chang, *Sony vs. Samsung*, 39.

and photos.⁴⁹ There are two takeaways from this agreement. First, the emphasis on technological trade. By the late 1980s, Xinhua's news service agreements began to place a significant emphasis on technological trade.⁵⁰ In addition to the existing partnerships of technology imports between the two countries, another reason for this change was Xinhua's belief that to compete with other international news organizations there had to be an elevation and competitiveness to its technological capabilities.⁵¹ More broadly, this revealed the larger change to Xinhua's operations and how it aimed to boost its own reputation as a world news agency through its international news partnerships. This demonstrated how Xinhua's expansion into industrialized nations also began to take on other forms of globalization and internationalization that engaged with practices of foreign trade, technological development, and commercialization.

Second, the expansion outside of traditional news organizations. Xinhua's collaboration with *Joong-Ang Ilbo* was considered one Xinhua's earliest partnerships with a national newspaper outside of China. Most importantly, this commented on how Xinhua saw its operational strength towards the end of the decade. As Xinhua grew its "hardware" (overseas bureaus, technology) and "software" (working style and management), it also grew its confidence in taking on partnerships that went beyond the traditional news agencies.⁵² In doing so, Xinhua's hopes of securing a collaboration with a trusted, reputable, and commonly read

⁴⁹ "Asian News -South Korea, China: Southern Korean paper, China to exchange news; Joong-Ang Ilbo," *Japan Economic Newswire*, December 19, 1988.

⁵⁰ See, "Asia News-China; China wants to import U.S. High-Tech Products," *Japan Economic Newswire*, February 2, 1988; "Federal Germany, Xinhua Develop News Handling System," *The Xinhua General Overseas News Service*, December 6, 1988; "AT&T; (T) AT&T awarded \$2.8M contract to provide a distributive processing network to Xinhua News Agency," *Business Wire*, January 13, 1988; Noel Fletcher, "AT&T to Automate China's News Agency," *Journal of Commerce Special*, January 7, 1988.

⁵¹ Mu, "Shoulder the Sacred Mission," (1991): 7-8.

⁵² Hong, "From the World's Largest Propaganda Machine," 387; Baochuan, "Journey to the World," 13; Mu Qing, "Shoulder the Sacred Mission," (1991): 7-8.

South Korean newspaper worked into Xinhua's ability to reach new audiences and tap into an avenue of readership that was previously closed off to Chinese media.

Xinhua's collaborations with South Korean media in the late 1980s reflected a notable shift in its operations going forward. In a sense, the differentiation in its approach from North to South Korea was a comment on its understanding of what the 'global news sphere' had to offer Xinhua and what the news agency wanted to gain from it. The change over this ten-year period from expansion in the Global South to industrialized nations was not only motivated by the failures of proposed national communication systems and Xinhua's partnerships with ANN and PANA, but also China's changing geopolitical situation and its relations with the two Koreas.

Xinhua's new partnerships with South Korea media also demonstrated the CCP's broader interests to reengage with the South Korean government and place South Korea back onto its own foreign policy agenda. Overall, both these instances demonstrated how Xinhua became a proxy for China's broader understanding of the global and its change from focusing solely on the Global South to exploring regions outside of it by the end of the 1980s.

Conclusion: News for China and the World

In 1992, the retired paramount leader Deng Xiaoping embarked on his Southern Tours to visit provinces across Southern China. Considered to be the ‘revitalization and acceleration’ of China’s economic modernization, state-run media systems once again underwent rapid development. For Xinhua, this call to modernization ushered in a new path for its own ambitions of globalization.

In 1997, Xinhua officially launched *XinhuaNet* and with it the news agency officially entered the ‘digital’ age of online news. After China’s accession into the World Trade Organization in December 2001, Xinhua also instituted a series of structural changes to its international operations. From 2000 to 2003, Xinhua launched a series of initiatives that were a part of its “Asia-Pacific Plan,” targeted at expanding Xinhua’s market for English, Chinese, and Spanish news services across the Asia-Pacific region.¹ On December 10, 2002 Xinhua launched a Chinese-language news service based on the needs of overseas Chinese media and with it by 2003 most Chinese-language media outlets in the Asia-Pacific region had become subscribers to Xinhua’s news services with the number reaching nearly 1,000.²

As Xinhua’s international operations and foreign bureaus grew at an exponential rate in the 2000s, so did its needs for management and employees for its operations abroad. Instead of primarily relying on Xinhua’s own staff, the news agency became interested in expanding its jobs to foreign employees as well. By 2006, Xinhua successfully tackled its problem of “understaffing” and had over 200 foreign employees in its overseas bureaus.³

¹ Xin, *How the Market is Changing China’s News*, 113; See also, Shengrong Ma, “Ma’s Speech on Xinhua’s Operation in the Asia-Pacific Region,” *Journalistic Practice Weekly* 7 (2004): 1-9.

² Xin, *How the Market is Changing China’s News*, 113; See also, Ma, “Ma’s Speech on Xinhua’s Operation in the Asia-Pacific Region,” 1-9.

³ Xin, *How the Market is Changing China’s News*, 118.

In 2008, China hosted the Olympic games for the first time from August 8 to 24 in Beijing. The Government of the People's Republic of China invested a significant amount of money into a three-year Olympic venue construction project that consisted of four new stadiums and total investments that exceeded \$295 billion yuan (\$43.13 billion USD).⁴

The Olympic Games signified a new face to China's international image and fostered renewed efforts for the CCP's "going global" project. This new project consisted of matching China's media influence with its rapid economic development. Xinhua, once again, became the face for the CCP's global media ambitions and the critical network to distributing Chinese media influence abroad. By November 2008, the European Union, United States, and Canada approved the launch of "Xinhua 08," a Chinese-language financial information service. In doing so, "Xinhua 08" brought the news agency in competition with Reuters, Dow Jones, and Bloomberg.⁵ The approval of this financial information news service also occurred at the same that Xinhua's editorial operations began to actively trade information and news with international news organizations like the Big Four.⁶

In 2009, Xinhua launched its very own television news network called China Xinhua News Network Corporation (CNC). Only a year later, on July 1, 2010, Xinhua announced CNC's official English-language television service CNC World.⁷ Soon after Xinhua and UNESCO announced a joint-partnership on October 15, 2010 with the objective to use Xinhua's news

⁴ International Olympic Committee, "Beijing 2008: beginning of venue construction project," *IOC News*, December 15, 2003, <https://olympics.com/ioc/news/beijing-2008-beginning-of-venue-construction-project>. Last accessed March 1, 2022; "Beijing Olympics funding exceeds \$43 bn," *The Economic Times*, August 4, 2008, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/beijing-olympics-funding-exceeds-43-bn/articleshow/3325832.cms>. Last accessed March 1, 2022.

⁵ Xin, *How the Market is Changing China's News*, 116-117.

⁶ Xin, *How the Market is Changing China's News*, 115.

⁷ Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the United States of America, "Xinhua launches CNC World English Channel," July 1, 2010, <https://www.mfa.gov.cn/ce/ceus/eng/zgyw/t713374.htm>. Last accessed March 1, 2022.

services to increase global awareness of the UN agency's work.⁸ This not only pushed Xinhua's name further into the international sphere, but also established a key relationship between the UN agency and Xinhua with recurring visits, interviews, and keynote speeches.⁹

In 2015, Xinhua continued its efforts in bridging China's economic development with its global media influence, by launching its own network dedicated to the "Belt and Road" Initiative. Xinhua launched the "Xinhua Silk Road Information Service" in July 2015, with the aim of providing a platform for commodity trade and investment cooperation amongst governments, companies, institutions, and other actors part of the "Belt and Road" Initiative. Its mission statement was "linking people, enterprises and institutions in countries and regions along the Belt and Road and facilitating information sharing and business cooperation."¹⁰

Today, Xinhua can be accessed from virtually anywhere around the world and with any device, from its tailored English website to daily updates on Twitter. It has utilized the prevalence and rise of social media networking apps like WeChat in developing a "multi-dimensional communication system" with news apps, mini-programs, and official accounts.¹¹ Alongside the CCP's "going global" project and Xinhua's own ambitions for global media power, the news agency also maintained its commitments to build Xinhua into a world news agency that could globally disseminate the Chinese perspective.

⁸ See page 5 as well as pg. 5, footnote 9.

⁹ In 2014 Li Congjun, the President of Xinhua, visited UNESCO headquarters and signed an agreement renewing cooperation between Xinhua and UNESCO. In 2017, Xinhua's editor-in-chief met with UNESCO's Director-General to deepen strategic cooperation, inter-cultural exchange, and sustainable development. See, "Xinhua editor-in-chief meets UNESCO Director-General," *China.org.cn*, June 15, 2017, http://www.china.org.cn/world/Off_the_Wire/2017-06/15/content_41028931.htm.

¹⁰ "Xinhua Silk Road Information Service," 2013-2022, https://en.imsilkroad.com/about_us/index.html. Last accessed March 1, 2022.

¹¹ All-China Journalists Association, *Development of China's News Media (2016)* (Beijing: Foreign Language Press Co. Ltd, 2017), 31. http://www.xinhuanet.com/zg/jx/136330786_14962868633441n.pdf

The implications of Xinhua becoming one of the largest national news agencies in the world today is rooted in the history of the news agency itself. In forty years, it went from a small redistribution news organization to China's national news agency, and finally a multipurposed world news agency. The period from 1978 to 1989 was especially important in charting this change, as alongside China's own economic modernization and international re-opening, Xinhua's conceptualization of what being a 'world news agency' entailed rapidly changed from focusing solely on the 'Third World' to developing a 'international' perspective for the news agency by the end of the decade.

This research's focus on Xinhua News Agency brings in an untouched aspect of global news histories. In the Big Four news organizations' competition for global news dominance in the 1970s and 1980s, there is also the history of the CCP's own objectives to achieve global media power and build its national news agency into a world news agency. By analyzing Xinhua's shift from disaggregating the Global South to exploring partnerships with industrialized nations, it has reflected how the CCP understood globalization and where the news agency set its priorities for global expansion.

Its prioritization of the Global South until 1988 worked with the Party's own geopolitical interests in the region. Maintaining a dedication to 'Third World solidarity,' the CCP primed its own national news agency to becoming a 'Third World news agency' that aimed to be the 'alternative news source' for the Global South and combat global news narratives from the West. To effectively achieve this ambition, Xinhua was more strategic in where and how it expanded its operations by focusing its efforts within Southeast Asia and Central-West Africa. On the one hand, Xinhua saw those areas as 'news niches' that it could successfully expand into with limited competition from other, more established news agencies like Reuters. On the other hand,

Xinhua's collaborations with news networks or organizations, like ANN or PANA, aimed to further disseminate the ideas of strong nationalist communication systems and infrastructures based on South-South communications. However, once the news agency ran into problems with its expansion in Southeast Asia and Central-West Africa it began searching for other avenues to support its global media ambitions.

Consequently, its shift from the Global South to industrialized nations after 1988 reflected another change in the Party's world outlook. As the CCP aimed to expand its international engagement with the United States, and to its allies, Xinhua's partnerships also reflected that by way of its expansion into the South Korean news market. After the failures of proposed ideas like the NWICO and NIIO, Xinhua became more motivated to explore other potential avenues to achieve its ambitions to become a world news agency. This exploration became evident as Xinhua turned its attention to expanding its partnerships and influence within South Korea after 1988, by partnering with its national news agency and newspapers.

This period of Xinhua's history became representative of not just a fusing of media policy and foreign diplomacy, but also a reflection of how the processes of globalization reached every aspect of Chinese society. Although China's media systems and messaging were, and still are, controlled by the Party, this period also saw Xinhua engage in its own opportunities as a news agency. These opportunities consisted of Xinhua experimenting and exploring a 'balance' between distributing the voice of the Party to the world and its own interests for global news dominance.

Through this more differentiated understanding of the Global South from the Chinese perspective, this thesis offers a new approach to the histories and existing literature on South-South connections and China's own globalization. Most importantly, it showcases how Chinese

media reflected the changes to China's world outlook during this period of economic reform and international re-engagement. In analyzing the change in Xinhua's focus from a disaggregation of the Global South to exploring partnerships with industrialized nations, it presents a more nuanced understanding into how China conceptualized and defined the region of the 'Global South.' Xinhua's internationalization not only demonstrates how this definition of the Global South worked in tandem with the Party's broader foreign policy interests, but also how Xinhua's definition diverged from the Party's during its transformation into a world news agency.

The focus on the internationalization of Xinhua also demonstrates the broader implications and significance of media in these larger questions of globalization, 'Third World' nationalism, and international relations. In the case of China, the current scholarship and literature has sparsely mentioned the role of national news agencies like Xinhua in its globalization. Thus, Xinhua acts as a proxy for broader ideas related to China's industrialization and participation in global news discourse. It bridges these two spheres of literature together to understand how global communications factored into the CCP's objectives for Chinese media and how China factored into the broader historical developments of global media.

This research on Xinhua's internationalization could inspire a deeper exploration into Xinhua's developments after the 1990s. After Deng Xiaoping's "Southern Tours" in 1992, a whole new set of objectives and modules for internationalization was introduced to China's media systems across the nation. After the permanent institution of the internet in China in 1994, the landscape in which Chinese media operated and distributed in had completely changed. Many scholars have alluded or posited to Xinhua's (and other media forms) exponential growth after the 1990s, but there is still sparse scholarship on how its global ambitions evolved alongside its operations. There is a tendency to focus on the impacts of marketization,

commercialization, and other forms of economic news in this area of research. However, rapid expansion of Xinhua in the late 1990s also brought along stronger international initiatives and goals that are worth exploring to understanding its contemporary influence and reach.

This study on Xinhua also opens the space for further examination of the role of globalization on other forms of Chinese media. For example, television and radio also saw significant developments in the “reform and opening era.” One possibility is examining the China Central Television (CCTV) and the creation of its international English-language cable news, China Global Television Network (CGTN). Given this project, it could shed light into similar developments in other areas of Chinese media or spark a comparison between other forms of media to see how developments varied or changed.

Additionally, it also raises the possibilities of revisiting the scholarship and discussions on global media. In the case of UNESCO and its initiatives like the NWICO, there is room for more analysis on the role of news agencies like Xinhua. While this research has tried to shed light on the impact of the “NWICO debates” on Xinhua’s own development, there could be further research into Xinhua’s involvement with NWICO activities and its participation (or reasons for absence) in other like-minded proposals for national communication systems.

This could also support further research on the relationship between international news organizations like the “Big Four” and Xinhua in this period. The current literature tends to focus on how international news organizations like Reuters interacted with other top-tier news agencies like Associated Press or Agence-France Presse. However, there has yet to be substantial investigations into how these news organizations viewed Chinese media, or how that perspective changed over time as media outlets like Xinhua underwent processes of internationalization and globalization.

This work could also provoke a completely different set of formulations in other fields. For example, the introduction of economic news and the role of ‘profit’ in Chinese media systems after 1978, the internationalization of other media or technology industries like China’s film industry, or the role of media in decolonization movements and their impact in fostering ‘Third World solidarity’ in Latin America, Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and Africa.

But the story does not end there.

Chinese media, in all its forms, is repeatedly at the centre of discussions from scholars to policy analysts. Xinhua and its substantial growth in the past forty years is just one of many examples of how the Party set forth a strategic effort in the “reform and opening” era to develop and expand its media systems into ones that could spread the CCP’s voice and political messages around the world. Analyzing news agencies like Xinhua helps us gain a better understanding of what the CCP’s global media ambitions were and how it changed the trajectory of China’s state-run media infrastructures.

To date, Xinhua is still the largest national news agency in China and worldwide in terms of foreign correspondents. Its collaborations with national news agencies and international organizations like UNESCO have brought up a bigger conversation about the role of China’s state-run media agencies in the contemporary spaces of international news and foreign affairs. Xinhua’s growth is only one example of the development that has paralleled the international rise of other media outlets, communications, and technology systems across China. From Tencent to Huawei, the unprecedented rise of China’s media systems raises new questions about the future of Chinese media and their rapid globalization, its impact on global media consumption, and concerns over its affiliations with the CCP and its propaganda tactics on the world stage.

In 1991, at Xinhua's 60th Anniversary, Mu Qing stated that if Xinhua continued to forge ahead it would compete to become best news agency in the world and play a bigger role in the competition for international news and public opinion dominance. His confidence was one that expressed the true vision of the Party and the news agency to surge ahead and establish itself as a premiere world news agency. Ultimately the Party's objectives to transform Xinhua into a world news agency was successful. It was, and still is, one of the most important tools in the CCP's foreign propaganda system. Its established role as the chief distributor of the 'Chinese perspective' has given the news agency unprecedented access to global media networks and communication systems around the world. Its efforts to bolster its global media power was one that saw a bigger vision for Xinhua beyond national influence.

As the concerns against China's state-run media outlets continue to mount, understanding the historical processes and origins of the rise of media outlets like Xinhua gives insight into the objectives behind their growth and how they managed their expectations to achieve global media power. This research and the history of Xinhua's internationalization acts as a lens into the contemporary aims of the Communist Party and its media outlets today, as well as the role of Chinese media in world history and contemporary politics.

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